

Pride and Sacrifice:
War Memorialization and National Identity in the United States and Germany
Memorialization and its Effects on National and Urban Identities

Natalie Hillerson
Berlin and Jena, Germany – Summer A Term 2015
Julie Villegas and Manka Varghese
University of Washington Honors Program

Group Abstract

Memorials and monuments are lenses into the past, often depicting events integral to the nation's history and formation. Our group is interested in investigating different types of memorialization in Berlin and connecting these structures back to national and urban identities. There are several different types of memorials that we explored, such as government commissioned memorials, uncommissioned memorials, historical buildings, and unintentional memorials. Likewise, we view memorials as non-static structures; monuments can change over time, both influencing and being influenced by individuals who interact with them. Therefore, we studied the ways that memorialization practices affect the formation and constant reformation of both urban and national identities. We hoped to further our project by discovering to what extent these memorials serve as a representation of the national or urban populace based on how citizens and inhabitants felt about the memorials. Our project focused on several different forms of data collection—primarily interviews with a variety of people, but also observations on memorial sites, and general surveys. We also spoke with students and instructors at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena to get their perspective on German and Berlin history. Hopefully through our individual and group investigations, we have attempted to answer our main research questions: How do practices of war memorialization compare in the United States and Germany? To what extent do memorialization and street art represent a changing Berlin identity? How do sites of commemoration resulting from the East/West divide and the fall of the Third Reich both highlight and shape a shifting Berlin identity? What do different people nowadays think about the Nazi architecture, and how does that represent the shift of German identity throughout these years?

Question

War is a huge staple in the history of the United States and Germany, shaping borders, economic forces, and social divisions. Nationalism and patriotism have played into the support, or

lack thereof, in these nations' pasts and led to both positive and negative feelings once the wars were won or lost. Throughout this research project, I am aiming to explore the connections between war memorialization and national identity. I have several questions that I hope to explore: to what extent is national identity intrinsically tied to the presence of memorials, the forced remembrance of things past? In what ways does memorialization affect and shape national identity, both in positive and negative ways? I'm most interested in comparing U.S. and German national identities and seeing the ways that memorials have an effect on how individuals identify within their nation state. Specifically, I am investigating government commissioned memorials in both countries to examine a "national narrative" and how the government sanctioned representation of war events affects a sense of national identity. For example, does the excess of memorials from the post-World War II era foster negative feelings about identifying oneself as German, and therefore lessen the desire to claim a strong national identity? Conversely, does the plethora of memorials in the U.S. that focus on honorable figures and events create a strong sense of national pride because the citizens are forced to selectively remember only good things about America's past?

Background

Monuments and Memorialization

Monuments are broadly defined as "anything that is enduring; an ancient building or site that has survived... because of its historical significance" (Mitter, 2013, p. 159). Likewise, Harjes (2005) describes the main three functions of memorials: "to mourn and commemorate the dead, to educate their audiences, and to politically and socially represent contemporary... citizens" (p. 139). Memorials can also be viewed as snapshots of the society and culture at the time the monument was erected, "revealing underlying social, political, and cultural values" (Stangl, 2003, p. 213). Several different types of monuments exist and have different effects on those who interact with the sites. For example, Mitter (2013) claims that there are two different kinds of memorials: durable and

ephemeral. Durable monuments are “material ones such as sites, buildings, and images,” while ephemeral monuments are “transitory and mobile ones made of fragile materials” (p. 159). For the purposes of my project, I will focus on connecting national identities to government commissioned war memorials—the “durable monuments.”

National Identity

The formation of a nation has been highly documented in the literature, and Sharp (1996) describes this process as “the repetition of symbols that come to represent the nation’s origin and uniqueness” (p. 98). Likewise, even though “it is not possible for all members of any nation to know even a small fraction of the other citizens of the country,” a sense of national identity is achievable because “nations are communities, [containing] very real bonds... perceived as linking distant people in the same territory” (p. 98). Mitter (2013) focuses extensively on the connections between memorials and national identity, specifically focusing on the phenomenon of collective memory, which “has a dialectical relationship with historical reconstructions of the past because both contribute to the idea of nationhood” (p. 163). The idea of a nation is described as “a construct that serves to forge a sense of unity and the feeling of ‘us’ versus ‘them.’” Nationhood, then, is upheld and constructed through collective memory, which “helps to fix our identity in the modern re-use of the past” (p. 163). Through this analysis, it is evident that memorialization, which plays a role in establishing a collective memory, has a huge influence on the formation and upkeep of a national identity, a topic which will be developed further through my individual research question.

Commissioned Memorials

Our group defines commissioned memorials as monuments that are constructed with consent or direction from a governing body. Because a group that represents the large community, city, or nation builds these memorials, a very specific and carefully planned narrative is constructed through these monuments, often attempting to “speak for” an entire population. For example, Harjes (2005)

describes in detail the intricacies of the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe, a publically funded memorial established in 2005 (p. 138). She describes the purpose for this memorial as being “the unified government’s wish to set a signal of integration: the integration of east and west German collective memory” which eventually became almost synonymous to a “democratic form of collective memory” (p. 141). In a similar vein, Sodaro (2013) writes about The Jewish Museum, established in Berlin in 2001 (p. 77). The Jewish Museum was not intended to be a Holocaust museum, but instead to focus on “a celebration of German-Jewish culture and history” (p. 77). Sodaro hypothesizes that the construction of this museum, then, is considered to be a “countermemorial museum” because it rejects the categorization of a Holocaust memorial and thus challenges the typically self-reflexive purposes other memorial sites serve (p. 76-7).

Introduction to United States and German War Memorials

Both the United States and Germany are often considered as countries with great global influence, and this clout may inspire strong senses of national pride and well-developed national identities. According to Niven (2008), “war memorials are amongst the oldest memorials in the world” (p. 39) and generally serve as “focal points for the collective articulation of grief” (p. 44). The United States and Germany have engaged in a multitude of wars that have established borders, redefined social and cultural practices, and changed economic policies. Therefore, war memorials are key in commemorating past events in both countries. Practices of war memorialization have been found to contribute to the nationalism that permeates the United States in particular. For example, Luke (2010) suggests that the National D-Day memorial in Virginia, as well as memorials like it, is a “material manifestation of nationalist sentiments” (p. 558). As Luke explains, public sites of war memorialization have a huge influence on constructing a national identity, and this link could be further elucidated when comparing Germany and the United States.

Studying the ways in which national identities are formed and maintained is extremely important when considering the implications of having a strong national identity. A study done by Huddy and Khatib (2007) found that American participants with a strong national identity were more likely to vote and participate in other civic engagements, both of which influence national leadership and politics (p. 74). Likewise, ethnicity and race can play a role in national identity and national pride, as black and Asian individuals were found to have lower levels of national pride and symbolic nationalism, respectively (p. 71-2). These are important factors to consider, as both Germany and the United States have various immigrant communities that may be unrepresented through memorials, thus having an impact on their national identity and pride.

Methodology

The main research methods used for this project were a survey, distributed online to U.S. students and in-person to an American Studies class at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, analysis of official websites of six chosen memorials, close reading and interpretation of academic articles, and conversations with various German and American individuals on the topic of war memorialization. These four methods will be discussed in further detail in the following sections, as well as an explanation of the selection process for the investigated memorials.

Memorial Selection in the United States and Berlin, Germany

The memorials in the United States chosen for analysis were as follows: the National World War II Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and the National D-Day Memorial. Three memorials were also chosen in Berlin, Germany: Topography of Terror, the Soviet War Memorial Treptow, and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. These six memorials were chosen because all of them were relatively well known by inhabitants of Germany and the United States, respectively, were freely accessible to the general public, and were government funded. Likewise, they represent memorials erected after a significant war in the nation's history. However, several of

the memorials from both countries have unique aspects that I intended to pay special attention to when investigating public opinion and literature on the memorials. For example, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a memorial to a war in which the United States lost, but all of the German memorials also commemorate a war that Germany lost. While I would have liked to study a memorial in Germany that remembered a war in which Germany had a positive role, the abundance of World War II memorials and lack of any other war memorials made this difficult. Furthermore, the Soviet War Memorial Treptow was erected to the Soviet soldiers who died while fighting to liberate Germany from Nazi power. However, it is important to note that Soviet power would later be ousted from divided Berlin by Western forces, and thus the memorial pays tribute to a population that was conquered through the founding of the current German and Berlin society.

The three Germany memorials were visited over the course of the study abroad program; these visits were both for my own personal edification as well as to add context to the memorials I would be writing about. I had visited two of the three United States memorials on previous excursions, though not recent enough to make any valid observations about the memorial sites.

Surveys

In order to obtain public opinion and knowledge of the chosen memorials, two surveys were created to distribute electronically for United States individuals and in-person for German individuals. This survey had several demographic questions, agree-disagree scale questions, and short answer questions. The demographic questions were used to contextualize age, gender, and self-reported nationality and use these details to make further conclusions about the remainder of the survey results. The purpose of the agree-disagree questions were to gauge public feeling about having a sense of nationalism or patriotism, the existence of war memorials in general, and whether there is a connection between being “a part of” a country and placing importance on the presence of war

memorials. These multiple-choice questions were listed as a scale from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree.

The short answer questions focused specifically on the chosen memorials for each respective country and asked for a word association response—two to three words or short phrases that came to mind when thinking of the listed memorial. I hoped to extrapolate a potential pattern in the language used by each participant and categorize the general feelings towards each memorial to hopefully draw conclusions about how the memorials are perceived in the light of the respondents' self-reported nationality. This analysis was done with the help of my peers, who collaborated with me on determining whether or not each unique word or phrase could be categorized as positive, neutral, or negative. A total of five people were included in this determination, and the word or phrase was definitively marked as positive, neutral, or negative based on a majority opinion.

The surveys were both conducted in English. While a German translation for the German students would have been preferable, timing and other issues prevented this goal from coming to fruition. However, a note was included on the short answer section encouraging the students to respond in German if they felt most comfortable, in order to hopefully prevent losing any genuine thoughts due to writing in a non-native language. Due to suggestion from Manuela Mangold, Site Coordinator at Humboldt, one question was changed in the German version as to avoid using the word “pride,” which has negative connotations in Germany, whereas in the United States, “pride” is seen as a positive term, especially when related to patriotism. The question was reworded to hopefully maintain the essence of the original question.

A drawback to the German surveys was the sample size: 15 total responses, nearly half of the number of American responses. Because of this skewed sample size, the survey data must be analyzed more carefully in order to avoid various biases. Likewise, both surveys had a majority of

18-24 year olds, and therefore the results may only be a reflection of the young adult population but not representative of older viewpoints. A copy of both surveys can be seen in the Appendix.

Website Analysis

Another method of data collection was a website analysis of the official websites for each of the six memorials (<https://www.wwiimemorial.com/>, <http://www.nps.gov/vive/index.htm>, <https://www.dday.org/>, <http://www.topographie.de/en/>, <http://www.visitberlin.de/en/spot/soviet-memorial-treptow>, <http://www.holocaust-mahnmal.de>). An official website for the Soviet War Memorial Treptow could not be found, so the information page on the Visit Berlin website was used. The Wikipedia pages for each memorial were also viewed for general historical information about the monuments. The website analysis mainly consisted of observations of the language used, inclusion of details, and length and tone of information given on each webpage. Because I conducted the analyses by myself, the results are subjective and only interpreted through my point of view. Therefore, the analyses could be perceived as biased, even though I hope to be as objective as possible when discussing my findings. The purpose of the website analysis was to investigate the way these memorials were framed by the organization or government department that funded their creation. The way the memorials are being officially presented could be an indicator of a national narrative—ideas or beliefs about the country that the government wants the public to adopt. Comparing the linguistic choices, as well as the website layouts, of the United States and German memorial sites will also help to make conclusions about the ways in which these two countries view their history as manifested in the war memorials.

Outside Research Through Academic Publications

More qualitative research was done through searching academic databases to find publications on the chosen memorials, or about memorials, memory politics, and national identity in general. These articles will aid in supporting my findings as well as supplying a theoretical context for the

concepts with which I am engaging. An effort was made to find articles that focused solely on analyzing the memorials I chose in order to deepen my understanding of the history as well as the societal, political, and cultural effects of the monuments. However, an article emphasizing the Topography of Terror could not be found, but several other articles used did mention this memorial.

Conversations

Lastly, conversations with Germans and Americans alike helped further this project. While no formal interviews were conducted, I had the opportunity to discuss my research project with several Germans and Americans in more informal contexts. While visiting a class in the American Studies department at Humboldt, I was able to speak to a couple students about my project and heard their thoughts on the subject. Likewise, my good German friend visited me in Berlin and we had the chance to converse about my research as well. Throughout the study abroad program, my American peers have also been helpful in discussing various ideas and concepts regarding this project and giving me various insights based on their beliefs and past experiences. Talking with students of both nationalities has helped me gain a unique perspective on the issues of national identity and war memorialization and has deepened the scope of my research.

Findings

Findings Overview

Over the course of my time in Berlin and Jena, my research both contracted and expanded as I began collecting and analyzing data. While my topic became more specific as I decided to only focus on government commissioned war memorialization, my emerging results became broader as I realized that connecting the concept of national identity directly to the presence of war memorials was a lot harder than I expected. However, I still was able to make interesting observations and connections when compiling the survey data and my findings from the website analyses. In the

following sections, I will outline some of these findings, supported by academic articles and conversations with Germans and Americans alike, and conclude by detailing one of the most interesting discoveries I made during this program: the complexities of pride and sacrifice.

Analysis of American Survey Results

A total of 31 people responded to this survey, the majority (96.15%) of which were between the ages of 18 and 24. This young adult age majority is most likely due to the platforms on which I was posting the survey—mainly academic webpages that appealed to college age students. A slight majority (57.69%) of the respondents were female. Most identified themselves as American, though four people stated that they identified as a different nationality. Their responses were kept in with the larger data pool for consistency, and because some of these respondents identified as being both an American and another nationality, and thus could not be omitted from the results.

The chart below summarizes the general agree-disagree survey results, listing the responses for each category as a percentage. A few notable questions will be talked about in greater detail, as well as an overview of the short answer questions.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel a strong sense of pride for my country.	6.45%	19.35%	35.48%	19.35%	19.35%
I believe that being American is an integral part of who I am.	16.13%	41.94%	9.68%	22.58%	9.68%
If I were not American, but everything else about my upbringing was the same, I believe I would have very different values and beliefs.	9.68%	35.48%	16.13%	22.58%	16.13%
When I visit war memorials (like the World War II or Vietnam Memorial), I feel proud of my country and those who have fought for it.	9.68%	29.03%	19.35%	35.48%	6.45%
I believe that the federal government has a responsibility to fund the creation and upkeep of war memorials.	9.68%	38.71%	38.71%	6.45%	6.45%

To truly be an American, one must visit war memorials to appreciate the country's past and remember the men and women who have made sacrifices for the country.	3.23%	9.68%	6.45%	22.58%	58.06%
If a nation has no monuments about the wars its men and women have fought in, then this nation also lacks a sense of pride for its past.	3.23%	22.58%	9.68%	32.26%	32.26%

These questions were designed to hopefully extrapolate general feelings about national identity, war memorialization, and any connection or link between the two. As seen through the first two questions, the majority of respondents felt that being American was an integral part of their identity, though in general, the respondents did not feel a strong sense of pride for their country. This distinction is interesting, as it is clear that the participants generally do have a sense of national identity, but this national identity isn't marked by strong nationalism or patriotism. When asked whether or not the respondents felt proud of their country when visiting war memorials, 38.71% responded in the affirmative, and 41.93% responded in the negative. This result was particularly striking to me, as there appears to be an even split between generally agreeing with the statement and generally disagreeing. I had hoped that this question would be most helpful in getting a sense for the connection between national identity and war memorialization, but it appears that there is no clear answer, and that the way one identifies themselves in relation to their country is not entirely dependent on their interactions with and feelings towards war memorials.

While most of respondents did think that the federal government has a responsibility to fund the creation and upkeep of war memorials, indicating that war memorialization is important on a national level, the participants overwhelmingly disagreed with the last two questions in the survey which focused again on linking national identity and war memorialization. Just over 80% of the respondents disagreed that visiting war memorials is integral to being American, and over 60% thought that a nation with no war memorials did not necessarily lack a sense of pride for its past.

These results indicate that there is not a clear-cut connection between war memorialization and national identity. Instead, there are many more factors that complicate the concept of national identity, and while war memorialization might play into the formation of national identity, it is apparently not the driving factor to its development.

The short answer responses intended to gauge general feelings towards the three chosen memorials and investigate any obvious links to national identity within the responses. Because the participants were instructed to respond with 2-3 words or phrases, the number of unique responses for each memorial varied. For the National D-Day Memorial, there were a total of 19 positive, 14 neutral, and 17 negative words or phrases. For the National World War II Memorial, there were 14 positive, 10 neutral, and 22 negative responses. Lastly, for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, there were 8 positive, 5 neutral, and 41 negative responses. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the respondents felt most negatively towards the Vietnam War and its memorial, likely because this war was notorious in American history for being controversial and unsuccessful. Common words or phrases among all of the short answer questions include: pride/proud (listed 5 times), sacrifice (11 times), sad/sadness (25 times), and thankful/grateful (5 times). In general, the positive sentiments tended towards “respecting and honoring,” while the negative sentiments generally noted the “brutality of war” and the “suffering” of the victims from all countries. One participant stated that, when thinking of the National D-Day Memorial, they were “[g]lad we helped stop Hitler.” The use of “we” here is interesting, since “we” implies togetherness, even though this respondent could not have directly participated in the war efforts. However, this “we” could be interpreted as a strong connection with one’s country and a feeling of national identity that was inspired by thinking of the memorial. While no other obvious connections between national identity and war memorialization could be determined, the overwhelmingly negative responses for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial do indicate that when the nation loses, the inhabitants are “frustrated” and believe the war to have been a

“mistake, ill advised,” and “terrible.” These feelings are then captured in the memorial itself, standing as a reminder of these negative emotions and resentment towards America at large for getting involved in the war.

Analysis of German Survey Results

The surveys were distributed in an American Studies classroom at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and had a total of 15 responses, with the majority (66.67%) being between the ages of 18 and 24. As with the American survey, a majority (60%) of the participants were female. Most identified as German, but two participants noted that they were Russian, one was Greek, and one person described his nationality as, broadly, “European.” These students were included in the data set for consistency, though some interesting outliers will be discussed following the overview of survey responses.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
When I think of my country, I am happy to be a part of its culture.	6.67%*	40.00%	40.00%	6.67%	6.67%
I believe that being German is an integral part of who I am.	13.33%	40.00%	33.33%	0%	13.33%
If I were not German, but everything else about my upbringing was the same, I believe I would have very different values and beliefs.	14.29%	28.57%	7.14%	35.71%	14.29%
When I visit war memorials, I feel proud of my country and those who have fought for it.	6.67%**	13.33%	20.00%	20.00%	40.00%
I believe that the government has a responsibility to fund the creation and upkeep of war memorials.	26.67%	40.00%	26.67%	6.67%	0%
To be a German, one must visit war memorials and appreciate the country’s past and remember the men and women who fought for the country.	0%	40.00%	6.67%	26.67%	26.67%
If a nation has no monuments about the wars its men and women have fought in, then this nation also lacks a sense of pride for its past.	0%	6.67%	33.33%	33.33%	26.67%

* The one respondent who answered “strongly agree” identified herself as Greek.

** Both the “strongly agree” and “agree” responses were from participants who did not identify themselves as German.

Similar to the American survey, these questions were posed in order to gain an understanding of how a sample of German students view national identity and war memorialization. Like the American respondents, most of these students believed that the federal government had a responsibility to create and upkeep memorials. One respondent added a comment to this question, however, noting, “It’s also our responsibility to help preserving memorials,” which raises the notion that not only is the government responsible for preserving physical manifestations of history, but the inhabitants of that nation also have a responsibility to do so. This implies a sense of community surrounding memorials and, as I interpreted it, acts as a contributing factor to creating national identity because the population has a responsibility to work together for a common goal for the nation.

One of the most striking responses, though unsurprising, was to the question: “When I visit war memorials, I feel proud of my country and those who have fought for it.” All of the self-identified Germans answered either “neutral,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree,” which I expected due to the history of violence associated with World War II and the Nazi regime. However, as discussed with Manuela and other German residents, the word “proud” in this question might have skewed the results. Using this word and knowing its negative connotations in German culture, this question might have been perceived as more extreme than intended. If the wording had been changed before distributing the surveys, I still believe that the general trend towards negative responses would have remained, but this is important to note and might be a source of bias or inconsistency in the data, especially when comparing to the American results.

An interesting distinction between the American and German survey results that was surprising to me was the overwhelmingly negative American response to whether or not being

American/German hinges upon visiting war memorials and remembering the sacrifices men and women made for the respective country. I had expected the American responses to be more positive, because of the constant nationalism and patriotism I see permeate the culture, whereas I expected the German responses to be more negative, assuming that citizens would want the wars of the past to be forgotten and not be necessary to understand in order to “be German.” However, this expectation was reversed, and while both American and German responses had a majority of “disagree” and “strongly disagree” responses, the American surveys had a much more negative reaction to the question, while the German surveys had a larger positive response. I believe this may be due to a “responsibility to remember and confront the past,” as one student at Friedrich-Schiller Universität noted. Because the history of the country is so engrained in the culture and society, being German might indeed depend in some part around remembering the wars through war memorials. While the survey results by no means indicate this conclusively, there does seem to be a stronger connection between national identity and war memorialization in Germany than in the United States.

Many of the German participants did not completely answer the short answer questions, but the majority of the responses were negative when responding to the Topography of Terror and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. Most strikingly, one participant noted that they were reminded of “what happens, when Germans are proud of being German” when thinking of the latter memorial. Again, “pride” here is used in a negative sense, which will be discussed more in a later section. Similar sentiments were also expressed throughout the surveys, with “guilt,” “terror,” and “shameful” being used to describe reactions towards the monuments. As with the American surveys, no conclusive connections are obvious between national identity and memorialization, but it is clear that pervasive negative feelings about the past, particularly the World War II era, still exist among Germans, even those who were not alive during or in the years closely following the war.

The Soviet War Memorial Treptow was an interesting memorial, as it is dedicated to Soviet soldiers who once inhabited East Berlin and were forced out when the Western powers took control and established the current society. One Russian who took the survey claimed that she felt an obligation to visit the memorial and stated that it is “good [that] there is a Russian monument like this.” The other Russian respondent said she felt both “proud,” “sad,” and “ashamed of today’s racism in Russia.” While not German, these responses still connect personal emotions and ties to a national identity that is encapsulated through thinking of and viewing a memorial. Likewise, the German responses to this memorial were overall neutral, with either the question left blank or statements like feeling “hardly anything.” While the Russian responses were emotionally positive or negative, the German responses were mostly neutral, again indicating that there is some connection between feeling a personal link to a nation and being affected by war memorials that symbolize that nation’s past.

Website Analysis Findings

To gain qualitative data, I conducted an analysis of each official website for the chosen memorials. Language use, website layout, and inclusion of detail were among the items noted for each site, and I hope to summarize my findings as well as connect these findings with a narrative about national identity that the government is attempting to promote through the memorials, and to a certain extent, through the websites about the memorials.

The D-Day Memorial webpage is thoroughly detailed, in-depth, and connected to current cultural trends—the memorial has its own Twitter account. On the landing page, there is a short blurb about the memorial, giving a brief historical background as well as an overview of what to expect as a visitor to the memorial. Words like “stylized,” “haunting,” “sacrifice,” “valor,” “fidelity,” and “striking” are used to describe the memorial, which aims to give visitors “both an educational experience as well as an emotional one.” Much emphasis is placed on the lives lost during the

invasion of Normandy, France, and the memorial page even boasts having the most complete list of Allied soldier names who died in this particular battle. As this list shows and as Luke (2010) states, “powerful nations [require] the solemn recognition and continuous celebration of individual deaths for civic continuity and renewal” (p. 547). Luke (2010) discusses at great length how the D-Day Memorial serves as a manifestation of nationalism and the individual’s connection to the greater nation by memorializing the deaths of soldiers. Indeed, the memorial has only “minor historical displays” because its main focus is to “embody the sacrifice, fidelity, and valor of the entire American nation” (p. 550-1). This analysis rings true when looking at the webpage, focusing less on history and more on idealizing the deaths of soldiers in order to remind the American public of the sacrifices made to ensure freedom for all citizens.

The World War II Memorial page is similar in its glaring nationalism, only perhaps more extreme than the D-Day website. Similar to the D-Day page, the WWII site contains historical information as well as the history of the monument and its construction. The webpage is plastered with red, white, and blue and again describes the memorial with words and phrases such as: “this memorial is a monument to the spirit, sacrifice, and commitment of the American people.” This phrase, both specific to Americans as well as general to “people,” not just soldiers, aims to create a connection with the viewer and include them in this American community, whether or not the visitor was alive during the war. The website has a link to a “Facts” page, and this section was an interesting look at the purported purpose of the memorial. This memorial aims to “inspire future generations of Americans, deepening their appreciation of what the World War II generation accomplished in securing freedom and democracy.” Moreover, this monument serves as “an important symbol of American national unity, a timeless reminder of the moral strength and awesome power that can flow when a free people are at once united and bonded together in a common and just cause.” These

patriotic sentiments explain that the memorial is supposed to remind people of the ties to their nation and promote a sense of “national unity.”

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial website is much different than the previous two American war monuments. This site is a subpage on the National Park Service main website, and as such the information on the page is very sparse. The title of the page is “The Wall That Heals” and has a general statement about the purpose of the memorial: simply, “honoring the men and women who served in the controversial Vietnam War...” Following several links on this page, such as “Read More” and “Learn About the Park,” leads, respectively, to a general overview of directions to the memorial and information about the National Park Service. Unlike the previous two memorials, there is a dearth of proud or nationalistic language—no text about inspiring future generations or instilling a sense of national community. Rather, according to a video under the “Photos and Multimedia” link, negative sentiments are associated with this memorial; words like “loss,” “sacrifice,” “wound,” and “suffering” are mentioned to describe the memorial and the emotions it elicits from the viewer. This attention to negative phrases and the lack of detail on the website might point to feelings of shame surrounding the war, as the Vietnam War was “controversial, morally questionable, and unsuccessful” (Wagner-Pacifici & Schwartz, 1991, p. 381). This also explains why the website was undetailed, as “incorporating painful events into the collective memory” might not be a goal of the government when the war was largely seen as a mistake by the general public (p. 381). As evidenced even in the name of the memorial, the focus is on the Vietnam Veterans as opposed to the Vietnam War itself, signaling a shift in the intended purpose of the memorial.

Much like the Vietnam War Memorial website, the majority of German memorial webpages contain only sparse emotive language. In fact, the Soviet Memorial Treptow lacks any sort of official webpage, and instead the most informative website is the tourism-centered Visit Berlin site. Most of the survey responses from Germans, as previously stated, had little to nothing to say about the Soviet

Memorial Treptow, and this similarly mirrors the amount of information and detail present on this unofficial website. The statements presented on the page are purely historical and factual, such as describing the memorial as being “100,000 square meters” and having “memorial slabs and frescos depicting the course of the war... arranged in long tiers of straight lines.” The lack of detail on the website combined with the lack of input from German students indicates that this memorial has little meaning or emotional connections in the minds of the German public. Allan Cochrane (2006) notes that the memorial itself is “inviolable, visited by the occasional tourist” and generally receives less attention from the local population than other memorials (p. 12). The lack of interest might stem from the memorial not directly relating to the German populace or a German national identity, since the focus of the monument is on another nation entirely. Indeed, the memorial was designed and erected by the Soviet Union in an effort “to inscribe its story of victory on conquered territory” (Stangl, 2003, p. 214). While the memorial was intended to address both Soviet and German audiences (p. 230-1), the survey results and website analysis indicate that the German audience today has little emotional connection to the monument.

The Topography of Terror website, on the other hand, is incredibly detailed, containing many subpages documenting diverse aspects of the war. However, like the other chosen German war memorials, this site contains no emotive language, and instead serves as a large database for exhibitions and information on World War II. Similarly, the webpage for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is a source of information rather than a place for nationalistic, positive language. This site does mention that the purpose of the memorial is for “honouring and remembering” the Jewish people who were killed during the holocaust, language which describes an emotional purpose to the monument rather than simply listing logistical or factual statements. Another interesting thing to note about the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is that it is commonly referred to as a “mahnmal” rather than the typical German word for “memorial,”

“denkmal.” The word “mahnmal” is often used to describe Holocaust memorials and translates more specifically to a “warning monument” (Marcuse, 1998, p. 331). This linguistic nuance is reflective of the general regret and guilt that the German population still feels towards the tumultuous history of the Nazi regime, and this national guilt is manifested in these “mahnmals.” The presence of Holocaust memorials may indicate a “stabilization of national identities,” as Niven (2008) argues, because the German public no longer feels the need to ignore and suppress their country’s history, and therefore, “resistance narratives are no longer needed” (p. 42).

Both the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and the Topography of Terror have a museum component to their memorial and the museums are a central focus of their respective websites. This differs from the United States memorials, which appear to be mostly for a symbolic, emotional experience rather than an in-depth educational one. Perhaps this difference is indicative of a forced remembrance of the crimes of Germany’s past and a constant reassurance to the public that these crimes will be remembered, not repeated, through abstract memorials as well as informational museums. The United States, which does not have this pressure to remember, therefore does not feel an obligation to offer in-depth information about the history of its past at war, but instead focuses on the tragic lives lost in the fight to victory.

Pride and Sacrifice

As the title of my project implies, the terms “pride” and “sacrifice” have grown increasingly complicated as my research has progressed. This linguistic discovery mirrors the realization that national identity is a hard concept to define, likely because the words used to describe national identity are similarly complex. In this section, I would like to briefly discuss my findings on these terms based on conversations I had with my peers and friends on the trip. These findings are relatively underdeveloped, as I did not have the chance to explore these through more in-depth methods while abroad, but I look forward to investigating these linguistic nuances in the future.

While asking my peers to help me categorize the short answer questions on my surveys, many of them found it hard to place the word “sacrifice” definitively into a positive, neutral, or negative category. In fact, the consensus was split down the middle and there was no clear answer to whether this word was positive or negative. In my own analysis, I had decided that “sacrifice” was undeniably negative—sacrifice meant dying, and dying is a negative event. However, after asking my fellow researchers why they classified it as positive or negative, one person explained that “sacrifice,” to her, meant that someone was giving their life for a larger cause, which is a selfless and ultimately positive attribute and therefore elicits a positive emotion. I had never thought about “sacrifice” in those terms, and this realization forced me to analyze my survey data more carefully, and eventually think about war memorialization more carefully. Each person’s definitions of words impact the way individuals react to and interact with memorials, and these definitions come to fruition through unique experience and how that individual sees his or herself in relation to a national identity. For example, one person could look at a war memorial and think of sacrifice, which to them relates to grief and sorrow. Another person could view the same memorial and think of sacrifice, but be reminded instead of honor and respect.

The term “pride” has also become less clear-cut than expected, especially in terms of German national identity. When asking my friend, who was born and currently lives in Germany, about this word, she informed me that no one would ever say or show that they’re proud of being German, because doing so would mean “they’re a Nazi.” She went on to describe an instance where the office she worked in received a food delivery, which proclaimed on the box that the food came from “the finest of German farms.” My friend recalled her entire office being very confused and uncomfortable, wondering why the food supplier made a point to note the food’s German origins. Even this small instance of “German pride” was perceived as improper. Hearing her anecdote came as a huge surprise to me, as “pride” in America is omnipresent; the term appears in many famous, nationalistic songs

and is plastered on products that were “proudly made in the U.S.A.” Again, I had to approach my survey as well as the data analysis differently, as I realized I could not use “pride” in the same context in Germany as I could in America. Likewise, I gained a new insight on German national identity, one that appears to reject any sort of deep appreciation for the country’s history and current achievements. While it is not surprising that Germans would not be proud of some of their nation’s past, it is still interesting that this shame manifests so deeply in today’s view towards pride for one’s country.

Conclusion

National identity is a difficult concept to define, especially in recent years as globalization and the interconnectedness of people and populations becomes more apparent. As Biesecker (2002) writes, “the question, what does it mean to be an American has... never been more difficult to answer” (p. 394). Similar sentiments are also found for Germany, specifically Berlin: “Berlin... is reimagining itself through the process of dealing with, incorporating, reflecting on or attempting to write off its ghosts...” (Cochrane, 2006, p. 21). Cities and nations are constantly in the process of change, growth, transformation, and reconstruction. Reflections of this intricate progression, national identities are similarly as complex. National identities hinge deeply on memory—after all, “collective remembering... provides cultural identity and gives a sense of the importance of the past” (Sturken, 1997, p. 1). Memorials and monuments serve as a place of remembering the past, and war memorialization is especially prevalent as a way to commemorate the nation’s history.

The connections between national identity and war memorialization, however, are not so easy to deduce. Participating in this research project has challenged me to rethink my own perceptions of national identity as well as the words that are often used to define this concept. Ultimately, I wish that I could make more tangible conclusions based off of the data I collected and the analyses I performed; because I have discovered that many factors play into national identity, not just war

memorialization and memory politics, determining the reasons for an identity's formation and development is difficult to elucidate. However, I have been able to make interesting observations and notice compelling patterns that raise questions for future research. The surveys given to American individuals indicated that while the respondents generally felt being American was an integral part of their identity, they did not necessarily feel proud of their country when viewing war memorials. This statement is also true for the German responses, but with an even more negative reaction towards viewing war memorials and feeling a sense of pride for their nation. However, the German individuals did tend to agree that visiting war memorials and understanding the history of the nation was an important aspect of being German, whereas the American responses vastly disagreed with this question. The difference in these responses indicates to me that there is similarly a difference in the way residents in either country view their nation in relation to war memorials, though the details of this difference is still a question to be investigated.

The websites of each memorial also offered insights into the purpose of each memorial. The United States memorials were often sprinkled with emotive language that emphasized symbolic purpose of the monument—to provide visitors with an emotional experience. The National World War II Memorial webpage was particularly notable, as many patriotic words and messages permeated the site's "purpose" section, urging future generations of Americans to be inspired by the memorial. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial site was a bit different, and more closely resembled a German memorial webpage due to its sparse and historically focused details. In that vein, the German memorial webpages were largely much different than the American sites, with little to no emotive language used and only presenting historical facts as the purpose of the monuments. The Soviet Memorial Treptow had no official website at all, and only a short paragraph on its purpose on the Visit Berlin tourism website. These differences in website content indicate to me that the United States memorials are intended to evoke emotions from viewers, specifically positive and patriotic

emotions—remembering fallen soldiers and other lives lost to preserve American values. On the other hand, the German websites suggest that the memorials are supposed to only help viewers remember historical events, while avoiding imposing any specific emotions. Perhaps the lack of emotive language is to avoid the shame and guilt that comes with remembering the history of Germany's role in World War II, or perhaps no emotional language was used in order for viewers to create their own emotional experience without priming or suggestions from official websites.

While some questions were answered during this research project, many questions were raised. The most interesting question to me was a matter of linguistics and the deeper meanings of words depending on context and location. As discussed in the Findings section, “pride” and “sacrifice” both took on new, complex meanings after discussions with peers and friends and gave new insight into how linguistic nuances inform and shape an understanding of national identity. Furthering on this topic, I am also interested in exploring more about the use of “we” or “us” when referring to past actions of a nation (regarding the “Glad **we** helped stop Hitler” survey response). When my German friend first visited me in 2011, she was surprised when I used “we” to describe the actions of the United States during a history lesson; she remarked, “Well, *you* weren't involved, so why did you say ‘we’?” This comment took me aback, as I questioned my verbal choices and why I felt a connection, even subconsciously, to an event that took place well before my lifetime. When talking with a student from Friedrich-Schiller Universität about the Dresden bombings, he remarked, “We kind of deserved it.” I asked him why he used “we,” and he explained he felt pressured to atone for the events of Germany's past. I think these small linguistic choices are not only interesting, but also reflective of how we view ourselves in relation to our country, and exploring this topic more in-depth would lead to fascinating discoveries.

References

- Biesecker B. (2002). Remembering World War II: The rhetoric and politics of national commemoration at the turn of the 21st century. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 88(4). 393-409.
- Cochrane A. (2006). Making Up Meanings in a Capital City: Power, Memory and Monuments in Berlin. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 13(1). 5-24.
- Harjes K. (2005). Stumbling Stones: Holocaust Memorials, National Identity, and Democratic Inclusion in Berlin. *German Politics & Society*, 23(74). 138-151.
- Huddy L., & Khatib N. (2007). American Patriotism, National Identity, and Political Involvement. *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(1). 63-77.
- Luke T. W. (2010). The National D-Day Memorial: Art, Empire, and Nationalism at an American Military Monument. *New Political Science*, 32(4). 547-559.
- Marcuse P. (1998). Reflections on Berlin: The Meaning of Construction and the Construction of Meaning. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 22(2). 331-338.
- Mitter P. (2013). Monuments and Memory for Our Times. *South Asian Studies*, 29(1). 159-167.
- Niven B. (2008). War Memorials at the Intersection of Politics, Culture and Memory. *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 1(1). 39-45.
- Sharp J. R. (1996). Gendering Nationhood. In N. Duncan (Ed), *BodySpace* (97-107). London: Routledge.
- Sodaro A. (2013). Memory, History, and Nostalgia in Berlin's Jewish Museum. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 26(1). 77-91.
- Stangl P. (2003). The Soviet War Memorial in Treptow, Berlin. *Geographical Review*, 93(2). 213-236.
- Sturken M. (1997). *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Wagner-Pacifici R., & Schwartz B. (1991). The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past. *American Journal of Sociology*, 97(2). 376-420.

Youkhana E. (2014). Creative Activism and Art Against Urban Renaissance and Social Exclusion – Space Sensitive Approaches to the Study of Collective Action and Belonging. *Sociology Compass*, 8(2). 172-186.

Cultural Sensitivity

Pre-Journey

Growing up in the United States, I have some bias as I have been exposed to American memorials and do identify as American (though I can't say that I have a particularly strong sense of national pride or a deep connection with being American). I also understand that while I have learned many things about German and American history throughout my education, I have done so from a fairly neutral position and am able to talk about events in history without shame, embarrassment, or discomfort. However, this is not always true in other countries with different education systems. German inhabitants may be wary to talk freely about the country's tumultuous history, particularly in relation to the monuments I hope to investigate. Therefore, I must be careful and respectful when broaching these topics and understand that while I may feel comfortable speaking about German and American history, others may still feel the open wounds from previous generations and be hesitant to share their thoughts.

Post-Journey

I think one of the most surprising things for me upon investigating war memorialization and national identity is the complexity of language. As mentioned before, and as evidenced in the title of this paper, I was extremely surprised to find two words, which I had previously assumed to be fairly straightforward and well-defined, to be much more complicated than I had anticipated. When crafting my survey to send to the German students, Manuela emailed me and noted that using the word "pride" might not have the intended effect, because "pride" has very different connotations in Germany than in the United States. Likewise, I discussed with my peers whether the term "sacrifice" was a positive or negative term when going through my U.S. survey responses. The interpretation varied from person to person, and proved to me even further that linguistic meaning, specifically with these two words, is a lot more complicated than I expected. These realizations then affected how I

worded surveys and furthermore how I interpreted the results—all in all, much more carefully. I found it harder to make valid conclusions, especially regarding the American survey responses, since I couldn't say with any degree of certainty what “sacrifice” meant to them, and therefore, their feelings towards a national war memorial. However, realizing these nuances has allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of national identity and memorialization and has made me even more interested in learning more about this topic.

After completing this research project, I believe that understanding the connections between national identity and war memorialization are important. Personally, I have always been fascinated by the ways in which static, inanimate objects can influence memory, beliefs, and actions without conscious understanding of this effect. Undoubtedly I have found researching war memorialization and its effect on producing and reshaping a national identity to be enthralling, but I believe that this relationship also holds both national and global importance. A lot of my research falls under the broader domain of memory politics, and I believe that it's extremely important to investigate what the collective memory of a nation is and how that memory of the past affects treatment of people in the present. Monuments can foster this collective memory and influence how individuals view and think about an event or group of people based on the nation's history—or rather, how the nation's history is represented through memorialization.

In reviewing the survey responses from Americans, I learned that I held a much harsher viewpoint on Americans than was evidently deserved based on the responses. I had expected much more positive, nationalistic responses, especially in some of the more extreme questions. However, I was surprised by the overwhelmingly negative response on these questions, and learned that I had a skewed vision of the “typical American.” I always imagined a very nationalistic, patriotic, populace that would defend the U.S. even in the face of its faults. The survey responses showed me that, at least for the young adult demographic, this is entirely not true, and that many people hold the same

critical view of the United States as I do. However, learning that I have biases against fellow citizens has helped me realize and reevaluate how I interact with the survey results and conversations with other Americans.

Appendix

United States Survey

Demographics information:

- Age:
- Gender:
- Do you consider yourself American?
- If not, what nationality would you consider yourself?

PART ONE

I feel a strong sense of pride for my country.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

I believe being American is an integral part of who I am.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

If I were not American, but everything else about my upbringing was the same, I believe I would have very different values and beliefs.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

When I visit war memorials (like the World War II or Vietnam Memorial), I feel proud of my country and those who have fought for it.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

I believe that the federal government has a responsibility to fund the creation and upkeep of war memorials.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

If a nation has no monuments about the wars its men and women have fought in, then this nation also lacks a sense of pride for its past.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

To truly be an American, one must visit war memorials and appreciate the country’s past and remember the men and women who fought for the country.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

PART TWO

Please write down 2-3 words or short phrases that describe your reactions when you think of the following war memorials. For example, try to complete the sentence: “When I think of X memorial, I feel _____ / I am reminded of _____.”

National World War II Memorial

D-Day Memorial

Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Germany Survey

Demographics information:

- Age:
- Gender:
- Do you consider yourself German?
- If not, what nationality would you consider yourself?

PART ONE

When I think of my country, I am happy to be a part of its culture.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

I believe being German is an integral part of who I am.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

If I were not German, but everything else about my upbringing was the same, I believe I would have very different values and beliefs.

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Neutral* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree*

When I visit war memorials, I feel proud of my country and those who have fought for it.

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Neutral* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree*

I believe that the government has a responsibility to fund the creation and upkeep of war memorials.

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Neutral* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree*

If a nation has no monuments about the wars its men and women have fought in, then this nation also lacks a sense of pride for its past.

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Neutral* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree*

To be a German, one must visit war memorials and appreciate the country's past and remember the men and women who fought for the country.

Strongly Agree *Agree* *Neutral* *Disagree* *Strongly Disagree*

PART TWO

Please write down 2-3 words or short phrases that describe your reactions when you think of the following war memorials. For example, try to complete the sentence: "When I think of X memorial, I feel _____ / I am reminded of _____." Feel free to respond in German.

Sowjetisches Ehrenmal Treptow

Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas

Topographie des Terrors