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Living History in the Classroom

A Descriptive-Exploratory Study on the Pedagogical Use of Oral Testimonies in
Colombian Schools as a Tool of Historical Memory to Ensure
Non-Repetition of Violent Events.

Historia vivida en el aula

Un estudio descriptivo-exploratorio sobre el uso pedagógico de testimonios orales en
aulas escolares como herramienta de memoria histórica para asegurar la no-repetición
de hechos violentos.

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Abstract

Based on a multitude of publications on pedagogies of memory in the last two decades, the implementation of historical memory into the Colombian educational sector gained attention, highlighting the need to enhance students' agency and critical thinking. Whilst early publications already highlighted the need to include victims' voices into pedagogical materials, a coherent implementation proves to be difficult in an atmosphere of ongoing violence and high levels of affection of the civil population. Based on transformative learning and critical pedagogy, this investigation examines the aim of pedagogies of memory for an inclusion of materials like oral testimonies in the pedagogical practice in the pursuit of non-recurrence in line with transitional justice efforts. Taking into account institutional contributions and challenges, a descriptive-exploratory study collects the experiences of five social science teachers in Bogotá through qualitative semi-structured interviews. The investigation confirms a stronger impact of oral testimonies compared to other pedagogical materials already suggested by academic contributions, highlighting the need for participatory approaches to learning when working on historical memory. Despite facing some challenges in implementation, oral testimonies prove to be an adequate tool to open up educational spaces for the inclusion of personal experiences and shift the pedagogical experience away from traditional teaching dynamics.

Keywords: Transitional Justice, pedagogies of memory, oral testimonies, historical memory, recent history

Resumen

A partir de una multitud de publicaciones sobre pedagogías de la memoria en las últimas dos décadas, la implementación de la memoria histórica en la educación colombiana ha ganado atención, resaltando la necesidad de potenciar la agencia y el pensamiento crítico de los estudiantes. Si bien las primeras publicaciones ya destacaban la necesidad de incluir las voces de las víctimas en los materiales pedagógicos, una implementación coherente resulta difícil en un ambiente de violencia permanente y altos niveles de afectación de la población civil. Con base en el aprendizaje transformativo y la pedagogía crítica, esta investigación examina el objetivo de las pedagogías de la memoria para una inclusión de materiales como los testimonios orales en la práctica pedagógica en la búsqueda de la no repetición en línea con los esfuerzos de la justicia transicional. Teniendo en cuenta los aportes y retos institucionales, un estudio descriptivo-exploratorio recoge las experiencias de cinco docentes de ciencias sociales en Bogotá a través de entrevistas cualitativas semi-estructuradas. La investigación confirma un mayor impacto de los testimonios orales frente a otros materiales pedagógicos ya sugeridos por aportes académicos, resaltando la necesidad de enfoques participativos de aprendizaje cuando se trabaja la memoria histórica. A pesar de enfrentar algunos retos en su implementación, los testimonios orales demuestran ser una herramienta adecuada para abrir espacios educativos para la inclusión de experiencias personales y alejar la experiencia pedagógica de las dinámicas tradicionales de enseñanza.

Palabras clave: Justicia transicional, pedagogías de la memoria, testimonios orales, memoria histórica, historia reciente

Declaration of authorship

"I hereby declare that I have written the present work independently, that I have not already used it to obtain another certificate of achievement and that I have not used any aids and sources other than those indicated"



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List of Abbreviations

AUC	<i>Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia</i> / United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia
CEV	<i>Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la No Repetición</i> (Comisión de la Verdad) / Truth Commission
CMPR	<i>Centro de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación</i> / Centre of Memory, Peace and Reconciliation
CNMH	<i>Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica</i> / National Centre for Historical Memory
CNRR	<i>Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación</i> / National Commission of Reparation and Reconciliation
ELN	<i>Ejército de Liberación Nacional</i> / National Liberation Army
EPL	<i>Ejército Popular de Liberación</i> / Popular Liberation Army
FARC	<i>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia</i> / Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FARC-EP	<i>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército de Pueblo</i> / Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army
FN	<i>Frente Nacional</i> / National Front
GMH	<i>Grupo de Memoria Histórica</i> / Group of Historical Memory
JEP	<i>Justicia Especial para la Paz</i> / Special Jurisdiction for Peace
MEN	<i>Ministerio de Educación Nacional</i> / Ministry of Education
SIVJRN	<i>Sistema Integral de Verdad, Justicia, Reparación y No Repetición</i> / Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-repetition (SIVJRN)
UBPD	<i>Unidad de Búsqueda de Personas dadas por Desaparecidas</i> / Unit for the Search for Persons Presumed Disappeared

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1. Introduction

Eight years after the signing of the Peace Agreement between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC), the Colombian panorama has again drifted further away from peace.

The rearmament of several former conflict actors, paramilitary members of the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC) and guerilla members of the FARC as well as drug traffickers, are renewing the battle over territories especially in rural areas (Ardila-Behar & Behar-Leiser, 2024). Particularly in the region of Catatumbo in the Northeast, close to the Venezuelan border, new clashes between two guerrilla groups, the National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, ELN) and the a dissident group of the FARC, called *Frente33*, led to the highest number of forced displacement that Colombia has seen in the last years (Reuters, 2025; Reynoso, 2025). This upsurge in violence follows on ambitions of negotiating a “total peace” with different conflict actors by President Gustavo Petro, which aimed at tackling structural problems and poverty (The Latin American Post Staff, 2025).

By now, Colombia finds itself undisputedly again, or rather still, in an active stage of the internal armed conflict, after the 2016 Peace Accords with the FARC were for many a hope for peace (Vargas Álvarez & Ibagón Martín, 2022). This also highly affects the educational sector, which was subject to a variety of advances to integrate historical memory into school curricula in recent years. Accompanied by an academical boom in memory, discussions on pedagogies of memory gained relevance. Whilst there are international examples of educating in post-conflict societies, the challenge is a lot bigger when historical narratives of the recent past and political polarizations still shape the present, with a large part of the population having been or still being affected by the conflict (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022b, p. 35).

The question thus arises of how it can be possible to embark on the complex topic of recent history in the classroom. As historical learning is a crucial part of people's lives, there is an explicit need to recognise classrooms as a participatory space of exchange and reflection, where historical knowledge is built in cooperation, and to develop a stronger connection of history learning with the social challenges of the present (Vargas Álvarez & Ibagón Martín, 2022).

To foster interactivity in formal educational spaces so that memory can take form as a lived experience, the inclusion of testimonial materials seems to be a very impactful and adequate tool (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2018a, p. 11). In the Colombian context, pedagogical tools and theoretical approaches to an implementation of historical memory in formal

education were thoroughly discussed in the frame of pedagogies of memory, as was the importance to include testimonial sources, suggesting an especially great impact on students (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2018a, p. 11).

Whilst testimonies can take a variety of forms, oral testimonies form a special category through their explicit auditive nature. Oral testimony as a pedagogical tool thus includes all material that has an auditive component of a person affected by the conflict narrating their experiences from a personal perspective. This can take the form of interviews, podcast, documentaries or songs, for example. Whilst there are teaching experiences of narrative testimony, contributions on oral testimonies largely concentrated on a conceptual level, with concrete studies on an adequate implementation into formal education constituting a gap in Colombian academia (J. C. F. Orellano & Ibarra, 2018). This thesis will therefore explore current perspectives of an implementation of oral testimonies in Colombia by conducting qualitative semi-structured interviews with social science teachers in Bogotá, following the question:

How can oral testimonies of the armed conflict be integrated into the Colombian formal sector's secondary education as a pedagogical tool of historical memory following the aim of ensuring non-recurrence?

Whilst this question will be examined from various angles in the next chapters, the preliminary research hypothesis consists of the assumption that opposed to a fixed national narrative, it is beneficial for students as well as teachers to explore new forms of learning that involve personal backgrounds and experiences, tell diverse stories and include emotions. By implementing oral testimonies, the learning outcome will indeed prove to be more effective and more lasting, pursuing therefore the general aim of pedagogies of memory to contribute to non-repetition and non-forgetting. The inclusion of oral testimonies in history education will furthermore prove as a useful measure towards overcoming polarisation, stereotypes and hate through enhancing dialogue with each other instead of about "the other".

The next chapter will provide an overview of the historical placement of the armed conflict in Colombia, situating the research in a concrete context. Chapter 3 will discuss different approaches to the field of pedagogies of memory in a literature analysis, taking into account educational policies and a selection of pedagogical materials as well as academic contributions. In chapter 4, the theoretical framework based on social constructivism will be presented, building on an interdisciplinary approach of transitional justice, memory studies and educational theory. The following fifth chapter provides insight on the research methodology of the descriptive-exploratory study with teachers in Bogotá. Chapter 6 then consist of the presentation of results, reviewing the practical implementation of pedagogical tools and the perspectives of integrating oral testimonies in the Colombian formal education sector. Chapter 7 further

provides a discussion of the results, creating a link between the investigation and experiences from Holocaust Education to derive perspectives for a stronger inclusion of oral testimonies into formal education. To conclude, chapter 8 will give an outlook to future perspectives and research.

2. Historical Placement of the Colombian Armed Conflict

To understand the social and political aspects influencing the educational fight for peace, it is crucial to understand the complexity of the armed conflict that deeply marked the Colombian society for over 60 years - and counting. Throughout the years, the conflict went through different stages with changing actors and forms of violence. The Group of Historical Memory (*Grupo de Memoria Histórica*, GMH), created in 2005 in the frame of Law of Justice and Peace with the aim to contribute to reconciliation and reparation, published in 2013 the report *¡Basta Ya! Colombia: Memorias de guerra y dignidad* (Enough already! Colombia: Memories of War and Dignity), which bases their findings on interviews with victims and survivors of violence, highlighting the importance of a change of the perpetrator perspective to a victim-centred approach whilst offering a deep insight into the conflict (GMH, 2013a). It is therefore seen as one of the leading key documents in dealing with the past in Colombia, followed by the extensive publications of the Truth Commission in 2022.

2.1. The Phases of Conflict

For a better overview on the conflict, a separation into different phases can be made following the *¡Basta Ya!* Report. A first phase between 1958 and 1982 describes the change from biparty violence to subversive violence. Before, in the 40s and 50's Colombia saw a period of massive violence called *La Violencia* (The Violence), that started with the killing of the leader of the liberal party Jorge Eliecer Gaitan in 1948, leading to mass riots known as the *Bogotazo*. Aiming at the end of the brutal bipartisan violence in the country, Rojas Pinilla took power and initiated the National Front (*Frente Nacional*, FN), a joint government between Liberal and Conservative parties taking turns for four periods, the from 1958 to 1974. Even though the violence decreased, and political stability was enhanced, political competition was excluded, and Colombia's core problems and structural violence were not solved (GMH, 2013a, p. 112). It further led to the establishment of the main guerilla groups during the sixties as agrarian movements, inspired by insurgent movements like the Cuban Revolution and operating in different parts of the country, amongst them the FARC; ELN and EPL¹ (CNMH, 2013b, pp. 39–40).

Until the end of the *Frente Nacional*, that promised modernization but repressed social mobilizations, the violence by the guerillas was quite low, until after the end of the FN the group M-19 emerged as an urban guerilla aiming at political impact and popularity through

¹ The FARC was founded in 1966, counting 300 members at time. The ELN was founded in the course of the 60s, counting especially members like oil workers class and students, present in the eastern rural regions and the municipality of Antioquia and inspired by Che Guevara and international revolutionaries. In 1967 the EPL was born as an armed wing of the communist party with Maoist inspiration, operating mainly in Córdoba and Sucre (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica., 2013b, p. 40)

“spectacular“ militant actions (CNMH, 2013b, p. 41). The legacy of the FN proved to be quite problematic for the state in responding to the upsurging guerillas in combatting communism: given a large autonomy, the military assumed their own political positions often diametrical to the civilian government, leading to sometimes pacifist and reformist, sometimes military and repressive measures (CNMH, 2013b, p. 43). A civil strike in 1977 led to a new public order proposed by the military sector, which paved the way for first violations of human rights by the state that were further incentivised with the authorization of “civilian self-defence groups sponsored by the Military Forces“, that led to the creation of paramilitary groups in the 80’s (CNMH, 2013b, p. 44). In the beginning of the 80’s the guerrilla groups then started to aim for a combination of warfare with political action and social movements, expanding largely and aiming to take power (p. 41).

During the second phase between 1982 and 1996, the conflict and its actors built up (GMH, 2013a, p. 111). Whilst the ruling government of Betancurt at that time made a negotiation offer fearing the guerillas’ success, these grew even more and established successful political parties like the Patriotic Union. The peace offer was widely disputed also by the elites and political parties and openly sabotaged by the military, that then jointly established the first paramilitary groups, “who unleashed a dirty war against the legal left and against the social bases of the insurgent groups“ (CNMH, 2013b, p. 41). The peace process further crumbled under the rising narcotraffic with Pablo Escobar whilst the guerillas further radicalized their insurgent actions, aimed mainly against the military and the country’s infrastructure, leading to another civic strike in 1988 that ultimately failed and led to the demobilisation of M-19 and EPL (CNMH, 2013b, p. 42). The FARC and ELN however abandoned the vision of legally achieving power, incentivised by the rising paramilitary structures and the extermination of the Patriotic Union, and “went to war with all their forces over the next twenty years“ (CNMH, 2013b, p. 42).

In the mid 90’s, the State also aimed at a strengthening of its forces and privatized security, allowing the expansion of paramilitarism throughout the country (CNMH, 2013b, p. 45). This opened up the third phase of escalation of the conflict between 1996 and 2005, with guerilla and paramilitary fighting over territories “with blood and fire“ (p. 36).

In 1999, the government of Andrés Pastrana initiated the Caguán Peace Process, that aimed for demilitarization of the FARC and political reforms but failed in 2002 due to military buildup on both sides. The FARC counted a total of 16.000 members at that point and concentrated their power on Bogotá and big cities aiming for state collapse, whilst the military experienced a large expansion through the Plan Colombia that aimed at the destruction of guerrilla forces.

But “the war, the military and repressive solution, had broken the eternal ambiguity between the state and part of society as to what position to take towards the guerrillas“ (CNMH, 2013b,

p. 45), which unlocked the first real perspective for an end of the armed conflict. During the government of Uribe, in 2005 the conflict then entered its fourth phase of “rearrangement” (GMH, 2013a, p. 111). With the Law on Justice and Peace in 2005 the paramilitary AUC began its demilitarization, whilst the armed forces regained territory and legitimacy that the guerillas lost in a highly efficient military offensive. Following human rights violations by the military and continuous structural social problems that remained unresolved, the guerilla reinforced their political stand and military operations (CNMH, 2013b, p. 58).

2.2. Violences and Their Impact

The armed conflict in Colombia was characterised by an extreme lethality and affection of civil society: The Truth Commission counts at least 500.000 people who lost their lives amongst a totality of over 9 million victims of violence, which with a shocking 90 percent of the victims being civilians, making a fifth of the Colombian population directly affected (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022a, p. 573, 2022b, pp. 35, 37). The objectives ranged from „obligating them to maintain loyalty to the group that dominates a region, to weaken the adversary or to accumulate military power. Killings are intended to break communities, and sometimes to punish them if they declare themselves autonomous“ (CNMH, 2013b, p. 24). The forms of violence meanwhile were quite various, including kidnappings, massacres, selective killings, land dispossession, displacement and sexual violence, amongst others. Even though these forms of violence are not uncommon in armed conflict, the CNMH (2013b) states that the Colombian case still stand out for its „cruelty and terror“ (p. 25). One example for this is the high number of enforced disappearances, counting up to 27.000 cases, which leaves the survivors in eternal uncertainty, „the terror and the damage it does to the victim's environment is devastating“ (p. 27). In total, the conflict affected a third of the country's territories (p. 36).

To state a few more numbers, the cases of kidnapping add up to 39.523 cases, assassinations reach a number of 1.1 million (Unidad para las Víctimas, 2025). Over 8.8 million people suffered forced displacement (Unidad para las Víctimas, 2025) leaving around 8.3 million hectares of land abandoned, and 350.000 properties dispossessed, changing the demography of the country (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica., 2013b, p. 28). There are 1.754 victims reporting sexualised violence, making it a clear weapon of war with the goals ranging from humiliating social leaders over punishment for behaviour to the destruction and demoralization of the population (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica., 2013b, p. 31). Also, illegal recruiting has to be counted with over 10.000 minors as well as anti-personnel mines and explosives with 12.552 victims and around 45% of the Colombian territory being mined (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica., 2013b, p. 33; Unidad para las Víctimas, 2025). Targeted killings further

aimed at a high number of social leaders, leaving 1227 victims, and at „militant politicians“ with 1495 cases, especially of the UP (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica., 2013b, p. 35).

The CNMH (2013b) highlights that there were many atrocities and crimes committed by all parties, but the logic and goals behind them were quite different. To exemplify a few key characteristics: paramilitary groups mainly opted for “mass or targeted killings, disappearances, land dispossession, vicious crimes and sexual violence“ (p. 31), accompanied by torture, dismembered corpses and their display. The guerilla groups are not exempt from committing the same crimes, but mainly opted for “kidnappings, attacks on villages and infrastructure, destruction of property, looting, terrorist attacks, the use of anti-personnel mines and, in general, the siege of the population“ (p. 32). The army also has to account for their participation in targeted killings and massacres and can be linked to supporting some paramilitary actions. A driving factor was and is a political incapability or even a missing will to end the violence, resulting in a failing of institutions and lack of trust in these amongst the population. Additionally, the violence became a daily occurrence which led to a certain naturalization of the war and violent acts, that also media stopped reporting on due to “low intensity of violence, but with a high repetition“ (p. 34).

The lasting violence left many victims still living in fear, with severe loss of land and people, with hate and rage, with guilt and embarrassment, with a conglomeration of psychological and emotional damages impeding everyday life (CNMH, 2013b, pp. 61–62). Many violent acts actively aimed for such a demoralisation of the civil population, including a destruction of the sociocultural networks and cultural life, as the CNMH (2013b) states: “Ours has not only been a war for territory, it has also been a war for the imposition of new social orders based on authoritarian values“ (p. 64). This especially also affected afro Colombian and indigenous communities, who often had to suffer from killings of their spiritual leaders and of environmental damage, forcing them to abandon their land or prohibiting them to leave, enforcing poverty.

But also the political sphere was deeply affected to violence: all actors aimed at silencing civil organizations, political movements or critical voices in general, until “the political opposition became a death sentence“ (CNMH, 2013b, p. 65). One of the most known and brutal cases is the political genocide² of members of the Patriotic Union (Unión Patriótica, UP) in the 1980's with an estimated 6000 people disappeared or assassinated by paramilitary forces or drug cartels (Epinosa, 2024). Many state forces had an active participation in this, which deeply hurt

² Espinosa (2024) states that the assassinations were ruled by the Colombian government to constitute the crime of a genocide after a discussion whether they constituted a mere crime against humanity. More in Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2018), Todo pasó frente a nuestros ojos. El genocidio de la Unión Patriótica 1984-2002, Bogotá, CNMH.

the legitimacy of the government and affected trust, ultimately leading to dysfunction of basic democratic rights and processes and a loss of political plurality (CNMH, 2013b, p. 65).

3. Literature Review: Pedagogies of Memory in Colombia

In Colombia, the last years presented a literal memory boom in academia and society. With the publishing of the *Basta Ya* report in 2012, an official narrative on historical memory was presented that opened up space for victim's stories on the violent past. The Peace agreement in 2016 further led the way towards a victim-centred perspective on memory, with the report of the truth commission in 2022 presenting another broad and detailed overview of human rights violations and casualties mainly affecting the civil population (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022b).

To situate the discussion in a more concrete context, first an overview on educational policies of the last two decades will be given, that highly shaped the integration of historical memory in school curricula. Then, some materials will be presented here; due to the enormous quantity of productions concerning the topic of pedagogies of memory in the last years, it is nowhere near complete. A following review of academic discussions further serves to exemplify some key discussions of the field and illuminate the variety of approaches that can be taken when implementing historical memory in the frame of teaching recent history in formal education. The final focus will then examine perspectives for an integration of oral testimonies in the formal education sector.

3.1. Educational Policies

Even with the conflict still ongoing, there were several attempts of transitional justice that shaped the Colombian political and social sphere and also tackled the educational sector.

The Basic Standards of Citizen Competencies, formulated by the Ministry of Education (MEN, 2004a), are based a variety of normative legislative documents: First, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948, that proclaims the right for education, aiming at development of understanding, tolerance, personal development. Second, on the Colombian Constitution of 1991 and third, the General Law on Education, Law 115 of 1994 (MEN, 2004b, p. 6, MEN, 2004a, p. 152) . The Citizen Competencies take a threefold approach that is reflected in the standards for all grades in basic and secondary education: first, coexistence and peace, second, participation and democratic responsibility, and third, plurality, identity and appreciation of differences (MEN, 2004a, p. 165). The basic standards further entail a variety of competencies: cognitive, emotional, communicative and integrative competencies as well as knowledge (MEN, 2004b, pp. 12–13).

The Law of Justice and Peace, Law 975 in 2005 then created the National Commission of Reparation and Reconciliation (CNRR). Not addressing the pressing topic of victims that gained rising attention since the beginning of the 2000's, in 2011 Law on Victims and Land Restitution, 1448) then aimed to enhance victim's visibility after the Law of Justice and Peace resulted in amplifying the perpetrator's perspective (CNMH, 2013b, p. 58; CEV, 2022b, p. 46). The Law on Victims further incentivized "programmes that guarantee equality and non-repetition and the promotion of rights" (Mateus Carreño, 2022, p. 32) (Mateus Carreño, 2022, p. 32), amongst them the establishment of the commemorative Day of Victims on the 9th of April. Both laws suggested an integration of the armed conflict in the educational sector (Bedoya et al., 2016, p. 188)

To further enhance these objectives in pedagogical incentives, Law 1732 introduced the *Cátedra de Paz* (Peace Chair) in 2014 as an obligatory subject in the formal sector to enhance a culture of peace (Ley 1732 de 2014, 2014, Article 2). It proposes twelve possible topics for classroom implementation, out of which at least two must be treated in class. Historical memory constitutes one of the suggested topics (J. C. Orellano & Ibarra, 2018, pp. 900–901).

Even if presented with many challenges, the 2016 Peace Agreement between the government and the FARC-EP was then for many a hope for change and a new perspective for peace (Vargas Álvarez & Ibagón Martín, 2022). In the frame of the peace process, a Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-repetition (SIVJRNR) was created (CEV et al., n.d.). It serves as a mechanism to "guarantee the rights of victims" in the beforementioned areas, proposing a threefold approach to through "restorative and remedial measures" that is embedded in the Colombian Constitution by the Legislative Act 01 of 2017 (p. 2). The SIVJRNR is comprised of three independent and autonomous mechanisms: the Truth Commission (CEV³), the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP⁴) and the Unit for the Search for Persons Presumed Disappeared (UBPD⁵). It is characterized by its centrality of victims and their rights, included in active participation in the mandates:

The System aims to consolidate a transitory or temporary institutional scenario that is sufficient and appropriate to satisfy the rights of the victims of the armed conflict and contribute to national reconciliation. (JEP 2022)

The JEP, as an "autonomous judicial entity" with a mandate for 15 years, aims at „investigating, elucidating, judging and punishing serious human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the context of the armed conflict up to December 1, 2016.“,

³ Website: [Inicio | Informe Final Comisión de la Verdad](#)

⁴ Website: [Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz | JEP](#)

⁵ Website: [UBPD - Unidad de Búsqueda de Personas dadas por Desaparecidas - Unidad de Búsqueda de Personas Dadas por Desaparecidas](#)

mainly by ex-combatants of the FARC and the military forces, but also investigation in paramilitary cases if they „appear voluntarily“ (CEV et al., n.d., p. 5). The UBPD, also independent and autonomous and additionally extrajudicial and humanitarian, has a mandate for 20 years to direct the search of missing persons of the armed conflict, including the recovery and delivery of remains (p. 5). The Truth Commission, with a mandate of three years, was established as a “national autonomous public entity whose mission is to listen and to understand, without judging” and the prospect of non-repetition (p. 4). Its final report, issued in 2020, represents a comprehensive overview of human rights violations, war crimes and affected people and territories of the internal armed conflict. It further entails a website, an archive and a variety of pedagogical materials.

In 2017, Law 1874 further partially modified the general Law on Education (Ley 115 de 1994, 1994). The law stated three main objectives: first, to contribute to the creation of a national identity that acknowledges ethnic and cultural diversity; second, to enhance critical thinking; and third, to “promote the formation of a historical memory that contributes to reconciliation and peace” (Ley 1874 de 2017, 2017, Article 1). It further highlights the “emphasis on the memory of the dynamics of conflict and peace that Colombian society has experienced, oriented towards the formation of a reflective capacity for coexistence, reconciliation and the maintenance of a lasting peace” (Art. 5).

3.2. Pedagogical Material

In terms of pedagogical material, a number of institutional documents, guides and manuals have already been published that shed light on the subject of historical memory from different points of view: There is narrative material, audiovisual material, there are audios and soundscapes, images, often telling personal life stories of victims.

Already the Citizen Competencies entailed a small toolbox for pedagogical implementation (MEN, 2004b, p. 26). One of the most important contributions however constitutes a toolbox published by the CNMH (2018a) with the name *Un viaje por la memoria histórica: aprender la paz y desaprender la Guerra* (A Journey Through Historical Memory: Learning Peace and Unlearning War) from 2018 constitutes one of the most important contributions on pedagogies of memory. Based on the experiences of teachers and students, the toolbox proposes a pedagogical journey through the recent past, allowing space for questions of identity and for emotions (p. 16). It entails 12 different books that touch different themes of the recent past, are aimed at different ages and take into account diverse perspectives. As stated in the overarching pedagogical recommendations, the toolbox shows ways on “how to activate a process of teaching and learning of historical memory in the classroom that contributes to the formation

of critical, empathetic citizens and managers of peace and democracy in their environments” (CNMH, 2018a, p. 45).

In the framework of the Truth Commission's final report, many pedagogical materials have been published for the educational sector. Pedagogical guides were created for each of the volumes of the final report that all have a different thematical focus, taking for example an historical perspective in *No Matarás* (CEV, 2022b), looking at territorial questions in *Colombia Adentro* (CEV, 2022a) or putting a focus on women and LGBTQI+ persons in *Mi cuerpo es la Verdad* (CEV, 2022b; CEV, 2022a). The CEV also published various pedagogical tools for working the conflict, reflecting on issues of memory and discussing peace proposals from diverse perspectives. The contribution *El Puente está quebrado, ¿Con qué lo curaremos?* (The bridge is burned. How do we heal it?) (Ruiz Silva, 2022) for example offers a didactical guide to approach the recent past in Colombia and to discuss restorative justice, non-repetition or reconciliation efforts in the classroom. It further entails recommendations for pedagogues on how to deal with upsurging emotions of the students. Additionally, the archive of the CEV offers valuable pedagogical material that could be used in the classroom⁶. To facilitate the implementation of such a variety of materials, the CEV published a guide presenting the pedagogical contributions *Un legado, mil lenguajes* (CEV, 2022c). The CEV also contributed to the publication *Diez propuestas para el estudio de la historia reciente de Colombia con énfasis en el conflicto armado* (Ten propositions for studying recent history of Colombia with a focus on the armed conflict) that compiles diverse pedagogical approaches to implement historical memory into the classroom (CEV, 2022).

A contribution of the Pedagogical University (Ruíz Silva, 2022), *Para que no me olvides* (So that you don't forget me), further approaches women's organizations and their contributions to peace in Colombia, but also tackles the topics of forced disappearances, forced displacement or gender-based violence.

To facilitate the application of the Peace Chair, the cultural branch of the Bank of the Republic (*Banco de la República, banrep*) (2020) published a pedagogical guide containing 44 planned classes that align with the basic competencies of social sciences and the Citizen Competencies, among others. It is part of a program called *La Paz se toma la palabra* (Peace takes the stand), which contains a digital tool basket with diverse pedagogical materials, containing for example a podcast called *La paz se cuenta* (Peace being told), where different persons narrate their experiences in the construction of peace (Banco de la República, 2019). They also initiated a travelling library on peace that is sorted for different ages to embark on discussions

⁶ Website: [Archivo del Esclarecimiento de la Verdad](#)

around peace (Banco de la República, 2018). The CEV (2020) later also published a physical toolbox, including 15 different contributions that approach the different chapters of the final report in an artistic, practical and playful way.

The CNMH further published materials following up on the *Caja de Herramientas*. A book published in 2021, *Para que no me olviden: La violencia me mató, pero la escritura me mantiene vivo* (So that they do not forget me: Violence killed me but writing keeps me alive) for example is based on a concrete pedagogical experience of construction of historical memory through collective writing processes based on the experiences of adolescents that were victims of the armed conflict (CNMH 2021). The CNMH also has an interesting contribution based on audiovisual material that serves as a journey through historical memory, exploring topics of resistance, resilience and agency (CNMH 2018b). Benítez Arenas and Mora Hernandez (2021) further contribute with a book, edited and published via the CNMH, reflecting on pedagogical experiences of historical memory throughout the educational sector.

Quite recently, in 2023, the JEP also published didactical material to treat the armed conflict in the classroom, *Justa-mente* (Just-mind), together with the National Program on Peace Education (*Programa Nacional de Educación para la Paz*, Educapaz). It is a pedagogical proposition for the grades 9, 10 and 11 with two key objectives: for the students to first, understand the severity of the conflict and the potential of transitional justice to pave the way towards non-repetition, and second, to develop an individual sense of justice applicable to the private and public life (JEP & Educapaz, 2023, pp. 11–12). It offers a pedagogical guideline in 7 modules that can be implemented interdisciplinary in many subjects, including the Cátedra de Paz and social sciences. All modules contain didactic sequences between 5 and 8 sessions of 45 minutes, which makes 54 sessions in total and 40 hours of class work (p. 20). Whilst proposing different didactic approaches throughout the modules, it follows two key pedagogical understandings throughout the material: One is the approach CRESE, short for *educación ciudadana para la reconciliación y socioemocional* (citizen education for reconciliation and socioemotional) by Educapaz, that works from individual to community level in six key aspects, one of them accentuating reconciliation, restorative justice and memory (p. 14). The second consists of the participative-action-reflexion (*reflexión-acción-participativa*, RAP) by the secretary of education in Bogotá (pp. 14-15).

3.3. Academic Reflections

The variety of these contributions illuminates how pedagogies of memory are an ever-growing field, that experienced a literal boom especially after the Basta Ya Report in 2012 (GMH, 2013a). Bearing in mind the educational framework and some of the pedagogical tools presented, the question remains of how to implement them into the pedagogical practice. This

section will thus shed light on academic discussions and case studies regarding the use of pedagogies of memory in Colombia.

According to Vélez Villafañe (2012), discussions on the topic and term of memory take up a growing role in academia and the political spheres in Colombia, especially since the Law on Justice and Peace in 2005. On the relation of memory and education, he summarizes quite well a key concern:

What can pedagogy contribute to the processing of the past of political violence in a limited transitional context, in which it continues to systematically restrict the possibilities for the construction of historical memory and restorative social transformation? (Vélez Villafañe, 2012, p. 255).

According to Bush and Saltarelli (2000), educational practices should propose transformative solutions that “change the underpinning logic and structures of behaviour”, whilst bearing in mind the difficulty of challenging existing structures of power present in the educational practice (p. 33). An exemplary investigation can be found in Underwood (2017), who in form of several case studies and interviews as well as an extensive revision of literature presents a quite detailed overview of education in the Colombian frame of memory education in a conflict setting. He argues that there are many local examples focussing on transitional justice through a participatory approach, especially in non-traditional education. Breaking away from traditional top-down teaching of facts and instead including children in their own learning process, he puts an emphasis on unifying values that can create a connection between children with different experiences (p. 106). Putting also a focus on local contexts and including the kids’ emotions, there is a higher agency and an overall impact that is “observable, measurable, and significant” (Underwood, 2017, p. 119). According to Underwood, the participants in his studies presented a higher amount of critical thinking, an awareness and questioning of the conflict as well as a clear aim of non-repetition. He proceeds to argue that education should play a greater role in transitional justice processes due to its clear and positive impact in the present, such as a reduction of violence even in high conflict areas (pp. 119-120).

He concludes with ascribing education a transformative role in shaping a peaceful future and “transform the fundamental structural causes of conflict” (Underwood, 2017, p. 120). This transformative role is also examined by Plazas Díaz (2017), who discusses the theoretical and methodological implications of recent history as a pedagogical tool in formal education, concluding that the classroom as a space of memory can lead to the creation of responsible and democratic identities (p. 197). Also Vargas Álvarez and Ibagón Martín (2022) accentuate the crucial aspects of education, more specifically the teaching of “history as knowledge”, which come to light especially “in the current social and political situation in Colombia, marked by disputes over the representation and remembrance of the recent past and the collective

processes of elaboration of memory, justice, truth and peace” (p. 56). Londoño Sánchez and Carvajal Guzmán (2015) further emphasize a possible contribution to citizenship and a critical political competence of students. Based on a case study at Colombian schools, Corredor-Arístizábal (2020) draws conclusions of an implementation of pedagogies of memory in the classroom, focusing on historical understanding and the development of empathy. The results show that pedagogies of memory can have significant effects on the understanding of conflict, especially concluding that the connection to students’ identities, emotions and experiences is crucial for the understanding of historical memory (p. 192).

This emphasizes the need to include events of recent history into teaching, as Herrera and Pertuz (2016) state whilst reflecting on the complex and intertwined roles of memory, remembering and reconciliation (pp. 103-104). By taking into account the local context as well as comparative cases, the authors in their article state that in the 2000’s, the armed conflict was still treated only marginally in educational materials, with a focus on forced displacement and human rights (p. 100). García Vera and González Santos (2018) further highlight how discussions about memory tend to be quite academic, and thus also emphasize the importance to create a pedagogy of memory that is based on events and experiences, a memory that is a practice of resistance. Following this line of thought, many authors argue for a stronger inclusion of victim’s perspectives into the pedagogical practice.

Underwood however also points out some core challenges, amongst them a segregated educational system that does not value teachers in a necessary way to promote memory education (Underwood, 2017, p. 120). Amaya and Torres (2015) list further crucial problems in the Colombian educational system limiting the prospects of pedagogies of memory, such as an exhaustion of teachers, a fragmentation of pedagogical processes or a low continuity rate in pedagogical propositions and projects (pp. 161-162). The authors further state that the socio-political sphere in Colombia historically has been characterized by „dynamics of political intolerance”, arguing for a stronger implementation of historical memory in the classroom, with the primary objective of rearranging and modifying the educational practice and structures (p. 161).

A practice example is given by Mayorga Mendieta et al. (2017), who from an interdisciplinary approach examine processes of teaching-learning in the frame of narratives and pedagogies of memory with the aim to foster dialogue, reflection, critical thought and a culture of peace in the educational practice in a case study in Colombian schools (p. 140). In a more recent contribution, Murillo-Arango (2024) further advocates for the creation of a critical conscience and memory with an intergenerational approach to change social dynamics (p. 1).

Aiming at a new understanding of teaching history, construction of recent history and collective exercises of memory, Gámez (2016) reflects on the complex relations between memory and

history in a conflict setting concluding that any pedagogical intervention should be carried out in a comprehensive manner respecting the presence of victims throughout the complete process (pp. 166, 182). Arango (2017) pursues a similar line of argumentation with a discussion of possibilities to include victims' dignity and community building within the frame of historical memory. Also Moreno Báez (2021) emphasizes the need to include victim's voices in the implementation and realization of pedagogical tools and interventions. Through the ethical-political standing of pedagogies of memory actively pursuing non-repetition, Gauta Blanco (2020) states that pedagogies of memory, in comparison to peace pedagogies, can even achieve a higher degree of dignification for victims. This is confirmed by Corredor et al. (2018a), who state that pedagogies of memory can even serve as a „means for victim's reparation“ (p. 169), since it helps taking perpetrators of violence accountable and allows victims to close gaps between their personal memory and the historical memory; memory could therefore „healing“ sociopolitical breaches (p. 169).

Following this argumentative line, Gómez Sepúlveda (2018) proposes implementing more sensitive and reflective readings of historical events by including a “multiplicity of voices” (p. 81) to create a shared knowledge, based on a case study of a teaching experience of the recent past in a Colombian elementary school in the frame of the (re-)taking of the Palace of Justice (p. 52). The author concludes that this entails also a thorough reflection of the teachers themselves as subject, to question practices and teaching out of a place comfort with the aim to deconstruct hegemonial discourses (p. 81). Regarding the difficulty to include sensitive and potentially hurtful topics of the armed conflict into a pedagogical practice, Corredor et al (2018a) emphasize the need for a development of empathy and emotional regulation in school contexts situated in ongoing violence, emphasizing the issue of emotional desensitization and habituation to violence that can be minimized through a focus on diversity and tolerance, peace and human rights (page).

3.4. Oral Testimonies

As already stated in the *Caja de Herramientas*, the inclusion of victims testimonies is deemed crucial for historical memory, since it can challenge difficult discourses through its “transformative power”: testimonies “allow[.] to capture in depth the lived experience of others through the imaginative recreation of the emotional and sentimental world of witnesses and victim-survivors” (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2018a, p. 11).

This becomes ever more important when implementing testimonies in the educational practice. As addressed by Orellano and Ibarra (2018), oral testimonies as a didactic method in classroom contexts allow us to imagine a way of building knowledge about past events through the recognition of the subject, creating an emotional angle that makes it easier for students to

connect current problems to recent history (p. 903). Oral testimonies mostly serve to convey a personal narrative which allows a more personal and emotional basis for dealing with a topic (Gudehus et al., 2010) and always represent subjective stories and lived experiences (Jelin, 2002).

Further following a case study of Gómez Sepúlveda (2018), oral testimonies can be more impactful and create a closer experience and more direct connection to the past events (Gómez Sepúlveda, 2018, p. 82). They thus prove to be a very valuable source for learning because they allow “students to know and understand their closest social reality in a direct way” (J. C. Orellano & Ibarra, 2018, p. 898). Following Mezirow (2006), the process of transformation in the learning process is often kicked off with a “disorienting dilemma”, followed by critical self-reflection that might entail emotions like shame or anger (p. 94). Oral testimonies could thus have the power, through their personality and emotion, to act as such an initiator for transformation. Nevertheless, the stages already imply the difficulties that might arise in handling them, as they could open difficult reflections and emotions.

As already stated by Jelin (2002), “Testimony as the construction of memories implies a multiplicity of voices, the circulation of multiple ‘truths’, but also of silences, of things unsaid” (p. 96). The term of truth therefore is of high relevance when working with testimonies, since they highlight the subjectivity of a personal truth that is narrated over factual descriptions and events of the past. Testimonies can further serve as a means to reconstruct private spaces and a sense of community that were destroyed by decades of violence, but “cannot replace the urgency of political, institutional and judicial responses to the conflicts of the past, in addition to the personal, symbolic, moral and ethical ones”, highlighting the need to embed the testimonial source in a wide ranging transitional justice process (Jelin, 2002, p. 98).

From a comparative perspective, in Germany for example, testimonies have been firmly anchored in the curriculum since around 1985 due to their relevance (Barricelli, 2009, p. 198, cited after Bertram, 2017, 182). In formal education, an institutionalized national narrative however seems to be overly represented, as Doğmuş (2022) criticizes. According to Kölsch (2000) however, institutionalized remembrance is also formative for the historical narrative, which is intended to shape the collective memory of society. This seems especially fruitful in non-formal spaces: There are numerous contributions on the use of memorial sites as places of remembrance in the field of memorial site education (Ballis & Gloe, 2019; Barricelli, 2020; Chernivsky, 2022; Fehlberg et al., 2022; Gilzmer & Kmec, 2016; Mckayton, 2015; Rothstein, 2020) and on museums as places of institutionalized memory. In these spaces, a focus on collective memory is often given, for example by displaying victim’s perspectives (Schönhagen, 2015) or individual stories (Mckayton, 2015), opening up interesting insights on the use of oral testimonies.

Chernivsky (2022) further illustrates an interesting characteristic of the German Holocaust Education: due to different narratives in the family memory depending on the victim's or the perpetrator's side, there seem to be mismatches between collective and individual memories. With an externalization of transitional justice to memorial sites and the educational sector, many family memories became incomplete, leading to a lack of emotionality when talking of the holocaust and an overall "cold historical awareness" (Chernivsky, 2022, p. 41). According to Dietrich and Müller (2010), also Aleida Assmann recognizes this problematic cold memory and hence promotes the enhancement of dialogue between generations to enhance it with emotion and empathy, leading to a warmer memory (p. 16).

According to Messerschmidt (2022), another neglected aspect in formal education is the relevance of present and future in pedagogy. With the transition of living testimonies to recorded or digital testimonies, Holocaust Education further has the challenge to adapt to changing realities (Brüning, 2018, pp. 11–12). The German holocaust education could thus learn a lot from the academic discussion and practical experiences from other contexts like the Colombian in terms of implementing the use of oral testimonies into a thorough discussion of historical memory in the classroom.

4. Theoretical Framework

Following this perception, the concrete theoretical base for this investigation consists of the concept of pedagogies of memory. It can be placed in the broader frame of peace pedagogies, which is primarily focussed on the broad concept of how individuals can peacefully coexist. Pedagogies of memory however describe a more concrete concept placing greater emphasis on the transformation of individuals, their interaction with their own environment and aims to link school contexts with social reality (J. C. F. Orellano & Ibarra, 2018). Pedagogies of memory further have an inherent interdisciplinary approach by being situated in a conflict setting with a strong focus on transitional justice processes, memory discussions and educational perspectives. Following the complexity of lived realities in the Colombian context, the concrete theoretical approach in this study will also be of an interdisciplinary nature, combining key concepts of transitional justice, memory studies and educational sciences.

The present research builds on the traditional lens of social constructivism, which perceives subjects in the capacity to build their own knowledge of reality. The cognitive mechanisms of each individual enable them to interact with their surroundings, taking an active role that can lead to transformation through experimenting with objects and (Araya et al., 2007). Furthermore, social constructivism builds on the idea that this creation of knowledge is not only an individual experience, but rather a shared one: the interaction of people with their environment

enables the emergence of new characters and traits, implying a complex and reciprocal relationship between individuals and their surroundings. Social constructivism further shapes this investigation on different levels. For one, it serves as an epistemological lens to emphasize how truth and memory are shaped and contested in (post-)conflict societies. In the educational sphere, a constructivist approach perceives learning as an active, meaning-making process.

4.1. Transitional Justice

In the Colombian Case, as elaborated in the previous chapter, comprehensive efforts are already being made with the JEP, CEV and UBPD, all highlighting the aim for non-recurrence and aiming at a remembrance of past atrocities to work towards a more peaceful future.

According to the JEP and Educapaz (2023), in Colombia and other societies an understanding of retributive justice is quite common in public and private life, and the one that was learned throughout the society, consisting of penalties and compensation (p. 8). Retributive justice thus also is present in the educational system through isolation, suspension or expulsion as last measures. This view however offers a perpetrator centred view and does not acknowledge the victims wish for truth, to be listened to, receive an apology and for wounds to be healed (p. 9). Based on a flexible understanding of justice that has to adapt constantly to changing contexts, it is highlighted how the firming of the peace agreement led to an institutionalization of a new and different form to apply and understand justice (p. 10). The JEP thus presents a “binary model”: “adversarial and retributive on the one hand, dialogic and restorative on the other” (p. 10). The authors further state that restorative justice neither did nor should replace retributive justice completely – in the frame of the JEP, it was however necessary to adapt a primarily restorative focus to be able to respond to victims’ needs:

Transitional justice with a restorative approach takes many of us beyond what we have been able to imagine: justice as punishment and isolation for those who cause harm, while offering a different, certainly more humane and achievable understanding. (JEP & Educapaz, 2023, p. 11)

This understanding of a transitional justice with restorative focus will be the foundation also for this investigation. Based on investigations by Haan and Destrooper, transitional justice is furthermore understood as a non-linear process that adapts to the dynamics of memory, that especially after traumatic experiences „requires a more cyclical, multidimensional and iterative understanding of temporality“ (De Haan & Destrooper, 2021, p. 212). Jelin (2002) also offers an interesting perspective: “If state terrorism and repression violated privacy and human bodies, the reconstruction of identity also requires the reconstruction of private spaces and intimacy”, highlighting the need for memory in transitional justice contexts (p. 97-98).

4.2. Memory Studies

Following the constructivist approach of this investigation, in tradition with Halbwachs and Ricoeur memory⁷ can be understood as positioned in a social frame and in collective narratives, and therefore is always subject to change (Jelin, 2002). Based on Ricoeur, the past is understood as certain, but with the possibility to change its meaning and interpretation, testifying memory therefore an “active sense” and making humans to “social agents” of their memory (Jelin 2002: 39). In accordance with Jelin (2002), memory can thus be understood as a dynamic phenomenon that especially following traumatic events does not follow a linear structure. This is emphasized by Haan and Destrooper (2021), who highlight a constant connection and exchange between temporalities inherent to memory (p. 212). Following the thoughts of Todorov (2000), all memory is further understood as a selection, since „preserving without choosing is not a task of memory“ (p. 16). Jelin (2002) also emphasizes the impossibility of total memory and highlights the chance for hidden collective memory on the side of national narratives (p. 29). Todorov (2000) further states the right to forget of a population affected by past atrocities; at the same time, highlighting also a duty to remember and give testimony of exceptional violences (p. 25, 58-59).

Following an interdisciplinary framework by Corredor et al. (2018a), three levels of memory should be distinguished when talking about transitional justice: personal, collective and historical memory. According to the authors, personal memories are characterized by a variety of experiences and details, that can add an emotional value to historical facts (p. 172). Historical memory on the other hand serves as the broader context, like an institutional narrative, helping to situate the personal experiences on a larger scale. Collective memory then builds a “bridge between these two levels” putting emphasis on the communal experience of socializing personal experience whilst considering sociocultural structures (p. 173),

Following Assmann (2008), such a collective memory “is a crossover between semantic and episodic memory: it has to be acquired via learning, but only through internalization and rites of participation does it create the identity of a ‘we’” (p. 52). Collective memory thus constitutes a form of created identity through a variety of symbols, creating a version of the past that “cannot be ‘remembered’; it has to be memorized” (p. 52). This is exemplified in TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE processes, that according to Chirwa (1997) can serve as “state strategies for creating collective memories” (p. 480). Based on Assmann (2008), the term of collective memory can further be seen as an “umbrella term” that entails a variety of more specific forms of memory

⁷ It should be noted that are contributions that talk about memories in plural to highlight its individual character (Aguilera Morales & González Terreros, 2019, p. 38). This investigation will stick with the name in singular, based on the majority of the canon.

like “family memory, interactive group memory, and social, political, national, and cultural memory” (p. 55).

Although acknowledging these various concepts of memory, this investigation will be based primarily on the concept of historical memory. This understanding of memory emphasizes the situatedness in a context of TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE: it contributes to an understanding of the past and opens up perspectives of future prevention (Corredor et al., 2018a). Historical memory further follows an interdisciplinary approach, consisting of building knowledge, acknowledging truth and therefore contributing to the objective of non-repetition through the recognition of the voices of all people involved who might not have been heard before (J. C. Orellano & Ibarra, 2018). Through an interrelation with personal experiences, historical memory further serves as a demand for justice and contributes to a public recognition of the truth, allowing affected people to decrease discrepancies between personal memories and the public narrative (Corredor et al., 2018a). With regards to education, historical memory thus focusses more on an understanding of current structures based on historical knowledge, rather than on transmitting concrete facts of past events and persons (J. C. Orellano & Ibarra, 2018).

Following Corredor et al. (2018a), historical memory further needs to be distinguished from history in rethinking the importance and objectivity of truth in historical accounts and events, acknowledging above all the suffering of victims. It additionally exercises the victim’s right to truth and actively works against a silencing and repetition of past atrocities, Corredor et al. even call it a “moral duty” (p. 182).

Regarding the concrete use of the concept of history, according to Orellano and Ibarra (2018) it is important to emphasize “that historical memory is located in the historiographic current Recent History, which entails that they are mutually related in their understanding” (p. 902). This concept of Recent History will be used here since it refers, as the name insinuates, to a past that is closer to the present and therefore is well suited to treat the internal armed conflict in Colombia. The concept should thus be differentiated from a traditional understanding of history and especially national history, which according to Halbwachs and Díaz (1995) acts as a summarized version of the past containing only the most important events constituting the nation and is thus “far removed from the individual”, only serving as a “very broad framework” (p. 212).

4.3. Educational Theory

As Bush and Saltarelli (2000) highlight, especially in conflict situations education has to be handled with great care. It can contribute to an overall “conflict-dampening impact” (p. 34), but there always is an inherent risk for instrumentalization and a destructive impact as well.

On a systematic level, Bush and Saltarelli (2000) emphasize the risk of an “uneven distribution of education”, that can lead to an increase of positions of privilege from a political to a social scale. Education can further be instrumentalised to promote violent and conflict-enhancing worldviews: “as a weapon in cultural repression”, “as a means of manipulating history for political purposes”, or “to diminish self-worth and encourage hate” (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000, p. 34). Denying education to specific groups can even serve as “weapon of war” (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000, p. 34), and poor educational quality can lead to distrust in the state, increased vulnerability and feelings of inferiority (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000, pp. 15–16). If implemented carefully, however, education can enhance tolerance, act against state oppression or contribute to a “disarming of history” (p. 34). The fostering of “inclusive conceptions of citizenship” (p. 34) can furthermore create a common ground for exchange of experiences, that enables constructive exchange inside the society as well as with the political level (p. 19). The authors further suggest that education can influence society as a whole since “students may carry non-confrontational and tolerant attitudes from the classroom into the broader community” (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000, p. 4).

Bush and Saltarelli (2000) name a few guiding principles for education in transitional justice contexts that go in line with the perceptions of Haan and Destrooper presented before. The authors describe memory education not as a product, but a process that is oriented at a long-term perspective relying on local expertise, resources and input. It thus is understood as a bottom-up process that is rising out of communities and therefore is oriented at the immediate context and lived realities of the people, accentuating the applicability and relevance (pp. 27, 34). Bush and Saltarelli (2000) further suggest some key objectives consisting in opening up alternatives and creating agency, delegitimizing the role of violence in conflict-resolution and fostering non-violent change and a sense of community, as well as a “demilitarization of the mind” (p. 34). It all adds up to the aim to “deconstruct structures of violence and construct structures of peace” (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000, p. vii). This goes in line with Freire (2014) who accentuates the internalization of oppression entailing an inherent struggle for humanization of the oppressed (pp. 44, 47). He thus emphasises the need for the active inclusion of victims, their experiences and perspectives in transitional justice processes:

No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption. (Freire und Macedo, 2014, p. 54)

Also in the educational field, a constructivist approach will thus constitute the base for this research. According to Jha (2012) this is characterized mainly by a less hierarchical learning, more dialogue and a shift in the teacher-student relation, making students a clear subject in

their learning process instead of an object receiving education (pp. 175-176). As the author states:

Social constructionism represents a leading edge approach to curricular practice. It permits educators and students alike to understand what is happening in themselves as minute points of the intersections of biography and history within society. (Jha, 2012, p. 177)

With this objective in mind, theoretical contributions in the tradition of social constructivism like critical pedagogy, transformative learning and situated learning further shape the fundamental understanding of educating for this investigation.

Freire's *pedagogy of the oppressed* (Freire, 2014) constitutes some basic guidelines for a participatory approach to education that is rooted in a deconstruction of hegemonial structures (p. 44). He advocates for interactive learning, where students are subjects rather than objects, and the strict dichotomy between teachers as educators and students as learners is eliminated (p. 72; 80; 81). Freire further argues for critical thinking, based on problem-posing strategies and dialogue, which in his perception acts as a means for liberation and reconciliation (p. 80; 88; 92) Freire further accentuates the inherent activeness of dialogue through the transformative nature of words.

Lave and Wenger (1991) accentuate the sociocultural aspect of learning opposed to traditional teaching, by arguing for situated learning in communities of practice. The focus on learning as a social practice in the role of legitimate peripheral participants constitutes an important perspective for the formal sector that proposes alternative and inclusive approaches, emphasizes social learning and enables a clear connection to the student's life (p. 29; 35-36; 49-50). Freire's concept of *conscientização* (Conscientization) further highlights the process of individuals to develop critical consciousness, leading subjects to perceive social injustices, feel empowered and act as responsible subjects that practice self-affirmation (p. 36).

This is accentuated also by Mezirow (2006) in his theory on transformative learning:

The two major elements of transformative learning are first, critical reflection or critical self-reflection on assumptions – critical assessment of the sources, nature and consequences of our habits of mind – and second, participating fully and freely in dialectical discourse to validate a best reflective judgement. (p. 94)

Following Mezirow (2006), transformative learning entails a critical self-reflection of assumptions and beliefs, their causes and consequences. In the frame of communicative learning, as opposed to instrumental learning⁸, students can work towards a stronger justification of beliefs

⁸ Instrumental learning is characterized mainly by being task-oriented; they are not to be distinguished completely. See Mezirow (n.d.), p. 93.

through informed discussions, ultimately gaining a sense of agency allowing them to pursue their transformed perspective (p. 94). Even if originally aimed at adult learning, studies suggest that also the educational sector can benefit greatly from transformative pedagogies by leading to behavioural change and fostering non-violence (Opere et al., 2020, p. 35).

Based on these participatory and transformative perceptions of learning, various pedagogical approaches can be distinguished that implement such objectives in conflict settings. Bush and Saltarelli (2000) for example suggest the term of peacebuilding education to address the structural and deeper causes of violence, in contrast to “rather narrow” peace education (p. 23). Based on the analysis of literature and the threefold theoretical base, this investigation is however centred in the concept of pedagogies of memory.

4.4. Key Concepts

This threefold theoretical approach acts as a larger contextualization in which the concrete case study of oral testimonies as a pedagogical tool of historical memory can be placed. Based on the literature review, some key approaches and definitions can thus be determined that will guide the empirical study.

Corredor et al. (2018a) present historical memory education to highlight a clear connection to transitional justice efforts. The authors suggest that historical memory education can link the different levels of memory, and especially “[t]he connection between the personal and the social is fundamental in guaranteeing non-repetition” (p. 183). According to the authors, historical memory education thus is superior to peace education since the latter does not include social dynamics and puts less focus on the victim’s suffering and collective emotional healing (p. 183). Following Ortega Valencia et al. (2020) pedagogies of memory further have an inherent ethical component that is present in reflections and implementation, leading them to an understanding as “pedagogy of otherness” (p. 47, 55). Their definition of such a pedagogy seems applicable to this investigation:

Thus, pedagogy is defined as an instance of ethical and political education implicated in the forms of production of subjectivities, in the processes of construction and circulation of values and in the creation of links between school and society. (Ortega Valencia et al. 2020, 55)

Keeping this in mind, the definition by Amador-Baquiro et al. (2022) further clarifies its core principles:

The pedagogy of the memory of recent time is an epistemic field whose objective is to enable students to critically read the events of socio-political violence that occurred in particular coordinates of time and space, problematized by different social actors at the present time. (p. 2)

In this context, historical memory also constitutes a concrete pedagogical tool that “allows a reflection on history teaching practices and, at the same time, on the duty that the school must fulfil in the construction of history” (J. C. Orellano & Ibarra, 2018, p. 903).

By addressing underlying issues of the armed conflict, education in historical memory can empower students by presenting a framework in which they can locate personal experiences and establish agency for changing the social realities they are confronted with (Corredor et al., 2018b, pp. 173–174). Likewise, the implementation of historical memory allows individuals to connect and transfer emotions about past events to current problems in the present, which makes it a suitable tool for pedagogical interventions in the field of memory (Cowie-Haskell, 2015). Corredor et al. (2018a) as well illuminate the twofold intent of enhancing emotions as well as knowledge of historical dynamics.

Education is understood as a key factor in promoting these objectives, as is supported by their institutionalization in the Colombian formal sector in the last years. Jelin (2002) further states that educational systems could serve especially as spaces to “dispute over memories” in the frame of transitional justice initiatives (p. 137). The core concept of agency is further understood in line with the *Caja de Herramientas* as “the many choices that people constantly make in our environments to carry on with our lives” (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2018a, p. 9). The idea of a living history present in this study further illuminates these core values of historical memory as an alternative to traditional education, that includes students’ experiences and aims for an open discussion and an involvement of emotions and active reflection in the classroom. Having in mind these normative values, the question arises of how to implement pedagogies of historical memory into the classroom, which constitutes the key question of this research:

How can oral testimonies of the armed conflict be integrated into the Colombian formal sector’s secondary education as a pedagogical tool of historical memory following the aim of ensuring non-recurrence?

The focus on testimonies arises from the various educational policies that Colombia has seen in the last decades, that found its way into the peace agreement and constitutes a valuable approach. Oral testimonies are understood as a concrete subgroup of testimonies. Based on the understanding that hearing the voice of a person and listening to their life stories generates more impact, the use and implementation of such oral testimonies will be explored. They can take different forms: Audiovisual forms of oral testimony can be present for example in documentaries, in interviews, or testimonial sequences, auditive oral testimonies can be in form of podcasts, songs or interviews. Those being the primary focus of this investigation, also live testimonies count to the sphere of oral testimonies. Jelin (2002) further introduces the term

“personal testimony” to describe the narration of people directly affected by past atrocities, serving as a source for information as well as a form of personal memory that by sharing evolves to social memory (p. 96). Such personal testimonies of life stories will thus also be included. They can take the form of close testimonies, when talking to friends and families, or be part of live interviews, panel discussions, or classroom visits, for example.

Following Jelin (2002), a possible implementation of oral testimonies into the classroom makes a thorough reflection necessary. First, it is important to revise how and why testimony is produced, since intentions differ depending on the format. Secondly, it should be considered with cautions which topics the testimony contains, and which are left out, and third, how it is used, and which impact it has. This study will focus especially on the second and third aspect of careful revision of testimonial material as well as perspectives for implementation and impact.

5. Methodology

The research is based on normative values, as it seeks to investigate ways to increase the implementation of stories of victims into existing structures, to create a living and inclusive history in the educational sector in which there is space for personal stories and experiences as well as emotions. The concrete method for the investigation at hand, however, consists of a qualitative research design with a descriptive-exploratory approach.

Semi-structured interviews conducted virtually with social science teachers in the formal secondary education sector in Colombia served as case studies in the tradition of R.E. Stake (2020) to explore the current use of oral testimonies in the classroom, with its benefits and risks, opportunities and limits. Additionally, based on teachers' needs and general conditions, conclusions could be drawn about the structural framework for a wider application of oral testimonies in the classroom. The research seeks to reflect on throughout the research process, and based on the pedagogies of memory takes an intersectional approach aiming at the goal of social change (Lafrance & Wigginton, 2019).

The research mainly focuses on a systemic level, considering the structure of the formal sector in the exploration of the practical framework for an adequate implementation of pedagogical materials including oral testimonies. Based on teachers' needs and general conditions in the implementation, the didactical realization itself will be the secondary focus.

5.1. Data Collection

Sample

The participants of the investigation consisted of 5 teachers of social sciences at public and private schools in Bogotá, who use different pedagogical tools of historical memory, preferably

including oral testimonies, in their classes with the grades eight to eleven. A focus on the locality of Bogotá aimed at a better comparison of results and facilitated the contact with teachers.

The participants were contacted through personal contacts in the university environment of the researcher and tutor with the invitation to transfer the call to acquaintances or colleagues. To aim at a larger and more diverse sample, enhancing a variety of persons, backgrounds, places and working environments, the call for participants was also spread via universities and organizations in Bogotá, but with no results. Some people were contacted directly, without any conflicts of interest prevailing. The participants were informed and gave written agreement on their voluntary participation and the possibility to revoke their consent and withdraw their contribution at any time. They were informed about the use of personal data, including recording the interview and an anonymisation of data in the analysis (See appendix A or F)⁹.

The participants can be categorized as follows and will be presented briefly:

Participants	Gender	School Form	Locality	Age	Experience
Participant 1:	Male	Private	North	40	20 years
Participant 2:	Female	Private	North	34	14 years
Participant 3:	Female	Private	South	26	6 years
Participant 4:	Female	Public	South	38	14 years
Participant 5:	Male	Public	South	39	12 years

FIGURE 1: TABLE PRESENTING THE PARTICIPANTS

Participant 1, Samuel¹⁰, is 40 years old and works in a private school in the north of Bogotá with highly privileged kids. In his professional career of 20 years, he also worked in schools in concession before moving to his current employer 2 years ago. His case is special due to the class size of only 4 students per class, allowing for very different approaches.

Participant 2, Valery, is 34 years old and also works at a private school in the north of the city mainly with ninth, but also tenth and eleventh grades. She has 14 years of experience working as a teacher, a background in human sciences and a degree in pedagogy.

Participant 3, Tamara, is 26 years old and has been working as a teacher for 6 years now. For two years, she is at her current job at a private school in the south of Bogotá, teaching the grades nine, ten and eleven. In her previous experiences, she worked also at private schools,

⁹ The format of informed consent can be found in the appendix, the signed forms are with the researcher.

¹⁰ This and all following names are pseudonyms. The author is familiar with the real full names.

one with very conflict-affected children, and one with privileged kids. She likes to implement geographical elements in her classes.

Participant 4, María, is 38 years old and works at a large public school in the South of Bogotá. In her 14 years of professional experience, she used to work in a military school for four years, which opens interesting comparisons of experiences. She used to teach in ninth grade but currently works with four classes of eighth grade.

Participant 5, Thiago, is 39 years old. He has 12 years of official professional experience but started to work in private schools four years before his graduation already and passed through many different schools and grades.

Data collection

Based on the concept of Mayring (2022), the structured content analysis method according to Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022) was used in the design and analysis of the semi-structured qualitative interviews. The semi-structured design opened up the possibility of including more unplanned topics and leaving others aside, allowing the researcher a more conversational and casual exchange than in a survey or formal interview.

The interviews were conducted within this thematic framework in Spanish language following an interview guide (See appendix B, C, G, H) based on the concept of focalized interviews by Kuckartz and Rädiker (2024).

Each participant engaged in two interviews and an introductory talk, which was offered to be combined with the first interview, would the participants have wished to. They all opted for an informal introductory talk, which helped to create a personal base, explain the key objectives of the investigation and address possible questions. As it was planned to do the two rounds of interviews at the beginning and end of the academic term between September and November 2024 in order to be able to observe a possible change during the academic term. For calendar A the interviews were planned for the fourth term, with the first round of interviews taking place in mid-October, the second in mid/late November. For calendar B it was the second term, with the first round also in mid-October, the second round in mid-December. Due to unforeseen delays in the scheduling of the interviews, only participant 1 (Samuel) could be interviewed in the beginning and end of the term. With the other participants, both interviews took place near the end of the term. With Participant 2 (Valery), the first interview had to be cut short, and it was agreed to continue the interview at another date, extending the research to 3 interviews in this case.

The online interviews were held and recorded via *zoom* to facilitate the researcher's analysis. The interviews were first transcribed using the automatic transcription of *zoom* as well as the *MAXQDA* programme. They were then revised and refined by the investigator according to the rules for analysis of focused interviews by Kuckartz and Rädiker (2024), aiming for a complete verbal transcription whilst ensuring legibility. It should be noted that the transcripts were kept in Spanish language throughout the analysis to enable the most accurate understanding and interpretation possible. The analysis thus is based on the original transcripts, with direct quotes having been translated by the author herself. For universal accessibility, the transcripts were translated with the help of AI in a last step. The direct quotes can thus differ from the English translation, since they are based on the Spanish original.

5.2. Frame of Analysis

The programme *MAXQDA* was also used for the detailed categorisation of the documented material. Before starting with the coding, summaries of some exemplary cases were made to facilitate an overview and a comparison of cases.

Following the method of Kuckartz and Rädiker (2022), categories of analysis helped to identify key points and statements, similarities and differences, to ultimately draw a conclusion on the research question. These categories were formed with a mixed deductive-inductive method. In a first step, the main categories were defined in a deductive and thematic way. Based on the analysed literature, the theoretical framework and the already formulated hypothesis, the main categories coincide with the thematic blocks of the interview guide. The first preliminary thematic categorisation thus was the following:

- Contextual information/personal background
- Recent History in the Classroom
- Structural Factors
- Pedagogies of Peace
- Pedagogies of Historical Memory
- Pedagogical Materials
- Oral testimonies
- Additional information.

The final version of the categories did not differ greatly, just the two categories of pedagogies of peace and pedagogies of historical memory were fused due to too few contributions:

Codes		2734
>	T - Trajectory	61
>	RH - Recent History in the Classroom	241
>	SF - Structural Factors in Recent History Education	680
>	PoP/PoM - Pedagogies of Peace and Memory	35
>	PM - Pedagogical Materials	393
>	OT - Oral Testimony	514

FIGURE 2: OVERVIEW OF FINAL CATEGORIES

Based on these deductive categories, a first broad categorization of the material was made separated by participant. During the process, some categories were already specified. In a following step, all segments were looked at category by category and coded inductively in detail on the material itself. The result is an extensive code structure for each of the broader categories (see appendix E) as for example here for the category of oral testimonies:

Codesystem	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	SUMME
OT - Oral Testimony						0
OT - Use						0
OT - Evaluation						0
Evaluation the Use of OT						4
Comparing Materials						19
Impact						1
Change of Perspectiv						17
Raise Awareness and						12
Non-repetition?						3
Interest, Connection,						7
Complex Reflections						5
Question oneself						2
Challenges and Limits						7
Teacher's need for re						4
Differences between						4
Navigate emotional						4
Strong Opinions						5
Risk for Teachers						3
Σ SUMME	34	32	21	7	3	97

FIGURE 3: EXEMPLARY CODE STRUCTURE

These inductive coding rounds of the transcribed material served as a base for the written analysis, which is thus oriented along the thematical categories, aiming primarily at summarizing the key aspects, similarities and differences between participant's contributions. The focus during the analysis is explicitly thematical, aiming at displaying the participants' experiences in the classroom. Their personal and academic trajectories thus are more of a background information, that was included when deemed necessary to understand the broader context.

5.3. Ethical Considerations

There is a certain personal bias in this investigation: I am a student of the binational master's program of conflict, memory and peace, I identify as a woman, I am white and grew up in the Global North. There are differences in the way I was raised, my experiences of education, in a country with a conflictive past but a peaceful present, and my experiences with memory and dealing with the past, in comparison to the participants and research topic. My situation automatically brings a certain international perspective to the research; but there are certain limitations to the impact and insight that an "outsider" can have. Even if in-depth and informative interviews are conducted, cultural and historical aspects can never be fully captured. But through a sensitive approach to interviewing in content and conduct, where I intend to consider learnings from feminist and decolonial studies, such conflicts could be limited to a minimum.

There also is a certain power asymmetry since I will be the sole researcher for this master's thesis. To decrease this asymmetry, I will provide the transcriptions and summaries of the interviews for the participants to review and comment before taking them into account for the analysis, if they stated to wish a revision in the formal consent form. I intended to involve the participants in the process with this feedback loop of sharing findings, by keeping them informed during the process, and providing them with a digital translation of the final version. This also aims at avoiding academic censure.

Additionally, the digital format of the investigation reduces the personal and informal exchange with the participants, and some interesting and important aspects might get lost due to the distance. The chosen format might cause discomfort at the same time, as the personal level is not so easily transmitted through digital channels. To mitigate this discomfort, there will be an introductory talk with each participant where the project and the objectives will be explained. Participants will have time to get to know me and there will be room for questions. These introductory talks all took place in a separate session before the interviews that was not recorded. To enhance confidentiality and continuity, following the informal talk, there were at least two recorded interviews with each participant.

The digital format also has a minimizing influence on the personal risks during the investigation. I am aware that educators in Colombia's conflictive environment are putting themselves at risk every day in order to teach peace in the region. In a joint communiqué, the Colombian Federation of Education Workers denounce that "they have been repeatedly attacked by actors and political parties of the extreme right", due to "a violent discourse that ends up justifying extreme actions against critical thinking that have led to the murder of teachers in different regions of the country" (FECODE, 2020). Teachers are therefore a vulnerable population at risk, which

implies the need to aspire to safe and protected interviews. In addition, some individuals may belong to other vulnerable groups, creating a multidimensional concern.

Due to the digital format, the risk for participants nevertheless was on a low level. Since the interviews were conducted virtually, it will not be necessary to travel to other locations that could cause discomfort in the choice of space or in the journey to get to this location and participants can choose a space in which they feel comfortable and secure. To make the virtual space as safe as possible, I aimed to create a friendly atmosphere by introducing myself and referring to the informed consent form. It emphasises the possibility for participants to refuse answers, request breaks, interrupt or end the interview at any time. There was space to address the issue of dealing with violent experiences in the educational space, but the interviewer refrained from asking direct questions about personal experiences of conflict as it is not central to the analysis, in order to avoid addressing issues that are painful for the participants. If they want to broach the subject, the interviewer aimed to guide the conversation as sensitively as possible.

All data used in the project was strictly anonymised and only used with the prior permission of the participants. The right was reserved to make exceptions in the case of explicit written consent of some interviewees, but with the possibility to revoke consent at any time until the project is delivered. To provide context, very general information on the participants was given, i.e. private/public school, area/region, age. If the participant does not feel safe with the use of these personal contexts, they would be completely anonymised. In order to minimise the possibility of making participants identifiable, places of life and names of schools will not be named in any case. All personal data was only be part of the internal documentation and was saved securely on my personal hard drive.

The informed consent was taken in written form and sent via e-mail. It informs about the anonymisation and use of data and takes consent for the use of voice/image and use of data (content of the interview, personal context). The international data transfer (Colombia-Germany) will take place securely and with the explicit and unambiguous consent of the participants in accordance with the Law 1581 on the protection of personal data (Ley Estatuaría 1581 de 2012; 2012) using the institutional drive. Contact information as well as participation requirements were sent only once by mail; for this purpose, the institutional mail was used, the information was saved afterwards only on my personal institutional drive. Personal information was kept to a minimum (name, age, school, contact details). If people feel more comfortable, this personal data could also be shared orally in a chat using the institutional *zoom*, but they all gave written consent.

This change of perspective and realities seems to be a driving factor, as Thiago states: “I implicitly thought that social science allowed one to identify and transform reality” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 5). He further accentuates the chance of social mobilization through education (Thiago - E1, Pos. 29).

Some of the participants always knew they wanted to be teachers, as for example Valery, who always has an inclination for social sciences (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 25), or Thiago, who discovered his interest for social sciences in secondary school (Thiago - E1, Pos. 5). Tamara as well stated: “I feel that ever since I was a little girl, I (.) felt inclined to be a teacher” (Tamara - E1, Pos. 11). Others landed in the field of teaching social sciences a bit later, as for example María who started with medical studies before switching to humanities: “I don't think I ever, I was not sure what I wanted to be” (María - E1, Pos. 5).

The participants also display various academic and professional trajectories, with many having worked both at private and public institutions throughout their career, with all grades from primary to secondary school. The schools they are currently working at also differ, especially with regards to the treatment of recent history in the classroom. Most participants state to follow the guidelines of the ministry of education and address the Colombian recent history in 9th grade (María - E1, Pos. 13-14; Tamara - E1, Pos. 29; Thiago - E1, Pos. 46). As Valery explains: “ninth is like a historical journey (.) through all the dynamics (.) of the country” (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 53). María further comments that she perceives the 9th grade to be a good age to talk about the armed conflict, since the students are old enough to discuss it “from the harshness that, that was the, the situation” (María - E1, Pos. 16). Samuel on the other hand integrates the topic of the armed conflict more deeply in 11th grade, which for him seems to be more effective: students have more background knowledge, are more curious and complex topics can be approached more honestly than in lower grades (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 23).

On a more theoretical base, the participants have some interesting contributions to the understanding and use of the core terminology of recent history, historical memory and pedagogies of memory that shape their pedagogical practice. Tamara highlights her understanding of historical memory with its inherent role to contribute to change by opening up opportunities and enhance agency in the aim for non-recurrence (Tamara - E2, Pos. 4). Historical memory thus has “a very important role to play” in education— highlighting the overall “importance of memory being a function of the victims and of memory also serving as an element to recognise the past and to deal with the present to some degree” (Tamara - E2, Pos. 3). She further proposes a definition of pedagogies of memory as “the way we use (.) remembrance”, accentuating its constant perspective to the present that opens up the possibility of non-recurrence (Tamara -

E1, Pos. 80). Samuel further emphasizes the crucial duty of education in these processes of memory:

We are not only left with this traditional history, right, but with everything that is happening at the moment, right, everything that has been happening in Colombia, specifically from the 1980s to the present (.) and that in some way it is important to take it into account in order to generate these processes of reparation and non-repetition above all. (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 32)

Thiago further stresses the importance of educators: “we pedagogues are remembering history, we are chronicling (...) what is happening” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 42). In the frame of the recent past, Valery clarifies that she understands it “in terms of a past that we continue to nurture and build in a different way” (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 51). This constructivist perspective is also reflected in a contribution by Thiago: “when you do recent history (.) eh, in theory you are getting closer to the, to the interpretation of one of the great evils or traces that determine why we are the way we are” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 34).

In the pedagogical practice, María further mentions how pedagogies of memory should always be thought together with pedagogies of peace. She highlights the need to contextualize history education to the different contexts, as in many regions children are still living with the conflict every day. She thus states the need to implement pedagogies of memory to create a common ground and knowledge on past and present violences, to then work together for peace (María - E1, Pos. 74).

6.2. Structural Factors of Recent History in the Classroom

Before diving in to concrete pedagogical experiences of the interviewed teachers, it is considered helpful to get an overview of the structural challenges that are most pressing in the educational sector in Colombia according to the participants. They are therefore nowhere close to complete, and present only a brief insight into the everyday struggles that educators have to cope with when approaching historical memory in the classroom. They reach from challenges on a societal level to school level and concrete structural challenges in the classroom, which served as codes in the preparation of the data. But since they are all intertwined, the analysis will follow a thematical logic here.

6.2.1. Conflict and Violence

Conflict persistent in the present

According to Valery, even though the conflict changed throughout the last decades and the actors are different now than they were in the 1980's (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 51), she states that “in the classroom we can't let the children believe that this is from the past. Because, because no, (laughter) because we would be lying” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 23-24). Supporting this, Thiago

mentioned how the core of the conflict is not changing but how the same atrocities are happening all over again, which accentuates the need for pedagogies of memory (Thiago - E2, Pos. 14). Tamara also states that there is a consensus in society until today that there is no way of resolving the conflict peacefully (Tamara - E1, Pos. 73). One of the reasons certainly is the continuity of the armed conflict in many regions, with many people affected also in Bogota, for example by displacement (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 28).

A crucial point mentioned several times by all participants are the differences between living and teaching in Bogotá in comparison to territories that are still affected by conflict. Teaching in Bogotá is seen as an “advantage and huge privilege” (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 35), as “a bubble that allows one (.) almost in its full dimension (..) to question, criticize, teach, address these issues” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 44). In conflict-affected territories however, the situation is different, as María for example mentions difficulties in the Cauca or Chocó region, where restrictions are still prevailing due to the presence of armed groups (María - E2, Pos. 21). Tamara also mentions the issue of armed strikes in the case of the Chocó, where some students have school only once a month (Tamara - E1, Pos. 76).

Especially teachers are highly affected in their day-to-day work and have to be extremely cautious. As Valery states, “in the region, there is still a presence of armed groups, and there are things you can say, and there are things you can't say because they can kill you” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 34). Many educators therefore live with fear of repressions or death, due to armed groups applying pressure (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 45). As Samuel states, there are already many cases of teachers who were displaced or assassinated for resisting the armed authorities in their area (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 35) – in the words of Thiago: “And in the region it is much more difficult, right? [...] Because what is at risk, well, it is your life, right?” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 44).

Adding to these already hard realities, also many students experience affection of the armed conflict – either themselves, in their families or their environment, especially of displacement (Samuel - E2, Pos. 83). On the one hand, this “allows many entries” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 46) into the topic, as Thiago states, and also Tamara had an experience where students liked the topic of the conflict since they could relate to it (Tamara - E1, Pos. 12). On the other hand, affection makes it much more difficult to treat the recent past in class with the needed sensitivity. Additionally, one can never know how students might be affected until specific topics are raised, as happened to Valery with a student who had just had plastic surgery when they discussed the topic of change in aesthetic through narco-culture (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 19). Another aspect is the strong presence of violence in their lives (Thiago - E1, Pos. 42), and many students outside of Bogota still live the conflict daily (María - E1, Pos. 74). María also shares an experience of a former student whose father was facing accusations for war-crimes in the

military, which of course made an objective discussion of the conflict very difficult (María - E1, Pos. 66). As Thiago states: “there are situations of the contexts and of the students (...) that are so heavy (...) in other words, they are living the conflict and the war in themselves and (...) and the tensions (...) in their territory” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 42).

Culture of violence

One of the main challenges that is named by most participants is a certain culture of violence that has persisted in Colombia throughout the decades until today. Valery for example laments a “harshness (.) of the country” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 21) with “a completely violent society that has learned very strong patterns (.) of violence (.) where the other is seen as an enemy that I can trample on” (Valery – E1.2, Pos. 71). María mentions structural violence (María - E2, Pos. 4), that also Thiago sees as a problem, in explaining that actors of violence in Colombia derive from historical processes of over a century, including insurgent movements, imperialist logics, and semi-feudal economy, leading to appropriation of rural, fertile territories (Thiago - E1, Pos. 46). Valery frames this structural violence as a “normalization of the war” (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 60), with society being so used to violence in many forms in their daily lives that there is no strong reaction to it anymore (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 3). Samuel also laments this normalization of violence and states that especially sexualised and domestic violence are widely accepted: “everything becomes normal, and it is part of life, since we are here and we survive” (Samuel - E2, Pos. 92).

Minimal agreements

Thiago mentions the difficulty of reaching compromise in Colombia – he even speaks of a “social contract that is fractured in Colombia as a consequence (.) of the war, (E: Yes) of the violence, of the internal armed conflict” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 33). To rebuild this, he suggests that it might be an option to gain some clarities over the conflict and reach some basic agreements of certain events of the armed conflict. Valery makes demands in the same direction, as she states several times that there should be some minimal agreements of what happened to further discuss the conflict in society and the educational sector (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 78). Those minimums could help to counter narratives that are going against historical facts, and a discussion could erupt that is based on a humanitarian approach: “a minimum is how we have, since independence, built a society based on violence where there is an otherness that is eliminated” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 78). More suggestions for necessary minimums are the understanding that “people suffered (.) (E: Yes), people died, (.) there are people missing” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 82), and a minimal agreement on how the Colombian society wants to rebuild (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 74). It is however a challenge to establish such minimums whilst the conflict is not yet in the past and therefore difficult to obtain some sort of closure (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 49)

– as compared to countries with a conflictive past like Germany where some basic facts are undisputed (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 63).

5.2.2. Truth and Narrative

Another topic mentioned by most of the participants is the issue of conflicting narratives and truths. Following the argumentation of Valery, single narratives lead to polarization (Valery – E.1.2, Pos. 81) – a current issue in Colombia that was highlighted with the clearly divided results of the peace agreement (Samuel - E2, Pos. 49). According to Samuel, the current political sphere is “complicated” (Samuel - E2, Pos. 51), with one aspect being that the opposition was historically never respected, which resulted in also being a driving factor for the conflict (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 23). Valery states that the polarization can be seen also in the society, where most people assume radical positions regarding the conflict – which makes it more difficult to reach compromises (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 34).

Legitimize and negate

Valery states that many people tend to legitimize forms of violence committed by actors that they can relate to or understand in some form (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 81). This can also be seen in the classroom, when students justify violences or see it as adequate way to end the conflict. Samuel for example states that some of his students justify paramilitarism and defend Pablo Escobar (Samuel - E2, Pos. 40). Some even seem to strongly negate facts, as Thiago gives an example of right-wing senators denying the disappearance of adolescents and peasants by the military, as was also the case recently in relation to a military operation in the *Comuna 13*, a neighbourhood in Medellin (María - E2, Pos. 3).

An issue that only Thiago mentioned is the question of forgetting when talking about structural factors. In his statements he points out the complexity of the topic: on one hand, it can be important to forget to not continue in a spiral of violence and vengeance (Thiago - E2, Pos. 10), on the other hand he raises the question how it could be possible to forget with all that is still happening , concluding that he doesn't see it as an option right now: “I precisely do not see it because the prospects for (.) for Colombia are still quite (.) quite grey, you know?” (Thiago - E2, Pos. 12).

Another issue only mentioned by one Participant, Valery, is the risk of voices being silenced when specific narratives are being prioritized – by the government, educational institutions or the teachers themselves (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 78). She gives an example that it is quite common in her school to find students with limited knowledge of the conflict's actors, only being able to name the guerilla since there is widespread silence about other actors (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 47). Her conclusion therefore is “that this totalization of a single narrative and a single truth (..) always implies the silence (.) of others (..)” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 84). She accentuates that

especially the topic of a single truth has a dividing tendency, since people will always dispute the rightfulness of it (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 82): “I think it would be very harmful to have just one narrative (...) I mean, I think this country has been so diverse, the violence has been so diverse, that to monopolize just one single (...) truth, well, that is a field of unfinished tension” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 78).

Student’s backgrounds

These issues of a single narrative prevailing over others can also be observed in students. Samuel for example states that students’ beliefs are “in many cases learned” (Samuel - E2, Pos. 40) and that “they often end up reproducing the discourses of their families, the discourses of their political leaders” (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 13). He further argues that the impact one can have in 4 hours a week compared to a whole social life is minimal and more like a constant effort to “open the window so that they can look over here and see that there are other things besides their life” (Samuel - E2, Pos. 38).

Tamara also says that she has some students who show a very small amount of sensitivity. Additionally, some tend to be discriminatory or racist (Tamara - E1, Pos. 46), some deny the existence of false positives or the peace agreements, and some are very homophobic (Tamara - E1, Pos. 54). Overall, an experience that Samuel shares, with students who show a high level of prejudice (Samuel - E2, Pos. 3), homophobia (Samuel - E2, Pos. 32) and classism (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 9). These experiences tend to be linked to higher classes of privilege, whereas working with lower classes naturally presents another sort of realities. Samuel used to work at a school where there “were gangsters, it had drug dealers, it had muggers” (E2, Pos. 83), and Thiago lists “problems of consumption, violence, neglect, a lot of tenacious things” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 15). Tamara further states that there are students “who do not live with both parents, they have very dysfunctional families, they have violence at home, (.) eh, they spend a lot of time alone, so they have too much access to social media” (Tamara - E1, Pos. 73), and Thiago as well states that many students consume drugs. These conflicting realities illustrate the political polarization of the country, which makes it even more important to always adapt to the context, as also Valery states (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 48).

Narratives in school

Especially due to these diverse structural challenges, according to Thiago, working on the conflict and the topic of memory in class always is a “space of disputes” (Thiago - E2, Pos. 41), or in the words of Valery: “Of course, being a social sciences teacher means being (.) in the eye of the hurricane all the time” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 35) – and therefore is a “political statement” (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 26) and “complex task” (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 48). María too agrees that “it is a matter of political will” (María - E2, Pos. 16). For this reason, Valery states

that it is understandable if colleagues decide to not treat these topics in depth and prefer to avoid them or address them superficially (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 34) - for reasons of fear, out of laziness, institutional reasons or sheer avoidance of critical discussions (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 51). It becomes difficult though when some teachers start to stop their colleagues out of fear to having to follow in their example of teaching, which according to Samuel is not that uncommon (Samuel - E2, Pos. 94).

Many times, there is an institutional censorship, as can be seen for example in the case of Thiago. Since he has passed through many different schools, Thiago recounts very diverse experiences: a time in a catholic school with “permanent surveillance and control” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 15), a time at a public school where the rector had him take down some caricatures that the students made concerning the conflict (Thiago - E1, Pos. 23), or private schools where “there was always censorship for many topics, for say, debating or discussing or questioning, or talking about sexual diversity” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 23). He does state though that in the religious schools he worked, at least politically, there was an open debate. Tamara also used to work in a quite prestigious private school where she “couldn't talk about any of these issues, it was completely refused” (Tamara - E1, Pos. 13).

María has some further interesting insight to contribute from the time she worked at the military school. She states that she had to be very careful with what she said, and that especially topics related to the armed conflict were barely treated in class since there was a permit needed from the rector. Raising the topic of false positives was “impossible” (María - E1, Pos. 29) if one didn't want to put their job at risk, as well as criticising the military (María - E1, Pos. 62) or talking about their collaboration with paramilitaries (María - E1, Pos. 64). As María states: “You couldn't make jokes or comments there, or how are we going to bring in a demobilised person, no, that would have been a scandal, they would have thrown you out in a second” (María - E1, Pos. 68).

It is interesting to see that indeed mostly the participants working at private schools reported experiences of censorship. As Thiago states accordingly: “there is much more surveillance and much more control and much more punishment (.) eh, much more censorship, ehm (...) in the private sector, right? There is more (E: Mhm) (...) more coercion, right?” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 20). However, he states that it is important to separate between the private sector for the elite and for the working class (Thiago - E1, Pos. 20). Supporting this general claim, María states that she “feel[s] that in the public sector there is not much censorship” (María - E1, Pos. 32) and that her school is very open with discussion topics (María - E1, Pos. 34). Comparing it to her experience in the military school, she states that “of course, you can say openly here that there were paramilitaries, that they worked together with the army. I say that here and nothing

happens” (María - E1, Pos. 64). Thiago also accentuates that in his current public school he is experiencing academic freedom (Thiago - E2, Pos. 31), and Samuel refers to friends who report much more liberty in the public sector (Samuel - E2, Pos. 83). But the cases of Samuel and Valery show that it does in fact depend on the concrete schools and environment: Both state that in their current workplace they experience no resistance to treat topics of the armed conflict from an institutional level and the schools’ directive (Samuel - E2, Pos. 81; Valery - E1.1, Pos. 37), even though they are working in the private sector in an environment of privilege.

The censorship however also can be due to a strong influence by families. As Tamara states, even if she has full liberty in her school, she knows many colleagues who are afraid to speak their opinions in private schools, who “fear that if the parents don't like a topic (.) they can get you fired” (Tamara - E1, Pos. 73). She concludes that in the end, since they are financing their kids’ education, the parents get to decide on all matters they wish, whether it is a form of evaluation or a specific a method used (Tamara - E1, Pos. 78). Samuel contributes on this matter with a quite illustrating example of a conflict he experienced at his private school: A student, the daughter of a politician, accused him of political indoctrination whereupon the parents demanded to review materials before he could use them in class (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 33). By now, he has gained liberty and respect for the methods and resources he is implementing (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 31), but also states that depending on his student’s background, he would feel the need to censor himself to avoid problems (Samuel - E2, Pos. 60). Tamara states that also at the military school, the student’s family history is a main reason for avoiding certain topics (María - E1, Pos. 64) and Valery also mentions that according to the student’s family background, an adaptation of materials and topics is often necessary to avoid repercussions (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 18). Valery contributes to the topic with an experience of a field trip to an exhibition, that was almost cancelled last minute due to complaints that they were imposing a narrative on the students, accusing the teacher of being a *guerillera* for proposing it (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 35). The school still allowed the field trip, but for Tamara it was a difficult experience: “The negative connotation of being labelled a guerrilla, (E: Mmh) (communist?) or leftist in a country like Colombia, that is (...) This connotation is very complex, it is very hard” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 36).

One more critical aspect pointed out is the question of biases: Whilst María points out a chance of institutional biases allowing that “there are truths and there are possibilities that are said more than others” (María - E2, Pos. 6), Valery states that teachers also need to reflect on their own biases while working on the topic of recent history. Otherwise, there is again a risk of reproducing some narratives over others (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 32) or silencing deviating opinions (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 10).

5.2.3. Educational System

The participants face different challenges on school level that present a wide variation depending on the cases. The first hypothesis (and widely spread prejudice) would be that private schools are better equipped and public schools less, but that the freedom in public schools is greater than in private schools, where the pressure from institutional level is bigger.

The following part will therefore aim at distinguishing between experiences in the private and public sector. Samuel, Valery and Tamara are mainly contributing with a private perspective, but with some experience of Samuel in a school in concession¹¹. María and Thiago are mainly contributing with experiences in the public sector, but with both having some insight to the private sector as well and with María sharing experiences from a military school.

Valery explains, Valery laments that even if there is a principle of academic freedom in Colombia in theory, through its link to standardized exams by the state the orientation soon becomes a prerequisite for success (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 42). Additionally, the state curricula rarely suggest pedagogical resources but are more strongly oriented towards topics and competencies (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 45) – which represents the competitive and productive aim of the educational sector. But, as Tamara mentions, these standardized exams at least implement the topic of post-conflict including questions about transitional justice and construction of peace in Colombia (Tamara - E2, Pos. 18). Samuel further states that the academic freedom also transcends into the classroom, since there is a certain degree of teacher's autonomy in implementing the syllabus (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 25). But as Valery states: "Let's say that there is a regulation, but that, well, that, well, precisely that academic freedom is mediated by a lot of things, the parents, the institutions, the location of the school, the type of school, well, the particular needs of the children, right?" (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 48).

Having in mind these circumstances and challenges, it is understandable that participants lament the competitiveness of the educational system: Tamara for example criticises the comparison of student's performance based on their overall averages, without taking into account any of the structural challenges, let alone the student's individual needs – a trend that she perceives also with the parents of her students, who seem to be content as long as their kids have good grades (Tamara - E1, Pos. 76). Samuel also laments the focus on productivity and the objective for students to be competitive and develop competencies. Due to a very high workload at his school, there have even been complaints that "many times the student is dehumanised" (Samuel - E2, Pos. 42). This goes hand in hand with a certain traditionality of the educational system. As Tamara states, many colleagues still tend to implement punishment as a method

¹¹ Explain – private or public? Bit of both...

in education, without regard for behavioural issues that students might show due to problems at home (Tamara - E1, Pos. 73). Samuel as well says that punishment is a widely used method in his environment (Samuel - E2, Pos. 62), and that he sees it in the responsibility of teachers to opt for a modification of these traditional structures, which consists of a constant process (Samuel - E2, Pos. 44). Valery also believes that “the big problem in Colombia is that we continue to think in that classical school” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 73) – but that in her perception, many new teachers intend to fight for a better education.

Besides the teachers, according to Tamara also students seem to be stuck in the traditional system. In her experience, they are also used to prioritize natural sciences over social sciences and to work hard for good grades: “so sometimes classes tend to fall into a behaviourism that I think is already a structural problem (.) and it does not give enough autonomy to the children yet” (Tamara - E1, Pos. 72).

A main challenge according to Tamara therefore is also a better education of teachers, so that they are able to guide students into active and open discussion where their own individuality is in focus (María - E2, Pos. 4). Samuel also pleads for a revision of the curricula in university education, since at least in the university where he got his degree, the syllabus did not change in the last 20 years: “We continue with the same theoretical bases, with the same authors from a long time ago” (Samuel - E2, Pos. 44).

Another challenge that was mentioned by many is a very ambitious curriculum in social sciences – but interestingly, only by the participants working in private schools it was mentioned explicitly as an issue. Tamara states that she believes it to be “a structural failure on the part of the Ministry of Education, which is that the curricula deal with too many subjects for the amount of time available” and that “the Ministry proposes more standards than one actually manages to meet” (Tamara - E1, Pos. 70). She concludes that there consequently is a lack in the quality of the education one can give, since there is a need for a superficial run-through of the topics to prepare students for final exams – which leads back to the problem of the competitiveness of the system (Tamara - E1, Pos. 71). Samuel further states that time is a very sensitive issue, and teachers therefore have to “optimise time to a great extent” (Samuel - E2, Pos. 16). This is why in his school, both teachers and students have to work outside of school to prepare classes (Samuel - E2, Pos. 16; 82). Another approach is presented by Valery, whose school is pursuing a policy of not giving homework since students already spend their whole day at school (Valery - E2, Pos. 81). To still be able to comply with the curriculum, they have 8 hours of class a week, which is a lot in comparison to other schools, where 4 or 2 hours a week are more common (Valery - E2, Pos. 71). Tamara for example mentions that she has only one unit of 100 minutes a week with her students (Tamara - E1, Pos. 70).

School's infrastructure

The participants all report on infrastructural issues, highlighting the importance of the topic for their work in the classroom.

The first topic widely mentioned is the issue of resources. Thiago reports that in the public sector “everything has to be done with your fingernails [...]. Everything has to be mobilised, managed from below, resisted” (Thiago - E2, Pos. 41), and that it is common for teachers to adapt to the resources they encounter or manage to organize. María states that even if the school was well equipped in the beginning, materials deteriorated over time and a majority of rooms are without necessary equipment for audiovisual material at the moment. She and other teachers therefore have to provide basic resources such as colours and glue, and due to lack of state support she tends to print school materials with her personal printer at home (María - E1, Pos. 38). But Tamara, who is working at a private school, is also facing challenges regarding the equipment: there is only one room with a computer or TV that has to be booked separately, which highly impedes the use of audiovisual material in the classroom (Tamara - E1, Pos. 32). Valery reports a quite contrary experience: the private school where she works is “impressive. It looks like a university” (Valery - E2, Pos. 89), with a wide array of equipment: “There is no limitation (l: laughs) Neither in books nor in money” (Valery - E2, Pos. 89). They additionally use a virtual platform where students can access resources and class materials (Valery - E2, Pos. 83) whereas María mentions that it is not a given that their students have a computer at home, but that the majority has a phone with data that can be used for research purposes in the classroom (María - E1, Pos. 42).

Plus, the size of classes is a factor: In the public sector, María is teaching in classes with about 40 students (María - E1, Pos. 36), in the private sector Valery is working with classes of 20 students. Samuel compares his time in concession with up to 57 students to the private school now, where he is teaching groups between 2 and 4 students, concluding that “there are some very strong differences” in the didactical approach (Samuel - E2, Pos. 75; 82). There is a slight tendency to bigger classes in the public cases, but Thiago and Tamara did not refer to their class sizes so that a conclusion is difficult.

“New” challenges

The participants also state some “new” challenges that they face disregarding the polarization and conflictive situation. Three participants mentioned difficulties with the use of artificial intelligence by students: Tamara states that students tend to summarise everything, even movies (Tamara - E1, Pos. 35), and Samuel fears that students will not be able to participate in class since they don't engage with the resources themselves anymore (Samuel - E2, Pos. 4). Valery

on the other hand likes to see it more as a resource that could be used (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 45).

Another challenge is the audiovisuality of the young generations, which makes it harder to focus on traditional materials. Since “we live in the universe of screens” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 53), students now “need a lot of visual stimulation” (Tamara - E1, Pos. 37) – and, as Tamara surprisingly states, the older student more than the younger ones, if you want their attention away from their phones (Tamara - E1, Pos. 39). Tamara also mentions a driving factor for this phenomenon – due to the pandemic, she perceives that many of her students have problems reading or even a “reading gap” (Tamara - E1, Pos. 33).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it currently mainly remains in the hands of committed teachers how intensely the topics of memory and dealing with the past are treated in class and which concrete resources are used (María - E2, Pos. 6). But there are some positive conclusions as well: Many participants state that in their schools, different initiatives of peace are implemented: Valery mentions the day of memory (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 54) and María the week for peace (María - E1, Pos. 25). Tamara further mentions a “co-living committee” (Tamara - E1, Pos. 23), Thiago the day for victims of the conflict (Thiago - E2, Pos. 29).

Valery states that school is an essential space for reconciliation and formation of conscious citizens, since most students spend the majority of their time in schools: “And that makes the leading role of the school in the life of the new generations very strong” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 70-71). She considers it to be an important space to open new possibilities for children that can also influence values and principles (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 72). Samuel further evaluates it as purely democratic exercise that the classroom remains an open space for discussion and opinions without judgement (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 12-13). Valery also emphasizes the importance of allowing diverse debates and narratives in the classroom, to avoid imposing a single perspective. She further stresses the need for schools to be a space for reconstruction and reconciliation, without silencing unwanted voices or privileging certain narratives over others (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 10). Tamara however states that there is a difficulty for teachers to navigate these discussions sometimes whilst keeping objectivity (Tamara - E1, Pos. 56).

Samuel further states that many students feel free and secure enough to share personal experiences, which allows him to approach conceptual topics from a way more practical perspective. (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 40-41). Tamara recounts similar experiences and talks of open and critical debates in her classroom, with a high level of tolerance by the students (Tamara - E1, Pos. 51). Valery often also encourages her students to share their personal and family’s stories

in class (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 26). Tamara further states that she deems education to be fundamental in the fight against unilateral and recreated narratives (Tamara - E2, Pos. 6).

6.3. Pedagogical Materials

Diving into the use of concrete pedagogical materials in the classroom, the following pages will illustrate some perspectives from the participants. A first look will be taken on the selection of materials, to then explain their implementation in class by the participants followed by their evaluation. The resource of oral testimonies will be topic in the following section; however, it should be noted that the distinction whether or not a resource counts as oral testimony is not always clear. It is therefore important to first get a general overview for a better understanding of the differences of oral testimonies as such and their implementation in class.

6.3.1. Selection / Curatorship

The participants all name a variety of resources that they use in their daily work in class. Thiago for example mentions that there is a large variety of materials one can choose from (Thiago - E1, Pos. 51) and also Valery states:

well, you're going to find, I don't know, all the material you want. You will find (.) audio-visual materials, you will find films, you will find podcasts, you will find songs, you will find (.) newspapers, you will find (.) stories, fanzines, in other words, the amount of educational material, exhibitions, for example, is enormous. So, I think that there is an enormous variety of pedagogical material on the subject, that is to say, by pedagogical material, it is not that the subject does not reach the classroom“ (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 58).

As for the preferences amongst all these materials, Valery mentions that she and her colleagues mainly used resources from the *Banco de la Republica*, the Channel *Institucional* or the *Centro de Memoria* (Valery - E2, Pos. 93). Tamara also likes to work with the pedagogical materials from the Truth Commission, as well as with materials from the *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* (Tamara - E1, Pos. 32). She further mentions a Youtube channel called *info animados* (Tamara - E1, Pos. 37) and the website *Maguaré* by the Ministry of Education to work on the topic of cultural diversity (Tamara - E1, Pos. 88). Thiago also names the CNMH and the CMPR as sources, and states that he likes to use further resources from other academic institutions not specifically named. Agreeing with Valery he states that “there are a lot of things. And the day that (E: Yes) you want to work, then you look for them” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 50). María too likes to use the CEV as a source, but in contrast to the others did not work with the pedagogical material so far but more with the reports themselves (María - E1, Pos. 44).

The selection of which of these various resources will be used depends on different factors. María states the need for revision and preparation of materials (María - E1, Pos. 46), as does

Valery, stating that there are some risks involved when the material is not well prepared and that there might arise more confusion (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 63). Valery further states that the curative process of the materials to be used in class ultimately results in a political decision by the teacher of what to bring to implement and what to leave out, highlighting the need to be aware of personal biases to not transfer them into the classroom (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 21). Thiago points out that also the material itself should always be analysed critically, "Because one knows that there are also intentions there, right?" (Thiago - E1, Pos. 50), concluding that the source of the material plays a crucial role and that one should be aware of specific narratives of the relevant institutions (Thiago - E1, Pos. 51).

Closely related is the importance of a certain quality of the material (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 62). Tamara gives an example of the materials from the CEV which according to her are developed according to the concrete needs and situations in Colombian classrooms and are therefore very helpful, since they are "short, dynamic, very colourful, there are comics, cartoons, series, songs, audios, it's very nice" (Tamara - E1, Pos. 88), concluding that it is an advantage when materials are developed by pedagogues (Tamara - E1, Pos. 86).

Thiago further lists some attributes for a good material: it should be clear to understand and have a concrete line of thought and objective (Thiago - E2, Pos. 6). Additionally, they should reflect the realities of the country in a very honest way to motivate the students to engage (Thiago - E2, Pos. 6). Tamara offers a similar opinion in stating that "with [the students] you have to try to use things from real life, (.) a lot of examples, be very practical and try to handle it that way (...)" (Tamara - E1, Pos. 60), and Samuel also highlights the need for materials to be adapted to changing realities (Samuel - E2, Pos. 66). Nevertheless, Valery states that with all the brutality of the conflict, there has to be a balance between honesty in displaying the conflict and the reproduction of violence. Teachers thus need to be very cautious in selecting materials dealing with of some form of violence (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 21), as Valery states that "one has to be careful (..) what things one can suddenly awake with a material that is not so well selected (..)" (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 60).

Also, the structural factors of course play a role, which were already discussed at lengths, but should be mentioned shortly in this context. Thiago for example states how in his school with many infrastructural impediments, "the teachers normally work around that" – so also the materials have to be adapted to the circumstances" (Thiago - E2, Pos. 41). Samuel states that it always is "a question of organizing things" (Samuel - E2, Pos. 92) and Tamara highlights that the issue of scarce time also applies for preparation and selection of resources (Tamara - E1, Pos. 88).

On the student side, it is furthermore important to adapt materials to the group's abilities and capacities as Valery states (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 59), depending on their way to learn and the success of certain materials (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 62). Samuel also declares that materials depend on the predisposition of the students and should be selected accordingly (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 34), also with the goal of effectiveness and motivation (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 41). Thiago points out that of course the age is also relevant, and that in the case of the conflict the older classes allow him to apply more honest and heavy materials (Thiago - E2, Pos. 29). Tamara highlights that "you don't work in all classes in the same way neither do the same materials serve you, no matter how hard you try" (Tamara - E1, Pos. 46).

Regarding the material of lectures for example, Samuel states that their efficacy in the classroom highly depends on the predisposition of the students: "when you have students who (.) rarely or not at all read and who often make little sense of what is written, then it can be a limited resource" (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 34). If you have students who like to read, on the other hand, it can be an interesting and impacting material (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 41). Valery argues in a similar direction by stating that her students are "good at reading and doing analysis and research" (Valery - E2, Pos. 105), and that they like it. She even reads parts of books with her students, as for example *Una nación a pesar de sí misma* by David Bushnal (Valery - E2, Pos. 97). Samuel too mentions a book that he likes, *Ahí les dejo esos fierros* by Alfredo Molano (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 40), but that he evaluates more useful for the university context. Some other texts that he does like to implement in class are for example *Todos tenemos la llave* by William Ospina when talking about citizenship (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 26), written stories of the conflict (Samuel - E2, Pos. 36) or a poetry by victims of the conflict (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 34).

Tamara on the other hands states that her students have many difficulties reading, which impedes the use of autonomous lectures in class or as homework. A possible solution are collaborative lectures (Tamara - E1, Pos. 33), so if they are not too long, Tamara likes to work with "some little lecture" from time to time (Tamara - E1, Pos. 35). María argues in a similar direction by stating that she can only work with lectures up to one page, or if the lectures are longer or more complex, read them in pieces to minimize frustration by the students (María - E1, Pos. 51). Thiago even goes one step further by stating that lectures are boring for students (Thiago - E2, Pos. 35). The more traditional form of lectures, the use of a textbook, meanwhile is not so popular amongst the participants. Tamara mentions that she used to work with one textbook in the beginning, *Activamente Santillana*, but that now especially with the older students she prefers to use a variety of materials (Tamara - E1, Pos. 32). The only other participant stating to have used a textbook from time to time is María, but she also declares to use more open resources now (María - E1, Pos. 19).

Following this line of thought, it is of course also relevant to bear the objective of the exercise in mind before selecting adequate material, also for the teacher to be prepared for topics that might arise from student side (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 62). Valery further states that her students tend to demand a current connection to the present when talking about topics: “it’s something that for them is crucial, like I need to understand this, what it’s for, to understand what’s happening now” (Valery - E2, Pos. 107).

6.3.2. Implementation in the Classroom

Conceptual work

Throughout the interviews Samuel states that when working with materials, he often uses individual work to get to know the materials, so that the students gain a foundation on which they can discuss their findings in class (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 50). He states that in his experiences, students tend to understand the class topics “in a different way” (Samuel - E2, Pos. 63) when they have a conceptual base in mind upon which they can discuss and analyse. Homework therefore is an essential part due to the lack of time, which constitutes the foundation for autonomous work in class (Samuel - E2, Pos. 16). María gives another example, of how she sends audios or videos to her students in advance, so that they can prepare them conceptually at home and work on them in class; sometimes she even makes the audios herself (María - E1, Pos. 42; 46).

María states that after introducing the topic with some kind of material, for example a lecture, she often continues with short activities (María - E1, Pos. 48). She likes to do some form of creative work with the materials – whether it is a short argumentation in writing (María - E1, Pos. 46) or in form of pictures or figures or both, in the attempt of “trying to address, like, like, all abilities” (María - E1, Pos. 46), to work differently and spark the student’s interest (María - E1, Pos. 48). María further states that she likes to do a short feedback round in the beginning and often asks her students to reflect and write or talk about what was done in the last class (María - E1, Pos. 46). Samuel also likes to motivate his students to reflect individually on the exercises, to ask themselves what they did, what they learned and what they will take with them (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 50).

Interactive methods

Tamara additionally mentions some concrete needs of her students that should be considered when selecting and implementing materials. She states that they need visual stimulation and a high amount of interaction (Tamara - E1, Pos. 39) and they like quizzes and competitions in class (Tamara - E1, Pos. 37). This serves as motivation to concentrate on the resources or the class in general (Tamara - E1, Pos. 42), which she evaluates as a crucial factor: “they tend to be very (.) very cool classes when you can motivate them” (Tamara - E1, Pos. 48). To further

enhance motivation, her students get their grades mainly from oral participation (Tamara - E1, Pos. 50). She also uses gamification: to enhance concentration on the materials used, especially auditive ones, there are competitions with points or questions that have to be answered (Tamara - E1, Pos. 37; 42). Thiago states that with younger grades he likes to do breathing exercises before working with materials to enhance focus (Thiago - E1, Pos. 53), and Samuel says that he likes to use poetry as an introduction sometimes (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 34). Valery also gives interesting insights by mentioning the methodology of *Thinking Classrooms* when working with materials of all kinds (Valery - E2, Pos. 23).

Another material especially mentioned by Tamara are audios or podcasts, which also has structural reasons: Since she does not have continuous access to a room where she can show audiovisuals, Tamara often takes a speaker to class and works with auditive materials (Tamara - E1, Pos. 40). She likes to use the audio of videos like for example from *TEDtalks*, or different podcasts like *Rutas del Conflicto* of the Rosario University (Tamara - E1, Pos. 32).

As for audios, Tamara states that her students like podcasts and “almost don’t distract themselves” (Tamara - E1, Pos. 42). According to her this is due to the variety of sounds that is implemented and makes it interesting. Regarding the question whether they need more work than other materials, she states that “On the contrary, it helps me because it orients the class towards conversation” (Tamara - E1, Pos. 90), therefore enabling interaction. She also frequently uses songs with some kind of social critique to motivate her students and to start a discussion and reflection (Tamara - E1, Pos. 40; 48).

Samuel further states to work with the photographs by Jesús Abad Colorado collected in the exposition *el testigo*, when implementing the topic of the armed conflict (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 27). Tamara also mentions this exhibition but worked with it outside of class: She recounts a field trip with her students to a talk with the photographer about his investigation, since he “is practically the one who has registered all the, (.) the issues of the armed conflict here” (Tamara - E1, Pos. 15). The experience was quite the success, since it sensitized the students largely to new topics (Tamara - E1, Pos. 15). Exhibitions are also mentioned by some other participants: Valery took her students to an exhibition called *Huellas de desaparicion* in a museum organized by the *Banco de la República* (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 35). María and Thiago meanwhile both mention travelling galleries making exhibitions in their schools for special occasions like the day of victims on 9th of April (Thiago - E2, Pos. 29; María - E1, Pos. 21).

Tamara furthermore highlights the use of maps to illustrate demographics (Tamara - E1, Pos. 33), especially digital ones with colours (Tamara - E1, Pos. 39), or images (Tamara - E1, Pos. 40). Samuel is the only other participant explicitly mentioning the use of pictures in class, which he likes to use to provoke interesting discussions (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 29). Tamara states that

generally, illustrative and colourful materials tend to work better, slides with movement for example. Her students also prefer colourful and funny videos over documentaries (Tamara - E1, Pos. 37). María also states that colours and pictures “make all the difference” (María - E1, Pos. 48).

As for the material of audiovisuals, most participants share the same opinion. Thiago states that they “allow a lot” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 53), and Samuel further states that they can “awaken sensitivity, empathy and even generate pain” (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 34). Valery also grants the audiovisual an impact that is “completely different” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 2), that students tend to like more than lectures, even if both work in class (Valery - E2, Pos. 105). Tamara too agrees by stating that “the elements that (.) generate the most, like interest or awareness among the children (.) is almost always when we watch audiovisuals, whenever we use (.) videos” (Tamara - E1, Pos. 60). Valery highlights that audiovisual materials “need a lot of mediation” (Valery - E2, Pos. 83) by the teacher. They therefore watch it together, take breaks, there is space for questions and commentaries. Additionally, she states that “on these issues there can be many opinions that, at home (.) can contaminate the exercise, so (.) we prefer to mediate it in class” (Valery - E2, Pos. 83). Valery also repeatedly mentions a documentary about the Banana massacre¹² in 1928 that she likes to use (Valery - E2, Pos. 6; 9; 15). As she states, it entails a change of perspective for the students, showing a certain duality of opinions and worldviews which helps the students to understand the complexity of the past (Valery - E2, Pos. 7; 15). She further states that some materials „can connect students to a reality that for some is completely unknown” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 11).

Samuel also states that he usually prefers to work with audiovisual material, as for example the documentary *El horror de los hornos crematorios* (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 34) or *No hubo tiempo para la tristeza* (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 27). He often implements them with a socializing part where students can exchange their conclusions and reflexions in an open discussion (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 27). Additionally, he tends to guide the discussion with critical questions from his side (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 48) that can be quite provocative to enhance critical contributions and reflections (Samuel - E2, Pos. 69), and to focus their attention and concentration (Samuel - E2, Pos. 68). For a richer discussion, he likes to give all students different materials, so that they can argue from different backgrounds (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 48) – and so that “they know that they are responsible for the construction of the class” (Samuel - E2, Pos. 70).

Tamara too states that she prefers highly socialized classes, with discussions between her students so that they stay focused. She bases the discussion often on a conceptual part of the

¹² Masacre de las Bananeras, Erklären

topic, supported by various pedagogical materials, naming mainly visual ones (Tamara - E1, Pos. 40). A crucial point for discussion is also the feeling of a safer space, which is mentioned by some participants. Tamara for example states that she tends to make discussions in a round table, to create a space where all opinions are welcome and tolerated (Tamara - E1, Pos. 51).

6.3.3. Evaluation

When asking the participants to compare the implementation of different materials and their impact, most of them had quite similar views. Valery for example states that even though there are many materials that do have an impact on students, of course there are some with a bigger effect than others (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 2). And Samuel states that some can change the perspective especially considering discussing the diversity of actors and victims, but that when confronted with strong opinions, also pedagogical materials have their limits (Samuel - E2, Pos. 36). However good a change of perspective might be, the question arises whether or not a possible change has a lasting effect on the students. María has quite the illustrating anecdote on that topic of a religion class she gave, where students especially remembered a topic of which they liked the approach, the activities and the material (María - E1, Pos. 49). It therefore already makes a difference if the materials are chosen and worked with well. Samuel gives another example of a student who experienced a real change in perspective:

And he told me (.) „Something that I took away was that (.) the whole semester, we were debating hard about the actors in the conflict. (.) But it wasn't until the end that I understood the importance of analysing the problems from the perspective of the victims (.) And I hadn't realised that and that makes me (.) more human (.) in terms of the way I am approaching the analyses I want to make” (Samuel - E2, Pos. 29).

Even though these two examples state at least an impact that lasts for a certain period of time and definitely longer than during the class, the question remains whether or not there is a lasting change of perspective; but it can be considered as a first very important step in the right direction.

6.4. Oral Testimonies

6.4.1. Selection / Curatorship

With the variety of pedagogical materials already stated by the participants, it is not surprising that this also applies for oral testimonies:

There are 788,000 oral testimonies, and whatever you want, from journalists, from ex-combatants, ehm, there are, for example, yes, there is everything, there is everything. I don't think there is, I mean it's not for lack of resources, I mean, there are resources. (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 43)

Valery accentuates that when using oral testimonies, it is even more essential to plan and revise the material adequately to also prepare for its impact (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 17).

Depending on the students you are working with, it can also be necessary to adapt the materials politically to the respective audience (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 18; E1.1, Pos. 60). It is therefore also crucial to keep in mind the objective, which for Valery when implementing oral testimonies consists of amplifying the voices of victims (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 2). It should be considered wisely what kind of testimony to take to class, as Valery illustrates:

[A]n oral resource of the forced displacement of a person who tells how they are displaced or how they were displaced, (.) ehm, perhaps for the children it is a little more digestible than if I give a testimony of, I don't know (.) of the massacres, of how people had to flee, it (.) is very complex. (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 21)

Tamara also states that even though revision needs time, since some resources tend to have a duration up to 30 minutes, it is indispensable to listen and revise them completely (Tamara - E1, Pos. 45). Thiago further states that for all resources a lot of preparation and a thorough knowledge of facts and structural relations is needed, not highlighting whether or not oral testimonies deviate from this with a greater need for revision (Thiago - E2, Pos. 37). Valery further mentions an essential aspect by stating that it always is a political decision by the teacher which materials reach the classroom and which do not (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 21).

Comparing Materials

Evaluating the efficacy of oral testimonies, the participants univocally agree that oral testimonies have a special impact on students compared to other materials. María states that in her opinion, “the oral testimony is very potent” (María - E2, Pos. 8). Samuel argues that oral testimonies have a different effect since personas are speaking from their own emotionality. It therefore can convey emotions, which rarely happens with other materials, like a lecture. He further states that it is important how the content is conveyed, not only the information itself (Samuel - E2, Pos. 21). Thiago largely agrees with this, stating that “the oral testimony (.) is a direct link (.) with (.) the subject of the history of the event” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 61), which is not the case with resources like textbooks. He further states that oral testimonies are a “good” and “important” for being “first-hand” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 63).

Valery as well says that “the oral testimony clearly has a strength that other types of materials do not have” (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 59), it shows the students “a depth and an emotionality that makes them connect in a different way” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 2). She thus states: “I feel that it is a very, very powerful tool” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 4). Tamara as well states that in her opinion, oral testimonies have “a lot of potential” (Tamara - E2, Pos. 10), also on an interdisciplinary level outside of social sciences. She further accentuates that through unique points of view outside of history or science that are reflected in the testimony, it becomes a “much more personal, more lived” resource (Tamara - E2, Pos. 8), and that her students seem to “like to

listen to people telling the situation in their own voice rather than someone else telling what happened to that person” (Tamara - E1, Pos. 44).

Comparing testimonial accounts with documentaries, she further states that it seems to be easier for students to recognise that people told the truth. They overall relate better with the oral testimony, which makes it more effective in the end since it feels closer and more real (Tamara - E1, Pos. 62; 64). She further supports this claim with her own university experience, where she concludes to be more aware and have a higher learning outcome when working with testimonies (Tamara - E1, Pos. 64). Valery also grants the oral testimony a huge effect, stating that since it generates capacity in students, it also generates empathy (Valery - E1.1, Pos. 59). In a second interview, she repeated this claim by stating that “the oral testimony does allow (.) to give (.) a greater degree of empathy so that the students understand that behind this there are people affected, right? It is not a figure as such (..)” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 3).

6.4.2. Implementation in the Classroom

Samuel likes to work the testimonies in a quite similar methodological way like the other materials: with individual preparation and engaging with the material, followed by a critical discussion in class guided by questions from his side (Samuel - E2, Pos. 71). With oral testimonies however, he likes to put even more emphasis on the students’ emotions, taking breaks at some points in the material to ask them how they feel and leave space for first reflections (Samuel - E2, Pos. 22). He further states the importance of leaving the space for open reflexion, to avoid acting like “a priest, a shepherd, I don’t know” (Samuel - E2, Pos. 72).

Valery also states that she likes her students to work individually on the testimonies, or for more variety in different groups that each treat a different topic or perspective (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 23). Additionally, the already mentioned strategy of *Thinking Classrooms* can also be used for oral testimonies (Valery - E2, Pos. 31). Another strategy frequently used by her are “listening clubs” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 22), where students can sketch or colour something related to the topic while listening to testimonies. Further strategies consist of questions that are worked on individually to discuss them in group, quite similar to what Samuel proposes, so that “while the resource is having its effect in the classroom, one also works on it with the students” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 22) and ends with a reflexion depending on the objective of the class.

Bearing these methods and necessities in mind, there are some concrete examples of an implementation of different kinds of testimonial materials. Thiago for example talks of the use of testimonial interviews (Thiago - E2, Pos. 29) with mothers of *falsos positivos* (Thiago - E1, Pos. 51). Valery mentions an oral replication of a written testimony (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 59) and further states that she likes to work with some few students also the audiences of the JEP (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 53). María states that she likes to use the audiovisual testimonies of the

CEV, as well as from other NGOs (María - E1, Pos. 18). Tamara further states that by using testimonial podcasts, she could perceive a clear impact in the students. With the podcast *Nuestra Orilla* for example, she states that “they tend to empathise [...] They like it, and (.) in some cases, there are boys, some girls who cry (.)” (Tamara - E1, Pos. 44), further explaining:

The woman who told the story told it, she told it in such a way, well, clearly from her own perspective, her own story, that several of my students (.) were very moved by it. Clearly there are children who are less (.) easily sensitized, but still (.) yes (.) yes, it does attract their attention to hear about testimonies. (Tamara - E1, Pos. 45)

Tamara states that there are also songs in form of testimonies that she likes to use, like cumbia from the pacific or *cantoras* (singers) in the north, who narrate their stories in musical form that “are also very (.) important and the message reaches the students very well” (Tamara - E2, Pos. 20).

Samuel shares that he likes to work the testimonial materials from the CEV to highlight diverse aspects of the conflict and put a focus on the experiences of women during the conflict, and to also expand his students’ perspective and understanding of the diversity of people who suffered from the violence of the armed conflict (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 49). The testimony of *Melania* for example is a story of uprooting from land and violence on the one side, and coffee cultivation as a means to reclaim the land on the other, therefore allowing him to work on several issues at once (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 48). Testimonies like this make his students often feel “empathy, pain, sadness” (Samuel - E2, Pos. 25).

Valery gives another example, stating that the already mentioned video of the Banana massacre is in many parts an oral testimony (Valery - E2, Pos. 33), since it collects and displays different voices and perspectives of the massacre. She states that she likes to use it to work on the topic of social movements, stating quite the interesting effect on the students:

It was very interesting because it allowed them to see these perspectives (..) And one confusion that has remained is like (..) that they say, and sometimes we too as (teachers?), it's as if, mmh, they understand where all this violent and conflictive past comes from. It's like of course (.) if it's from the end of the 20th century, 19 we were killing each other if we didn't manage to reach agreements (.) (E: Of course) (.) then it's allowed us to continue in a violent situation where maybe they define what we learned to be violent, that is, the opponent is eliminated and we can't have a dialogue (..).“ (Valery - E2, Pos. 7)

To contrast this experience, Samuel states that he also likes to work the testimonies of perpetrators in form of a documentary where a former guerrillero, a former soldier and a former paramilitary reflect on their experiences and their role in the conflict (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 32). When working on these materials, his students “generally feel rejection. They feel anger, they feel contempt” (Samuel - E2, Pos. 22). He points out an interesting observation: asking his

students what they need from the person giving their testimony, they state that seriousness and credibility are of utmost importance for them (Samuel - E2, Pos. 22).

Especially stories of perpetrators further open up the issue of forgiveness, which is difficult for many to students to understand: “they are also very shocked by the fact (.) of knowing that there are victims that forgive (.)” (Samuel - E2, Pos. 23). Samuel further states that many of his students claim that “under no circumstances would they forgive the offender”, even though they understand the concept and objective of forgiveness for the victims (Samuel - E2, Pos. 24). Valery shares a similar example when talking about a future for peace with her students, stating that “one of the, one of the girls told me like ‘I feel that the victims in the country want to force us to forgive’” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 30).

Samuel further states to be working with the testimony of *Bertha Lucia Fries*, who was a victim of the attack on Club Nogal. Listening to it, many students start to relate with personal stories of family members affected by the conflict, as he concludes:

‘So, like, there is a recognition that the conflict has affected not only is it not something over there in the countryside, it is not something over there, far away (.) but (.) mh, in Colombia it has affected us all in some way (E: Of course), directly or indirectly, far away, close, but it affects us in some way. And so, we have to recognise that (.)’ (Samuel - E2, Pos. 31).

This testimony also sheds light on the existing prejudices that the students have: “One simply speaks of victims as (.) poor people (E: Mhm) They assume it, they generalise it in that way. It is the poor who suffer from the conflict” (Samuel - E2, Pos. 31). Valery argues in a similar direction by stating that if a testimony does have an effect if it “moves them, connects them (.) with the different realities” and “allows students to have a different approach” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 4). She too states that it enables students to challenge prejudices, as for example “the typical social representation of a victim is, no, poor, it's rural, right?” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 7).

Samuel further laments a high level of classism in his students, which makes it even more important to use oral testimonies as a means to change perspectives (Samuel - E2, Pos. 93). He states that his students do start to question some beliefs they have, concluding that if they can “in a small way in a concrete moment (.) listen to a victim, see a person different from them (.) of a socio-economic condition and allows them, and that this allows them, at least to question (.) For me it is already a (.) a gain” (Samuel - E2, Pos. 40).

Samuel additionally states that the oral testimony also includes an aspect of dignity towards the populations that have been victim of violence and have experienced exclusion (Samuel - E2, Pos. 93).

5.4.3. Challenges and Limits

For all the possible impact, testimonial resources also come with certain challenges and even limits when implemented in the classroom. As Valery for example states and as has become clear in the last pages, it is always in the hands of teachers on how valuable a resource can be – there is a political will and subjectivity behind each step of the process, from selection to implementation (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 21). But to add on that, it also depends on the teachers in which amount the voices and opinions of students get the necessary space in class when discussing resources (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 32). There are topics and questions that might “challenge the teacher” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 30), as for example discussing the perspective for peace in Colombia as a pacifist with students who don’t see a perspective for forgiveness. She illustrates this need to acknowledge a certain reciprocity here:

And of course (.) when the teacher also allows himself to question his own discourses, from that oral testimony, notice that it is not only what I bring to the classroom, but (..) that in the classroom, orality is also the other side. I mean, from what they tell me [...] because sometimes, of course, thinking about orality or as I see you are also thinking about it is clearly only the resource that the teacher brings (.) but it turns out that it is not. That sometimes you are nourished by what the children are saying (.). (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 30-31).

It therefore is crucial to be aware of personal biases to avoid reproducing certain narratives and to leave an open space for discussion (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 32). Valery further states that oral testimonies highlight the debate around narratives and truths, since they always display a personal and subjective perspective of events of the past, and who might be telling the one and only truth is a redundant question in this context (Valery - E2, Pos. 35).

But, as Valery also states, it is quite the complex task for educators, since they are also risking to “use a resource that exposes them in class [...] to different (.) like scenarios that are very complex” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 9). On another aspect, oral testimonies are often very hard and emotional, and it’s the teacher’s responsibility to analyse whether the class is in an emotional capacity to work with the material (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 18). After being asked whether it is difficult for her to navigate these emotional spaces with her students, she therefore states: “I think that in Colombia it is particularly difficult (.) that is, in Colombia, to deal with these issues (.) especially, for example, through oral testimony, it is very difficult (.)” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 34). María further states on this topic that materials “must be mediated by the teacher all the time. [...] Because if you leave the child alone, that oral testimony is going to be lost, right?” (María - E2, Pos. 14). She therefore concludes that it is “very exhausting” (María - E2, Pos. 14).

Valery thus raises the question “what are we going to do with this resource, are we all going to sit down and cry, that is to say, what are we going to do” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 22),

accentuating the need to engage with the students' emotions with a certain spontaneity and adaption to whatever repercussion the testimony might have. Samuel highlights that there is always a risk that some students might be affected themselves, that there might be victims of some form of violence, and that the teacher needs to be prepared to deal with this situation if it emerges (Samuel - E2, Pos. 71).

Samuel further states that many of his students have strong opinions, many are openly and proudly homophobic, which will probably not be disputed by a short testimony (Samuel - E2, Pos. 33). This also illustrates a certain limit of education, as Samuel states that in comparison to all the influences from the student's environment creating strong positions, the little time that he has in class to try to show different perspectives already makes a lasting impact less likely (Samuel - E2, Pos. 38). Nevertheless, impact is still a wide term that should be looked at individually. As Tamara for example states, not all students have the same ability to sensitize when listening to testimonies (Tamara - E1, Pos. 45), and "not all students have a level of empathy" (Tamara - E1, Pos. 15).

6.5. Special Focus: Personal Testimonies

A very specific form of oral testimony constitutes of a personal format, with persons giving their testimony directly to the students. In other contexts, as for example the German academia, the research field of holocaust education praises those personal testimonies as the primary and most effective form of working with testimonies. Since the Colombian context is not in the slightest comparable, this is not an assumption that can be transferred without reflection. It therefore was an explicit topic during the interviews to get a glance at the teacher's perception of personal testimonies in the classroom or the possibility of a future use.

6.5.2. Implementation in the Classroom

Methods

With personal testimonies, it is the same as with other material: there is enough (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 43). And also, as already in the two categories before, personal testimonies can be implemented in class, as homework or during school events outside the weekly classes.

Valery gives an interesting example of a talk they organized at her school during the peace week with three former combatants to talk about peace – one who was paramilitary, one who was guerrillero and one who was soldier (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 6). The conference was realised with support of an organization that also brought a journalist who moderated the space (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 56). María talks of a similar experience at her school, inviting people to a discussion in the frame of the Peace Week (María - E1, Pos. 27). She states that already twice, her

school invited persons to give their testimonies in form of discussion forums, with the contacts often being former study colleagues (María - E1, Pos. 21).

It is also Valery who likes to implement direct testimonies as a homework for her students. One example is the topic of the *Bogotazo*, where Valery asked her students of the ninth grade to talk to their parents or grandparents about what they remember from it, resulting in many family stories that the students then brought to class (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 26). She likes to do a similar exercise with the seizure and repossession of the Palace of Justice (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 27). Another example that Valery gives is how she sends her students to inquire with the persons working in the general service about their personal stories of how they came to Bogotá (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 28). Tamara also likes to do a similar exercise, as she recalls an activity where she asked her students to interview a person of their choice on how they arrived in Bogota, resulting in many stories of displacement that were then brought to class (Tamara - E1, Pos. 53).

Valery further states that these kinds of exercises are very easy to manage, “because everywhere you go someone has a story (.) related to the violence in Colombia”, concluding that “there are stories of children's parents, of grandparents, of work colleagues (.)” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 27). Valery even recalls that when working the Palace of Justice, she by chance found a colleague in her school who was doing his military service right when it happened and consequently invited him to class to talk to her students about it (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 27). Sometimes the students also bring their families' stories to the teachers, as Valery for example recounts the case of a girl whose grandparents were kidnapped and killed (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 30). María is living a similar experience, but from another point of view: She states that in her students' environment, including their families, many were involved in the conflict in some form, many in the FARC in positions of social leadership. There are thus many “close testimonies” (María - E1, Pos. 18), who would in many cases be willing to share their experiences in class, for example of demobilisation or as community leaders.

Only Thiago and Samuel presented their experiences with personal testimonies in the classroom in a more detailed fashion that were not family members or colleagues. Thiago once invited a person to class to talk about the prospects for peace and the need for dialogue in the country right before the plebiscite, from his perspective as teacher and father affected by the conflict (Thiago - E2, Pos. 48). During his visit, he gave a “tremendous talk” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 61), shared his partly painful experiences whilst the students listened. They afterwards posed questions and could engage in a conversation with him (Thiago - E2, Pos. 48). Samuel shared his experience with a personal testimony who he invited to class at the end of the school period, after already having worked the conflict from different angles and different materials including

some testimonies (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 35). It was realised in form of a conversation with an informal round table, with the person giving the testimony in the middle, who will be called Alma here (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 36). The experience will serve as a short case study to highlight the necessities when working with personal testimonies.

Necessities

In his example, Samuel highlights especially the need for thorough preparation. First, there is a necessity for a preparation of the group. On a conceptual level, this entailed working first with oral testimonies and then reflecting on the implications of talking to a victim first hand: what attitude should the students bring, how should they behave, what is their responsibility? (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 53). Then, there is a need for preparation of the person giving the testimony. Samuel states that they then first met in an informal space for preparation on both sides: Samuel prepared Alma for the class, explaining in detail “what the objective of the project is, to explain what are, let's say the intentions, (.) what the procedure would be, what the information is going to be used for, and so on” (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 58). He then gave her the option to decide freely if she wanted to continue with the exercise under these conditions, and “she said ‘I do want to talk about this, because if there are people (.) who want to know what has happened so that this does not happen again (.) then it is important’.” (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 2). To prepare also conceptually, he invited her to share her story again fully, enabling him to revise the content and prepare the class and students accordingly (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 58).

When Alma came to class, Samuel states that his students were very respectful and considerate (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 55). In an open space, she could tell her story, at some point “her voice cracks, (she) cries” (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 36), but wanted to continue. Samuel recounts the experience as “such a dramatic situation, and such a hard story” (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 2), which was also tiring for Alma. Nevertheless, when Samuel invited her to say some concluding words to the class, he states that

Until that moment she had not looked at the students, (.) she was looking at me, but when I asked her this question she looked at all of them (.) and started to tell them how important it was to study, how important it was to be good people, how important it was not to hurt others, and she started this, empowered, herself. (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 2)

After the testimony, there is of course also a need for debriefing on both sides – the students’ and the testimony’s. As an exercise of reflection, Samuel asked the students to write down what they would like to say to Alma now, what to give back to her, concluding that they all wrote “words of gratitude” (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 55). In the conversation that erupted in class, the topic of forgiveness was discussed intensely (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 55). Also with Alma, Samuel met another time afterwards to discuss how she felt during the exercise and what she might take away from it. She stated that it was quite painful since she did not speak about the

topic in many years. Nevertheless, she had a positive experience and was open to repeat the exercise: “And then I asked (Alma), ‘and you, would you dare after this, would you dare to do this again?’ She said ‘professor, as many times as you want, we’ll go on like this’.” (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 3).

6.5.3. Evaluation

Impact

Samuel evaluates the experience with Alma overall very positively, with a great impact on his students, especially due to an emotional aspect (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 37). As he recalls, in the classroom, “absolute silence reigned” (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 9) and during the testimony, “they were (.) captivated. They were caught in that moment of, of the, of the whole, the sea of emotions that was shown at that moment” (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 36). Afterwards, he states that many students were very impacted, many sad and some on the edge of crying (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 9). Samuel further states that this emotional aspect of testimonies is very important, and key to understanding the conflict more deeply. Listening to victims as they narrate their experiences opens a way for students to reflect their own emotions: “when I ask them what impacted them and how they feel (E: Mhm) their sensitivity awakens (.) and they relate in a different way to what we are going to address” (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 52). Even the students recognized the impact of the direct testimony, as Samuel recalls: “And they told me, it is impressive that, that (.) yes, obviously we read and talked about many things in class (.) Listening to these people teaches you much, much more (.) than reading a book about victims” (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 55).

Other participants also recount a curiosity and connection from the side of their students when encountering personal testimonies. As Valery states, in the experience of the discussion forum, it was especially impressive for them to see those three persons of opposed groups, who in the conflict certainly would have had to kill each other, were sitting peacefully together and talking about their experiences and a peaceful future (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 6). Personal testimonies, as for example the ones from their relatives, “connect them in a super deep way” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 26), mainly because they are more personal (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 29). But they also experience a profound connection to the history, which for Valery is “an element that is crucial” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 27).

María further states that her students also tend to show great interest in external persons coming to class, no matter if they are demobilized, trade unionists or even members of the air force, who visited the school once. They tend to react positively and naturally, with curiosity instead of prejudice, enjoying the experience and asking many questions (María - E1, Pos. 29). A reason in her opinion is that “because it allows them to know a story in a direct way, yes? (.)

Ehm, it allows them to understand other possibilities” (María - E1, Pos. 57). Nevertheless, she states that in her perception, the impact is larger with older students, especially when the testimony is introduced in a setting outside of class (María - E1, Pos. 53).

Thiago as well states that inviting a personal testimony tends to “generate more concern” in the students:

Victims’ stories allow us to see Colombia's violent conflicts in a different way than before. Why? Of course, that's where it comes in, where, of course, one used to think only of the FARC and drug trafficking. But of course, when you start to see (.) the complexity of everything that the victims go through, like, mh, maybe the armed solution is not necessarily the solution. (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 51)

Valery recounts from the discussion panel that it even contributed to fight prejudices: the ex-guerrilla narrated how she was recruited as a child and also suffered violence, and the ex-paramilitary faced stigma during his effort of reintegration. She states that this experience of testimonies “allows students to see that behind these different roles, there are human beings” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 8), which ultimately “does allow students to get closer to those realities that are sometimes so difficult to deal with in the classroom” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 9). Thiago supports this tendency as well, illustrating some of the prejudices of his students when they worked with ex combatants of the FARC: “The vision they have of a combatant is (.) of someone evil, right? (.) And even with a macabre face or I don't know what and so on” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 67). Seeing them as a human being and talking to them therefore has a great impact.

Samuel further states that the impact was also quite powerful concerning the dynamic between the students and the testimony (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 2). In his case, there was a strong power asymmetry in the beginning, with the students paying for their education and the testimony, Alma, working for the school. Listening to her and seeing the conflict through her eyes therefore made a small contribution to fight the inherent classism and prejudice that Samuel repeatedly laments in his students, turning around the positions of power with Alma teaching the students something (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 3).

Oral testimonies do have another great impact that was perceived by Samuel, which consists of the opening of complex reflexions. In the case of Alma’s testimony, Samuel states that with his students a discussion around forgiveness erupted: “some said that (.) that they (.) listening to that (.) reaffirmed that they could not forgive. (.) And others said that they would forgive, (.) seeing the example of [Alma]” (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 55). He concludes that this ambivalence is also reflected in the society, as could be seen in the plebiscite: “that doesn't make anyone good or bad, but that's what society is” (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 55). Samuel further states that forgiveness is a personal process that varies from victim to victim that should not be judged from the outside, since “it is a tool that is often not even a tool to free the perpetrator (.) but to

free the victim him/herself" (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 11). As he further recalls from a discussion with a student: "I was saying, look (.) in these reconciliation processes, we can't do mathematics here. This is not eh victim plus perpetrators plus dialogue equals forgiveness and reconciliation. No, it's not like that" (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 10).

6.5.4. Challenges and Limits

Even bearing in mind the positive impact, there are of course some challenges and limits included in the use of personal testimonies.

As Samuel states, and as it becomes clear with the example of Alma's testimony, it is a painful experience for persons to narrate their violent stories (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 35), even though it can also be a liberating experience (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 3). He further puts an emphasis on the importance of giving the power to the person sharing their testimony, to focus on what they can teach the students (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 51). This empowerment is crucial and entails also including the person sharing their testimony in the whole process, include their opinions and hear possible doubts and wishes (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 5). He further shares an experience with a personal testimony in university context, who the students questioned without the necessary sensitivity, focussing on the painful experiences. This highlights the importance to respect the person's process, to lead and follow the testimony with sensitivity and empathy, otherwise there is a risk to increase suffering instead of empowering (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 54).

Valery too states that it is important to consider the intention and impact of the exercise on the victim, respecting their decision to share their story or not. Handling this topic responsibly is crucial, as it deals with horrors that people went through; and if not handled with care, there is always a risk of re-victimisation (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 58). Samuel as well recognizes the risk for revictimization, especially when there is a lack of preparation: "That's using the person and re-victimising them and making them a victim of another process, that's not like putting animals in a zoo (.) for our enjoyment (.) right?" (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 2). Valery further emphasizes that she considers inviting victims to class to be difficult, as a possible re-victimisation and misuse must be avoided at all costs. There is a need for thorough preparation of the group to deal sensitively with victims' stories and pain, without instrumentalising them. This is for her also on a larger scale a sensitive issue that deserves great care in Colombia (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 58). It is therefore of the utmost importance that victims "really feel that they are being given a voice" (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 59), but also very important to have a clear objective of the exercise to minimize the risk for revictimization. Oral testimonies have "allowed victims or it has been used a lot for victims to re-signify their stories" (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 9), but there is a need for a certain reciprocity. She further argues that there is a very thin line between living a positive experience by sharing painful stories and a use of suffering of victims:

It seems to me that there is also an issue with the victims, and that there has been a relationship, especially in Colombia. (.) Of course, as there are so many victims, so many stories, so many, there has been a (manichean?) use of the victims in many scenarios (.)” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 58)

There is thus a necessity and great responsibility from the teacher’s side to reflect on how to work with direct testimonies, as Samuel states:

You have to be careful, in this case not only with who is going to offer the story, which in this case is a victim (.) but also with who is going to receive the story, because that story can be received very well (.) but it can be received very badly, right? (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 58).

Especially the reflection on the abilities of the group should be considered with great care, as Samuel states that if there is even a minimal risk, one can always work with oral testimonies in audiovisual format, with a similar impact but way less risk (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 6). Or, as he puts it quite provocatively, to ask: “does this audience (.) deserve the great gift that is the victim’s story?” (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 6). He accentuates this by stating that the responsibility for the victim always has priority (Samuel - E2, Pos. 59). Thiago argues in a similar direction by stating:

But, of course, no, no, you can’t walk around with your victim under your arm to take them to class, right, the six ninth grades. Well, you have to use other things, (.) yeah, videos, audios, music, right? Eh, art, no? (Thiago - E1, Pos. 57).

It therefore depends highly on the group dynamic and the students’ capacities if it is possible to invite someone to give a personal testimony (Samuel - E2, Pos. 59). This semester for example, Samuel decided not to invite a testimony since he felt that his students did not have the necessary sensitivity (Samuel - E2, Pos. 60). But there are also some structural factors: as Valery mentions, working with direct testimonies depends even more on the goodwill of principal and parents, especially with the sensitive topic of the conflict (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 55). Tamara agrees in stating that also infrastructural factors might impede inviting persons to give direct testimonies, since in her school there is no possibility for financial recompensation (Tamara - E1, Pos. 66). María concludes that oral testimonies are a powerful tool, but its application in Colombia faces challenges. It works best in capital cities and areas close to Bogotá, where there is greater diversity of thought. In regions with a presence of armed groups and drug trafficking however, testimonies face greater risks and difficulties due to the security and politicisation of the victims (María - E2, Pos. 8).

Valery concludes that in her opinion, the environment in Colombia is still too violent to be able to implement personal testimonies on a larger scale in the classroom. It would have to be handled very carefully, and the group “would have to be very ready at a level (.) of respect” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 63). It could eventually be a good experience, but she clearly states that

there would be a necessity for some minimums in the society first. In her opinion, neither the social and political nor the educational sphere are ready for more radical pedagogical measures and experiences, and that there is still a very long way to go (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 53).

6.6. Future Perspective

Bearing in mind these diverse challenges, the future perspective for the use of personal testimonies seems still quite challenging. Its implementation can be a good experience in some environments but is also a highly ethical question of responsibility. Based on the experiences of the participants, it can be concluded that a broad implementation in Colombian schools is not a realistic nor a responsible option right now, since the conflict is still too present, especially in some territories, and the general culture of violence is too embedded in society to allow a responsible use of direct testimonies without a risk of revictimization.

Even bearing in mind these limitations, the overall evaluation of direct testimonies that were implemented is still quite positive. Valery for example states that her experience with the discussion panel was very positive and that she would be open for doing it again (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 56). Next time, however, she would opt for a more open space with more students and invite victims or participants of the peace process to enrich the discussion with more perspectives and reflect on the complexity of the topic (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 52). Even if Tamara did not work with testimonies recently, she states that it would be “very cool” (Tamara - E1, Pos. 66) for the students and they would surely enjoy the experience. María also states that she thinks her students would be open for it (María - E1, Pos. 30).

The overall use of oral testimonies however, in auditive or audiovisual format, is evaluated very positively by the participants. María states that she would like to implement more oral testimonies, should she work the conflict in ninth grade in the next years (María - E1, Pos. 78) and agrees that it would be beneficial to increase the use of testimonies (María - E2, Pos. 16). As Tamara states:

History should not just be a purely historical story, narrating historical facts (.) and that's it (.) but that an important role should be given to the forms of testimony, to the different ways in which the victims or survivors or the people who were present in the conflict, in those events, can narrate it. (Tamara - E2, Pos. 4)

Samuel also has a very positive conclusion on victim-centred work and oral testimonies that he would like to continue using (Samuel - E2, Pos. 60). He further states that especially audiovisual testimonies of women permitted him to discuss many different realities with the students, which he would also like to implement in future educational scenarios. He further states that the focus on victims and empowerment is especially important in the Colombian context,

where a constant need prevails to question the culture of poverty, corruption, machismo, homophobia, classism and racism, also in the classroom (Samuel - E2, Pos. 96). María though states that even if oral testimonies can be implemented more easily in comparison to personal testimonies, there is still a risk by using testimonial material in some contexts and territories (María - E2, Pos. 10).

As a conclusion in the interviews, the participants were asked what perspectives they would possibly see for a future use of oral testimonies in the classroom. Valery for example regrets that curricula talk about topics and skills but not so much about resources. She sees a lot of value in including oral testimonies as a pedagogical material in a higher amount, also to encourage professors to use it more and to bring about a change from traditional (frontal) teaching. She concludes by proposing to make it compulsory to incentivise its use (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 45-46), since in her experience, what is not evaluated in schools does not get a priority (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 43). Implementing oral testimonies as a tool in the standardized curriculum from the ministry could therefore be an option to introduce more people to the idea of using it. Asking the other participants about this idea, they mostly agreed, as Tamara for example states:

Yes, I think that perhaps the Ministry of Education could consider it as a tool. Because usually, when we talk about the pedagogical resources that are used in the classroom, we talk about the role of audiovisuals, the role of documentaries, the role of podcasts, the role of images in textbooks (E: Yes), even music. But we hardly ever talk about testimony as a pedagogical resource, and I think it has a lot of potential. (Tamara - E2, Pos. 10)

She further adds that this would need to be supported by relevant research from the fields of historical memory or oral testimony (Tamara - E2, Pos. 14). María agrees as well that it should be feasible quite easily, and even necessary to implement oral testimonies from the ministry's side (María - E2, Pos. 18). Thiago too states that implementing it in guidelines should be quite feasible, and that it would create an obligation (Thiago - E2, Pos. 21), and also Samuel states that he could imagine implementing it as a tool or material in the curriculum in a very generalized form (Samuel - E2, Pos. 51).

Another proposition by Valery to create an obligation to increase the use of oral testimonies in class is an inclusion into the standardized exams by the ministry: to "include an element (.) of orality" so that "they could have an exam (.) that was not only about reading" (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 42). However, she also recognizes that this is even quite a step further than including it into the curriculum, since there is way less academic freedom concerning the standardized exams. But, as she sees it: "It would help them to say well, you have to prepare children in the

analysis of this kind of (.) eh means and resources to be worked on in the classroom” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 42).

Thiago however states that the perspective for a realization of one of these propositions is quite small, since it is a very political decision (Thiago - E2, Pos. 16). Samuel makes a comment in a similar direction by stating that political polarisation makes it very difficult to implement such measures on a larger scale: “the reform, the paper is easy, but the issue is the discussion that in a country that is so polarised (E: Yes) and with so many prejudices” (Samuel - E2, Pos. 51). At this moment, even though he can imagine an implementation to curricula and syllabus, he cannot imagine an implementation of oral testimonies on a more structural level where it touches a reform of the educational system. But he does give an additional perspective, which is the implementation on local and institutional level, adjusted to the concrete context and circumstances (Samuel - E2, Pos. 49-50). Continuing this line of thought, María states that committed teachers could advance creative methods such as oral testimonies and teach history in a more diverse way (María - E2, Pos. 6). Thiago further illustrates how this exercise then is yet again in the hands of motivated educators, which might not be all bad:

It is a space of disputes. Yes? (E: Yes, of course). And perhaps it's good that it's still like that. You know? (E: Mhm) Because the day it stops being like that and becomes a question from above, yes? (.) Eh, well, suddenly it also loses its vindicatory character. (Thiago - E2, Pos. 41)

7. Discussion

Pedagogies of Memory in (Post-)Conflict Settings

The results of the analysis highlight the diverse difficulties that educators in Bogotá grapple with in their everyday teaching experience. The conflict proves to be present in the everyday life of students and teachers, underlined by a general culture of violence in the Colombian society. With missing minimal agreements on the events of the conflict, the educational practice is situated in contested memory landscape, characterized by a multiplicity of narratives about the past and diverse perceptions of truth:

So, I do think that the issue of truth is extremely complex, because that's what it is, the truth always (E: Yes it is) generates (.) a division. And there will always be people who say, this is not the truth, and the other is not (.). (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 82)

Those at times opposing narratives can be perceived in the students' opinions as well as on an institutional level through the influence of parents and school directives on content and methods, highlighting the school as a space of dispute that reflects the societal and political debates of the country. This goes in line with academic contributions, as Gauta Blanco (2020) for example ascribed the educational sector in conflict affected societies like the Colombian one an inherent ambivalence between “legitimising and reproducing emblematic stories or

hegemonic memories” and opening up space for critical reflection where “dynamics of the armed conflict can be questioned, problematised and vindicated, posing important challenges at the pedagogical level” (Gauta Blanco, 2020, p. 146). As Thiago highlighted in his interview:

Because we can then say no, let's agree (.) with the hegemonic or dominant or institutional history, yes? (E: Yes) Eh (..) and clearly, I would say no, we can't do that, because there are realities, yes? And, that is not history, that is ideology. (Thiago - E1, Pos. 33)

This highlights the importance to understand education not in an isolated way, but as a part of the system highly influenced by narratives and current debates. Revisiting Bush and Saltarelli (2000), this goes both ways: the educational impact can also transfer into society, as also Samuel confirms how parents acknowledge their kids “coming home to offer interesting discussions” (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 34). Also Amaya and Torres (2015) underlined:

We consider it being an ethical and political imperative to link issues associated with recent history and the conflict so that educational scenarios can be aimed at the formation of a culture of peace that breaks with the dynamics of political intolerance that has characterised the socio-political history of the country” (Amaya & Torres, 2015, p. 161)

Structural factors further impede memory education. Whilst acknowledging a certain degree of academic freedom, the results of the investigation illustrate a high degree of traditionality and competitiveness of the educational system, manifesting in a highly ambitious curriculum that delimits pedagogies of memory an in-depth discussion of the recent past. Whereas especially the Laws 1448 and 1732 show a certain degree of political will to invest in memory education, there still prevails a strong lack of resources especially in the public school system. This reaffirms Amaya and Torres (2015), who lament a multitude of problems in the Colombian educational sector impeding pedagogies of memory, advocating for the necessity of an open and flexible educational practice to comply with its crucial role in the construction of historical memory and the pursuit of peace (p. 161). This further confirms Underwood (2017) and his call for a prioritization of the educational sector in transitional justice processes to tackle chronic underfunding and acknowledge the transformative power of pedagogies of memory in conflict settings (p. 120).

The results illustrate how these structural factors as well as students’ backgrounds highly influence the teaching objectives and methods, emphasizing the necessity for participatory and flexible approaches. They underline the quantity and relevance of methodological contributions and pedagogical material of memory that were made in the last years through different governmental and civil society initiatives, emphasizing the need for a good curatorship, revision and preparation to enable a steady adaptation to the context and student’s needs.

The investigation presents a large variety of implementation strategies, ranging from conceptual work with written material on an individual basis to open discussions based on songs. There is however a strong preference for interactive methods of teaching, orienting the classes towards open debates and critical thinking to actively engage the students. A key challenge proves to be motivating the students and keeping their attention, which further enhances the need not only for interactive strategies of implementation, but also for captivating material. The investigation further underlines teachers' preferences for comprehensible and honest materials that follow a clear objective and argumentation, enabling critical engagement and fostering active participation of the students.

Oral Testimonies as a Pedagogical Tool for Non-Recurrence

The investigation presents a variety of resources that are being used as a pedagogical tool of historical memory in the frame of recent history, ranging from podcasts to songs to audiovisual testimonies, confirming also the use of a variety of pedagogical materials based on oral testimonies. It further confirms the strong impact of such oral testimonies on students that was suggested, amongst others, by Gómez-Sepulveda (2018, p. 82), which is mainly due to their personal aspect and the ability to convey emotions. Being based on experience rather than facts, they achieve to create a more direct link between the events and the students, with an inherent power and depth through the first-person perspective. They further allow students to reflect on the proximity of the conflict and especially can serve to open up a change of perspective or even challenge prejudices rooted in classism or racism. The results show how oral testimonies can open up space for polarized discussions on forgiveness and reconciliation and therefore prove to be a powerful pedagogical tool that can sensitize students to different perspectives and foster their historical consciousness.

Whilst putting a focus on victims' stories, the investigation also highlights the perspective of integrating perpetrator's testimonies as a pedagogical tool. Accentuating different aspects of recent history, both sources seem to be equally emotional and impacting, but awakening very opposed emotions in the students: Testimonial experiences with perpetrators prove to be impactful through the emphasis of humanity, allowing to challenge prejudices of different actors and their roles in the armed conflict. Acknowledging the need to amplify victims' perspectives, this nevertheless opens up an interesting strategy to shed light on the multiplicity of memory, which could prove to incentivise valuable discussions also for Holocaust Education on guilt and shame that have been neglected so far (Diddens, 2022, p. 62).

The investigation further opens up some interesting insights on the integration of personal testimonies in the Colombian educational context. As Samuel stated, personal testimonies can be very captivating for students by transferring a "sea of emotions" (Samuel - E1.1, Pos. 36).

They prove to be a very powerful pedagogical tool, further orienting the class towards discussion and critical analysis, enabling students to reflect on their own experiences and awaken sensitivity. Personal testimonies “generate more concern” (Thiago - E1, Pos. 65) and can ultimately lead to a change of perspective by breaking down the complexity of the armed conflict to a personal and relatable experience, emphasizing the shared pain of a civil society affected by decades of violence. They further incentivize reflections on forgiveness and reconciliation, allowing the discussion of a vision for the future and society the students want to live in and contribute to.

Whilst acknowledging their tremendous impact, the investigation especially highlights the many ethical implications of personal testimonies. With the narration of painful and personal experiences, the chance for liberation and empowerment of the testimony including a chance to “re-signify their stories” (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 9) is in stark contrast to a constant risk of reliving violent experiences, leading to a possible revictimization. Whereas most of these risks can be mitigated through thoughtful preparation to some extent, the integration of personal testimonies proves to be a constant balance between a positive and negative impact, reaffirming Bush and Saltarelli (2000) and their two faces of education. It is thus of extreme importance to constantly reflect on the balance of risks and impact and include the testimony throughout the complete process. Overall, the results of the investigation rather evaluate the Colombian context of contested memories being still too violent for an implementation of personal testimonies as a pedagogical method on a larger scale. Especially in areas still actively controlled by armed groups, the question of integrating oral testimonies into the pedagogical practice cannot even be considered, as the thought alone of talking about peace with the students can put teachers at risk. Inviting an external person to narrate their experiences therefore is unthinkable in the current situation and remains a topic that could be discussed mainly in metropolitan areas like Bogotá, where the presence of the conflict feels further away. Also on a national level, the results accentuate the importance of a more sensitive approach to victims to avoid instrumentalization and a use of them and their stories for educational purposes.

The experiences with oral testimonies in (audio-)visual form however prove to be effective to a similar degree whilst presenting way less risks. As confirmed by the investigation, they transport emotions to a similar amount, having also a very strong impact on the students. Especially victim-centred perspectives allow for a sensitization of the students, to reflect upon their own values and prejudices, open up different realities and enable a discussion on ideals of citizenship and societal structures. Oral testimonies can thus “generate strong discussions but without the need to directly link the victim” (Samuel - E1.2, Pos. 6). This further opens up an interesting perspective for Holocaust education, which has heavily relied on personal

testimonies for a long time and has to grapple the challenges of moving towards audiovisuality now (Brüning, 2018, pp. 11–12).

The investigation highlighted some possibilities of further integrating oral testimonies into the educational practice, that could serve as practice examples to rethink also international examples like German Holocaust Education. To incentivize a more thoroughly use of oral testimonies in the Colombian educational practice, two main perspectives were accentuated by the participants: the possibility to include the tool of oral testimonies in the standardized curriculum, or in the standardized exams. This would create a certain obligation for teachers to familiarize themselves with oral testimonies as a tool to enhance their pedagogical practice. Implementing it as a method could complement the educational policies already existing, putting a stronger focus on resources and personal exchange, challenging the traditional objectives of skills and knowledge and enhancing the importance of a participatory approach in education.

Teaching Memory as a Lived Experience

Implementing oral testimonies as a highly emotional pedagogical tool in a conflict setting necessarily implies further challenges and limits that make a thorough ethical consideration necessary. There is a high need for intensive preparation of the group on a conceptual as well as on an emotional level, to be able to create a respectful atmosphere in the classroom. The study highlights the need for reflection in every step from selection to socializing of pedagogical materials, including a reflection of the teachers' political intention, their availability to handle students' emotions or difficult discussions. This goes in line with Gómez Sepúlveda (2018), who already called for a thorough questioning of teachers and their pedagogical practices in the fight against hegemonial narratives. Oral testimonies additionally allow a certain disruption of traditional teacher-student hierarchies and can lead to learnings also for the teachers, if they are willing to reflect on own biases or narratives (p. 81).

Due to the proximity of the conflict, in the Colombian context there is always a risk that some students might be affected by topics treated in class. This leads to a strong need to create safer spaces where students and teachers feel comfortable to share their stories and experiences, with a necessity of the teacher to constantly mediate the space, which can also prove to be quite exhausting. This supports El Ashmawi et al. (2018), who accentuate the importance of creating safer and empowering spaces where students can share their experiences, "where they are the holders and producers of knowledge" (p. 81),

The investigation further accentuates some present challenges that teachers are facing, such as the growing audiovisuality of the younger generations and the rise of artificial intelligence. Adding to the structural challenges, these aspects highlight the need of the educational system to rethink traditional approaches, learn to be flexible and adapt to new situations. For teachers

to be able to perform the role of memory agents, a better education of teachers would be necessary to support educators to navigate this complex balancing act between students' needs and the political and institutional sphere of contested narratives.

The investigation further presents the integration of close testimonies into the educational practice as a methodology involving less risks whilst maintaining the personal and emotional aspect of personal testimonies. By encouraging the students to explore the perspectives and experiences of their relatives or people in their environment on concrete events of the armed conflict in an open conversation, it creates a lasting impact, permitting a personal connection and emotionality. As a pedagogical tool, close testimonies are easy to manage, since, with a large quantity of the population being affected by the conflict, there is a lot of easily accessible oral testimony:

In schools, there is material, that is, you don't even have to look for it, but you look for it among the students, and there are stories, and among the teachers, and there are, and even among the principals, and if you bring one day, the parents, the parents will have things to tell and the grandparents, and everybody. (Valery - E1.2, Pos. 43)

The implementation of close testimonies might thus be an alternative option to move the pedagogical practice more towards orality, to incentivize the students to engage with family memory and critically examine different perspectives in the classroom. This supports Rubiano Velandia (2020), who stated that many students do have a close connection to the conflict in their daily lives, and through the use of pedagogical tools of historical memory could establish a direct link between past events and their own lived experiences as well as their families' (Rubiano Velandia et al., 2020, pp. 70, 77).

The investigation confirms that it could be of great value to enhance the inclusion of students' perspectives and emotions into the pedagogical practice, enabling them to reflect on their own values and prejudices. Creating a living history with oral testimonies as a pedagogical tool thus proves to be a valuable methodological contribution to incentivise discussions on contemporary social justice struggles. By focussing on experience rather than historical facts, a transfer and connection to questions of citizenship and political participation can be initiated more easily. Oral testimonies further contribute greatly to the opening of new perspectives and a feeling of agency, constituting a crucial factor for non-recurrence and laying the base for a strong society.

For the field of Holocaust Education, where a connection to the events is often difficult through lacking personal connection, participatory approaches of a living history could contribute greatly to the debate, especially in light of the need for new approaches through the loss of personal testimonies. The accentuation on the need to connect historical learning with

experiences, as well as creating a stronger link to current sociopolitical struggles could also constitute a valuable lesson for Holocaust education.

8. Limitation and Outlook

Memory education in (post-) conflict societies proves to be a complex issue. The investigation based on the Colombian case however opens up a variety of perspectives not only for the Colombian educational sector but also allows conclusions for German Holocaust Education, even though there are some limitations.

In a sphere of political polarization and contested memory narratives, the educational practice is impeded by a variety of structural factors. Education thus proves to be a reflection of society, but the investigation further accentuates its characteristics as agent of change.

It should be noted however, that this research was conducted with a strong constructivist lens, applying pedagogies of memory and participatory and transformative learning approaches. An investigation based on other traditional lenses, such as a decolonial approach or a discourse analysis, could thus provide quite different insights into how the recent history in Colombia is constructed and taught. This investigation nevertheless showed how with participatory approaches to history education the focus can be shifted from facts to experiences and from national events to students' memory.

There are also certain methodological constraints inherent to the research design implemented in this investigation. The choice of qualitative methods and the small sample size offered detailed insight into some schools and therefore served the purpose of an exploratory study. The results however do not allow for a statistical generalization. As the participants stated, pedagogical experiences and structural factors vary greatly in other regions of Colombia, which further impedes a generalization. An investigative focus on rural areas could thus be interesting, as could be a comparative perspective. Additionally, the selection of the sample was very likely influenced already by the research topic, since it aimed explicitly at teachers implementing pedagogies of memory. Further investigating the teachers' perspective to include voices who decided against an implementation and include a variety of political perspectives and teaching backgrounds could thus be highly interesting. Since the research provided only a quite punctual insight, a long-term study would be of interest, especially to include the students' perspective more thoroughly. This investigation already suggests that the inclusion of students' voices and a stronger aim for discussion-based learning in educational spaces can enhance critical thinking, historical consciousness and self-reflection. Future research could thus for example integrate quantitative methods, such as student surveys, to measure the concrete impact and effectiveness of pedagogies of memory on a larger scale.

This however connects to some ethical considerations for this and future investigations. The lack of the students' perspective in this investigation resulted in a broad disregard of the emotional impact on students of oral testimonies. Future research should thus be based more on ethical sensitivity in the pedagogical practice and explore how an emotional impact can be created whilst also ensuring students' emotional well-being. To be able to support the students in processing possibly distressing experiences, psychosocial support mechanism in schools should be included more thoroughly into research. This also includes the investigation of possibilities of teacher training, providing educators with the necessary tools to implement pedagogies of memory in a sensitive way that enhances supportive and safer learning environments. Additionally, this investigation could not a satisfactory extent address the emotional impact on persons giving their testimony for educational purposes. Being a crucial and highly sensitive topic, subsequent research should ensure putting a stronger focus on integrating especially victims' voices directly, focussing on their perspective on the question of oral testimonies as a pedagogical tool.

Acknowledging these limitations, this investigation nevertheless suggests that oral testimonies shape educational settings in putting a natural focus on personal experiences, showing and evoking emotions that set the tone for further pedagogical strategies. Oral testimonies prove to be an adequate tool to shift the educational practice from traditional forms of teaching to a more lived experience, and can be a valuable instrument to enhance discussions on citizenship and social justice. Its ability to connect history teaching with contemporary social and political challenges opens up an interesting perspective for the Colombian educational sector but could also be of an especial use for Holocaust Education: In light of an ever more plural and diverse society, with political polarization, racism and antisemitism, also in Germany a shift to more participatory approaches of a living history could prove to be extremely valuable.

The investigation further highlights the transformative potential of oral testimonies of victims and perpetrators. However, the distinction between victims' and perpetrator's testimonies was not addressed thoroughly and the focus laid on the strong impact of both. Future research could thus explore testimonies of different perspectives and investigate how they influence students' learning and historical consciousness. Acknowledging that in the Colombian political and social sphere a focus on victims' stories is crucial to highlight the affections and violence that occurred during the last decades, the investigation also showed the value of perpetrator testimonies. Those could especially prove to give an interesting new perspective to the German holocaust education, that neglected the personal level of perpetrators and was stuck in a spiral of guilt and shame that is prevailing until today.

In its descriptive-exploratory aim, the results of this investigation allow a first conclusion of future perspectives for education in (post-) conflict societies. Participatory approaches to education, incentivized by tools such as oral testimonies in the frame of pedagogical memory, achieve to connect historical events with sociopolitical struggles, therefore enhancing the students' agency. They further emphasize self-reflection and critical thinking, forming students as active citizens with the motivation and ability to actively shape their future. In light of political and social challenges in Colombia and Germany, as well as on a global scale, an inclusion of oral testimonies into formal education thus gives hope for a chance towards non-recurrence and lasting peace through education based on self-reflection, critical thinking, and, most importantly, memory.

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Appendix I. Interview transcripts