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The Collectivization of Lebanese National Identity from

Contending Historical Narratives

By

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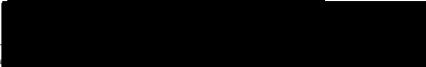
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Dedication

To my mother and my aunt

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Collectivization of Lebanese National Identity from Contending Historical Narratives

Zeina Abdallah

Abstract

A major obstacle to the formation of a national identity is the lack of a unified national memory. Since the country's 1943 independence, Lebanese have disagreed on a single historic narrative and failed to produce a unified history school textbook. Persistent differences among the various political and sectarian communities on what, why and how historic events took place are to blame. The thesis examines the correlations between the construction of collective memory, teaching history, and, subsequently, the formation of a national identity. It explores strategies that can help establish a unified curriculum for teaching the history of the Lebanese Civil War and the foundation of a collective memory through different narratives. It claims that a unified history book based on contending stories from different political and sectarian perspective might be possible to be collected and streamed into educational curriculum. This theme is tested through a comparative focus group research design that examine the impacts of teaching pedagogies through a single and multiple narratives collected from various contending political and sectarian discourses.

 Keywords: Collective memory, national identity, Lebanese history, history book, curriculum, education.

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Chapter One

Introduction

In a multi-sect, multi-background country emerging from a long-term civil war, it has proven hard to create a unified national identity. A major factor standing in the way of a national identity is the lack of a national memory.

This thesis is exploratory in nature. It examines various strategies to establish a unified curriculum for teaching the history of the Lebanese Civil War that helps offset the challenges to a unified sense of national identity in Lebanon by creating a common national memory. In brief, the thesis aims at exemplifying an approach to the study of historical pedagogy that may contribute to the collectivity of the different perspectives.

James Wretsch (1997), discusses history, not only as a source for learning about the past, but as a catalyst to affect the formation of the ideas and emotions of the citizens that in turn affects their decisions on voting, taxation and other state related matters. He continues in presenting the major role that history plays in the formation of national identity. Historical narrations inform citizens about their past to help shape their future. Official history is used by the state to ensure the loyalty of citizens to their nation-state (Wretsch, 1997).

According to James Reilly (2011) the formation of a collective memory is much affected by historical narratives. National history is written with an objective to

reinforce national identity through historical events. In the case of Lebanon, the political and religious construction leads to creating counter historical narratives due to the historical disagreements among the different groups (Reilly, 2011).

Hayden White (1984) highlights Hegel's point of view on the influence of political interest in presenting the past through the "production and preservation of the kind of records" (p. 4) used to narrate and analyze historical events. The state has a selective role when it comes to documenting historical events. It selects the narratives in a way that suits its vision on affecting the present and shaping the future. Hayden, as cited in White, presents the relation between a historical event, the aim for documenting it, and the way it is represented to shape the historical knowledge of the community. The lack of any of these components makes the information presented lack its historical aspect (White, 1984).

The various points of view and analysis that the Lebanese parties hold on the Lebanese civil war, its reasons and consequences, will inevitably lead to different interpretations and documentation of this period. This in turn will create a fragmented sense of national identity. Documented history can be interpreted in different ways, and this can clearly be seen when the Lebanese want to discuss their national identity. According to Kamal Salibi (2009), unlike the Lebanese Muslims, the Lebanese Maronites as well as many other Lebanese Christians, disagree on being classified as Arabs and through referring to history, they highlight their Phoenician as well as Mediterranean heritages over and above their Arab heritage. This inability to agree on common roots has only increased and led to a more distorted national identity with the lack of a common history education (Salibi, 2009).

Along the same lines, Nemer Frayha (2003) discusses the compromise on the Lebanese identity as presented in the 1943 National Pact. The Pact emphasized the Arab aspect in the Lebanese sovereign State as a way to create a common denominator among Lebanese just after the independence. The government reinforced this through education that was viewed as a catalyst in creating a common national identity among Lebanese. This approach by the government was a failure and this was clear in the conflicts that took place in the late 1950s (Frayha, 2003).

According to Salibi, the Lebanese problem, when it comes to the national identity, can be traced back to different historical backgrounds that each of the Lebanese Muslims and Christians follow. There is a major disagreement between them on the historicity of their country. Muslims link the history of Lebanon to that of the other Arab countries where the differentiation between Arabs and Muslims is not clear, whereas Christians trace it back to the emergence of the Lebanese state in 1920. The different views of the Lebanese history by its citizens are the basis of many problems and disagreements in the country (Salibi, 2009). This disagreement in itself is a barrier to the production of a unified history book that is approved by all the Lebanese constituents.

Word of mouth passing on stories between generations is often relied upon and as a history lesson for those who did not experience the conflict or the war presented. Oral history is open to interpretation, according to Paul Thompson (2000, p. 267), as a way for documenting historical events. Oral history can be the reason behind inaccurate documentation and bringing to the center whatever events or characters different factions wish to highlight. The subjectivity in this method allows the

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historians to interview whomever and ask only the questions that might bolster their argument and point of view (Thompson, 2000).

On the other hand, Gian Luca Gardini (2012) discusses oral history as a method to uncovering all the aspects of the events and brings up the characters and events that were neglected by historians.

James Mayo (1988) highlights the diverse views of past wars in a pluralistic society and the role these different perspectives play in shaping the identity of the many constituents of the same community.

In 1989, the Taif Accord called for unifying the history and civics textbook as one of the solutions to decrease tension among the Lebanese (Bahous, Nabhani, & Rabo, 2013).

With all the political tension in Lebanon, and eight years into the Lebanese civil war, the Druze leader Walid Jumblat brought up the importance of rewriting the Lebanese history textbook as a primary solution to a lasting political settlement in Lebanon (Salibi, 2009, p. 201). With this proposition, all Lebanese will have access to the same history education that will help in building a common national memory.

On the contrary and in a pluralistic society like that in Lebanon, Craig Larkin (2010, p. 620) found that in the case of the Lebanese civil war, it is difficult to teach this critical period in Lebanon since the teachers themselves do not agree on a common narration of what happened; war memory 'remains an untouchable topic' at schools. As a result, students are influenced by their parents' views when it comes to discussing the period of the Lebanese civil war. This only leads to continued failure in building a common national identity. Larkin portrayed this idea in an example of a

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kid wearing a supporting shirt, holding a flag and queuing to see Samir Geagea, one of Lebanon's current politicians who was a major leader during the civil war. This image only confirms that through oral history, ideas for support, hatred, prejudice and sectarianism are being passed from the parents to their children at early ages (Larkin, Beyond the war? The Lebanese post memory experience, 2010).

According to Makdissi (1996), one of the most important projects for the government is to have a new national history textbook that disregards all the sectarian narratives as a way to reinforce national unity. As mentioned by Freedman, Weinstein, Murphy, & Longman (2008, p. 666), after conflicts, any "offensive or divisive material" should be removed from history textbooks to avoid further conflicts. However, at the same time, it is hard to agree on what to remove due to the several parties involved. The drawback of removing the material, Freedman et al. continue, is the room of assumption and coming up with different narratives when analyzing this period (Freedman, Weinstein, Murphy, & Longman, Special Issue on Education in Conflict and Postconflict Society, 2008).

Nemer Frayha (2012), the former director of the Center for Research and Educational Development (CRDP), a research organization that develops Lebanon's curriculum, highlighted the problem of the Lebanese people split in different groups. He suggested having one textbook for all as a way of reinforcing the sense of belonging. In an attempt to produce a new history book and after the first batch was out in 2001, a disagreement on the use of the term "Arab conquest" by a deputy in the parliament with an accusation that this is "different from history as we know" led to an agreement to remove this part from the book (Bashshur, 2005).

Fattah (cited in Bahous, 2013) explains that the failure to have a unified history for all the events might lead to a repetition of the past since the new generation is getting the history either from their families or from the political leaders that they follow, and those leaders usually have their own agenda (Bahous, Nabhani, & Rabo, 2013).

One of the drawbacks of documenting history and coming up with a single narrative of a historical event is only quoting "activist archivist" as described by historian Howard Zinn and ignoring the narratives of ordinary people (Cline, 1991, p. 46).

The political influence of the different political stakeholders as well as the interference of ideological projects, affected the writings of the scholars about the civil war during that period. This made the civil war documentations subjective and biased depending on the background and political affiliation of the historian (Haugbolle, 2011). The Lebanese, despite their religious and political belongings, should agree on what makes them one nation. This will be achieved by agreeing on a common history leading to a peaceful country (Salibi, 2009, p.17). This can be accomplished by creating a common history textbook that includes all the versions narrated by the different political and religious constituents in Lebanon. This will expose students to all the versions that they might hear and they can shape their opinion through analyzing and using their critical thinking. Frayha (2003, p. 84) talks about the importance of students being exposed to analytical skills as well as evaluation and critical thinking to be able to better assess situations and tolerate others with different opinions and background.

Building classroom discussions that lead to extended analysis and debate between students from different backgrounds and points of view as discussed by Freedman et

al. (2008, p. 667) seems to be a constructive method in approaching history after a conflict in a multi-sect, multi-background country.

In the Lebanese case, the various and often conflicting historic narratives posited by the different political components that make up the Lebanese polity, make creating a unified history book problematic. This research involves an examination regarding the proposition of a history book that includes accounts of the war written by the various groups that compose the Lebanese structure. This proposition is often established around a curriculum and teaching methodologies that encourage thinking and analysis and allow students to form their own opinions while examining different narratives. One positive effect of providing school students with the different narratives on a certain conflict in a history class would be the expansion of their intellectual horizons. Being exposed to, and understanding different narratives and points of views, whether or not they ultimately agree with them, helps faster a more tolerant and informed outlook from a young age.

This history book may, in turn, create or solidify a national memory of the Lebanese civil war. This national memory may lead to more tolerance and better grounds for national discussions, which in turn could lead to more cohesion and a growing sense of national identity.

Research Questions

The lack of a collective memory among the different constituents of Lebanon is affecting the country negatively. The loyalties of each group to external countries make it easy for foreign countries that have different interests in Lebanon to intervene in its politics. This in turn will lead to further conflicts among the

Lebanese, increasing the gap further. To avoid further conflicts, a unified history book should be written to inform the new generation about the events of the last fifty years. The different failed attempts to come up with a unified history book to cover this period due to political disagreements raises the need to come up with a proposal that suits all the political and religious constituents of Lebanon. This mission is difficult due to the different narratives that each group has about the same historical event.

The following research questions are addressed in this thesis to test the hypothesis whether a single or multiple narratives can be associated with a unified national identity.

- What is the relationship between a unified history book and the Lebanese national identity?
- How would one versus multiple narratives in a unified history book impact the national identity among secondary school students?

Methodology

My thesis will revolve around three major premises, the history book itself, national memory and finally national identity.

My research for this proposal has introduced me to many thinkers and political historians with various interpretations and opinions pertaining to the Lebanese history and its effect on the Lebanese national identity. I will be using many of these sources as I make my argument.

I will use a qualitative approach to argue on the importance of having the proposed history book to reinforce the Lebanese national identity through the formation of a common national memory.

The methods and resources I will use for writing this thesis will include books, journal articles and newspaper articles. My analysis will be based on focus groups to be conducted with school students to test the feasibility of my approach. I will conduct two focus groups with the selected students from different social backgrounds. Each group will have six to eight students and they will be selected through a recruitment email sent to different people to help identifying the participants. Since the participants are in 15 to 18 age group, their parents will sign a consent form according to the IRB guidelines before having the participants sign an assent form.

The topics that will be discussed with the groups are the reasons behind the break of the Lebanese Civil War. The narratives presented to the focus groups are texts presented by two different historians. I will have one focus group exposed to a single narrative on the start of the Lebanese civil war, and the other group will be exposed to three different narratives by major political constituents of the Lebanese polity on the same incident. After presenting the narratives I will ask several questions to trigger the participants to contribute and provide answers and arguments that can be used to help answer my research question. During the focus groups I will observe the different points of views, the analytical thinking of each of the groups as well as the interaction among the group members. I will then compare the results of having a one story historical approach versus the many stories approach.

Then I will proceed to collect and analyze the data from the two focus groups. The final proposed format for the history book will be based on all the observations that resulted from the focus groups.

For the purpose of this thesis, I have decided not to conduct surveys; as a result I will not be going into details on how the history book will be taught, but rather on the importance of creating it in the first place and the general form it will take. This study will also lack in-depth interviews with politicians and historians to discuss the agenda behind the history book and the reasons of the failure to agree on a book that covers the 1975 war period so far.

Map of the Thesis

The thesis consists of six chapters where the first introduces the importance of having a common history book based on the compilation of the different narratives by historians. The second chapter presents different reasons discussed by scholars for the start of the 1975 Lebanese civil war. It also covers the literature available on two approaches to document history, a one narrative approach versus a multi-narrative approach. Chapter three presents two competing interpretations, a single narrative story vs a multi-narrative story, one for each focus group to analyze. Chapter four presents the findings of the two groups through giving and overview on the characteristics of the participants and then moving to synthesizing the results of the discussions. Chapter five introduces the discussion of the results that were developed in chapter four to study the impact of each approach on the focus groups and evaluate the approaches presented to present a new Lebanese history book. Chapter six includes the findings of the thesis, it also outline the limitations and suggests topics for further research.

Chapter one introduced the topic under scrutiny. It listed the research questions and

highlighted the various parts of the thesis. The next chapter reviews the literature

available in the topic.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

History as a guide to shape the future

In an article published in the *New York Times* in 2007, Hassan Fattah posits the purpose of history classes across the globe, "they educate the young and they shape national identity".

Sune Haugbolle (2005) presents different scenarios to create a public memory to inform people about the 1975 Lebanese civil war. The only consensus concerning this event is the date when the military conflict started, which is April 13, 1975. Haugbolle highlights the ideological disagreement and the different beliefs and views that Lebanese have about their national belonging (p. 196). This ideological struggle facilitated the break of the war in 1975 due to the lack of a national belonging among the Lebanese (Haugbolle, Public and Private Memory of the Lebanese Civil War, 2005).

According to Liu and Hilton (2005), history is a guide that helps us track where we came from and where we are going. It also introduces us to our origins and our relation with other groups. Liu and Hilton continue to explain the close link of history in shaping a group's social and political identities (Liu & Hilton, 2005).

"History is past politics and politics present history" as Michel Foucault believed (Foucault, 2002). The dominant and powerful political group in a country affects the writing of its history. Zajda and Zajda (2003) present the case of Russia in rewriting

history after the collapse of the USSR. The Russian Federation started the liberal reform in the country and one of its missions was to change the "Soviet" mentality through rewriting history (Zajda & Zajda, 2003). This interrelation between politics and history affects the creation of the knowledge about the past. Joan Wallach Scott (1989) describes history as the guidelines agreed on to produce the information that form people's knowledge of history. She stresses the point that there are no principles to figure out the ultimate truth of the historical knowledge presented by experts (Scott, 1989).

Sirka Ahonen (2001) discusses the effect and the role of the political groups in documenting the past based on their interest and ideas of shaping the future of a country. Ahonen continues to discuss the relation between the historical narratives and ideologies that are used to serve the political interest of those in power. This resulted in documenting the history of some nations in a way that helped shape a specific ideological belief. She supports her argument with examples on creating and reinforcing certain identities throughout history, such as the communist and socialist identities (Ahonen, 2001, pp. 180).

Elie Podeh (2000) links history, memory and textbooks by highlighting the importance of educational systems in shaping the memory of the new generation. The gap is usually in the missing coordination between historians and sociologists where they don't give importance to the complimentary roles that they have. Politics plays an important role in shaping the present and the future of a nation by providing the new generation with an incomplete historical documentation by eliminating the events that don't work in their benefit. Podeh presents the example of the history curriculum in Israel and the incomplete and inaccurate documentation to shape a

certain collective memory among Israelis. The history book was written several times, each time to achieve a certain agenda. In the first edition that covered the period between 1948-1967, the focus was to build a collective memory that will lead to a strong Israeli national identity through distorted historical documentation. The second edition (1967- 1984/85) was less biased due to having the Arabs and Palestinians closer on different aspects to the Israeli Society. Changes in the textbook that happened in 1990s showed a lot of open-mindedness that was a result of the transformation of the Israelis views towards the 'enemy' (Podeh, 2000).

Anna Triandafyllidou quotes Anthony Smith where he emphasized the importance of sharing historical memories in forming a nation. In the case of Greece, collective memories, real and imagined, on national struggles against 'invaders' or 'enemies' affected the formation of the Greek nation. The historical events were narrated to ensure the homogeneity of the nation (Triandafyllidou, 1998).

Factors shaping national identity

Stearns, Seixas and Wineburg (2000) say that collective memory is mainly established at schools particularly in the history classes. He continues that schools tend to teach a particular version of the historical event and that teacher subjectivity in this matter plays an important role in transmitting the story (Stearns, Seixas, & Wineburg, 2000).

Unlike Stearns, Seixas and Wineburg, Ahonen (2000) believes that there are several historical methods that affect the formation of national identity other than history classes in schools. Family, as well as other affiliations, plays a role in shaping the historical memory of people. This, with time, will make historical narratives lose

their credibility which will make the history curriculum in schools unreliable (Ahonen, 2001, p. 181).

In a special report published in 2006 by the United States Institute of Peace, Elizabeth Cole and Judy Barsalou highlight the role of the educational systems in marginalizing, including and dividing the different social groups that constitute a country. The agendas of these educational systems are not always clear and transparent; on the contrary, most of the times they have a hidden agenda (Cole & Barsalou, 2006).

Duncan Bell (2003) also investigated the role of memory in shaping national identity. He highlighted the counter effect of memory on national identity if it weren't properly employed. The historical narratives should be properly and clearly articulated to have a positive influence and effect. Unified memory, through a common history, plays a cohesive role in bringing the constituents of a nation together (Bell, Mythscapes: memory, mythology, and national identity, 2003, p. 70).

Bell brings up the importance of other factors that affect memory and makes the different narrators see the same event in different ways. Ethnicity, class, gender and age all play an essential role in shaping the ideas of a person, including his view of events that take place.

Edward Vickers (2003) reveals that the history book in Hong Kong was changed to reflect the desired viewpoint of Hong Kong and China's history. He highlights the inaccuracy of documenting history by people in power since they only reflect their victory while ignoring any achievement by the 'others' (Vickers, 2003).

Lynn Davies (2005) talks about the conflicts that are nourished at schools while teaching the young generation about "others" from the same country in history. This approach leads to more complexity and chaos, which in turn leads to more conflicts within the same nation (Davies, 2005).

Susanne Buckley-Zistel (2009) highlights the role of narrating history in both dividing and unifying a country. Studying the Rwandan example, she discusses the role of historians, specifically Ferdinand Nahimana, a professor of history at the National University of Rwanda in encouraging the genocide through spreading hate in his speech by featuring the ethnic belonging of Tutsi. Linking this speech directly as a main reason for reinforcing ethnic difference between the Tutsi and the Hutu which led to the genocide makes the succeeding Rwandan government aware of the importance of the historical narrative on the unity of a country. This awareness pushed the government to capitalize on the unity relation between the constituents of Rwanda before the arrival of colonialists by having a unified narrative on this historical relation (Buckley-Zistel, 2009, p. 39).

A unified history in this case can be traced back to the period prior to the colonialist periods where the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa were living in harmony. This is even clear in the museums where there was no sign of differentiation between the Hutu and the Tutsi (Buckley-Zistel, 2009).

The complexity of a multicultural identity: exposing the conflicts

Majid Al-Haj discusses the important role of school curriculum in reinforcing national identity in a multicultural identity in an attempt to analyze the new history textbooks in Israel. He presents the idea of conservatives when it comes to diversity

where they think that society can be united through a unified historical narrative. As an ideal approach in a multicultural society, Al-Haj considers that each group in such a society should have the freedom in deciding the national ethos to follow to be able to shape its collective memory that in turn will shape its identity. He then pinpoints the inadequacy of an 'official history' since usually the political group in power has the final decision on what to include and what to omit. The complication to have an 'official history' in a multicultural divided society lies in the external loyalties that the different groups have towards other countries (Al-Haj, 2005).

From a research done in Rwanda on teaching history after a conflict, Freedman, Weinstein, Murphy, & Longman (2008), found out the direct link between teaching history and creating a unified national identity. The government interference was to achieve its political goals and promote a unified Rwandan identity. The disagreement between the Tutsi and the other Rwandans on the historical events makes it hard to agree on a narrative that will make use of the previous conflicts and minimize the possibility of repeating the same events in the future (Freedman, Weinstein, Murphy, & Longman, 2008, p. 664).

They brought up the importance of having the different opposing narrations when documenting identity-based conflict to reinforce national identity. They present the initiative by the Georg Eckert Institute (GEI) where they recommend presenting the opposing narratives and points of views, "the images of the 'other' and the images of the enemy" to expose students to all the possible narratives for better analysis. This method was also proposed by historian Eyan Naveh from Tel Aviv University to present the opposing views of Palestinian and Israeli historians and teachers for students to be able to better understand and analyze the incidents. Due to the strong

and direct link between politics and teaching history, the conservative Israeli government in 2000 opposed this method of teaching to avoid exposing students to a different narrative than the one they want to reinforce (Cole & Barsalou, 2006).

According to Daniel Faas and Wendy Ross (2012) when analyzing the curricula and textbooks in Irish schools, history education has a direct influence in shaping the identity of the new generation.

Asher Kaufman (2001) presents the importance of creating shared narrations and 'historical memories' among the different groups that constitute Lebanon through reconstructing the past. This shared history will be the base for a unified national identity among the Lebanese (Kaufman, 2001).

This brings us to the fact that common education of history reinforces the sense of national belonging in a country like Lebanon.

Political, social and economical factors leading up to the Lebanese civil war

The Lebanese civil war may be considered as a case study. The literature about the civil war is fragmented, as scholars tend to have different points of view on the reasons behind it. Needless to say that young people are not very much aware of these scholars views, as their main source of knowledge tends to be the Internet.

Farid El Khazen (2000) goes back to the indirect effect of the 1950s regional politics, especially the 1956 Suez War, on the conflicts that happened in Lebanon in the 1970s. He continues by analyzing the direct effect of the post 1967 events on the breakdown of the Lebanese civil war. The armed presence of the Palestinian

Liberation Organization (PLO) after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war affected the regional politics and Lebanese politics as well (El Khazen, 2000).

El Khazen (2000, p. 6) analyzes the reasons and ways for the breakdown of the 1975 civil war in Lebanon. The lack of strong political representation to secure stability and security led to the break down in the public institutions as well to the eruption of violence. The political actors in the Lebanese divided society, even the ones that were not represented in the government, interfered on behalf of the external countries in which they are loyal to and they represent. The composition of Lebanon led to a situation where the society dominated the state that helped in maintaining a democratic character of Lebanon during the non-crisis times. The loyalty of the Lebanese groups to external countries made this positive factor of the domination of society a liability in the times of crisis. This division in the Lebanese national identity led to difficulty in preserving the country in the time of crisis. The lack of agreement between the different parties led to different interpretations for the collapse of Lebanon and the breakdown of the 1975 civil war. The weakness of the political system, the divisive forces that characterize the Lebanese confessional political system, the increase in the socio-economical gap between the different Lebanese sects and classes as well as the inefficiency and the corruption of the government are all factors that were considered as reasons for the start of the civil war (El Khazen, 2000).

As mentioned by Nasr (1978, p.3), the emergence of the Arab oil economy in the 1950s resulted in the integration of the Egyptian, Syrian and Iraqi business bourgeoisie into the Lebanese bourgeoisie. This in turn led Lebanon to play a strategic role as a link for these countries with the international capitalist market. The

successful economical role that Lebanon was leading in the 1950s led to tremendous growth in the different economical sectors in Lebanon and moved the country to a leading position in the foreign trade until 1965, the year of the collapse of Intra bank and 10 other Lebanese banks. The collapse of the banks affected the Lebanese economy and made it more dependent on the Western countries. This monopoly in the economic sector reinforced the position of its main players and resulted in them shifting to importing instead of local agricultural production. This capitalist movement forced the farmers to migrate from the rural areas to Beirut after selling their lands that created a sectarian geographical distribution in the country. This domination and interference of capitalists and the Western countries caused inequalities on the social level and created more grounds for division among Lebanese. The deterioration of the social and economical situation during this period helped to reinforce the other factors behind the crisis (Nasr, 1978).

Zamir (1980, p. 59) elaborates on the impact of the 1970's presidential elections on the break of the Lebanese civil war. The construction of the Lebanese political system that is based on personal, familial, sectarian and regional considerations played an essential role in the 1970's presidential elections. Both Lebanese Moslems and Christians were feeling the threat of the domination of one of them over the other due to the demographical change in the country. Christians wanted to preserve their role as agreed on in the National Pact and Moslems wanted equal share in both the political representation and wealth distribution due to the increase in their number. Franjieh's election in the 1970 as a president of the republic only increased the gap between the Christians and Moslems because of many mistakes he committed during his term. He lacked the right strategy to maintain good relations with the Arab countries while saving the Lebanese unique situation. His failures

continued in taking sides in the Lebanese political system where his role was essential in stabilizing the system and maintaining balance during periods of tension and instability. As a result of this, the economic and social conflict started to increase between Moslems and Christians. To secure his power, Franjieh committed another mistake in selecting a weak prime minister who should be the key representative for Lebanese Moslems. The country needed a strong prime minister during this period to decrease the tension among the Moslems. In order to keep everything going in his favor and under his control, Franjieh kept on assigning this role to his alliances. Franjieh also played an essential role in weakening the army, it was during his term that the army started to split and was affected by the sectarian tension in the country. This was a major loss for Lebanon since the army was the only institution that wasn't affected by the sectarian faction until Franjieh appointed Iskandar Ghanem as the army commander. Preserving the army would have prevented the involvement of many Lebanese groups in participating in a civil war. All these mistakes committed by Franjieh during this critical period when both the Palestinian problem and the inter-Arab rivalry were rising increased the confrontation between the Moslems and the Christians, which in turn added the causes for a civil war (Zamir, 1980). This historical narration of Franjieh's role is believed by certain Lebanese groups as being a catalyst of the civil war.

The narratives of the Lebanese civil war

Due to the composition of the Lebanese society and the political and religious diversity among them, there is no agreement among them on one reason to be the cause for the break of the 1975 Lebanese civil war. Certain groups adopt external interference as an essential factor in facilitating the division among the different

Lebanese groups in 1975. Michael C. Hudson (1978, p. 261) presents the Palestinian factor behind the break of the Lebanese civil war. The lack of national identity and a strong community among Lebanese and the absence of a strong authority facilitated the deep involvement of Lebanon in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Hudson (p. 268) highlights that unlike the Lebanese, Palestinians shared a common identity, which made them more unified politically (Hudson, 1978).

Farid El Khazen (2000, p. 3) claims that there were internal and external parties behind the break of the civil war in Lebanon. The different interests of the different constituents of the Lebanese nation that share neither a common ideology nor common values lead to a multidimensional analysis for the reasons behind the break of the war. The continuous change in the alliances between the different groups in Lebanon led to different documentation on the conflict based on the timing when it was written.

Saree Makdissi (2006) presents the need of a unified history curriculum in Lebanon to introduce students to more recent events instead of the focus on teaching them about "Phoenicians and the Romans, the Greeks and the Persians, and the various stages of the Turkish Rule" (p. 201). He talks about the failure of a government attempt to come up with a history book after the end of the civil war. Although the government appointed historians representing the different political and religious backgrounds, this attempt failed. The proposed book included only the events and narrations that all constituents agreed on and the result was the shortest history book since there isn't much that they all agreed on. Although the books for grades 3 to 6 were released in 2001 but the Ministry of Education decided to stop them

immediately since there was a description that was considered inaccurate for some of the parties (Makdissi S. , 2006).

The different narrations and analysis available for students to know about this period in the history of Lebanon is through a personal effort by referring to different books written by different historians, newspaper archives, or narrations by their parents, friends or the religious or political figure that they follow. This method has only created more friction among Lebanese due to the inconsistency in the available narrations about the 1975 Lebanese civil war.

Analysis plays a major role in revealing undocumented history. According to Farid El Khazen (2000, p. 260), there is a missing link between the socio-economic situation in Lebanon in the 1970s and the break of the 1975 civil war. The Lebanese socio economic situation was manageable and any gap could have been solved without the need of an armed conflict. He continues highlighting the insignificance of the socioeconomic factor in the break of the civil war by presenting the people involved in the war as Christians and Muslims both from the middle and lower income groups. The Musa El Sadr movement was justified by the socio-economic discourse but El Khazen emphasized the importance of the political dimension behind this movement.

There are different narrations on the events and reasons that happened and led to the outbreak of the 1975 Lebanese Civil war. El Khazen (p. 269) presents the incident that happened in February 1975 during a demonstration of fishermen in Sidon where the consequences was the shooting of Ma'ruf Sa'd, a local Sunni politician. He talks about the different narrations by different groups on how Sa'd was injured. Some said that a special shotgun from a short distance from behind shot him while others

said that he was shot from the left side. As for the person who did it, some said that the shot came out from an army M-16 while photos taken during the incident shows that army soldiers were pointing their guns in the air and not on the people. Others claimed that the M-16 was used on purpose so blame will be set on the army soldiers while an army soldier, accused of being an agent to a particular group, was liquidated because he shot Sa'd. The different narrations on this incident made it hard to establish the real story on who shot Ma'ruf Sa'd but at the same time raised different questions on why this unauthorized demonstration happened in the first place. Despite the right narration on this incident, one of the obvious results of it was the weakening of the Lebanese army (El Khazen, 2000).

Unlike El Khazen's presentation of the different narrations on this incident, William Harris (1997, p. 160) said that the army intervention started the fighting between the demonstrators and the gunmen who mainly came from the Ayn al-Helwa camp (Harris, 1997).

The involvement of different groups with different political and religious affiliations makes it hard to agree on one narration on the conflicts that take place in Lebanon. The different interpretations of events can only lead to more disagreements and conflicts.

A book written by Edgar O'Ballance, a British military journalist and academician on international relations, titled *Civil War in Lebanon: 1975-92* includes inaccurate information when talking about the February 1975 fishermen demonstration that took place in Sidon (O'Ballance, 1998):

  The Fishermen's Dispute (p.4)

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While the Rumaniyeh incident was the spark that ignited the events leading up to the civil war, the 'Fishermen's Dispute' provided the powder that caused the explosion. In February 1975 there had been protests in the port of Sidon by fishermen, mainly Muslim Shias, about the granting of exclusive fishing rights to a company named 'Proteine' (the chairman of Proteine was Camille Chamoun, the NLP leader) on the ground that this would deprive them of their living by 'industrialising fishing'.

Led by Marouf Saada, a Shia politician who had formerly represented Sidon in the National Assembly, the protesting fishermen began a series of demonstrations that got out of hand…

It is clear that the historical narration that is published in a book can present an inaccurate representation of people as well as incidents that took place. First the name of the people mentioned as well as their religious affiliation is wrong; Ma'rouf Sa'd, the Sunni politician is mentioned as Maarouf Saada, the Shia politician. In a country like Lebanon where one of the main reasons behind the war is sectarianism, such a documentation that is accessible to students through academic libraries is misleading and might lead to the formation of a wrong collective memory among some of the new generation. The lack of a school history book that covers this period makes students refer to whatever is available to learn about the civil war without knowing the reliability of the source. Barton and Levstik (2013) present the formation of the students' national identity as an objective for teaching history at schools (Barton & Levstik, 2013). With the inaccurate documentation of historical event, students will be misled by whoever published the narrations and this will affect the formation of their national identity.

Single narrative or analysis as a methodology

Kiston Clark defines history as a selected narration on previous events that was presented to students by other human beings (Clark, 1967). Scott (1989, p. 690) reaches a conclusion that history can never be objective and can never be treated like a neutral science. This leads to interpretation and analysis as an approach to deal with this discipline. Although interpretation is a solution for more accurate history, Scott stresses the importance of filtering the historical information to ensure accuracy. She proposes that verification procedures should be used to avoid documenting wrong information (Scott, 1989).

The uncontrolled historical documentation of a sensitive conflict such as the civil war can lead to more conflict. Hyden White (1984, p.2) explains that a narrative historian must investigate the events to make sure that his documentation is accurate.

In a controlled historical documentation, you can have two ways for documenting history, an agreed on single-narrative documentation versus an agreed on multi-narratives documentation to be able to reflect the events that happened in an accurate way to build a collective memory among citizens.

Single Narrative

Kovras (2012) presents the selective documentation method after conflicts to control what citizens need to remember after the dispute is settled to ensure stability, peace and democratic consolidation.

Thomas Bender (1986) highlights the weaknesses in this approach by talking about the domination of people or groups in power even in documenting history. Such

people abuse their authority to present historical events in a way that reflects the image and story that they want others to know and exclude narrations that reflect a bad image for them from the documented history (Bender, 1986).

The single narrative approach to document historical events might sound illogical and incomplete when evaluating. Scott (1989, p. 689) continues on the ineffectiveness of this approach and talks about the inaccuracy of the single narrative when discussing the rise of the Western civilization. The way it is narrated makes it clear that the 'Others' point of view is excluded. The documentations by orthodox historians, with only one right way for telling the story, undermined the historical narratives due to the misrepresentation of the other groups (Scott, 1989).

Students with no historical knowledge are affected by the history that they study at School (Clark, 1967, p. 200). Clark believes that the authoritative history that these students get from the textbook can affect their critical thinking negatively. Being exposed to a single narrative without any analytical approach or any question to the validity of the argument makes this history a truth that can't be questioned (Clark, 1967).

Time has proven the failure of the agreed-on single narrative approach for documenting history. Jonathan Spencer (2004) presents, through the work of other scholars published in his book *Sri Lanka: History and the roots of conflict*, that the documented history of Sri Lanka is misleading especially when one analyzes it and compares it with other narratives. It is clear that what was written to reach people about a certain period in the Sri Lankan history was documented in a way to reinforce national identity by excluding important events (Stirrat & Nissan, 2004).

A single agreed upon historical narrative had been effective in old times. Montserrat Guibernau (2004) elaborates by presenting Anthony Smith's ideas on nation and national identity. A collective memory shaped through an agreed on narrative imposed by elites used to be effective in old times. With time illiteracy decreased and masses became more exposed to different approaches that influence their sense of identity (Guibernau, 2004).

In Lebanon, the so-called 'consensual democracy' is as far as it goes in terms of consensus. Due to the lack of a collective memory with regards to the civil war and the need of each political party to take over power in the country, no one single narrative can be adapted and agreed upon among all the groups.

Multiple narratives

The single narrative approach in documenting conflicts is in certain cases inaccurate and incomplete due to the need to hide some incidents to avoid further conflicts.

Ringmar highlights the role of decision makers in interpreting the political events and conflicts in a country and transfer them to the people in the way that best suits their agendas (Ringmar, 2006).

Scott (1989, p. 684) believes that telling a unified single story about a certain historical event creates doubts about it since other groups that lived the same period might have a different viewpoint. Racial and ethnical differences affect the vision and analysis of the people from different belongings. Despite the doubts that a unified single narrative creates, Scott thinks that the plurality in the historical narratives might lead to challenges and disagreement but it will better represent the different points of view about the event (Scott, 1989).

Tormey (2006) criticizes the agreed on single narrative documentation of historical events by giving the example of the United Kingdom where lots of incidents were ignored as an attempt to disregard a certain group and to construct national identity in a specific way. The state usually employs a method of creating a specific history to construct a certain national identity. Unlike Scott, Tormey not only criticizes the agreed upon single narrative as a method to document history, but he recommends an alternative that is more beneficial for students. He believes that the focus should be on the method of teaching that encourages analysis. This exposes students to different narrations after doing the fact checking of the suggested texts and then students have to study and analyze these texts to construct their own view (Tormey, 2006).

Siegrist (2006) also stresses the importance of analysis in education especially in a pluralist society. A scientific approach should be implemented when approaching history to better study the similarities and differences between the different groups to be able to assess what unites and what divides. This comparative approach helps in creating knowledge of the other and the interpretation of the similarities and differences between the different groups (Siegrist, 2006).

Bender (1986, p. 131) proposes an approach to replace the single agreed upon historical narrative through the creation of a public culture in a pluralistic society to understand the background of every group entitled to document a narrative on historical events. He pinpoints the importance of understanding the components and differences among the different groups that form the society (Bender, 1986).

Wiley and Voss (1999) do not only use a similar approach as Tormey and Siergist, they even go further in detailing and explaining the importance of analysis and the

way it should be applied in teaching history. Wiley and Voss demonstrate the importance of understanding text through analyzing. They say that students learn more through constructing a situation, interpreting it, comparing it to another, analyzing the story and constructing their own view. This constructive method makes students more involved especially when it comes to studying historical events from multi source texts rather than from a single source text. This method improves their ability in building connections between the different narratives they are receiving (Wiley & Voss, 1999).

Kitson Clark (1967) goes further into presenting the importance of people knowing the story behind what happened to be able to critically analyze it. When discussing history (p. 196), different versions of historical events should be presented and taken into account. A better understanding of historical events will lead to a better construction of the present and future vision (Clark, 1967).

As a conclusion, it is obvious from the literature presented that a multiple narration presentation of history offers a broader spectrum of information reflecting the various points of view without bias for a single scenario and leaves the student wanting to discover the most relevant interpretation using logic and common sense. Lebanon, with its multiple narration on the reasons behind the civil war is a perfect example where this case could come into play.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The aim of this thesis is to examine a new approach to the Lebanese history book that might be a solution to reinforce national identity through creating a collective memory. The negative effect of the lack of a collective memory in Lebanon is apparent and is emphasized through the continuous conflicts among the different groups. The attempts to create a Lebanese history book failed so far due to the disagreement among the groups on what, why and how certain events took place. These failed attempts kept school students without a history book covering at least the 1975 Lebanese civil war period. A unified history book based on agreed narratives from each of the political and religious groups might be a solution to reach a unified national identity.

This study explores the relation between teaching history, collective memory and national identity. The correlation between national identity formation, collective memory, and teaching history is entertained through a case study analysis. Teaching the history of the Lebanese Civil War provides an ample opportunity to examine various relevant pedagogical approaches. It presents different documented narratives by politicians and historians on the reasons behind the break of the civil war. Afterwards it tests two approaches for teaching history. One approach is using an agreed-on single narrative history after agreeing on all the terms and events with all the concerned groups. Another approach is using multiple narratives of history submitted by the different political and religious groups represented in the

government. Testing the second approach is used to observe students capability to study the text, compare and analyze the narratives presented by each group to come up with a personal observation and analysis of the discussed situation.

This project is carried out in two phases using the qualitative method approach. Martin Marshall (1996) presents one of the objectives of using the qualitative method in social science research. This objective is to 'explore complex human issues' through observation, understanding and interpreting their approach and interaction among each other during the focus group session.

The qualitative method gives a better view of the interaction among participants that represent a sample of the students that study history. It reflects how they receive the information and how they analyze it and accept it.

Phase 1. Review of Secondary data

In order to be fully acquainted with the history including various narratives, patterns of collective memory, milestones, and relations between the different existing groups, the review of secondary data was considered as a basis of undertaking the assessment. For this reason secondary data including all major documents available on the history of Lebanon focusing particularly on the break of the civil war in 1975 and its impact on the major communities of Lebanon is thoroughly reviewed before proceeding with phase 2. Books, journal articles and papers written by historians, politicians, academicians and journalists who investigated the topics of this research make up the core documents analyzed.

Phase 2. Collection of Primary Data

Sample Analysis

For the purpose of this project, secondary school students between the age of 15 and 18 make up the core of the focus groups. The analysis is used to check the characteristics of the groups for a better understanding of their background and its effect on them. It is also used to understand the knowledge and impressions that a specific way in presenting events in history have had on participants.

Focus Groups

The main technique employed in this research is a qualitative approach through comparative focus groups. The importance of the focus groups in this research is in collecting data through interpreting the in-depth discussion on the reasons behind the break of the 1975 civil war. Jenny Kitzinger (1994) describes focus groups as group discussions that aim to explore the different experiences, reactions and points of views among the group members. It is 'focused' since it involves a certain topic or issue to discuss and test within the participants (Kitzinger, 1994).

This research involved two focus groups exposed to the reasons for the start of the 1975 civil war. Focus group A was exposed to a single narrative and focus group B was exposed to three different narratives.

The discussion topics for the focus groups revolved around the reasons behind the break of the Lebanese Civil War. The focus groups are subjected to two different narratives and observations are made as to the implication on consensus building among the group. The narratives presented to the focus groups are texts presented by

two different historians. After presenting the narratives several questions were asked to trigger the participants to contribute and provide answers and arguments that can be used to help answer the research question. During the focus groups, I observed different points of views, the analytical thinking of each of the groups as well as the interaction among the group members. I then compared the results of having a one story historical approach versus the many stories approach.

Subsequently the data from the two focus groups was collected and analyzed. The final proposed format for the history book was based on the analysis of the literature presented and all the observations that resulted from the focus groups.

Research Ethics

Roger Gomm (2004) views research ethics as a separate entity than 'individual morality'. It is a more advanced discipline that is produced by experts to protect the research conduct. Researchers are supposed to follow and abide by the communal ethics (Gomm, 2004).

In order to be objective and follow the research rules in producing truthful and transparent research (Gomm, 2004, p. 367), this research includes proper referencing for all the sources used.

Since my study involves human subject, the Human Subject protection training was completed and a certificate received. I submitted a 'Protocol Exempt Application' to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the Lebanese American University to ensure following the proper procedure while dealing with human subject. As a requirement by the IRB and since my sample was individuals below the age of eighteen, a parental consent form was signed by the parents/ guardians of the participants. The

members of the focus groups also signed a participant's ascent form to be aware of their level of involvement. The focus groups participants were informed about the confidentiality measures on the records resulting from the focus groups where the audio recordings and transcribing will be kept in a secure place linked to a secret code. The results of the focus groups will be published in an anonymous way to ensure confidentiality. The research approach includes no harm for the participants or any other person involved in this study. To abide by the research proposal submitted to the IRB this research will only be published as an MA thesis. If further studies and investigations are to be continued on this topic, I will make sure to go through the proper research ethics and guidelines to ensure confidentiality of the participants.

Sampling

Due to time restrictions, the convenience sampling method is used in this research to select the participants of the focus groups. Students were recruited through the method of convenience- sampling which means that the sample size and make up was restricted to participants that were recommended by a mailing list of acquaintances and friends.

Alan Bryman (2004) defines a convenience sample as the way used by researchers because of its easy access. Although this method is one of the agreed on technique to use in social research, Bryman highlights its drawbacks. By using the method, the researcher cannot generalize the findings because there is no clear identification of 'what population this sample is representative' (Bryman, 2004).

The sample size of 12-16 is deemed large enough to draw conclusions about community member's experiences.

Participants:

A convenience sample was used to select participants in the focus groups through a recruitment email sent to members in my mailing list:

There are two focus groups where each includes six to eight students. Students are being referred through common friends, colleagues and acquaintances that are part of my mailing list. They are informed about the objective behind them being involved.

The participants are from an age group between 15 and 18 from both genders. They are current school students in grades ten, eleven or twelve from different regions in Lebanon that are able to communicate in English.

Collection of background information related to the participants was done during the focus group sessions to get an idea about the profile of the participants. The responses of the participants in relation to their background are detailed in chapter four.

Research Design: Qualitative Instruments/approach

A qualitative approach has been employed through the use of focus groups. Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2009) stresses the importance of the qualitative research to test the different reactions and ways that people follow in their observations.

The qualitative approach of the thesis starts with the literature review, followed by a presentation of different arguments on the break of the civil war discussed with school students during focus groups sessions. During the focus group discussions, questions were asked to trigger the participants to debate the reasons behind the break of the Lebanese civil war. Another objective of having the groups was to observe the ability of the participants to debate and analyze provided one narrative versus having multiple narratives on the same incident. The challenge between the participants will be tested in a new study as a way for tolerating the 'other'. Brymen (2004) highlights that participants in focus groups get new information from the other participants and build up a new view based on this interaction (Bryman, 2004).

The literature review starts by presenting the different reasons presented on the break of the civil war. Two methods for documenting and teaching history are reviewed, the single narration and the multiple narration method.

These two methods are then tested through two focus groups, exposed to narrations on the reasons for the break of the war. An observation is made in each focus group to study the reaction of the participants based on the method. Each focus group session lasts for fifty minutes. The session starts with an introduction on the project to make sure that everyone is aware of the objective of the session. The moderator controls the discussion among the different participants. As Bryman (p. 352) suggests for a better documentation and recording of the focus group, one participant should speak at a time to avoid any distortion in the audio (Bryman, 2004).

The three narrations discussed are different versions presented online on the reasons for the break of the 1975 Lebanese civil war. The informal selection of the used narrations was done on purpose to better assess by using material that anyone can

easily find. The narration presented for group A is one of three narrations presented for group B.

Focus Groups' Discussions

The following paragraph, presented by Antoine Abraham (1996), is given to group A as the reason behind the break of the civil war:

The different political and religious Lebanese groups engaged in an arms race as a result of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) moving to Lebanon after it was expelled from Jordan during Black September in 1971. The Lebanese became involved not only in a regional conflict, but in a local conflict among the different religious and political groups. Fighting broke out between the Maronites and Palestinians in 1975 and later on Muslim groups allied with Palestinians.

The presence of the Palestinians in Lebanon was a major reason for the break of the 1975 Lebanese civil war (Abraham, 1996).

The following three narrations are presented to group B where each of them is a reason that a certain Lebanese group believes that it was the reason for the war. The reason presented for group A will be among the reasons discussed with group B:

Narrative 1:

> David Hirst (2010) says that the French colonial powers created the state of Lebanon as a safe haven for Maronite Christians. Since then, the Christians have dominated the country's government. However, Lebanon's large Muslim population (and its many pan-Arabist and left-

wing groups) opposed that pro-western government. The Muslim population increased with the entry of 100,000 Palestinian refugees (around 10% of Lebanon's population) when the state of Israel was established. The Cold War also had a divisive effect on Lebanon, as the pan-Arab and left-wing groups sided with Soviet-aligned Arab countries, and the Maronites sided with the West.

This division based on religion among Lebanese and the international alliances led to the 1975 Lebanese civil war (Hirst, 2010).

Narrative 2:

Antoine Abraham (1996) says that the different political and religious Lebanese groups engaged in an arms race as a result of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) moving to Lebanon after it was expelled from Jordan during Black September in 1971. The Lebanese became involved not only in a regional conflict, but in a local conflict among the different religious and political groups. Fighting broke out between the Maronites and Palestinians in 1975 and later on Muslim groups allied with Palestinians.

The presence of the Palestinians in Lebanon was a major reason for the break of the 1975 Lebanese civil war (Abraham, 1996).

Narrative 3:

Joseph Kechichian (1985) says that the Lebanese army's inability to control the PLO was an important factor. The army was divided along sectarian lines. The Christian officers in the army were against Muslims

and their PLO supporters The loyalty of the different army ranks shifted from the nation to the different sectarian groups and this led to the 1975 Lebanese civil war (Kechichian, 1985).

After presenting the causes for the participants, a discussion was held on their evaluation and opinion on the presented causes.

Guide for Focus Groups Discussions

A guide, detailed above and also presented in table 1, was developed to test the influence of the narratives on the responses of the focus groups' participants.

To trigger debate among the participants of each group, the following eight questions were asked, each of which has a certain rationale behind it.

Question 1.   In your opinion, what was the reason behind the start of the civil war? (Reasons)

Question 2.   Where did you get your information? (Source of information)

Question 3.   If history were to repeat itself what would your role in the conflict be? (Role in future conflict if history repeats itself)

Question 4.   Should you choose to fight, which side would you be on and why? (Alliance in case of conflict)

Question 5.   How do you identify yourself? (Identification)

Question 6.   If you face a problem, what authority would you turn to? (Authority you refer to in case of conflict)

Question 7.   Would a history book about this period be helpful? And who should

write it?

Question 8.   What should the history book cover? And should it give a conclusion?

Question 1 was needed to check the different versions that this small group of

participants, in this specific age group, and without being exposed to this topic in a

history class in school, has on the reasons behind the start of the 1975 Lebanese civil

war.

Question 2 was essential to know their source of information for the answers they

presented when asked the first question. The importance of this information is to

assess their critical thinking, check if they accept anything without justifying the

source and to evaluate the influence that their parents or others have on them.

Question 3 and question 4 were important to evaluate if they learnt any lesson based

on what they knew about this period.

Question 5 was very important to check their first loyalty and their sense of national

identity.

Question 6 was to evaluate their trust in the system and the governmental institutions

versus their trust in the political and religious groups that they or their friends belong

to.

Question 7 and question 8's objective was to check the participants' opinions, being

the end user of the history book, on what they want to learn and know about the civil

war period.

The following chapter features the findings of the focus groups. It starts by presenting the characteristics of the participants and continues with the results of the discussions that took place in focus group A and focus group B.

Chapter Four

Findings of the Focus Groups

In this chapter the findings of the focus groups held with two groups, Group A and Group B, are presented following the guide that was developed. The findings of group A reflect a sample exposed to the single narrative approach in teaching history through the text presented to them on one reason behind the break of the Lebanese civil war. Whereas the findings of group B reflect a sample exposed to multiple narratives on the break of the civil war to explore an example to the multi narrative approach in teaching history. The first section presents the findings on the characteristics of the groups as detailed in table 2. The second part of the chapter synthesizes the results of the focus group discussions that were held according to the guide as detailed in table 3.

Characteristics of the sample

As shown in table two, there is a range of different characteristics among the participants. There is a fair gender representation where there are six males and six females. Group A included two females and four males and group B included four females and two males. The participants included samples from both private and public schools. The sample includes students from different geographical locations that help in reflecting the different perspectives of the different locations. All of them lived all their lives in Lebanon except for one of them who used to live in Saudi Arabia. All the parents of the participants, except for one, are from the same religion. This similarity usually reflects homogeneousness in the points of views among the

parents when it comes to religion and political views. Seventy five percent of the parents are still living together where the remaining twenty five percent are either separated or divorced.

All the participants belong to an age group between 15-18 so they all lived through a war in Lebanon. Twenty five percent had lived the May 2008 while around seventy percent said that they lived the July 2006 war against Israel. The only participant that did not witness any war event had lived outside Lebanon, so his answer of not living any war event could be a result of him being abroad during such events in Lebanon.
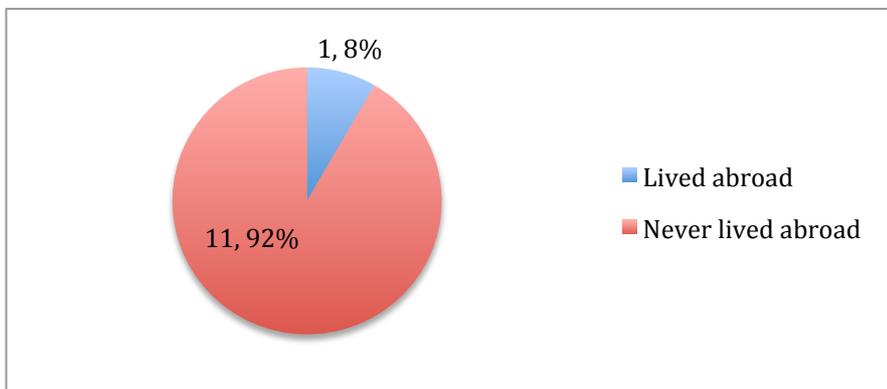
Figure 1: Participants
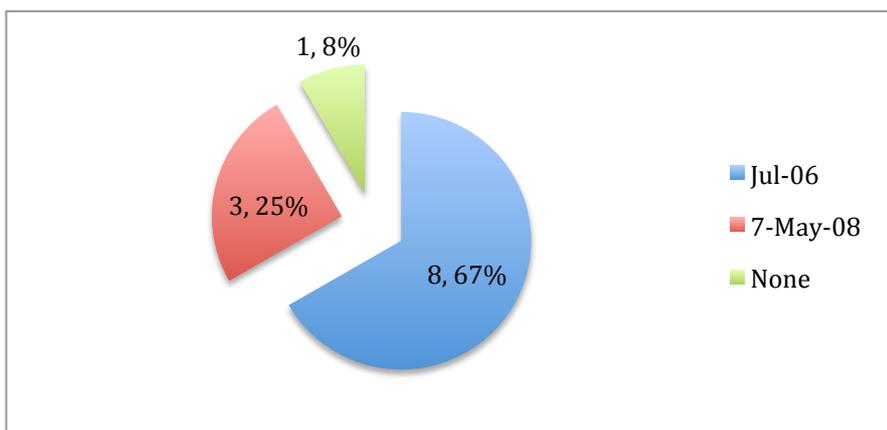
Figure 2: Participants who witnessed war events

Focus Groups results

The focus group discussions were analyzed and the results are presented by themes that illustrate the views of the participants (table 3).

The answers to each of the focus group question are summarized in themes. As shown in table three, the themes of the focus groups were listed according to the guide.

Reasons behind the start of the Lebanese civil war in 1975

Group A: Participants in Group A had mixed ideas about the reasons behind the start civil war. Some thought that the war started on April 12, 1975 by Palestinians killing two members of the Kataeb party. As a reaction, the Kataeb on the second day, on April 13, 1975, shot 25 Palestinians that were in a bus in Ain El Roumeneh. Others believed that black Saturday contributed to the start of the war without elaborating on details. Furthermore, at the time that some participants of this group thought the division among the Muslims in Lebanon was one reason for each of the Muslim sects to ally with other groups, other participants believed that the division among the Christian groups was the major factor in the outbreak of the civil war. The group continued by presenting more reasons that each of them knew. Such reasons include, but are not limited to, the bombing of the Sabra and Chatila, the presence of Palestinian camps in Beirut, the conflict between the Lebanese Maronites and Palestinians, the arriving of armed Palestinians to Lebanon with the intention to start a war and finally the division among the Lebanese themselves and their inability to unite to face external threats was another reason mentioned for the start of the war.

Group B: The participants of this group talked about the Ain El Roumeneh bus incident on April 13, 1975 as the main reason for the civil war. They elaborated on it by also referring to the day before and the killing of the two Kataeb members by Palestinians. Unlike Group A, members of Group B talked more about the black Saturday being a reason for the war. They mention the four members of the Kataeb that were found dead in December 1975. Some participants of this group admitted that they had no idea about the reason behind the war. Other participants brought up events that happened in the 1972 as a reason for the 1975 war. The assassination of Maarouf Saad, a political figure in Saida was considered one of the main reasons that accumulated until the situation blew up in the 1975 with the bus massacre. The lack of a strong and powerful Lebanese president helped the break of the violent acts and the start of the war.

Source of information

Group A: Parents, books, Wikipedia and stories from people who lived the war were the main sources for group A to know about the outbreak of the civil war. Due to the lack of a history book at school that covers this period, members of this group said they listened to what others told them about this period. They also check books and surf the internet to get information about this period.

Group B: Participants in Group B believed that there is no objective source for the reasons behind the break of the civil war. Most of the participants asked their parents, although they know that they are biased and not completely objective. Others go to Wikipedia – while they know that it is an unreliable source, it is easy and quick to look up things. Some of the members got information from the political party that they belong to. This group also refers to other people to learn about this

period. Although members of group B also refer to people who lived the war for information, just like members of group A, they would not believe what they say right away and would crosscheck the information. They made sure to ask other people who lived the war and had another political belief or affiliation to shape their own conclusions based on logic. A participant in Group B was exposed to such information while working on a paper for her English class at school.

Role in future conflict if history repeats itself

Group A: The first reaction of a member in this group was: "I didn't want to hear such a question". Around forty percent of the participants in this group expressed their willingness to get armed and fight if any of their family members was affected or killed. Some of the members stated that they would leave the country in such a situation. Some said that there is nothing that they can do in such a situation, while others highlighted the importance of each citizen playing a role in such a situation. Some of the participants expressed their willingness to join the army if need be, however others did not mind getting armed if needed without joining the Lebanese army.

Group B: Although some members of this group said they would leave the country in such a situation, other members believed that they have a role to play in changing such a situation. Others thought that they are not capable of doing anything in such a case.

Alliance in case of conflict

Group A: Many members stated that they would be fighting with the group that defends the country even if it is not the political group that they usually support. On

the other hand, some members believe that they should be loyal to the political group that they support and fight with it even if wrong or fighting against the country's interest.

Group B: The majority of the members in this group said that they would be fighting with the army. One of the participants even thought of a scenario where the army is divided and said that in such a case he would join the resistance forces despite to which religion or sect these forces belong.

Self-identification

Group A: Participants in Group A mainly identified themselves as Lebanese. One of the participants identified herself as "human" while another said that he is half Lebanese and half Philippine because his parents come from different nationalities.

Group B: The first participant to answer the question in this Group identified herself as a Muslim and then other participants also classified themselves as Muslims. Other participants said that they are Lebanese. One of the participants identified herself as a human being. A discussion was brought up and someone then said that there is no specific identification that classifies Lebanese.

Reference authority in case of conflict

Group A: Participants in Group A had different opinions about this matter. Some said that they do not have to refer to any authority and they can either handle situations by themselves or ask for help from their friends. Only one participant said that she would refer to the police station while others criticized the efficiency of the police in Lebanon. Most of them agreed that they would back up and do nothing if the person they are in a conflict with is politically connected.

Group B: Most of the members of this group referred to the governmental authorities as their reference in case of conflict. Others referred to their own personal power in getting their own rights. However, some members didn't believe in the governmental authority since they believed that everyone in Lebanon has connections, or "Wasta" (the Lebanese term for connections and bribery) to deal with such cases. For the same reasons, some of the participants preferred to do nothing.

Perspective towards a history book

Group A: The major answers for this question in Group A were negative. Almost all the participants in this group agreed that a history book that covers this period will not be accurate due to the different points of views and any kind of book will only create more hatred among the Lebanese. The only positive answer was to have it documenting the 1975 civil war event briefly, maximum in two pages.

Group B: Similar to Group A, most of the participants in Group B do not see the added value of having a history book that covers the Lebanese civil war. Other than creating problems, they think that there is no need to study a past event especially since it included a lot of violence. One of the participants agreed that there is a need to have this history book because the current book covers only very old events and she sees the importance of having a history book that teaches the new generation about this period in the history of Lebanon. Another participant in this group sees the importance of having this book as a way to avoid repeating the mistakes committed by the previous generation.

As for who should write it, the participants of Group B gave three propositions. First, the different political and religious groups in Lebanon should agree on a narration and the book should be prepared accordingly. Second, the different stories should be presented in this book and students will decide on their own narration based on logic. The third proposition is that historians should interview people who lived the war and make sure to have a representation of every political and religious group.

Content of the history book

Group A: The participants came up with different proposals. Some proposed a history book with no details; it would just mention that the war began in 1975. They proposed that students should research details themselves if they need to know more. Others preferred that all the historical events that took place should be documented for the new generation to learn from. This detailed book should include the detailed points of view of the different Lebanese groups. One of the participants proposed to mention that there are many versions for what happened but the most popular versions should be documented. The participants proposed that the conclusion shouldn't include who won to avoid conflicts.

Group B: The participants' answers to this question varied from the importance of mentioning all the details and incidents that happened and from the different points of view, to having only a timeline with all the events and dates with not a single detail. Some of the participants even proposed to have current events in the history book instead of documenting the 1975 civil war period. All participants agreed that no conclusion should be given to avoid further conflicts among the political and religious groups.

In summary, and after conciliating the findings of the two groups, it is clear that there are differences in the motivation and involvement of the two groups in the discussions. At the time that group A was more reluctant to provide their opinion, group B showed high interest in being involved in the analysis. An elaborate discussion on this observation will be presented in the next chapter.

The following chapter discusses the findings that resulted from the focus group sessions in relation with the literature review presented in chapter two. Patterns between the demographic information and the discussions that happened during the focus groups are investigated in terms of similarities and differences to see how this is relevant to the research questions.

Table 1: Guide-Material presented for each group to discuss:

Focus Group A	Focus Group B
Antoine Abraham (1996) says that the different political and religious Lebanese groups engaged in an arms race as a result of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) moving to Lebanon after it was expelled from Jordan during Black September in 1971. The Lebanese became involved not only in a regional conflict, but in a local conflict among the different religious and political groups. Fighting broke out between the Maronites and Palestinians in 1975 and later on Muslim groups allied with Palestinians. The presence of the Palestinians in Lebanon was a major reason for the start of the 1975 Lebanese civil war (Abraham, 1996).	**Narrative 1:** David Hirst (2010) says that the French colonial powers created the state of Lebanon as a safe haven for Maronite Christians. Since then, the Christians have dominated the country's government. However, Lebanon's large Muslim population (and its many pan-Arabist and left-wing groups) opposed that pro-western government. The Muslim population increased with the entry of 100,000 Palestinian refugees (around 10% of Lebanon's population) when the state of Israel was established. The Cold War also had a divisive effect on Lebanon, as the pan-Arab and left-wing groups sided with Soviet-aligned Arab countries, and the Maronites sided with the West. This division based on religion among Lebanese and the international alliances led to the 1975 Lebanese civil war (Hirst, 2010). **Narrative 2:** Antoine Abraham (1996) says that the different political and religious Lebanese groups engaged in an arms race as a result of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) moving to Lebanon after it was expelled from Jordan during Black September in 1971. The Lebanese became involved not only in a regional conflict, but in a local conflict among the different religious and political groups. Fighting broke out between the Maronites and Palestinians in 1975 and later on Muslim groups allied with Palestinians. The presence of the Palestinians in Lebanon was a major reason for the outbreak of the 1975 Lebanese civil war (Abraham, 1996). **Narrative 3:** Joseph Kechichian (1985) says that the Lebanese army's inability to control the PLO was an important factor. The army was divided along sectarian lines. The Christian officers in the army were against Muslims and their PLO supporters The loyalty of the different army ranks shifted from the nation to the different sectarian groups and this led to the 1975 Lebanese civil war (Kechichian, 1985).

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Table 2: Demographical Chart of the Participants:

	Age	Gender	Type of School	Location of School	Lived outside Lebanon?	Are your parents from the same religion or mixed marriage?	Are your parents living together, separated or divorced?	Did you live a war event? If yes what was the event? And when?
Participant # 1	15	Male	Private	Ras Beirut	No	Same religion	Living together	Yes. May 7, 2008
Participant # 2	18	Female	Public	New Rawda	No	Same religion	Living together	Yes. July 2006
Participant # 3	17	Male	Private	Dekwaneh	No	Same religion	Living together	Yes. July 2006
Participant # 4	16	Female	Private	Down Town-Beirut	No	Same religion	Divorced	Yes. July 2006-Israel attacked Lebanon
Participant # 5	17	Female	Private	Ras Beirut/ Bliss	No	Same religion	Living together	Yes. July 2006 Israeli attack
Participant # 6	17	Female	Private	Mechref-Damour	No	Same religion	Living together	Yes. July 2006
Participant # 7	15	Male	Private	Salim Salam	No	Different religions	Separated	Yes. July 2006
Participant # 8	16	Male	Private	Hamra	Yes-Saudi Arabia	Same religion	Living together	No
Participant # 9	17	Female	Private	Kfarshima	No	Same religion	Divorced	Yes. July 2006. "Harb Tamuz"
Participant # 10	17	Male	Public		No	Same religion	Living together	Yes, July 2006
Participant # 11	16	Male	Private	Batrakiye	No	Same religion	Living together	Yes. May 7, 2008
Participant # 12	17	Female	Private	Dawhet El Hoss	No	Same religion	Living together	Yes, May 7, 2008

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Table 3: Results of the focus groups discussion:

	Group A	Group B
Reasons	Ain El Roumeneh- Palestinian started by killing 2 Kataeb members, then the next day the bus accident happened where 25 were killed by the Kataeb group The division among Muslims The bombing of Palestinian camps The division among Christians No external interference Black Saturday No need to list reasons, 120000 Lebanese victims There is no accurate source of information, so we will never know the right reasons Palestinians came to Lebanon WITH weapons (with an intention to start a war) Different Lebanese sects do not unite to face external threats	Ain El Roumeneh bus incident on April 13, 1975 Palestinian killed two members of the Kataeb group on April 12, 1975 I don't know the reasons but I know about specific events that took place during the war Black Saturday War between the different religious groups I know that it happened but I don't know why I know its effects Lebanon was a weak country with a weak president In 1972 they assassinate a political figure (Maarouf Saad) in Saida External groups started the war
Source of Information	Parents Books Wikipedia People who lived through the war	Wikipedia Parents Other people I ask people who lived the war making sure to have different points of view From research I've done for my English class at school There is no source that is objective The political party I belong to
Role in future conflict if history repeats itself	I didn't want to hear this question I will get armed and fight if my family was affected	Leave the country I have a role as a citizen I can not do anything

	I will leave the country There is nothing that I can do I have a role as a citizen I will join the army if need be	
Alliance in case of conflict	With the group that defends the country With the political group that I support even if it is wrong	With the army If the army got divided, I will join the resistance forces
Identification	Lebanese Human Half Lebanese and half Philippine	Based on my ID I am a Muslim but I don't practice A Muslim Lebanese Human Being There is no one identification
Authority you refer to in case of conflict	Myself Police station My friends that can help I have my sources Police station can't do anything, it is faster to have a delivery boy come to you than a policeman If the problem is with someone who is politically involved or well connected I avoid doing anything because I don't want to be harmed	I will complain to the governmental authorities I will get my rights by myself No governmental authority can get me my rights in Lebanon because of the "Wasta" system I will do nothing
Would a history book about the civil war be helpful?	Not helpful It will only create problems It should only mention it briefly, maximum in 2 pages There will be 30,000 different versions of the same story It will create hatred among the different groups	I don't care about what happened before Not helpful Yes. Students should know about this period and the current book covers very old events. No because it will create a lot of problems Yes to avoid repeating the same mistakes that they committed The current conflicts are an effect of the civil war so documenting it will only create more conflicts.

Who should write it	Not a committee that will agree on a story-this will make it inaccurate	The different groups should agree on a scenario and publish a book If it includes details, historians should go back to people from the different political groups that witnessed the war
What should it cover?	It shouldn't cover details- students should research details It should include as much points of views as possible The war period with all he historical events so new generations will benefit from and do not commit the same mistakes Just mention that a war took place in 1975 and let people research what happened Include the most popular stories Mention that there are many ideas and only write the most popular ones.	The different stories of each group and students will form their own story No details should be mentioned It should not mention any of the massacres that took place It should only include facts in terms of dates and numbers It should cover all incidents in details A history book that should be used in schools should only cover current events, why do we need to learn about conflicts and wars if they happened long time ago. Talking about war will only lead to more killing.
What should the conclusion be?	The history book shouldn't state in the conclusion who won to avoid problems The conclusion of this period of the Lebanese history is known and everyone knows that Syrians were the winners in the Lebanese civil war.	No conclusion to avoid taking sides.

Chapter Five

Discussion of Findings

The importance of having focus group discussions in this research is to have a sample of different people within the age group of 15 to 18 and observe the performance of each group when exposed to a certain type of narration about the reasons behind the start of the 1975 civil war. Jan Reed (1997) emphasizes the importance of having the focus groups "to gather data from a number of participants in one session, thus avoiding the time-consuming processes of individual interviews".

Although the number of participants in the focus groups was limited and didn't reflect a complete representation of the different political and religious groups in Lebanon, many observations were made among the groups. Both included diversity among the members in terms of their political point of views. This was clear through presenting their knowledge of the historical events as well as through asking them to name any war event that they lived. Some of the participants blamed the Palestinians for the 1975 Lebanese civil war while others gave them the right to fight against the Lebanese Christians because they support Israelis who were killing Palestinians. Other participants related the absence of a strong powerful president to control the country to the outbreak of the war.

Based on the literature by Sune Haugbolle presented in chapter two on when and how the civil war began and the answers by students from both focus groups, it is

clear that Lebanese only agree on when the civil war began. Their diverse loyalties

create a gap among them and make it difficult to agree on a common national

identity. This also increases the conflict among each other.

Although eleven out of the twelve participants never lived abroad, it is clear that

there is no agreement among them on the war events that happened in Lebanon.

Some members consider the July 2006 events as a war event and others consider the

May 7, 2008 as a war event

Keeping in mind the small number of participants each focus group has, the

difference in opinion among them reflects the disagreement among Lebanese on

these two events. Imad Salamey (2014) presents the different points of view among

Lebanese for the involvement and start of the July 2006 events. Salamey says that

March 8 supporters agreed with Hezbollah on the importance of kidnapping two

Israeli soldiers for a later exchange with three Lebanese prisoners in Israel. He

continues with presenting the March 14 supporters' point of view on this issue where

they considered that Hezbollah should have got the approval of the Lebanese

government on the kidnapping before involving the country in a war with Israel

(Salamey, 2014).

Salamey (pg. 70) also presents the May 7, 2008 events and Hezbollah's reaction to

two decrees proposed by the government that represented the March 14 group. One

decree was on starting an investigation on the "Hezbollah's private communication

network" and the other was to relocate the head of security at the Beirut airport who

was supported by Hezbollah (Salamey, 2014). As for March 8 supporters and

according to Krista Wiegand (2009), the May 2008 event was a 'minor political

violence' as a reaction to the threat of executing the two decrees proposed by the government and their results. Hezbollah and March 8 supporters believed that executing the two decrees would weaken the position of Hezbollah against Israel through the exposure of its communication network (Wiegand, 2009). If the participants disagree on events that they have lived and witnessed, it should be hard for them to agree on events that other people tell them about.

Duncan Bell (2003), states the importance of proper and accurate documentation of historical narratives to have a unified national memory. This approach will bring people together and strengthen their unity (Bell, Mythscapes: memory, mythology, and national identity, 2003). The observations on the alliance of people in case of conflict differed between the two focus groups. In group A, where the participants were exposed to a one-story approach, the participants referred more to the political parties and groups that constitutes Lebanon. Although participants were aware of the possibility of having the political group that they support to be wrong, some insisted on despite being wrong they will still be with the same political group. The rest of the participants in group A stated that they would support the political group that defends the country. On the other hand, participants of group B, who were exposed to three different narratives for the start of the civil war, were more supportive of the army than to political groups. Some of them went further and gave an alternative in case the army got divided. The link the participants made in reference to being exposed to more than one narration reflects a broad thinking in the case of a multiple narration history.

The fact that some of the participants go online to get their information about the war is alerting since there are many unreliable websites that they might be exposed to.

The participants also use books as a source of information to know about the 1975 civil war. The lack of an official history book that covers the war period might be a reason for the new generation to be exposed to inaccurate and sometimes wrong information as presented in the literature review section on Edgar O'Ballane.

Zajda and Zajda (2003) argue that the powerful group in the country affects the historical documentation of events. The discussion in the focus group on the authority that they refer to in case of a conflict with someone brought up the passive attitude of the participants. They did not show their interest in fighting for their right to avoid conflict of "might be" people with political connections and "Wasta". The answers presented by the participants on this issue supports the argument presented in the literature review where powerful political groups dominate the country even in presenting historical events in a way that portray them in a better image that they can benefit from.

During the discussion, group A asked more question to know more about what happened. When the first question about the reasons behind the war was raised, it was clear that some participants had more information on the issue than others in the same group. Since this group was only exposed to one narrative, the participants with less knowledge about the issue started asking others who seemed to know more so they get more information. Although this reflected tolerance and accepting information from others that was obvious that they belong to a different political group, the unknowledgeable group seemed to accept what the others were telling them without questioning. On the other hand, group B, that was exposed to three different points of views, analyzed the different stories and was able to assess the logic behind each story and criticize the parts that did not make sense to them. It was

obvious in group B the better research and analytical skills and this was clear when they started relating incidents and even thinking of incidents that they knew about and happened many years before the 1975 incidents to be reasons for the outbreak of the war. Members of this group talked about the assassination of Maarouf Saad in Saida that took place in 1972 as one of other reasons that escalated and led to the outburst on April 13, 1975.

Group A were more concerned in discussing stories brought up by the participants during the discussion about the same period only while participants in group B were thinking of current events in Lebanon as a continuation of the civil war to better analyze that period.

The difference in the thinking approach was obvious when the groups were asked about their source of information. Although both groups were interested to know more, it was obvious that each group had a different approach. Members in group A were accepting the different information that was brought up during the discussion and only evaluating the performance of the different groups that were involved. Members of group B insisted on analyzing and coming up with their own logical conclusion after hearing the different opinions. This approach of wanting to know more, use common sense to check validity then analyzing was also obvious when they were asked direct questions, one of the answers that reflect this attitude when asked about their source of information was:

"There is no one source that is completely neutral. Everyone will tell me a story about the reasons in a way that makes the party or group that they belong to look the best among other parties. My way is that I get information from different people that

belong to different parties and I will assess using logic and common sense."

A discussion was brought up in both groups when asked about their role if history were to repeat itself. When some of the participants answered that there is nothing they can do or they will leave the country, other participants in the group argued with them on their role as citizens. The similarities in both groups reflected the difference in opinion despite the approach used for the group and the division among this age group between people that are aware of their role as citizens and others that are passive citizens.

The fear of being neglected and left out was the highlight of group A when asked about alliance in case of conflict, one of the participants answered:

"Each one should fight with his group even if the group is wrong on this specific issue. If you fight with the other group because they are right, your group will hate you and anyway the group that you fought next to won't accept you and will never trust you. As a result you will be always neglected from both, so better stay on your group's side."

Participants of group B, and maybe as a result of being exposed to different narratives, have the army as their resort to ally with in case of conflict and were not limited in their answer to a political party that they support or another that is doing the right thing at this specific conflict. The answer of participants in group B to join the army showed a sense of their national belonging.

Mikael Hjerm (2014) study the relation between religion on one side and national identity on the other side. They conclude that religion has a great effect on excluding

nonbelievers and people that belong to different religious groups. Religion increases the bond among people that belong to the same sect and affect their relations and behavior as citizens (Hjerm, 2014).

Among the focus groups and when participants were asked: "How would you identify yourself?" the answers of participants in group A were mainly based on their national identity as Lebanese with a small percentage that identified themselves as "human beings'. As for the participants in group B, almost fifty percent of the participants' answers were based on their religious affiliation and the others referred to themselves either as being Lebanese or human beings. It is worth mentioning that the questions were asked out loud to the group in an open discussion setting where they then answered one by one. As an observation while moderating the focus groups, I noticed when I asked the question on identification that the first member in group A to answer this question referred to himself as Lebanese without even thinking, so most of the other participants continued with the same answer and then a small percentage identified themselves as "human beings".

As for Group B, when the identification question was raised, the first to answer took some time thinking and then answered hesitantly, "I am a Muslim as registered on my ID," and she made sure to emphasize that she does not practice Islam. This answer prompted the rest of the participants to identify themselves based on religion. The analysis approach that was used in this focus group, made a participant not follow the same identification criteria and identified himself as a Lebanese, and this in turn made the rest of the participants think of the question in more than one paradigm which led one of them to say: "there is no one identification that classifies

us".

The effect of their parents and environment on them was obvious in both groups when they answered the question on the authority that they will refer to in case of conflict. The majority of answers in both groups reflected negativity when it comes to the governmental authority and fear from politically connected people. This combination of fear and negativity will result to just forget about fighting for your right and just continue your life peacefully.

Although one of the answers by a participant in group A was funny but it only reflected the amount of mistrust that citizens have toward the governmental authority:

> 'I will never call the security forces if I am facing a conflict or problem, delivery service is faster.'

This mistrust towards the government might change if the Lebanese national identity is reinforced through a unified history book and the government is the only reference to all Lebanese.

'Not helpful' was the most repeated answer in both groups when asked if a history book that covers the civil war period would be helpful. The discussion continued on the reasons why such a book is not important and one of the answers was:

> "No one will ever learn from others mistakes, we have to do the mistake ourselves to know what they were talking about, so no need for such a history book."

These answers were alarming and reflected a passive attitude among this young

generation.

The discussion continued with the conflicts and hatred that such a book will create due to the fact that most schools in Lebanon are politicized. A debate took place in each group, and the only answer among participants who knew the added value to such a history book in group A was to have maximum two pages of the history book about this period presented in a timeline without details. On the other hand, the debate in group B led to having some participants to compare the current status of the history book where it only covers very old events and the importance of having a book that cover the Lebanese civil war. Some members of this group debated with others about the importance of such a book to avoid repeating the same mistakes that were committed and led to the war.

After this debate, and when asked "who should write the history book?", participants in group A were concerned only concerned about the inaccuracy of such a book if written by a committee that will agree on a story but they did not propose another solution. While participants in group B proposed two ways, where one of the proposed ways showed the broad way of thinking that dominated this group. They proposed to have historians go back to people who lived the war from the different political parties, get first hand stories from those witnesses and put them all in one book so students will know the different stories.

Participants in both groups got more involved in the discussion when the debate continued on details about the history book. More involvement and interaction was clear when they were asked to be solution oriented and think of the content of a history book that could be useful. The passive attitude and negativity was still there

among some of the participants in both groups but it was obvious that other participants became more concerned when they were asked to propose the ideal content for such a book. The most common answer, and to an extent the agreed on content in each group was kind of a timeline with only mentioning the important events that took place. Both groups proposed that if students want to learn more, they should research, evaluate the information that they get and then analyze it.

There was an agreement about the different participants in group B that the history book should not include a conclusion so students avoid taking sides. While in group A it was clear from the debate that some of the participants were so affected by ideas that they had. One of the answers that was firmly presented with a lot of assurance was:

"The conclusion is known, Syrians won the civil war."

This attitude of surely knowing presented with much self-confidence reflected what we have heard and maybe some of us said in 2005 when prime minister Rafic Hariri was assassinated: "No need to even think about it, Syrians killed him, it is obvious." Or "It is clear, people can not even question it, Israeli's killed him."

This affirmative answer that Syrians won the Lebanese civil war triggered debate in group A. It showed that even among this young generation that never studied this period in the history of Lebanon, the effect of parents, and most probably other factors that shaped the ideas of the participants, is obvious. Such effect is clear when the debate shifted to start to discuss Syrians and their presence in Lebanon with all the disagreement that is out there among Lebanese on this specific issue.

Summary of discussions

If we were to summarize the difference between the two groups, we can identify that the analytical approach in group B motivated the participants to be more involved in the discussion, and this can be due to the fact they were more knowledgeable through the multiple narratives provided to them. This led to more solid ground to base their arguments.

Members of group A were more reluctant to provide their opinion that reflected limited information and lack of knowledge. Also it was clear that members of both groups are exposed to information though an older generation and mainly their parents but each of the approaches presented to them about the reasons for the outbreak of the 1975 civil war affected the debate. In group A, where they had a single narrative on the reasons, the external effect that shaped their opinion was present although they were asking to know more. In group B, the participants, and most probably due to being exposed to three different stories, moved more into analysis and critical thinking that led them to even refer to the current situation in Lebanon to better assess what might have happened in the 1975.

The purpose of the focus groups was to get the participants' perspectives on the 1975 civil war, but instead it was more like a representation of the parents' perspective.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

This thesis examines the possibility of having a unified history book in a pluralistic, multicultural country, namely Lebanon. A unified history book should include the different narrations of the different constituents of the Lebanese polity. The proposed history book would be a partial solution to the lack of a unified national identity for the Lebanese society, and it would potentially prevent more conflicts resulting from external alliances and first loyalty to foreign countries. The problem came from the continuous conflicts between the different political and religious groups due to the fact that the Lebanese tend to have a lack of national belonging to their country

The ministry of education has worked on several attempts to come up with a new history book that addresses the civil war period, but due to the involvement of current leaders in the civil war, all the attempts were rejected. The disagreement among the political parties regarding the civil war narrative was an obstacle to this project. In order to save our country, especially the new generations, from repeating the mistakes of our parents, we must come up with a solution.

This thesis starts with an introduction on the link between collective memory of a nation, unified history, and national identity. The literature shows that these three elements are directly linked especially in a multi-sect society that undergoes conflicts between its different constituents. It also reflects the single narrative approach versus a multi- narrative approach as two ways to document history. The important role of

the history curriculum at schools in reinforcing national identity is also cited in chapter two as presented by Majid Al-Haj (Al-Haj, 2005). Moreover, the literature review shows the importance of having an agreed-upon narrative to document history with an objective to reinforce national identity. It also reflects the better effectiveness of the multi narrative approach in a pluralistic society like Lebanon. A single narrative approach has many drawbacks as presented in the literature review in chapter two.

The literature review section highlights two main conclusions regarding the history book. First is the importance of a unified book in a pluralistic society that passed through conflicts and wars to reinforce national identity among all its constituents. Second is the need for presenting the different points of view and narrations of each of the parties and groups that constitute the Lebanese polity.

The focus groups' discussions, in chapters four and five, point toward an observation that participants who were exposed to multiple narratives on the reasons behind the start of the 1975 Lebanese civil war were better able to analyze and link events to form their own conclusions based on logic and common sense. Some of the participants of the focus groups suggested having a history book that includes the different narrations by the different groups in Lebanon to avoid inaccuracy and subjectivity. It would then be up to the students to evaluate the different narrations and build up their own logical narration based on analysis.

Research Limitations

One of the limitations of this research is that the text presented in each of the focus groups was in English. Although it was stated in the recruitment letter that the

participants should be able to communicate in English, some had difficulties in understanding the text and this recommended oral translation of the text in each session to ensure that everyone understood it. This limitation did not affect the discussion since all of the participants were able to discuss in Arabic the ideas that they were not able to express using the English language. Another limitation was that participants were influenced by their parents without having an objective knowledge on the different arguments presented by the different political and religious groups. A sample with an age group between 19 and 21 might have been more effective since the participants will be more aware and exposed and would have better reflected the effect of not having a history book covering the civil war period. Time constraints were another limitation to not meet with members of the committee who worked on attempts to produce a book to study the real reasons behind the failure in completing their mission. It would have been more effective if the focus group sessions were longer and students were asked about their opinion before being exposed to the text. Then the same questions were asked after the same participants read the text to compare their reaction before and after being exposed to the intervention, that is the single narration text for group A and multiple narration text for group B.

For the purpose of this thesis, I have decided not to conduct surveys; as a result, this study does not provide a detailed description of how the history book will be taught, but rather on the importance of creating it in the first place and the general form it will take. This study lacks in-depth interviews with politicians and historians to discuss the agenda behind the history book and the reasons of the failure to agree on a book that covers the 1975 war period so far.

Due to the lack of time no interviews were conducted. Interviews with politicians, historians and academicians would have played a great role in providing more literature on documenting and teaching the Lebanese history. Interviews with the last committee that was commissioned to come up with a new history book would have provided a better picture on the restrictions they faced as well as clarifying the interference of politicians and religious figures in approving the history book.

The timing of the focus groups prevented the recruitment of the participants through contacting different schools since it took place during the summer vacation. The participation of the school students would have reflected a more diverse image of the different political and religious groups in Lebanon.

The use of the English language might be a barrier since not all Lebanese are English educated. French and Arabic are two languages that are officially used by the Lebanese government.

The conclusions drawn from the literature review and the findings of the focus groups open a discussion for further interdisciplinary research to build a national identity among the new generation. In addition, certain measures should be taken by the government on the policy level to inform the new generation about events related to Lebanon and raise awareness among them to clarify their rights and duties as citizens.

Further research in the field of Psychology is needed to work on the passive and negative attitude that the new generation has towards the country. In the same area, some work is needed on ways to eliminate the fear that this generation has as a result of the conflicts, wars and the dominance of the power of groups instead of that of the

government. Further research is also needed in the field of Education to study the ways to implement the proposed history book. With an approach that depends on analysis, a revision of the relevant parts of the curriculum as well as examinations and evaluations should be considered and adopted.

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Institutional Review Board (IRB)   لجنة الأخلاقيات

NOTICE OF IRB APPROVAL

To: Ms. Zeina Abdallah
              Advisor: Dr. Imad Salamey

APPROVAL ISSUED: 11 *Aug 2014*
EXPIRATION DATE: *10Aug2015*
REVIEW TYPE: EXPEDITED

Date: August 11, 2014
RE: *IRB #: LAU.SOAS.IS1.11/Aug/2014*
              Protocol Title: Rethinking the Content of the History Book to Reinforce National Identity

The above referenced research project has been approved by the Lebanese American University, Institutional Review Board (LAU IRB). This approval is limited to the activities described in the Approved Research Protocol and all submitted documents listed on page 2 of this letter. **Enclosed with this letter are the stamped approved documents that must be used.**

APPROVAL CONDITIONS FOR ALL LAU APPROVED HUMAN RESEARCH PROTOCOLS

LAU RESEARCH POLICIES: *All individuals engaged in the research project must adhere to the approved protocol and all application LAU IRB Research Policies. PARTICIPANTS must NOT be involved in any research related activity prior to IRB approval date or after the expiration date.*

PROTOCOL EXPIRATION: *The LAU IRB approval expiry date is listed above. The Office of the IRB will send an email at least 45 days prior to protocol approval expiry - Request for Continuing Review - in order to avoid any temporary hold on the initial protocol approval. It is your responsibility to apply for continuing review and receive continuing approval for the duration of the research project*

MODIFICATIONS AND AMENDMENTS: *All protocol modifications must be IRB approved prior to implementation, unless they are intended to reduce risk. Any protocol deviations without IRB approval must be reported to the IRB.*

If you have any questions concerning this information, please contact the IRB office by email at christine.chalhoub@lau.edu.lb

Dr. Costantine Daher
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Institutional Review Board
Lebanese American University
1 1 AUG 2014
APPROVED

Lebanese American University FWA00014723
IRB Registration # IRB00006954 LAUIRB#1

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED:

IRB Initial Protocol Application	Received 26 July 2014
Cover Letter	Received 26 July 2014
Questions to be discussed in the Focus Group	Received 26 July 2014
Parental Consent form	Amended 8 August 2014
Recruitment Letter	Received 26 July 2014
Research Protocol	Received 26 July 2014
Sample Assent	Received 26 July 2014
NIH Training – Zeina Abdallah & CV	Cert. # 1469880 (Dated 22 May 2014)