Reintegrating Ex-Combatants in Liberia: What role can DDR play for democracy?

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Abstract

Current research on democratization and peacebuilding tend to emphasize macro-level issues such as institutional arrangements or elite group formation and compliance. However, this paper suggests that we need to look at how these two parallel processes interlink at the micro-level. As a way to take on the challenge of how such policies feed into democratization, we should take a closer look at Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) programs and their rarely studied political impact among ex-combatants. By doing so, we also address three major challenges within current DDR research, namely: 1) the normative challenge of how these programs structure and condition the ex-combatants' continued political voice has not been studied enough; 2) research in this field has approached this from the perspective of *political reintegration*, which suffers from several conceptual challenges; and 3) at present this research has lacked a theoretical framework in which to grapple and make sense of the political consequences of DDR, i.e. *how* do the programs shape the political outlooks of the ex-combatants. In this paper various types of reintegration programs are studied in terms of their political ramifications among ex-combatants in Liberia, as we need to take a closer look at the design of the programs in order to understand the varying impacts of these programs. This paper suggests that the work methods employed within the programs, as well as composition of beneficiaries matter for the ex-combatants' relation with politics.

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Keywords: DDR, ex-combatants, Liberia, political reintegration, focus groups, policy feedback, policy design, democracy

Introduction

Questions about how to deal with former combatants at the end of war have long been political as well as societal concerns. Concerns about returning soldiers from WW1 and WW2,[1] to the reception of veterans from the Vietnam war, to current reintegration projects in the aftermath of civil wars highlight the formative importance of these processes. This should also be combined with the research interest in the military as an institution in general, and to what extent military service changes the values and behaviors of those who serve, especially in the political sphere. Research into the political socialization of the military is far from conclusive (for a discussion of this, see Krebs 2004). Research on American veterans indicate that the military experience, during some wars (WWII, Korea and post-Vietnam) increases political participation, whereas the Vietnam experience seems to have decreased their political participation (Teigen 2006). Experiences of African veterans from the world wars have indicated that the political consequences may not be that extensive and if anything, may have lead to more conservative orientations(Greenstein 1978). Different types of involvement by ex-combatants in post-war politics in have also been noted in Sierra Leone (Christensen and Utas 2008) and Uganda (Blattman 2009). While, it is of course possible that the war experience itself has molded the former fighters' involvement in politics, it is also possible that the post-war experience plays a key role here. Research on the G.I. Bill and World War II veterans in the US suggests that that might actually be the case (Mettler 2005; Sampson and Laub 1996; Canaday 2003). If this is so, then we need to seriously examine the contemporary political effects of the dominant Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) policies currently in place across the world.

Current research on DDR has failed to meet this challenge adequately, as will be discussed further in this paper. Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs are a large component of contemporary peacebuilding efforts that target the ex-combatant population, in an attempt to smooth the transition to civilian life and alleviate security risks in the transition phase. These are large endeavors that have become increasingly integral to UN practices in post-war societies.[2] A few researchers suggest that DDR conditions politics in a broader sense than just the existence or absence of violence (e.g. Darby 2006, p. 149). Not all are that specific as to what this relationship is constituted of or how this happens. One exception here are some observations in the recent work by Nussio detailing the post-war experiences of ex-paramilitaries in Colombia:

[1] Among others, the American Secretary of War Henry Stimson expressed a deep concern about the returning veterans after World War II and their acceptance of the democratic system (Waller 1944, pp. 35, 89f).

[2] During 2005 about 1 129 000 people participated in DDR activities in twenty countries around the globe, and two thirds of these were in Africa (Caramés et al. 2006, p. 9).

> A reintegration programme signifies for some ex-combatants their first positive contact with a state institution. The potential of these programmes in terms of confidence building – or let us even say state-building – is thus enormous. Not exploiting its potential means losing an invaluable opportunity (Nussio 2011, p. 227).

Nussio continues and suggests that even symbolic gestures in DDR implementation may go a long way, due to the ex-combatants previous experience with the state as something rather distant and misgoverned. Here, then, DDR is seen as a process that can clearly influence the statebuilding process if such aspects are taken serious. Nussio sees the experience of DDR as an arena where trust can be created that can alter the relationship between ex-combatants and the new state. Nussio continues and notes that this is a very fragile process, and that unkept promises in this area are especially damaging (Nussio 2011, pp. 135, 175f). These observations are very similar to the suggestions the interpretive hypothesis within policy feedback bring forward, as we shall see later. Although there are indications that reintegration programs matter in this way, this has not really been taken up properly and asked outright. So, while there are some recognitions that DDR also condition politics in a wider sense, and by extension democracy, this issue has not been systematically addressed.

I argue that current DDR research has been theoretically crippled in three respects. Firstly, it has not taken up the normative challenge of how these programs structure and condition the ex-combatants' continued political voice enough. Secondly, research in this field has approached this from the perspective of *political reintegration*, which suffers from several conceptual challenges. Thirdly, at present this research has lacked a theoretical framework in which to grapple and make sense of the political consequences of DDR, i.e. *how* do the programs shape the political outlooks of the ex-combatants.

I propose to use the literature on *policy feedback* to address these challenges, as well as the literature on *democratic citizenship*. By applying a policy feedback framework to our understanding of DDR, we are also expanding the field of research within the policy feedback literature. Policy feedback research has almost entirely focused on welfare policies in established democracies alone (I know of only one exception, see MacLean 2010). This limitation is unfortunate, and we need to take this research further; here, the DDR realm is a promising one and an important one. Policy feedback effects are certainly possible here as well, making it important to explore. Of course citizens meet policies and the state in many shapes and forms, and at many levels. In the case of DDR, this is a joint venture between the local state and UN partners. However, as this is one of the first instances of state and policy interactions the ex-combatants face in the new regime, it is likely to play an even more formative role. While the programs are of limited duration in the lives of the ex-combatants, they are quite in-

tense and all-consuming while they are ongoing. In this way, DDR can act as a political space, where political orientations and identities can be molded, and networks may be created.

Often policies are only examined from the viewpoint of the imminent goals they themselves set out to deal with, but public policy often has larger implications than this. If policies shape individual citizens' relation and outlook on politics in *any* way, and thereby their functioning in a democracy, then we have a normative obligation to study this (see also Schneider and Sidney 2009, p. 112). Whether intended or unintended, such consequences of public policy need to be examined and understood. Here, I fully agree with Wichowsky and Moynihan when they say:

> Much like the medical field, public policy design should employ a 'do no harm' standard. Policies should not diminish the civic capacity of citizens, decrease their opportunity to voice their concerns to program administrators, or send such negative messages to program beneficiaries that they see little worth in participating in the political process." (Wichowsky and Moynihan 2008, p. 914)

If policies, including peacebuilding policies, can contribute and undermine the political orientations of ex-combatants we need as researchers to expose if and how this happens, not the least so those responsible of these policies can design and implement them fully aware of such consequences. Therefore, in this paper, the research question pursued is: *Do reintegration programs shape ex-combatants as political actors, and if so, how?* This question is pursued here, as well as in my thesis (Söderström forthcoming (2011)-b). The data used to answer this research question are focus group interviews with 101 ex-combatants in Liberia, grouped into six different reintegration experiences. After the end of the Liberian civil war (1989-2003), the UN, UNDP and the Liberian government embarked on a mission to deal with the 103,019 ex-combatants that disarmed (for more details see UN DDR Resource Centre; Caramés et al. 2007). Given the size of the population of Liberia, 3.5 million (Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) 2009), the ex-combatants make up a significant portion of the population and are likely to shape Liberian politics as a result.

This paper makes clear that particularly the work methods in the reintegration programs do matter for the ex-combatants' relation with politics, and that emphasizing democratic norms within the program itself seems to encourage such norms in politics at large.

Current challenges within DDR research

Research on DDR has generally been very caught up with trying to understand the social and economic repercussions of these programs (see also Porto et al. 2007, p. 69). The political aspect, on the other hand, has largely been ignored. While the methodological approaches to studying this is somewhat more diverse, there has still been an emphasis on quantitative studies, despite the fact that self selection is likely to bias such investigations, as the comparisons have mainly been between participants and non-participants. Random assignment to programs may be beneficial for understanding the effects of these programs, but such solutions could be ethically compromised and have at present not been pursued. A few attempts have also been made to use more refined statistical methods in order to address this issue, such as matching (see e.g. Gilligan et al. 2010). While these are important challenges, I suggest that we need to engage in the critical questions first, as suggested by the normative challenge put forward by Wichowsky and Moynihan (2008): how do policies condition the democratic orientation of citizens?

When researchers discuss the implications of DDR, and why it is seen as important, this is mainly seen in the light of peacebuilding. DDR is thought, generally, to contribute to a more peaceful society, if done right, through avoiding a re-marginalization of ex-combatants and making sure that they have an option other than violence for their livelihood or for their political influence (Gamba 2006, pp. 56, 73; Spear 2002; Zahar 2006, p. 42; Höglund et al. 2009, p. 550; Toure 2002, p. 26; Arnson and Azpuru 2003, p. 200f; Sisk 2006, p. 125; Nilsson 2008, p. 183; Berdal and Ucko 2009; Bøås and Hatløy 2008; Jennings 2008). However, I would agree with Desirée Nilsson when she states that: "There seems to be a consensus in the DDR-literature that the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are of importance for creating durable peace, but there is limited knowledge on how to construct these processes." (Nilsson 2009, p. 14).

Research in this field more importantly fails to recognize the complexity and variation among reintegration programs themselves. Most research on the effects of DDR rarely differentiate between different types of DDR programs, seeing it as a dichotomy – either you participate or you do not. I argue that we need to disaggregate, and study different types of DDR-programs, because it is problematic to assume that wildly different programs are going to have the same effect on the ex-combatants. In addition, the various implementers involved in carrying out the mission of the reintegration programs are quite likely to differ substantially as well.

It is not strange then that research on DDR has so far not been conclusive concerning their effect. Some assert that they do matter (Pugel 2007; Banholzer 2010; Gamba 2006, p. 56), while others say they have no effect (Humphreys and Weinstein 2007), or even a negative effect (e.g. Bøås and

Hatløy 2008, p. 52; Jennings 2007; Arnson and Azpuru 2003, p. 201). Others note that we do not know what the effects are and/or that they have not been studied comprehensively enough (Jennings 2007, p. 204; Humphreys and Weinstein 2007, p. 532; Nilsson 2008, pp. 22, 183; Nilsson 2009, p. 14), thereby raising the call for further research in this area. Part of this confusion and the mixed results concerning the impact of DDR, relates to what is actually meant by *reintegration*. A lot of the work fails to recognize the complexity of the concept of reintegration, confounding social, economic and political reintegration for instance. Indeed, I argue that it is unreasonable to expect all programs to matter equally for social, economic and political reintegration. The assertion that DDR programs matter need to be carefully qualified in terms of what kind of reintegration is at stake. This argument, which seems only rarely recognized, is also supported by some of the findings in survey work from Sierra Leone. Here, the authors recognize that the different dimensions of reintegration are firstly explained by different things but also that such explanations may not always be mutually supportive (Humphreys and Weinstein 2007, pp. 543, 548). While economic, social and political reintegration are important goals of DDR, and ideally they should be mutually reinforcing, that is not necessarily the case, nor may the same things be decisive for their achievement.

Definitions of reintegration vary related to their inclusion of the political dimension of the concept, limiting the process to the social and economic sphere (among others Gleichmann et al. 2004, p. 65; cf. Knight and Özerdem 2004, p. 500; see also Nilsson 2005, p. 27; Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2006, p. 23), consequently these areas have also been given more attention (Özerdem 2010). Research that today deals with the political aspect of reintegration has only done so in a rather limited and under-theorized fashion, as it is usually unclear why certain aspects have been chosen over others to represent *political reintegration*. I would argue that this limited conceptual understanding of what political (re)integration means has in turn impaired investigations of the political impact of these programs (for a longer discussion concerning this, see Söderström forthcoming).

Explicit measures of political reintegration include: confidence in the democratic system (measured as preference for voting and contacting officials compared to protests or non-governmental channels of influence) and social acceptance (Humphreys and Weinstein 2007, p. 541), transformation of rebel groups to political parties (Berdal and Ucko 2009; Söderberg Kovacs 2007); knowledge of elections and parties, whether voting is seen as a right or obligation, past and future participation in elections (voting, campaigning and candidacy) (Porto et al. 2007, p. 71).

If we are to apply these indicators as measures of ex-combatants' political reintegration we run into difficulties. The transformation of rebel groups to parties is an interesting field, but not one that is obvious at the individual level. Such transformation relates to the level of elites within the armed

groups, and not necessarily one that is affected by the DDR process. While this aspect is also interesting, it is quite different from asking questions about the political involvement of individuals, albeit ex-combatants. The reintegration of ex-combatants may be affected by whether or not the armed group transforms into a political party or not, but it is not a measure of political integration at the micro-level in and of itself. In any case, even if the armed group transforms into a political party, that may not enhance the political involvement of the rank and file ex-combatants, this I believe is still an open question that has not been considered enough.

In other cases, political reintegration has been conceptualized as something rather close to evaluations of the political system as a whole (e.g. Humphreys and Weinstein 2007, p. 541). The measure of confidence in the democratic system, however, conflates evaluations of the political system with political reintegration. Ex-combatants can be more or less politically reintegrated independent of whether the society as a whole has made democratic progress. Perhaps there are real problems with the political system in place, is that then really a good measure of the political reintegration of the ex-combatants? In any case, non-governmental channels of participation and protests are not necessarily undemocratic. Research also suggest that often it is the same people who participate in all forms of participation, and it is more a question of their degree of involvement, and that such a division between one group of people doing one thing and another group doing other things as suggested by Humphreys and Weinstein (Humphreys and Weinstein 2007) does not really occur (Verba et al. 1978).

The focus on elections as noted by Porto et al (2007, p. 71), is not unreasonable but it does limit reintegration to a very narrow field of politics. It also sets the bar quite low, as voting is often done *en masse* in post-war societies. Definitions of political reintegration that are pervasive in DDR research, typically also refer to the ex-combatants becoming full members of the decision-making process (among others Özerdem 2010, p. 3; Podder 2010, p. 4; Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2006), hinting at the democratic assumptions in the definition of political reintegration. Other times, political reintegration is defined as the peaceful participation in political processes by ex-combatants (Porto et al. 2007, p. 69).

Through embedding democratic expectations in the concept of political reintegration, previous research has missed the mark. There is no guarantee that a post-war society will also be a democratic society, and that the type of political involvement society as a whole is engaging in, is democratic. So, the question: *Reintegration into what?* is truly crucial. In a post-war context, we face an inherent tension between democratic practices and simply political practices. Often democratic practices are a challenge for the entire society at this stage. Thus, I argue that we need to conceptualize political reintegration as political involvement, either democratic or otherwise. The democratic involvement of the ex-combatants is also dependent on the develop-

ment of politics at large in the post-war society, and it is problematic to assume that reintegration programs will also rehabilitate entire societies. Surely the ex-combatants can be *political*, yet neo-patrimonially so, or in an authoritarian way or even in a corrupt way. Hence, the different outcomes span from lack of involvement (in which case democratic traits matter little), to involvement with undemocratic traits, and finally to involvement with democratic traits. Of course, ideally reintegration programs would promote the latter outcome, but the other alternatives cannot be ignored as possible outcomes. If we are to truly capture the effect DDR programs can have on political reintegration, or the ex-combatants' relation with politics, all of these outcomes need to be considered and understood. While there may be an implicit democratic goal of DDR among practitioners, this is never really scrutinized thoroughly. This does not mean that it is unreasonable to assess reintegration against normative goals as well, but this needs to be done more explicitly when that is the case. Also, *political reintegration* does not conceptually contain democratic assumptions *per se*. The concept itself only implies being increasingly involved in politics on the same terms as everyone else in the polity, but it could be a question of *equally bad* terms, rather than equality in participation or democratic participation.

I argue that political reintegration is essentially about political involvement, and this is important in and of itself. If DDR conditions ex-combatants' relation with politics in any way this is interesting and important to know and understand. However, the usage of the term *re*integration suggests that it is a process whereby things return to normal, or where overall a harmonization process occurs between different segments of society; this type of interpretation of the term is unfortunate, and at the very least making it difficult to evaluate (as the level of involvement becomes a moving target, related to the involvement of the rest of society). The important aspect of political reintegration however, is the understanding of it as a process whereby political channels are increasingly seen as viable for handling societal problems for the individual. Due to the above limitation of the concept of political reintegration, I propose instead to relate my examination of the ex-combatants' relation with politics through departing from the concept of *democratic citizenship*, which I believe is more instructive and transparent.

Political scientists often talk of *democratic citizenship*, but this term has also been used in many different ways (see e.g. Nie et al. 1996; van Deth et al. 2007; Mettler and Soss 2004; Krishna 2008; Bratton 2006; cf. also Almond and Verba 1963), hence there cannot be said to exist a consensus of what should and should not be included in this concept. The concept can be broken down in several different ways: some delineate between civic competence, democratic values and democratic participation (Finkel 2003, p. 138); some between political participation, social participation and civic orientations (van Deth et al. 2007, pp. 7-9); others again make the link with democ-

racy more explicit by relating it to the principles of a democratic system (Dalton 1994, p. 475); others divide the concept of democratic citizenship into three dimensions: *values* (tolerance, accountability and equality), *attitudes* (preference for democracy, support for democracy and patience) and *behavior* (voting, collective action, contact) (Bratton 2006, pp. 11-13). There are, however, a few common denominators, and as a concept I would argue that it is more conceptually coherent than political reintegration, and in my research with ex-combatants in Liberia, these were used to stimulate the conversation about their relationship with politics. In the end, these themes are ultimately visible in the resulting data, but so are other aspects that emerged as important in these discussions. This is why the data is now structured in relation to the following dimensions of politics: *political involvement*; *tolerance of dissent*; *inclusion*; and *expressed antagonism*.[3]

Political involvement is the most important dimension for understanding their relation with politics. This dimension speaks to the level of political participation envisaged by the ex-combatants, their feeling of efficacy and involvement in community decisions. The second dimension is *tolerance of dissent*, which captures the degree to which the ex-combatants' value consensus, how dissent is dealt with and viewed at all levels of politics. The third dimension is *inclusion*, which relates to how inclusive their conceptualization of the demos is, particularly in relation to the Mandingos, the Lebanese community and the Americo-Liberians, but also the extent to which the principle of equality is applied among members of the political community. Finally, the fourth dimension that has emerged, I have labeled *expressed antagonism*. It became very apparent that the degree with which politics was viewed with antagonistic eyes varied a lot between the groups. Aspects that tapped into this related to their take on the use of protests and violence, but it was also expressed in terms of whether politics was framed in a 'we against them' perspective, and having a hierarchical view of politics. While the previous dimensions fit well with the themes suggested by the *democratic citizenship* literature, this dimension is a crucial addition, with particular relevance from a peacebuilding perspective.

Underlying this discussion, is the understanding that some traits are supportive of democracy and others are not, something which is made more clear through the use of the concept of *democratic citizenship*. People can and are engaged in politics in ways that are not democratic, and this aspect of their 'political citizenship' is also important to capture and understand, which will be made clear through openly contrasting it with the ideal of a democratic citizenship. Democratic citizenship is also seen as a precondition for a functioning democracy, i.e. the quality and nature of individuals' relation with politics has aggregated effects on the quality and nature of a polity.

[3] These dimensions are discussed in detail in this paper, but are explored in great detail in my thesis, and in related articles (see e.g. Söderström forthcoming (2011)-a, 2010, 2009).

Democrats are an important building block in a democratization process as the development of a democratic regime is dependent on the stance and attitudes of its citizens (Bratton 2006, p. 1; Bratton and Liatto-Katundu 1994, p. 535; Kymlicka and Norman 1994, p. 352). This is not to say that the macro-political environment does not condition the individuals' relationship with politics as well, simply that if we care about democratization, understanding the relationship with politics among the citizenry is crucial.

Policy Feedback - An Alternative Framework

The policy feedback literature has developed in the realm of welfare policies in industrialized nations, however, there are important insights and questions in this field that can help to move DDR research forward. Given the similarities with the G.I. Bill in the US after World War II and current reintegration programs, it is surprising that policy feedback has not yet been applied to this field. The idea within policy feedback is that policies affect politics in subsequent processes, while policy *feedback* is the common term, it is rather a question of "feed-forward" effects "as we are talking about how policy changes the dynamic of future political action" (Schneider and Sidney 2009, p. 108). This study will enrich current policy feedback research for three main reasons: 1) it comes closer to the individuals' experience with specific program implementation; 2) because we move beyond the typical context for these studies, namely welfare policies in the West; and 3) through its use of a more participant centered data collection than has previously been the case in this literature (Schneider and Sidney 2009, p. 115).

Related to the individual level, there are in particular two paths of causality proposed. Firstly, policies change the way individuals relate to politics because the policy gives rise to resources that the individual can use and need in politics, such as money, time and skills. I suggest we talk about this effect as acting through an *access mechanism*, i.e. these resources help the individual access politics in a different way then before. Secondly, the policy feedback literature suggests that policies carry with them structures of meaning, norms and values that individuals are exposed to and interpret. This is often referred to as interpretive effects. The literature describes this as a spill-over effect, where the individuals endure political learning through the policies. The policies are said to give rise to cognitive shortcuts, whereby citizens generalize from their specific experience with a public policy to how the entire government works (Soss 1999, p. 369). Soss also notes that the spill-over effect is not the same for everyone, but rather that it is contingent upon other government experiences. Instead of talking of interpretive effects, I would however, propose to talk of this as procedural effects, as it is the procedural traits in the policies that are meant to have this effect, and instead

term the mechanism one of interpretation, i.e. the procedural elements of policies affect politics through an *interpretive mechanism*.

Policy feedback effects are more likely when the policy is highly visible, and the more proximate the policy experience is (Soss and Schram 2007, p. 121). So, while we could look at the political impacts of DDR on the public in general in Liberia, these linkages should be most visible and prominent for the target groups themselves, i.e. the ex-combatants.

The policy feedback literature has been interested in how policies structure ensuing politics on many different levels, in part on the individual level, but also in terms of elite behavior and the organization of politics at the macro-level. These are obviously large areas of political science research, and it can therefore be no surprise that this broad approach in general is reflected in a similar approach in how this field has examined the effects of policies at the individual level. I would argue that the field suffers from a largesse and conceptual overload, the following shows the range of labels the dependent variable has been given: the citizenry's political engagement (Soss 1999, p. 376); civic competencies and democratic citizenship (Soss 1999); exercise of citizenship (MacLean 2010); end citizenship outcomes (social trust, civic engagement, political efficacy and political participation) (Wichowsky and Moynihan 2008, p. 917); values and attitudes, orientation toward government, and political participation patterns(Schneider and Sidney 2009, p. 442); social capital (Freitag 2006); inclusion and exclusion in citizenship (Canaday 2003); mass political behavior, incentives for mobilization, civic skills, patterns of political beliefs, boundaries of the political community, and content and meaning of citizenship (Mettler and Soss 2004, pp. 61-3); "preferences, beliefs and behaviors of broad mass politics" (Soss and Schram 2007, p. 111); political agency among the citizens (Bruch et al. 2010, p. 206); civic and political engagement (Bruch et al. 2010, p. 206); basic outlooks in politics (Pierson 2000, p. 260); features of the political landscape (identities, interests, beliefs about what is possible, concepts of citizenship, agency and incentives) (Soss and Schram 2007, p. 113); "inclination for political participation" (Lawless and Fox 2001, p. 369); and "the desirability of exercising political voice" (Bruch et al. 2010, p. 206).

What it boils down to is an interest in how the individual relates to and engages in politics (similar to the underlying interest we find in the literature on political reintegration). While the specific choice of which concepts to apply matter a great deal in relation to the collection of data, perhaps it matters less in relation to describing this data once collected. There are also several themes among these measures that are repeated, such as participation and efficacy, general orientation toward politics and delimitations of the political community. (Again, this resonates with the literature on democratic citizenship.) Essentially, we are talking about the same thing: understanding the individual as a political actor. Hence, I have used the democratic citizen-

ship literature as discussed earlier to structure my investigation of the ex-combatants relationship with politics.

In this research project I have located programs of different design and focus that, based on insights from earlier research within *policy feedback* (Pierson 1993), are likely to affect the political involvement of the attending ex-combatants. Through comparing the political experience of ex-combatants in these different programs, this paper will discuss to what extent policy feedback is possible within various types of DDR programs; thereby elucidating a possible micro-level relation between peacebuilding and democratization. In particular, two ways in which policy feedback can occur in this field have been investigated; namely whether these programs contribute through an interpretive mechanism, or through an access mechanism.

Returning to the selection of specific programs to study in detail, I tried to use insights from the policy feedback framework and related research to locate programs that were more or less likely to trigger either mechanism. The programs I have chosen to look into were chosen to reflect differences related to the two hypotheses noted above (the resource and procedural effects) within the policy feedback literature. Programs that were embedded within an existing social and economic network were believed to be more apt at initiating a resource effect. Thus, this mechanism and effect should be more likely in cases where the following criteria are met: locally adapted training, such as job placement or agricultural training, rurally located program (which matters for both possibilities of absorption in the local economy but also for the potential support from family and community). The following two aspects were identified as being crucial from a procedural and interpretive perspective: 1) the program contains a mixture of participants and 2) the decision structures within the program are participatory and transparent. Thus, in relation to the interpretive mechanism, the following criteria should be met: the program should allow a sense of empowerment for the participants in terms of the bureaucracy or running of the program (such as a sense of confidence in payment routines, being able to participate in decision-making within the program), the program should cater to a mix of participants, preferably both ex-combatants and civilians, but also in terms of including a mix of various factions from the war. Having an explicit psychosocial component and possibly a domestic organization may also matter. As there was a plethora of reintegration programs and implementers in Liberia, I conducted interviews with different stakeholders in the reintegration process to locate programs that fit with the above criteria. After discussing the program experiences with the ex-combatants themselves as well, the program characteristics that are important to note, are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Program Characteristics

Program	Basis for a Procedural effect					Basis for a Resource effect		
	Entry	Dealt with problems	Discussion climate	Trainers	Composition	Socially	Economically	Perceived Impact
UMCOR	Chose specific profession.	Hesitant about approaching.	Hierarchical, but trusting.	Knowledgable & committed to training, continued mentorship.	Mainly ex-combatants, any mix was due to transference of ID-cards	Community embedded program.	Still apprenticeship position or started their own business.	High Economic & Some Social impact
GAA	Opted in.	Felt listened to, part of decisions.	Open (potential bias in material).	Supportive and engaged.	Mix in each group very intentional (gender, civilians, refugees, ex-combatants etc)	Community embedded program.	Improved farming abilities.	Low Economic & Social Impact
YMCA	Actively preferred (often in comparison to MVTC).	Felt involved in problem resolution and decision-making.	Open, felt listened to.	Impressed, trusted.	Factional and civilian mix very intentional	Mixed composition.	No jobs. Professional identity and importance of training itself stressed.	Some Economic & Social Impact
MVTC	Chose specific profession, but participants did not seem to have chosen MVTC specifically.	Poorly, only responded after rebellious behavior, confrontational.	Did not feel listened to.	Trainers ok, administration more problematic.	Factional and civilian mix, not intentional	No advantage.	No jobs.	Low Economic & Some Social Impact
Formal education	Entrance tests.	Riots and confrontation.	Did not feel listened to.	Some indications of corruption.	Factional and civilian mix, oppositional at times.	Community embedded.	Some able to make a living, good prospects for post-secondary education.	Low Social & Some Economic Impact

After exploring the program experiences in this manner, we can now express specific expectations about each program related to the policy feedback framework, also see Figure 1: Expected Program Effect, below. In the end, the United Methodist Committee for Relief, UMCOR, was deemed to fit the best as being a most likely case for a resource effect and access mechanism. This apprenticeship program was mainly located in rural communities, such as in Foya in Lofa County, but also closer to Monrovia. Ex-

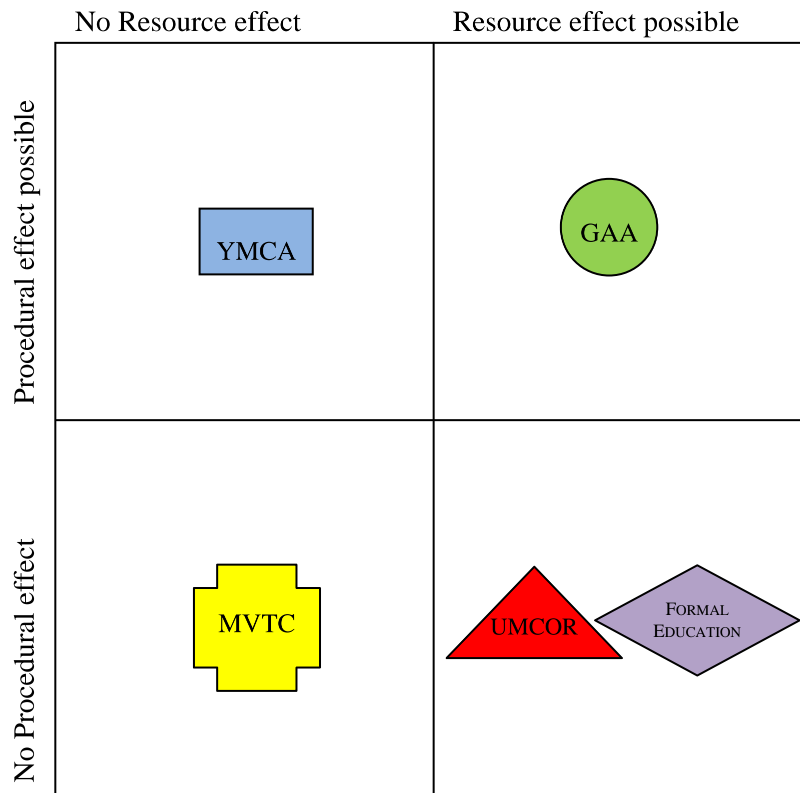

Figure 1: Expected Program Effect

combatants were placed with local tradesmen as apprentices. The program at the Young Men Christian Association, YMCA, is considered a most likely case for the interpretive mechanism. While they had activities outside of Monrovia as well, the groups recruited for this program were all based in Monrovia. This was done in order to make sure that it was mainly the interpretive mechanism that is enacted and not the resource effect, as the challenges of finding employment are much larger in the urban community. The YMCA offered a mix of vocational training with some apprenticeship placement, and mixed both civilians and ex-combatants. The German Agro Action, GAA, program was considered to be a most likely case for both mechanisms, as it was a rurally located and adapted program, where a mix of participants as well as inclusive decision structures were a large part of the

program design, but as the participants did not really experience much of a socioeconomic improvement through participation in the program this program experience will reflect the relevance of the procedural effect in comparison with UMCOR. In terms of more typical programs, about 40 percent of the caseload within the DDR program made use of the formal educational option, i.e. returning to high school or university. As most ex-combatants settled in Monrovia after the war, it makes sense to explore the formal education experience in Monrovia. Formal educational programs should have some positive effect on the relationship with politics among the ex-combatants, mainly through a resource effect. Procedurally, the experiences within formal education are more varied, where the principle of inclusion is certainly emphasized but other elements are more negatively loaded. In addition, the Monrovia Vocational Training Centre (MVTC), was also included in the study as this program, in part it is similar to the YMCA program, hence comparing these two programs in particular will be useful, but also because this was a fairly common option among ex-combatants in Monrovia. The MVTC-program should not affect the political involvement of the ex-combatants positively, in fact we might even expect a negative reaction in relation to the procedural elements.

Method

The programs selected to explore the two hypotheses brought forward by the policy feedback framework. I purposefully picked programs that were well placed to enact either mechanism, in order to show the relevance of, and explore the potential of a policy feedback framework. However, with the inclusions of programs that also fail to give rise to the conditions believed to matter for such effects, we can contrast these groups with those that participated in the other programs.

Of course, we cannot escape the problems of selection bias, simply by not focusing on the comparison between participants and non-participants. However, here I believe that specific pairs of comparisons are at least reasonably similar in their selection processes. The MVTC and YMCA programs gave essentially the same type of education in the same location. Similarly, GAA and UMCOR also catered to similar segments of the ex-combatant community. In terms of the formal educational groups, I would argue that these groups differ internally somewhat. While they were all located in Monrovia, the entry requirements alone for university sets this group apart. However, the high school groups are quite similar in their background to the ex-combatants that ended up in either MVTC and YMCA.

While programs were chosen in a strategic manner, the programs studied also took on a substantial amount of the ex-combatants reintegrated under the UNDP trust fund. Three (MVTC, YMCA and UMCOR) of the four

training programs (the other groups where either involved in formal education or no program at all) were covered by the UNDP trust fund, and are among the largest programs, and carried in excess of 27.9 percent of the caseload (JIU 2008). The fourth program (GAA) was not covered by the UNDP trust fund. Finally, the formal education programs, such as returning to high school or university, carried about 40 percent of the caseload. Most groups (12 of 18) were carried out in Montserrado County (mainly in the capital Monrovia), the county of preferred settlement (48 percent) (UNDP 2004, p. 38).[4]

Focus Group Data

Focus group interviews offered the best choice for the research question at hand and the context in which research was carried out. The reasons are several, and only a brief discussion of this is offered here (for an extended discussion of this, see Söderström 2011, 2010). Focus group discussions are good at revealing, not only what the participants think, but why they have the political attitudes or preferences that they have (Kitzinger and Barbour 1999, p. 5; Tursunovic 2002, p. 14). In part, this relates to the synergies of the group context, as participants often make implicit and explicit comparisons between themselves and others (Nylén 2005, pp. 38-43, 48-54; Weiss 1994, p. 207f; Bratton and Liatto-Katundu 1994, pp. 537-41; Morgan 1997, pp. 2, 10-14, 20f; Stewart and Shamdasani 1990, pp. 16, 33-49, 76).

Focus groups can therefore also help to elucidate causal mechanisms, as they can reveal each individual's socialization process. Notably, David Morgan, one of the central focus group methodologists, states that "When the research topic involves understanding the success or failure of a particular program in a specific setting, focus groups may well be the most efficient and effective tool for uncovering the reasons behind this outcome." He continues and argues that focus groups are ideal for research attempting to deal with explanations and specification of theories (Morgan and Krueger 1993, p. 9). Focus groups also provide an advantage compared to in-depth interviewing as the interaction between the ex-combatants may also allow for a proxy of their democratic behavior; they provide insights into how debates are dealt with and settled. The interaction also increases the ecological validity, i.e. the *emic*[5] quality of the data, as their experiences are expressed in

[4] These numbers are based on information given at cantonment site; there are no figures available for actual settlement. The figures of preferred settlement for the other counties varied between 14 percent and 0.05 percent, with Lofa County and Margibi County at 6 percent respectively, and Grand Gedeh County at 4 percent.

[5] Within anthropology it is common to make a distinction between *emic* and *etic* data, where the former is data that can be described as local knowledge, with a cultural specificity or knowledge that is structured by the informant, and the latter in turn can be described as scientific knowledge, with claims of universality, or knowledge that is structured by the researcher.

their own words and in a social context that is relevant for the question at hand (see e.g. Henn et al. 2002, p. 174; O'Toole et al. 2003, p. 56; Lee and Chan 2008, p. 90). This is particularly relevant as we are trying to get insights into the ex-combatants own conceptions and understandings of politics. The focus group setting can also help increase trust in the interviewing process (Söderström 2011, pp. 148, 158), which should be especially important in a post-war context.

The data collection was carried out between April 15th 2008 and June 15th 2008, and during March 2010, in five areas of Liberia: Monrovia, Kahtoe Town, Foya, Zwedru and Kakata, thereby covering both the rural and the urban parts, as well as inland (North and East) and coastal regions. The groups were recruited in different ways. In some cases I approached the ex-combatants through the elders of the village, those in charge of the program or trainers known to have participated in the program and in other cases participants were contacted through the network of a veterans' organization in Monrovia. Because I had to rely on these various networks for recruitment, undoubtedly these networks have shaped the outcome of the recruitment, and sometimes in ways not apparent to me. All participants were given monetary compensation for their time and to cover transportation costs, to the amount of five USD (varying slightly depending on transportation needs) in keeping with focus group praxis (Morgan 1997, p. 38f). Overall, it was never difficult to recruit participants.

In terms of selecting the specific individuals for participation in each group, it is important to note that self-selection will remain a problem, as the participants can choose not to take part; in this case it is likely that those who do participate will be more inclined towards being socially and politically involved. This recruitment may at times also have lead to a bias toward higher levels of political involvement, but this bias is present across all groups, i.e. difference across groups and programs are still relevant and speak to the research question at hand. The types of recruitment channels used are also likely to lead to an overly positive view of the programs they attended. However, this fits with the overall *most likely* approach used in this study, as the aim is to demonstrate whether this theoretical approach has any bearing on the issue at hand and to explore the mechanisms involved if it does.

Through having groups that differ with respect to some issues within each program, I should be able to demonstrate that similarities despite these differences may be program related. In addition, the focus groups are also, to varying degrees, similar across programs, which if we find differences between groups that in many respects are similar except for program membership, we can ascribe such a difference to the program difference. Comparing ex-combatants that did not participate in a program with those that did, is problematic as there is a definite selection bias related to who does not participate in a program. The inclusion of these groups should therefore not be

seen as a baseline in comparison to the other groups, but rather as one additional point of comparison among many, and including such groups helps diversify the description of the ex-combatants' relation with politics, to include a wider variety of backgrounds. Below, an overview of the 18 focus groups conducted is given, see Table 2.[6]

Table 2: Focus Groups

Group	Program	Area	Gender	Faction	Ethnicity	Size	Age ($\bar{x}$)
G1	GAA	rural	male	MODEL	Krahn	7	25-30*
G2	GAA	rural	female	MODEL	Krahn	5	over 35*
G3	GAA	rural	male	MODEL	Krahn	4	25-30 (27)*
G4	GAA	rural	female	MODEL	Krahn	6	20-25*
U1	UMCOR	rural	male	mixed	Kissi	4	19.5
U2	UMCOR	rural	female	GOL	Kissi	4	17.5
U3	UMCOR	rural	male	GOL	Mixed	5	35
Y1	YMCA	urban	male	LURD/GOL	Mixed	6	20
Y2	YMCA	urban	female	GOL	Mixed	6	31.5
Y3	YMCA	urban	male	MODEL	Kpelle**	6	27.8
M1	MVTC	urban	male	GOL	Bassa/Kpelle	6	33
M2	MVTC	urban	male	LURD**	Bassa**	6	29.7
M3	MVTC	urban	male	MODEL**	Mixed	6	30.6
F1	University	urban	male	GOL	Mixed	5	29.5
F2	High School	urban	female	GOL	Gio**	6	30.5
F3	High School	urban	male	LURD**	Mandingo**	8	25.6
L1	none	rural	male	GOL/LURD	Kpelle	5	35.4
L2	none	urban	male	GOL	Loma	6	23.2

* Exact age not given for participants, based on age category (median). If several also gave an exact age, mean in parenthesis.
** Indicates that the group consisted mainly of such individuals, but not exclusively.
Acronyms used above: German Agro Action (GAA), United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), Young Men Christian Association (YMCA) Monrovia Vocational Training Centre (MVTC), Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), Government of Liberia (GOL) and Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD).

[6] While this is a study of ex-combatants, in one group two participants were discovered not to be ex-combatants during the focus group interview (U1), and one participant in two groups (G1 and G2) through the survey at the end of the focus group. Within each group, I have tried to keep gender (always) and faction membership constant. Having mixed male and female ex-combatants I would have been concerned about gender roles conditioning the group discussions even further (of course, in the male groups this might still have been an issue as the moderator was female). As both male and female groups were convened, this also means that this study to some extent has segmentation in relation to gender. I also tried to conduct focus groups where the faction membership was the same for all participants in each group. Clearly, factional differences may correspond with political differences, and it could have been a source of antagonism within the groups had the groups been mixed. However, during recruitment it was often difficult to fully control this, and groups where factions were mixed did not in general exhibit more antagonism or less trust. Given that three different factions are represented in the data, comparisons across this segment are also possible. While comparisons can be made in terms of gender, faction or urban-rural belonging, this study is not designed to address such issues in detail, rather the program difference is the central segment addressed.

Impacts & Mechanisms?

The following section offers a summary of the visible patterns across the programs and groups. The dependent variable used here are the four dimensions of politics introduced earlier. As stated earlier, political involvement is the crucial aspect of political reintegration. But in order to also be able to make statements as to the democratic traits the different groups exhibit, we need additional parameters. As noted before, I have chosen to highlight the following issues: *tolerance of dissent*, i.e. views on pluralism and risks of dissent; *inclusion*, i.e. a wide and open extension of the Liberian demos; and *expressed antagonism*, i.e. conflictual tendencies. Below, we will turn to each dimension respectively to see if we the ex-combatants' stance is related in some way with their program experience.

Political Involvement

If we start to look at the level of political involvement, the groups relate to each other in the way visible in Figure 2. While not all groups from the same program background are grouped together, often groups from the same program experience are grouped close together.

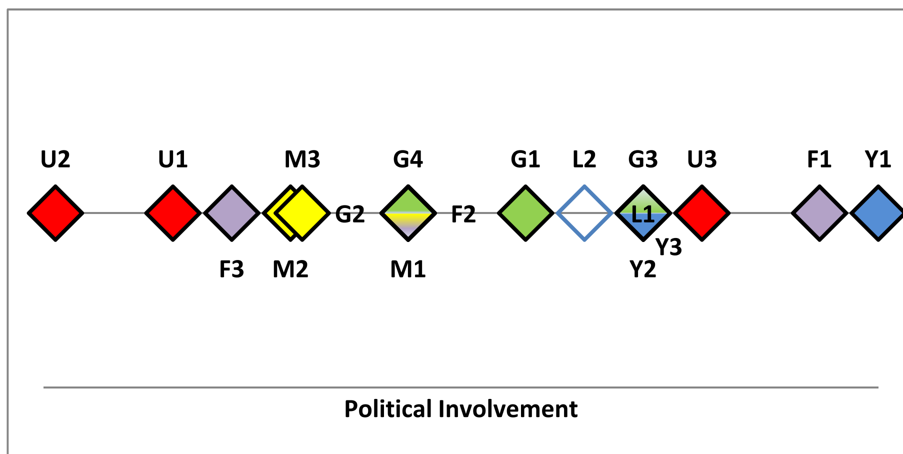

Figure 2: Political Involvement

Program grouping in Figure 2 is most clear for the MVTC groups, which tend toward the lower range, and the groups without program attendance, which fall in the middle. While the GAA groups all end up in the middle, with group three on top (male former MODEL members), there is quite a degree of variation between them.[7] The YMCA groups are all placed in the upper range of involvement, yet again, there is a fair degree of variation between them, with group Y1 being the most involved group. For two programs, the variation is even greater: one of the groups that attended formal education is placed at the upper level of political involvement, notably the male university group, while the female high school group is placed in the middle and the male one toward the lower end; the UMCOR groups are placed at both extremes, with the two younger groups at the lower end.

Interestingly, the YMCA groups and MVTC groups offer the most distinct results, especially, as the programs were relatively similar. Ex-combatants could attend either program in Monrovia and receive vocational training, as e.g. a mechanic, carpenter or tailor. Also, the groups themselves and other characteristics of these groups are quite similar between the programs (faction, resources, educational levels, age etc). In particular, while there is a fair amount of variation within the YMCA groups as well as the MVTC groups, their overall levels of socioeconomic resources are rather similar between these programs. Any difference between the YMCA groups and MVTC therefore cannot be explained by referencing differences in absolute socioeconomic resources or a selection effect (as the programs recruited in very similar ways and areas), rather the main difference between these programs is the presence of positive procedural traits in the case of YMCA.

[7] Clearly, the amount of variation possible depends to some degree on the amount of groups within each program, thus the GAA groups can display more variation as there are four of them.

Most importantly, the YMCA groups expressed a sense of involvement in the running of the program as participatory work and management methods were used, and the participants clearly felt listened to when problems arose. This was certainly not the case at MVTC, where the ex-combatants clearly did not feel listened to or involved in decision-making. Most notably, groups Y2 and M3 also perceived the same level of social and economic impact of attending their programs, but are involved in politics at wildly different levels. Thus, it is quite possible that the experience of involvement in the program at YMCA carried over into the ex-combatants' involvement in politics in general.

The levels of reported absolute levels of socioeconomic resources were largely reproduced when we examined the perceived change in resources as a result of the program. Thus, the resource effect could mainly be expected in the case of the UMCOR groups, whereas for the GAA groups, any political integration cannot be said to have passed through the resource route. The decision-making structures in the case of the GAA programs, lead us to suspect that a positive procedural feedback may be possible. The context of the UMCOR and GAA groups are also fairly similar, particularly being fairly removed from the capital and the state. If we examine the levels of political involvement of these groups, however, the resource mechanism should have been most pronounced with UMCOR, including U1 and U2, and clearly this is not the case above; the GAA groups fare much better in terms of their political involvement than what would be expected given their socioeconomic status and perceived change. Again, we find that the degree of involvement within the program may be mirrored in the degree of involvement in politics in general, as suggested by the procedural feedback hypothesis.

However, it is important to note here that the results within the UMCOR program were quite mixed. Group U3 was clearly involved in politics to quite a high degree. What should we designate as the cause for the mixed results of the UMCOR program? Is it only a question of age? Or were the local contexts of these groups different in an important area (group U3 was located much closer to Monrovia than the other two groups)? Should the political involvement of group U3 be attributed to the program experience or their age? These are questions this study is not able to address. But we can note that resources in themselves are not enough to promote political involvement, as we can see from the case of U1 and U2.

However, we can explore the relevance of the resource effect through other group experiences as well. In particular, the university group, F1, clearly perceived a socioeconomic impact from having attended their program, which may be reflected in their high level of political involvement. The participants themselves noted quite typical ways such resources are believed to shape political involvement, namely how the education they had received had given them knowledge to evaluate politics differently and the ability to express themselves politically. However, the female high school

group (F2) noted the least perceived impact in terms of social and economic resources, and the resource mechanism would have suggested the opposite order between F2 and F3, but in fact the female group is more politically involved than the resource mechanism would suggest. In fact, the participants in group F2 and F3 are very similar to the participants in YMCA and MVTC, in terms of their general background. The advantage the YMCA groups have expressed in terms of their political involvement, in comparison with both the MVTC and high school groups, emerges again as something that we have to explain based on other things than resources obtained in the program. Given the large amount of ex-combatants that attended high schools through the DDR-program, the impact both in terms of resources themselves and in terms of political involvement are quite disheartening. Formal education, at the high school level, has largely failed here.

It would thus seem as if feeling listened to in the programs also corresponded with a general sense of being listened to in politics in general. Of course, this relationship may be due to a tendency among these individuals in general, i.e. that they feel listened to generally, whether inside the program or in politics. However, it seems unlikely that such a tendency would be in effect for all members of a particular group. Thus, while we cannot claim that this is indeed a causal relationship, this correspondence between program design and outlook on politics, is striking and worthy of future attention. Participatory methods and problem resolution mechanisms that took the ex-combatants' needs and thoughts into consideration therefore seem to be important from a political reintegration perspective.

Using the qualitative appraisal of the focus groups, we can explore the two hypotheses further using OLS regression as well. In the quantitative analyses that follow the dependent variables (all four dimensions) are based on the qualitative ratings of the groups (as graphed in the figures above), similarly also for some of the independent variables, such as the categorization of the programs overall or the perceived impact of the programs. In contrast, most of the other independent variables are based on group averages of already other variables, such as education or social indicators.[8]

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[8] In the analyses here, the unit of analysis is the group, thus at the most the sample consists of 18 cases. Clearly, this is a small sample, and not a random sample. This has important implications for both the significance testing and the robustness of the findings. The group ratings are based on types of arguments or sentiments expressed in the group as a whole that relate to each dimension. This rating does not consider how often or how many in the group expressed a certain idea, but rather if the argument or sentiment was expressed at all in the group. In the end, the value assigned to each group is a summary of the number of arguments and sentiments that are categorized as belonging to a certain dimension. This means that the scales of the dependent variables vary considerably, in the case of political involvement from 1 to 8 (where e.g. 8 is not the theoretical maximum but the observed maximum), whereas for inclusion the scale runs from -1.5 to +2.5, reflecting the fact that sometimes statements are categorized as the complete opposite from inclusion, i.e. as an expression of exclusion, and thus at least one group had more exclusionary sentiments than inclusive statements, hence the negative rating: -1.5. Also, if the group was clearly divided on an issue, instead of assigning a '1'

Turning first to the main dependent variable, political involvement, see Table 3, page 24, for regression results, we see in particular that ex-combatants that perceived an economic advantage of the DDR program also have higher degrees of political involvement. However, actual resources, such as education or housing standard, have little positive impact. In fact, having some form of work is even reported as negatively associated with political involvement (albeit not a significant relationship). Being male is at times also associated with a fairly large positive impact on political involvement, although not reported as significant. More importantly, we see that social acceptance as well as having attended a program that in this study has been categorized as having positive procedural traits (YMCA and GAA) show large and positive (and significant) associations with political involvement. These results suggest that rather than actual levels of socioeconomic resources having an impact on levels of involvement, perceiving that the program delivered something is important in terms of the political involvement of the group. Also, programs of positive procedural design are associated with increased levels of political involvement in line with the procedural hypothesis, and discussions of findings earlier. In fact, when this variable is added to the model, the overall fit improves dramatically (with 29.0 percent comparing model 2 and 3).

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to the group, the group was given a '0.5' to indicate partial agreement. Expressed antagonism in turn ranges from -2 to +8, whereas tolerance of dissent ranges from 1 to 6. See appendix for descriptive statistics for all variables used in these analyses. The analysis is also limited to variables where an average is possible or the value is constant across the entire group. Hence, the analysis cannot include an ethnicity variable, as this varied too much within some groups and an average value cannot be assigned. In the case of faction membership, I have used a dummy variable for MODEL membership, as this faction was fairly constant across the groups, whereas there were groups that had more mixed composition including both GOL and LURD members. The age variable is based on the average age in each group, and the degree to which such a mean is a good description of each group can vary extensively, as some groups contained larger variance in terms of age than others. Also, in some groups, we only have median values for age, and here the midpoint in such a median instead of the mean is used in the analysis. These are important limiting factors of this analysis, and the results of these regressions should be considered with these in mind.

Table 3: OLS Regression - Political Involvement

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8	
Constant	,663	3,784	,174	4,208	-6,368*	3,339	-4,719	2,641	-8,366**	3,877	-4,379	2,494	-11,363***	2,876	-10,883**	3,572
Resource	-		-,647	1,930	-,144	1,300										
Procedural	-		-		3,055***	,837	2,926***	,767	3,392**	,941	2,508**	,778	4,088***	,663	3,939***	,903
Gender	,663	1,207	,497	1,352	,418	,906	,942	,839	1,064	,872	,262	,921	1,361*	,606	1,212	,857
Age	,020	,130	,043	,152	,185	,109	,137	,094	,188	,130	,133	,088	,234**	,073	,227**	,083
Education	,307	,186	,270	,224	,149	,154	,287	,129	,278	,170	,297**	,122	,336***	,092	,335**	,099
Perceived Social Impact	-		-				-,015	,448	-,364	, 575	,088	, 427	-,357	,335	-,317	,390
Perceived Economic Impact	-		-				1,112**	,453	1,352	, 909	1,798**	, 641	1,408***	,333	1,513**	,531
Summary Social Indicators	,223	1,004	,195	1,050	,806	,723	-		1,235	,811						
Summary Economic Indicators	,163	,825	,534	1,401	1,400	,968	-		-,143	1,416						
	-		-				-									
Livelihood	-		-				-				-2,285	1,595			-,411	1,539
Social Acceptance	-		-				-						4,000**	1,322	3,748**	1,704
n =	17		17		17		15		15		15		15		15	
Standard error of the estimate	1,911		1,993		1,334		1,266		1,241		1,191		0,891		0,957	
Adjusted R^2	0,060		-0,022		0,542		0,623		,638		0,667		0,814		0,785	

The first column for each model is the b-coefficient, and the second column contains the standard error for the coefficient.
* = significant at the 0.1 level, ** = significant at the 0.05 level, and *** = significant at the 0.001 level.

Tolerance of Dissent

If we move on to the issue of tolerance of dissent, the groups place themselves in the pattern visible in Figure 3. In terms of patterns that relate to program experience, this dimension is the weakest. Indeed, this dimension exhibits the largest within program variation. It is only the formal educational programs that are in the same range, namely middle levels of tolerance of dissent. The UMCOR and GAA groups all fall in the middle and high levels of tolerance of dissent. The groups without a program fall in the middle and low levels of tolerance of dissent. YMCA and MVTC stretch across all levels (YMCA is at both high and low levels and MVTC is at all levels: low, middle and high), although the MVTC groups are at the outmost extremes. Thus, when we compare the GAA groups and the UMCOR groups, there is no systematic difference that we can relate to either hypothesis. Similarly, when we compare the MVTC groups and the YMCA groups we see no real difference between the programs. In addition, there is no specific program design element observed in these cases that could be related to this dimension. In terms of the resource effect, the affluent are often suggested as more tolerant, and this aspect can be explored further in the quantitative analysis below. What is more noticeable is that the formal educational programs are more closely grouped here. Perhaps, exposure to schooling has an important bearing on the tolerance of dissent. However, while these groups are grouped together, they are not grouped together at a high level, suggesting that formal education provided a specific advantage in terms of this dimension.

Turning to the quantitative analysis of tolerance of dissent, see Table 4, page 27, neither hypothesis is convincing here either. The variables related to program characteristics show little relevance here. In fact, different model specifications make little difference in overall fit generally, and very few variables are reported as significant or assigned large coefficients. However, there seems to be a consistent negative association with gender, i.e. the female combatants tend to be more tolerant of dissent than the males. Similarly, the more the ex-combatants perceived an economic impact of the program they attended the more tolerant they are. This is perhaps the only program related pattern here. However, social indicators have a clear negative relationship with tolerance, for instance the more socially accepted they feel the more intolerant of dissent they are. Similarly, having a job is reported as negatively associated with tolerance of dissent. Again, the perception of resources gained from a program are perhaps more important in shaping political orientations that actual resource levels.

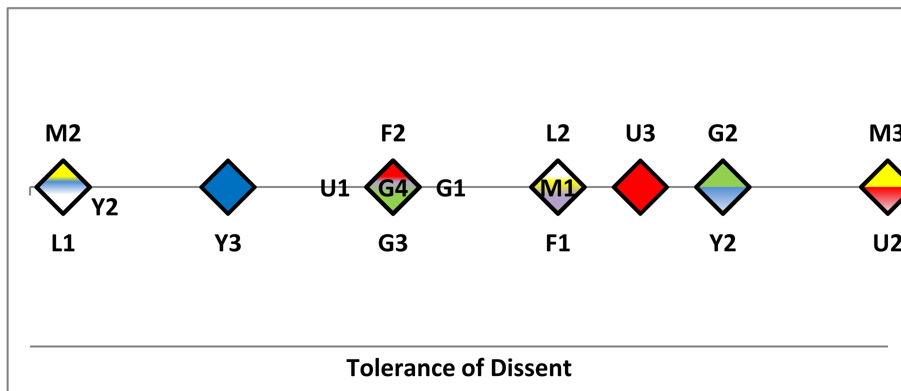

Figure 3: Tolerance of Dissent

Table 4: OLS Regression - Tolerance of Dissent

	Model 1		**Model 2**		**Model 3**		**Model 4**		**Model 5**		**Model 6**		**Model 7**		**Model 8**	
Constant	3,655	2,659	4,672	2,825	6,607*	3,319	-,612	2,802	3,365	4,285	-,486	2,968	1,346	4,535	,913	2,913
Resource	-		**1,345**	1,296	**1,196**	1,292	-		-		-		-		-	
Procedural	-		-		**-,903**	,832	-,235	,814	**-,865**	1,040	-,389	,926	-,577	1,045	-,520	,807
Gender	**-1,378**	,848	**-1,033**	,908	**-1,010**	,900	**-,877**	,891	**-,860**	,963	**-1,129**	1,096	**-1,001**	,956	**-1,213**	,887
Age	,134	,091	,086	,102	,044	,108	,191*	,099	,107	,144	,189	,105	,162	,116	,142	,102
Education	-,120	,131	-,043	,150	-,007	,153	-,062	,137	-,003	,188	-,058	,145	-,077	,146	,006	,141
Perceived Social Impact	-		-		-		-,624	,475	-,180	,636	-,586	,508	-,523	,528	-,208	,552
Perceived Economic Impact	-		-		-		**,860**	,480	**,998**	1,004	**1,114**	,763	**,773**	,525	**,954***	,464
Summary Social Indicators	**-1,578****	,705	**-1,521***	,705	**-1,701****	,719	-		**-1,112**	,896	-		-		-	
Summary Economic Indicators	**1,039**	,580	,269	,941	,012	,962	-		-,513	1,565	-		-		-	
Livelihood	-		-		-		-		-		**-,846**	1,898	-		-	
Social Acceptance	-		-		-		-		-		-		**-1,179**	2,084	-	
Family Close	-		-		-		-		-		-		-		**-2,057**	1,548
n =	17		17		17		15		15		15		15		15	
Standard error of the estimate	1,343		1,338		1,326		1,344		1,372		1,417		1,405		1,284	
Adjusted R^2	0,250		0,255		0,268		0,220		0,187		0,134		0,148		0,288	

The first column for each model is the b-coefficient, and the second column contains the standard error for the coefficient.
* = significant at the 0.1 level, ** = significant at the 0.05 level, and *** = significant at the 0.001 level.

Inclusion

Next, let us look at the relative levels of inclusion in the various groups, see Figure 4. Here, the programs are more closely grouped together, although not as strongly as on the first dimension, political involvement. All the UMCOR groups and the groups without a program fall in the middle level of inclusion. The formal educational groups fall in high levels of inclusion, and middle levels (both high school groups). The YMCA and GAA programs also fall in the high and middle levels of inclusion. Again, the female YMCA group performed worse than the male groups. The program design at YMCA, which purposefully mixed ex-combatants and non-combatants and systematically referred to them as (war affected) youth, resonates with the inclusive tendency of these groups. The GAA groups are relatively dispersed concerning this issue. While the GAA program was designed in such a way that different categories of participants had to be included in every agricul-

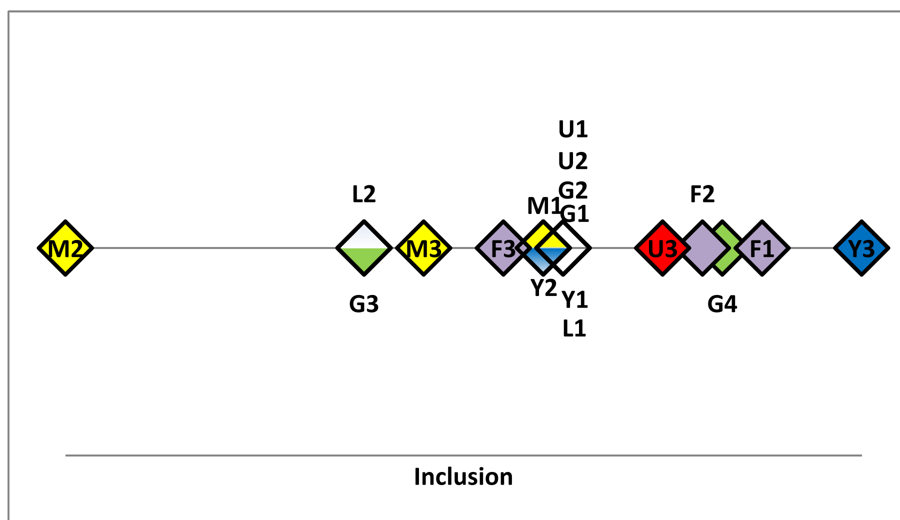

Figure 4: Inclusion

tural project, the area that they were situated in was relatively homogenous in terms of faction and ethnicity. The formal educational group that ended up at relatively high levels of inclusion was the university group. However, the groups involved in formal schooling, often expressed a sense of being treated differently and that the administrative routines made it obvious who was who, causing increased antagonism between the groups to begin with. In the case of the university groups this animosity seems to have disappeared over the course of the program, whereas for group F2 this differentiation did not disappear or may in fact have worsened over course of the program, and it was something they felt originated both among teachers, administration

and the other students. Group F3 mainly experienced this in relation to the other students during registration procedures, but felt that the teachers tried their best to treat them the same.

The program that fared the worst was again MVTC, falling in the middle and low levels of inclusion. These groups often felt abandoned and on the fringes of society, and this lack of feeling included in society may be connected to their limited inclusion of others. The groups outside reintegration programs fall at the middle levels of inclusion. Given that most of the programs encouraged socialization with other factions and sometimes non-combatants, it is not strange that these two groups are more closed off in their view of the Liberian demos, as they missed out on this socialization.

Comparing the GAA and UMCOR groups, we cannot see a clear advantage of either program, suggesting support for either mechanism. Similarly, if we compare the formal educational programs and the YMCA groups, we cannot see a clear advantage for the YMCA groups, in line with the procedural hypothesis.

Interestingly, however, we see in Figure 4 that all the programs that mixed ex-combatants and non-combatants fall, to some extent, in the high levels of inclusion. A mixed composition encouraged the creation of friendship, both across rebel groups but also with non-combatant. While mixed programs, i.e. programs that contained both ex-combatants and non-combatants, certainly encouraged a wider and more inclusive conceptualization of the demos, a mixture in itself is not enough. Those in formal educational programs often expressed a sense of confrontation between non-combatants and ex-combatants that took a while to overcome (and not always), this may have been detrimental to the creation of a wider sense of community and it may also have contributed to their relative levels of antagonism as we shall see later. Thus, a mixed composition of beneficiaries is likely to have the most clear political learning benefits when this is done with routines, e.g. registration routines, that avoid making it apparent who is an ex-combatant and who is not.[9]

Turning to a quantitative analysis of inclusion instead, see Table 5, page 31, we see that being male usually entails less inclusive norms. The impact of the various resource variables is not straightforward, and often not substantively significant. Some seem to have a mainly positive impact (education) while others have a mostly negative impact (perceived social impact, household status and livelihood). Notably, programs where the ex-combatants perceived an economic impact of the program are associated with more inclusive norms at relatively high levels (and at times significant).

[9] Related to this we see another danger of reintegration programs that reveal the individual's identity as a former combatant. Programs that only target ex-combatants may signal to the wider community as well who is an ex-combatant. This may, beyond the political consequences, also have security implications, as has been noted in the case of Colombia (Nussio 2011, p. 135f).

We also see that the more socially accepted the ex-combatant focus group feels on average, the more inclusive the group is as well. Here the procedural categorization has less explanatory value compared to the model for political involvement, although the size of the coefficient is not negligible and it is reported in the right direction, i.e. programs with positive procedural elements in general are associated with higher levels of inclusion. However, if we use a dummy variable that indicates whether the program had a mixed composition of beneficiaries we see that this variable carries considerably more explanatory power (and it is reported as significant). In fact, this variable improves overall fit of the model substantially as well (with 27.5 percent compared to model 8, and with 24.2 percent compared to model 7). Thus, we see here as well that perhaps it is very specific procedural elements of a policy and program that are interpreted and carried over into politics; here the inclusive design of a program is mirrored in the inclusive tendency in politics. A confirmation of the pattern noted above in the discussion of the interview material in itself.

Table 5: OLS regression - Inclusion

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8		Model 9	
Constant	,598	2,056	1,473	2,157	-,181	2,492	-1,323	1,971	-1,639	3,047	-1,197	2,056	-4,082	2,961	-,425	2,328	-5,378*	2,414
Resource	-		1,156	,989	1,284	,970	-		-		-				-		-	
Procedural	-				,772	,625	,702	,573	,544	,739	,546	,641	1,184	,682	-		-	
Gender	-,724	,656	-,428	,693	-,447	,676	-,418	,626	-,165	,685	-,671	,759	-,245	,624	-,544	,671	-,058	,515
Age	,012	,071	-,029	,078	,007	,081	,032	,070	-,011	,102	,030	,073	,072	,075	,002	,071	,139*	,070
Education	,035	,101	,102	,115	,072	,115	,101	,096	,181	,134	,105	,100	,122	,095	,116	,106	-,125	,114
Perceived Social Impact	-				-		-,150	,334	-,079	,452	-,112	,352	-,292	,345	-,059	,355	-,069	,257
Perceived Economic Impact	-		-		-		,696*	,338	1,365	,714	,951	,529	,819**	,343	,534	,337	,853**	,268
Summary Social Indicators	-,008	,546	,041	,538	,195	,539	-		,487	,637	-				-		-	
Summary Economic Indicators	,231	,448	-,432	,718	-,213	,722	-		-1,096	1,113	-				-		-	
Livelihood	-		-		-		-		-		-,849	1,315			-		-	
Social Acceptance	-		-		-		-		-		-		1,661	1,361	,292	1,241	1,540	,999
Mixed Composition	-				-		-		-		-				-		2,052**	,715
n =	17		17		17		15		15		15		15		15		15	
Standard error of the estimate	1,039		1,022		0,996		0,945		0,976		0,982		0,917		1,026		0,744	
Adjusted R^2	-0,288		-0,247		-0,184		-0,002		-0,068		-0,081		0,056		-0,182		0,379	

The first column for each model is the b-coefficient, and the second column contains the standard error for the coefficient.
* = significant at the 0.1 level, ** = significant at the 0.05 level, and *** = significant at the 0.001 level.

Expressed Antagonism

If we then add on the level of antagonism expressed in the group, the groups fall into the pattern seen in Figure 5, below. The programs where the groups are relatively closely placed, here include the UMCOR program (low levels), the GAA program (middle levels) and the groups without program attendance (middle levels). YMCA, MVTC and the formal educational programs all include groups that were placed in the higher end of antagonism, as well as in the middle. Related to this experience, it was evident that within MVTC problems were solved only when an active confrontation occurred between the administration and the participants. Notably, group M3 clearly saw protests and violence as a viable option in politics and this is what their

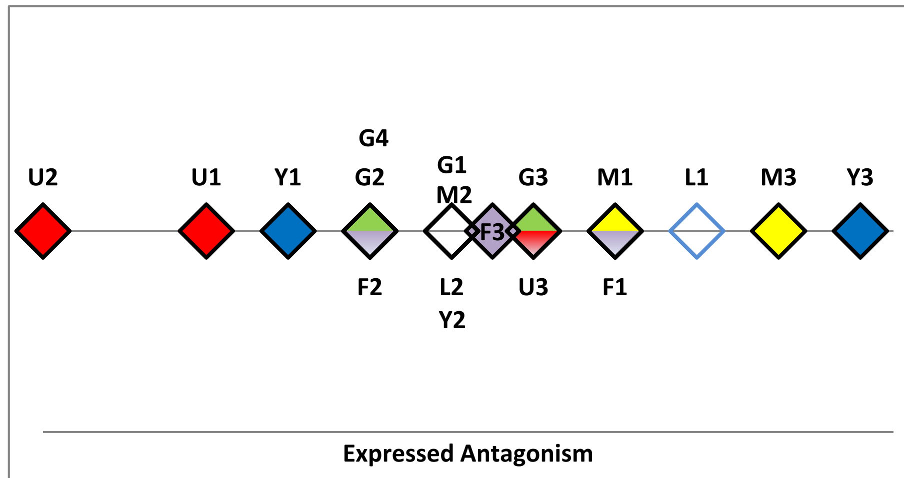

Figure 5: Expressed Antagonism

experience within MVTC had taught them. The ex-combatants at MVTC clearly expressed a sense of a 'tug of war' with the administration at the centre. The YMCA group that had a relatively high level of antagonism was the male MODEL group, and among the formal educational groups, it was the male university group. Group Y3, however, did not have the same experience in the program as M3, rather they had a very cooperative relationship with the administration, and the resolution of problems was dealt with through dialogue instead. The participants in Y3 clearly felt listened to by both teachers and administration. In particular, group Y3 scored high on antagonism, because of their questioning of authority, both in terms of distrust of politicians and the government, as well as the running of elections. Their antagonism thus reflects a disappointment with politics as it is run in Liberia today, rather than choices they have made to express that antagonism in violent ways. In comparison, the groups that specifically recognized violence as an option in politics include the following groups: M3, L2, F1, and

some in group F3. Worth noting, is also that both Y3 and M3, the two groups that scored the highest on antagonism, included past members of MODEL.

Related to this, we see that another aspect of work methods that seems to matter is how communication with the ex-combatants is carried out. Criteria and promises within a reintegration program should from early on be clear to the participants. Transparency matters and in a corrupt society (Liberia has been noted to suffer from chronic and endemic corruption, see e.g. Reno 2008), thus applying rules in a strict and predictable fashion is perhaps even more important. In addition, in a society with low levels of literacy (56 percent of adults are literate in Liberia) vocal communication takes on an even more pronounced role. In the case of the YMCA program the communication was rather open and clear, whereas it was quite problematic in a lot of the high schools and at MVTC. These issues became most pronounced in relation to attendance requirements, subsistence payments and toolkits. The participants from MVTC and the universities often noted and complained about not receiving information and sometimes even receiving contradictory information from management. Similarly, the MVTC groups and F2 clearly felt that the program had not delivered on what they had been promised. This experience with failed promises and ensuing disappointment,[10] creates less basis for a sense of solidarity to develop with society overall; they have less reasons to feel as if they owe anything back to society based on the advantage they gained through their training. Instead, this experience may simply continue to underline how they have felt tricked and used in society before and during the war. In comparison, the YMCA groups more often had a clear view of what they would gain from training, a view that matched quite well with actual outcomes. For them, their expectations were focused on the training itself and the professional knowledge they gained from the training, rather than gaining employment directly after graduating.

As noted before in the discussion concerning inclusion, routines that differentiated between groups, mainly between combatants and non-combatants, tended to cause stigmatization, isolation and also antagonism. Again, this experience resonates with several of the groups that rate high on expressed antagonism as well.

Before moving on, we can explore the dimension expressed antagonism through a quantitative analysis as well, see Table 6, page 35. The procedural variable, changes sign across model specifications, and is never reported as significant. In terms of the resource hypothesis, the variables for perceived

[10] This experience of failed promises and expectations not being met in DDR programs is not an unusual experience. Again, we see in the case of Colombia that this was also quite noticeable, and signaled a break in the pact with the state (Nussio 2011, p. 155f). However, while of course we would want reintegration programs to lead to employment and the like, this might be more difficult to achieve. Instead, ensuring that those participating in the programs have reasonable expectations may be just as important.

impact, when included made the model worse overall, and were not reported as significant. In particular, the social impact as perceived by the ex-combatants only gave rise to a fairly small coefficient, whereas the economic impact was slightly larger, and here the more economic benefits the ex-combatants perceived from the program the less antagonistic they were. While the strength of this variable (perceived economic benefits of the program) was less important in explaining antagonism, this variable has been a consistent good predictor of the various dependent variables. Being male carries positive associations with antagonism. Interestingly, social acceptance also has similar positive associations with antagonism, whereas being in a relationship has the opposite relationship. The economic indicators, livelihood and household status, have a negative relationship with antagonism, i.e. the more deprived you are the more antagonistic in your views.

Turning to the issue of program design, the results of the quantitative analysis are counterintuitive in relation to the discussion of the program experiences above. Including a variable that captures whether the interaction with the program staff and administration was of a confrontational nature suggest that this is associated with lower levels of antagonism. This variable is not reported as statistically significant, but often with rather large coefficients. However, this variable is extremely sensitive to model specifications, but more particularly to specific cases. It seems, as if the observation Y3, carries significant influence, because when this case is not included in the analysis, this variable switches sign. It was noted above, that one thing that Y3 and M3 had in common, was their factional membership: they both consisted of past members of MODEL. To test this, the last models also include a dummy variable which indicates groups that were predominantly composed of former MODEL members. This variable improves the overall fit of the model dramatically (standard error of the estimate improves with 59.7 percent, comparing model 10 and 9) and indeed the variable has a rather large substantive significance, as well as being reported as statistically significant. Being a past member of MODEL is positively associated with higher levels of antagonism.

Table 6: OLS Regression - Expressed Antagonism

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11
Constant	-4,285	-4,768	-5,633	-4,991	-3,446	-7,050*	-7,150	-4,518	-6,603	-9,160**	-9,618***
	(3,221)	(3,575)	(4,086)	(3,827)	(6,422)	(3,571)	(6,401)	(4,635)	(5,500)	(2,264)	(1,986)
Resource	-	-,639	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		(1,640)									
Procedural	-	-	,595	,773	,303	,708	1,194	-	1,042	-,336	-
			(1,048)	(1,112)	(1,558)	(1,055)	(1,299)		(1,361)	(,601)	
Gender	2,515*	2,351*	2,475**	2,017	2,301	1,912	3,306**	4,073**	3,667*	3,468***	3,367***
	(1,027)	(1,149)	(1,063)	(1,216)	(1,444)	(1,069)	(1,279)	(1,521)	(1,655)	(,668)	(,605)
Age	,181	,204	,212	,234	,148	,272*	,229	,228	,253	,325***	,329***
	(,111)	(,129)	(,127)	(,136)	(,216)	(,106)	(,141)	(,151)	(,159)	(,065)	(,061)
Education	,193	,156	,164	,078	,193	,097	,256	,185	,185	,155	,156*
	(,158)	(,190)	(,171)	(,187)	(,282)	(,164)	(,180)	(,201)	(,207)	(,084)	(,079)
Perceived Social Impact	-	-	-	,165	,001	-	-	-	-	-	-
				(,649)	(1,343)						
Perceived Economic Impact	-	-	-	-,555	-1,433	-	-	-	-	-	-
				(,656)	(2,345)						
Summary Social Indicators	,362	,335	,477	-	,453	,483	-	-	-	-	-
	(,855)	(,892)	(,905)		(,953)	(,923)					
Summary Economic Indicators	-1,054	-,688	-,829	-	,237	-	-1,053	-2,208*	-1,625	-1,237*	-1,095**
	(,702)	(1,191)	(,826)		(1,505)		(1,403)	(1,037)	(1,312)	(,534)	(,442)
Livelihood	-	-	-	-	-	-1,042	-	-	-	-	-
						(1,302)					
Social Acceptance	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,552	3,289	3,520	5,012***	5,014***
							(3,168)	(2,665)	(2,764)	(1,145)	(1,078)
Family Close	-	-	-	-	-	-	-,468	-	-	-	-
							(2,764)				
In a relationship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-2,406	-3,347	-3,014	-4,513***	-4,363***
							(2,458)	(2,453)	(2,566)	(1,068)	(,973)
Confrontational bureaucracy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-1,586	-,768	-1,612	-1,358
								(2,031)	(2,351)	(,960)	(,796)
MODEL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,150***	3,024***
										(,558)	(,480)
n =	17	17	17	15	15	17	17	15	15	15	15
Standard error of the estimate	1,627	1,694	1,680	1,836	2,056	1,708	1,598	1,674	1,726	0,696	0,655
Adjusted R^2	0,567	0,531	0,538	0,478	0,345	0,522	0,582	0,566	0,539	0,925	0,934

Standard error for the coefficient within parentheses. * = significant at the 0.1 level, ** = significant at the 0.05 level, and *** = significant at the 0.001 level.

The Access and Interpretive Mechanisms

Concluding this paper, I would like to make two main points. First, peacebuilding (for instance in the shape of DDR-programs) should at least not diminish or undermine the political voice of ex-combatants. Secondly, while this should be seen as the minimal requirement of peacebuilding, there are also missed opportunities for achieving more here. Policy feedback shows us how policy design can accentuate positive and democratic tendencies among the public. Needless to say, DDR-programs are ripe for similar mechanisms of political learning. The dimensions of the ex-combatants' relationship with politics that have been scrutinized here resonate with design elements in some of the various reintegration programs that accentuated different democratic ideals (e.g. participatory work methods, inclusion) or more conflictual practices. Ex-combatants that participated in specific programs tended to emphasize certain values more than others in a way that suggests that indeed there may be a link between program participation and relation with politics. This seems to be particularly true in the realms of political involvement, but also in terms of inclusion and antagonism; thereby exposing how DDR-program can contribute as well as undermine relations with politics that are supportive of democracy (and peace). Particularly the YMCA program clearly emphasized the participants' feelings of efficacy within the program, and this seems to have carried over to the general political arena where these ex-combatants continue to have a heightened sense of efficacy. The programs that included other groups than ex-combatants in the training also seem to have heightened the degree to which the ex-combatants value inclusion in politics more generally. More problematic is the fact that such feelings can be undermined, as in the case of MVTC, where the ex-combatants' sense of efficacy and antagonistic views of politics mirrors their experience within the program; an example of how poor procedural elements in DDR-programs can undermine the political voice of the ex-combatants. This highlights how important it is to take the political ramifications of DDR seriously, but also that it is only this more refined way of measuring political reintegration, in all its components, that have allowed us to see these different effects.

Hence, our work methods matter too, and that success within DDR programs is not just a question of what the programs achieve related to the more narrow goals of economic and social reintegration. This is particularly clear for the YMCA groups, which endured an economic failure, yet clearly felt empowered and experienced a positive political involvement, ultimately they seemed to bare the economic failure much easier, partly because of this greater sense of empowerment. In comparison the experience within MVTC

added additional elements of frustration, in addition to not being able to find work.

If we return to the two policy feedback effects and the mechanisms behind them, it is clear that the YMCA groups often excelled in their political involvement, and in the relative democratic traits of their attitudes. The GAA programs were meant to trigger both mechanisms, and in light of that, the less than impressive outcomes for these groups raise questions about both mechanisms. However, as the resource advantage of the GAA groups was rather limited, we cannot assign the political orientations of these groups to an access mechanism and resource effect. However, as the contexts and selection and recruitment mechanisms for enrolment in YMCA and GAA differed quite considerably, these groups are not suitable for comparison. Thus, the different outcomes, despite both programs being categorized as having positive procedural traits, are not strange. Also, as this examination has showed, the participants' views of the two programs were also quite different, and the procedural traits of the two programs were not identical. For instance, in the case of YMCA, the training was more of a personal choice and seen as a way of developing the individual's career and life choices, than in the case of GAA. Also, the participants in YMCA more clearly identified their training as a benefit of the DDR-program overall, and thus linked with the state of Liberia, whereas for the GAA participants this was not the case, as the training was identified as originating with the NGO community rather than the state, and not seen as a part of the official DDR-program.

Comparing UMCOR and GAA is, on the other hand, more reasonable, although here we are faced with two cases where the political reintegration of the groups may be related to the two hypotheses in this thesis, i.e. we cannot compare the GAA groups with ex-combatants in a similar situation that did not experience a program that carried similar positive cognitive cues as the GAA program nor the benefits of increased socioeconomic resources (basically, we have no rural MVTC group to compare with). The group L1 was set in a rural community, but as noted before, they did not enroll in any program, and the reasons for this are unlikely to be unrelated to these ex-combatants' relationship with politics. The evaluation of the UMCOR groups is crucial in evaluating the resource mechanism, as this was the only case where it was believed to be the sole aspect of the program that mattered for political reintegration. Excluding the older UMCOR group, the political results of the program appear weak at best, despite heightening the social and economic reintegration of its participants. Looking at group U3, however, we see that while their political involvement was rather high, their tolerance levels and degree of inclusion is only moderate, and similar to the other UMCOR groups. In terms of the absolute social and economic resources of the groups, all UMCOR groups did reasonably well, both in terms of social and economic indicators, although group U3 is better placed than the younger groups. However, from this, it does not seem as if we can equate the ad-

vantage in terms of the political reintegration of group U3 to a large advantage in terms of socioeconomic resources, since U1 and U2 experienced similar levels of socioeconomic resources.

The GAA groups fared rather poorly on both dimensions of actual socioeconomic resources, albeit better on the social one. The one exception is group G4 which scored high on the social indicators, which incidentally was also the most inclusive of all the GAA groups. The poor economic circumstances of these groups, however, could simply reflect the overall development of the region in which these groups were carried out. Thus, before we rule out that these groups experienced a boost in resources as a result of the program, the perceived impact of the program in this area is pivotal. However, the GAA groups mainly noted how the program had reinforced the sense of community where they lived, and that the program had increased their sense of social acceptance. However, in terms of the economic advantage, the program impact was more limited. Most of the groups noted that the program had removed them from abject poverty, but mainly because of the development projects, such as clearing the road or building latrines, that GAA engaged in, not because of the agricultural training itself. However, G3 and G4 did note that the training had improved their financial situation as well. However, the resource benefits noted by the UMCOR groups were much more significant.

The economic potential of the programs is certainly limited, especially given the economic infrastructure of Liberia, few of the ex-combatants indicated that they had found a job as a result of the programs they attended. Indeed, the lack of job opportunities was a constant problem discussed in the groups when asked to reiterate the main problems in Liberia. This problem has not gone unnoticed by those working with DDR in Liberia (Tamagini and Krafft 2010), or indeed by other researchers (Jennings 2008). While few ex-combatants noted any economical improvement after attending a reintegration program, more ex-combatants observed that socially their lives had changed as a result of the programs. However, some programs did manage to improve the opportunities of finding a livelihood for the participating ex-combatants. UMCOR and the university students, and to some extent the GAA groups, seemed to have found ways of supporting themselves. Agricultural training in rural areas does allow for the upkeep of a livelihood, even without a developed economic structure, even if this level of upkeep is relatively low. This does not mean that we should boost the number of agricultural programs, as there is not an infinite capacity of absorption because access to land is a crucial limiting factor. It is noticeable, however, that even with relative success in this area, the outcomes in terms of political reintegration for both the GAA and UMCOR programs are not overwhelming. The university group, however, is a clear exception; at this level, the impact and type of training may reflect the typical relationship with education and so-

cioeconomic resources and involvement in politics we are used to from more developed contexts.

While some of the programs may have contributed with cognitive skills and the like, especially the formal educational programs, which are likely to be important in relation to political involvement and conceptualization, this was not as evident as one might suspect. For instance, the university students (who also noted this link for themselves) were clearly vocal in politics, but this was not isolated to those with formal schooling, indeed age and life experience in general seemed to matter more than level of education as such.

However, even the programs where the participants mainly acquired a trade, without the ability to practice it, many expressed a sense of pride of having a professional identity. Being and becoming something other than an ex-combatant is therefore a crucial benefit of some reintegration programs (especially those emphasizing a trade or the university programs). Several ex-combatants talked about the importance of being *somebody in the community*, and having proved that they could follow such a program and achieve something, they also regained the trust of their communities. Being able to identify as something else, both for the individual but also in the community should therefore not be underestimated in the transformation of politics in a post-war context.[11] Similar findings have been noted elsewhere as well (for instance in a study of child soldiers in Sierra Leone by Williamson 2006, pp. 198, 202f; and in a study of ex-combatants in Angola by Porto et al. 2007, pp. 115-118).

Also, we saw in the quantitative analysis of the group data, that groups that perceived an economic impact of programs, often had a large positive relationship with the various dimensions of politics.[12] Whether we should see this as an indication of a resource effect, or perhaps rather an additional aspect of the interpretive mechanism can be discussed, as experiencing that the program enriched their lives in a substantial way, may have created a new bond and pact with society in Liberia that changed they way they saw their own role in society. The quantitative analysis of the group data, largely confirmed the findings from the qualitative analysis, except in the case of the antagonism dimension. While there are clear limitations to the use of OLS regression in relation to the 18 focus groups, these findings are an important complement, especially as the qualitative analysis of, and comparison of, 18 focus groups across several segments can easily become unwieldy.

It is clear that there is a great deal of variation between individuals and groups within the same program, the UMCOR groups (U1, U2 and U3) are a

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[11] Recent experiences and interviews from Liberia also point to the increased importance of professional identities, where it seems that they are partly replacing factional and military identities.

[12] The more the groups perceived a positive economic impact of the program, the more involved they tended to be, the more tolerant they were, and the more inclusive they were, and finally, the less antagonistic they were (the last finding was not robust however).

case in point. The two younger UMCOR groups are undoubtedly fairly removed from politics, whereas the older UMCOR group is more politically engaged. Thus, just as not all programs are created equal, neither are all ex-combatants. While program design cannot overcome everything, some programs are more apt at cultivating and nurturing a democratic political involvement among the ex-combatants than others. But making sure that the type of program fits with the situation of each ex-combatant is crucial. In the case of Liberia, this aspect, often called career counseling, was often poorly managed and executed. Again, the policy feedback literature, has noted that experiencing that the program you participate in, is instrumental to your life goals is important (Mettler and Welch 2004, p. 501). While most participants felt that they had made a choice themselves in terms of what program they would attend, it was most clearly internalized at YMCA that the program had life changing potentials.[13]

The civic education component in all the programs was often rather weak, and subsumed under the psychosocial component. As far as I can tell, it was most impressive at YMCA, and even here the content of this component seems a bit mixed. While some aspects clearly were well planned, such as discussions concerning community acceptance and reconciliation, not all aspects were. While the component included discussions on human rights, interestingly, this catalogue of rights also included 'our right to obey leaders' (as noted by the program officer at YMCA) – perhaps not disseminating the most democratic, participatory and deliberative form of politics as possible. Similarly, when the ex-combatants made note of their perception of the impact the program had had on their own involvement in politics, this was often wound up with connotations of politics as something bad, and indeed linked with conflict, and the message they felt they had received from their trainers was to stay out of politics. So even in cases where these issues have been taken seriously, there are still problems with the details of that design and its implementation.

While formal education had several benefits, not the least of which was the mix between former combatants and civilians, the routines of cash payments and tuition payments often made it obvious to the student body who was who. This often made the interaction between ex-combatants and non-combatants more confrontational in the beginning. Social reintegration is therefore not easy, when administrative routines continue to draw the line between fighter and civilian. Similarly, programs that target a wider au-

[13] Again, we see similarities with experiences in Colombia. Here, Nussio discusses what aspects determined commitment to the reintegration process overall, and notes that the combatants that were 'war fatigued' tended to embrace the program more readily, whereas the combatants that had a nostalgic view of the war did not see the program as an opportunity (Nussio 2011, p. 95). If commitment and viewing the program as instrumental to life goals is such an important determinant of the impact of the program, we start to glimpse here how complicated this chain of events is.

dience than just ex-combatants are more likely to encourage the acceptance of the wider community, than programs that only target ex-combatants. In Liberia, some people seem to feel that not only did the ex-combatants make up the group of perpetrators during the war, but that they were also rewarded for this behavior. Targeted programs are therefore more likely to increase the level of antagonism in the receiving communities, which has been noted elsewhere as well (Knight and Özerdem 2004, p. 513), but more importantly they may also be less beneficial and effective *vis-à-vis* the ex-combatants themselves.

Political reintegration is unlikely to occur in a vacuum, rather it depends on social as well as economic conditions. Development as such should not be part of the goals of DDR, but I would argue that political reintegration is dependent upon at least some absolute level of socioeconomic reintegration. Having the time and ability to be politically involved, however, does not necessarily entail democratic politics. The procedural aspect of the programs can modify how politics is played out, and therefore become increasingly important in relation to any democratization process in a post-war country. It is thus clear that the micro-level relations between peacebuilding and democratization are not absent, nor entirely contradictory. There is room for synergies if program design is considered more carefully. So while the opportunities for synergies are there, there is a great deal of variation in how this played out. Some programs may even exacerbate the feeling of isolation and political inefficacy among the ex-combatants, as may have been the case with the MVTC program.

So what design elements or building blocks should be given specific attention among DDR programs in the future? A few have surfaced in this research project: ensuring a sense of internal and external efficacy within the program, such as including the participants in decisions concerning their training; staff and instructors that listen to and have an open communication with the ex-combatants; work methods that increase trust and communicate reasonable expectations; mixed composition of targeted groups and routines that do not differentiate between the groups in an obvious way; and skills and methods for resolving conflict between such groups if and when they arise. This highlights an important contribution of this paper, not just in relation to DDR policy, but also for policy feedback research: “there is little agreement […] about the specific design elements that produce such effects, or about how policies can best be designed to foster a more inclusive and engaged citizenry” (Bruch et al. 2010, p. 206). This paper has moved this discussion forward.

Finally, I believe this paper has made three important contributions to the policy feedback literature. Firstly, it has broadened the empirical scope of this field in much needed ways: moving beyond established democracies, and the realm of welfare policies, and by expanding the type of data and methods used to study this phenomenon. Secondly, as previously mentioned,

this study has also highlighted which specific design elements of a policy actually seem to matter at the individual level. Thirdly, this paper has contributed to deeper insights into how we should think about these mechanisms, especially in terms of the interpretive mechanism, where I claim that we need to see a specific mirroring between design elements and aspects of the political culture. This explicit matching needs to be demonstrated or we need to be able to show how people go from one experience to conclusions about politics more generally through direct quotes and arguments by the participants themselves, for this hypothesis to be credible.

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Appendix 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	St. Deviation
Age	17.50	35.00	27.1059	5.03370
Confrontational bureaucracy	.00	1.00	.1875	.40311
Education	.00	12.80	7.2667	3.29617
Family Close	.00	1.00	.6439	.31747
Gender	.00	1.00	.7222	.46089
In a relationship	.17	1.00	.6983	.23375
Livelihood	.00	1.00	.4311	.39283
Mixed Composition	.00	1.00	.5556	.51131
MODEL	.00	1.00	.3333	.48507
Perceived Economic Impact	.00	3.00	1.3750	.95743
Perceived Social Impact	.00	4.00	1.9375	.92871
Procedural	.00	1.00	.3889	.50163
Resource	.00	1.00	.2222	.42779
Social Acceptance	.21	1.00	.7711	.23318
Summary Economic Indicators	.33	2.40	1.2899	.69471
Summary Social Indicators	1.17	2.83	2.1124	.50076