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HISTORY TEACHING, IDENTITY, AND SECTARIANISM IN LEBANON : How the Absence of recent history in schools affects National Identity

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How the Absence of recent history in schools affects National Identity

By Margaret Folcarelli

Abstract

This thesis looks at the history of Lebanon along with the background of its system of education. The particular nature of Lebanon as a small, religiously diverse country with a confessional system of government, at the center of a volatile region has played a large part in its civil strife. This thesis looks at the nature of teaching history in Lebanon, which does not include events past 1960, and how it increases sectarian sentiment. The study explores the history of Lebanon as having affected the system of education, and the educational system in general in the country. This study explores what effect Lebanese history has on sectarianism or to the contrary, social cohesion. A comparison between the post-conflict education reform in Lebanon and Rwanda serves to illuminate this study of curriculum as an integral part of building social cohesion. Lebanese student opinion is also included in the form of student survey results distributed to Lebanese University students. It will be argued that because of the absence of recent history in schools, Lebanese students are left to rely on subjective sources for history, which creates further social divides.

Key Terms

Lebanon, Education, Curriculum, History, Civil War, Sectarianism, Social Cohesion

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Copyright statement:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction p. 1

Methodology p. 5

Review of Literature p. 9

Chapter 1: History of Lebanon p. 12

Chapter 2: Education and Identity, What a Lebanese education means p. 28

Chapter 3: Lebanese Students' Opinion p. 49

Conclusion p. 65

Appendix p. 69

Bibliography p. 70

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 p. 7

Figure 2.1 p. 51

Figure 2.2 p. 52

Figure 2.3 p. 53

Figure 2.4 p. 54

Figure 2.5 p. 55

Figure 2.6 p. 56

Figure 2.7 p. 57

Introduction

> *We can say that after more than 12 years since the Ta'if Accord, the teaching of history in the country remains as it has always been: subject to the interests and shifts of different groups, and that agreement to unify curricula and textbooks as means to unify the people and the country have produced nothing new, except more of the same debate and casuistry that goes as far back in the history of the country as the framing of the Lebanese Constitution in 1926.*[1]

The Lebanese history curriculum, I was told when I arrived in Beirut, is a "sensitive subject". I was told repeatedly that this topic was one of great debate and something to be avoided in conversation. The fact that the mere mention of teaching about the history of the civil war raised eyebrows was an indication of how something that other countries take for granted, the telling of a common history, can become a politically charged and tense topic of discussion in Lebanon. The media attention devoted to Lebanon, especially in regards to its history curriculum, and textbooks, is negative and usually critical of the textbooks used and the gap in the curriculum on Lebanon after the 1960s.[2] Though it is a vital subject, its sensitivity means that it is not addressed in schools as to not cause conflict among students. Each different social or religious group has its own personal investment in what is taught to students, and this creates gridlock despite significant academic work on the subject, and scholars' collaboration on different curricular projects.

Private schools have more leeway with their curricula, though most international private schools teach the IB curriculum and therefore avoid Lebanese history lessons. At certain schools there are different options of tracks in learning history, and one can choose to take a Lebanese history course or not. Even in private schools, though, there are controversies over the teaching

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[1] Bashshur, (cited in El-Amine, 2003) in Frayha, Nemer, "Developing Curriculum as a Means to Bridging National Divisions in Lebanon." p. 187

[2] Fattah, Hassan M. "Lebanon's History Sidesteps it's Civil War."

of history, and the government is entitled to intervene. In 2009, Hezbollah asked a few pages to be censored from *Modern World History*; a history textbook being used at International College, due to their objection to the way the group was portrayed. [3] This history textbook, *Modern World History*, is also taught in eighth grade classrooms in the U.S., and published in the U.S. It portrayed Hezbollah as well as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad as terrorist. The pages were removed, as asked, by the minister of education. This is one event indicative of the type of issues, and micromanagement, that occur with the various political interests in the education system. In 1996 during the Rafic Hariri government's rule and the post-war rebuilding initiatives the minister of education was quoted as saying that the history of Lebanon "must eliminate everything that creates conflict between Lebanese."[4] The prevailing fear is that teaching recent history would create more conflict than it would prevent. The most recent curriculum development attempt in 2001, (which failed due to disagreement, and perhaps to "Syrian micromanagement"[5] in Lebanese affairs), fell apart after the book was complete because of an objection to the portrayal of the Arab invasion of Lebanon.

At the student level the discussion is more blunt; students are not taught the modern history of Lebanon and they rely on outside sources for information. The absence of recent topics in the history education system sends a clear message by those running the school system. Modern history should be left, and forgotten, in order to help society move forward. This is its own form of propaganda, encouraging forgetting rather than remembrance and learning from past mistakes. It is the government's self-consciousness regarding the war and the sensitivities

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[3] "Lebanese School Rips Pages From Textbook Critical of Hezbollah" http://news-lab.net/blog/2009/10/21/lebanese-school-rips-pages-from-textbook-critical-of-hezbollah/

[4] *Time International* , January 15 1996 quoted in Makdisi, Ussama. "Reconstructing the Nation-State: The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon."

[5] Fattah, Hassan M., "Lebanon's History Textbooks Sidestep Its Civil War."

that inhibit them from teaching the country's children about it. What is the purpose of "ignoring" the civil war as far as education is concerned will be examined. What are the implications of this omission in Education? How does this compare to other areas of post conflict and to other countries with similar divided camps over a past conflict? The result for students is a perception that their history is not important, not worth learning. This causes the national identity to be based on sectarianism and bias rather than a unified Lebanese identity, because students rely on personal narratives from family, social groups and sects. It will be noted, however, that this opinion is not universal. There is a counterargument in Lebanese society that sectarianism is in fact positive, and has allowed for peaceful cohabitation among the Lebanese religious sects throughout its history. The confessional system, based on the Ottoman millet system allowed for the co-existence and shared power of the many religious groups in Lebanon. This paper, however, will present sectarianism as a divisive societal issue that pits groups against one another. History is politically charged, and where it could become less volatile through effective teaching, the silence on the subject creates a deeper vacuum. The silence speaks volumes on the shame and willingness to forget and move on the part of the government. As a result of the lack of modern education in Lebanon, students perceive history, as static, repetitive and not necessarily pertinent. Studying Lebanese students' perceptions of their history and the way they learn it in turn reveals the Lebanese governmental approach to managing society, and the prevailing societal perception and reticence towards discussing their recent past. In correcting the curriculum to create a more inclusive classroom with acceptance of diversity, schools would encourage embracing differences, and Lebanese citizens would be helped greatly by a healing process in the education system.

The historical events of Lebanon, along with its diversity of its population, make it essential to include a modernized and unified curriculum in all its schools. The implementation of a unified and comprehensive history curriculum that includes recent and "sensitive events" is crucial to Lebanese social cohesion and the healing process from past violence. Is the absence of recent history in schools directly influential on society? Is there a direct link between social cohesion or sectarianism and learning? In order to make this argument it is essential to explore the history of Lebanon, as well as the history curriculum in the Lebanese school system. This study will examine the teaching of history in Lebanese schools as a critical part of Lebanese national identity and social cohesion. This study seeks through studying the history of Lebanon, the educational system of the country, and students' opinions of the importance of history in school, to argue as a hypothesis that the absence of a common curriculum throughout the school system, especially in regards to teaching history, is detrimental to the cohesiveness of Lebanese citizens, and reinforces sectarian biases in society. Based on surveys of university students in Lebanon, the student perception of their education will be examined in the context of a divided and unequal education system.

The first chapter will look at the historical background of Lebanon and how the society and education system arrived where it is today.

The second chapter will focus on education and pedagogical methods and how that applies to Lebanon.

The third chapter will focus on my particular study, which takes the first two chapters as a base and studies the student perception of their history education in high school, and the way that students learn about and current, and recent events.

Methodology

I set out rather naïvely to Beirut, Lebanon with the intention of visiting High school classrooms in order to compare and contrast schools and their history curricula. My interest was in comparing and contrasting religious background of schools and the way in which history is taught. In order to further explore the recent history of Lebanon and the academic relationship to its history I knew that speaking with students was essential. As an outsider without inside connections I was systematically blocked or ignored by schools. The protective bubble that surrounds the education system is also indicative of the malaise and self-consciousness in regards to the Lebanese education system. Even elite private schools, such as International College were required to hold an administrative meeting to allow me to enter the school. Luckily, despite being blocked out of schools and not having access to classrooms, textbooks, or teachers, I was still able to gather information from students through a questionnaire. This questionnaire will help guide my study, adding students' perspective in order to argue that the lack of recent history teaching in schools has an affect on social cohesion.

I am interested in examining the perception of students' history and national identity as a result of, or lack of educational subject matter on their recent history. I will also look at the relation between the educational system(s) and sectarian sentiments. Ideologically the absence of recent history in the curriculum underlines the inability of the various political and confessional groups in Lebanon to agree on a telling of one common story. The message that is implied by this void is that one should forget and move on, despite the daily reminders whether physical or in collective memories of family members. I would like to examine how the education system fits into the politics of forgetting, and whether it is easier to skip over a major part of the Lebanese collective memory (whether or not individuals choose to accept that).

The Ministry of Education has a set National curriculum standards for public and private schools; in schools such as International College there are four separate history tracks that students can choose. Obviously, despite a national curriculum and approved textbooks there exist divergences in the end result, namely the perception of Lebanese high school students on their very recent history. There is a difference of discourse both in the home and at the school about the history of the country. My primary research was conducted at the American University of Beirut by giving questionnaires to students. Other than my questionnaires I relied on secondary sources from curriculum creators who worked on the project to renew the curriculum (which eventually fell apart) and a recent documentary by a Lebanese filmmaker Hadi Zaccak who was able to film history classrooms with teacher and student interviews. My background research is in pedagogical theory in oppressive contexts, and curriculum in relation to conflict especially by Paolo Freire, and Nemer Frayha. This will serve as the theoretical backdrop to my study, and will help me to look at the classroom in a more critical sense. I will explore Lebanon's history and how it has led to the current education system. Teaching in areas of conflict and former conflict is not unique to Lebanon so I will compare other case studies of post-conflict countries such as Bosnia-Herzegovina to contrast the different pedagogical approaches.

This process will be used to examine how sectarianism is perpetuated through teaching history in an educational system, and how the absence of education on recent historical periods furthers sectarian perceptions of society. I am looking to see where historical lacunas may hinder the country in the long run, and how it could possibly be approached differently. I want to explore how in general, conflict can inhibit education where it is most necessary.

Below in figure 1.1 the questionnaire that I gave out to students to obtain information for my research:

Fig. 1.1

The High School, Religion, and Age were asked at the beginning of the survey.

1. Where do you learn the most about the History of Lebanon? 2. Which do you think represents the "true" historical events better? 3. Where do you learn the most about the Politics of Lebanon? 4. Where do you learn the most about current events in the world?	Home/Family	School	Friends	T.V	Newspapers	Other

1. Is there a difference in what you hear from friends and family and what you are taught in school? Or is it the same? How different is it?

2. What do you read for History of Lebanon? Do you read other books or Watch TV or movies outside of class about the History of Lebanon?

3. What subjects are most important to you in school? Why?

4. Do you talk about current events or news events: for example the recent fall of the Hariri government or the recent events in Tunisia and Egypt?

In your history class?	Yes	No
In your school?	Yes	No
At home?	Yes	No
With Friends?	Yes	No

5. What have you learned about modern history in Lebanon? About the civil war? (Both inside and outside the classroom.)

Review of the Literature:

The literature relied on in order to conduct this study was a combination of pedagogical theory, historical texts, and articles on conflict education, and on education in Lebanon. Obtaining official information from government ministries was only possible through the Internet. The Ministry of Education, and school websites, however, do not include the history curriculum, if they include curricula at all. Therefore the majority of the research was conducted through the literature, surveys of students, and periodicals. The literature served as a theoretical and historical basis for the study, while the surveys of students allowed for an inside perspective on the history teaching in schools. Articles in periodicals were useful, giving the media's perspective of the problems with history textbooks, and history curriculum in Lebanon. It was these articles that inspired the study in the first place, and their journalistic observances of the absence of history teaching in the classroom helped in order to further understand the issue at hand.

The pedagogical literature served to situate the issues of education in the third world and countries subjected to oppressive regimes. Paolo Freire, and Henry Giroux were the two authors relied on for this part of the research. *Theory and Resistance in Education, The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and *Education for Critical Consciousness* were the texts that founded the pedagogical aspect of this study. Their theoretical approach to the study of education in areas of conflict, or of oppression served to contextualize the education system in Lebanon, in comparison to other education systems in countries emerging from conflict. The emphasis in this literature was on the narrative and dialectic aspect of education as a positive step towards healing, or overcoming oppression. Rote learning is the usual approach, especially in areas where the government is oppressive, and propaganda infiltrates the school curriculum,

perpetuating a culture of the oppressed. This is relevant to the case of Lebanon because the civil war paralyzed the country, and the various sects have become the propagandists of the education system. The basic teaching methods were rote, and did not enforce critical thinking. The solution to peace building and moving away from violence and conflict is through the teaching of analytical skills, and through a more dialectic and narrative education system. Their studies and theories proved that the education system requires teachers who stimulate thought.

The text *Education, Conflict and Social Cohesion*, published by UNESCO is a compilation of studies that focus on schooling as a result of identity-based conflict, and as a large part of civic reconstruction and social cohesion. This text looked at Bosnia-Herzegovina, Guatemala, Lebanon, Mozambique, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka. For the purpose of this study the chapter on Lebanon was critical. Nemer Frayha, who was the head of the Centre for Research and Development, and the curriculum development project, begun in 1997, wrote the article. This was not the only source used written by Frayha, whose insight was particularly useful, but was the most comprehensive. This text was tantamount to the research in this study, providing not only in-depth observations on the process of the curriculum development project that was initiated by the Ta'if accord, but also providing studies on similar cases in other countries wracked by civil war and societal divisions. In Frayha's essay, "Defining Curriculum as a Means to Bridging National Divisions in Lebanon," he delves into the history of Lebanon as a result of social divisions, and argues for the redrafting of history and civics curricula in order to build a sense of social cohesion. This article was essential to the study of history education in Lebanon, because of Frayha's significant role in the redrafting of the curriculum and his expertise in Lebanese education, and history. Frayha broke down the process of the drafting, by giving details on the makeup of the committee and the issues involved in agreeing on even the

most basic topics in Lebanese history. He reviewed the problems that existed in the Lebanese curriculum prior to the war, and prescribed what he believed was the best remedy for the problems in social cohesion that existed in Lebanon. Frayha also criticizes the process and explains what the complications were in drafting the curriculum. This essay is critical in gaining an insider view of the steps in the process.

For historical background of history the primary source used was Malcom Yapp's text, *The Near East Since the First World War: A History to 1995*, along with Samir Kassir's *La Guerre du Liban*. These works provided the history background of Lebanon used for this study in order to give context to the lead-up to the civil war, and the events that occurred during the war. Yapp does not deal with the war in great detail, but Kassir's text breaks down the events right before the war and the war until 1982 from many different angles. He looks at the political figures, as well as the external and internal events that caused the war to break out. An article that proved also to be extremely helpful for the research was Kaufman's "Phoenicianism: The Formation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920." This article gave a background to the Phoenician myth, which is a very important part of the formation of Lebanese Christian identity. This was pertinent to the background of the formation of the Lebanese state, and the involvement of the French during this period in the Levant. Phoenicianism fueled the French interest in Lebanon and the Lebanese Christians and was part of their interest in supporting the Christian population in Greater Syria and Mount Lebanon.

Chapter One: History of Lebanon

Lebanon's rich history and extremely diverse religious population, tenuous balance of power, and geo-political position in relation to the rest of the Middle East have made it the center of many agendas. Its education system, which is the subject of many political and religious debates, has been greatly influenced by these factors. In order to explore the teaching of history in Lebanon, which I will argue is highly influenced by the recent political experience of the country I will first look at Lebanon's historical background the context of its current political and demographic situation.

This first chapter will review briefly the important facts that led to the current political and societal issues in Lebanon today, with specific focus on moments in history that were catalysts for the conflicts that have wracked the country in the past three decades. It will be argued that it is this conflict that has caused the debates over the school curricula. The major historical influences on the area; the Ottoman Empire, the Sykes-Picot agreement, the French mandate period, the split between Syria and Lebanon, and the creation of the State of Israel have all been factors that led to the development of the current national identity, government policy, and education system.

The territory that is today the state of Lebanon was inhabited by the Phoenicians, and throughout its history, annexed by many of the great world powers; the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Macedonians, Romans, Muslims, European Crusaders, Ottomans, and finally the French.[6] It was the French mandate that led to the division of the region of greater Syria and formed the modern borders of Greater Lebanon, taking the already existing Mount Lebanon and part of Syria, which split up the religious majorities and altered the demographics

[6] Frayha, Nemer. "Education and Social Cohesion" 102

of the countries.[7] Greater Lebanon was officially formed in 1920 under French jurisdiction as an attempt to woo the Maronite Christian community. [8] The newly drawn borders formed a country that was 55 % Maronite, 20 % Sunni Muslim, and 17 % Shi'ite based on one of the few censuses taken before they were stopped in 1932. Lebanon is home to 18 different religious groups overall, making it an extremely diverse country in terms of religion for its size and population. The government put in place at the formation of the country was a confessional one, meaning that the power was based on the demographics of the population. Even from its independence, this system was seen as imperfect due to the sensitivity of the different religious groups and the shifts in demographic population as well as previous religious clashes in the late Ottoman Empire. Once the religious balance of population shifted in favor of Muslims, the census ceased because of the fear that the Muslim population was equal to if not slightly greater than the Christian community. The confessional system put in place was as follows: the highest political office was to be held by a Maronite, the Prime Minister a Sunni, and the head of Parliament a Shi'a, with a majority of 6:5 Christians to Muslims in the Parliament, because Christians were considered the majority religious population, and therefore were accorded a larger representation. The Preamble to the Lebanese Constitution states: "The abolition of political Confessionalism is a basic national goal and shall be achieved according to a gradual plan."[9]The fragility of the confessional system of government was a significant factor leading to the civil war in 1975, and has been under criticism since it was implemented and acknowledged as an imperfect system that needed to be corrected. After the war, however, the government reverted back to its confessional system.

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[7] Yapp , M.E., *The Near East Since the First World War: A History to 1995* p. 104
[8] Yapp, M.E. p. 104-105
[9] The Lebanese Constitution

Lebanon today is the result of both the Ottoman Empire, which covered the Middle East and North Africa, as well as the Sykes-Picot agreement and subsequent mandates. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire the European countries swept in to take up this newly freed territory. During the mandate system that followed, Greater Syria and Mount Lebanon fell under French control. Most of the Middle East and North Africa were subjected to the mandates by French and British powers. The main purpose of these land acquisitions was the growing need for petrol, which had been discovered in the region. The French, in comparison to the British, had less oil ambitions, and more cultural one. At the beginning of the First World War they had already begun asserting themselves and slowly spread their control in the Near East, along with the British:

> "Since the nineteenth century France had proclaimed her civilizing mission in the Near East, a concept which embraced both the notion of France as the protector and promoter of Catholic interests in the region and a broader duty to extend the benefits of French civilization and values, particularly through French schools and the French language."[10]

The end of the First World War was a catalyst for the Mandates by which France and Britain divided up the land as they saw fit. The French tried to win the favor of the Maronites, while the British did the same with the Druze population.[11] The French took complete control of Syria and Lebanon in 1920, and though it was not quite a colonial effort to the degree that marked the French policy in Algeria, the French power was undeniable in asserting Christian dominance over the Muslim population: "The French wanted the Maronites to play a role on their behalf…France supported those religious orders that best effected French policy."[12] Therefore the Maronites became the proponents of the French language, culture, and policy, creating a

[10] Yapp, M.E. 385-386
[11] Hagopian, Elaine C. "Maronite Hegemony to Maronite Militancy : The Creation and Disintegration of Lebanon." p. 102
[12] Ibid. p. 110

linguistic and cultural divide between Christians, Muslims, and Druze. Many missionary schools were established by the French. In the Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon, Article 10 states that: "The religious missions may also concern themselves with education and relief, subject to the general right of regulation and control by the Mandatory or of the local government, in regard to education, public instruction and charitable relief."[13] This gave more power to Christian missionaries and showed the clear favouritism shown towards the Maronites by the French over the Muslim population. It also demonstrated the mission of the French as far as education was concerned, giving the teaching positions to clergy. At its inception, education in Lebanon was religious. During the Ottoman Empire the charge of each sect's education was left in the hands of its clergy, created a segregated system based on religious affiliation from the outset. [14] It was only when occidental forces started to come in after the Ottoman Empire that the free and public schools without particular religious affiliation started to be created, and were open to all: " All of the Lebanese communities profited from the free school system- communities as well as missionaries established their own private schools, based on the Anglo-American model or, American or, most often, French."[15]

Within the school system, religious communities began opening schools along their particular religious beliefs. Schools divided between public and private and separated along religious lines was symbolic of the Lebanese society as it moved towards becoming a nation-state. The school system was never entirely mixed, and the influence exacted by the French is still felt to this day on certain private schools.

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[13] Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon
[14] Frayha, Nemer. "Éducation et Cohésion Sociale au Liban" p. 104
[15] Ibid. p. 140 " Toutes les communautés libanaises ont profité du système des écoles libres - communautaires aussi bien que missionnaires et établi leurs propres écoles privées, sur le modèle anglo-américain ou, plus souvent, français."

The Franco-Lebanese treaty was drafted in 1936, as Lebanon and Syria attempted to make mandate arrangements in order to gain their independence.[16] They gained their independence in 1943 in large part due to Christian-Muslim political cooperation against the French. [17]After Lebanon gained its independence the new government did not make any huge strides in policy in the education system between 1943 and 1958, as this period was the gestation period of the nation:

> "Most Lebanese went to private schools, usually maintained by the religious communities. In 1924 only 12 per cent were in public school and as late as 1959 only 40 per cent. Higher education was provided mainly by two private foreign institutions, the American University of Beirut and St Joseph; the unfashionable Lebanese University was founded only in 1958."[18]

Lebanese University is the public university, which is considered unfashionable compared to its American and French counterparts. The heavy enrollment in private school is still a characteristic of the Lebanese system today, especially because of civil conflict and sectarianism. The government has made reforms to give itself more control over the private school curriculum. Many of the students enroll in private education to remain within a system run by their own religious background, though these schools are not exclusive and do not teach students of one faith uniquely, there are generally majorities with a minority population from various backgrounds.

After the Lebanese independence, regional problems affected the stability of the country, and one of the catalysts that eventually led to the Lebanese civil war originated in 1948 with the creation of Israel and the war in Palestine, which forced 150,000 Palestinian refugees in the

[16] Yapp, M.E. 107-108
[17] Ibid. p. 107-108
[18] Ibid. p. 114

country.[19] The Palestinian refugees who fled to Lebanon were relegated to informal camps in the south of Lebanon. These refugees were not integrated or given Lebanese citizenship. Accepting this many Palestinian refugees as citizens, would upset the precarious confessional political system based on religious proportionality, and the fear on the part of the Christian community that the Muslim community would become the vast majority.[20] A 1996 Population and Household Survey did not include the Palestinian population in their count of the Lebanese population, citing a population of merely 3.1 million and excluding hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.[21] The Palestinian refugee camps were subject to violent attacks from various factions during the civil war and afterwards. The events leading up to the beginning of the war were the culmination of decades of regional trouble due to the Balfour Declaration, Sykes-Picot, and consequentially the creation of the State of Israel. In the 1960s various militias began to form. The PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) formed shortly after the creation of Israel, after being driven out of Jordan moved to Beirut, and then to the south of Lebanon, making Lebanon the target for Israeli attacks. The presence of the Palestinian refugees, as well as of the PLO divided Lebanese society, and ideologically split Christians and Muslims. The civil war that erupted in 1975 was the most devastating military conflict that Lebanon has witnessed in its modern history. It was the breaking point of years of tension and power struggle between the Muslim and the Christian communities, which represent the two major religious groups in Lebanon, as well as different political affiliations.

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[19] Yapp, M.E. p. 267
[20] Yapp, M.E. p. 267
[21] Diab, Hassan ; Rania Tfaily ; Andrzej Kulczycki. "Regional and Sectarian Stratification in Education in Lebanon: The Impact of the Civil War." http://paa2009.princeton.edu/download.aspx?submissionId=90265

The Civil War, which was a fifteen-year conflict between different factions, destabilized not only the country, but the region as well. The war was long, and devastating to the Lebanese State: "From its outset, the Lebanese civil war inflicted great destruction, bloodshed, and divisiveness that led to the segregation of the population along denominational lines and political affiliations. This, in turn, created a tragic decline in all cultural and educational values and ultimately led to the collapse of the economy's productive capacity."[22] In order to provide a basic knowledge, I will briefly review the main events of the war, though due to the complexity of this period, focusing on only the main events in order to paint a clearer picture of the war, in order to understand its affect on the Lebanese identity and education. The general consensus is that the war broke out in 1975 after the Christian Phalange fighters ambushed a bus in Beirut, as retaliation for an attack on a church allegedly committed by Palestinians. The ambush killed 27 people who were mostly Palestinians. The next significant event, called "Black Saturday" happened in December of 1975, when four Christians were found dead. Subsequently the Phalange militia murdered 40 Muslims, which led to a retaliation by Muslims, resulting in the death of 300 Muslims and 300 Christians by the end of the day. Syria was invited to intervene, and so they moved their troops in. In 1978 Israel invaded Lebanon and the UN forces (Unifil) moved in to oversee their withdrawal. The Israeli army passed on their control to the SLA (South Lebanon Army), which was a pro-Christian proxy army in the south of Lebanon. In 1982 Israel invaded again to chase out the PLO fighters, and the PLO conceded. The same year Bachir Gemayel, the leader of the Christian Phalange was assassinated, and therefore the Christian Phalange massacred hundreds of refugees in Sabra and Shatila. International forces from the US, France, and Italy entered the country to support the Christian forces. This initiated a slew of

[22]Oweini, Ahmad, A., "How Students Coped with War." p. 409

suicide bombings by the Islamic Jihad. In 1984 when the government fell again the international forces exited the country. In 1985 Israel withdrew from parts of Lebanon (they did not fully withdraw until 2005), and in 1988 the country was split by two separate governments; one Christian in East Beirut led by Michel Aoun and one Muslim, led by Salim al-Hoss in West Beirut. The Christian government declared war against Syria, and was eventually driven out by Syrian forces in 1990. In 1989 a reconciliation accord was agreed upon at the signing of the Ta'if agreement in Saudi Arabia. This agreement balances the ratio in parliament, making it 5:5 Christian and Muslim to represent more correctly the confessional population. After this agreement was signed there was a tenuous peace and the divisive confessional politics that had existed prior to the war were reinstated. [23] All militias were dissolved except for Hezbollah, and there continued to be conflict at the south Lebanese border between Hezbollah fighters and Israeli soldiers. A "Treaty of Brotherhood, Co-operation and Co-ordination" between Lebanon and Syria did not happen until 1991.[24] The 1990s were marked by sporadic attacks by Israel, and demilitarization of zones that remained occupied by the war, but otherwise Lebanon lived in tentative peace. In 2005 after Hariri's assassination, which was believed to be by pro-Syrians, there were protests and rallies, which became known as the Cedar Revolution, which finally caused Syria to withdraw from Lebanon in 2005. When they left Lebanon found itself truly independent for the first time since before the war. In 2006, however the Islamic Resistance captured two Israeli soldiers and Israel began to attack Lebanon. The July War lasted 34 days and killed 1000 Lebanese citizens. Though there have been many more events that have occurred since 2006, this was the last major conflict that Lebanon experienced.

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[23] Makdisi, Ussama. "Reconstructing the Nation-State: The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon," p. 23

[24] Ibid. p.23

Today's students, like their parents, are not strangers to violence. The civil war ended before many of today's students were born, but they have not only learned about their parents' war, but seen war for themselves, and it is incomprehensible that their educational process would not try to shed light assess these events in their schools.

The war affected everyone regardless of his or her religious affiliation. It was a long and destructive period and is a very large part of the collective memory, and now also, part of the identity of Lebanon, whether or not the government or different sects choose to acknowledge it. It cannot be forgotten, nor should it be, so that efforts can be made in the future to prevent the loss of lives and the destruction cities. Though there was a great deal of international intervention during the war, the war was also Lebanese, and between different sects. Sectarianism was more pronounced after the war. For students to learn that it was purely the fault of the international players is dangerous, for it takes away the Lebanese involvement and their relation to the conflict. In order to build social cohesion, and reduce sectarianism, schools need to include this material in their courses.

Questions of Identity: The Phoenician Myth, and Sectarianism

"If there is a consensus on the reality of a "pluralistic" Lebanese nation-state composed of seventeen official communities, the 1975-1989 civil war reflected the lack of agreement on the definition of a common Lebanese national identity and a sense of civic loyalty."[25]

The history and background of the modern Lebanese State are critical to its current identity, as well as its periods of conflict. Lebanon's national language is Arabic, however the official languages were French and Arabic up until its independence in 1943. As a result many educated Lebanese citizens are trilingual in English, French, and Arabic. The French influence on Lebanese history is significant due to the mandate period and the French *Mission Civilatrice* that

[25] Sobhi & Harley, "Education, Conflict, and Social Cohesion" p. 14

called for the dissemination of French culture throughout the Middle East. In the Levant the French language and education were seen as status symbols, and used to represent a culture and education superior to Islam and the Arabic language. The education system still has a great deal in common with the French system in many schools. Students take "Brevets" and "Baccalauréat" as they do in the French system.[26] The education system in Lebanon, in great part due to the confessional system is a combination of public and private, schools; each one is affiliated with different religious sects creating a system that is not uniform across the board. The school system also reflects class differences in Lebanon, which affects the way in which you are educated as a child. The upper middle class students attend the elite private schools, there is a lower echelon of private schools for those middle and lower-middle class students who cannot afford the best private schools, then there are public schools, which represent the lower socio-economic classes. There are four different types of private schools within this category:

> "1) Expensive and elitist, with either French or American curricula; 2) religious or missionary-run schools (mostly Catholic, with the number of Islamic schools increasing substantially in the 1990s), catering primarily to middle class parents; 3) relatively inexpensive schools targeting less well-to-do families; and 4) government subsidized schools that target the poorest students who find no seats in public schools."[27]

The Ministry of Education overseas all of these different schools, but has the tightest grip on the public education system. The public/private split was much more severe prior to Lebanese independence in 1930. At that time 15 % of students attended public school with the other 85% attending private schools. More recently a breakdown of the enrollment in public and private education shows 39 % in public and the remaining 61 % in private.[28] The most recent statistics

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[26] Akar, Bassel. " Citizenship Education in Lebanon." P. 5
[27] Diab, Hassan ; Rania Tfaily ; Andrzej Kulczycki. "Regional and Sectarian Stratification in Education in Lebanon: The Impact of the Civil War."
[28] Frayha, Nemer. , "Defining Curriculum as a Means to Bridging National Divisions in Lebanon." p. 178

from 2001 show that socio-economic disparity, in terms of school attendance, has evened out to a certain degree. This means less religious-based and sectarian education than existed previously. Although there is still two thirds of students who are educated privately, the numbers have greatly changed since the 1930's when it was basically only religious sects that were responsible for the education of the youth of the country.

During the period of the French mandate there were initiatives to use the education system to build unity between religious groups, and to form a Lebanese national identity.[29] The question of identity is a fundamental one, yet is complicated in Lebanon. Though there is a growing laïque (secular) movement, the primary identity of Lebanese citizens before their Lebanese identity is their religious affiliation. Most Lebanese identify as Arab, though there are some who do not believe that they are. The National Pact of 1943 compromised on the question of identity, agreeing on a "Sovereign State with an Arab face".[30] Lebanon is home to a heterogeneous population with 18 different religious sects, and various ethnic backgrounds. Throughout the centuries the territory that makes up modern Lebanon was a part of many different empires, which brought different civilizations and cultures. Though in everyday society at a glance Lebanon is a prime example of interreligious, and interethnic existence, where churches and mosques cohabitate the same blocks, there are divides rooted in the society such as matters of personal law. At moments disagreements between these cohabiting groups result in violence. The education system is one area where divides are apparent. Though religiously affiliated schools are not exclusive, the background of the students in terms of their religion gives great bearing to their perception of their history.

[29] Frayha, Nemer. "Éducation et Cohésion Sociale" p. 108
[30] Ibid. p. 108

The Lebanese identity is key to its education system, and this identity is essential in understanding questions of social cohesion and sectarianism. In citizenship education the question of national identity is tantamount. The effect of the European colonization on the Lebanese population: "transformed the social, political and economic significance of religion into a reified order wherein decontextualized religious identities alone defined the individual."[31] To identify oneself by ones religion before ones national identity predates the beginning of the Lebanese nation-state. Lebanon was formed through foreign intervention and the government was created to represent the different religious groups that inhabited the land. Religion has always played a prominent role, though after the civil war the sectarianism that had increased in the events leading up to the war was perhaps even aggravated.

The Lebanese nationalist movement was propagated by Christian sects using the Phoenician myth:

> The Lebanese national movement was practically wholly Christian, and its thinkers saw the combination, presented by French thinkers of Christian faith and organic nationalism as an appropriate model. These Lebanese Christians, however, did not absorb the whole doctrine. They never tried to provide an overall world view, but rather were frugal in selectivity borrowing from France. They chose to identify with the relationship to the historical past and the effort to place the nation in its appropriate place in the course of history. The Phoenician past of Lebanon glimmered from between the pages of history. A glorious past, indeed for a burgeoning national movement that, against all odds, wished to be oriented towards the west.[32]

The Phoenician myth, originated by French and Lebanese Christian scholars was a glorification of a legendary past, and a fantastical connection to the western culture.

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[31] Makdisi, Ussama. "Reconstructing the Nation-State: The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon." p. 24

[32] Kaufman, Asher. "Phoenicianism: The Formation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920." p. 190

This Phoenician myth was introduced by the French Christians and infiltrated Mount Lebanon in the early 20th century.[33] The myth is not that the Phoenicians inhabited Lebanon, it is certain that they did, but the fact that the Lebanese Christians are descended directly from them, and that they were the first western culture. This is difficult to prove. The Phoenicians were a biblical people, around 2000 BC, who, according to the myth originated from Canaanite tribes (this explains that they were Indo-European, rather than Semitic).[34] This myth served to emphasize Christian's superiority over Muslims as descendants of the Phoenicians as part of a great ancient society that had been tarnished by Ottoman Muslim invasions. Muslims, on the other hand chose to value the Arab identity as their Lebanese identity. [35]The French romanticized this ancient civilization and revered their accomplishments as a Mediterranean culture that,

> "Were forced to withdraw to Mt. Lebanon because of the foreign occupier. In Mt. Lebanon they kept their national heritage and their virtues which they inherited from their ancestors: the Mediterranean culture, their love of the sea, their commercial skills, their search for peace and their outstanding scholarly qualities."[36]

The French Orientalists were fascinated with this myth; Ernest Renan wrote a book *Mission de Phénicie*, based on visits and philological research. [37]They were viewed as the original Lebanese and the French tied them directly to Christianity, and western society. As discussed earlier, in the French agenda to further Maronite hegemony, this fit into the argument gave credence to the Christians as the rightful rulers, while Arabs were Muslims responsible for the "decay" of this society. "The Phoenician idea from its very beginning was shared by different groups with

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[33] Frayha, Nemer. "Éducation et Cohésion Sociale" p.108
[34] Kaufman, Asher. "Phoenicianism: The Formation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920." p.174
[35] Frayha, Nemer. "Éducation et Cohésion Sociale" p.108
[36] Kaufman, Asher. "Phoenicianism: The Formation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920." p. 174
[37] Ibid. p. 175

different political agendas. A key factor to becoming a "Phoenician" was not a total allegiance to France, but a Jesuit-Francophile education."[38] This myth was then perpetuated in education, and still exists, to a certain degree, in the school system. The propaganda was intended to further the French *Mission Civilatrice* and was part of a French love affair with this ancient society, which was already a part of the curriculum in France. [39] There were Lebanese Christian scholars who were experts on the topic and who worked with the French to help to prove the superiority and historical importance of this culture, such as Maronite Patriarch, Elias Huwayyek who "ethnically tied the Maronites to the French through the ancient Phoenicians by attributing the origins of the Crusaders to the ancient Phoenicians, which according to him, had established colonies on the French coast from which the Crusaders departed to the Levant."[40] This scholarship managed to link the Christian crusaders, who sought to take back the holy land from Muslims, to the Phoenicians. It pitted the Christians against the Arabs and Muslims, which greatly served the French in their mandate agenda. As a result of this infiltration of the Phoenician myth into the Lebanese education system, there are many people who believe that they have Phoenician roots to this day. This is certainly due to the way that the schools depict the ancient history of Lebanon. Depending on the school, whether it is more Muslim or Christian, students either learn that the Ottoman Empire was a great and powerful empire, or that they were occupiers who took the great Phoenician culture and made it backwards. A New York Times article on the current state of situation of history textbooks in Lebanon observed that:

> "In one textbook, the students get to know the Ottomans as occupiers; in another, they read about them as administrators. In some, they study the French as colonialists; in others they study them as examples to emulate. In some Christian schools, history starts with the ancient Phoenicians, who many Christians believe are their original ancestors,

[38] Kaufman, Asher. "Phoenicianism: The Formation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920." 182
[39] Ibid. p. 182
[40] Ibid. P. 185

> and the dawn of Christianity. In many Muslim schools, the Phoenicians are glossed over and emphasis is placed on Arab history and the arrival of Islam."[41]

In his documentary, "A History Lesson", Hady Zaccak asks students if they believe they have Phoenician roots, and many of the students believe that they do. The different religious sects each have their own interpretation of what is the Lebanese heritage, and which empires or civilizations best represent their current religion or identity.

Social Cohesion vs. Sectarianism

Social Cohesion, as defined by John Rutayisire, John Kabano, and Jolly Rubagiza in their article, "Redefining Rwanda's Future: The Role of curriculum in Social Reconstruction," is as follows:

> A state of peace and harmony between different social groups. Social cohesion refers to an image of a society where differing groups live and hold together and try to build their nation. Social cohesion differs from a state of tolerance as people have to communicate and cooperate in their common welfare. [42]

Sectarianism, as opposed to social cohesion, is the adherence and fidelity to ones sect as opposed to a greater society. It is the existence of separate groups who choose to follow the doctrine of that group, and are unwilling to accept the beliefs of others. It is intolerance and self-preservation over the common good.

In Lebanon the existence of sectarianism amongst the various religious groups is detrimental to the larger society, and results in violent outbreaks amongst the factions that oppose each other. Lebanon is a society divided up by its sects, with the dialectic of them vs. us within the societal structure, as opposed to a melting pot of different religions. The violence is between sects but also within sects along political lines and differences. The existence of

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[41] Fattah, Hassan M., "Lebanon's history textbooks sidestep its civil war"
[42] John Rutayisire, John Kabano, and Jolly Rubagiza "Redefining Rwanda's Future : the Role of Curriculum in Social Reconstruction" p. 322

sectarianism completely undoes any attempts at secularism and unity, according to U. Makdisi: "Sectarianism, which undermines the secular national ideal and creates subversive religious loyalties, is umbilically tied to the 1943 national Pact which institutionalized the modern, independent Lebanese state."[43] The pact divided power by religion, attempting to make it a balanced and even representation of the population, though the population was not static, which posed problems for the government at the period of Lebanese independence. It is not only the internal struggle between different communities but also their international affiliations and allegiances that led to the violent conflict of the civil war. Sectarianism, in large part is responsible for the violent conflict of the civil war, but it has been perpetuated after the war as well. "It [the government] has also re-inscribed the confessionally -based hierarchical social order while reconstructing the nation-state."[44]

The results of the various influences on Lebanon, both internally and externally have created a unique situation of identity and social cohesion. The modern-day state is one that has experienced extreme violence and seeks to rebuild and move forward, but the politics of forgetting are not acceptable. The collective memory is too strong, and the monuments and wounds that remind people of war are still present. This chapter has given a brief history of Lebanon, and a sociological look at the perception of national and religious identity on the part of its people. This background will aid in the next chapter, which examines more closely education in areas of post-conflict and oppression, and more specifically, the system of education in Lebanon.

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[43] Makdisi, Ussama. "Reconstructing the Nation-State: The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon," p. 25

[44] Ibid. p. 26

Chapter 2: Education and Identity, what a Lebanese education means

The first chapter studied the implications of Lebanese history on the national identity. In this chapter the interaction between the history curriculum in the education system and national identity as well as the way that one has affected the other will be analyzed. How, exactly, does the way that history education is taught, or the lack of modern events presented in the curriculum, reflect on the current Lebanese state and its government and people.

The education system of a society is essential to its future. Without an adequate system in place, the country can face future problems as the young generation grows into adulthood. As Henry Giroux believed: "Schools cannot be analyzed as institutions removed from the socio-economic context in which they're situated"[45], they are: "political sites involved in the construction and control of discourse, meaning, and subjectivities."[46] They are simultaneously influenced by society and influential on society. By studying the education system of a country, one is, in fact looking as well at the larger picture. It is also impossible to look at the education system as a separate entity from the greater society to which it belongs. In the case of Lebanon, its history and societal structure, as well as the current political climate give insight into the education system. The role of the education of history in Lebanon is crucial to the development of its students, and the way that the curriculum is written in turn reveals the societal reticence towards telling one common story.

When looking at a curriculum, one cannot take it as its own entity to be followed to the letter. The way that a curriculum is carried out relies entirely on the teacher. Despite the ideologies of politicians and the agenda that they may set out in a national curriculum, it is the teachers in the end who directly influence the students; they are the educators, the medium for

[45] Giroux, Henry *Theory and Resistance in Education*: *A Pedagogy for the Opposition* p. 46
[46] Ibid. p. 46

the message. Frayha calls them, "the determining element of the success or failure of any education plan."[47] He goes on to say that since they are part of the greater society, they bring in their own perspective into the class, and there must be efforts made in order to improve teaching skills and competences, they have to be on the same page as far as the curriculum is concerned.[48] The school system would not function without teachers, and the study of the teaching methods and the teachers approach to the subject being taught is an essential part of the study of the education system. The way that the subject is taught is significant, since the approach can greatly change the way the students learn and perceive. The language used, whether the lesson is interactive or lecture based, as well as the materials used for teaching, all make a difference in the way that the students learn, perceive, and analyze information.

In the traditional classroom setting the teacher lectures the class in a depository, or narrative style. The students passively listen and are "filled up"[49] with the information as it is given to them. The opposite of this style would be the dialectic style of the classroom teaching where there is a back and forth between students and teachers rather than just information being fed to the students. Since the teacher –student relationship is fundamentally narrative; educators need to make efforts to have a dialectic relationship between the two, in order to "free" their pupils.[50] What this means is that teachers, in order to have the students actively participate in learning, need to include them in the process. There should be a certain amount of questioning, and discussion in order for the student to be an active participant in their education. The educational system, in any country, has the potential to be an oppressive force, and to promote a particular government agenda, using the teacher as the vehicle for this agenda. The classroom

[47] Frayha, Nemer. "Éducation et Cohésion Sociale" p.114
[48] Ibid p. 114
[49] Freire, Paolo, *Pedagogy of the oppressed,* p. 72
[50] Ibid. p.71

can serve as a propagandistic tool to mold the students into its subject, especially in an environment of government oppression. After independence, or conflict, the education of the oppressed- that is inherently the depository (narrative) method- needs to become education as a practice of freedom, the dialectical method. In doing so one does not keep the classroom as an isolated space, but as a part of the larger world: "Education as the practice of freedom- as opposed to education as the practice of domination- denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people."[51] Students need to see themselves as part of a greater society to identify with the past and the present of the adults around them. If the classroom and the teacher remain outdated, unrealistic, and separate from the existing world and events occurring, the students see what they learn as unrelated to their lives, and unimportant. In an area of post-conflict, this becomes increasingly worrisome. Schools have the potential to be extremely influential in society, whether positively or negatively and they are a microcosm of the larger structure. To keep an educational system as a separate entity from society is detrimental to student development. A school is the most constructive environment to learn about sensitive events if taught properly.

In the case of the school system in Lebanon the question is not only how to construct a post-war curriculum, but also how to unify a system often divided and separated by religion and socio-economic classes. It questions the "degree to which schooling could possibly serve as a unifying mechanism, given the existence of parallel public and private school systems and of diversified curricula."[52] As discussed in the previous chapter, private schools enroll more students than public schools. The segregation of schools and the enforcement of sectarianism in society was indirectly a cause of the war and now, more than ever needs to address that war in

[51] Freire, Paolo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 81
[52] Tawil, Sobhi & Harley, Alexandra. "Education, Conflict, and Social Cohesion" p. 16

order to educate the youth to learn from past events to prevent similar events from recurring.

The history curriculum, despite efforts, has not been revised since before the war in 1975 and does not address the civil war and include the events since the 1970s in the curriculum or in the textbooks. The absence of a recent curriculum obviously poses problems: "Schools now determine what history they teach, and several different approved history textbooks from the 1960s and 1970s are used, many of them presenting contradictory concepts."[53] The students are not taught a unified national history, and are not taught history beyond the 60s and 70s.

As Nemer Frayha, who was the president of the Educational Centre for Research and Development from 1999 to 2002, criticized not only the recent curriculum development effort, but the first curriculum redrafting as well. The curriculum was rewritten between 1968 and 1970 in the midst of changing regional politics. This came right after the Six Day war, the period of Pan-Arabism, the Palestinian refugee crisis, and the PLO movement to Lebanon from Jordan after Black September.[54] The Ministry of Education chose not to focus on these events in the curriculum and huge changes in the politics of Lebanon, and "neglected" the social, civic, and political issues of the period, as well as avoiding critical and analytical learning.[55] This was a failure on the part of the national education system in Lebanon to create a cohesive national identity.[56] Frayha blamed this lack of attention to the issues in the current society as to not risk topics that may have been volatile. He said:

> One has trouble seeing how the students will be able to overcome their social and religious differences if the important questions that their local communities and the national society had to face were not diagnosed, discussed, evaluated and resolved; or if the students don't participate in the activities of their communities in order to develop a feeling of sharing

[53] Ghosn, Irma. "Educators, Youth & Peace Building" p. 5
[54] Frayha, Nemer. "Éducation et Cohésion Sociale au Liban " p. 111
[55] Ibid. p. 111
[56] Ibid. p. 110

and belonging to the society.[57]

How would any semblance of social cohesion result from the ignorance of major events in history in the curriculum? The students were not given the proper tools for analysis, or for participation in society. The issues of education in Lebanon predate the war and are also a significant factor in the sectarian divides that led to it. During the war there were no educational reforms and developments. As a result the current system is exponentially more outdated:"The bizarre result [of the civil war] is evident in any schoolbook here: History seems simply to come to a halt in the early 1970s"[58], Lebanon's heyday. The Ta'if agreement signed in Saudi Arabia in 1989 ended the war and set forth objectives for Lebanon in the reconciliation and rebuilding process. One of the sections of the Ta'if agreement was on education reform to ameliorate the system existent since before the war. The new curriculum project launched after the war as a result of the Ta'ïf agreement was intended to unify the different sects over a common history narrative. The other subject that was to be changed was citizenship education, another subject that plays an important role in the formation of a Lebanese national identity. The agreement had been put together by the government that had fallen apart during the civil war and attempted to make it more egalitarian. The confessional system, in place since Lebanese independence, was not abolished, however: " Lebanese politics in the post-war period marks the resurrection of the confessional state in Lebanon, the same kind of political divisions along sectarian lines that led

[57] Frayha, Nemer. "Éducation et Cohésion Sociale au Liban " p. 111
"On voit mal comment les élèves allaient jamais surmonter leurs divergences sociales et religieuses si des questions importantes auxquelles leur communautés locales et la société nationale devaient faire face n'étaient pas diagnostiquées, discutées, évaluées et résolues; ou si les élèves ne participaient pas aux activités de leurs communautés afin de développer un sentiment de partage et d'appartenance à la société."
[58] Fattah, Hassan M., "Lebanon's History Textbooks Sidestep its Civil War"

to the civil war."[59] Keeping the confessional system in place perpetuated the problems of power that were causes of the war. With a government that cannot agree, and where political tension is a daily event agreeing on a common narrative of the history of the country is impossible. This makes the curriculum initiative and the textbook drafting that much more difficult.

For the purpose of this study the section of the Ta'if accord that is pertinent to education will be reviewed. In the terms of the agreement, certain expectations of the Lebanese education system were put forward:

> 1. Education shall be provided for all and shall at least be made obligatory for elementary school students.
> 2. The freedom of education shall be emphasized in accordance with general laws and regulations.
> 3. Private education shall be protected and state control over private schools and **textbooks shall be strengthened**.
> 4. Official, vocational, and technological education shall be reformed, strengthened, and developed in a manner that meets the country's development and reconstruction needs. The conditions of the Lebanese University shall be reformed and aid shall be provided to the university, especially to its technical colleges.
> 5. The curricula shall be reviewed and developed in a manner that strengthens national belonging, fusion, spiritual and cultural openness, and that **unifies textbooks on the subjects of history and national education**. [60]

The Ta'if accord clearly recognized the weak points in the national education textbooks and curricula and made a point of including a reform of these textbooks and curricula in moving forward from conflict. The accord acknowledged that the homogenization of textbooks and curriculum would indeed create cohesion and openness in the system, as opposed to a system that reinforced sectarian divides. Theoretically this initiative would greatly improve the teaching of history in Lebanon. The other initiative: obligatory education at the Elementary level is a key part of a successful education reform. The review of curricula in the manner mentioned above is

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[59] Makdisi, Ussama. "Reconstructing the Nation-State: The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon," p. 23

[60] *The Ta'if Accord*

crucial given the sectarian tension debates regarding the history of the country. Textbooks and curricula should be unified across the board, especially in regards to history, since different sects and political affiliation have their own versions of the story, and their own heroes, martyrs, and enemies. Despite this section of the accord, its directions have not been carried out to fruition and remains at the crux of the political debate in the education system since.

The curriculum development committees were separated by subject, and the drafting of the history curriculum took three years longer than the other subjects that were being redrafted. [61] This was due to the complexity of the issue, but also to the diversity of the committee selected among history and history teaching specialists, specifically to represent the different groups in Lebanon.[62] This committee was unable to finish its task due to too much disagreement, so they were dissolved and a new one was formed with, "some common views."[63] This meant agreeing on certain sensitive issues, though there were still disagreements on certain matters, particularly the term "political sectarianism" which was finally excluded from the curriculum.[64] Once various committees had approved the curriculum, there were groups selected to write the textbooks for grades two through twelve. This process was halted once the sixth grade textbook had been drafted because the minister of education suspended the distribution, "He objected to a lesson title in the third-grade textbook about the nature of the AD 636 Arab conquest of what is now Lebanon."[65] The portrayal, in his opinion was a negative one of the Arabs as being "on par with

[61] Frayha, Nemer, "Defining Curriculum as a Means to Bridging National Divisions in Lebanon." p. 186
[62] Ibid. p. 186
[63] Ibid. p. 186
[64] Ibid. p. 186
[65] Ibid. p. 187

other conquerors"[66], and therefore none of the textbooks were distributed to all students. The high school texts were therefore not even drafted before the project was halted. Frayha, who was one of the drafters of this curriculum, believed that this was a direct violation of the Ta'if accord. The problem, besides the minister of education's objection to the text, was also a reticence on the part of schools to accept a unified curriculum, preferring their own.[67] Frayha also believes that this was not only politically and ideologically motivated, but also economically motivated. He notes that, "One unified history text would have clear market (loss) implications for traditional publishers."[68] Therefore, the system in the end remained unchanged.

The plan to change the education system after the Ta'if accord was to include both religious, and social / citizenship education. The religious initiatives extended to education as well as a plan to teach humanity and humanist values and principles, along with learning about the monotheistic religions and their importance in the lives of the Lebanese constitute key elements of the educational aspect of the accord. [69] As far as social and citizenship education according to the Ta'if agreement the curriculum would include: supremacy of the law, individual and social liberties, and activities, and the necessity of education, with the goal to create students who are proud of their country, Arab identity, and history, and understanding the importance of coexistence. [70] The goal of these initiatives was the building of social cohesion and acceptance of differences among young citizens. Citizenship education figures into the civics curriculum in Lebanon, and is a one of the tools used to build social cohesion. The purpose of the new civics

[66] Frayha, Nemer, "Defining Curriculum as a Means to Bridging National Divisions in Lebanon." p. 187
[67] Ibid. p. 188
[68] Ibid. p. 188
[69] Frayha, Nemer. "Éducation et Cohésion Sociale au Liban " p. 112
[70] Ibid. p. 113

curriculum, like the intended renewed history curriculum, was to help rebuild a sense of national belonging and identity in Lebanon after the war.

Addressing the Issues: History, Peace, and Civic Education

Lebanon is a country of political gridlock, with much international interest in its politics. Whether or not there will be an agreement on the history curriculum among politicians remains to be seen. The most recent attempt at drafting a unified textbook and curriculum, however, fell apart in 2001. The system is crippled by personal (religious affiliated) agendas, and the inability to find common ground and a fact based history. Despite the lack of National Archives, historians and scholars have recently been able to write detailed and global accounts of the war. An excellent factual and extremely detailed breakdown of the events before and during the war is Samir Kassir's *La Guerre du Liban,* which covers events from 1975 until 1982. It has been called: "the most authoritative historical account of a war that has produced a plethora of journalistic books and memoirs, but virtually no comprehensive historical overviews."[71] Kassir, in seeking to give a reason for why the war began, and how it lasted so long, goes through the events in great detail. He acknowledges the many different external and internal factors that caused the war to begin and continue, including the fragile structure of the Lebanese state, confessional polarization, the Palestinian presence in the country, Syrian hegemony, and the will of Israel to destabilize Lebanon.[72] His work is of great importance because of the dearth of histories on the war. His objective in *La Guerre du Liban* to look at the war and all of the aspects that came with it, which is why it only covers the beginning of the war until 1982. His words on the importance of this study are poignant:

[71] Wilson-Goldie, Kaelen, "Hidden Identities: Writing Lebanon's History"
[72] Kassir, Samir, "La Guerre du Liban" p. 9

> This scientific ambition [the writing of a history of the civil war] breaks down another preoccupation of the civil order: the conservation of memory. Such a preoccupation becomes that much more necessary because, since at the end of the war, the tendency is to forget. (…) If amnesty is inevitable in all countries that wish to emerge from a civil war, (…), it [amnesty] has to be accompanied by the pedagogy of memory.[73]

Though too comprehensive for a high school textbook, students at least have access to a book that can give them the information lacking in their history class. Those curious can read it to gain insight into the war. As a high school textbook should, it objectively breaks down the events and figures leading up to the war, and describes in great detail the events of the war, without bias.

For now, another angle from which to examine the issue of the teaching of history in Lebanon is the scholarship in peace education in areas of conflict. In order for teaching and learning to have a lasting impact, and create a less sectarian environment it is essential to find a historical narrative, and peace education may be a way to help the system. Though it does not replace a history curriculum, peace education can serve as a means to teach students ideals of citizenship and social cohesion along side with the teaching of history. It is essential to have a comprehensive history curriculum, but in addition to that peace education can contribute to societal healing. Peace education can be defined in a variety of ways, since it does not represent one single discipline. UNICEF defines it as:

> "The process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about the behavior changes that will enable children, youth, and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national, or international level. "[74]

This is important in the context of Lebanon since the different sects are affiliated with different international alliances and political interests. Therefore an effective teaching model would include the concept of peace in a global context. Along with teaching peace, the history textbook

[73] Kassir, Samir, "La Guerre du Liban" p. 14
[74] Ghosn, Irma ed. "Educators, Youth & Peace Building" p. 1

is a key tool in this task: "The revision of the history textbook content is inextricably linked to larger political debates about which narratives of history are true. Secondary-school history textbooks rarely, if ever, play a pioneering role in tackling highly sensitive issues or changing historical narratives that are not widely accepted in society."[75] The concept of peace education can only go so far. The importance of a unified history curriculum and teaching method is tantamount. The problem lies not only within the difficulty to find a common history to teach in schools, but the wider societal inability to find a common history. The problem lies in government control of the curriculum and textbooks, not the individual schools or teachers. Since the schools tend not only to be separated by confession, but also by socio-economic class there is a class divide that factors into the sectarian environment as well. The purpose of using different methods of peace education in Lebanese schools is to heal wounds and eradicate sectarian bias from the war. This would help in the absence an objective history curriculum, but not replace it, and would combat sectarian bias.

The civil war transformed the demographics of the schools, creating more homogenized populations, and with the different religious groups staying within their own confessional system for learning.[76] Students and teachers come into the classroom with their own personal historical narratives and perspectives, and when they are not given the opportunity to discuss and analyze the different viewpoints they cannot learn a balanced and fair history. Rote learning is not ideal for moving forward. Students must learn to look critically at the world around them in order to have an effective appreciation of history. They need a fact-based textbook along with a forum for discussion and debate. They need to learn to have an analytical eye for information that they get, in order to be able to assess for themselves the politics of their country and their world. Media

[75]Ghosn, Irma ed. "Educators, Youth & Peace Building" p. 9
[76]Ibid. p. 3

literacy is also extremely important in this case, since if the schools are not providing the adequate training and information, the students need to understand how media is disseminating information and how to discern bias or interpret stories in the news. If, for example, students rely on news sources from their political party then they are not able to understand that there is a certain bias, which with they receive information.

The UN Institute of Peace has done studies on conflict education and teaching in sensitive areas that are either suffering a violent conflict or recently recovering from one. According to their report, peace education is the best solution to soften a history curriculum that may be difficult for students because of their own personal experiences or the collective memory of the population:

> Although it usually does not focus on the past, peace education may model new pedagogical approaches useful for history teaching, but in a much less controversial curriculum. For example, in Lebanon, teaching about the civil war remains stalled because of lack of political will and consensus about the war's causes, as well as inadequate teacher training and curricular materials. Although pedagogy in Lebanon remains very traditional, development of a peace education manual under the leadership of Lebanese American University in Baalbek has been under way.[77]

Tangible results are not immediately evident in these subtle changes in the teaching methods or daily lessons, but eventually a difference in student perspective of their community and their peers may be visible. As Irma Ghosn, the leader of the Peace Education Initiative in Lebanon points out that the measurable results are few: "Peace education outcomes involve changes not in knowledge and skills, but in attitudes, values, and patterns of behavior."[78] These changes are not quick to occur, and are very difficult to assess. The project is experimental, and teachers have reported back on their experiences in peace lessons in the classroom. Whether these results or improvements will last remains to be seen. Misconceptions also exist in peace education because

[77] Cole and Barsalou, "The Challenges of Teaching History in Areas of Violent Conflict." p.12
[78] Ghosn, Irma ed. "Educators, Youth & Peace Building" p. 7

it has been misinterpreted as being a way of making peace with "enemies" (whatever that may define for a particular group, or individual), or "turning the other cheek".[79]

What is practical in the implementation of peace education as a pedagogical tool is that it can be implemented where history cannot. Until there is an agreement on how to teach history, this may serve as a useful outlet post-conflict. This allows teachers to explore the topic from a different approach than rote teaching of historical events. The report also made recommendations for further research in the topic of teaching history, which are extremely useful: "More research should focus on:

1) What and how much students retain from their history classes;
2) The role that other classes (such as religion) play in forming students' historical understanding;
3) How schools' "hidden agendas" and structural features (such as ethnic segregation) affect student attitudes and identities: and
4) What influences outside schools (such as the media, popular culture, family influences, and broader political processes) influence students' knowledge and interpretations of history."[80]

In the questionnaire distributed to the Lebanese students, this study attempted to seek further answers to these questions. The majority of Lebanese students learn and hear about the war from family and personal narratives from outside of the classroom, it is important that they be able to discuss their version of the narrative in a safe environment. If there were a way to use personal narratives in addition to the curriculum, it might have more meaning for the students and bring a more balanced view of history to them, showing them the different sides of the debate, means touching on sensitivities. It would be a move towards healing to listen to and understand other narratives, rather than just those they rely on from their family and friends and religious service. There are individuals who have tried to argue for basing the curriculum more on personal

[79] Ibid. p. 6
[80] Ghosn, Irma ed. "Educators, Youth & Peace Building"p. 15

narratives, as opposed to historiography, which was used previously.[81] The disconnect between the classroom and the narratives from family, and media, can cause confusion for the students who hear a different history inside and outside the classroom. The school should be the first line of defense towards a balanced, even-handed and well-presented historical perspective. This could be a combination of personal narratives combined with historiography to personalize the perceived different groups. This however, can only happen with government acceptance and consensus on a textbook and efforts to reconcile differences on the national level and then integrate that into the curriculum:

> The underlying assumption is that for processes of educational change to be meaningful contributions to national reconciliation and peace building in the context of identity-based conflicts, the complex linkages between schooling and conflict need to be explicitly recognized and explored.[82]

More work needs to be done at the bureaucratic level, and more studies conducted on how to best approach post-conflict education in schools. This is not a problem unique to Lebanon, but the role of education in conflict and post-conflict zones is critical to social cohesion everywhere, "Understanding the role of education in general, and of curriculum Policy in particular, in their capacity to erode or reinforce social cohesion in the context of conflict-affected societies, is relevant to efforts at peace building education in *all* societies."[83]

According to Frayha, who led the committee that drafted the new textbook, the history and civics curriculum was revised in 2000 along with the project to draft a new textbook. The project was laborious and involved a diverse committee to avoid complaints from sects. As previously mentioned, the result was a text that was completed that was objected to and not

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[81] Cole and Barsalou, "The Challenges of Teaching History in Areas of Violent Conflict." p.10
[82] Tawil, Sobhi; Harley, Alexandra, "Education and identity-based Conflict : assessing curriculum Policy for social and civic reconstruction" p. 6
[83] Ibid p. 7

distributed to all students in the end. The objections were not even remotely due to the Civil war, but instead, to a centuries-old portion of history. The lines of disagreement run so deeply in some cases, and different sects hold so dearly to their collective history that telling a common story is challenging at best. Though there are disagreements as to how to portray the ancient history, it is even more sensitive when the topic is modern history. As mentioned in the introduction, the group Hezbollah objected to their portrayal as terrorists in the book *Modern World History* used by eighth graders at International College. [84] This textbook is not the textbook that was drafted for the curriculum development project, but a book published in the United States and used there to teach history. They had the pages that were offensive censored from the book. Frayha warns against schools that reinforce these sectarian allegiances, and violate the Ta'if agreement[85] by teaching their own versions of history and argues that they are only creating deeper social divides. He believes that in order to heal these wounds and mend the gaps between communities, the schools must be proactive in implementing teaching methods that build social cohesion. [86] Frayha's argument is a good one, however it was written before his curriculum development work for the government was dissolved. He defends the government as having paved the way for social cohesion and curricular development in his early work, but later acknowledges there faults and places blame on them. Now it has become the government (Prime Minister, and Cabinet, along with all the bureaucracy beneath these positions that collaborate to

[84] L.M. "Lebanese School Rips Pages from Textbook Critical of Hezbollah." http://news-lab.net/blog/2009/10/21/lebanese-school-rips-pages-from-textbook-critical-of-hezbollah/

[85] Frayha, Nemer, "Developing Curriculum as a Means to Bridging National Divisions in Lebanon." p. 188

[86] Frayha, Nemer "Éducation et Cohésion Sociale au Liban " p. 117

write curriculum policy)[87] that is creating further divides by not implementing the new curriculum. There are indeed schools that are responsible for teaching biased versions of history, but it is also the entire system that is responsible due to a silence on the part of the education ministry.

In addition to reforming history, the new civics curriculum was intended as a means of teaching pertinent current issues:

> In Lebanon, the 1997 civics curriculum added new topics such as the issue of Palestine, the Lebanese resistance to Israeli occupation, the value of liberation, the importance of social coexistence and unity, patriotism 'and so on.' [88] The history curriculum now includes 'sensitive events'. Yet we do not know exactly how these are taught and the relative balance between patriotism and coexistence externally. [89]

The international community encouraged this initiative, however the degree to which this civics curriculum was implemented is unclear. Like the drafted history textbook, and new curriculum written in 2001, the civics curriculum is not being taught in schools. Based on interviews with students, and discussing the present state of the teaching of history, the students still do not talk about the civil war in school, or any sensitive events. The purpose of citizenship education within the civics curriculum is to reinforce human rights, democracy, and active participation.[90] In a study conducted by Shuyab, however, "she concluded that the design of the new civics curriculum was developed from an authoritarian approach neglecting humanitarian ideologies in

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[87] Frayha, Nemer, "Developing Curriculum as a Means to Bridging National Divisions in Lebanon."p. 180
[88] Frayha, Nemer. "Developing Curriculum as a Means to Bridging National Divisions in Lebanon." p.196
[89] Davies, Lynn, "Teaching About Conflict Through Citizenship Education," p. 30
[90] Akar, Bassel, "Teacher Reflection on the Challenges of Teaching Citizenship Education in Lebanon: A Qualitative Pilot Study." p. 52

citizenship education as it overemphasizes the role of the citizen rather than the development of the personality."[91] This favored a sectarian ideology over a national and human identity.

Post-Conflict curricula and social cohesion: A comparative look at Rwanda vs. Lebanon

In countries that have experienced similar divisive conflicts to Lebanon in their recent past, there have been similar problems as well as initiatives in curricular development. I will compare briefly the curricular development post internal conflict in Rwanda to that of Lebanon. Rwanda suffered devastating and divisive civil war and ethnic genocide. Like Lebanon, the country was split into warring groups, however the violence in Rwanda was clearly one group trying to wipe out the other with the Hutus systematically killing the Tutsis and attempting to eliminate them from Rwanda. The main step towards social cohesion is through the drafting of a new curriculum to create a unified school system that will help in solidifying the bonds broken by years of civil strife. Rwanda and its efforts in curriculum development also had the goal of creating social cohesion and a look at the process by which they did this will help to understand the situation in Lebanon. After having examined in detail the teaching of history in Lebanon, it is important to look at the issues in curriculum development in aiding social cohesion in another post-war country. For this purpose the focus will be on Rwanda. This comparative study of curriculum development in Rwanda and its role in moving forward to build social cohesion after violent conflict will help to illuminate the situation in Lebanon: "In the cases of Lebanon and Rwanda, both societies are seeking to strengthen a central national identity that will hold the

[91] Akar, Bassel, "Teacher Reflection on the Challenges of Teaching Citizenship Education in Lebanon: A Qualitative Pilot Study." p. 52

nation together."[92] The link between these two countries is their need to strengthen and weld together a nation that has been broken by civil conflict.

Rwanda was wracked by ethnic genocide in 1994 within the context of a civil war. The Hutu tribe massacred 800,000 people, mostly of the Tutsi tribe during a three-month period.[93] Many of the problems that occurred in Rwanda can be traced back to the colonial period, and the divisions of the society by socio-economic class and Christian vs. non-Christian. [94]The education system reinforced the injustice based on ethnicity, and religion that prevailed in Rwandan society prior to 1994.[95] This culture of hate and previous massacres of Tutsis had existed since 1959, and it was because of this that so many people were killed so quickly; it had been bred into the collective thought. After the genocide a major part of the reconstruction involved the school curriculum, which was one of the problems identified as a cause of the civil war and genocide:

> Under normal conditions, education helps people to avoid conflict; something went very wrong in education in Rwanda. Today, people assume that something "prevented people of Rwanda from thinking critically and [they] became blind." What needs to change is pedagogy. All our respondents agreed that the acquisition of intellectual knowledge, skills, and attitudes depends on a pedagogic approach that combines discourse and practice- that is, a pedagogic approach that offers students the possibility to acquire knowledge, attitudes, and values.[96]

The methodology of the curriculum development project was to identify what was taught prior to the genocide that led to social divisions and conflict, and what should be taught to create social cohesion.[97] The post-1994 government also defined "peace and reconciliation" as a "life

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[92] Sobhi & Harley "Education, Conflict, and Social Cohesion" p. 14
[93] UN Security Council"Report by the Independent Investigation on the Actions of the UN in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda." P. 3
[94] Kabano, Rutasiyire, Rubagiza, "Redefining Rwanda's Future: the Role of Curriculum in Social Reconstruction." P. 323
[95] Kabano, Rutasiyire, Rubagiza, "Redefining Rwanda's Future: the Role of Curriculum in Social Reconstruction." p. 320
[96] Ibid. p. 355
[97] Ibid. p. 321

skill."[98] The goal was to develop a curriculum that promoted peace and tolerance, as well as skills necessary for socio-economic development. The government sought peace and reconciliation; education was one of the vehicles for this agenda. The first step in order to initiate this agenda was to reach a consensus on how to tell the history: "The challenge for Rwandan schools, and for the education system in general, is to first reach a consensus on how to interpret the events before and after the 1994 genocide, and to then determine how to move forward and look into the future."[99] Without a consensus on the past events, it is impossible to learn from them and to move onwards. This is the same problem faced in Lebanon; a consensus must be found in order to proceed in drafting a curriculum.

Though the teaching of history in Rwanda has been developed and rewritten, the process is not finished, and there are still problems that the country faces in educating its youth about the recent past. Despite their inclusion in the curriculum, teachers sometimes avoid certain topics because of the sensitivity that they fear might cause emotions to flare in the classroom:

> "In the teaching of history, there are sensitive issues that teachers do not teach even if they are indicated in the syllabus. Some of these are related to: the population settlement in Rwanda; the ethnic composition (Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa) of Rwandan society; the events of 1959; land ownership and; the question of citizenship."[100]

These events are of great importance to the civil war, ethnic conflict, and genocide in Rwanda. Though they may be sensitive topics, it is crucial that students learn them and talk about them in the classroom so that these conflicts do not recur in the future.

As in Lebanon, the national identity in Rwanda is preceded by one's group identity. In the case of Rwanda, this is an affiliation to an ethnic group: Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa. The national

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[98] Sobhi & Harley "Education, Conflict, and Social Cohesion" p. 14
[99] Kabano, Rutasiyire, Rubagiza, "Redefining Rwanda's Future: the Role of Curriculum in Social Reconstruction." p. 320
[100] Kabano, Rutasiyire, Rubagiza, "Redefining Rwanda's Future: the Role of Curriculum in Social Reconstruction." p. 357

identity, as a Rwandan, comes second. The initiative after the civil war was to create a sense of belonging to a nation rather than a group. This builds a sense of social cohesion that prevents the inter-group violence that occurred in 1994 from recurring. In the article on redefining Rwanda's future, Kabano, Rutasiyire, and Rubagiza acknowledge the improvements in the Rwandan curriculum, and state that in further reforms:

> "The curriculum should teach all Rwandan children to consider themselves as Rwandans first and not Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa. Patriotism should also be taught to teachers. Curriculum should inculcate values of Rwandan citizenship. The curriculum change should also lead to the formation of a Rwandan citizenship founded on the diversity of gender, age, social status, wealth, and individual characteristics."[101]

The concept of citizenship is key in forming a solid national identity and social cohesiveness. Without the feeling of belonging to a nation and of being a citizen, there is no sense of compatriotism. The different ethnic groups must identify as Rwandan above all, so that the divisive nature that existed up to and during the civil war dissolve.

In their conclusion the authors Kabano, Rutasiyire, and Rubagiza review the changes needed in the curriculum in different subjects. On the topic of history there recommendations were as follows:

> The teaching of history should be revised, and should be objective. Parents need to be involved and endeavour to tell the truth to their children. Books and other teaching materials that carry messages of hatred and social division should be removed from the school syllabus. Scientific research on the history of Rwanda is needed in order to invalidate the hermitic theory that presents Tutsi as foreigners and invaders. This research should be based on scientific arguments, methods, and new paradigms more elaborated than the hermitic theory. The truth should be put to light. *For issues related to sensitive events, our respondents said that history consists of both good and bad events. History should cover all of these, including negative events; what should be avoided is the distortion of information to suit one group or the other*.[102]

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[101] Ibid. p. 358

[102] Kabano, Rutasiyire, Rubagiza, "Redefining Rwanda's Future: the Role of Curriculum in Social Reconstruction." p. 359

These prescriptions, along with an emphasis on critical thinking are necessary to founding a nation with a united youth population. The teaching of history should indeed be objective; the authors put the emphasis on parents, urging them to take control of the telling the truth to their children. As argued in the case of Lebanon, the home cannot be the only source. The different truths of families are more likely to be biased and represent personal opinion. The objective of curriculum in schools is the best option to give students an accurate portrayal of the recent history of the genocide in Rwanda. As they state clearly, whether events are good or bad, they are part of the history, and need to be told regardless. This is an important lesson, and applies to Lebanon as well. The truth without distortion of events is critical in educating the youth of a country emerging from violent conflict.

This comparative study is enlightening in examining the problems in finding a common historical narrative in Lebanon to use in the school curriculum. Both Lebanon and Rwanda suffered immense losses, and extended periods of civil war. They are both nation-states that seek to rebuild after these civil wars in order to create a national identity and unity among their citizens. The school curriculum in Rwanda was extremely biased and portrayed the Tutsis as inferior people and enemies, which helped breed hatred and violence. In Lebanon, the separation of different religious sects in schools, and their respective curricula, does not help to reinforce a national identity and sense of belonging among students. Both of these countries need to find an objective historical narrative in order to reform the education of the youth of their countries, and to create a unified, and socially cohesive society. The hope is, that in reinforcing a social cohesion in the nation, the violent conflict will not happen again.

Chapter 3: Lebanese Students' Opinion

Objectives

The research conducted up to this point has been based on the sources, which were available on the education system in Lebanon. Unfortunately, the CRDP (Center for Educational Research and Development), a subset of Ministry of Education Website has been under construction, which may not be accidental, and it is difficult to find out the real story and the accurate information on exactly what is taught. Therefore the primary sources are my student surveys, and the documentary "A History Lesson" by Hady Zaccak, to explain the current state of the history curriculum in Lebanese high schools.

The questions that were asked in the survey in Beirut in February 2011 sought to gain insight into the following questions:

How does History education relate to sectarianism and social cohesion?

What influences do schools have on students compared to media and society?

Are textbooks and curricula followed strictly or do teachers include information that is left out?

What is the relationship between current events and politics and the classroom?

Do students learn about the civil war, and do they perceive a difference between the classroom discourse and the accounts circulating in their home and among their family?

The surveys were distributed to students at the American University of Beirut, in Ras Beirut and the Lebanese American University, in Snoubra in Beirut. There were 35 students filled out the questionnaire. All were University students with an age range of 17 to 22.

Survey findings:

Fig. 2.1

*****The response Lebanese, instead of the individual religion, is indicative of a strong belief in the Laïque movement in Lebanon, and the emphasis on the unified Lebanese population, rather than identification by religion.

The students who responded only Muslim, without sect affiliation, represented 17 %, the students who specified that they were Shi'a Muslim represented 14% and only 3% of students specified Sunni Muslim in their religious affiliation.

The large number of no responses, like the response "Lebanese" is possibly due to a reticence to identify one's religion, because of sectarian sentiment.

High Schools Represented by respondents:

- College des Soeurs des Saint-Coeurs Sioufi, Private Catholic School
- International College, Beirut, Secular Private School (elite)
- National Evangelical School, Nabatieh (National Evangelical, Protestant)
- City International School, Beirut Secular
- Al-Batoul High School, Shi'a

- Al-Mustafa High School, Shi'a (Hezbollah operated)[103]
- International School of Choueifat-SABIS Secular International School
- Rawda High School Secular
- Al Qualaa Secondary School, Private, Secular, Saïda
- Rafic Hariri High School, Secular
- Broummana High School, Friends school (Quaker, Secular)
- College Louise Wegmann, Protestant
- N.D. Jamhour, Jesuit Catholic

Responses to Questions:

Fig 2.2

Based on the responses to this question, students perceive that they learn the most about the history of Lebanon in school. The students could respond positively to more than one if they felt it applied. This meant that students would reply they learned the most from several sources. School was rarely the only source. This question was not about modern history but the history of Lebanon in general. Therefore it is not an accurate gauge of student perception of how the civil war is taught or dealt with in schools. This does not conflict with my thesis because the

[103] Lynch, Sarah, "A is for Al-Mahdi." *Now Lebanon*

question was about history in general, not specifically about history post 1960 or about the civil war. It is consistent in that home and family are the second source of history learning, almost as much as school, followed by television. This indicates that personal narratives and family stories are still a very important part of the learning process in history. The other factors, such as family, television, and other medias, Internet and friends, are playing into the student perception of history of Lebanon. School is not the most reliable source, and the story is being colored with other outside influences, affecting perspective. The absence of a modern teaching of history in schools means a greater likelihood of reliance on other sources, which may not be as balanced or accurate.

Fig. 2.3

The responses to this question the results were very similar to the results from the previous one. Of the two major sources of history learning, the school is the primary source for students but not by much. The home and family are the secondary most important sources according to these results. This may be a reflection of the fact that students perceive the discourse in schools as being more accurate, and personal narratives as having more bias. This perception may be due to the fact that teachers are viewed as experts trained in a profession. This could be privileged over the non-specialized narrative of parents.

Fig. 2.4

The results of this question are very interesting since the overwhelming source for learning about politics is through television. The relation between TV and school is staggering. Overall TV, Newspapers, and Media represent 57 % of the total of where students learn about the politics of Lebanon. This shows that students rely on media and outside sources for their political information, but that school is really not the forum for current political discussion, or analysis of current political events occurring. The reliance on TV means a certain media spin based on which news students follow. This could open the door to personal biases of different TV stations. The school does not deal with politics and with modern goings-on. Current events do not figure into the classroom, which remains an outdated and irrelevant part of the society. If students choose to watch particular party stations, such as Al-Manar, the Hezbollah station, they may be getting highly politicized information, and therefore have distinct political allegiances. It is in a case such as this that media literacy becomes an essential part of the education process. The ability to discern the information, whether it be on the Internet, in books, or on Television,

students need to learn media literacy skills. These analytical skills permit students to look critically at information rather than accepting it at face value.

Fig.

2.5

Just as the students perceived their learning about current events of Lebanon through television rather than school, home and family, friends, and newspapers, the same applies for current events of the world. This question ties into the question about politics. The students rely on information both domestically and internationally from their TV rather than their classroom. Is it also possible that students trust information from TV more than family and friends as well? Schools, however, play the least significant role in learning about current events in the world. The current events are not part of the curriculum, so they are not addressed. The classroom is a great place for discussion and debate of current events, and should be used as a forum to analyze and critically look at the world events.

Fig. 2.6

The figures of this chart are very telling of the perception of history in school of students. The graph represents the answer to the first part of this question. The other parts of the question were open ended and elicited varied responses, though most students simply answered yes or now. When asked if what they learned in school was the same or different from what they learn at home and from friends, the majority of respondents believed that there was a difference between the two. In retrospect, this question was not specific enough. The question should have included the word history, to be clear that the question was in relation to history rather than school over all. The discourse was different, whether it was a question of bias, narratives, or emphasis in information; students receive different discourses between the home and the school. Some students specified by saying that the schoolbook and teachers avoided certain topics that were not part of the curriculum but that were events they knew which occurred during the civil war. Therefore even if Lebanese history is being taught in school, it is not necessarily modern history, or stories about the civil war. I attempted to further analyze these results by religion and school,

but the results were inconclusive. All of those who responded that there was no difference between school and home were Muslim. They identified themselves either as Shi'ite or simply Muslim. This may be a correlation, however, they were all from different schools. The rest of the respondents who said there was a difference were from a diverse background of schools and religions.

Fig. 2.7

In question 5 the overwhelming majority of respondents said that they talked the most about recent events in the Arab world and in Lebanon with friends and at home with parents and siblings rather than at school or in their history class with their teacher. This could imply that the government is depoliticizing the school system inducing an ignorance of recent past and current events in school. The students, given the lack of education on recent history, and their lack of

involvement in current events makes them less likely to mobilize, and creates a sense of apathy due to the absence of current and pertinent historical discussions in class. Many of the University students I spoke to were not discussing these topics, even in University classes, which in my opinion, is the ideal forum.

6) What have you learned about modern history in Lebanon? About the Civil War? (Both inside and outside the classroom)

The last question, question 6 was the most telling of all of the questions I asked, and the most interesting for my research. This was an open question, which, unfortunately not all students replied to, since the responses that I did obtain were often very informative and pertinent in helping me gain a more complete image of the education of history in Lebanon. The overall impression from question 6 is that there is a complete lack of detail. The civil war appears as a general and vague reference in the responses, and students cannot speak specifically to events so they make generalizations such as "history repeats itself" or that "Lebanon is the victim of foreign intervention and interference". Their reflections show the degree to which they do not learn about the civil war in the classroom they cannot objectively say what they have learned about the war, like, for example, if they were asked what they know about the First World War. This is the result of a government that withholds the teaching of modern history to its students, for fear of dissent and disagreement. The overwhelming resistance is to breaking down facts and figures about the war since that would imply subjectivity. The fear of conflict and of upsetting sensitivities seems to be the largest concern of the government, since certain sects have wield considerable political as well as military power, such as the Hezbollah party, or the right-wing Christian groups. The government does not want to ruffle feathers and set off

imbalance. The absence of a recent history curriculum may also be due to the government's fear of instability and volatility and a desire to move on and forget in the hope that the violent conflict will fade away and no more will reemerge.

Observations on the findings of the surveys:

The objective in conducting this research at the beginning was to merely pose questions in order to find out how the teaching and learning of history related to sectarianism and social cohesion, to discern what influence teachers exerted on students compared to media and society, and how ancient history was taught and linked to the way modern history was approached, and finally if textbooks and curricula were followed strictly or it was left to teachers to include information that was left out? These varied questions led me to create this questionnaire, which I hoped would guide my discussions with the students who were asked to complete my questionnaire. What I was able to conclude from the results of these questions, was that overall current events and political goings-on in Lebanon are not discussed in schools and therefore only create a further void between the outdated and outmoded curriculum and the actual world of the students. This void creates a reliance on personal narratives and on media such as television to get information about the world today and various other events both domestically and internationally.

A dependence on media and stories from family and friends also reinforces certain belief systems especially if the media are ideologically or politically inclined such as Al-Manar. The stories learned from family, or from certain media outlets perpetuate certain opinions and loyalties that reinforce a sectarian sentiment. An Orthodox Christian Lebanese student may hear an entirely different story from his or her family on the war, and watch television that coincides with his or her political leanings, whereas a Druze, Sunni or Shi'a Muslim, or another Christian

sect may grow up with a different narrative and opinion, and rely on different news sources for their current events. A curriculum that finds one common story and is able to break down the war in terms of facts rather than subjective anecdotes will help in breaking down societal divides that are deeply ingrained in Lebanese society.

Since this study was done at the University level the results are different than if I had been able to interview high school students directly. In one sense this created a much more self-aware result as the university students were much more likely to reflect on the whole of their education from the perspective of students no longer in High School. The students were most likely more honest than if I had given them the surveys in a classroom setting, with the gaze of a teacher, and a greater sense of obligation to community and affiliation.

The students overall see a difference in the discourse between home and school, and at the same time believe that the most "true" historical events are taught in schools. As for current politics and current events the students rely heavily on television for information. This may contribute to sectarian sentiments because the bias in television has potential to reinforce personal bias that preexisted.

During my research in books and academic journals it was often unclear what students were exactly being taught. There are some academics who say that there have been new curricula drafted, or that a new textbook will be coming out imminently, but what I learned from the students themselves is that the civil war is not taught in schools, nor any recent history, and that the discourse between the two is very different.

These divided survey results are a result of a divided and sectarian school system where despite a common curriculum a different mentality and emphasis on religion and social divisions create very differing opinions on perception of history education.

One of the things I found most interesting while further researching the schools attended by the students who responding to the surveys, was that many of them included a section on their website about the schools' history, where they explain how the school was affected by the civil war, whether it was destroyed and rebuilt, or suffered losses or damage. The history of the school itself may talk about the war, but the curriculum ignores it. It is a bizarre contrast of remembrance and forgetting at the same time.

Hady Zaccak, A History Lesson

As another source I relied on Hady Zaccak's documentary film, "A History Lesson"[104] a documentary in which he visits five schools and films in the classroom during history and citizenship classes of elementary school up to high school. He then interviews individual students from these schools from various religious and socio-economic backgrounds. The five schools that he visits are: Notre Dame de Jamhour, a Jesuit catholic school; Al-Imam al Hassan Schools, Sayyed Mohamad Hussein Fadlallah's al-Mubarrat Foundation (Shi'ite); Lebanon Evangelical School for Boys and Girls, evangelical missionaries; Al-Imam Secondary school for Islamic Education, Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiya; German School Beirut, secular. These schools represent a wide spectrum of the types of institutions that exist and it was very pertinent to my research, since he was able to obtain access to classrooms, which I was not. His documentary is very comprehensive, and in his interviews he asks the students well-chosen questions in order to show the different beliefs of the different students. In the classroom he films the teaching of the National Pact of 1943, and shows the textbooks that the students use, which are in fact a series of 20 smaller books to replace the lack of comprehensive history text. One of the problems that lead

[104] *A History Lesson*. Dir. Hady Zaccak.

to this lack of an objective common story is the absence of a Lebanese National Archive, so there is no collection of primary-source documents from which to glean a comprehensive history.

In his documentary, Zaccak underlines the concept of national identity, and Lebanese pride. The flag is seen everywhere and there is a great pride in being from Lebanon. The question he seems to pose is, though everyone is proud to be Lebanese, what does that actually mean to them. He asks the students one by one what their favorite historical events are, which is telling of their political and religious background; some students reply Lebanese independence, while others say the 2000 and 2006 victories, or the withdrawal of the Syrian army, some refer to Khomeiny's Islamic revolution. There are a wide variety of responses to suit the very different backgrounds and beliefs of the students. In the classroom the emphasis on Lebanese independence and pride is striking. The teacher discusses the protests against the French during the mandate and points out how advanced Lebanon was to have women protesting. The degree to which the teacher pushes this particular moment of Lebanese pride, approaches propaganda.

Just as each person identifies their religion, the culture that comes along with that religion supersedes their Lebanese-ness and therefore influences the way that they learn history, and the way they perceive their common history. For example, in Hady Zaccak's documentary on history education in Lebanon, when students were asked to name their favorite historical figure, it was very telling of their religious affiliation and background. The Shi'a Muslim girls named Khomeini as their favorite religious figure, whereas the Christian students named Khoury and Solh the makers of the national pact at independence. The history of their religion and their religious heritage is equally if not at times more important than their Lebanese history, and the political leanings that accompany the different religious sects are obvious in these students' responses.

One scene from the documentary takes place in French at an elementary school, most likely Notre Dame de Jamhour, where the teacher is giving a lesson on the Phoenicians in French. She lauds the accomplishments of the Phoenicians and tells her students that it is due to the Ottomans and the Turks that Lebanon "fell behind". He then asks students if they believe they have Phoenician roots, and the answers are extremely telling of what the different students have learned in school. Some students do not believe they have Phoenician roots while others say, "Phoenicians were Arabs, and I am an Arab, so I am Phoenician", or "Phoenicians didn't fight amongst each other, Lebanese do". In an elementary classroom (in English) very young students learn what it means to be Lebanese, and they talk about language and food as means of identifying themselves- religion is not mentioned. In another class of very young children (taught in Arabic) the children learn about the Lebanese flag and they say that it is their job to protect the flag from their enemies by killing the enemies and "chasing Zionist enemies". This leads to a question on who is the enemy of Lebanon, to which students mostly reply Israel, though some also reply Syria or America. The last question he asks the students that he interviews is if they think that they should be taught about the civil war. The students reply that they do not learn about the war but they wish they could, some say that they would rather forget and are happy that they don't learn about the war, others say that it is important and that despite a desire they are unable to, one students asked, "which one?" For the students interviewed they have their own experiences with war. Different from their parents, but they have also experienced violent conflict so that it is not only in the stories told by their parents, but in their own memory.

There is one student, a high school boy Majd Salhab, who is fiercely patriotic, and very bright. He is extremely interested in the history of Lebanon, and is very disappointed by the lack of recent history taught to him. He is curious about the events that occurred in the civil war,

retracing the sites and scenes of battles that took place throughout Beirut. For his birthday his parents offer him a history book of narratives and pictures from the war, which he is thrilled to receive. The documentary appears focused on him as the hope of the next generation, and an example of the students that have a vested interest in the history of the civil war, and seek answers to their questions that are left unanswered in the classroom.

The filmmaker implies through these interviews of students at different schools, from various religious backgrounds, as well as his filming in the classroom, that the lack of history education is perpetuating the cycle of violence. Though not expressly stated Mr. Zaccak shows students playing towards the end of the documentary with gunfire as sound effects. His documentary is informative, and the amount of filming within schools he was able to achieve is impressive. It enlightens my research since I was not able to go into schools to work as comprehensively as he had. This documentary serves as an aid to my research, since his interviews and classroom scenes provide a great deal of insight into this topic. He manages to present the different schools and student and teacher opinion without bias; it is only at the end that he inserts his opinion into the documentary. This documentary is very useful as it provided frank interviews and uncommented scenes of classrooms that were teaching history, and citizenship. Hady Zaccack succeeds in showing the juxtaposition of Lebanese pride and nationalism along with the void of teaching history, and the very different opinions and beliefs of the various students and families.

Conclusion:

As this study has shown, the school system in Lebanon is unique in its combination of private, semi-private, and public religious and secular schools. The issue of the history curriculum, and how to tell the common story of Lebanon has been a problem since even before the war. The unwillingness to discuss history, or current events in schools may have exacerbated students' view of other religious groups, and helped to cultivate a culture of sectarianism that fueled the war. The continued absence of teaching recent history in the school system means that those making education policy have not learned from their mistakes. This then contributes to the reliance on personal narratives by students, and perpetuates sectarian values. This is seen through studies in social cohesion by Nemer Frayha, and through Zaccak's *A History Lesson*. In the student surveys examined there was a distinct trend in students relying on outside sources in addition to, or instead of the classroom for their information not only on the history of Lebanon, but on politics and current events as well. These students, in many cases depended on family or friends as a secondary source outside of school, or as a replacement for the information that was not given. Students responded that they were reliant on media such as television, newspapers, or Internet for their information on the war, or for current Lebanese and world events. This reliance on sources outside of the classroom greatly raises the potential for sectarianism among Lebanese students since they are more likely to learn the recent history from family, friends, or television, which may a very distinct political and social agenda.

The majority of students surveyed believed that there was a difference in what was taught in the classroom, and what they heard outside of schools from various sources. The documentary by Zaccak showed that the different backgrounds of the students along with the schools they were educated in had a huge influence on their worldview. The students that were from a certain

background, for example, Shi'a, were raised with a certain perspective of history, and by attending a Shi'a school that perspective was not challenged, and they continued to view current events and history from the perspective of their family and community. This could be said for Sunni Muslims or Christian families as well.

It is this sectarian perspective not only in regards to history, but in interpreting current events and politics that breeds hatred and leads to violence. Effective teaching and comprehensive curriculum is an important part of eliminating the sectarianism among youth, and eventually adults in Lebanon. The school system needs to include a forum to discuss and analyze recent history and events, since it is the absence of this that exacerbated sectarian sentiment leading up to the civil war.

This study has sought to explore the history of Lebanon, and its education system in order to explain the current state of affairs, and the problems that exist in the teaching of history, in order to explore its effect on Lebanese society. The efforts to create a socially cohesive nation-state after the devastation of the civil war, without implementing the educative prescriptions set forth in the Ta'if agreement, are much less effective. The history books drafted need to be distributed, and the school curriculum unified across the board. This is the only way to ensure that efforts are being made towards a cohesive society, and less internal violence.

Education is at the center of many government agendas; this is not unique to Lebanon. It has much potential as a tool for propaganda and for furthering opinions of political leaders, or for implementing an ideology that the government seeks to promote. Though it is a tool for propaganda, education is also the best tool for peace. As this study sought to show through the section on peace education, it is necessary to create a curriculum that teaches a complete history, and also uses peace education techniques as a means of societal healing. Though this topic was

difficult to study since primary sources on the topic were scarce, and it was not possible to obtain examples of the textbooks being used in the classroom, the student surveys helped to ascertain the state of history teaching. Both public and private schools were inaccessible and textbooks were therefore not a possibility.

The comparative study with Rwanda was important to this thesis since it provided information on another state that had experienced violent conflict between its citizens, and the similar problems that these two countries faced post-war. With more time a comparative study between Rwanda and Lebanon with extensive study in both countries would be enlightening as to the effects of curriculum as a means to social cohesion. Both Frayha's and Kabano, Rutasiyire, and Rubagiza articles are detailed, but follow-up research, and a strictly comparative study of the two states would be a fascinating topic.

Further research on the impact of education on sectarian views in Lebanon should be explored. A study relying on history teacher's opinion of the curriculum, and the subject matter that they are teaching would be truly enlightening in further study. The documentary by Zaccak touches briefly on teachers, but does not delve deeply into their opinion on the absence of recent history in the curriculum. An interesting study to be further explored would be what conflicts teachers may have in teaching a curriculum they do not agree with, and to see if there are cases of radical teaching, where teachers are going against the set government curriculum, and giving students the full history. Further research should also be conducted on peace education, as it continues to be implemented, both in some schools in Lebanon, and elsewhere, and how it affects students' feelings of belonging in the long term, and of tolerance towards other groups. This would be greatly helpful to understanding the benefits of peace education in promoting non-violence and whether these effects would trickle down to the greater society. Though obtaining

measurable results may be difficult for such research, it would be very useful, especially in compelling the Ministry of Education to include peace education in the official curriculum.

The teaching of history is tantamount to Lebanese students' identity as a citizen of the state and member of society. In order to reduce the existence of sectarian sentiment in Lebanon, there needs to be a consensus. Whether or not consensus is possible given the many historical truths for various groups, and each sects perception, will be the main challenge. Many groups differ on the history, making the drafting of a homogeneous text very difficult. There may be solutions with texts featuring merely chronological events, or different historical interpretations presented on the same page. Students should be taught their entire history, in order to build a sense of national identity, rather than learning to identify themselves primarily by their religion. The school curriculum needs to be unified to reinforce the sense of national belonging, and a larger social order rather than merely an individual sect or religious group. This initiative is the responsibility of education policy-makers in Lebanon, and the greater population. Consensus on the telling of recent history needs to be agreed upon so that it can be taught in schools, and help towards building a more socially cohesive Lebanon.

Appendix:

Education Statistics in Lebanon

As of 2009, Lebanon had a population of 4.2 million[105], with a population under 14 of 1.1 million, which makes up 26 % of their total population, Lebanon has 95 % Primary Gross Enrollment ratio, with a 10.8 % dropout rate and 82 % completion rate. Lebanon did not have universal enrollment at the Elementary level as of 2009. At the secondary level there is an 81 % gross enrollment rate. There are 3 years in both Lower and Upper Secondary. The enrollment for Lower secondary is 87 % and the enrollment for Upper Secondary is 75 %. The Secondary enrollment ratios are high in Lebanon as well as the Tertiary, which is 51.6 %, with an Adult literacy rate of 90 %. In terms of education financing it, education makes up 9.6 % of government spending with 35.5 % of that money going towards Primary and 30.0 % going towards secondary. 5.6 % of the 9.3% of the National budget goes toward private schools. [106]

[105] World Bank , Education Data By Country

[106] Frayha, Nemer "Éducation et Cohésion Sociale au Liban " p. 116

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