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History Education and the Construction of National Identity in Iran

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HISTORY EDUCATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

IN IRAN

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To: Dean Delia C. Garcia
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This dissertation, written by Maryam Soltan Zadeh, and entitled History Education and the Construction of National Identity in Iran, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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DEDICATION

To my family

Zarafshan, Behrouz, Nahid, Amir, and Maseeh

for the love and serenity they bring to my life every day.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Finally I want to thank my family whose love and support allowed me to embark on this journey and encouraged me throughout the way. I want to thank my mother and father who has thought me, by example, the value of life-long learning and who has selflessly supported my intellectual endeavors without ever questioning my decisions; my sister Nahid who, for the past 8 years, has graciously carried all my responsibilities at home and allowed me to follow my dreams; and my husband Amir whose constancy, kindness, and never-ending support have made this possible.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Professor Mohammed K. Farouk, Major Professor

This study examined the representation of national and religious dimensions of

Iranian history and identity in Iranian middle school history textbooks. Furthermore,

through a qualitative case study in a school in the capital city of Tehran, teachers' use of

textbooks in classrooms, students' response, their perceptions of the country's past, and

their definitions of national identity is studied. The study follows a critical discourse

analysis framework by focusing on the subjectivity of the text and examining how

specific concepts, in this case collective identities, are constructed through historical

narratives and how social actors, in this case students, interact with , and make sense of,

the process. My definition of national identity is based on the ethnosymbolism paradigm

(Smith, 2003) that accommodates both pre-modern cultural roots of a nation and the

development and trajectory of modern political institutions.

Two qualitative approaches of discourse analysis and case study were employed.

The textbooks selected were those published by the Ministry of Education; universally

used in all middle schools across the country in 2009. The case study was conducted in a

girls' school in Tehran. The students who participated in the study were ninth grade

students who were in their first year of high school and had just finished a complete course of Iranian history in middle school. Observations were done in history classes in all three grades of the middle school.

The study findings show that textbooks present a generally negative discourse of Iran's long history as being dominated by foreign invasions and incompetent kings. At the same time, the role of Islam and Muslim clergy gradually elevates in salvaging the country from its despair throughout history, becomes prominent in modern times, and finally culminates in the Islamic Revolution as the ultimate point of victory for the Iranian people. Throughout this representation, Islam becomes increasingly dominant in the textbooks' narrative of Iranian identity and by the time of the Islamic Revolution morphs into its single most prominent element. On the other hand, the students have created their own image of Iran's history and Iranian identity that diverges from that of the textbooks especially in their recollection of modern times. They have internalized the generally negative narrative of textbooks, but have not accepted the positive role of Islam and Muslim clergy. Their notion of Iranian identity is dominated by feelings of defeat and failure, anecdotal elements of pride in the very ancient history, and a sense of passivity and helplessness.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

History education and the representation of the past has been a topic of study for decades. It was recognized as a sensitive issue internationally after the Second World War when the United Nations and the European Council acknowledged the role of history education (and specifically textbooks) in promoting nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments that were partially influential in the disasters of the war (Pingel, 1999). Bilateral and multilateral partnerships were initiated to conduct comparative analyses of history textbooks to examine stereotypes, prejudices, and biases and to provide recommendations for their improvement in the promotion of international understanding especially in countries that were actively engaged in the war (Slater, 1995).

In most societies, states take the responsibility of shaping the national identity and educational policies are among their most influential tools. Looking back at the historical roots of nations, Anderson (1999) has argued that the print industry has been very influential in constructing national identities in the modern world. In his analysis, Anderson focuses on the publication of novels and newspapers and the role they played in the construction of European national identities. Considering that school textbooks are among the most authoritative forms of print media especially for their direct consumers who are young children (Kalmus, 2004), it seems obvious to find them at the forefront of the efforts for shaping national identities. As Nasser and Nasser (2008) put it, "the control of educational systems and the content of school textbooks is a powerful resource for shaping identity formation and inter-group relations within any society" (p. 629). Through education, the elite can choose among different dimensions of identity and

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nurture the ones they prefer and suppress the others. In the case of Iran, the issue is even more complicated as the concept of national identity has been extremely controversial since its introduction to Iran by the west in the 19th century.

Official policies to instill nationalistic sentiments in younger generations through mass public education are in place even in well established democracies such as the United States; a society which is usually used as the example of a civic nation because of its diverse demographics. Many studies on the content of history textbooks in the United States show that the images of the past presented to students are aimed at nation building and are not necessarily objective historical analyses (VanSledright, 2008). These observations further demonstrate the important role of a conception of national identity based on shared memories and common histories in today's society. Therefore a critical need for a representation of a national identity that is most inclusive of Iranian people, can improve social cohesion, and can be a force for social development is apparent.

Debates over Iranian national identity have been a part of discussions of religion and modernity for a long time. Since the 1979 Islamic revolution, religious dimensions of identity seem to be at the center stage of official efforts to define Iranian national identity, especially in social studies textbooks (Mehran, 1989). In this study, the history textbooks were analyzed from a more inclusive perspective towards Iranian identity. Integrating both Iranian-Islamic and liberal conceptions of Iranian identity (which will be discussed in detail), this study challenges the overly negative and demeaning approach to national identity found in the official textbooks published by the government and provides a plausible alternative option for a more inclusive approach; one that incorporates civic, national, and religious dimensions of Iranian culture and identity.

Purpose of the Study

I studied how national and religious dimensions of Iranian identity and history are being portrayed in the textbooks through an examination of textbooks' inclusions and exclusions of historical events, value judgments, and presentation of influential figures. Furthermore, I examined how a sample of high school students respond to this portrayal of history, how they perceive the country's past, and how they define their national identity.

Research Questions

This study was guided by three main research questions. The first questions dealt with the content of history textbooks. The second question examined a sample of high school students' images of the past; and the last question analyzed the similarities and differences between these two.

1. How do middle school Iranian history textbooks represent the national and religious dimensions of Iranian history and identity?

2. What are the selected sample of Iranian high school students' perceptions of the history of the country and their national identity?

3. How do middle school Iranian history textbooks' representation of the national and religious dimensions of Iranian history and identity relate to the selected sample of Iranian high school students' perceptions of the history of the country and their national identity?

Significance of the Study

There have not been many studies that focus on history education and history textbooks in the context of the Middle East where religious identities and dynamics

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interact with a relatively new conception of nation state. With the exception of studies on Israeli and Palestinian textbooks (Al-Haj, 2005; Mazawi, 2011; Moughrabi, 2003; Nasser & Nasser 2008; Podeh, 2002) and Jordanian textbooks (Anderson, 2001; Nasser, 2004) the slim body of textbook research in this region does not address the complexities of Middle Eastern societies. Recent studies, including reports from political institutions and press articles, mostly focus on the representation of the "other" or the West in textbooks, or examine the content of religious courses to understand whether they promote violence (Doumato, 2003; Doumato & Starett, 2007; Fattah, 2005; Science Applications International Corporation, 2007; Shea, 2006) With the exception of few studies published in the past couple of years that present a more subtle examination of identity and diversity (Kheiltash & Rust, 2009; Kohnehpush & Kohnepush, 2009), a similar trend can largely be observed for studies on Iranian textbooks (Kaviani, 2008; Mehran, 2007). Consequently detailed analyses of how the nation state is being presented to pupils and how they understand their own past are missing from the literature. These examinations are significant not only for the country under study but also for the global community as their findings can help societies improve their conceptions of citizenship and create stronger foundations for the initiation or development of democratic institutions.

This study contributes to the discussion of history education and national identity in Iran not only by providing an analysis of textbooks' content, but also through a qualitative study of a school in the capital city of Tehran with a focus on students' perceptions of history, national identity, and the history education they receive. Such comprehensive examination of textbook content and of students' understanding is not only absent from the literature on Iran's educational system, but can hardly be found in

the larger context of the Middle East as most studies limit their approach to the analysis of the text without examining what is happening inside schools and how students are responding to the content of textbooks.

It also expands the international and comparative education literature on the Middle East by providing insight into the subtle complexities of educational media and practices in Iran as an example. The qualitative examination of school practices can shed light on how teachers are dealing with, and sometimes going around, official policies and materials and how students are constructing their own meanings in the conjunction of official narratives and everyday experiences. It can also help researchers in the field of comparative education to become familiar with the intricacies of doing research, and especially case studies, in Iran and the larger Middle East.

Furthermore, the findings of this research can help teachers and schools inside Iran to better understand the complexities of textbooks and their impact on students' conceptions of history and national identity and therefore be able to improve school programs and curricula. Also, it helps policy makers in having a deeper and clearer image of what textbooks are communicating. Therefore it provides an opportunity for improvement in case policy makers are willing to do so.

Definition of Terms

I based my definitions of nation, nationalism, and national identity mainly on the ethno-symbolism paradigm and works of Anthony Smith because of their consideration of the influence of pre-modern cultural identities and ethnicities on the formation of nationalisms and national identity in modern times especially outside the West.

In this paradigm, Smith (2001) defines *nation* as "a named human community occupying a homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a common public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members" (p.13). In my opinion, this definition accommodates both pre-modern cultural roots and the development of modern political institutions without specifying them in an exclusionary strict manner and therefore is the one used in this dissertation.

Furthermore Smith (2001) defines *nationalism* as "an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential nation" (p. 9). It is important to note that Smith acknowledges the modernity of nationalism as a form of ideology which lacks rigorous theoretical foundations. In fact, along with Anderson (1999), Hayes (1960), and others, Smith believes that nationalism can be better explained as a form of culture or religion rather than an ideology meaning that members of a community or a nation state have a say in its construction and therefore can feel a strong sense of ownership towards it. It is based on this understanding of nationalism that Smith (1991) can attend to its benign effects, while acknowledging the devastating consequences it has had for humanity.

Finally, in this paradigm, *national identity* is defined as "the continuous reproduction and reinterpretation of the pattern of values, symbols, memories, myths and traditions that compose the distinctive heritage of nations, and the identifications of individuals with that pattern and heritage and with its cultural elements" (Smith, 2001, p. 18). The important factor in this definition is the use of the term "heritage". As Lowenthal (1998) explains, heritage is a simplified version of the past with an agenda to

create a desired image. While the scholarship of history and efforts to make it as objective as possible are important in the long run, only a narrative that can emotionally resonate with the masses can create a sense of collectivity and belonging.

An example from the most famous Persian epic can further explain this conscious effort of creating myths and memories. Ferdowsi, in his masterpiece *Shahnameh*, tells the story of Iran through the lives of heroes and villains. In this long epic poem, which includes more than 30,000 verses, the main hero of the book, Rostam, known by almost any Iranian, possesses unrealistic powers and talents and can defeat almost anyone and anything. A popular verse among Iranians that is said to be from *Shahnameh* (some Iranain scholars argue that this verse had been added to the book after Ferdowsis's death) states "Rostam was in fact a strong man in Sistan, but I made him the Rostam of the stories." In this verse, Ferdowsi acknowledges the fact that he has had a hand in creating the stories; however, he clearly states that they are ultimately based on a true reality (Babashahi & Ma'soumi, 2008). This is how collective myths are created and remembered through the ages in different human collectivities and in nations.

I used the ethno-symbolism paradigm for my study as I believe this approach is most compatible with the history and development of Iran and its internal debates over nationalism and national identity, particularly because it utilizes the experiences of non-Western societies of Asia and Africa in the development of its perspective and definitions. By focusing on the history of nations and nationalism in the West, modernist theories argue that these concepts were created in modern times as a result of political and social developments and generalize this process to movements exported to Africa and Asia. In other words, modernists argue that these concepts are not only chronologically

recent, but also qualitatively novel in the way that they are not based on any preexisting similar phenomena.

Assumptions

My first assumption in my approach to national identity is that I do consider common history and cultural ties a necessary force in establishing political solidarity and a powerful bond for social mobilization, as does Smith (1991). I believe ethno-symbolism paradigm can best explain Iran's case because while religious sentiments constitute a significant tenet of Iranian collective identity, most social movements in the country's modern history have enjoyed nationalist elements: Constutitional Revolution 1905-1911, oil nationalization 1932, Islamic revolution 1979, the presidential campaigns of the reformist candidates Khatami in 1997 and Mousavi and Karoubi in 2009, and finally the Green movement which was initiated as a protest to the results of the 2009 presidential election and gradually expanded to a call for freedom and democracy. These incidents demonstrate a potentially powerful force of nationalism in Iranian politics which if ignored or suppressed, might find more radical ways to flourish.

I also based my study on the assumption that a society's understanding of its national identity is a necessity for active participation in the international scene in a world where nations are known as building blocks of the global community (Rajaee, 2004; Smith, 2001). This need for understanding one's own national identity is more pressing for societies who are not yet strong players in the international scene, or do not enjoy well established democratic political institutions (Rajaee, 2004).

In analyzing the rise of religious nationalisms in newly independent Muslim societies of the 1980s and 1990s in Africa, Middle East, and East Asia, Juergensmeyer

(1994) observed a desire for an indigenous form of religious politics and a rejection of Western culture. However, because the fundamental concept of nation state was an import from the West, and Muslim societies could not deny the international system that was being built on this concept, they could not distance themselves from Western political ideologies all together if they wanted to engage with the rest of the world; hence the need for consolidating the notion of nation state with religious principles. Iran's experience was among the first to replace a secular state with a religious one and the 1979 revolution took most analysts by surprise. Perhaps President Jimmy Carter's statement about Iran in 1977 shows how little the West knew about the internal struggles of the country when he asserted that "Iran is an island of stability in one of the most troubled areas of the world" (Yergin, 1991, p. 672). Many scholars inside and outside of Iran have since tried to understand why the Iranian revolution succeeded in spite of the Shah's strong support from the West and his successful economic development programs (Abrahamian, 1980; Milani, 1994; Rajaee, 2007). Some of these analyses that are most relevant to this discussion claim that the Shah's emphasis on a radical Iranian national identity that neglected religious sentiments of the society and his focus on Iran's pre-Islamic history were influential elements in Khomeini's success in his religious agenda (Rajaee, 2007). In other words, Iranians have once before experienced the backlash of exclusionary and narrow conceptions of identity and it is now time to create a notion of identity which is inclusive of both religious and national dimensions.

And finally, my last assumption addresses the relationship between citizenship and national identity. The contemporary debate about citizenship, its relation to collective identities, and the role of the state in addressing these issues is mostly conducted in the

context of democratic societies of the West. In this context, nations have already passed the phase of functional nationalism and adopted the concept of democratic citizenship and also their political institutions are already established (Schwarzmantel, 2004). However, in Iran, with newly established semi-democratic institutions and a public education system that is already under the control of the government with a specific identity formation agenda, the need for developing a more inclusive national identity and belonging to a collectivity which fosters and motivates social mobilization and action and political solidarity is still pressing. In other words, while western democracies might have gradually passed the period of utilizing national sentiments for encouraging civic participation, Iran is still struggling in this stage. According to Farhi's (2008) observation, in the absence of a common narrative that binds people together and nurtures social activism, Iranians are becoming more and more isolated in their private lives. Furthermore, the increasing rate of migration from the country especially among educated individuals (Hakimzadeh, 2006) might be additional evidence of the absence of political and social solidarity.

I do understand that my approach to nationalism and national identity might seem naïve and negligent of a significant dimension of this concept which is defining the other and is, in fact, the root cause of many problematic outcomes of nationalist sentiments. However, I do believe that in the context of Iran, the demeaning of national identity at the expense of religious identity has far more problematic outcomes and a move towards a more positive representation of the past is merely a move towards a more balanced conception of national identity, and not a radical exclusionary approach. This need has also been recognized by many reformist intellectuals and politician inside the country. In

the campaigns for the presidential elections of June 22nd 2009 all three challengers to the incumbent president had announced their plans to revive the national dimensions of Iranian identity. Unfortunately, a focus on educational policies is still missing from the political debate.

Limitations

My original plan was to focus on middle class students who have partial access to international media. First because they have a possibility to compare what they know about Iran with the images they receive from other countries that situate their understanding of national identity in a global context. And second, because due to their exposure to alternative sources of information, the textbooks' influence on them might be lower compared to other students who use textbooks as their main source of historical data.

However, the current political situation in the country limited my study in two aspects. First my choice of school was restricted to private schools as I was not be able to introduce myself to the Ministry of Education as a researcher coming from the United States (due to security threats this would possibly have for me and my family) and obtain permission to do research in public schools. Therefore I decided to limit my study to a school that could be accessed through personal contacts and did not need governmental permission. Second, as a result of the same considerations, I was not able to contact government officials in the Ministry of Education for interviews regarding the processes of designing and producing textbooks, which was part of my original plan.

Overview of the Chapters

In the next chapter, I will present an overview of the literature on history education and its relation to questions of identity. I then introduce my understanding of national identity and discuss the theories I will be using. I also provide an overview of the debate over national identity in Iran. In Chapter 3, I discuss my methodology for analyzing the textbooks and conducting the case study in a school in Iran.

To analyze the data, I focused on four main themes that emerged from my preliminary research on this topic, literature review, and also the definition of national identity I am using for this study. I then engaged in a recursive analysis of data from which new themes emerged in each of these categories. In Chapter 4, I examine how the textbooks introduce the discipline of history to the students and how students communicate with and understand the discipline. This initial analysis provides a lens through which one can have a general understanding of how textbooks, and students, approach history. It also clarifies textbook authors' expectations of their readers, and the nature of readers' interaction with the text.

In Chapter 5, I focus on the representation of Iran's history in textbooks and students' understanding of it through an examination of dominant themes and historical events discussed in the text and remembered by the students. When compiled in the history textbooks published by the state, these images of the past demonstrate the official narrative of the national heritage and of national identity. In the minds of students however, images of the past represent a collective memory and a specific perception of national heritage that comes from the grassroots, is influenced by various forces beyond school, and might not match the intentions of the state.

In chapter six, I examine the role and characteristics of heroes and villains, described and emphasized in the text, and remembered and discussed by the students. When praised in textbooks, heroes are in fact the exaggerated embodiment of national virtues sanctioned by the state as the pillars of Iranian identity. Students' ideas and perceptions of national heroes on the other hand demonstrate their understanding of national values and aspirations. Conversely, villains are the epithet of anything negative that a community, or a state, deems undesirable and worthy of reprimand.

Finally in chapter seven, I focus on direct representations of collective solidarity and national identity both in textbooks and in students' accounts.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study examined how national and religious dimensions of Iranian identity and history are being portrayed in the textbooks through an examination of textbooks' inclusions and exclusions of historical events, value judgments, and presentation of influential figures. Furthermore, the study focused on how students responded to this portrayal of history, how they perceived the country's past, and how they defined their national identity.

This study was guided by three main research questions. The first questions dealt with the content of history textbooks. The second question examined students' images of the past; and the last question analyzed the similarities and differences between these two.

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3. How do middle school Iranian history textbooks' representation of the national and religious dimensions of Iranian history and identity relate to the selected sample of Iranian high school students' perceptions of the history of the country and their national identity?

History education and the representation of the past has been a topic of study for decades. It was recognized as a sensitive issue internationally after the Second World War when the United Nations and the European Council acknowledged the role of

history education (and specifically textbooks) in promoting nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments that were partially influential in the disasters of the war (Pingal, 1999). Bilateral and multilateral partnerships were initiated to conduct comparative analyses of history textbooks to examine stereotypes, prejudices, and biases and to provide recommendations for their improvement in the promotion of international understanding especially in countries that were actively engaged in the war (Slater, 1995).

Unfortunately, there have not been many studies in this area in the context of the Middle East where the religious identities and dynamics interact with a relatively new conception of nation state. With the exception of studies on Israeli and Palestinian textbooks, the slim body of research in this region follows the model of American and European concerns and does not respond to the realities and complexities of Middle Eastern societies. The recent studies, including reports from political institutions and press articles, mostly focus on the representation of the "other" or the West in textbooks, or examine the content of religious courses to understand whether they promote violence (Fattah, 2005; Kaviani, 2008; Science Applications International Corporation, 2007; Shea, 2006). But questions of how the nation state is being presented to the pupils and how they understand their own past are missing from the literature. These questions can similarly be important not only for the country under study but also for the global community as their findings can help societies improve their conceptions of citizenship and create stronger foundations for the initiation or development of democratic institutions.

In this chapter, I will first explain the theoretical framework of the study. Then I review the literature on the goals of history education and the content of history textbooks

in different contexts, how they contribute to the development of national identity, and how they have gone through dramatic changes as a result of political or social transitions in different societies. I will then focus on Iran, starting with a brief history of the country's political system in the past century, and discuss different approaches to the question of national identity. The next section reviews the literature on educational reform after the 1979 Islamic revolution and textbook revisions in the areas of social studies and history.

Theoretical Framework

This study followed a critical discourse analysis framework by focusing on the subjectivity of the text and examining how specific concepts, in this case collective identities, were constructed through historical narratives.

Discourse is a social construct that interacts with the objects it is describing. According to Foucault (1972), discourses "systematically form the objects about which they speak" (p.49). They affect and shape social hierarchies and institutional norms. They also present a specific order of affairs as natural and therefore contribute to the reproduction of social hierarchies and constructed realities (Apple, 2000). Luke (1996) argues that a central task of critical discourse analysis is to examine how social and political structures of power are evident in everyday features of texts in use and also, how texts contribute to the construction of identities or subjectivities. From this perspective, critical discourse analysis relates directly to education through the examination of power and subjectivity productions supported by educational knowledge and curriculum. More than being mere products that teachers and students use in their everyday established

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roles, texts actually contribute to the social construction of identities and subjectivities (Luke, 1996).

The process of this social construction, as Van Dijk (1993) explains "may involve such different modes of discourse-power relations as the more or less direct support, enactment, representation, legitimation, denial, mitigation, or concealment of dominance among others" (p. 250) He argues that in order to understand the role of discourse in perpetuating social orders, we need to examine the social context of the text and understand the relationship between the discourse and the social actors. In other words, social cognition is an inseparable element in critical discourse analysis.

One of the basic tenets of critical discourse analysis, according to Luke (1996), is the inevitable subjectivity of the discourse. Based on this argument, which builds on Foucault's work, texts are active forces of social construction rather than simply reflections and descriptions of the world. This account bears the risk of falling into relativistic approaches to discourse analysis. Luke argues that the critical role comes in when the analysis is aimed to raise awareness among readers and introduces three specific purposes for critical discourse analysis. First, it should illuminate the constructed nature of the texts for students. In other words it should clarify the subjectivity of the texts and its possible functions. Second, it should provide students with the tools with which they can understand the subjectivity of the texts and its manipulative features. Third, because discourses do not have equal impacts on the world, the analysis should identify the powerful discourses which are most influential.

One can also argue that while discourse is subjective in nature, a critical analysis that examines this subjectivity from a different perspective and provides an opportunity

for dialogue can progress the discourse towards a more inclusive approach. In other words, it can create a new construction that is more accepting of previously marginalized voices and is less hegemonic. This argument is based on the assumption that there exists a continuum between subjective and objective discourses and the multiplicity of voices can move us on this continuum from the extreme subjectivity towards an objectivity which cannot be reached, but can be approached. Critical discourse analysis, therefore, can act as an alternative voice which is closely tied to the social context of the discourse.

Goals of History Education and its Significance

The official goal of history education, as is usually stated in history curricula in different societies, is to help students understand the history of their country, and to some extent the history of the world, and learn from its past to improve its way towards the future. It is also utilized in many different contexts to instill in pupils a sense of national belonging and patriotism towards the country. Barton and Levstick (2004) propose a framework for teaching and learning history that identifies four main functions of history education. First students are expected to identify; meaning that they should draw connections between their own lives and the past. Second, they are expected to analyze; meaning that they should establish causal relations in history. Third they are expected to respond morally to the events and actors in the history. They are faced with opportunities to remember, praise, and condemn different incidents or people in the past. And finally they are expected to display or exhibit the information they have gained about the past (Barton & Levstick, 2004). However, questions remain about the normative function of history education along the lines of these functions. With whom should students identify? Based on what information should they analyze? Who should they praise and who should

they condemn? The answers to these questions determine the ideological stand of the textbooks and implicit goals of history education.

History Education as a Controversial Subject Matter

History is usually considered a controversial subject not only because it is open to different forms of subjectivity, but because most often it is used to shape a national identity and introduce a particular image of the past, and the "other", to younger generations (Doyle, 2002). Different groups aim to influence the content of history textbooks so that they portray their preferred version of the society's past that protects their interests. History education is also a means of socialization. It is a way of legitimizing the status quo through selections, interpretations and implicit or explicit value judgments. The stories of the past create a context and trajectory for the events of the present. Through their selection of important events and people, textbooks develop a line of logic that can justify and explain the present social order and foster a desired future (Hofman, 2007). Therefore it should not be a surprise that public authorities are usually more concerned with the content of history and social studies textbooks than other subject matters (Wain, 1990).

Furthermore, through their structure and forms of presenting data and historical narratives, textbooks can shape students' understanding of the nature of historical knowledge (Thornton, 2006; VanSledright, 2011). The structure and narrative of the textbooks can lead students to perceive history as a field open to interpretation, or as a series of facts presented to them. It can influence students' belief in the possibility of independent learning and "figuring it out" (Stodolsky, 1988, p.125). It can also help or

hinder their ability to learn inquiry skills such as gathering information and evaluating sources in different contexts (VanSledright, 2008).

The Social Construction of Historical Knowledge

When dealing with historical analysis, it is difficult to argue for one version of history that reflects the absolute reality. Any selection of events and people, at best due to time and space limitations, is embedded with subjectivity. As Foner (2002) argues, any form of historical scholarship, including selection and ordering of historical events and human actors, bears in itself a form of interpretation which renders discussions of objectivity almost irrelevant. The same is true for history textbooks and curricula especially because they usually have to cover extensive amounts of information with restrictions on the number of pages, readability, and complexity of the text. Therefore no matter how neutral textbooks seem to be, they are usually a protective force for values, culture, and knowledge of their society (Anyon, 2001; Foster & Crawford, 2006).

Nevertheless, it is not always the inevitable features of history that create biases in history education and related educational media. More often than not, history curricula provide an image of the past that is filled with victories and accomplishments and provides meager insight into struggles and mistakes of the dominant group in the society, in order to foster particular identities and royalties. Glorification of one group while demonizing another, exaggerating the contributions of some while ignoring the others, and interpreting historical incidents in favor of a particular agenda while delegitimizing the opponent has become a common state policy in many different contexts (Friedman & Kenney, 2005) and has inevitably found its way in education. Lowenthal (1998) calls this sugar-coated and simplified version of the past "heritage" and argues that although

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history is never free from bias, the difference between heritage and history is in their objectives, or their approach towards bias. He argues that while history tries to minimize its bias, heritage uses it to create a desired image of the past. What we find in history curricula and textbooks, is more often than not, one group's heritage introduced as everyone's history.

The Role of Textbooks

But how important is the role of textbooks in students' learning experience? Three main observations can demonstrate that textbooks are significant elements in most educational systems. The first is the amount of time spent on textbooks in classroom instructions. Many studies have shown that textbooks related activities constitute a significant portion of instructional time in classrooms in different parts of the world including (Foster & Crawford, 2006; Stein, 2001). In Iran, textbooks are in fact the definition of the curriculum and so their role and influence in classroom practices is even more pertinent. While technological advancements are providing new possibilities for new forms of educational media, textbooks are, and most probably will be for years to come, a pertinent element in education especially in areas under economic pressure (Nicholls, 2006). Therefore examining history textbooks can be a powerful tool in illuminating the educational experience of the students.

The second observation that demonstrates the important role history textbooks play in students' learning in different educational systems is the extensive debates that take place around the their content and format. As Foster and Crawford (2006) explain, the complexity of the processes of textbook design and publication demonstrates a deep power conflict among different political, social, and cultural actors in the society. History

textbooks aim to instill a set of shared values and a sense of national ethos in younger generations and therefore they are not easily ignored by power groups in the society. The opposition of United States Senate to the changes proposed by a group of historians and educational reformers in history textbooks demonstrates the sensitivity of this issue even in a democratic and heterogeneous society like the U.S. (VanSledright, 2008). It is for this exact reason that the study of textbooks plays a significant role in understanding a state or a society's ideology and ideal image of the national self.

Finally, the third observation is that History textbooks are the main resource for recreating a people's past and crafting a unifying image of the nation. They are social constructions and throughout the process of their manufacturing, authors have to choose among competing interests for exclusions and inclusions (Crawford, 2003; Peovenzo, Shaver, & Bello, 2011). Because this selection process is not accessible to the masses, those in positions of power are the ones who make the main decisions along the way and have the chance to integrate value systems that perpetuate their dominance and support their worldviews (Apple, 2000). However, Apple acknowledges that in societies like the United States, the content of textbooks is related both to the power relations in the society and the struggles to alter the current order. In reality, the processes of textbook publishing, including government policies, market forces, and curricular guidelines play a significant role in determining the content and format of the textbooks. Therefore it is important to understand the educational system of a country and its politics in order to do a viable analysis of the textbooks.

Following the discussion of the subjective nature of historical knowledge, and the significant role textbooks play in students' interaction with this knowledge, the next

section will examine the role of history education in the construction of shared historical memories and identities.

Identity Formation through History Education

Anderson (1999) defines nation as a limited and sovereign imagined political community and argues that it is a modern phenomenon in Europe and the world. It is limited by the boundaries that separate national self and others and is imagined because the members imagine their collectivity without really knowing each other or being in contact. He argues that the weakening of religious authorities and dynasties along with the growth of capitalism were some of the influential forces in the development of nation-states and nationalism. While this analysis, which is based on transformations of the role of religion and market in Europe, does not necessary apply to Middle East where nation-state was not an organic development but an imported concept from the west, it does provide a valuable starting point to discuss the formations of national identity especially in Europe. Anderson argues that nationalism is a collective consciousness which was nurtured by the developments in printing industry and growth of vernacular languages in Europe which made it easy to define self and other. The publication of newspapers and novels provided the opportunity for mass audience and therefore the creation of a collective identity.

One of the markers that help a society to (re)define its identity is its shared historical memory (Smith, 1993); therefore the interpretation and illustration of historical events, a concept at the center of numerous debates on subjectivity and objectivity of scholarship in the field of history, appear as a means of promoting (particular) social, national, and religious identities.

Actualized History

In the discussion of the utilization of different interpretations by political and social actors, Herzfeld (1991) introduces the concept of ownership of history and argues that the study of these interpretations in and of itself is an important task. Giordano (2005), in his article on actualized history, discusses the concept of reinterpreting historical events by societies or states with the goal of meeting present aims. In this article, she explores cases of invention in retelling historical events in different social or political contexts and argues that this phenomenon should not be devalued by simply being labeled as "falsifying history". In fact she believes that in some cases, this invention has helped countries to foster stability, peace, and social cohesion. For her the main question is how social and political actors utilize past events for their present agenda. To understand the dynamics of this process, one should examine what is included and what is excluded, which events are deemed significant and which ones are discarded, and finally what are the potential reasons for such reinterpretations or reinventions. In a broader sense, Foner (2003), in response to the critiques of new approaches to scholarship in the field of history and their emphasis on its subjective nature (in contrast to the classic schools and their objective standpoint), argues that "the very selection and ordering of some "facts" while ignoring others is itself an act of interpretation" (p. xvii). He asserts that in every country, those versions of the past which can form a sense of belonging and identity are being used as the real history.

This phenomenon has been studied in different contexts and in different countries; in some, from the perspective of the public, and in some, by looking at state policies and interventions. Giordano himself has studied the reinterpretation of history in the context

of post socialist societies (Giordano & Kostova, 2002). John Edison (2000) examines the issue in his study of collective memory in Germany where he explores how past events are reinvented in the collective memory of the society in a way that "is systematic enough to serve as a common past but flexible enough to accommodate varying interests" (p.580). Shapiroh (1997) investigates the role of history in creating a unified national identity in France and specifically discusses the role of history textbooks in achieving this goal by providing proud and positive images of the country's past and present.

Reinvention of History and National Identity

In many of the studies in this area, the concept of actualized history, or invented history, has been discussed in the context of nationalism and patriotism; meaning that the historical victories, defeats, and actors are glorified or ignored as a means for developing nationalistic ideologies and/or identities. Ahonen (2001) goes so far as to claim that it was the rise of nationalism that rendered history a hegemonic subject in school curricula. She argues that modern nation-states were constructed through narratives of the past which emphasized ethnic unity of communities and portrayed nation states as the inevitable and natural development of pre-modern societies and therefore, in many cases, minority groups are marginalized in these narratives that supposedly cannot afford to portray heterogeneity of the society. It is through these narratives that states call upon particular dimensions of identity and repress those aspects that are deemed threatening to the official portrayal of the nation (Puri, 2004).

History textbooks reveal those images of the past that a state is willing to instill in its next generations. These images represent different combinations of forces depending on the educational policies and political system of the state. They might be a compromise

among different social groups in countries that have more open procedures of textbook publishing. For example in the U.S., this multiplicity of voices has been recognized as a positive force in the democratization of the process by scholars like Apple (2000) and also criticized as an over-sensitivity to multiculturalism that falsifies history by scholars like Ravitch (2003) and Matusevich (2006). As another example, Cajani (2006) examines how debates over the nature of history as a discipline and forces towards more progressive instructional methods have influenced history textbooks in Italy.

On the other end of the continuum, textbooks might be centralized productions of a government and therefore they can represent an official version of history preferred by the state and also provide a more precise image of the state's political and ideological agenda. For example in Iran, textbooks are published by the ministry of education and are universally used throughout the country. Another example is Ukraine where the same process is being implemented and the Ministry of Education makes all decisions regarding the curricula and the text (Korostelina, 2011; Popson, 2001). There are also examples of societies in which the way government practices its authority over the textbook industry changes depending on the social and political climate of the country. This phenomenon has been studied in Russia, among others, where forces of strict textbooks policies seem to be reviving after an era of liberalization in the 1990s (Erokhina & Shevyrev, 2006). It is important to note that government's control over textbook content cannot be understood merely through the examination of textbook authorship. States might enjoy varying levels of authority over the process through curriculum policies, publishing and distribution practices, and market forces.

The topic of state official narratives mirrored in history textbooks has been extensively studied in many societies. In the context of the United States, Loewen (1996) explores the representation of historical events in textbooks and the promotion of national pride and patriotic sentiments through the reinvention of historical narratives. In his book, he examines how textbooks mask some of the shameful events in America history and glorify its accomplishments to create a positive image and nurture the "American dream". VanSledright (2008) approaches the issue from a more comprehensive standpoint. In his review article of history education in the United States, he examines studies on textbooks, teacher practices, and students' learning to clarify the function of textbooks and the intended and unintended consequences of a history education curriculum that aims at presenting a nation building narrative through overemphasizing accomplishments and reshaping failures; a narrative dominated by White male presidents, generals, and chief executive officers (CEO) who are portrayed as the most important players in American history. By claiming that their interpretation is the one and only true version of history, he argues, textbooks distance themselves from the methodologies dominant in the discipline of history. Furthermore, a narrative that aims to create a guilt free image of the past can more accurately be called "heritage" rather than history (Kammen, 1991).

VanSledright (2008) goes further to examine the consequences of such an approach to history education on students and argues that it limits their ability to acquire critical thinking. The "omniscient authorial tone" (p. 116) of the textbooks does not leave any room for students to do research and understand how they should look for information and how they should examine the authenticity of their sources; a skill so crucial for active participation in a democratic society with ever increasing resources of

information. It should be noted that on the other side of the spectrum, there are scholars who defend the current approach and criticize the forces of reform for their over sensitivity to multiculturalism (Finn, Ravitch, & Whitman, D, 2004; Ravitch, 2003). They argue that the nation building narrative, with its emphasis on White males and political and economic leaders, is the true representation of American history and any attempt to include diverse voices of minorities creates an artificial image of reality.

The body of research provides examples of such an approach to history education in many societies (Baranovic, 2001; Glyptis, 2007; Katsarksa 2007; Korostelina, 2011; Oteiza & Pinto, 2008; Popson, 2001; Zajda & Zajda, 2003). It seems to be a common practice that the narratives of the past are used to present a cohesive homogenous image of the country which neglects ethnic, religious, and language diversities in order to foster a unified identity or provides victorious stories that are supposed to nurture a sense of national pride and belonging in pupils.

The efforts by the state to establish its own version of reality, in which its value system prevails and its preferred identities find a way to flourish and proudly grow, can also be observed and studied in comparisons of the representations of controversial issues in the textbooks of the countries that are on different sides of a conflict. The foundations of national identity narratives can be found in different representations of the same event which works for both countries as an important historical incident, but with different interpretations.

An example of this can be observed in the representation of the 1980-1988 war between Iran and Iraq in the two countries. Although the war ended with a UN resolution and without any changes in the distribution of land or resources among the countries, it

was presented as a victory in Iraqi textbooks during Saddam Hussein's rule (Asquith, 2003a). In Iran, the 11th grade history textbook (the only history textbook that discusses Iran's history after the 1979 revolution) presents an image of sacrifice, heroism, and bravery of this period of time where Iran single handedly resisted the aggressions of the Iraqi army supported by Western powers (Salehi, & Javadian, & Haddad Adel, 2007).

In this section, the role of history education in the construction of national identities, nurturing of patriotic sentiments, and instilling accepted value systems in pupils have been discussed. It should not be surprising then to observe that history education and history textbooks are usually at the center of attention for educational reform after political transitions in a society. The next section is a review of studies that focus on this issue.

Political Transitions and Educational Reform

While the practice of reinventing history is a usual one among many educational systems, as shown by the examples provided earlier, there exists another angle through which the issue can be examined. If history textbooks are the apparatus for socialization and instilling the values of the status quo, what happens when a drastic social and political shift takes place in the country? What happens when the values of the system go through a dramatic transformation? Considering our discussion of the function of the textbooks, one can predict that the educational system is one of the first to follow the transformation. The new value system needs to be instilled in the textbooks to prepare the next generations. The comparison of the textbooks before and after social and political transformations, therefore, is a powerful tool to understand the changes in value system and the dynamics of the socialization efforts.

New Ideologies, New Systems

Following political transformations, new powers or new systems usually start off with restructuring the educational system and designing a new curriculum. These official efforts have been studied in the context of dramatic social and political changes like revolutions in Iran (Derry, 2000; Mehran, 1989a; Mohsenpour, 1988; Shorish, 1998) and China (Jones, 2002; Wang, 2008), the emergence of newly independent nation states like Ukraine (Janmaat, 2005; Korostelina, 2011) and Eastern Europe and the Baltic States (Coulby, 2000), gradual changes in the political system of the countries like South Africa (Spreen & Vally, 2010; Taylor & Vinjevold, 2000), or where economic developments or new alliances and new adversaries necessitates changes in values that are being transmitted to the next generation like in Brazil (Gomes, 2000). The changes in educational policies or educational media reflect the new values and new structures that are considered significant for younger generations to learn and be familiar with.

As can be observed in the abovementioned studies, social studies and humanities textbooks and curricula are usually the main focus of curriculum reform and transformation. Issues of citizenship, language, and national, ethnic, or religious identity, covered mostly in social studies and humanities courses, are some of the most sensitive when it comes to social and political ideologies of a state or a society. Therefore it is expected that at times of transition, these subjects go through more dramatic transformations than do subjects such as math and science.

The Form of Transition and its Effect on Educational Changes

In history textbooks, images of the past transform to reveal the deficiencies of the previous system and to justify changes. New interpretations and new selections of

historical events and actors help to define a new social order and a new narrative of the past that prepares its initiation. While the overall tone is similar, different societies approach these reforms differently. Some rewrite the history with an absolute rejection of the past, and some aim to present a sense of continuity in the country's journey. This approach seems to be partially dependent on the form of transition that has taken place in the country. The objectives of the political system differ according to the magnitude and nature of the transition; whether there has been an internal revolutionary transformation, a reestablishment of the country as an independent state after a period of foreign dominance, division of a country into new states, or the independence of a state from a colonial power. In each of these situations, there are different elements of the past that need to be rewritten and different values are to be emphasized.

In newly independent states, the most urgent function of education seems to be nation building and creating a sense of national identity in pupils. In these cases, while history textbooks present a negative image of the previous dominant power, a glorified representation of the country's ancient past is created to foster a sense of national identity. This concept has been studied extensively in the context of post-soviet countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Janmaat (2005) and Popson (2001) examined how history textbooks foster nation building and aim to define national identities in Ukraine. Their work focuses on civic vs. ethnic conception of nation and they both argue that Ukrainian history textbooks promote a national identity with elements from both perspectives. On one hand, the national identity promoted in the textbooks is based on Ukrainian ethnicity which is exclusionary to other minority groups (especially Russian minorities) in Ukraine. This is apparent in the stories of heroes and victories that

emphasize Ukrainain-ness and in the negative representation of foreign states. On the other hand, textbooks foster a civic approach to the Ukrainian nation through some degrees of self-criticism and dedicating more time and space to modern history rather than ancient history. Ukrainian textbooks foster national identity mostly through emphasis on Ukrainian accomplishments, heroes, and mythologies rather than demonizing Soviet Union.

Other studies in Eastern Europe also examine changes in the State's policies towards language and religious education as signs of new ideologies. Coulby (2000) focuses on the Baltic States and provides examples of the introduction of official languages other than Russian and new emphasis on religion in schools as elements of new national identities in newly independent countries. He also argues that these new policies are marginalizing new minority groups (like Russians) as their competency in learning new languages is a determinant of their civic engagement and citizenship rights under the new arrangement.

In countries that have gone through revolutions in which the ideological tenets of the regime or the government have changed, the most important task for education is to redefine the values, justify the changes, and present the new system as a step forward, if not the ideal destination. In these cases, at least a section of the society's past is criticized and rejected in order to prepare the scene for its abolishment and establishment of the new order. Examples of such approaches can be found in China and Iran.

In an analysis of Chinese history textbooks, Jones (2002) demonstrates that in the early decades of revolution, history textbooks supported the legitimacy of the new order based on laws of historical materialism and by focusing on the corruption of China's

ruling class in the 19th and 20th centuries. Textbooks provide a dark image of China's "feudal and fascist" ruling class that reduced the once great empire of China to a "semi-feudal, semi colonial" state (p. 549). In other words, the new history demonizes a limited period in the country's past to justify the new order as a necessary continuation of the history, while cashing in on the nationalistic sentiments through praising the ancient history.

In the case of Iran, the country's dependence on Western powers like the U.S. and Britain is demonized in the new textbooks and the 1979 revolution is presented as a new dawn of independence and self sufficiency (Menashri, 1992; Shorish, 1988). Moreover, most textbooks were revised to be compatible with religious laws and also to foster a lifestyle based on religious commitment. These efforts were part of a larger scale policy transformation in the structure of politics and by extension the educational system of the country in which textbooks were considered a key medium for the transmission of values (Higgins, 1994).

A fascinating phenomenon in the study of history education, and especially textbooks, in the countries that have gone through political transformation is how these negative and positive representations change throughout time. In countries in need of nation building, the exaggerations seem to diminish as the society gains its stability and national identity and in revolutionary states, the hyperbolic statements about the past and the present seem to become more moderate as the states feel free from the pressure of justification and sense the need for educating pupils with analytical and critical thinking skills.

Studies of Ukrainian, Chinese, Russian and Israeli history textbooks (among others) reveal that as societies move forward and distance themselves from the immediate aftermath of the transition, more moderate evaluations of the past gradually replace extremist worldviews in history textbooks and one can find more grey areas in historical analysis that once used to be dominated by definite evaluations. The forces of globalization can also play an important role in how a country portrays others. The pace of this moderation process and its focus depend on the internal and external pressures put on the state. For example in China, forces of economic growth are mirrored in textbooks through new emphasis on entrepreneurship and personal achievement and pushing communism to the background (Jones, 2002). In Ukraine, the internal conflicts forced state officials to respond to ethnic tensions through recognition of Ukraine's ethnic diversity and the contributions of minorities (Popson, 2001). In Israel, history textbooks that were designed for Arab Israelis were gradually moving towards recognition of Arab culture up until 1992, before the new waves of conflict broke out (Hofman, 2007).

Before and After: Comparing Textbooks to Understand the Transition

Another area of study in the context of societies that have gone through political transformation is comparisons of textbook content before and after the change. In other words, examining the changes in the presentation of historical incidents in a society after a political transformation can help us better understand the differences among the previous and the current system. For example, many studies have analyzed the changes in Russian textbooks after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Nicholls, 2003). Zajda and Zajda (2003) examine how the Marxist- Leninst language of history textbooks has gone through vivid changes in Post-Soviet Russia. They argue that new textbooks support a

multiple perspective approach to the study of history which was absent from the "grand narrative" of the Soviet era textbooks (p. 378). Tomiak (2000), through a broader lens, examines the structural changes in the educational system in Russia and argues that the new conceptions of nationalism and pride in the mother land, in contrast with the older communist ideology, were gradually introduced into the system and a democratization of the structure of the educational system allowed alternative voices to be heard. Such studies can illuminate on the transformation of goals and principles of the new political or social order through the lens of education.

In the context of the Middle East, there have been several social and political rearrangements in the past few decades which create a rich context for studies in this area. In an article in The Guardian on November 25, 2003 Asquith wrote about the case of textbook revision in Iraq. He states that textbooks have been rewritten once in 1973 when Saddam Hussein took power, and once in 2003 when the U.S. and coalition forces took control of the country (Asquith, 2003). From 1973 till 2003, the U.S. was being presented in the textbooks as the evil enemy, Iraq as the victorious in all wars, and Saddam Hussein was the defender of the Arab world against Israel. After the 2003 revisions (implemented by the U.S. appointed Iraqi educators), all images of Saddam and the Ba'ath party has been removed from the textbooks. Unfortunately, other than some newspaper articles and reports from organizations like United States Agency for International Development (USAID) who are participating in this process, there has not been a comprehensive study on the revision of textbooks in Iraq. As another example, after the attacks of September 11th 2001, Saudi Arabia was pressured by the United States

to make modifications to their textbooks (Labott, 2006). However, there has not been a comprehensive study to evaluate the real effect of such efforts in Saudi Arabia.

In the case of Iran, the 1979 revolution marked a drastic transformation in the political system and its ideology, and in the structure of the society. It also changed the official approach towards Iranian identity and its representations in every aspect of social and political life, especially in education. In the next section starting with a brief history of the country in the past century, I will examine the question of national identity in Iran. Later on, the literature on the educational reform and textbook revisions after the revolution will be reviewed.

Nation, Nationalism, and National Identity

I based my definitions of nation, nationalism, and national identity mainly on ethno-symbolism paradigm and works of Anthony Smith because of their consideration of the influence of pre-modern cultural identities and ethnicities on the formation of nationalisms and national identity in modern times especially outside the West.

In this paradigm, Smith (2001) defines nation as "a named human community occupying a homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a common public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members" (p.13). In my opinion, this definition accommodates both pre-modern cultural roots and the development of modern political institutions without specifying them in an exclusionary strict manner. It is based on Weber's assumption that purely objective or purely subjective criteria of the nation both pose problems in explaining our current reality. Purely objective definitions, based on language, religion, and territory, always leave some nations out, while purely subjective definitions that solely focus on sentiments and

perceptions are usually too loose and cannot distinguish nations from other human collectivities such as tribes and city-states (Weber, Gerth, & Mills, 1958).

The definition also encompasses both conceptions of civic nation and ethnic nation which are considered incompatible in modernist theories. From a modernist perspective, nations in the West are based on the foundations of civil rights, duties of citizenship, public participation in the political processes, and the rule of law which are all characteristics of a civic nation while societies in Eastern Europe and Asia have developed an ethnic model of nation based on common ancestry, kinship, and birth (Kohn, 1967). Modernists prefer the civic model of nation and argue that the ethnic model does not support the emergence of a truly democratic society. However, by examining the developments of France as one of the first modern nations, Smith (1991) argues that even in supposedly civic models of the West, the ethnic ties and myths have been called upon and at times, functioned as important motivations for political solidarity. Supporting this argument is Habermas's (1992) observation of the role of French historians in founding a collective identity in France which proved to be functional in social mobilizations and the establishment of civil rights and liberties after the revolution. Therefore, in reality, nations combine both sets of civic and ethnic dimension, though in varying proportions. In other words, ethnic national sentiments have been influential forces in social mobilization for the development of modern, and more democratic political institutions, whose stability allowed for a move towards more civic conceptions of nation. The same could hole true for the case of Iran.

Furthermore Smith (2001) defines nationalism as "an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its

members deem to constitute an actual or potential nation" (p. 9). It is important to note that Smith acknowledges the modernity of nationalism as a form of ideology which lacks rigorous theoretical foundations. In fact, along with Anderson (1999), Hayes (1964), and others, Smith believes that nationalism can be better explained as a religion rather than an ideology. It is based on this understanding of nationalism that Smith (1991) can attend to its benign effects, while acknowledging the devastating consequences it has had for humanity. Nationalism, with its praise of nation as the ultimate object of loyalty and national identity as the measure of human value, has challenged the idea of a single humanity and offered, instead, a fertile ground for conflict. However, it is also nationalism that defends minority cultures and lost histories, offers a resolution for the identity crisis, legitimizes social solidarity and motivates collective action (Smith 1991). In other words, like religion, nationalism can be the banner for genocide, or the force for social activism and progress.

Finally, in this paradigm, national identity is defined as "the continuous reproduction and reinterpretation of the pattern of values, symbols, memories, myths and traditions that compose the distinctive heritage of nations, and the identifications of individuals with that pattern and heritage and with its cultural elements." The important factor in this definition is the use of the term "heritage". As Lowenthal (1998) explains, heritage is a simplified version of the past with an agenda to create a desired image. While the scholarship of history and efforts to make it as objective as possible are important in the long run, only a narrative that can emotionally resonate with the masses can create a sense of collectivity and belonging. An example from the most famous Persian epic can further explain this conscious effort of creating myths and memories.

Ferdowsi, in his masterpiece *Shahnameh*, tells the story of Iran through the lives of heroes and villains. In this long epic poem which includes more than 30000 verses, the main hero of the book, Rostam, known by almost any Iranian, possesses unrealistic powers and talents and can defeat almost anyone and anything. A popular verse among Iranians that is said to be from Shahname (some Iranain scholars argue that this verse had been added to the book after his death) states "Rostam was in fact a strong man in Sistan, but I made him the Rostam of the stories." In this verse, Ferdowsi acknowledges the fact that he has had a hand in creating the stories; however, he clearly states that they are ultimately based on a true reality (Babashahi & Ma'soum, 2008). This is how collective myths are created and remembered through the ages in different human collectivities and in our case, in nations.

According to Smith (2001), political solidarity needs to be built on a set of shared myths, histories, and symbols that can resonate with people and motivate collective action and social development and a purely civic or territorial notion of national identity might not suffice in most cases. Constant debates over different conceptions of national identity and periodic revisions of its definition in the West suggest that this concept serves a significant purpose and meets vital needs. Smith acknowledges that this need is even more pressing in non Western countries to ensure political security and cultural belonging in societies where populations are thrown together by colonial rule. The same argument applies to Middle East were national boundaries were artificially determined by European and Russian powers and the problems of ethnicity, until this day, threatens the territorial sovereignty of countries like Iraq and Turkey. The same idea has been examined in more detail by Jandora (2008) in his book "*States without Citizens*" where

he discusses the crisis of nation states in the Middle East. However, the case of Iran is somewhat different from other Muslim countries in the region. Considering the ancient history of Persian Empire and later on the success of Safavid Dynasty in 1500 to revitalize Iran's cultural dominance in the region, Iran seems to be one of the most successful societies in the region to infuse national and religious sentiments. Also the country has had minimal loss of territory since the rule of Safavid empire and therefore the legitimacy of national territory is more established for Iranians than it is for Arabs whose borders are specified by the British (Baram, 1990).

Even after the 1979 revolutions, in spite of the state's focus on a universalistic narrative of Muslim identity, national sentiments were called upon during the country's war with Iraq (1980-1988), and until this day, national identity and nationalist slogans are exploited by presidential candidates during the elections to mobilize the population. Nevertheless, examining the dilemma of national identity in Iran, Farhi (2008) argues that the dichotomy of religious and national identities in Iran, which was amplified by the Islamic Republic's neglect of Iran's pre Islamic history, is pushing Iranians away from society to the privacy of their homes. Farhi believes that "without a narrative that connects, at least loosely, all sectors of society to a somewhat commonly acceptable recent history, social and political cohesion and stability will remain a far-flung aspiration" (p. 14). The situation in contemporary Iran, might be an example of the need for benign effects of nationalism discussed by Smith (1991).

Furthermore, Smith's definition of national identity, which is based on a dynamic process of reinterpretation of myths and memories, allows for changing conceptions of civic/ethnic identities, which is compatible with his definition of nation. The continuous

reinterpretation of national myths and common histories will accommodate a move towards a civic conception of national identity by altering the points of reference for this identity in accordance with the establishment and development of democratic institutions and changing social relations among the people and the government.

I used the ethno-symbolism paradigm for my study because this approach is most compatible with the history and development of Iran and its internal debates over nationalism and national identity, particularly for its inclusion of the experiences of non-Western societies of Asia and Africa in the development of its perspective and definitions. By focusing on the history of nations and nationalism in the West, modernist theories argue that these concepts were created in modern times as a result of political and social developments and generalize this process to movements exported to Africa and Asia. In other words, modernists argue that these concepts are not only chronologically recent, but also qualitatively novel in the way that they are not based on any preexisting similar phenomena.

For example Anderson (1999) argues that the weakening of religious authorities and monarchs opened the space for a new authority and ideology, namely the nation, to fill in the gap. Furthermore the expansion of the print industry and the revival of vernacular languages through literature were among the important developments that led to the emergence of nations and nationalism. However, this observation is valid solely for European nations. For many Middle Eastern countries, the concept of nation was introduced to the public before such developments took place. Even today, secular definitions of nation that exclude the cultural origins and religious beliefs of the people in this region cannot explain the situation in Muslim societies of the Middle East. Although

there exists a continuum of perspectives and attitudes towards the idea of nationalism and nation state among Muslims ranging from those who fully embrace the idea and those who fervently reject it as a Western import (Piscatori, 1986), the primacy of nation as a self referential entity to which all loyalties are dedicated is still a relatively problematic concept in societies where God has a strong presence. Therefore, only a definition that accommodates the cultural roots of the society might have a chance to incorporate its religious foundations and explain the new forms of nationalism in this region.

Furthermore, the modernist paradigm focuses on the political system of a nation and considers mass participation as one of the significant tenets of its definition (Gellner, 1983). However, this approach excludes many countries from the circle of nations in theory, while they are practically functioning as nations in the international scene and also perceive themselves as a nation in their internal circuits. Therefore, an exclusionary and strict definition does not really serve the realities of our times, especially for societies who are still a long way from becoming democratic states.

Another element in modernist theories of nation and nationalism is the role of capitalism and industrialization in the development of these concepts (Gellner, 1983; Mann, 1993). Gellner argues that nations and nationalism are inevitable consequences of industrialization and modern economic systems. From this perspective, in pre-modern epochs there was no need for such phenomena and therefore they should be examined as qualitatively novel necessities of capitalist systems. Again, this Eurocentric approach does not explain the emergence of many nationalist movements in other parts of the world, and specifically Middle East, at a time when a functioning capitalist economy or the move towards industrialization was yet to materialize. While Smith (2001)

acknowledges that nationalism is a modern concept which arose in the West, he argues that its expansion to the rest of the world does not follow European models and in different societies, it calls upon different elements of culture or religion to appeal to masses and these new formations of nationalisms cannot be explained with strictly modern assumptions.

On the other hand, "ethno-symbolism focuses particularly on the subjective elements in the persistence of ethnies, the formation of nations and the impact of nationalism" (Smith, 2001, p. 57). Smith, while acknowledging the modern nature of nationalism as an ideology and a movement, considers nations and nationalism parts of a "wider ethno-cultural family of collective identities and aspirations." (p. 58) In other words, ethno-symbolism focuses on the subjective nature of historical myths, cultural values, and collective memories to understand the inner dynamics of nationalism and national identity. From this perspective, analyzing collective cultural identities is the only way of understanding nations and nationalisms. This approach can accommodate for religious aspects of collective identities in societies like Iran and can also analyze the particularities of different nationalisms and national identities outside Europe. It was also necessary for my specific study which focused on the construction of identity through the representation of the past, and on the creation of shared memories, in public education.

The Case of Iran

The 1979 revolution in Iran transformed the political system of the country from a monarchy to a theocracy or namely the "Islamic Republic of Iran". It was the second revolution of the century in Iran following the constitutional revolution in 1905-1911 which aimed to bring about the rule of law, representative government, and social order

and successfully transformed the absolute power of Qajar's into a constitutional monarchy (Amanat, n.d.). However, after few years, as a result of internal conflicts and increasing foreign influence (by Britain and Russia) the parliament's power in the political processes of the country diminished (Ettehadieh, n.d.). In 1921 Reza Pahlavi, a military commander in Qajar's dynasty, led a coup, supported by the British, who aimed to limit Russian's control over Iranian territory, and by gradually taking over the power established the Pahlavi dynasty and was sworn in as the king of Iran in 1925 (Majd, 2001). Reza Shah is one of the most controversial figures of Iran's modern history, whose portrayal ranges from a nationalist reformer to a brutal opportunist dictator, placed in power by the British (Majd, 2001).

Reza Shah initiated the project of modernizing Iran through the development of a national army and public education and simultaneously took drastic measures against cultural traditions through mandatory unveiling and the implementation of dress codes (Chehebi, 1993; Cleveland, 2004). These measures, along with Reza Shah's approach towards religion as an impediment to modernization (or westernization) created tensions between Reza Shah and Shi'ah clergy (Banani, 1961); a tension that continued during the rule of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (Reza Shah's son) and climaxed in the 1979 revolution. Crenshaw (1995) argues that Reza Shah's fast paced strategies to change Iranian society has had long lasting disruptive consequences that can still be observed in Iran's current struggles; an issue that can also be related to the discussions of identity.

In 1941, after a period of social unrest and instability, poverty, and famine, Allied troops invaded Iran, which was believed to be a strategic territory during World War II, and abdicated Reza Shah in favor of his son Mohammad Reza Shah (Majd, 2001).

Mohammad Reza Shah's reign proved to be a better opportunity for the U.S. and Britain to increase their political and economic influence in Iran. However, opposition to the rising foreign interference was also growing in the Parliament and in public (Richards, 1975). One of the major national movements during this period was the oil nationalization movement led by the Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq that ended the dominance of Great Britain over Iran's oil resources. Mosaddeq, who was the Prime Minister of the country at the time, aimed to curb Shah's power and create a true constitutional monarchy similar to European versions (Goode, 1997). However, decreasing oil productions, the international boycott of Iranian oil, and several attempts by Britain to replace Mosaddeq resulted in the deterioration of the economic situation and the weakening of Mosaddeq's government (Gasiorowski, n.d.; Katouzian & Shahidi, 2008). Finally, in 1953, he was overthrown by a coup d'etat operated by the CIA, a move which revitalized Pahlavi's power.

Following a period of growing dictatorship, in 1963 Shah embarked on a massive reform project, known as the White Revolution, which once again aimed at a fast paced modernization process. The new initiatives, including land reform and women's suffrage reinforced Shi'at clergy and traditional sectors of society's growing dissatisfaction with Shah (Katouzian & Shahidi, 2008). At the same time, high economic growth rates created a viable middle class that was increasingly restricted from political participation due to the Shah's unwillingness to political liberalization (Milani, 1994).

The economic developments that were not accompanied with the formation of proper political institutions, increasing foreign intervention that had created an image of Shah's as an American puppet, and growing tensions between Shah and the clergy,

resulted in an improbable alliance between religious, national, and communist groups in Iran who had one goal in common: overthrowing the Pahlavi dynasty (Katouzian & Shahidi, 2008; Milani, 1994). Milani provides a thorough analysis of the Islamic revolution in Iran and argues that none of the forces of revolution alone could succeed in defeating the Pahlavi dynasty. However, the social and economic atmosphere of the society in 1979, Shah's retreat from repressive measures against political opposition groups under the pressure of President Carter's human rights campaign , people's dissatisfaction with Shah's dependence on the United States, and Shi'at clergy's fear of being marginalized by the forces of modernization and capitalism created a great opportunity for a mass movement that finally succeeded in overthrowing a dynasty which was supposed to be the most stable state in the region.

However, the alliance between Islamic nationalists, secular nationalists, Islamic socialists, leftists, and Shi'at fundamentalists proved to be a fragile one and soon after the revolution, the fundamentalists defeated their rivals and took over the state (Katouzian & Shahidi, 2008)

The upheavals of the past century in Iran were accompanied with increasing relations with the West and the import of new technologies as well as new concepts, some of which were the notions of nation-state, nationalism, and national identity. In the following section, different approaches to the notion of Iranian national identity are examined.

Different Conceptions of National Identity in Iran

The question of national identity, in its modern conception, was introduced to Iranian intellectuals and the ruling class in the second half on the 19th century (Amanat,

1989; Ashraf, 2006). The issue was raised as a result of Iran's increased relations with the West and recognition of its fast pace of development which made Iranian intellectuals see themselves as an inferior society and strive to find the causes of Iran's backwardness (Amanat 1989; Cole 1996; Kia, 1994). The industrial and scientific achievements of the West, along with its social and political modernization, encouraged many Iranian intellectuals to think of solutions for Iran's problems with the help of Western values and principles. One of these values absent from Iran's public discourse was the notion of nation, nationalism, and national identity. Iranian intellectuals like Mirza Agha Khan Kermani (Philipp, 1974), Kasravi (Abrahamian, 1973), and Akhundzadeh (Cole, 1996) argued that love of one's country and belief in collective progress are essential elements in the development of the country as is evidence in Western societies.

In addition to Iranian intellectuals, the Qajar dynasty also took part in new efforts in creating national identities and national royalties. Nasir Din Shah believed that the strength of Western states came from their ability to unify and consequently control the masses by encouraging national loyalty and love for the homeland and therefore began a campaign for instilling nationalistic sentiments among the population through the publication of Vaghaye' Ittifaghie newspaper (Tavakoli-Targhi, 2002). In this and other publications of the time, a patriotic ethos was being transferred. Love of homeland was associated with dignity and humanity and as Tavakoli-Targhi states "Vatan [homeland] veneration and Shah adoration were the nodal points of a patriotic nationalist discourse that imagined the Shah as the father of Vatan" (p.233). In other words, Nassir Din Shah was aiming for a more centralized and strong government by educating Iranian

population to respect and obey the Shah. Ironically, at the time, only 3% of Iranians were literate.

Another factor that heated the debates of nationalism and national identity was Iran's weak political and military position against the pressures of two colonial powers, Russia and Britain (Balaghi, 2008), which had already resulted in the loss of Iranian territory in the two consecutive treaties of Golestan 1813 and Tukamanchai 1828. In other words, the escalation of nationalist movements was partially a reaction to the threats of foreign dominance. A common theme in the nationalist rhetoric of Iran at the time was a romantic interpretation of Iran's glorious and proud past (Ashraf 1993; Kia, 1998). Iranian intellectuals who subscribed to this movement helped craft a narrative of victory and prosperity of ancient Iran that apparently worked as a remedy for their sense of disappointment.

This romantic exaggeration of Iran's past magnificence, along with intensified intellectual discussions on the need for political modernization, gradually increased popular dissatisfactions with the ruling authorities, who were known to be the main responsible figures for Iran's descend, and created the support for the constitutional revolution in 1906 (Tavakoli-Targhi, 2002). Intellectuals calling for a constitutional government, ranging from radical revolutionaries to the supporters of gradual reforms, argued that absolute monarchy does not provide an opportunity for development; and parliamentary system and the establishment of the rule of law are necessary steps towards Iran's progress (Kia, 1994). Some Shi'ah ulama[1] also joined forces of revolution and

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[1] Ulama are the highest rank of religious scholars in Shi'ah Islam who have the authority to interpret Islamic law.

helped to create a constitutional government. This support from religious leaders, who were popular among people and had the power of mobilizing masses with their religious Fatwa, helped the constitutionalists in winning the fight and forcing the Shah to sign the establishment of the Parliament and the Constitution.

This alliance however, was not a smooth one. Some secular and religious forces soon faced conflicts with regards to the role of religious law in the Parliament's legislation and the judiciary system. These conflicts, according to Ajoudani (2003), were rooted in different objectives these two groups had for the revolution. While secular reformists were convinced that a secular European model should be used in Iran, some Shi'ah clergy had planned to undermine Shah's power with religious law through the parliament. This conflict surfaced after the immediate goal of establishing the constitutional government was reached (Ajoudani, 2003). The fundamental differences among several groups who participated in the constitutional revolution were also apparent in their differing conceptions of Iranian identity.

The conflicting understandings of, and opinions about, national identity, a newly introduced notion to the Iranian society at the time, resulted in different definitions of identity which were not only used to explain the present, but were also designed to shape the future. The main issue was (and is) the competing or complementary role of Islamic and pre-Islamic histories in the formation of Iranian identity. Different approaches to national identity in Iran, therefore, have been revolving around the paradox of religion and nationalism which has created four main fronts: (a) Radical Persian approach, (b) Radical Muslim approach, (c) Shi'ah Iranian Approach, and (d) liberal nationalist approach. In the following sections, each of this approaches are explained in more details.

Radical Persian approach. Those who subscribe to a radical Persian identity base their definition of Iranian identity on the glories of ancient Persian empires in pre-Islamic eras. Most of the proponents of this approach argue that the Arab invasion, and consequent foreign dominations, had been the cause of all contemporary problems of Iranian society (Ashraf, 1993; Boroujerdi, 1998; Cole 1996). They rely on a romantic narrative of Iran's past which presents the country as the birthplace of all knowledge and justice. They focus on mythologies of Cyrus the Great and Achaemenid and Sasanid Empires as evidence of Iran's past glory and magnificence and argue that since the Arab invasion, Iran has faced constant instability and foreign aggression; from Turks, Mongols, Russians, and the British(Ashraf, 2006). The rejection of Arab culture accompanies a revitalization of Zorosterianism as the real Persian religion and the foundation of Iranian identity. More importantly Persian language is considered one of the main pillars of Iranian identity and a reflection of Iran's historic culture (Yarshater, 1993).

One of the manifestations of this approach can be found in the language purification movements. Some proponents of a purely Persian identity argue that the Persian language is the foundation of Iranian culture and the fact that it resisted the Arab influence and did not disappear, a reality that distinguishes Iran from many other Muslim countries in the region (Baram, 1990), is the evidence for this claim (Ashraf, 1993; Boroujerdi, 1998; Kia, 1998). Kia (1998), in his study of the history of language purification movements in Iran, argues that secular nationalists of the 19th century understood their weak position towards the social influence and dominance of Shi'ah clergy and therefore, instead of making direct attacks on Islam that could create a strong

backfire, decided to focus on Pre-Islamic language and culture. Language purification efforts, according to Kia, were a part of this strategy. Among the radical proponents of this movement was Jalal –d-Din Mirza (1832-1872), a Qajar Prince himself, who called for a complete purification of the Persian language from all Arabic words. His efforts in writing a history of Iran empty of Arabic words was praised by secular modernists like Akhundzadeh who were not only calling for replacing Arabic words, but also were strong advocates for a change in the script, arguing that Arabic script is not suitable for the modern industrial country that Iran aims to be. Opponents of this approach, on the other hand, argued that Arabic, as well as Islam, is constructively intertwined with Iranian language and culture and any radical effort in disconnecting the two would be harmful not only to the language, but also to the cultural continuity of the county (Kia, 1998).

This exclusionary attitude towards Iranian identity that negated the influence of Islam and its integration into the fabric of Iranian society appeared in the official narratives of Iranian identity during the Pahlavi Era as well. Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah both tried to emphasize the ancient roots of Iranian identity and focused on the glory and greatness of Ancient Iranian kings. Their rejection of Islam as a fundamental aspect of Iranian identity intensified gradually and ultimately resulted in a backlash from the more traditional sectors of the Iranian society (Seyyed Imami, 2005).

Many scholars have recognized that this exclusive approach to Iranian identity neglects the ethno-linguistic diversity of Iranian people and therefore alienates a large portion of the population (Ashraf, 2006; Boroujerdi, 1990; Kia, 1998). Boroujerdi (1990) argues that minorities like Turks in the northwest, Kurds in the west, Arabs in the south and south west, and Baluchs in the south east of the country are marginalized because of

their language and ethnicity and this marginalization can be damaging to the territorial sovereignty of Iran as it might strengthen the separatist sentiments. This argument will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Radical Muslim approach. The second approach to identity belongs to those who call for a universal conception of Muslim identity that can unify the Muslim world and offer Shi'asim as the main foundation of Iranian identity (Boroujerdi, 1990). Members of this approach were mostly Muslim clergy who believed Islam is the only significant aspect of identity that should be recognized among Iranian people and aimed to guide loyalty and belonging to the Muslim world instead of restricting it to national boundaries.

Some of the religious leaders of 1979 revolution, including Ayatollah Khomeini himself, who finally got the complete control of Iran's political system in 1981, were initially interested in promoting this version of identity (Ranjbar, 2007). After the 1979 revolution, the Islamic Republic advocated for this narrative of universal Muslim identity hoping that the revolution in Iran could work as an inspiration for other Muslim societies and therefore be a first step for the establishment of a global Muslim Ummah[2]. Ayatollah Khomeini, while acknowledging Iranian national sentiments, believed that Islam should be the overarching tenet of identity (Khomeini, 1990). And therefore, in early years after the revolution, the state tried to undermine national celebrations and advocated for a Muslim society that surpasses national boundaries. Saddam Hussein's attacks on Iran in 1981 damaged this vision to a great deal. In spite of the Islamic Republic's efforts to project Saddam as an anti Muslim dictator, the 8-year war between Iran and Iraq, affected

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[2] In Qoran, Ummah is referred to the community of believers.

this universalistic narrative and pushed Iran towards the politics of national interest. However, one can still find the remainders of such tendencies in venues controlled by the government such as the television, radio, and education. While there have been studies that argue the government has moved towards a more inclusive notion of identity that respects national sentiments in its rhetoric and political strategy (e.g., Paul, 1999), not much research has been done in areas of education and public media.

Liberal-nationalist approach. Those who advocate for a liberal notion of national identity argue that considering the ethno-linguistic and religious diversity of Iran, the only plausible answer to the question of Iranian identity, one that can foster a national cohesion and prevent ethnic clashes, should be based on liberal notions of nationality with a focus on democratic citizenship, civil rights and liberties, and civil society (Boroujerdi, 1990). According to this school of thought, founding loyalties or belongings on Persian language, Persian culture, or Islam can alienate Iranian minorities like Kurds, Turks, Baluchs, Jews, and Christians. Ashraf (2006) traces the roots of this approach back to the early years of the 20th century and the National Front (Jebhe Melli) Party under the leadership of Muhammad Mosaddeq. From the beginning, the National Front defined itself as an anti-despotism and anti-imperialism movement with the goal of an independent Iran. Therefore the values of democracy and the growth of civil society was first and foremost an approach towards the political and social system. Later on scholars like Boroujerdi incorporated the issues of ethnic diversity and national identity into this framework. While in the early years after the revolution there seemed to be a political space for liberal nationalists, they were soon pushed to the margins by the dominant clergy. Siavoshi (1990) argues that one of the causes for their weakness was the

fact that liberal nationalists were founded on an elite liberal base and lacked mass public support in Iranian society.

In spite of its marginalization from the official political scene, liberal nationalism still is considered by some as a plausible and maybe necessary alternative. Boroujerdi (1990) argues that because ethnic minorities have never been integrated in the national identity discourse and ethnic separatist uprisings have always been a part of Iran's modern history, moving towards a more inclusive definition of identity is critical for Iran's territorial sovereignty. One of the reasons for the integration problem can be found in the history of nation-state in the Middle East. The boundaries that separate countries in Middle East are mostly a result of colonial rule and therefore have been irrelevant to many of the ethnic groups from the beginning (Yinger, 1994). One of the most well known examples of this tension in the Middle East is the conflicts between Kurd minorities with the state in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. The proponents of a liberal notion of national identity argue that to address this problem, to prevent Iran from fragmentation, and to succeed in national integration, the state should address the problem of marginalization with a more inclusive strategy (Boroujerdi, 1990).

Shi'ah-Iranian approach. A middle ground for Iranian identity has been provided by some Shi'ah clergy as well as secular scholars. This group recognizes the significant role that Islam had played in the social and cultural history of Iran in the past 1400 years and argues for a definition of Iranian identity that incorporates the Pre-Islamic and Islamic elements.

There are, however, ambiguities about the real beliefs of some Iranian intellectuals who belonged to this camp, especially in the late 19th century. Some argue

that intellectuals like Akhundzadeh, Malkum Khan, and even clergy like Haji sheikh Hadi Najm-Abadi had realized that to earn popular support in a traditional society like Iran, and also to escape excommunication and persecution, one had to concede to the principles of religion and acknowledge, at least in public, its contributions to the Iranian identity (Keddie, 1962; Tavakoli-Targhi, 1990). In other words, covering their secular ideologies in religious rhetoric, these intellectuals were aiming to dominate Iranians' hearts and minds to gain public support for their modernization agenda. These arguments are based on conspicuous inconsistencies that exist in the writings and personal communications found from these scholars. It seems that many of them were eager to present their anti-Islam theories in their personal letters or writings in newspapers published outside of Iran, while exploiting religious philosophies and rhetoric inside the country (Cole, 1996; Phillip, 1974). It should be noted that the sense of necessity felt among the secular intellectuals to incorporate religious terminologies and rhetoric, signals a solid reality in and of itself. Even though they might have been trying to create a secular society, they could not dismiss the reality that Iranian identity could not be easily disengaged from its Muslim roots. So even if they did not believe in the compatibility of Islamic traditions with their modernization objectives, they did realize that they cannot simply ignore Islam, which was a strong element in the fabric of Iranian society.

In mid 20th century, however, more consistent theories of a Muslim-Iranian identity was framed especially among non clergy Muslim intellectuals such as Shari'ati, Al-I Ahmad, Bazargan, Sadr, and Motahari (Chehabi, 1990; Esposito & Voll, 1996; Faghfoori, 2003, Rajaee, 2004). Bazargan emphasized the long history of Shi'ah Islam in Iran and argued that while the notion of national identity is a modern conception and is

imported to Iran from the west, religious identity has a historic presence in Iranian society (Ara'e mohandes Mehdi Bazargan, 2005). He goes so far as to say the Iranian society considers itself "Muslim" first and "Iranian" second. Sadr focuses on the reciprocal relation between Shi'ah Islam and Iranian culture and argues that not only Iranians have been influenced by Islam, the Shi'ah traditions have also been deeply shaped by Iranian culture (Faghfoori, 2003). Therefore a narrative of Iranian identity which ignores its religious roots would be unrealistic and deficient. Shari'ati advocated for a more radical approach and along with Al-I Ahmad called for a complete rejection of European modernization and a revival of a traditional Islamic-Iranian identity (Ranjbar, 2007; Shari'ati, 1982). Motahari was another advocate for Islamic Iranian identity whose religious credentials made him influential in early years of the revolution. More recently, scholars like Rajaee and Soroush have expanded Motahari's theory and incorporated elements of modernity into their conceptions of Iranian identity. In this section, I will elaborate more on the works of these three scholars.

Motahari (1970) engages in this discussion with his famous book "*Khadamate moteghabel-e Islam and Iran (the mutual contributions of Islam and Iran)*". In this book, he first lays down the foundations of his approach towards nationalism. He asserts that national sentiments are acceptable in Islam, insofar as they are motivations for solidarity and constructive cooperation; and any antagonism towards other nations, who are in fact equal human beings, is therefore forbidden and against the Islamic principles. He states that in an ideal situation, human beings should not be separated by ethnic, racial, or national boundaries. He then introduces his argument as a practical solution for an

imperfect world in which we are forced to live in national categorizations. He then moves on to explain his approach towards the question of Iranian identity.

Motahari (1970) first uses historical evidences to show that Iranians converted to Islam not with the force of swords, but out of genuine belief and because of their natural yearning for justice. He rejects the claims that the Arab invasion was the origin of Iran's decline based on two historical observations. The first one is Iraninan's extreme dissatisfaction and frustration with Sasanids, which made them welcome Arabs instead of fighting them and the second is the blossom of Iranian culture and economy during Safavids dynasty which is one of the glorious periods of Iranian history. These assumptions can be seen as a precondition for any successful integration of religious and national identities because if the introduction of Islam to Iran is seen as a violent attack on the part of Arabs and a humiliating defeat on the part of Iranians, presenting Islamic and Iranian cultures as compatible and mutually constructive will be extremely difficult. In other words, this part of the analysis is pointed at radical nationalists with an attempt to discard their claim of historical antagonism between Iran and Islam.

Motahari (1970) then goes on to clarify the role of Iranians in the expansion and growth of Islamic culture, Arabic language, and sciences. In this part of his discussion he focuses on the deep roots of the Iranian culture and goes so far to claim that Iranian scholars made many more contributions to Islamic civilization than did the Arabs. Here he is primarily speaking to radical Shi'ah clergy who dismiss Iranian identity and uses historical evidence to show that in fact, Islam has benefited tremendously from Iranian culture and society.

By demonstrating the interconnections of Iranian and Islamic cultures and the long history of their constructive relations, Motahari (1970) rejects both radical national and radical Islamic approaches to identity and argues that extracting any of these two elements will strongly damage the foundations of Iranian identity. Similarly Soroush (1998) builds his argument on the rejection of exclusionary approaches to culture and identity and asserts that a live culture should have the capacity to borrow from others and in the process strengthen its own foundations. He emphasizes that static cultures are dead cultures and integration or exclusion of new ideas and concepts should be a rational decision and not a dogmatic one. Expanding Motahari's ideas, Soroush suggests that Iranian identity is facing a crossroad of three cultures: Iran, Islam, and the West and the best approach moving forward is to incorporate all these elements in the creation of a strong and vital identity. For Soroush, eliminating or disregarding any of these dimensions would limit the capacity of social and cultural development for Iran and consequently would affect her ability to engage in the international community.

Rajaee (2004) joins Soroush in calling for a dynamic conception of identity and culture that is in constant interaction and trade with others. In fact, Rajaee claims that one of the strengths of Iranian culture in the era of Persian Empire and also during the Safavid period was its acceptance of diversity and its openness to change and growth. Rajaee further expands and revises Soroush's theory and counts four main elements as the foundations of Iranian identity: Iran, Islam, tradition, and modernity. Rajaee has a detailed proposal for a specific narrative of identity which is based on a selection of different elements from each of these main dimensions. Without going in the details of his argument, it is worth noting that in discussing the Iranian dimension, he, like

Motahari, focuses on the successes and strengths of Iranian society, especially in the pre-Islamic era, and incorporates them in his final analysis and proposal.

These arguments provide a rich foundation for an educational plan that aims to foster an inclusive narrative of national identity compatible with the main tenets of Iranian/Islamic culture and at the same time rejects a narrow conception that alienates one of these elements. What we see in today's educational policies however, is an approach that praises the Islamic dimension of Iranian identity at the expense of the other aspects.

The negative representation of Iranian past, focusing on lost wars, glossing over cultural and scientific accomplishments, and providing minimal contextual information about the important eras of Iranian history prevents students from even developing a balanced view towards their past, let alone having any sense of pride or connection. Motahari (1970) and Rajaee's (2004) analysis of the successes and accomplishments of Iranians demonstrates that for these scholars, positive memory of a prosperous past is an important element of national identity for which they provide valid historical documents.

While the abovementioned scholars do not present a unified front and have significant differences in the details of their ideologies, especially with regards to the practical role of Islam in Iranian society, their approach seem to be the best starting point for the discussions of Iranian identity. In the growing number of publications in Iran about the issue of national and ethnic identities, supporters of this approach have argued that recognizing and incorporating Iranian and Islamic dimensions of national identity in Iran is the only viable option for a conception of national identity that can foster progress and social cohesion (Ahmadi, 2005b; Mojtahedzadeh, 2008; Tajik, 2005). First of all, it

does not ignore the country's history and cultural heritage. Secondly, this approach is more inclusive of Iran's diversity because while 97-98% of the population is Muslim, only 58-60% is Persian and speaks Farsi as their first language (Higgins, 1984; The World Fact Book: Iran, 2009). It is true that considering Islam a central element in Iranian identity can marginalize religious minorities, but a secular conception of identity in a country surrounded by Muslim nations with a 97% Muslim population, even with a growing semi-secular middle class, does not seem to provide a viable alternative.

The need for a clear conception of national identity. But why would we need a strong national identity? Rajaee (2004) and Soroush (1998) argue that unless Iranians have a clear understanding of their collective identity, they will not be able to play an active role in the global community. For Soroush (1998), Iranian culture and identity is in constant struggle between three forces of Islam, Iran, and the West and unless we clearly identify our relations to each of these forces, we cannot be socially or culturally productive. In other words, according to Soroush, Iran's success in social development is conditioned upon a solution for its identity crisis which incorporates these three aspects and clarifies their connections. Rajaee (2004) defines identity as a framework that provides a form of conscious understanding of the self, society, culture, history, and the future and argues that a clear understanding of who we are as a nation enables us to analyze the struggles of Iran's modern history and provides us with a practical solution to the political and social dilemmas of the country. On the other hand, without a general understanding of the self, a society will lose its cohesion, will suffer alienation, and will be in constant internal struggle. Considering that the current international system is based on independent political units, Rajaee asserts that these internal struggles will weaken our

position in the international scene and prevents us from being active members of the international society. This argument is similar to Smith's (1991) discussion of the functional importance of national identity where he points to the constant debates over, and periodic revisions of, the interpretations of national identity in western societies as evidence for the significant function it plays in our time despite the claims that globalization is rendering national ties irrelevant.

In the discussion of globalization and its influence on nations and national identity Smith (2001) asserts that the cultural interactions that are emphasized as one of the outcomes of globalization, are in fact a form of cultural imperialism in which weaker identities are swallowed by the cultural forces of big powers. Rajaee's (2004) argument can also be discussed in this context when he states that an alienated and fragmented society cannot gain the power to join the global community as an active player. Here he distinguishes between the conditions of nations who are already powerful players, and those who want to join the game and suggests that the latter, need a stronger internal cohesion to be able to compete with already powerful others.

The importance of national identity also comes into question in the discussion of civic and ethnic identities. From a modernist perspective, the foundations of a Western nation are rights and duties of citizenship, public participation in the political processes, and the rule of law, which are all elements of a civic nation; on the contrary, societies in Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia have developed an ethnic model of nation based on common ancestry, kinship, and birth (Kohn, 1967). Modernists prefer the civic model of nation and argue that the ethnic model does not support the emergence of a truly democratic society and encourages violence and conflict (Kohn, 1967). However, Smith

(2001) rejects the dichotomy of civic and ethnic nations and suggests that all nations combine elements of both approaches, though in varying proportions. He bases his argument on an observation of French revolution as one of the first Western modern nations which incorporated nationalistic sentiments to promote social mobilization for civil liberties, and also the English conception of nationalism. Habermas (1992), based on similar observations, argues that nationalism is in fact the vehicle for republicanism. In other words, the move towards mass participation and the establishment of democratic political institutions is conditioned upon an active social participation which cannot be achieved if the people do not share a collective identity based on historic roots, myths, experiences, or memories. In addition, Smith (2001) suggests that civic ties do not suffice for the mobilization of the masses and therefore an analysis of subjective elements of national identity is necessary in understanding the progress of nations.

Based on these theories, a need for a strong national identity built on common histories becomes pressing for Iran. This need is also recognized in the growing number of scholarly publications about this topic in Iran in recent years (Ahmadi, 2005a; Goudarzi, 2006; Mojtahedzadeh, 2008; Sani' Ejlal, 2006). At the same time, the arguments of scholars like Boroujerdi (1998) who call for a new conception of national identity which emphasizes civil society and political participation seems to be out of context. The experiences of other nations show that the social mobilization and activism that is necessary for the establishment and development of democratic political institutions is conditioned upon the existence of a collective identity that bonds people together and encourages them to cooperate for the progress of their nation. Furthermore, the sense of alienation that is created as a result of unresolved identity crisis can push

people further apart and threaten their sense of political solidarity and consequently the social cohesion of the nation. In the case of Iran, high rates of immigration (Ozden, 2006), people's isolation in the privacy of their homes (Farhi, 2008), and a sense of inferiority towards the West which becomes apparent in a comparison of people's attitudes towards Westerners and Easterners, can all be evidences for this social alienation.

While the concept of Iranian national identity has been the focus of many studies in areas of sociology, anthropology, political science, and history, inside and outside Iran in the past decade, there seems to be dearth of academic research in education. Aside from few general references to the role of education in literature on Iranian identity, a study that focuses on the representation of national identity in textbooks and students' understanding of it is yet to be conducted. This study aimed to be one of the first steps in filling this gap.

Education in Iran and the 1979 Revolution

Soon after the revolution, the new system began to implement drastic measures to revise the educational system. While the structure of the educational system remained the same, new policies were put into place to ensure compliance with religious law. In 1980, a call for Islamization of all educational institutions resulted in the Cultural Revolution and the universities were shut down for almost three years while new officials were evaluating the curricula, the faculty, and the students based on the new values and ideologies. Religious commitment and independence from the West were the foundations of the new social order and therefore quotas were put in place for the acceptance of

university applicants and the employment of university faculties, school teachers, and government employees to assure the protection of these principles (Mehran, 1989a).

Another initiative by the Islamic government was the establishment of literacy movements that were designed to reduce the illiteracy rate in rural areas. The goals of this movement were stated to be eradicating huge literacy gaps in urban and rural areas of the country (Literacy Movement Organization, 1997). These initiatives, supported by a strong sense of purpose and success among Iranian youth, were also successful in reducing the gender gap in literacy and opened new doors for girls and women to enter the Iranian society (Mehran, 2003).

One of the other educational policies that impacted the participation of women after the revolution was the Islamization of the universities. Ironically, while new regulations on dress codes for women and strict surveillance on the interactions of boys and girls in universities sound problematic and limiting for students, it opened the doors of higher education for girls from traditional and religious families (Mehran 1991). While the Westernization of institutions of higher education during the Shah era had convinced many religious families that universities are not appropriate for girls, the new waves of Islamization after the revolution gave them the assurance that their daughters will be safe in this new atmosphere. Furthermore, the pressure of war and migration of professionals created a demand for women to enter the work force and institutions of higher education (Derry, 2000)

The ideological changes in the educational system were inevitably reflected in the new textbooks and curricula. As Higgins (1994) states, the significant role given to textbooks in the Islamic Republic of Iran can be understood by the fast pace of revisions.

Considering the centralized nature of the educational system and the fact that the government had full control over the design and publication of the textbooks, it is not surprising that the state took advantage of this opportunity to implement the new policies first through the distribution of new textbooks.

There have been some studies that evaluated the revisions of textbooks in the early years after the revolution from different perspectives. The proponents of the new changes who believed the history of Iran has been used by the Pahlavi Dynasty to indoctrinate students to the values of monarchy and Western domination praised the reforms while opponents of the new system criticized the religious indoctrination of students through school textbooks. In one study conducted by an official in the Ministry of Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the early years of the Revolution, the author compares the objectives of history textbooks before and after the revolution and notes that:

> In an introduction to the teachers' guidebook for the history textbook of the second grade of the guidance cycle (before revolution), one of the compilers of the history textbook indicates that "the major goal of teaching history at schools is to strengthen the students' feelings for the royalty and nationalism as well as their patriotism." It is quite clear that whenever history textbooks were written for the purpose of infusing royalty and chauvinism, historical events were inevitably distorted and disguised. (Mohsenpour, 1988, p. 79)

Mohsenpour, while criticizing the ideology of education before the Islamic Revolution, asserts that writing history with the goal of praising a particular political

system is not an honest approach. However, in the following sections of the article, where he explains the philosophy of education of the Islamic government, on more than one occasion he mentions the efforts that have been made to convince the students that "the Islamic government has now replaced the monarchy and is the most highly valued political system" (p. 83).

According to another study on language and religion textbooks done by a scholar outside the country and not affiliated with the government, "…. [t]hey [i.e., the textbooks] are filled with the political symbols and great personalities of Islam and the present Iranian leadership, in contrast to the secularism and nationalism whose political symbols inundated textbooks under the late Shah" (Shorish, 1988, p. 59).

However, the topic is still extremely under-investigated and many studies focus on early years of the revolution. Most of the studies in this area examine the image of the West and the representation of religious values and laws in the textbooks (Matini, 1989; Mehran, 1989a; Shorish, 1988). They examine how textbooks defy what was considered to be the Shah's imposition of Western values, representation of a solely Persian heritage by neglecting the role of Islam in the history of the country, and censorship of religious education. However, there is no comprehensive analysis of the history textbooks which examines the representation of the history of the country. There is also no study on how these representations are affecting students' perception of the country's past and their own national identity.

Therefore, by examining the representation of the past in the history textbooks of the Islamic Republic of Iran and understanding how it is being translated in students' image of their national identity, this study aimed to fill this gap. While the representation

of the "other" in history textbooks is an important topic of study in our globalizing world, students' understanding of the self and their connection to their country's past can also be influential in how they see themselves and the world.

Conclusion

Research shows that countries use historical narratives to create a past that serves the objectives of the present. While there are scholars who fundamentally disagree with the glorification of a country's history (Kammen, 1991), there are those who believe the reinvention of the past has been shown to be a functional force in fostering stability, peace, and social cohesion (Giordano 2002). Furthermore, these images of the past are used to shape national identities. This study examined the role of history textbooks in establishing a new value system, a new set of social norms, and consequently a new conception of national identity in Iran after the 1979 revolution. While there have been many studies in the context of the former Soviet Union, China, Germany, France, and the United States, there is not much analytical work done in this area in Iran. The concept of national identity, a modern notion introduced to the Middle East by the West, has also been a topic of controversy and debate in different fields of social sciences and humanities. However, once again, not much emphasis has been put on education. In the light of recent developments in the Muslim World, and specifically in Iran, and considering the long history of tensions between modernity and religion in the region, it is now clear that a more profound understanding of the complexities and dynamics of Muslim/national identity is necessary. This study aimed to provide a part of such understanding through the lens of education.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This study examines how national and religious dimensions of Iranian identity and Iranian history are being portrayed in several textbooks through an examination of the textbooks' inclusions and exclusions of historical events, their value judgments, and their representation of influential figures. Furthermore, the study provides a venue for a better understanding of how students respond to this portrayal of history and identity by the textbooks; how they perceive the country's past; and how they define their national identity.

This study was guided by three main research questions. The first question dealt with the content of the history textbooks. The second question examined the students' images of the past. And the last question analyzed the similarities and differences between these two. The questions are as follows.

1. How do middle school Iranian history textbooks represent the national and religious dimensions of Iranian history and Iranian identity?

2. What are the selected sample of Iranian high school students' perceptions of the history of the country and their national identity?

3. How do middle school Iranian history textbooks' representation of the national and religious dimensions of Iranian history and identity relate to the selected sample of Iranian high school students' perceptions of the history of the country and their national identity?

Unfortunately, there are not many works on methodology done in the area of textbook research; and researchers usually do not explain much about the methods they

have used. In many of the research conducted on textbooks, it seems that the methods have been supposed to be intuitive (Nicholls, 2003). Some have even argued that the field of textbook research lacks a methodological foundation based on which the studies can be conceptualized and assessed (Weinbrenner, 1990). In the studies reviewed by the author of this work, explanations of the methods used by the researchers rarely appear. Even in cases where the authors explain their methodological framework, there is no explanation of the details of the techniques they have used, their criteria, and the points of emphasis they have chosen among different parts of the texts. For this reason, a combination of two methods of discourse analysis and case study based on a general principle of textbook analysis was put forward by Pingel (1999) and Weinbrenner (1990). This method calls for a comprehensive examination of production, content, and reception of textbooks. In the following section, a brief historical background of methodological works on textbook analysis is presented. Finally, the design of the study is explained in some more details in relation to the three dimensions of Pingel's and Weinbrenner's frameworks.

Textbook Research Methodology

There are two main organizations that focus on textbook research and, therefore, have made some efforts to establish theoretical frameworks for textbook analysis methodologies. These are the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research. Most of their activities in this area, however, go back to the late 1990s and early 2000s and there has not been much further work after that. In 1990, the Council of Europe in cooperation with the Georg Eckert Institute held a workshop in Braunschweig,

Germany with a focus on textbook research. One of the outcomes of this workshop was a report titled *"History and Social Studies: Methodologies of Textbook Analysis"* edited by Hilary Bourdillon, which was later published in 1992 (Bourdillon, 1992). This report reviews a wide range of discussions and articles on textbook research –and its methodologies– conducted in various countries across Europe. Later on, in 1999 UNESCO published its first guidebook on textbook research and textbook revision (Pingel, 1999). This document tries to establish the theoretical basis for textbook research in a systematic fashion (Nicholls, 2003). It focuses on international and comparative studies on textbooks and provides methodological and practical guidelines for different stages of research projects in this area.

Pingel (1999) introduces three main categories of questions that can be examined in analyzing textbooks: (a) what is the politics of textbook publication in the country of interest? and who has a voice in decision making?; (b) how are the textbooks being taught and learned in classrooms?; and (c) what is the content of the textbooks? and what issues are included and which ones are excluded? A similar idea has been articulated in a different terminology by Weinbrenner (1990). He identifies three types of textbook research. These include (a) process-oriented research, which examines different aspects of textbook design and publication; (b) product-oriented research, which examines the content of the textbooks; and (c) reception-oriented research, in which textbooks are examined as a part of the educational experience, Reception-oriented research pays attention to internalization and socialization processes with a focus on how textbooks influence students and teachers. It is important to note that, while most of the studies in this area are focused on content analysis, the other two aspects are also important for a

comprehensive understanding of the dynamic social processes triggered or affected by textbooks (Weinbrenner, 1990).

In this study, I incorporated the above two approaches in textbook analysis. Based on Pingel's suggestion, I analyzed the content of the textbooks and how they have been used in the classroom. Using Weinbrenner categorization, I conducted a study that is both product- and reception-oriented. Through a case study conducted in a school in the capital city of Tehran, teaching and learning practices as well as students' and teachers' interactions with the textbooks were examined. Classroom observations, qualitative interviews with the students, and qualitative surveys filled by the students provided information on how the textbooks were being used in the classrooms; how they were being received by the students; and how they related to the students' perceptions of their identity and their past.

Before turning to a more detailed review of the study, however, a rationalization of the analytical basis for the selection of the textbooks is necessary. The next section will discuss the textbooks sampling strategy and the methodological details of each of the two dimensions of the study, namely the content and the reception.

Textbook Samples

Pingel (1999) provides a framework for conceptualizing the study and its implementation. The first issue discussed in Pingel's guidebook (1999) is the need for a generalizable sample of textbooks. In this study, considering that Iranian textbooks are published by the government and are universally used across the country, the issue of finding representative samples presents itself in a different form.

The history textbooks in the Islamic Republic of Iran are designed and published by the Ministry of Education based on the guidelines prepared by the Office of Curriculum Planning. These textbooks are universally used across the country and are usually revised by the Ministry of Education every four years. In other words, since the first publication in 1980 of new history textbooks after the Revolution, they have been revised several times and the new editions have been published in 1983, 1987, 1991, 1999, 2002, 2007, and 2011. The 1983 textbooks were published in the early years after the Revolution and during the Iran-Iraq War (1980 – 1988). At a time, the state needed not only to establish its own legitimacy and value system, but also to communicate a strong sense of national defense to the younger generations. Following a similar logic, the textbooks published in 1991 reflected the state's policies during the period of "Reconstruction" that followed the end of Iran-Iraq War. These textbooks, in particular, reflected the policies of President Rafsanjani's administration in departing from war-time paradigms and in mobilizing the population in support of the government's economic development strategies. After the "Reconstruction" period, the reformist candidate, Mohammad Khatami, won a landslide victory in the 1996 election and marked the beginning of an era of relative democratization. The textbooks were revised and published in 2002 under his administration cautiously reflecting the prevailing attitude of the reformist government. In 2005, the ultra-conservative candidate, Mahmud Ahmadinejad, won the election to the surprise of the middle class and began a campaign of reversing President Khatami's reform. The textbooks published in 2007 are therefore, reflective of this new conservative era.

Although the revision and publication of textbooks is under the control of the Ministry of Education and, therefore, supposedly the President, it must be noted that on cultural and educational issues the influence of the conservative Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, has often overruled more liberal ideas of the Presidents. This power dynamic can be observed when reformist President Khatami was forced to change his relatively liberal Minister of Education and to replace him with someone supported by the Supreme Leader in 2003. In addition, Khatami's administration only succeeded to implement limited changes in the textbooks and in the educational policies due to powerful opposition of conservatives.

For this study, I examined the textbooks published in 2007 as they reflected the contemporary approach towards education of Iranian identity and history at the time of this research. Furthermore, given the reception-oriented part of the research, I needed to conduct my case study based on the textbooks that had been used by the group of students I interviewed and surveyed.

Another issue in the selection of samples among history textbooks was the grade level selection. In Iran, students begin Social Studies in the third grade through a course that covers lessons that include civics, history, and geography. The lessons are framed through the story of a family traveling across the country. In the fourth and fifth grades, Social Studies textbooks are divided into three separate sections, namely history, geography, and civics. In these two years, the textbooks provide a brief review of Iran's ancient and modern history up until the 1979 Revolution. In middle school , that is the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, Social Studies education includes three separate courses in history, geography and civics. The middle school history textbooks cover the same

period of time as the elementary textbooks do but with more details and discussions. Finally in high school, students have to take one course of history in the 11th grade, which covers the modern history of Iran (i.e. the twentieth century), including the period after the 1979 Revolution. In this study, the middle school textbooks were analyzed for they cover Iran's history from ancient times to the modern era. As such, they provide a rich set of data on the representation strategies of the past and the present, as well as those of national and religious dimensions of Iranian identity.

Textbook Content

One of the main issues in any study of textbooks is the researcher's methodological paradigm. Pingel (1999) asserts that quantitative and qualitative methods are complimentary in textbook research. He argues that the two methods should be combined so that the analysis achieves sufficient breadth and depth. Quantitative methods focus on issues such as the frequency of words and the space dedicated to different subjects in the text. Qualitative techniques try to understand the meaning of the text through more in-depth contextual analysis. Pingel has identified four different qualitative methods for textbook analysis. These include (a) hermeneutic analysis, which aims at exposing the hidden meanings in the text; (b) linguistic analysis, which is an examination of (key)words and terminologies –with controversial meanings–; (c) cross-cultural analysis, which focuses on studying the representation of controversial issues by taking into account both sides of the argument; and (d) discourse analysis, which helps to understand which topics have been important to the authors, which notions have been taken for granted, and which values have been deemed favorable.

For this study, I integrated both quantitative analysis and discourse analysis to analyze the textbooks. According to Philips and Hardy (2002), the basic assumption of discourse analysis is the notion that no single discourse can claim to be purely objective and to have authority over the truth (Philips & Hardy, 2002). Foucault (1972) believes that discourses could be active constructors of the reality they claim to represent. Following a similar paradigm, I have incorporated methods of discourse analysis as introduced by Gee (2005) and Fairclough (2003). Gee introduces a number of concrete methods in understanding the subtle and hidden functions of a discourse. Fairclough describes more detailed methods of linguistic analysis that can deepen one's understanding of a discourse. Fairclough's approach is especially suitable for this study for he acknowledges the role of social actors in making sense of a text as well as these actors' impact in the actual construction of the meaning. This is where students' agency in interacting with textbooks comes into play. In such a situation, the official discourse was analyzed and contrasted with rival discourses to which students have access. In the following sections, I further explain how Gee's approach guides my analysis of the history textbooks and how I incorporated Fariclough's methods into the research design.

Questions Guiding Textbooks Analysis

Gee (2005) argues that the function of language goes further than simple communication. He introduces seven main tasks of language, which are to be examined in the analysis of any discourse. In this section, each of these tasks will be briefly discussed and the questions that will guide the analysis will be introduced.

Significance. Language is used to grant certain things significance through inclusions, exclusions, value judgments, and –more subtly– through its grammatical

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structure. With regards to history textbooks, authors can project the significance of different issues through the selection of specific historical events and figures and through the evaluation of the role of these events and figures in history. In regard to this research, the space allocated to different historical events will be examined to understand which ones have been presented as more significant and influential. Also an analysis of the textbooks' description of historical figures and the evaluation of their role in history demonstrate which figures have been pictured as –positively or negatively– significant and which ones have been ignored. These items of the analysis will be guided by Nicholl's (2003) recommendations for examining the issue of "significance" in history textbooks. I will also use Fairclough's (2003) concept of "evaluative statements" (p. 172). These are statements about "desirability and undesirability, [and about] what is good or bad" (p.172) in which the authors use explicit adjectives –such as good, bad, valuable, or useless–, adverbs –such as impressively, or cowardly–, or verbs –such as betrayed, or improved– to make value judgments in a text.

Engaging in particular activities. Language is sometimes used to recognize one's engagement in a particular kind of activity. It helps to position someone –or oneself– in a specific situation. In doing so, language contributes to the formation of one's identity. In history textbooks, the authors can project the role of the masses in different ways. In describing social movements, for instance, they may either focus on leaders as the history makers, or instead they may include the agency of ordinary people in the analysis. In other words, they can define how people have been engaged or involved in history; how their collective identity has been shaped by this engagement. Attention to this function of language shows how collective identity can be manipulated

through the inclusion or exclusion of the masses from textbooks' historiography. In order to analyze this dimension of the official discourse, the text and the images of the textbooks will be examined to better understand who the "main actors" in history are according to the textbooks. This reveals the textbooks' account of who the influential figures are and what their legacies have been. The amount of information in the text about the masses and ordinary people in comparison to the kings and military elites and clergy is also an important indicator in this regard. Finally, I will pay attention to the projected role of ordinary people according to the textbooks. In particular, I will use Faircoulgh's discussion on passivity and activity in the text and author's proposed attachment to the reader through the use of –first person– plural pronouns.

Identity formation. Speakers of a language can enact or construct particular identities not only through their selection of stories, but also by utilizing the subtle mechanics of the language. With this insight in mind, I have examined how often words such as "us", "we", and "our" have been used in the textbooks and, more importantly, in what context they have been used. I also paid attention to whom and what these words were referring; what common characteristics were considered significant in forming the collective identity; and how the students' sense of belonging was shaped and directed through the textbooks' employment of these terms. These guiding questions were based on the themes found in a previous study on elementary history textbooks in Iran (Soltan Zadeh & Farouk, 2007).

Construction of a relationship with the reader. The other constructive function of the language of a text is to build a relationship with the reader. History textbooks can be viewed as authoritative voices of historical knowledge that claim to be transmitting

neutral facts to students. In contrast, these textbooks may engage students in a historiography in which different perspectives have been recognized. Furthermore, they can shape how students deal with history and determine whether students learn the principles of historical analysis –including how to find reliable resources and how to examine and crosscheck them. This dimension of language is also relevant to the question of identity construction for it directly influences the relationship students have with textbooks. If students understand history to be a series of facts, they will be less critical in processing whatever they read in textbooks or find in any other form of media. Therefore, in analyzing the textbooks here, the following questions were be asked: how is the historical knowledge presented? Are the textbooks introducing history as a series of facts or a body of knowledge open to interpretation and subjective readings? What is the role of students in dealing with historical knowledge? Are they considered active learners who should practice their analytical and research skills or are they approached as passive recipients of information? These questions were guided by Thornton's (2006) study of American history textbooks. To answer these questions, the content of the lessons –as well as some of the activities for which students are responsible– have been examined. Based on Fairclough's definition of the concepts of "intertextuality" and "modality" of the text, I have investigated whether the textbooks acknowledge the multiplicity of perspectives in historical analysis. Furthermore, through an examination of the end-of-lesson questions posed in the textbooks, I analyzed the expected role of students as the audience of the text.

Building a perspective on the distribution of social goods. The fifth constructive task of language, according to Gee (2005), is to build and reinforce a

perspective on the "appropriate" distribution of social goods in a society. Similarly, history textbooks can present a specific social order or hierarchy of power as "natural" or "correct" through their inclusion of specific voices and silencing of others. They can also justify certain social arrangements by projecting a "natural historical flow" for social and political events and by representing these events as either inevitable, or a path towards improvement. Furthermore, textbooks can (re)present the role of the minorities in the society in such a way that highlights or overlooks discrimination. With regards to this discussion, this function of language is significant because the social order and the relationships between the majority and the minority groups are among the defining elements in the construction of national identity. To examine this function of language, one needs to understand how the textbooks demonstrate the relationship between the people and those who are in power and, in the case of Iran, their relationship with the clergies. Furthermore, one needs to focus on representations of culture, arts, and sciences to better understand how the textbooks acknowledge the contributions of different sectors of society. It is also important to examine how ethnic and religious minorities have been presented in the textbooks and whether they enjoy an equal status compared to the Muslim majority. These guiding questions are based on an analysis of Ukrainian history textbooks, which examines the representation of ethnic and religious minorities in the text and its relation to the question of national identity (Popson, 2001).

Establishing connection and relevance. The sixth function of language is to render certain things "associated" and "related", or instead to break or diminish "associations" and "relations". In this context, history textbooks can shape social associations and relations by representing certain actors as "heroes", by providing

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negative evaluations of the role of others, and by dismissing the impact of still others. Through these associations, textbooks can foster specific collective identities and nurture a particular sense of belonging. The role of historical actors, if overemphasized, can become the underpinnings of a people's memory and projection of a common history as well as the foundations of their national identity. Therefore, in analyzing the textbooks, the following questions were asked: who are the heroes and who are the villains –if any– in the historical narratives presented in the textbooks? What characteristics are mentioned as their main points of strength or weakness? How has their relationship with the people been projected? What is the role of religious figures in the course of history compared to secular ones? These questions are guided by the author's previous work on elementary history textbooks and the themes that came out of an open-ended analysis of the texts (Soltan Zadeh & Farouk, 2007).

Prioritizing sign systems and form of language. The last constructive task of language according to Gee (2005) is that of privileging certain sign systems or forms of language. In the discussion of Iranian national identity, language can play an important role considering the linguistic diversity of the country. It is important to examine whether the textbooks recognize this diversity and whether they acknowledge the contributions of different languages and dialects to the overall cultural and social tapestry of the country.

Coding and Analysis

The questions discussed above have guided my coding and analysis of the textbooks. I began the analysis of the text using predetermined codes and themes that had emerged from my previous studies. These codes and themes had been guided by the main questions discussed above. In this process, I color coded the texts, and then copied the

related sentences, or paragraphs, into an Excel file. I organized the file in such a way that it would clearly demonstrate the context in which these sentences had been used. In the first round of coding, I focused on explicitly evaluative statements about historical events and historical figures, the use of the words "Iran" and "Iranian", the use of the words "Islam" and "Muslim", the use of first person plural pronouns, the role and influence of the ordinary people, and the representation of minorities. After collecting the raw data from the text, I reviewed it and searched for the themes and categories that emerged in relation to the abovementioned guiding questions. To analyze the representation of historical figures, I made a list of all the people who had been named and discussed in the textbooks. Then I created a summary of the textbooks' description and evaluation of them. Finally I categorized them based on the role they had played or the positions they had held in the textbooks' historiography.

In the second round of coding and analysis I focused on the representation of history and searched for examples of "intertexuality" and "modality" in the text. In this process, I paid attention to the introductory essays at the beginning of each textbook as well as the end-of-lesson questions to examine what kind of knowledge students were expected to take away from the course.

The Validity of Discourse Analysis

One of the major challenges of qualitative research is the question of validity. Those who believe in the truth of numbers usually criticize qualitative studies for the subjectivity involved in them and argue that qualitative findings do not reflect the "objective reality" of the world. Gee (2005) rejects this criticism based on two premises. First, he asserts that people construct their reality, although this construction is bounded

by things that may be beyond human control. His second assumption is that discourses are active forces in the construction of the reality they are presenting. Therefore, a discussion on validity of discourse analysis cannot be done in a post-positivist framework, which assumes an unbridgeable separation between reality and the text. Gee argues that validity is something that discourse analyses can have albeit in various degrees. No one can lay, in other words, a "once and for all" (p.113) claim on validity. Any discourse is always open to further discussion and reinterpretation.

Based on these premises, Gee (2005) introduces four criteria of validity for discourse analysis. The first criterion is the convergence of the answers to the proposed questions. Such a convergence indicates the cohesion and the validity of the analysis. The second criterion is agreement between the findings of the study and the opinions of the participants in the discourse (in this case the students This criterion is usually used in qualitative studies under the name of "member checking". The third criterion of validity is coverage, which refers to the capability of the analysis to be applied to related sets of data. Finally, the fourth criterion is how well the analysis attends to the linguistic details of the discourse.

Examining the Reception of Textbooks by Students

Students are the main consumers of textbooks and their active role in the process can influence the impact the textbook contents can make in the classroom. Therefore, an examination of this group's perceptions and approaches towards textbooks is an important aspect of textbooks' analysis. There exists a huge gap in the literature when it comes to students' lives in school and their understanding of the educational media in Iran. In fact, the difficulties and risks of access to schools in Iran for research purposes

have forced researchers working on the country's educational system to restrict their studies mostly to document analysis.

This study is essentially an exploratory one, which aims at examining the complex dynamics of the students' approach to, and understanding of, the history textbooks; their historical memory; and their sense of national identity. The research questions mentioned above and the exploratory nature of the study led the researcher to choose case study as the main method of research. It should be noted that the restrictions in getting access to public schools in Iran has played a role in the researcher's decision to conduct her case study in a private school. In any case, after consideration of what the research would entail, it was concluded that case study is an ideal method for this study.

Many researchers have argued that research questions and research circumstances should be the main determinants of research methodology (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2003; Flyvbjerg, 2001). Qualitative research seems to be the most appropriate choice when research questions engage socially constructed meanings, practices, and processes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007a). The potential offered by qualitative research in understanding complex dynamics of social interactions and people's experiences cannot be found as easily in quantitative modes of inquiry and analysis (Flick, 2002). As Denzin and Lincoln (2007a) put it,

> [q]ualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the
> world. It consists of a set of interpretive material practices that make the
> world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world
> into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews,
> conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this

level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to

the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their

natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in

terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 4)

In other words, certain research questions can be best studied through the use of both

quantitative and qualitative methods. The proper choice of a qualitative approach, and

more specifically a case study, is derived not by the researcher's arbitrary preferences,

but by the necessity of an in-depth analysis due to the nature of the research problem. In

such a situation, the inquiry at the heart of the research cannot be reduced to quantitative

variables and formulas.

Furthermore, Flick (2006) argues that the ever increasing diversity of our value

systems and our ways of life makes it difficult for a single grand narrative of a positivist

nature to be applicable to different social settings. This diversity calls for a more

contextual and local understanding of social phenomena, which is the foundational

assumption of qualitative research. Peshkin (1993) claims that the function of qualitative

research goes beyond the "too-limited conventional focus on a theory-driven, hypothesis

testing, generalization-producing perspective" (p.27). Such research delves into the

descriptive and interpretive dimensions of research inquiry. In regard to the current study,

it is the interpretive dimension of qualitative research that particularly fits into the

characteristics and circumstances of the research problem. The fact that this study is one

of the firsts of its kind –and therefore bears some elements of exploratory research– calls

for an interpretive research inquiry. Furthermore, based on the assumption that meaning

is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world (Berger &

Luckmann, 1966), one may argue that understanding people's –constructed– realities requires an in-depth and context-dependent study of their experiences and interactions (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research, being focused on the lived experiences of people (Marshall & Rossman, 1995), and enjoying a naturalistic approach towards the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007a) provides a valuable and efficient approach for such studies.

More specifically and in the context of international and comparative education, scholars such as Crossley (1984, 2000, 2007) and Alexander (1999) have argued for the significance of in-depth qualitative studies that focus on school cultures and practices. Crossley points to the large number of policy analysis studies in comparative education literature that have failed to fully examine the realities of policy implementations and everyday experiences of students and teachers because of limiting their focus to the official narratives,. Furthermore, during the past two decades, criticisms against any grand narratives of educational transfers have amplified inside the community of international and comparative educationists by those who emphasize the importance of context and culture in education (Alexander, Broadfoot, & Philips, 1999). According to these scholars, studying and reporting on unfamiliar settings necessitate a contextual and in-depth examination and analysis that could be best done by qualitative research. For this very reason, Crossley (1984) emphasizes the benefits of case study for comparative and international researchers. In defending qualitative small-scale studies in international and comparative education, Alexander (2001) argues that because social and cultural contexts of education are extremely influential determinants of the character of a school, studying one school or one classroom can teach us a great deal about the country and its educational system. This is indeed the case if research methods are appropriately

employed to inquire beyond the observable practices and to examine the embedded meanings and value systems.

Case Study

I chose case study for its capacity to engage with the complexities of individuals' social world (Stark & Torrance, 2005), and for its flexibility in utilizing different methods of data collection and analysis. This approach allows the researcher to explore an understudied topic in more details through a deductive yet thorough examination of the case. Stake (2007) asserts "[n]aturalistic ethnographic case materials to some extent, parallel actual experience, feeding into the most fundamental processes of awareness and understanding" (p. 134). Flyvbjerg (2006) further argues that the context-dependent nature of the knowledge produced in case study research constitutes the heart of expert knowledge in Social Sciences. Case study provides a venue for the researcher and his or her audience to have a first-hand experience of the intricacies of social phenomena and therefore prevents blind generalizations about human experience (Stake, 1995).

In fact, many of the scholars who reject case study as a valid mode of inquiry refer to its inability to produce "generalizable knowledge". Stake and Trumbull (1982), however, argue that in-depth and contextual descriptions of a case –and the similarities of the analytical processes involved in a case study and in the natural procedures of gaining expert knowledge– enable the readers to develop their own "naturalistic generalizations" (p. 1). In many instances, according to Flyvbjerg (2006), the detailed examination of a single case can contribute to the expansion of knowledge more than the statistical inquires of large number of samples. Stake (1995) introduces the class of "instrumental case studies". These studies provide insight into an issue that goes beyond

the boundaries of a specific case. For example Flyvbjerg (2006) refers to "critical cases" that have strategic relevance to the research problem. The special circumstances of these critical cases allow the researcher and the reader to derive more general conclusions from the findings of the study. In regard to this study, for instance, a comparison of selected high school students' perceptions of Iran's history with the images presented in the textbooks may be cautiously generalized to other student populations in Iran who have access to non-government sources of information. As such, the case study here constitutes a "critical case". One can argue that if the textbooks can affect the perceptions of this group of students, it is reasonable to believe that those with fewer –and less diverse– sources of information are likely to be more influenced by the textbooks. It should be noted once again that the strength of case study is in its contextual and in-depth analysis of the case. Therefore, any transferability of the findings of this study to other settings should be cautiously evaluated based on this report's detailed descriptions of the case.

Role of the Researcher

Before turning to the introduction of the case and the methods of data collection, it is useful to briefly discuss the role of the researcher. The issue of subjectivity and objectivity has for long been a central component of qualitative-quantitative debate. When it comes to social interactions and to people's experiences and perceptions, the assumption of this study is that objective reality cannot be fully captured (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007a) in one single study; for the researcher cannot completely abandon her own social and historical background and environment (Smith & Hodkinson, 2007). It is not possible, in other words, to stand outside of the research setting as an objective and

detached observer.   Nevertheless, a researcher can work towards recognizing and controlling his or her subjectivity in order to expand his or her analytical horizons in the field. By doing so, he or she can also give the reader the opportunity to make more informed inferences from the study (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Based on the above context, I have reflected extensively on the interactions between my role as a researcher and my identity as an Iranian graduate student in the United States −who has completed some studies on textbooks and has already developed some opinions about what they are communicating. As an Iranian student in the United States, I have come to realize that at times, I have been reluctant to discuss the issues that portray a negative representation of my country   especially given the ever-increasing stereotypical images of Iran and Iranians in the United States. In the light of this self assessment, I decided to get feedback from my colleagues in Iran and from the participants in my study. As I was transcribing the interviews while collecting the data, I had the chance to review most of them with the participants. This process also allowed me to improve my interviews throughout the study. I became more aware of the issues that could cause misunderstanding and therefore used more probe questions in interviews to clarify the topic. Furthermore, I consulted with two of the teachers in the school, and a colleague of mine who was not familiar with the research, about some of my interpretations of interview participants' responses. This strategy was more useful in cases were participants' showed strong emotional attachments to the issue. The insight from the teachers allowed me to better contextualize students' responses. At the same time, my colleague's feedback on my interpretation of textbooks and of students'

comments helped me become more aware of my own biases and avoid inflating the findings.

Based on my assumptions about the textbook contents and their influence on the development of students' sense of national identity, which were based on my previous research, I also expected to be more attentive to the students' negative representations of Iran's history. Therefore I entered the field determined to cautiously make myself equally attuned to the students' positive and negative expressions of Iran's past. Recording the interviews, taking detailed and descriptive –instead of interpretive– notes with direct quotes, and conducting data collections and analyses in parallel are among the main strategies I have used to control the influence of my assumption on the processes of data collection. The latter strategy helped me to be constantly informed by the findings of my study so far and to revise and control my assumptions in an ongoing and dynamic fashion. As a result, I had the opportunity to better adjust myself to the environment and to minimize the influence of distorting assumptions.

Using several different methods of data collection –such as observation, interviews, and qualitative surveys– is one of the most powerful tools in enhancing the quality of the study when conducting qualitative research. As will be discussed later, each of these methods has its own specific points of strength and weakness. Yet, by integrating them together one can improve the rigor and richness of the analysis (Merriam, 2002).

Finally, through detailed and extensive descriptions of the case and the data I tried to do my best to enhance the quality and trustworthiness of my study. I have tried to offer readers an opportunity to make their own conclusions and judgments about the findings

of the study, and the analysis, and also about the possibility of transferring its findings to other social settings.

The Case

I chose a private secondary school (Nava School)[3] for girls in an upper middle class area of the capital city of Tehran, where the student population is generally from the middle class and the upper middle class. The school's philosophy is based on participatory education and, therefore, history classes are more active and more inquiry-oriented compared to regular public schools. It can be argued that the students in the school have had access to more diverse sources of historical information. In addition, they usually conduct various social studies projects throughout the school year. For example, the students have to conduct group research on a chosen historical topic and to find resources on the Internet, in the library, and through personal interviews. Furthermore, teachers usually plan for classroom activities using excerpts from college level history textbooks to provide a more in-depth analysis of specific topics.

Stake (2007) states that one of the main criteria in the selection of the case is the potential it offers for learning. Considering that having an uninterrupted access to the school for observation would be a significant learning potential, my choice of school was partially affected by restrictions in doing research inside Iran's public education system. Furthermore, having personal contacts with the administration at this private school proved to be an invaluable advantage, and facilitated my access to the field. In the Fall of 2009, I visited the school and discussed my research with some of the history teachers and with the school administrators. With the help of my acquaintances in the school, I

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[3] Nava is the pseudonym I will be using for the school.

was able to develop a friendly relationship with the staff and teachers and to introduce myself not as a "threatening" outsider, but as a friendly observer. This relationship, which had been established around trust, facilitated my smooth introduction to the students and the rest of the school staff when I went back to conduct my data collection in 2010.

As the school serves both middle school and high-school students, I had access to history classes on both levels. In middle school, the textbooks I studied were being taught and, therefore, it was a venue for my class observations. Meanwhile, the high-school students who had finished a complete course of Iranian history from ancient to modern times could provide valuable insight into the functions and influences of the textbooks.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data was collected over a period of two months in the Fall of 2010. The time window for data collection was decided following the consultations with the school administration, and based on their schedule for the school year. The administration believed that after Fall, the students and the teachers would be too busy to spare time for participation in my research. I must also add that I have received Institutional Review Board approval from Florida International University prior to the commencement of the study.

According to Yin (2008) and Stake (2007), who come from two distinct traditions of case study research, triangulation –i.e. using different methods of data collection– is a critical factor in the conduct of a strong case study. Integrating the data collected from different sources into one framework makes it possible for the researcher to expand her horizons beyond limited boundaries of a single data collection method (Flick, 2002); and to improve the credibility and richness of research findings (Merriam, 2002). For this

reason, I included classroom observations, in-depth interviews with the students, and qualitative surveys in my data collection methods. Knowing that each of these methods illuminates parts of the answer through a different lens (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007a), I used them together to strengthen the foundation of the study (Flick, 2006). Initially, I had planned to conduct focus-group discussions in addition to individual interviews. Yet in the field, I found out that given the tight schedule of the school, it was not feasible to arrange for such group discussions.

The combination of self reports –i.e. the interviews and the surveys– with direct observations deepened my understanding of the complexities in the students' historical memory and in their sense of national identity. It also revealed different dimensions of the students' connection with the official educational media. Through the interviews, I had the opportunity to interact with the participants in a private discussion. Classroom observations provided the opportunity to examine the students' interactions with and approaches to history and to the textbooks in a public setting. Finally anonymous surveys created a venue for communication for those who might have not been willing to openly share their ideas and opinions in front of their peers, the teachers, or me.

Observation. Observation is one of the most important methods of data collection in qualitative inquiries, where the researcher is the primary instrument of research (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Direct observation, Hatch (2002) asserts, provides the opportunity for the researcher to examine and understand the phenomenon under study in its context. It also allows to access issues that are taken for granted by the participants. Such issues are less probable to come up in interviews and in guided discussions. Moreover, Marshall and Rossman (1999) emphasize the role of observation in

understanding and discovering human interactions in their "natural social setting". In this study, by observing the students in history classes, I obtained access to the students' normal and daily interactions with the subject, the textbooks, and the teacher. Meanwhile, I had the opportunity to gather data from the students' spontaneous comments and questions.

There have been different categorizations of direct observation based on the researcher's relationship with the participants, and how structured the researcher's plan has been before going into the field (Adler & Adler, 1994; Angrosino, 2005; Jones & Somekh, 2005). For this study, I conducted "unstructured observations" (Jones & Somekh, 2005, p.140) due to the exploratory nature of the research. In this type of observation, as Jones and Somekh (2005) explain, the researcher is to be guided by his or her own socio-cultural background and also by the data already collected in other parts of the study. In the case of my classroom observations, my familiarity with the culture of schooling in Iran and the history of the country allowed me to be more attentive to subtle communications among the students and the teachers. In addition, my preliminary work on the textbooks partially guided my observations to be more in line with the objectives of this study. This allowed me to conduct observations that examined manifestations of the students' historical memory, their judgments about the past, their approaches towards national identity, and the role of the textbooks in the classroom. In other words, instead of creating quantitative rubrics for my observations and field notes –which might have overlooked the more subtle class dynamics–, I tuned my attention to take more detailed accounts of the issues related to the research questions. My role in the natural setting of the classroom was that of a "peripheral member researcher" as defined by Adler and

Adler (1994, p.380). Although I did try to reach an insider perspective, I did not participate in the activities that would have defined as membership in the classroom. Since I had established a relationship with the students through the interviews, my silent presence in the classroom was not disturbing.

History is taught in the Grades 6 through 8 in middle schools. In Nava, two teachers were responsible for the history education program and their hours of teaching usually overlapped. The students had one 80 minute period of history education each week. For this study, I observed two of the four classes in each of the middle school grades –i.e. six classes in total. I observed each class three times over the course of two months which added up to eighteen eighty minute observations.

My observations notes helped me to better understand the case and the context of the study and to have a sense of the teaching strategies and practices implemented in the classroom. These strategies complemented the students' accounts of their class experiences in the interviews. The observations also provided some supplementary data on some of the topics that the students discussed in the surveys and in the interviews. Considering that I was not able to conduct a year-long study to observe the coverage of all the textbooks' content in the classroom, this supplementary data about the students' perceptions of historical events and historical figures is limited to the content covered during my observation period in the school. Finally, I got the opportunity to observe some direct discussions about national identity in the classrooms, which informed my analysis of the subject in the interviews and the surveys.

In-depth semistructured interviews. DeMarrais (2004) defines interview as "a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on

questions related to a research study" (p. 55). Interview is a fundamental method of data collection in most qualitative inquiries (Merriam, 2009) that may be used alone or in conjunction with other forms of data collection methods. In this study, I used in-depth interviews to complement the data gathered through class observations and in the surveys. Through these interviews, I tried to understand the students' images from the past and their conceptions of national identity. Dexter (1970) argues that interview is an appropriate tool for collecting data when it can result in either "better data, more data, or data at less cost than other tactics"(p.11). In the context of this study, individual interviews provided a venue for the students to discuss their ideas and opinions in a more personal and private setting. Therefore, I was able to access less visible dimensions of their understanding of history and national identity, which were less probable to be revealed in the public sphere of a classroom.

I conducted 15 "semistructured" (Merriam, 2009; p. 89) interviews with 10 randomly selected participants and five volunteers. This selection was from the pool of 94 ninth grade students; for they had already finished the courses that covered a complete range of Iranian history in the middle school. I used Excel to generate random numbers between one and 94, and then selected the student who had that number on the school's list. Semistructured interviews are a mixture of more or less structured questions. I designed a framework for my interviews that included several guiding questions[4] and used probe and follow-up questions throughout the interviews based on the students'

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[4] See Appendix A.

responses. This approach allowed me to delve into the areas that deemed more important by the students and were extremely valuable and informative for my research too.

I did face some problems in timing and scheduling the interviews. I was not able to ask the students to stay after school hours and, therefore, had to plan for the interviews during the school day. This constraint limited the length of each interview to 25-50 minutes and, in some cases, I had to ask the participants for a second interview. After a few days, I realized that my interviews with the students who had volunteered usually took longer than the interviews with the students I had selected randomly[5]. Therefore, I began to schedule the interviews based on the estimations I had from their duration. There were two time slots during the day in which the students could participate in the interviews, a 25-minute and a 50-minute recess. I generally interviewed the randomly selected students in the first –shorter– recess and the volunteers in the second –longer– one.

Indeed the interviews did not go as planned every day. Sometimes the students would tell me that they had an exam for which they needed to study, canceling the interview in the last minute. In other occasions, the school would plan some events that the students had to attend and, therefore, I could not proceed with the interviews. In few instances, the students were absent from school on the day of the interview. While I did try to fill the spot by asking other students to participate, I was not usually successful as they had already made plans for their recess periods.

With the permission granted by the students, I audio recorded all the interviews and also took notes of the participants facial expressions and bodily gestures throughout

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[5] In my analysis, however, I did not find any noticeable differences between the two groups of interviews.

the interviews. As Merriam (2009) asserts, data collection and analysis are relatively simultaneous process in qualitative research. The researcher is guided by the data already collected to look for new leads and ask new questions that would complement the data collection process. Following the same philosophy, I used my initial interviews to fine tune my observations and interview questions. I also began the transcription, coding, and analysis of the interviews early on. After a couple of interviews, I realized that I was becoming more capable of posing the right probe questions and allocating the appropriate amount of time. I had divided my questions into three categories; and I flexibly moved between the questions of each category based on the answers that I received from the participants. For example, in the first section, if in discussing their classroom routines they would talk about their research methods and their use of different resources, I would ask the question about facts and interpretations in historiography. But if they discussed how their classes were more interesting than the textbooks due to their research, I would focus the next inquiry on the textbooks. Listening to the recordings of the interviews everyday was the most instrumental technique for me to improve my interview skills. Although I did not have the luxury of going back to the participants for further clarifications, this approach helped me in fine tuning my questions in future interviews. Therefore, as time went on, I was more and more satisfied when listening to the interviews and there appeared fewer and fewer missed questions and gaps that I could think of.

I should note here that the uncertainty of rules and regulations regarding field work research in Iran makes the work of researchers more difficult. Even though what I was doing was legal, I could not be sure what the consequences of my work could be.

Therefore, I decided not take any hard data with me when I was passing the border and leaving the country. In order to do this, I had to transfer all of my data into soft copies that could be easily transferred via the Internet. I scanned my observation notes and typed in the surveys responses in an excel file. I uploaded these data, along with the interview files, and accessed them online after I had left the country. Therefore, when leaving Tehran's international airport, I did not have any hard evidence of my research with me.

I also faced some moral dilemmas while conducting the interviews. When discussing topics such as the Islamic Revolution, the textbooks' representations of the current situations, and most importantly the 2009 disputed Presidential election and its aftermath, I tried to make sure that the students would not feel pressured to discuss things they were not comfortable sharing with me; for I did not want to put them in any vulnerable position. Secondly, I was personally afraid to carry anything with me that could put them at risk; and finally, I believed that putting any pressure on the interview participants is not only immoral but also futile for it exerts answers that were not completely honest. Therefore, whenever I felt that the students were thinking twice about sharing something –usually with a pause, a smile, or a gesture that communicated such feelings– I emphasized the fact that they did not need to talk about the subject if they were not comfortable. I also asked them to let me know if such circumstances came up. Therefore, I have instances in the interviews where the students told me that they could not talk about the issue at hand. For example, in discussing important historical events, one of the participants said "one of them I cannot tell [about], the other is […]". I asked her if the event she could not talk about is recent, and she nodded and that was the conclusion of our conversation about "the event". After each interview, I had to struggle

with a moral dilemma in my mind. I knew that I could get more information if I had insisted, or if I had emphasized more when assuring them about the anonymity of the recordings and the surveys. Yet being in Iran and listening to the constant news of political turmoil, I could not convince myself to do so. I am aware of the fact that I have probably missed some information –especially in regard to more recent parts of history– by not probing the students to go into further details when they felt uncomfortable. Yet similar to researchers involved in any qualitative research, I had to make a moral decision in the field. So I decided to give up some of the data, for the comfort, and potentially the safety, of the participants in the research, and also for my own peace of mind

In a number of cases, from the participants' facial expressions, repeated pauses, and smiles one could realize that they did not feel comfortable further discussing or sharing their personal thought. On several occasions, they made bodily gestures as if they wanted me to understand what they had in mind without them saying it loud. These occasions have been among the most unusual situations I encountered in the course of this research; for the students showed a peculiar combination of trust and mistrust towards me at the same time. On the other hand, there were times during the interviews when I was amazed by the students' frank comments on issues that were not directly related to the study. In several occasions, the students boldly criticized the current system's political decisions or shared their emotional experiences towards the 2009 protests. In contrast, there were other students who were angry about what people had done during the protests and who defended the government's reaction. These, I must say, are some of the issues that I am still emotionally attached to. While I had expected these discussions to come up in the interviews, I had not expected it to be so challenging for me

to keep myself detached from the subject and remain calm when asking probe questions. More importantly, because of the time limits I had to meet in the interviews, I had to re-focus the interview to the topics directly related to my work, which was also difficult as I was enthusiastic to know how the students' felt about the current political atmosphere.

I began the initial round of analysis using the same categories I had used in the textbooks analysis. Based on the findings of the first round of coding, however, I re-read the interview transcripts several times for more detailed themes and, more importantly, for a deeper understanding of the students' emotional attachment to, or detachment from, the topics they were discussing. Merriam (2009) argues that one of the most important task in qualitative data collection and analysis to "force yourself to make decisions that narrow the study" (p. 171) . Early on in my study, I realized that I needed to make my work on students' understanding of their own past and their identity more focused, and therefore left out questions about how they see the "other". Therefore, I limited my questions about those issues in interviews and spent more time on questions about Iran and being Iranian.

Qualitative surveys. Finally, qualitative surveys were designed to examine the students' overall image of history while providing them with an anonymous venue. The anonymity rendered the surveys more convenient for those students who were not willing to share their opinions in face-to-face interviews. It also allowed me to gather some demographic information about the students and, therefore, to better know the school and the context of the study. The surveys[6] were distributed among all ninth grade students. It began with a number of demographic questions, which focused on the students' age,

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[6] See Appendix B.

grade level, and religious background. The second part of the survey examined the students' sources of daily news and information, for example official government media, newspapers, satellite TV channels, and the Internet, their sources of historical information, and the extent to which they enjoyed or disliked history as a subject matter in school. The next set of questions asked the students to name five historical figures and five historical events –or development– that they believed to have been most influential in the history of Iran. The design of these questions was guided by Frisch's study (1989) where he aimed at examining American college students' historical narratives by asking the students to name 10 people who came to their mind when they read the phrase "American history from its beginning through the Civil War" (p. 13). The final section of the survey directly addressed the students' definitions and perceptions of national identity. In addition to the notion of national identity, these last questions asked about the students' future plans and whether they would leave Iran or not.

To analyze the surveys, I employed both statistical analysis –i.e. descriptive data– and qualitative analysis of the students' responses. To analyze the text of the students' survey responses, I used a similar approach that I had taken in analyzing the interview transcripts. Eventually, I incorporated the findings of the surveys and those of the interviews into one framework to obtain an in-depth and more comprehensive image of the students' perceptions and opinions about the past and about their national identity.

Summary

For this study, I integrated two qualitative approaches of discourse analysis and case study to examine the presentation of the past and that of Iranian national identity in middle school history textbooks, the reception of this history and this identity by the case

study students, and with the relation between the students' perceptions and the textbooks' representations. Discourse analysis, as introduced by Gee (2005) and Fariclough (2003), enabled me to unravel the complexities of the text and to understand the meanings and the value systems that were being constructed through different manifestations of historical events and actors in the textbooks. The case study provided me with an opportunity for in-depth analysis of the students' educational experiences with, reactions to, and understandings of the history textbooks. To have a more comprehensive examination of the case, I collected data through direct classroom observations, in-depth interviews with the students, and anonymous surveys.

CHAPTER IV

DESCRIPTION OF THE CASE AND THE TEXTBOOKS

This chapter provides the background information on the Nava school, its

students, and the history classes. I have also included an introduction to the textbooks

under study, their content, and the sections that have been considered for this analysis.

Nava School

Nava is a private secondary girls' school in an upper middle class area of the

capital city of Tehran, Iran where the student population is mostly middle class and upper

middle class. The school has a selective admission process including an entrance exam

and an interview and is becoming one of the most popular and sought after schools for

girls in Tehran. The school serves students from Kindergarten to high school in three

different buildings. I spent most of my time in the middle school observing history

classes and in high school interviewing with students. Most classrooms have 20-25

students and are considered small compared to average class sizes in Iran.

The school's philosophy is based on participatory education and therefore history

classes are more active and more inquiry-oriented than a regular public school. In my

observations, I noticed that although teachers' lectures are still a big part of instruction,

students are encouraged and expected to participate through individual and group

activities and group research projects. Nevertheless, the school is obligated to use official

textbooks and to follow ministry's regulations on instructional hours and some

extracurricular activities. Students also have to participate in national exams at the end of

each level (fifth, eighth, and 12th grades) that are solely based on the content of the

textbooks.

It is a common practice in Iran that schools decorate the hallways and classroom walls with quotations from famous religious leaders, scientists, and intellectuals. Although there are not any studies that examine the content of these decorations across the country, my personal experience has been that in most public schools, religious quotes constitute the majority of such decoration. In Nava school however, most of these decorations include statements about learning and hard work. In general, although the principal, vice principals, and the high ranking administrators of the school are practicing Muslims, the school atmosphere is open and students' religious beliefs or practices are not judged or monitored by the school. For example, prayer was not compulsory inside the school and the school administration seemed lenient towards students' lose veils.

All the participants that I engaged with, in middle school classes I observed and in 9th grade where I conducted the surveys and interviews were self-identified Muslims with the exception of one Zorostorian student. Due to the sensitivities of the school administration and also students, I did not delve too deep into participants' religious beliefs and practices. However, I did include 4 questions on the survey to get a sense of the population I was working with. I asked the participants whether they considered their family to be religious, whether they considered themselves to be religious and whether they practiced praying, fasting, and Hijab[7]. Although the majority of participants (out of the 94 who filled out the surveys) stated that they are not religious and do not come from religious families (see Table 1), the results confirmed my initial assumption about the sensitivity of the issue among students. While conducting the surveys, I noticed that students showed a negative perception of the world "mazhabi" which I had used as a

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[7] Here I refer to Hijab as the head covering traditionally worn by Muslim women which is mandatory in public places in Iran.

translation for religious. It seemed that some associated this word with strict and traditional religious views and not necessarily religious beliefs. When filling the surveys, some participants asked what I mean by the word and some felt a need to explain their answers instead of just responding with "yes" or "no". Some participants stated in their responses that they were believers but not the strict and fundamentalist type. Furthermore, although only 6% of the participants considered themselves religious, about 20% of them stated that they actually practice their religion. In other words, while the results do demonstrate that the majority of the participants are not practicing Muslims, the numbers might not be accurate.

Table 1

Students' Personal and Family Religious Backgrounds

Survey question	Yes	Somewhat/ Sometimes	No	No Response
Do you consider your family to be religious?	18%	15%	60%	7%
Do you consider yourself to be a religious person?	6%	22%	65%	7%
Do you practice praying and fasting?	22%	34%	37%	7%
Do you wear Hijab?	19%	18%	54%	9%

Most students come from families who have access to satellite TV and Internet and therefore have the opportunity to get their news from sources other than the official government media. In surveys 80% of the students have access to satellite TV at home with only 11% stating that they do not (the remaining 9% had not answered the question).

The use of satellite TV is important because inside Iran all radio and TV channels are state run. In other words, satellite TV is the only broadcast venue through which Iranians have access to voices other than that of the government.

79% of the participants stated that they sometimes, or regularly, follow the news and a majority confirmed that they tend to rely more heavily on internet and satellite TV as their sources news than Iranian TV and newspapers (see Table 2). It should be noted that these results mostly reflect students' family practices as decisions of installing satellite TV or buying internet access is made by parents. However, as 79% of the students sometimes or frequently follow the news, their interactions with these resources are meaningful.

Table 2

Students' Use of Different News Sources

How often do you use the below sources for news?	A lot	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	No response
Iran's government run TV	3	15	35	30	17
Newspapers	8	20	31	21	20
Satellite TV	39	29	9	7	16
Internet	40	30	7	5	18

While reliable data on the use of satellite TV and internet in Iran is not available, it is understood that both these services are mostly available to middle class and upper middle class families. Furthermore, they are more widespread in larger cities and urban areas. Therefore it is a reasonable conclusion to assume that to some extent, access to

alternative sources of information is partially dictated by a family's socioeconomic background and the area of the country they live in.

History Classes

In Nava, history classes usually started with teacher's lecture. The syllabus was guided by the textbooks but teachers rarely referred to the text inside the classroom (although they sometimes used textbooks images and maps as a reference for their lectures). The lectures were mostly supplemented with individual or group activities in which students' either had to work with reading materials provided by the teacher, or discuss their opinions and what they already knew about a specific issue. Students were more engaged in activities with extra reading materials, especially when the content was different from what they had read in the textbooks. I noticed that in such cases, most group members participated in the activity and the discrepancies between the textbooks and the new materials ignited analytical discussions between students. On the other hand, when they were asked to simply state their opinions, their accounts were more similar to that of the textbooks and the group discussions were limited to repeating previous knowledge.

In addition to discussions about the content of the lesson, in several instances teachers asked students' opinions about the class structure and their preferred method of studying history. While I did not get a chance to observe whether they would actually implement those suggestions, I did notice that students engaged in these discussions passionately and were eager to share their ideas.

Interview Participants

For interviews I randomly selected 10 participants and five more volunteered.
There were no significant differences between randomly selected and volunteer
participants' responses except that two of the randomly selected participants were eager
to finish the interview fast and provided mostly brief responses to my questions. I did not
ask many personal questions from the participants as I realized in the first couple of
interviews that such questions would create an uneasy environment for the students. As I
explained in the previous section, the political circumstances of the country at the time
had made participants more wary of sharing personal information about the religious or
political orientation of their families. Especially considering that we had to conduct the
interview inside the school and I was a newcomer that students did know. I did not want
to force my participants into an uncomfortable position in which they did not feel safe, so
I decided to compromise. In exchange for more candid and frank responses to the actual
questions of the interview, I decided to let go of personal questions that would give me
information about the participants' personal life and family situations. Table 3 provides a
demographic profile of interview participants.

Table 3

Interview Participants' Profiles

Pseudonym	Participation	Middle School Experience
Azarin	Randomly selected	Other
Baharan	Randomly selected	Nava
Elham	Randomly selected	Other
Maryam	Randomly selected	Nava
Saghi	Randomly selected	Other
Salma	Randomly selected	Nava
Sarin	Randomly selected	Nava

Shirin	Randomly selected	Other
Zeynab	Randomly selected	Nava
Zoya	Randomly selected	Other
Hengameh	Volunteer	Nava
Ladan	Volunteer	Nava
Nazli	Volunteer	Nava
Samineh	Volunteer	Nava
Shadan	Volunteer	Nava

Textbooks

In this study, I analyzed Grade 6 history textbook titled "*History: the first year of guidance school period*" (Kheirandish, Abbasi, & Javadian, 2007), Grade 7 history textbook titled "*History: the second yearf guidance school period*" (Javadian, Kheirandish, & Abbasi, 2007), and Grade 8 history textbook titled "*History: the third year of guidance school period*" (The History group of textbooks' planning office, 2007) published in 2007 by the Ministry of Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran that were universally used across the county in both public and private schools. These were also the books that the participants of the study had used in their history classes during their middle school years. Table 4 provides a summary of the content of the textbooks.

For this study, I have excluded the sections that cover the history of countries other than Iran including lessons on ancient cities and countries, the history of Europe, and the history of Islam in Saudi Arabia.

Table 4

The Content of Textbooks

Grade Level	Content Covered	Number of Pages
Sixth Grade	• The importance and benefit of History • Life and history in pre-historic times • Cities and countries in ancient world • The migration of Aryans • History of Persia[8] from Achaemenid[9] Empire to the introduction of Islam and the fall of Sasanid[10] Empire	69
Seventh Grade	• History of Islam in Saudi Arabia • Establishment of independent governments in Persia • History of ruling dynasties in Iran till the end of Teymurid[11] • History of Europe in middle ages	65
Eight Grade	• History of Persia from Safavid Dynasty to the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran • History of Europe in modern times	87

[8] Persia had been the official name of Iran until Pahlavi dynasty when Reza Shah changed the name to Iran.

[9] One of the earliest dynasties of Iran, the Achaemenid Empire ruled from 700 B.C to 330 B.C. and, at the peak of its history, it became a global empire.

[10] Persia's last pre-Islam ruling dynasty, which reigned from 241 to 651 A.D.

[11] A Turkik dynasty, which ruled Persia from 1370 to 1506 A. D.

CHAPTER V

REPRESENTATION AND PERCEPTION OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE

Teaching the past to support a specific agenda at the present has been among the main purposes of history education. On a deeper level, however, history textbooks introduce the whole discipline of history to students. These textbooks can –and do– shape students' understanding of the nature of the discipline and that of historical knowledge. In other words, through their structures and their styles of data representation, history textbooks serve the double purpose of providing historical information and teaching students how to interact with such information (Thornton, 2006; Wain, 1990).

In this Chapter, I focus on textbooks' representation of history, as well as students' understanding of the discipline of history. I examine students' opinions about their history textbooks and their history classes. This analysis helps to clarify students' complex relationship with the texts. It also provides a context for the following chapters where the content of the texts and the students' perceptions of the past are examined.

The Nature of Historical Knowledge

One of the main purposes of history education has been for students to understand the nature of historical scholarship and that of historical knowledge. History textbooks and history classes can present historical knowledge as an open-ended inquiry that lends itself to multiple perspectives. Such an attitude towards historical knowledge allows a multitude of opinions. The polar opposite of this attitude projects historical knowledge as a set of fixed written facts that are finalized and unanimously accepted. The way students are expected to study and learn history also plays an important role in their ability to become informed consumers of information. This in turn affects their understanding of

the world around them. Textbooks' narratives can help or hinder students' learning of essential inquiry skills such as gathering information and evaluating sources that belong to different contexts (VanSledright, 2008). More specifically, these narratives can shape students' perceptions –and ability– of independent thinking when dealing with history (Stodolsky, 1988).

Textbooks' Representation of the Nature of Historical Knowledge

To better understand the nature of historical knowledge that the examined history textbooks aim to instill in students, I have conducted three different analyses. First, I focused on how textbooks introduce the discipline of history to both the teachers and the students. Second, I examined the questions presented to students at the end of each lesson. Finally, I examined the content of the lessons in terms of their overall tone and the manner in which they represented historical knowledge

Introducing the discipline. At the beginning of each textbook, there are two pages of introductory material respectively titled "A Word With the Teachers" and "A Word With the Students". In these two brief essays, the authors of the text explain what students are expected to learn from the text; how they are to be evaluated; and how teachers are expected to approach the material in their classrooms. Furthermore, the sixth grade textbook begins with a lesson titled "The Importance and the Benefits of Knowing History". This lesson directly relates to the subject of our inquiry here, namely the introduction of the discipline. This lesson and the two-page introductions are the basis of my analysis in this section.

The parts of the two-page introductions that address teachers are the same in all the three textbooks. The essay provides a general guideline regarding the main learning

objectives of history lessons as well as a number of important issues that teacher should consider in their evaluations. The essay also offers several suggestions on how to enrich students' experiences in the classroom. In explaining the objectives of the course, the essay emphasizes the importance of understanding history as opposed to rote memorization. It encourages teachers to incorporate classroom discussions into their teaching so that students can improve their thinking and analytical skills. All these suggestions, however, are focused on students' understanding of the content of the text. In other words, the information presented in the textbooks is assumed to be the final and correct version of historical knowledge. With this assumption, the educational challenge becomes how to make sure that students learn and understand this final version. This is why nowhere in the essay there appears any suggestion of examining other viewpoints, comparing different perspectives, or allowing students to make their own judgments.

In the parts dealing with student evaluation, the essay reiterates its emphasis on students' understanding of the content of the texts. It discourages teachers to limit their assessments to questions that evaluate students' memorization of the information. The essay refers to the end-of-lesson questions as a guide for evaluation and asks teacher to use different types of questions that have been included in these sections. Nevertheless, the goal still remains to assess students' understanding of the content of the texts and that of the historical analyses presented in the texts. Even the previously mentioned notions of analytical and thinking skills are absent from this section on evaluation.

Finally, the authors of the essay recommend teachers to take advantage of all the materials available in the textbooks –including maps and images– and also to utilize the supplementary materials provided by the Ministry of Education to enrich the teaching

experience. While the teachers are being encouraged to go beyond the texts, in other words, they have been implicitly limited to use the materials approved by the Ministry of Education, which reinforce the same narrative provided in textbooks.

The parts of the two-page introductions that address the students simply encourage them to take history seriously and to learn the contents of the texts. It reminds them of the importance of historical information in their lives, no matter what career they choose. Yet, it falls short of discussing anything further than general importance of "knowing history". In particular, it does not elaborate on what constitute such "historical knowledge".

At the beginning of the sixth grade textbook, a four-page lesson is dedicated to the discussion of "The Importance and the Benefits of Knowing History". It introduces history as "the experiences of the human society" (Kheirandish, Abbasi, & Javadian, 2007, p. 3) and states that "through [studying] history, we have the opportunity to learn about the lives, beliefs, and the traditions of people in different eras". Elaborating on this attitude towards the study of history is the main point of the whole lesson. The authors go on to further explain that history helps us to learn from those who have lived before us and find the causes and the consequences of historical events.

The text then introduces historians as those who study the past and find the answers to historical questions. Based on this notion of historical scholarship, the text asserts that "what you read in the following lessons are the results of such studies." (Kheirandish, Abbasi, & Javadian, 2007, p. 5) In other words, the text begins with a monolithic image of the discipline of history in which questions have definite answers. The work of a historian is, therefore, to simply find the "correct" answers. In fact, there is

a picture of an archeologist working in a field at the end of the lesson associating historical scholarship with the process of archeological discovery. What is generally implied in this lesson is that historical knowledge is produced in a "scientific manner" based on hard evidence. Similar to what archeologists do in their discoveries, historians are assumed to search, find and organize decisive historical facts. The results can then be presented in a definite text such as the one students are about to read.

It seems, therefore, that the authors are rejecting –or ignoring– the possibility of various interpretation, multiple perspectives, and contrasting historical analyses. This approach then manifests itself in what will be taught throughout the text. The history textbook is believed to be and presented as the report of the "truth about the past".

Evaluating students' knowledge. In all three textbooks, the authors pose questions to be answered by students at the end of each lesson. These questions serve two purposes. They evaluate students' understanding and knowledge of what the textbook authors want them to learn. They also provide teachers with a guide for designing classroom evaluations. In other words, they provide a model for what the authors consider an appropriate framework for evaluating students' learning.

In the sixth grade textbook, three types of question are posed at the end of each lesson. These include "fill in the blank", "connect the related words", and "recall and explain" questions. Recall and explain questions either ask students to describe what has happened in a specific historical episode, or why a particular event has occurred. In all these questions, students can answer by simply going back to the text and reading the related parts of the lesson. Again, the underlying assumption for all these "recall and explain" questions is that there is one true version of the story that has been explained in

the text. Despite the earlier emphasis on understanding versus memorizing, all students have to do is to memorize the narrative –and maybe remember the causes of the events– as explained in the text.

In the seventh and eighth grade textbooks, most questions are "recall and explain" question. In some cases, students are also asked to conduct additional research beyond the contents of the textbooks. The recall questions often ask students about the information provided in the lessons. Examples include "what was the name of the army generals during the Samanid dynasty?" (Javadian, Kheirandish, & Abbasi, 2007, p. 27); "which areas were conquered by Mahmud Qaznavi?"(p. 40); or "what did the British do to defeat the oil nationalization movement?" (The History group of textbooks' planning office, 2007, p.57). In these cases, students should find the answers to the questions from the lesson and, in order to be able to respond to similar questions during evaluations, they have to memorize the content.

The explain questions go beyond simple memorization of the information and usually ask students to explain the causes of the events or to compare different circumstances with each other. Examples of these types of questions include "Why did the Alavian dynasty collapse?" (Javadian, Kheirandish, and Abbasi, 2007, p. 32); "What were the causes of Teymur's[12] repeated attacks on Iran?" (Javadian, Kheirandish, and Abbasi, 2007, p. 54); and "Why did the Shah not propose his reform bill before 1341 [1963]?" (The History Group of Textbooks' Planning Office, 2007, p.65). Answering these questions require students to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the textbooks'

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[12] Teymur Shah (1369 – 1405 A.D.) of Turkic origin was the founder of the Teymurian dynasty. Along with Genghis Khan, Teymur is often portrayed among the "brutal rulers" who invaded Iran killing many civilians.

content compared to the recall questions. Nevertheless, the answers to these questions can still be found in the texts. The authors do provide their own opinion about the causes of various events and then ask students to understand –and reiterate– them. In a similar way, these questions are based on the abovementioned assumption that the texts have provided the students with a "precise and final account" of what has happened –including its causes and consequences. Yet again, students are not asked –or encouraged– to analyze the causes and effects from different perspectives.

The end-of-the-lesson questions also include comparison questions that require students to compare and contrast the information provided in different lessons of the texts. Examples of this type of questions are, "In your opinion, what is the main difference between Al-e Buyeh dynasty and other dynasties you have studied so far?" (Javadian, Kheirandish, and Abbasi, 2007, p. 32); or, "In your opinion, what was the difference between Teymur's method of governance and that of Shahrokh?" (Javadian, Kheirandish, and Abbasi, 2007, p. 54). These questions go one step further in asking students to make their own judgment about events that have happened in different historical contexts. Despite the reference to students' "opinion" in these questions, there is still an assumption of a single true answer. In other words, the comparison questions assume that there shall be only one correct result out of historical comparison of two events.

Finally, the seventh and eighth grade textbooks include questions that ask students to conduct additional research beyond what they can find in the texts. Examples include "prepare an essay about the life and contributions of one of the Iranian scientists who have been named in this lesson" (Javadian, Kheirandish, and Abbasi, 2007, p. 9); or

"prepare an essay about the life of one of the people mentioned in this lesson" (Ibid, p. 33). These research questions, however, constitute a small portion of the questions that appear in the textbooks. More importantly, they often focus on the issues and figures that have not been covered in the texts. The students are then asked to gather more information –usually about a person– in the areas left outside the textbooks' definite and final accounts.

Table 5 provides a summary of the percentage of each type of questions in the textbooks. As the data show, compare and contrast questions and research questions that require students to think and do research beyond the content of the texts constitute a small portion of the overall number of questions.

Table 5

Types of Questions Presented in Each Textbook and Their Percentages

Question Type	6th grade	7th grade	8th grade
Fill in the blanks	44%	0	5%
Connect the related words	10%	2%	5%
Recall information from the text	22%	43%	48%
Explain the causes and consequences of events or decisions (as stated in the texts)	22%	33%	24%
Compare and contrast	2%	7%	5%
Conduct research	0	15%	13%
Total	100%	100%	100%

It is also useful to examine the nature of the textbooks' research question to find out whether they foster independent thinking or not. By independent thinking I imply giving students an opportunity to consider, and to interact with, multiple perspectives and

make individual decisions and judgments. The various categories of research assignments students are given and the instructions they are provided with in the texts are among the primary indicators that show the extent to which these assignments can broaden students' perspectives and promote inquiry skills. Table 6 summarizes these categories:

Table 6

Categories of Research Questions in the Textbooks and their Percentages

Category of Question	Percentage
Write a brief essay about a person (or persons)	69%
Write a brief essay about a historical event	16%
Write a brief essay about a historical place	10%
Write a brief essay about the difference between an authoritarian and a parliamentary system.	5%
Total	100%

An overall survey of the instructions for these research assignments shows that students are not provided with any systematic guideline on how to conduct the assigned research; how to gather information; what kinds of resources to refer to; and whether they need to include multiple resources or not. The text asks them, rather vaguely, to "write an essay" and, as mentioned before, in all these questions, the research topic is something that has not been covered in the text. This means that students can refer to a single resource in doing their assignments and they are not required to employ a high level of inquiry and analytical skills. While these questions do provide an opportunity for students to conduct a preliminary search to find a relevant resource, it falls short of requiring them to demonstrate independent thinking and analysis.

Content of the lessons. In this section, I employ two concepts of "intertexuality" and "modality" introduced by Fairclough to better understand how the texts introduce historical knowledge to students. Fairclough (2003) defines intertextuality as the process of incorporating the elements of other texts into a text through direct or indirect forms of speech –e.g. quotation, summarizing, or paraphrasing. Fairclough argues that by bringing other voices into the narrative of a text, intertextuality acknowledges differences and allows for other perspectives to be included. At the same time, it is important to examine which other voices are being included and which ones are not. Based on this background, I focus on the exercises of intertextuality in the history textbooks and examine how these texts have incorporated other voices into their narrative. I begin with examining the most basic type of intertextuality, namely quoting or citing other relevant sources. An analysis of such a direct intertextuality would allow us to better understand whether the textbooks acknowledge multiple perspectives in historical analysis or not; and whether they provide any model for historical scholarship or not.

Recognizing different viewpoints in historical analysis and multiple interpretations of similar events requires textbooks authors to refer to the work of other historians. Incorporating elements of other texts that are used or introduced as resources appears to be an essential part of historiography. In this context, citing the works of other historians who might have differing views on an specific issue indicates the authors' willingness to acknowledge the existence of multiple perspectives in history scholarship. At the same time, students become more familiar with the practice of scholarship by being introduced to the use of various –primary and secondary– sources in historical analysis.

In the textbooks under study, the narrative is presented for the most part in a monolithic manner in which the authors aim at transferring packages of information to the students. Throughout the three textbooks, there appears three instances in which the authors refer to the opinions of historians:

- in the lesson about the migration of Aryans to Iran, the text states "[h]istorians have named […] four issues as the cause of Aryan's migration";

- in the lesson on the Achaemenid Empire the text states "historians believe that Cyrus had been a very wise king";

- and in the lesson about Genghis Khan's attack on Iran the text states "historians believe that Sultan Mohammad made a mistake in overthrowing the Gharakhtaid dynasty".

These are the only instances in which the text refers to the opinions of historians as producers of authoritative knowledge about the past. Interestingly, however, even in these cases historians are presented as a monolithic group of scholars with a consensus about the issue under study.

Another way a text can incorporate elements of other texts into its narrative is through the use of primary sources. For the most part, the textbooks under study here do not provide any reference to the primary sources upon which they based their analyses. The main exceptions are the lessons covering the Pahlavi era and the Islamic Revolution. In these lessons, the text frequently uses the speeches by Ayatollah Khomeini as reference. Not surprisingly, these few cases of historical primary sources have been selected in a way that would confirm and reinforce the overall narrative of the textbook.

Indeed intertextuality could work as a double sword. By incorporating primary sources, intertextuality provides a model for gathering historical information. It shows the students that they can study and refer to the existing documents produced in the past. By implicitly inviting the students to investigate documents produced at the time of the event under study, the textbooks imply a contextualized approach to historical scholarship. However, the biased selection of the primary sources curtails the extent of this contextualized approach. Instead, the text creates a sense of –false– authenticity and provides a skewed –and sometimes unreliable– model for historical scholarship.

"Modality", on the other hand, refers to the level of certitude and authority attached to a statement in the text –or a speech. In defining the concept of modality, Fairclough (2003) quotes Halliday (1994) who argues that "modality means the speaker's judgments of the probabilities, or the obligations, involved in what he is saying" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 165). The level of certainty expressed in a statement may vary. Certain linguistic indicators such as "certainly", "often", and "probably" allow the author to express different degrees of certainty –or rather uncertainty. In particular, a text may present a definite and certain set of statements by not employing any such indicator that implies uncertainty. For example, a text may discuss the causes of the demise of a specific dynasty by referring to "the king's incompetence" as the main cause of the collapse of the whole dynasty. The same statement, however, may be expressed with a different modality: "the king's incompetence was probably one of the main causes of the collapse of his dynasty". These two statements demonstrate two different levels of certitude. The former projects an absolute certitude on the part of the author. As such, it communicates to the reader the absence of any doubt about the content of the analysis. In

contrast, the latter statement offers a more measured statement that acknowledges the possibility of other plausible explanations.

Moreover, the modality of a statement can communicate different messages regarding the scholarly authority of the author, or that of the text (Fairclough, 2003). In other words, modality shapes –and is shaped by– the relationship between the text and the reader. In the case of history textbooks, the text assumes a position of authority over the truth of historical knowledge. The authors exercise and reinforce this authority through the use of different modalities in their statements about the past. These modalities often instill a sense of certitude in the reader. The identity of the students as readers of the text, and receivers of knowledge, is, therefore, shaped by the modality of the text. The level of certainty expressed in the text determines whether students are being encouraged to question the text's assertions, or whether they are being told should accept and learn the information.

In the case of the history textbooks, the overall narrative is represented in a rather definitive manner. There exist a large number of statements that do not leave much room for uncertainty. Beginning from the ancient times up to the final lesson on the Islamic Republic, the text often presents historical information using absolute statements. The linguistic indicators that communicate uncertainty rarely appear in the text. Several examples can be quoted from the text to demonstrate the level of certainty embedded in it. Here is an excerpt from the lesson on the causes of the decline of the Achaemenid Empire: "in the Achaemenid dynasty, no one was allowed to interfere in the governance of the country because everything was under the control of the king. Therefore, the Achaemenids became corrupted" (Kheirandish, Abbasi, & Javadian, 2007a, p. 49). In

another excerpt from the lesson on the Islamic Republic the reader is told that "Today Iran is the most powerful country in the Middle East and all Muslim nations and the oppressed people of the world see it with respect and hope." (The History Group of Textbooks' Planning Office, 2007, p.84). It is possible to argue that the same certain tone colors the text throughout all three textbooks.

The same level of certainty exists in the text when the authors are discussing the inner feelings, motivations and emotions of historical figures or those of a group of people –such as Iranians in general. For example, here is an excerpt from the lesson about Naser al-Din Shah[13] of the Qajar dynasty: "He pretended to care about the progress and development of Iran, but in reality, he only cared about his own interests and, therefore, pushed Iran to the slippery slope of collapse" (The History Group of Textbooks' Planning Office, 2007, p.27). And here is another excerpt from the text about the will of the people: "Defeat against the Russians made Iranians very angry and after a few years, people answered to the call for Jihad by the clergy with extreme passion to reclaim the lost territories" (The History Group of Textbooks' Planning Office, 2007, p.24).

Students' Understanding of the Nature of Historical Knowledge

Along with the textbooks' representation of the nature of historical knowledge, it is important to examine how students' understand history scholarship and how they respond to the textbooks' narrative. An important context of this inquiry about students' response is the rapidly diversifying sources of information in the digital age. Increasing access to alternative sources of information can impact how students receive and process

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[13] Naser al-Din Shah (1831 – 1896) was the fourth Shah of the Qajar dynasty who ruled over Persia for about half a century.

textbooks' information. At the same time, the extent of the impact of such resources is dependent upon students' will to use them. Considering that historical inquiries do not seem to be among the most popular and attractive topics for teenage students, it is reasonable to argue that textbooks have had a strong monopoly over students' exposure to history.

To better understand how students understand textbooks' historical information and how they approach what they read, I designed a number of questions about the nature of historical knowledge and asked students to explain what they conceive of history as a discipline. I also asked them how much they think the opinions and subjectivities of the authors had influenced what we knew, or could know, about the past. The responses showed two different perceptions of history; and the respondents were divided based on whether they have been in Nava School during their middle school years or not.

Those interview participants who were new to the school and who had taken their history classes in other schools –i.e. 5 out of 15– believed that history was supposed to be the collection of the facts and it should have nothing to do with one's opinions. They believed the best scholarship was the one that focused solely on "what had happened". Such a scholarship, they believed, I was not tainted by the viewpoints of the author or that of the historian. Among these five newcomers, Somayyeh expressed her opinion quite forcefully: "the study of history has nothing to do with the author's personal viewpoint."

Those who have been Nava students during their middle school years generally believed that historical texts were a mixture of fact and opinion –i.e. 9 out of 15 participants. Although they acknowledged that some texts could be more biased than

others, they argued that it was impossible to completely separate an author's personal viewpoints from his or her analysis of the past. Samineh stated that "I think history is both reality and opinion. Just the percentages change for different people. One might put more of his/her opinion in his/her analysis; the other might write more about the reality." Baharan expressed the same opinion: "something has really happened [in the past]. But then people's interpretations are going to be added to it. It [i.e., the result] might not be exactly as what has happened. Some parts might be changed a little bit. That is why sometimes it [i.e., historical knowledge] is people's opinions and interpretations [rather than factual reports]." Some of the participants went as far to state that it was almost impossible to know what had really happened. For example, Shadan concluded:

Even now if you look at events that happen in Iran, [and ask] three people from three different parties with three different beliefs [to write about them], each writes it from a different perspective. Some say it is a good event, some say it is bad. So we do not know the truth because each person writes according to his/her own interest. That is why I think most of it [i.e., historical knowledge] is lies and [written] in the interest of someone. Anyway, it is not reality.

Students' perceptions of the nature of historical knowledge also inform their ideas about how they themselves can know and understand the past. Those who believed that history was a collection of facts and had nothing to do with the opinions of historians argued that it was easy to figure out if someone was telling the truth. They expressed confidence in that their ability to easily recognize if the author's personal biases had permeated his or her historical work. Azarin said: "[…] the more real it [i.e. the historical account] is, the more beautiful it gets. You can tell if someone is not telling the truth. You

can tell if something has really happened or not." None of the respondents, however, provided any concrete method for assessing the authenticity of the text or that of a historical claim. Instead, they relied on their intuition for recognizing "true" accounts from the "false" ones. Some of this group pointed to the textbooks as examples of biased historiography. They argued that just as easily as one could tell when textbook authors had put forward their own judgments, one would be able to evaluate any other text. To the respondents, it seemed that the essential indicator of an author's bias was the presence or absence of overt value judgments about how "good" or "bad" things and people had been. Since it seemed to them it was easy to find such definite adjectives as "good" and "bad" in most history texts, they believed that it would be easy for them to recognize the "real historiography" from the "fabricated" ones.

In contrast, those students who believed that historical texts were always a combination of facts and opinions articulated a more sophisticated approach to the study of history. They all believed that one could never understand what had happened from the accounts of just one author. They suggested that, in order to understand the past, one should read opinions of people from different perspectives. It is only then when one can come up with a conclusion about a historical event or figure. They also indicated that each individual would have his or her own biases in interpreting historical texts. For example, Maryam said: "[…] all books do not tell the same story [about the past]. They are different. You can read all of them and then again, based on your own opinion, make a conclusion." Zeynab made a connection between news and information about current events and what we could know about the past:

"[…] A historical event is like news. They say if you really want to know the news, you have to watch the Iranian [governmental] TV, and BBC, and then take something [i.e., a position] in the middle. For example we can read several historians' writings. One is Iranian, one is Egyptian. For example regarding Alexander [the Great] and the Third Darius, you should read the Egyptian accounts, and the Iranian ones, and also something like a German one, someone who has been neutral. Also we can refer to some references that we know to be true. If you read four or five of these [sources], then you can reach a conclusion [somewhere] in the middle. Of course it will not be 100% [correct]."

Students' Perceptions of the Subject Matter of History

In this section, I examine the students' experiences in history classrooms, as well as their perceptions of the textbooks. These perceptions include the degree of their reliance on the textbooks as a resource for historical information, and their general opinion about the subject matter of history discipline. Together with the above overview of history textbooks, this section helps us better understand the complex student-textbook dynamics in this case study.

General Interest in the Subject Matter of History

The students generally expressed a favorable view towards studying history. Some of them elaborated more by explaining that while they did like history, they did not like their history textbooks, the fact that they should memorize their contents, and that they were tested based on memorization. While the question in the surveys did not ask them for an explanation, 17 students wrote extra lines in their responses stating the above attitude. These unrequested explanations might be an indication of some internal tension

in the respondents when it comes to their experience of history education. Here are some of the comments from the surveys: "I like history itself but I hate school [version of] history"; "I like history itself, but I do not like memorizing it for the [history] class"; "I do not like history as a course that you have to memorize, but I do like reading about it."

In the interviews, I had the opportunity to ask the students whether they believed it is necessary to study history or not; and if so, why that would be the case. The majority of the students' responses were similar to what the textbooks describe as the benefits of studying history. The notion that history helps us learn from our past mistakes –and this, in turn, will help us not to repeat them– was frequently expressed by the students. Elham offered a simple –yet telling– answer to why it would be necessary to study history: "[s]o that we will not repeat it." Baharan said: "if we do not know how things happened in the past, they might happen again" and Hengameh asserted that: "[i]f we can know the real history, we can prevent the same mistakes from happening again."

Table 7

Survey Participants' Level of Interest in the Subject Matter of History

Interest in History	Percentage
Very much	19%
Somewhat	40%
Nor like nor dislike	19%
Don't like it	11%
I hate it	11%
Total	100%

I observed similar attitudes in one of the eighth grade history classes. The teacher asked the students whether they think studying history is important. Once again, the discussion was focused on learning from mistakes and preventing what has happened before to happen again. Nevertheless, sixth grade students expressed a more positive understanding of history. When asked why studying history is important, they pointed to how it makes them feel proud and how they can know more about scientific developments in the past. For example, one of the student said: "We can feel proud knowing that we used to be like that", or another student said: "We can learn what scientists like Ibn Sina did and continue their path." In other words, it seems that students begin middle school with a positive attitude but learn to focus more on negative aspects of history after three years of history education.

Overall, these responses demonstrate an emphasis on the negative experiences of the past and a focus on what has gone wrong and, therefore, should be avoided. The textbooks reiterate and reinforce this attitude through a number of quotes from religious leaders and texts such as Ayatollah Khomeini and the Qur'an – and classical literary sources[14]. It seems that, therefore, the textbooks' emphases on the failures and mistakes of the past have found their way into the students' attitude towards their history. In other words, perceiving history as a "Ayeneh Ebrat" –i.e. the "mirror [in which one can see] examples [or lessons] of warning and caution"– has gradually tuned the students' attention to the failures that should be avoided. A lack of concern –or knowledge– about the positive side of history, which can be arguably a source of hope and pride, is inherent

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[14] A genre of prose and poetries in classical Farsi literature deals with this image of "failed and regrettable past". This body of literature often urges the reader to reflect upon the negative aspects of the past in order to avoid repeating similar mistakes.

in this attitude. This can further explain why the students often refer to historical failures in their references to the past.

Students' Assessments of the History Classes

I asked the students to talk about their history classes; how they were organized; what the teacher would usually do in the class; how they would use the textbooks in the class; and what was expected from them. Again, there was a clear difference between the responses of those students who had been studying at Nava School and those who had been in other schools during their middle school years. As before, I call the second group the newcomers. For most of the newcomers –i.e. 4 out of 5– middle school history classes consisted of the teacher reciting the text and asking them to memorize the content for the exam. Furthermore, all of the newcomers reported that the teacher was the main actor in the classroom. She would either lecture the content of the text, or simply provide them with sample questions and answers for the test. The students had to memorize their notes, or the answers to the sample questions, and rewrite them in the tests and evaluations.

The students, however, showed different opinions about these teaching strategies. While taking notes from the teacher's lectures was considered a dull and boring task by some, others favored the approach. This was particularly the case for those students who had attended classes where the teacher would simply hand them sample questions and would ask them to memorize the answers. This group of students often showed a favorable attitude towards teacher's explanations and her more active role. Shirin stated "I did not like my classes in 6th grade because the teacher would just give us questions to memorize. But in 7th and 8th grades it was better; our teachers explained the lessons and it helped me understand." Also Elham who had never enjoyed her history classes argued "I

would have liked it if they would explain it to us. But my teachers used to just read the text and give us the answers to the questions."

Nonetheless, the fact that the students themselves did not have any role in the history classes and that they were supposed to be passive receivers of the information seemed to bother all of them. Although they did not have a clear idea of what their "ideal" history class would look like, they all believed that memorizing teachers' notes or sample questions was not a desirable method of teaching history. Saghi put it in rather unreserved terms: "I hated history; we just had to memorize everything". Azarin criticized her teacher's approach and considered her method of teaching as the "main reason" she did not enjoy history classes: "[i]t seemed like the teacher had memorized the text. She would write questions; we would mark the answers in our textbooks; [then we have to] memorize, and answer [during the tests], and that was it. We did not do anything else."

Even though it appears to be a flawed method of teaching history, this approach seems compatible with the historiography of the textbooks. The books generally do not acknowledge the diversity of perspectives and, in doing so, they imply a fixed set of questions and –correct– answers when it comes to history. In a similar vein, the teacher presents the facts as stated in the textbooks and students have to memorize them as "correct" answers. In turn, this teaching method reinforces the idea that textbooks possess the truth about the past and students' only role is to memorize it.

The students who had been in Nava School during their middle school years had a completely different experience in their history classes. As a result, most of them had enjoyed the class and the subject matter of history. They worked in groups on projects of

their choice and presented their findings in the class. They also had done some role-playing activities that had helped them better understand the content of their lessons. Many of them reported that they had not needed to memorize anything for they had the chance to deeply understand the lessons in class discussions, presentations and plays. Baharan explained the class environment:

> We would choose a lot of different projects so we would understand [the lessons] better; it was not memorization. For example, when studying a historical event, we would discuss why it had happened; what was people's reaction. We would discuss them deeply, and we also watched a lot of movies.

My observations in history classrooms supported students' accounts. In almost all classes, students had opportunities for group work and discussion and were able to share their own opinions about the content. They also engaged in analyzing reading materials that the teacher provided them with. In one of the sixth grade classrooms the teacher actually asked the students how they preferred to study history and what they wanted to do in history classes. The students were visibly excited for being consulted and gave suggestions that were similar to what I had observed happening in other classrooms in seventh and eighth grade. They asked for additional materials that went beyond textbooks, expressed interest in conducting research projects and classroom discussions, and asked the teacher to be enthusiastic so that they would become interested in the subject matter. In other words, it seemed to me that what was happening inside history classes was similar to what students would have liked to experience.

Nava students also showed more trust in their teachers and seemed to enjoy the teachers' style of teaching, even if it was simple lectures. Salma said: "we would not read

the books at first. She would explain for us what had really happened, because in our textbooks they did not tell the whole story. But she would tell us the whole thing based on the books she had read." Hengameh explained why it was easy for her to remember history: "[i]t was not as if the teacher lecturing all the time. She would make stories out of them [i.e. historical events]. This way, they would stick to our minds. It was much better."

When I asked the students to elaborate more on their research projects, their role plays, and how they prepared for them, many of them did not provide a clear answer. Some said that they did not remember their topics; others stated that they used the Internet sources but could not remember exactly what type of sources. Still others simply mentioned "Wikipedia". It seemed, however, that their approach in doing research on historical topics had been collecting data from sources other than the textbooks. Yet, they did not have clear criteria for what kind of resources they were supposed to use.

While they did understand that the textbooks could be biased and, thus, not always contain valid reliable information, they did not apply this knowledge to other sources. They did not show, in other words, a habit of examining multiple sources and comparing and contrasting multiple narratives. They had simply used another source as their main reference without a particular critical attitude. More importantly, I did not observe any instruction in the classroom about using multiple sources. As a result, the educational experience of doing a history project has been limited for them – especially in regard to the nature of the discipline of history. It is worth noting than most of these students, could not recall the topics they had chosen for their history projects.

I had the opportunity to observe one of the role-playing activities that the teacher implemented in her seventh grade classroom. When discussing the lesson on Teymur's attack to Iran and the establishment of the Teymurian dynasty, the teacher asked students to imagine they were a 13-years-old girl living in Iran during that time, and to write a letter to a friend to introduce themselves and to explain their living conditions. The students became excited and engaged in the activity; they started talking with each other and jotting down ideas while the teacher was going around the room answering their questions. What seemed to be missing from the activity, however, was any attempt to gather some information about the lives of ordinary people during the period in question from sources other than the textbooks. The students approached the activity more as a creative writing exercise and seemed to be more concerned about the words they should use and the tone of their letter. The content of the letter and its historical information became of secondary importance. At the end, some of the students volunteered to read their letters; and everyone seemed to enjoy listening to their stories –and their occasional jokes. The extent to which the activity resulted in new learning about history on the part of the students, however, was unclear.

To summarize, although the teachers at Nava were much more successful in igniting the students' interests in the subject matter of history and in giving them the opportunity to exercise their agency as active members of the classroom, they fell short of taking the full advantage of their practices. In particular, they failed to give the students the necessary skills and tools towards becoming critical and informed consumers of knowledge.

Students' Assessments of the History Textbooks

In addition to their different opinions about history classes, Nava students and newcomers showed significant difference in their perceptions of the textbooks' content. Most of the newcomer students did not have as critical a view towards the textbooks as Nava students. When I asked them about their opinions about the textbooks, the newcomers often discussed the length of the lessons and the difficulty of memorizing so much information. In other words, they mostly focused on the mechanics of the text and not necessarily on the quality of its content. Saghi said that "the textbook was weird. First of all it was too much. Then, before understanding what we were reading and [what] we should understand, we were [already] thinking about how to read and memorize all of these. It would not let you enjoy it."

One of the newcomers, however, did discuss the accuracy and the "bias" of the history textbooks. When asked what she thought about the history textbooks, Somayyeh referred to the "unrealistic" nature of the textbooks' contents. She asserted that the authors of the history textbooks had changed history to "suite the interests of the Islamic Republic". She was the one who believed that the study of history should have nothing to do with one's opinion. Yet, she believed that the school textbooks were full of personal judgments and opinions –especially against the Pahlavis in order to "justify" the Revolution–:

"[…] a big chunk of history textbooks is the publisher's opinions and perspectives. I mean the modern history and the Islamic Republic section. Because the Islamic Republic came to power defeating the Pahlavis, they would

use language to describe the Pahlavi [in such a way] that would make it seem as if

they deserved it and it was our right to defeat them."

I should mention, however, that Somayyeh enjoyed history and had read a number of

historical texts other than the school textbooks.

Nava students were more critical about the content of the textbooks compared to

the newcomers. The main issues for which they criticized the textbooks were the "unfair

treatment of the Iranian kings", the "distorted narrative" of the past, the "authoritarian"

tone of the text –which did not allow the students to make their own conclusions–, and

the absence of information about the lives of ordinary people.

The textbooks' "unrealistic image of the Iranian kings" was a source of criticism

for most of the participants. They argued that the textbooks distorted the past and the

images of the Iranian kings to suite the authors' beliefs and agendas. They criticized what

they saw as the black-and-white representation of the kings. They claimed that the

authors had emphasized the positive contributions of the people whom they favored,

while magnifying the failures of those whom they disliked. For example Hengameh

stated:

"I do not think the textbooks are fair. For one king, they would only say the good

things; but for someone they do not like, it is only negative. [It is] as if he has not

been a good king; he would waste people's money for personal fun; they would

never say anything about his positive side. For example Reza Khan [15] has done a

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[15] Reza Khan or Reza Shah (1878 – 1944) was the first Shah of the Pahlavi dynasty. He overthrew the Qajar dynasty and founded the Pahlavi dynasty in 1925.

lot of positive things. We studied a lot of them in our class. But the textbooks have none of them."

In a similar vein, Salma said:

"I agree that the Shah [i.e. Reza Shah] has done some bad things, but it would have been better if they [i.e. the authors of the textbooks] included some of his good works and [if they] would not look at him just from one perspective. For example establishing the railroad. The textbooks said that it was not for the country but for his British bosses [that he built the railroads].[…]It portrays people as black and white and not as real people who have done good and bad things. They censor the facts to fit their own ideology.[…] Anything about others is negative, everything about themselves is positive."

Students also criticized the textbooks' "authoritarian" tone that did not allow them to think and to come up with their own conclusions about historical events and influential figures. They believed that the textbooks' authors had imposed their own judgments on the reader; and that they had not left any room for the students to think about the past and to analyze the information. Some of the students such as Ladan took this criticism one step further and argued that the textbook's approach to history in fact impedes the learning process:

"I think if the students could analyze and judge history, the result would have been better. If we could decide for ourselves why that event happened, who was wrong, how could it have happened [differently], I think this way it would have had more impact on the students."

Finally, some of the students were dissatisfied with the textbooks' limited coverage of the lives of ordinary people. They expressed interest in knowing more about the people, instead of the details of the lives of the kings or those of the religious leaders. Their craving for something they could relate to more easily, and make sense of, was apparent in Samineh's statement about what she would have liked to see in the textbooks: "I would have liked to know about how people thought and felt. I wanted to know ordinary people's opinion. For example how was the life of a kid like me in those days? How did she feel?"

In spite of the general mistrust in the content of the textbooks, most of the students believed that "fabrications" and "biased judgments" can be found mostly in the parts that directly related to the Islamic Republic; i.e. the modern history. Most of their examples of what they saw as the textbooks' biases were from the parts covering the Pahlavi era. Some of them even stated that they felt comfortable with the content of the textbooks when discussing pre-modern history and ancient Iran. While it might be the case that the textbooks present a stronger bias in the lessons dealing with the Islamic Republic and the Pahlavi era, one may find in their representations of the earlier periods a fair share of biases and side-taking as well. For example, the textbooks never discuss the well documented religious tolerance of Shah Abbas during Safavid dynasty or Iran's global status during Alkhamaid Empire. These instances of biases, however, are more subtle and are not usually expressed with loaded adjective. As a result, the students seem to be less conscious of these implicit biases.

Moreover, more access to the alternative historiographies of the Pahlavi era and those of the Islamic Republic era has rendered the textbooks' representation one voice

among the many for students. Therefore, the students have the ability to examine the content of the textbooks and to compare and contrast what they see in the textbooks with what they hear from family members; what they find on the Internet; and what they may see and hear from different Satellite TV stations. In contrast, the students are not generally exposed to differing perspectives regarding Iran's pre-modern history unless they actively seek information related to these eras. This may be why they do not generally compare and contrast the textbooks' representation of the pre-modern periods with other sources. In regards to these periods, the textbooks seem to have a better chance of becoming the dominant voice in students' knowledge of history.

CHAPTER VI

REPRESENTATION AND PERCEPTION OF IRAN'S HISTORY

Reproduction and reinterpretation of collective myths and memories of the past is an essential element in creating a distinct heritage for a nation. This heritage, in turn, shapes individuals' identities as they begin to internalize this heritage. Reproduction of history, therefore, bears a direct impact on defining a specific notion of national identity (Smith, 2001). In the process, history is often simplified, –selectively– reproduced, and remembered in order to generate a homogenous image of the past. This image is then fed into the desired conception of national identity (Lowenthal, 1998).

In the case of Iran, the centralized system of public education and textbook publishing provides a venue for the state to propagate its version of history –and that of national identity– among the youth. At the same time, students' access to alternative sources of information –including the Internet, satellite TVs, and family stories that differentiate from the textbooks' narratives– has undermined the government's monopoly in creating a single version of the past.

In this Chapter, I examine students' overall images of Iran's history and the themes and events that dominate their memory of their collective past. At the same time, I analyze the text to better understand how its narrative relates to students' remarks about their past. In analyzing the text and the students accounts' of the past, I search for value-laden words (employing Fairclough's (2003) discussion on evaluative statements) to better understand how specific events, or specific individuals, have been portrayed.

The overall analysis of the textbooks indicates that they create and reinforce a grim image of Iran's history. This long history appears in the textbooks to be dominated

by authoritarian and oppressive rulers, a series of humiliating national defeats, and a large number of outrageous foreign interventions. Throughout this historiography, Islam is presented in multiple occasions as the savior of the Iranian people with its success culminating in the establishment of the Islamic Republic after the 1979 Revolution. Meanwhile, the surveys and the interviews show that the students' account of the past generally correlate with the textbooks' representations up until the Pahlavi era. However, their images of the Pahlavi era, their perceptions of the Islamic Revolution, and their assessment of the current state of the Islamic Republic diverge dramatically from the textbooks' narrative.

It may be argued, therefore, that textbooks have been successful in creating a generally negative image of Iran's many dynasties. Yet, their efforts in narrating a story of salvation for the "Muslim people of Iran" seem to have been unsuccessful in competing with alternative perspectives to which the students have been exposed. As discussed before, the students' limited access to alternative sources of information about the country's pre-modern history has rendered the textbooks the primary authority over the "historical truth" about these remote eras. In contrast, availability and accessibility of quite a number of alternative voices and perspectives regarding the modern history of Iran, the Islamic Revolution, and the state of the Islamic Republic have seriously challenged for the monopoly of the textbooks. Indeed, personal experiences, family conversations and stories constitute an important part of these alternative voices.

It can be further argued that the monopoly of the textbooks' discourse over historiography of the past and the multiplicity of voices regarding the more recent history have resulted in an overall sense of disappointment. This disappointment sometimes

translates into a feeling of national humiliation among the students who have internalized the worst of both formal and informal discourses on history. On the one hand, these students reject the textbooks' representation of the Islamic Revolution as a glorious victory and deny it to be an end to centuries of oppression and dependence. On the other hand, these students accept and internalize the textbooks' negative discourse on Iran's pre-modern history and the long list of national defeats, concessions and humiliation made by corrupt and despotic Shahs. The result is a negative perception of the past that continues into the present and is dominated by a theme of failure.

Overall Images of the Past

Before reviewing the collective images of specific events or historical periods, it is useful to examine the students' overall view of the history. This view can be then related to the textbooks' representations of the past. For this part of the inquiry, I generally focus on the students' general feelings towards the past. This will help us to better understand the net effects of the image provided by the textbooks. I addressed this issue in the interviews during which I had the chance to delve into deeper discussions. In these interviews, the students had the opportunity to further explain their opinions. The participants approached the question from different angles. Some focused on specific eras that they considered more important or more interesting; others expressed their opinion about what they saw as the general trends of history; and still others talked about their overall feelings –of sadness or happiness– when thinking about the past.

In general, the participants spent more time discussing what make them "sad" or "ashamed" about Iran's history. These negative feelings seem to have been mostly generated by three specific conceptualizations. The first of these was the students' image

of Iranian kings as generally incompetent, self-serving, and corrupt. Some of the students expressed deep emotional feelings –employing words such as "regret" or "extremely saddening"– when recalling the incompetency of the Iranian kings. They also counted the kings' incompetency as the main cause of the major historical failures of the past. Shadan stated that "[i]t really makes me mad how things repeat. The kings make mistakes or deceive people; then a good person comes along; but soon after people are oppressed again and they usually remain silent." Samineh, who seemed to be visibly upset about this situation, showed even more emotional attachment: "[i]t really bothers me to see how miserable people were and what kings used to do. People were like their puppets. This really really bothers me. I think this was the worst thing."

This appraisal of the past is compatible with the textbooks' portrayal of the causes of the "decline" and national "failure" throughout history. Such characteristics of the kings are considered as one of the main causes of the demise of various dynasties. In the historiography of all the dynasties, the textbooks conclude the discussion with a section called: "The Demise of the […] Dynasty" in which the causes of the demise, or decline, of that specific dynasty are discussed. In most cases, the royal court's internal fighting over power, foreign interference or attack, and the kings' utter incompetence appear at the top of the list. Table 8 provides a summary of the textbooks' accounts of the demise of various dynasties. It should be noted that on average, two or three reasons are discussed for each dynasty's decline.

The emphasis on internal conflicts over power and the role of personal interests in power dynamics of the royal courts have translated into the students' perception of the kings –and their courts– as self-serving heads of the state. For the most part of history,

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the political establishment appears to care little for the good of the country and the people. The role of the kings in particular has been highlighted. The prevalence of the instances of their incompetence and their oppressive attitude in the textbooks has left an enduring mark in the students' historical memory. It is the image many students have internalized as a fact of history and a clear cause of failure. Implicit in this image is also an admonishment of the past generations for failing to remove this recurring cause of defeat. In the absence of a comprehensive sociopolitical and economic analysis of the historical events, the textbooks have reduced national failures to personal incompetence of the kings who have become the sole target of blame for historical drawbacks.

Table 8

Causes of the Dynasties' Decline Discussed in the Textbooks

Cause of the Demise	Frequency
Internal conflicts over power and due to personal interests	11
Foreign attack and interferences	10
Incompetent kings	8
Authoritarian and oppressive rule	7
People's dissatisfaction	3

The second conceptualization causing students' negative feeling towards Iran's past is the overwhelming effects of foreign dominance and interference. These feelings are mostly associated with the modern history and, in particular, the influence of the British and Americans in Iran's political system before the Revolution. The students also expressed regrets about Iran's major land concessions and its losing of national

sovereignty when it comes to national resources such as petroleum. Again, this perception of the role of foreign powers is dominant in the textbooks. There is a great emphasis on the loss of territory during the Qajar[16] dynasty's rule. There is also a clear focus on the Pahlavis' dependence on foreign countries in the textbooks. The issue of foreign interventions, however, colors the overall historiography of the textbooks. As Table 8 demonstrates, foreign interference and invasion is among the issues repeatedly named as a cause of the demise and failure of Iranian dynasties. This issue will be discussed in further details in the next section.

Thirdly, the students have a tendency to emphasize the distance between the ruling system and the people. This can be observed in the students' responses to a number of questions in the interviews. Some of the students expressed regret for the continuous humiliation and oppression of the people by the monarchs. This is, of course, in line with the textbooks' representation of the relationship between the people and the ruling class throughout history. In most cases during the interviews, the term "people" was employed by the students in discussing popular dissatisfaction or in reference to the monarchs' oppression and abuse of power –to which the "people" appear as the victim. This simplified understanding of the past creates an image of history in which the rulers and the political establishment are solely responsible for what has happened; and people appear to be mostly on the receiving end. Passive and helpless, the "people" of the textbooks socialize the students with a deep sense of victimization at the hand of those in power. At the same time, this approach towards historiography of the "people" partially

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[16] The Qajar dynasty was one of the major political dynasties in Iran's history who ruled the country from 1785 to 1925.

shapes the students' understanding of their own potentials –as well as their responsibilities as members of the society. The notion that people have always been oppressed and the kings have been running the country, whether towards success or failure, continues to exist in today's discourse of state, power and society in Iran. This, in turn, defines individuals' roles and their attitude towards agency.

When I discussed with the students what they like about their history, most of the participants referred to the Achaemenid[17] Empire. Although they discussed different aspects of this era as the cause of their pride or joy, they all seemed to share the notion that the Achaemenid Empire represents the pinnacle of Iranian history. To many of the participants, the issue of territory –and its expansion or contraction– seemed to play a significant role in their assessment of the power of the country. Therefore, they considered the vast territory of the Achaemenid Empire as a proof of Iran's supremacy in the world during that time. Sarin talked about this issue with evident delight: "I am really proud of the time of Cyrus[18] for all the conquests he made throughout the world." Saghi directly linked this vast territory to Persia's international power: "I really like to see how powerful and great we were in the world. The Achaemenids were among the most powerful." Some of the participants also mentioned Cyrus and Darius as "patriotic kings" who worked hard for the progress of the country. These ancient figures seem to be among the main sources of pride for the students; for they are considered to be national heroes who put their country's interests above their own. Somayyeh seemed to be particularly

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[17] One of the earliest dynasties of Iran, the Achaemenid Empire ruled from 700 B.C to 330 B.C. and, at the peak of its history, it became a global empire.

[18] The founder of the Achaemenid Empire and the king of Persia. He lived between 600 or 576 B.C. and 530 B.C and was also known as Cyrus the Great.

enthusiastic about this:

> "[f]or example when you look at Cyrus and his Human Rights Charter[19], or whatever he did for Iran, it was all because he loved the country and he did it out of the goodness of his heart. This makes me really proud to think that someone would go that far to do something for his country."

I observed similar expressions in seventh grade history classrooms when the teachers asked students what they like about history and what they want to know more about. In both classes most of the students who responded to the question mentioned Iran's pre-Islamic history and the reign of Achaemenid Empire as their favorite historical topics. Some talked about their sense of pride and others described the period as "before the Arab's invasion", as if the invasion symbolized the end of an exciting era.

The above favorable image of the Achaemenid Empire is often contrasted with the present time with a sense of sorrow and regret. The students tended to compare the "ancient glory" of that age with the current situation, which they saw as grim. Although the glory and power of the Achaemenid Empire made them delightful and proud, they seemed to perceive such position of power as a lost fortune of the far past.

The positive feelings inspired by the textbooks were limited in their ability to create a tangible and concrete sense of national pride. These feelings often failed to stand up to the participants' negative view of more recent history –and specially the modern

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[19] Refers to the Cyrus Cylinder created in about 539–530 BC. It is an ancient clay cylinder, from the time of Cyrus on which is written his genealogy, story of his conquest of Babylon, and his political ideology. In the late 1960s the last Shah of Iran called it "the world's first charter of human rights". This claim however is contested by some scholars and historians. The Cylinder is the property of the British Museum and was lent to Iran for 2 months of display in the fall of 2010. The display enjoyed great publicity from the government of Iran.

history. Shadan's statement demonstrates this mixed feeling clearly:

> "When I look out our map during the Achaemenid Empire, I really enjoy seeing how large and powerful Iran has been. But even that turns into a source of anger because we kept losing our territory and it just got smaller and smaller."

Represented and Perceived Dominant Themes in Iran's History

In both the surveys and the interviews, I asked the students to identify significant historical events that in their opinion have been most influential in shaping Iran's history. This question allowed me to observe the students' dominant narratives of the past in some more details. In the surveys, most of the students merely named events that they deemed most influential. They also stated whether it has had a positive or negative influence for Iranians. Some of them did provide some further explanation about their choice. In the interviews, however, I was able to inquire more as I asked the students to elaborate on why they believed a specific event had been significant. In my analysis, I also included their responses to other questions that related to their understanding of particular historic events and their significance –i.e. their indirect answers to a similar question. Finally, I examined the textbooks to see how they cover different historical events; how much space they allocate for discussing them; and how they evaluate and judge the significance of these events for the country.

Judgments and Feelings towards the Past

To better understand the students' perceptions of the past and of significant historical events, I examined their assessment of the constructive or destructive impacts of these events on the country. In the surveys, some of the participants had expressed their opinions by using statements such as "negative influence" or "positive influence".

Others had not provided any value judgments. However, there were events that were clearly considered by almost all of the respondents as negative developments. For instance, Genghis Khan's attack was unanimously seen, by all participants who had mentioned it in their surveys, as a significant negative development. In several other cases, however, the participants' opinions about the –positive or negative– influence of the event varied. For example, with regards to the Islamic Revolution, some of the students considered it a positive event; some saw it as a negative development; and yet others did not provide any explanation. Based on these responses, I have categorized the events mentioned by the students into three groups of "Negative Events", "Positive Events", and "Mixed Feelings". Negative Events are those classified as negative by all the students who identified them as influential. Positive Events are those classified as positive by all student who identified them as influential. Mixed Feelings refer to the events about which the students expressed different opinions. Table 9, 10, and 11 summarize this statistical analysis in the order of their frequencies.

Table 9

Historical Events with Mixed Judgments in Survey Responses

Mixed Feelings	Positive	Neutral or not Specified	Negative	Total
The Islamic Revolution	6	26	28	60
The Arabs' Invasion[20]	1	9	15	27
The Green Movement[21] and its Aftermath	5	3	7	14
Total				100

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[20] Arabs' invasion of Persia in 644 A.D. that resulted in the fall of the Sasanid dynasty.

[21] Mass protests after the 2009 disputed presidential election in Iran that came to be known as the Green Movement.

Table 10

Positive Historical Events in Students' Survey Responses

Positive Events	Frequency
Oil Nationalization[22]	32
The Constitutional Revolution[23]	23
Khatami's[24] Presidency	3
Nader Shah's[25] Victories	2
Establishment of the Achaemenid Empire	2
Total	62

Table 11

Negative Historical Events in Students' Survey Responses

Negative Events	Frequency
Genghis Khan's[26] Attack	35
The World Wars	19
Alexander the Great's[27] Invasion	12
Establishment of the Qajar Dynasty	9
Iran-Iraq War[28]	9
The Qajar's International Treaties and Concessions	8
1953 Coup d'état[29]	4

[22] The nationalization of Iranian Oil Industries under Prime Minister Mosaddeq in 1951.

[23] A revolution in 1905 that resulted in the establishment of a constitutional monarchy Iran..

[24] The fifth President of the Islamic Republic of Iran who served from 1997 to 2005 and is widely considered as a reformist.

[25] The founder of the Afsharieh dynasty who ruled Persia from 1736 to 1747 A.D. Nader Shah restored and expanded the Persian territories through a number of military campaigns.

[26] The founder of the Mongol Empire who conquered Persia in a series of devastating battles in 1220 A.D.

[27] King of Macedon from 336 B.C. to 323 B.C. who attacked Persia in 331 BC and overthrew the Achaemenid Empire.

[28] The Iran-Iraq War began when Iraq invaded Iran in September 1980 and ended with a United-Nations-brokered ceasefire in August 1988.

[29] The U.S. led coup d'état of 1953 in Iran that overthrew the democratically elected government of Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq (d. 1967).

Amir Kabir's[30] Assassination	3
The Afghan's[31] Invasion	1
Total	100

Using this categorization as the basis of the analysis, I then examined each

student's perception of the past based on the dominance of negative or positive events in

their list of "significant" historical events. To do this, I allocated a value of +1, 0, or -1 to

each event based on students' judgment and then added the numbers for each participant.

If the sum of these numbers are greater than zero, it means that the participant has had

more positive events mentioned in their responses and if the sum is negative, it means

that there have been more negative events mentioned. This analysis showed that for

about 58% of the participants, negative events were dominant in their overall image of

Iran's history. In contrast, only 26% perceived their history as more influenced by

positive events (the other 14% had equal number of positive and negative events in their

list). This finding can explain, to some extent, why many students expressed feelings of

"shame" or "sadness" when talking about their nationality. Although they do celebrate

Iran's ancient "glorious" past -e.g. the Achaemenid Empire–, their historical knowledge

is essentially dominated by national failures, collective humiliation in wars, and

destructive reigns of incompetent kings. Moreover, they hold a rather general –and in

important ways vague– idea about the glory of a distant Empire. They do not seem,

however, to have enough tangible information about the ancient empires or on what has

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[30] Amir Kabir (1807 – 1852 A.D.) was the chief Minister to Naser al-Din Shah of the Qajar dynasty during the three first years of the latter's reign. He is usually considered be among Iran's earliest reformists. Amir Kabir has been also credited for his efforts in establishing various modern institutions in the country – including the first institution of higher education– and for publishing the first newspaper in Iran.

[31] The invasion of the Afghan tribes that resulted in the fall of the Safavid dynasty in 1722 A.D.

actually happened during their time. The power of these ancient empires in the world, their vast territories, their advanced bureaucratic systems, the vast networks of communication and transportation, the ruins of the Persepolis and Cyrus's Human Rights Charter are often cited in the historiographies of ancient Persia as the examples of what signify the achievements of these empires. Yet, students recall few of these achievements when they were asked directly about historical events or developments that they deemed significant. When it comes to the negative historical memories however, they seemed to have specific and numerous examples of national failures stretching from the collapse of the Achaemenid Empire to the present time.

I noticed a similar negative attitude in teachers' coverage of Iran's history. When providing additional materials for discussion, teachers seemed to focus more on failures than on accomplishments. In an eighth grade class, the teacher used the example of Genghis Khan's attack to elaborate on historical critical thinking. The teacher explained that it is not enough to know what Genghis Khan did and it is more important to understand the historical context in which such events happen. In another seventh grade class, the teacher distributed a text regarding the corruption of the Sasanid dynasty and its internal dynamics before its fall. Students were asked to decipher the conditions they believed resulted in the demise of the dynasty from the text. In both these cases the teacher was trying to encourage critical thinking and in-depth analysis by providing narratives that challenged textbooks' simplistic and superficial accounts. However, by using instances of national failure and weakness, the activities reinforced the negative image students hold from their past.

As a comparison, I also examined how the textbooks covered the events most frequently mentioned by the students –as negative or positive. In particular, I examined how much space had been allocated to these events. To do this, counted the number of lines used to discuss each event and then translated the numbers into pages knowing that a full page of text consisted of 28 lines (for example, 1.5 pages of text means 42 lines of text). For images, I simply measured the percentage of the page that the image takes up. I also investigated how the text evaluates the impact of these events. The results have been summarized in Table 12.

Table 12

Textbooks' Coverage of the Events Most Frequently Mentioned by the Students

Negative Events	Grade	Number of Pages		
		Text	Image	Total
Genghis Khan's Invasion	7	3	1.5	4.5
World War I and II	8	2.5	2	4.5
International Treaties (Qajar Dynasty[32])	8	2.5	1.2	3.7
Establishment of the Qajar Dynasty	8	1	0.7	1.7
1953 Coup d'état against P.M. Mosaddeq	8	1.5	0	1.5
Alexander the Great's Invasion	6	1	0	1
The Afghan Invasion	8	0.25	0	0.25
Amir Kabir's Assassination	8	0.2	0	0.2
Positive Events	Grade	Number of Pages		
		Text	Image	Total
The Islamic Revolution	8	10.5	5	15.5
Oil Nationalization	8	0.3	1	1.3
The Arab's Invasion	6	0.5	0	0.5
Mixed or Neutral Events	Grade	Number of Pages		
		Text	Image	Total
The Constitutional Revolution	8	4	1.2	5.2
Establishment of the Achaemenids Empire	6	2	1	3
Iran-Iraq War	8	0.5	1.5	2
Nader Shah's Victories	8	1	1	2

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[32] These treaties between Persia and the Russian Empire conceded vast territories of Persia to its northern neighbor.

One may notice that most of the events mentioned by the students as significant have happened in the more modern history of the country –and therefore is covered by the eighth grade textbook. This is not unexpected for the students usually recalled more from what they have studied more recently. Furthermore, as some of them explained in the interviews, the students generally believed that more recent events are "more influential" in determining the country's current situation. This can also explain the dominance of negative events in the students' image of history. The textbooks' representation of the modern history –i.e. the Qajar and the Pahlavi eras– is dominated by negative descriptions of the Shahs and numerous examples of Iran's failure and defeat at the hand of foreign powers. Therefore, the content to which the students have had the most recent exposure consists of the most negative historiography.

The above analysis also shows that some of the "significant" events mentioned by the students do receive more coverage in the texts. Yet, in some noticeable cases, the students' assessment of the impact of these events differs from the textbooks' accounts. Important examples of these discrepancies are the Islamic Revolution, the Arab Invasion, and the Constitutional Revolution. While both the Islamic Revolution and the Arab Invasion have been represented as times of victory or salvation for the Iranian people in the textbooks, most of the students consider them to be negative and unfortunate developments in the country's history. Due to their significance in both official and students' historiographies, these events will be discussed in some more detail in the following section.

To analyze the textbook's portrayals of various historical events, I have coded the text into "positive" and "negative" categories. Then I counted the amount of space each category takes up in the text. Topics that have been considered as "negative" for this coding include foreign invasions, acts of aggressions, and foreign interference that have been argued to have damaged the country –i.e. led to defeat in wars, loss of land, and losing sovereignty. Other elements of the "negative" category include negative descriptions of the kings or other historical figures who are usually associated with people's dissatisfaction. These figures are often described by employing words such as "incompetent", "corrupt", "oppressor", "abusive" and "foreigners' puppet". Finally, descriptions of certain historical episodes as times of "chaos", "insecurity", "poverty", and demise or weakening of the social order –due to the decline of the ruling system– have also been considered as belonging to the "negative" category. Topics that have been considered "positive" include victory in conflicts with foreign enemies; positive accounts of the strength and power of the state; discussions of progress in the arts, sciences, economy, and trade; praise of historical figures or kings for their positive impacts; and "people's victories" and achievements.

I should note that for this particular analysis, I have excluded the lessons on the Islamic Revolution. These include three lessons of the eighth grade textbook. In these lessons, the weakness of the state is equalized with the power and victory for the people which means the judgment about the positivity or the negativity of the content depends on which side one considers as the reference. Therefore the above categorization of "positive" and "negative" portrayals of historical events and episodes no longer applies to these lessons. As for the current analysis, Table 13 and 14 demonstrate the results.

Table 13

The Textbooks' Coverage of Events with Explicit Positive Descriptions

Categories of Positive Events	Number of Pages		
	Text	Image	Total
Stability, Prosperity, and Progress	2	5.5	7.5
Kings' and Politicians' Contributions	1.5	0	1.5
Resisting or Defeating Enemies	1	0	1
People's Victory	0.5	0	0.5
Power and National Strength	0.5	0	0.5
Total	5.5	5.5	11

Table 14

The Textbooks' Coverage of Events with Explicit Negative Descriptions

Categories of Negative Events	Number of Pages		
	Text	Image	Total
Foreign Aggressions, Invasion, or Interference	3.5	4.5	8
Kings' Incompetence, Oppression, and Brutality	2.5	0.8	3.2
Weakening and Demise of Dynasties	1	0	1
Chaos and Insecurity	0.5	0	0.5
Total	7.5	5.3	12.8

The results show that in the textbooks' explicitly normative accounts of historical events, more space has been allocated to negative assessments compared to the positive ones. The discrepancy becomes yet more apparent when one excludes images from one's analysis and one considers only the content of the text; for many of the "positive" descriptions of historical developments in the arts and sciences are briefly mentioned in the captions of the images instead of being discussed in the text of the lessons. Images of historical monuments or complexes known for their architectural sophistications or those of artifacts from different eras are usually accompanied with a caption that praises their artistic value and acknowledges the progresses made leading to such artistic productions.

However, if the students merely focus on memorizing the text –as they are usually expected to do when answering the textbook questions or when preparing for the exams–, they may easily ignore these images and their captions. This further undermines the "positive" historiography of the textbooks, which was less than the negative one to begin with and may explain the students' limited knowledge of the history of achievements in the arts and sciences as a major component of Iran's long history.

Similar to the students' overall image of history, the textbook's historiography illustrates foreign aggression and interference along with kings' incompetence as the most common "negative" themes of Iran's history. Once again, this points to the fact that although there might be some disagreements with regards to significant indicators of identity, territorial identity and national sovereignty are considered by both the students and the textbooks as critical. The textbooks' emphasis on presenting maps that highlights the –generally shrinking– borders of the country can be related to the students' image of the overall trajectory of their country. Through discussing, in much details, –mostly modern– foreign conflicts in which Iran had had to concede, the textbooks might have informed the students' perception of territory and "independence" as significant and indispensable pillars of their nationality and their collective sense of pride.

Categories of "Significant" Events

In order to better understand the nature of the events the students consider "most significant", I have categorized their responses into six themes. These consist of (a) foreign attacks, occupations, and interventions, which include, for instance, Genghis Khan's invasion, Alexander the Great's invasion, the Arab invasion, concessions to foreign countries during the Qajar dynasty, and foreign interference during the Qajar and

the Pahlavi dynasties, b) revolutions and uprisings, which include the Constitutional Revolution, the Islamic Revolution, and the Green Movement, c) the Oil Nationalization, d) social and cultural events, which include the establishment of universities, publication of newspapers, production of noticeable cultural heritages such as the epic book of *Shahnameh*; e) establishment of new political institutions, paradigms and dynasties, which include Khatami's presidency, the rise of the Qajar dynasty, and the establishment of the Achaemenid Empire; and f) territorial expansions made by Iranian kings who occupied other nations' land including Nader Shah's and Cyrus's conquests. Table 15 shows the distribution of these categories in the students' responses in the surveys.

Table 15

The Categories of "Significant" Historical Events in Surveys

Category of the Event	Frequency	Percentage
Foreign attacks, Occupation, and Interventions	125	40%
Revolutions and Uprisings	99	32%
Oil Nationalization	36	11%
Social and Cultural Developments	23	7%
Establishment of New Political and Royal Institutions	21	7%
Territorial Expansions	4	1%
Other	5	2%
Total	313	100%

A similar analysis was conducted on the textbooks. In this analysis, I have coded the events covered in the textbooks –both in the text and in the images– into different categories and then compared the amount of space allocated to each. The results are summarized in Table 16.

Table 16

Space Allocated to Each Category of Events in Text (Tx.) and Images (Im.)

Category of Events	Grade 6 Number of pages of:		Grade 7 Number of pages of:		Grade 8 Number of pages of:		Total Number of pages of:	
	Tx.	Im.	Tx.	Im.	Tx.	Im.	Tx.	Im.
Conflict with Foreign Powers	1.8	0	3.9	1.9	11.5	2.7	17.2	4.5
Popular Movements	0	0	0	0	11.5	1	11.5	1
Internal Conflicts over Power	1.7	0	1.3	0	1.8	0.8	4.8	0.8
Arts, Culture, and Science	0.9	5.5	1.4	6.5	0.8	3	3.1	14.7
Oil Nationalization	0	0	0	0	1.5	1	1.5	1
Total Number of Pages in the Textbook	25		26.5		57.5		109	

The above findings show that there exists a correlation between the textbooks' coverage of the events in the text and the students' images of historical events. In both the textbooks' and the students' historiographies, conflicts with foreign powers are at the top of the list of "significant events" followed by popular movements. Just as the textbooks spend most of their text space on discussions about wars and conflicts with foreign nations or the aggressions and interventions committed against Iran by foreign powers, the students deem these events as dominant in their recollections of Iran's history. Similarly, just as the textbooks spend limited space in discussing the arts and cultural achievements in the text of the lessons, the students do not seem to consider those issues "significant" as their long list of "significant" historical developments is almost devoid of such items. As mentioned before, the emphasis here is on the textbooks' coverage of an event in the *text*; for if the images are included in the analysis, the arts and cultural achievements do obtain a higher rank. Yet, most students approach

history textbooks as texts to be memorized interspersed with some "unimportant" images. Even if they pay some attentions to the images, it seems that the students rarely focus –or even memorize– the captions in which praises have been made in regard to these achievements. In overall, the impact of the text on students' understanding of history seems to be more lasting than that of the images.

Foreign invasions and interventions. It is worth spending some time on a number of the above categories for some more in-depth analysis. The top category of "significant" historical events mentioned by the participants is "foreign attacks, occupations and interventions". This emphasis on the role and impact of foreign powers parallels the textbooks focus on the subject. This is particularly the case in lessons on more modern history. Foreign intervention is often depicted as one of the sources of humiliation and national shame. The students share the same feeling as they consider such interventions a clear sign of weakness. The most "devastating" impacts of these interventions according to the participants have been "loss of land", "destruction of the country", "dominance of foreign cultures", and a sense of "being colonized, oppressed, and humiliated". The earliest instance of foreign invasion mentioned in the survey responses is Alexander the Great's invasion that resulted in the demise of the Achaemenid Empire. The most recent one mentioned by the students goes back to the continuous interventions and influence of foreign powers in Iran's internal affairs during the Pahlavi era.

Similar to the findings from the survey responses, foreign invasions such as the Mongol attacks, or the Arab invasion, constitute a majority of the events deemed significant by the interview participants. With regards to the Mongol, Alexander, and

Arab invasions, what most of the students mentioned as their chief grievance was how these invasions had destroyed "Iran's culture". In case of the Mongol invasion, the students talked about how the invaders burned down the books and the libraries and how they "ruined the progress the country had been making". Salma summarized the invasion in strong words: "they [i.e. the Mongols] burned and ruined a lot of things. They destroyed a lot of valuable things; many of the books that could even be useful today [were destroyed]. They destroyed everything".

In the case of the Arab invasion, the students expressed concern about the fact that the Arabs changed Iranian religion and their language[33]. Shadan gave one of the more expressive –and prejudiced– responses: "we had our own God. We had our own religion. A group of Arabs whose culture was much lower than us decided to teach us how to worship God?" Along with some similar responses the above statement indicates that after almost fourteen hundred years of Iranian Islam, some of the students still seem to identify with Iran's pre-Islamic culture and religion, and to consider Islam a foreign import.

I also got a chance to observe classroom discussions about Arab Invasion in two seventh grade classes. In both classes, students were more focused on the negative consequences of the invasion such as "stalling Iran's progress", "ruining Iranian culture", "destroying national pride", and "overriding Iranian history". Nevertheless, they did mention some positive impacts that did not come up in surveys or interviews. In one of the classes some students talked about the decrease in social and economic inequality

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[33] The change of religion refers to the transition from Zoroastrianism to Islam following the invasion. The change of language refers to the adoption of the Arabic alphabets –and not the Arabic language itself– by Farsi speakers in then Persia. Later on, a large number of Arabic words found their ways into Farsi as well.

after the establishment of Islam and in another class some mentioned that Muslims were able to free people from the brutality and oppression of kings. These discussions was probed however by some questions posed by the teacher. For example when one of the students argued that Arabs ruined Iran's political system, the teacher asked, "You mean before that everything was organized and in order?" Such questions intrigued other students to join the discussion in disagreement and name positive outcomes for the invasion. More importantly, it should be noted that some students might not feel comfortable to bluntly criticize the Arab Invasion, that is officially introduced as a victory for Islam.

The sense of grievance over Iran's relations with foreign powers also came up in the interviews when the students talked about the current situation of the country. Issues such as how Iranians are treated abroad, how Iranian politicians are treated, and what is Iran's international image were brought up by the students in the interviews. Some of the students blamed the Islamic government for "tainting Iran's image" on the international scene; some were frustrated by images of terrorism being associated with Iran in the minds of foreigners; and some stated that that they did not feel comfortable disclosing their nationality when they traveled out of the country: "I have to say I am Asian, or Turk. Otherwise, I am afraid that they would look at me as a terrorist."

Another finding that demonstrates the students' emotional attachment to matters of foreign relations is how they talked about the eras in which Iran had been a powerful player on the international scene. They specifically mentioned the reign of Cyrus and that

of Shah Abbas[34]. Many of the students considered these two kings as national heroes for they succeeded in establishing Iran's powerful status against other powers. Just as the students considered Persia's losing vast lands to foreign powers during the later Qajar period as acts of treason committed by the Shahs, they took Persia's vast territory during the Achaemenid Empire as a source of pride –thus celebrating "Cyrus the Great". Similarly, just as they seemed unsettled by the idea that the United States and the Great Britain had had enormous power and influence to shape Iran's domestic policy during the Pahlavi era, they expressed satisfaction in how Shah Abbas had controlled trade and commerce with European powers in accordance to his wishes during his rule.

These two examples of Iran's "powerful status" in the world go back to five hundred and two thousand years ago. Nonetheless, the students talked about it with a profound sense of nostalgia. They appeared to relive the experience in their imagination as they explained their image of those periods to me. Their voices became more confident and their facial expressions implied a genuine sense of delight. Azarin seemed, and sounded, excited when talking about those "triumphant" times: "in older days, we used to win all the time. We had a greatness and [a] glory. The country was huge. I really like those times." A similar sentiment came up when Saghi was talking about the ancient history: "I like to see how powerful we were in the world when I look at very old times. I wish we were still like that. For example when you look at the Achaemenid and see how powerful they were. And now….well I feel sorry and wish we were still like that."

In reviewing the students' various responses in the interviews and the surveys, one may find a contradiction of which the students do not seem to be aware. In spite of

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[34] Arguably the most powerful Shah of Safavid dynasty, who ruled Persia from 1587 to 1629A.D.

the dominance of humiliating themes in their historiographies, the students seem to have a deep nostalgia for an abstract image of powerful Iran. Projected to five hundred years ago or to two thousand years ago, this image of powerful Iran is treated by the students as if it belongs to the near past. They often talk about the greatness they crave for as something not too old, and not too far from their reach. With the bitterness of talking about a fresh wound, the students discuss the bygone –imagined or real– greatness as something just been lost. When confronted with direct inquiries about this nostalgic image, however, the students refer to the Achaemenid Empire or –to a lesser degree– the Safavid dynasty. "I am mostly proud of the Safavid era, when our art progressed, or Cyrus's times, when he had conquered everywhere and had a lot of power", Sarin argued. To a similar question, Zeynab responded "I personally have a better opinion about Iran when I think about older times. For example when we had the Persepolis our culture was much superior. We would never follow Westerners in their behaviors; or make them our role models."

It seems, therefore, that as a compensation for their feelings of despair and regret about the present, the students take refuge in a projected "bright" past –which is not necessarily out of reach. When they are asked, however, to elaborate on this past age of "glory" and "power", they often fail to recall anything other than ancient history –about which they usually have only a vague idea. The "golden age" seems to be close and accessible. Yet, even this does not seem to relieve them from further disappointment about the current situation; for this projected image of "past glories" are often used as a point of reference for comparison and, thus, further disappointment. Besides the passing

experience of joy in discussing the "past glories", these "bright" images of the past usually fail in producing any tangible and viable basis for pride and self-confidence.

Conflicts with foreign enemies have also been among the most extensively covered topics in the textbooks. These include both conflicts in which Iranians have been the defeated side, and the ones in which the enemy has been routed. Table 17 shows the textbooks' coverage of these conflicts in more details. Discussions of national defeats, as well as the negative impacts of foreign interventions in Iran's domestic affairs increases dramatically as the textbooks begin to cover more modern history. The sixth grade textbook's coverage of foreign conflicts is the most positive one compared to other grades; for the sixth grade textbook deals with Iran's ancient history. In this textbook, equal space has been allocated to the accounts of victory and those of defeat. This is also the time frame from which the students report their most positive images of history.

Table 17

Space Allocated to the Coverage of Conflicts with Foreign Powers

Grade	Conflicts with Foreign Powers (Number of Pages)			Total Number of Pages in Each Textbook
	Defeat	Victory	Neutral	
6	0.9	0.9	-	25
7	3.3	0.7	0.5	26.5
8	10.3	1.2	0.1	57.5
Total	14.5	2.8	0.6	109

One issue that differentiates the students' accounts of the ancient history from the textbook's representations is the invasion of Arabs and the introduction of Islam to Persia. As mentioned earlier, the Arab invasion is one of the historical events the students frequently described as negative. In the textbook, however, Arab Muslims' entry to Iran

is not described as an invasion. In describing the context of the Arabs' conquest of Persia, the textbook refers to "Iran's chaotic conditions towards the end of the Sasanid[35] dynasty and people's dissatisfaction with oppression and abuse" by the state. The narration, then, continues:

> "At this time, Muslims who had a strong and firm belief in God and were fighting for the expansion of Islam, fought with the Sasanid military and were able to conquer the capital of the Sasanid government. […] the people of Iran who had been tired of the Sasanid kings' years of tyranny and oppression, and had heard Islam's message of salvation and justice, began a new era by accepting Islam."
>
> (Kheirandish, Abbasi, & Javadian, 2007a, p.68)

The text, therefore, introduces the Arab invasion as a salvation for Iranian people and describes the encounter as a conflict between the "Sasanid military" on the one hand and "Muslim soldiers" on the other –instead of Iranian people against the Arabs. Based on the students' account of the encounter, however, it seems that the textbook has failed to convince them. In fact, it appears that the textbook's overemphasis on the element of Islam in the encounter has back lashed among the students.

In the seventh grade textbook, the share of the stories of national defeats increases while those of victories falls. This textbook covers Persia's most turbulent era, including the era of Genghis Khan, as well as Teymur's invasion. In line with the textbook's representations, the students do not recall any positive images from the events of this era and their historical knowledge are dominated by instances of foreign invasion and national defeat and humiliation.

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[35] Persia's last pre-Islam ruling dynasty, which reigned from 241 to 651 A.D.

The textbook dedicates three pages to the Mongol invasion. This invasion is described as "the most savage and most detrimental invasion to Iran." (Javadian, Kheirandish, and Abbasi, 2007, p. 43). The text explains how Genghis Khan set cities on fire and killed scores of people during his military campaign to conquer the whole country. The only difference between the textbook's narrative and that of the students is that the text praises the people's "spirit of resistance" and goes on to claim that the Mongols were not able to destroy Iranian culture. Such a positive sentiment is absent from the students' accounts of the invasion.

The historiography is much more negative in the eighth grade textbook. The textbook's coverage of Iran's modern history is filled with discussions about foreign aggressions, interventions, interferences, and dominance over the ruling dynasties. It is important to note that in its –essentially negative– coverage of the Qajar and the Pahlavi periods, the textbook is also preparing the scene for presentation of the Islamic Revolution as an absolutely positive development. Indeed, one of the main pillars of the Revolution is argued to be Iran's freedom from the dominance of the East and the West in the text. By emphasizing the dominance of foreign powers in the years preceding the Revolution, the text could further dramatize the problem and, thus, celebrate the "achievements" of the Revolution. Nevertheless, the image has made its mark on the students' historical memory. They frequently expressed feelings of shame and grievance over the dominance and interference of foreign powers during the Qajar and the Pahlavi eras. The Qajar kings' concessions to the British and the Russians through a number of bilateral treaties are often remembered by many of the students as some of the "most

negative" and most influential events in Iran's history. These treaties constitute a large part of the textbook's coverage of the period as well.

Overall, the textbooks portray Iran's relations with other countries and international powers in a rather simplified manner. In doing so, the text neglects the complexities and nuances of such relations. In most of the cases, the blame has been put on the shoulders of "incompetent" kings and on foreigners' opportunistic intentions. There appears no analysis of deeper socio-economic or geo-political contexts of these interventions; and in all instances, the interventions are portrayed as isolated cases of failure. A similar attitude may be found in the students' judgment regarding these interventions. They generally fail to demonstrate a critical understanding of such episodes and, disregarding collective responsibilities in cases of national failures, they often discuss those failures in terms of the kings' incompetence.

Popular movements and uprisings. Revolutions and uprisings appear to be the second most frequently mentioned category of "significant" events in the surveys. Here, the students expressed mixed feelings. There exist three particular events under the banner of "revolutions and uprisings". These are the Islamic Revolution (mentioned 60 times), the Constitutional Revolution (mentioned 21 times), and the 2009 protests to the results of the disputed Presidential election –or the "Green Movement" (mentioned 18 times). The Constitutional Revolution was considered by all the students to be a positive development. In regard to the Islamic Revolution, however, the students expressed mixed feelings as only a small percentage of the participants considered the impact of that Revolution to be positive. The 2009 "Green Movement" was perceived as a sign of

"government's brutality" by some, while others saw it as a testimony to "people's unity and power".

The Islamic Revolution is by far the most frequently mentioned event by the students in the category of Popular Movements and Uprisings. As mentioned earlier, the students' assessment of the impact of the Revolution goes against the official narratives. Only 10% of the participants who included the Islamic Revolution in their list believed it to be a positive development. 43% did not provide any judgment about the impact of the Revolution, and 47% considered it to have been a negative and destructive event.

The revolution was considered by many of the participants as an instance of "collective mistakes". As such, it did not imply the same sense of shame or humiliation as foreign invasions did. The students expressed diverse ideas about what had happened before and during the Revolution. Some of them believed that people were "shortsighted" and caught up in the seething emotions of the moment; others argued that people merely wanted to get rid of the Shah without thinking about the consequences or about the next political system; still others believed that Ayatollah Khomeini "deceived people", and some pointed that people had had high hopes for the outcome of an Islamic revolution and did not expect it to go wrong. In any case, while many of them uttered regret about the Revolution, they did not express any sense of shame or humiliation about it.

In the interviews, the students' responses to inquiries about the Islamic Revolution appeared to be more nuanced, measured, and –sometimes– conservative compared to their responses in the surveys. This might be the result of students' concerns about the consequences of being open about their disagreement with the official account of the Revolution in a face-to-face conversation. In anonymous surveys, such concerns

seem to be less worrying for the students. In several instances during the interviews, the students expressed discomfort in sharing their opinions about more contemporary issues; and told me that they did not want to further elaborate on the issue. Such discomfort did not appear in their responses to the surveys.

Some of the rather conservative responses I received in the interviews in regard to the Islamic Revolution are as follows: "I was not there so I do not know exactly whether it was good or bad" (Elahe); "[w]ell it has had some positive effects and some negative effects. Nothing can be all positive or all negative" (Saghi); "[i]t is what we are now [that is important] anyway" (Somayyeh); "[w]ell it has had some negative and some positive aspects. I personally believe it would have been better if we have had a healthier revolution; if people had a long term plan and knew what they were doing" (Ladan).

At the same time, the students seemed to express more straightforward opinions about the abstract concept of revolutions in general. Some seemed to associate the notion with the Islamic Revolution and to view that Revolution as a learning point: "[y]ou should never do that [i.e. revolution]. People have to think instead of revolt" (Sarin). Others considered the notion of revolution as a generally positive social development while acknowledging "exceptions" that might go wrong. Azarin argued that "[r]evolution is a good thing. People get what they want; unless it goes wrong. But in general, it is a good thing". Similarly Salma stated that "[i]f we know what our objective, it [i.e. revolution] is great. But if we only want to throw out someone without knowing who will come after, not so much."

In the textbooks, the only instances of discussing popular movements include the Constitutional Revolution and the Islamic Revolution. Both episodes are covered in the eighth grade textbook. Table 18 shows the coverage of these topics in the text.

The last four lessons of the eighth grade textbook, which constitutes 34% of the content of the book, covers the Islamic Revolution. The Revolution is narrated first and foremost through historiography of Ayatollah Khomeini as its leader. Throughout various stages of the Revolution, his actions, speeches, and guidance precede people's actions. The Revolution itself is introduced as a result of a national struggle to defend Islamic values and to restore Iran's independence from foreign dominance and intervention. The Shah and his Prime Ministers are argued to be the puppets of the United States who ignore the will of the people and oppress them with extreme brutality. Eventually, the victory of the Revolution is described as the victory of the masses that ushered in their freedom from years of oppression and abuse of power. The final lesson covers the early developments in the Islamic Republic following the revolution. The long list include: the elections; establishment of the Islamic law; reconstruction of the country; the conspiracies of the foreign powers against Iran –including supplying and supporting opposition groups, conspiracies during the Iran-Iraq War, and economic sanctions–; the death of Ayatollah Khomeini and the appointment of Ayatollah Khamenei[36] as the supreme leader.

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[36] The current Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran who has been in power since 1989.

Table 18

Space Allocated to the Coverage of Popular Movements

Grade	Popular Movements (Number of Pages)			Textbook's Number of Pages
	The Constitutional Revolution	The Islamic Revolution	The "Green Movement"	
6	-	-	-	25
7	-	-	-	26.5
8	2	9.4	0	57.5

The textbook's positive image of achieving long sought after goals during the Islamic Revolution is incompatible with what most of the students' assessments of the outcomes of the Revolution. As mentioned earlier, the students did acknowledge people's frustrations during the Pahlavi era and agreed with the textbook on the failure of the Pahlavi dynasty to rule Iran as a sovereign nation –and their failure in responding to the will of the people. Yet, the students' perception of what happened after the Revolution diverges from what the textbook represents. The eighth grade textbook concludes with a lesson on the "success of the Islamic Revolution" in responding to people's wishes and needs. It argues that the Revolution allowed Iran to begin progress in spite of "foreign conspiracies". The students, however, seem to generally consider the Islamic Revolution as well-intentioned effort gone astray.

Oil Nationalization. The next category of "significant" events discussed by the students is the "Oil Nationalization" movement. Nationalizing the oil industries by Prime Minister Mosaddeq in the 1950s is considered by almost all who included it in their responses, as a national victory and a positive development. Two of the interview participants mentioned Mosaddeq in their list of influential figures. They discussed how he had brought back a sense of national confidence to the people and how he had stopped

foreigners from "stealing" our natural resources. Few of the participants who remembered the topics of their research projects also mentioned that they had studied this topic beyond the textbook in their group projects and that they had given classroom presentations about this episode.

The text, on the other hand, provides an uncertain and brief description of the Oil Nationalization movement. It spends most of the discussion on elaborating what the authors see as the causes of its defeat. In the eighth grade text, three pages are assigned to a lesson on the Oil Nationalization movement. The first page introduces Ayatollah Kashani, a politically active clergy, as one of the leaders of the movement and praises his activism in defending peoples' right and in opposing British colonialism. Mohammad Mosaddeq, the Prime Minister who was at the heart the Nationalization movement is introduced briefly as "an experienced politician". The following paragraph explains how the cooperation of these two leaders resulted in the initial success of the Oil Nationalization. The text, then, spends the next one and a half pages explaining how the movement went astray and was defeated with the arrest of Mosaddeq.

While the students' image of the event appeared to be more positive than the textbook's representation, both narratives show a lack of critical analysis and fall short of demonstrating a deeper understanding of this controversial episode. In both the textbook's and the students' accounts, individuals such as Mosaddeq and Ayatollah Kashani or foreign countries such as the Great Britain are the only players. The social and political contexts of the Nationalization movement as well as the international context of the Cold War at the time are completely ignored. Although the students have had access to alternative sources of information about this episode and although they have had the

opportunity for a deeper discussion of the issue in their classroom, they did not show any

further knowledge beyond the brief historiography presented in the text.

CHAPTER VII

REPRESENTATION AND PERCEPTION OF HISTORICAL FIGURES

The mythical foundations of national identity often rely on exaggerated images of national heroes who embody the essence of the projected "national character". Students' perception of the role and character of influential historical figures, therefore, shapes not only their understanding of history, but also their sense of national identity. By presenting some figures as "heroes", some others as "villains", and still others as implicitly or otherwise–negligible, the text establishes a sense of connection and relevance of each character for its audience (Gee, 2005). Similarly, the text introduces, and defines, specific value systems and normative discourses through representations of historical figures. The students are supposed to internalize these "acceptable" value systems by creating a positive image of those who have embodied these values; and by demonizing those who have opposed them. The reproduction and reinforcement of particular value systems further feed into realization of a specific national identity (Smith, 2001). It is partly through encountering the descriptions and collective imaginations of national heroes and villains that students develop a sense of collective identity. This identity, in turn, allows them to project their roles, their responsibilities and their potential as members of the society. Based on this general background, in this chapter I examine the representation of various historical figures in the history textbooks and in the students' accounts. I argue that, in general, the textbooks provide a rather black-and-white image of historical figures. The complexities of human nature are often dismissed in the textbooks' accounts. Moreover, the influence these figures have had on the country has in some cases been exaggerated while in other cases, it seems to have been ignored. This approach, however,

has received some criticism by the students who argued that the textbooks did not grant a fair treatment to many historical figures, and especially to Iranian kings. The students also believed that the authors' biases could be easily recognized in their evaluation of the impact of these historical figures. The textbooks do seem to overemphasize the role of certain individuals. It is, however, their neglect of deeper sociopolitical and economic structures and contexts of the events that has been generally absorbed by the students. Similar focus on individuals' impact at the expense of the larger structures and contexts can be found in the students' accounts of the past. Praising national heroes who single-handedly succeeded in making dramatic changes in the course of the history is a common theme in these accounts. So is the tendency to demonize those who the students blamed to bear the full responsibility for national failures and defeats. In other words, the students seem to have internalized these aspects of the textbooks' historiography of historical figures.

To better understand the above dynamics, I have documented how the students' assessments of the influence of historical figures diverge from the textbooks' representation. The divergence appears in particular in regard to religious leaders, or those historical figures whose influence has been intertwined with religious controversies. In addition to the differences between the students' and the textbooks' value judgments about the historical figures, the textbooks' overall emphasis on the role of religious leaders seem to be absent from the students' accounts. According to the textbooks, the overall course of Iran's post-Islam history, and in particular the significant events of the modern history such as the Constitutional Revolution and Oil Nationalization movement have been overwhelmingly influenced by religious leaders in

positive ways. The students seemed to disagree. While the textbooks associate Muslim clergy with almost all positive developments in the past century, the names of these individuals did not come up in the students' lists of "influential figures".

Polarized Characterization of Historical Figures in the Textbooks

As mentioned before, the textbooks tend to introduce historical figures in black-and-white terms. The nuances and complexities of human nature as well as the possibility of change in the characters of these individuals seem to have brushed aside. In the cases where a historical figure is introduced as someone who has negatively impacted the country, or the people, the text often uses somewhat harsh adjective or descriptive paragraphs to describe him. Here is an excerpt from the text about Shah Sultan Hossein[37]: "Shah Sultan Hossein was a weak and cowardly man. Instead of attending to the governance of the country, he delegated his responsibilities to opportunistic people […] because he was unaware of the affairs of the country, he was blindsided by the Afghan attack and was defeated by them." (The History Group of Textbooks' Planning Office, 2007, p. 6)

A similar approach may be found in the instances where the text defends a person or praises his or her contributions to the country. Most of the actions of the person are described under a positive light and with positive outcomes. In cases of causing negative outcomes, the actions of the "favored" historical figures are portrayed as well-intentioned. To further justify this positive historiography, certain shortcomings or failures of the "favored" figures are attributed to uncontrollable forces and external causes. The clergy and Muslim politicians are the most frequent examples of this positive

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[37] The last king of Safavid dynasty who ruled Persia from 1694–1722 AD.

historiography. In addition, there are a number of kings and heads of state who have been portrayed as perfect. The praised kings are mostly the Iranian rulers who established independent Muslim dynasties after 820 CE. Amir Isma'il Samani[38], the founder of the Samanid dynasty, is described as:

> "[…] a just and brave man who paid a lot of attention to the development and progress of the country. During his time, the Samanid dynasty gained great power. He enjoyed the companion of wise and competent advisors. His support for science and poetry resulted in the progress of Persian culture." (Javadian, Kheirandish, and Abbasi, 2007, pp. 24-25)

Another example is Ayatollah Khomeini who enjoys the greatest praise and most attention compared to other historical figures throughout the history textbooks. In the absence of any critical analysis, Ayatollah Khomeini is generally introduced as a great leader who consistently fought for the people throughout his life. The following paragraph demonstrates how the eighth grade textbook represents him as an ideal perfect leader:

> "Imam[39] Khomeini was a selfless clergy, great thinker, and wise politician who only paid attention to [the commands of] God and the will of God in all his actions. He was the true example of a real Muslim; and his name and his memory would make the hearts of oppressors and dictators tremble [in fear]. He raised the flag of the Qur'an in the world; and the people saw him as the realization of all

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[38] 892 – 907 C.E.

[39] "Imam" is a praising title that the followers of Ayatollah Khomeini gave him during the Revolution.

their wishes and beliefs; and loved him dearly." (The History Group of Textbooks' Planning Office, 2007, pp.85-86)

There are several people about whom the text does not provide any judgment. For these figures, the text simply describes the state of the country during their time. Besides these "neutral" figures, there is only one person throughout the text whose actions are evaluated in both positive and negative terms. In the lesson on Nader Shah, the text introduces him as a brave general who united the country after a period of decline. He is also praised as the one who defeated the foreign enemies. Yet, towards the end of his life, the text reports, his behavior changed; and he turned into an oppressive and ruthless leader. The change of character in the person of Nader Shah is the only example in the text where the assumptions of homogeneity and consistency of character in historical figures have been abandoned.

The black-and-white assessments of the legacy of historical figures lack a critical attitude in two ways. They cast a simple view of history that lends itself to easy and far-reaching judgments. They also fail to acknowledge the existence of different interpretations and viewpoints –and indeed the existence of numerous debates over historical figures and events. Furthermore, the text's simplistic view of history prevents students from gaining the critical skills needed to gather reliable information and to analyze socio-historical issues. The textbooks' –sometimes exaggerated– emphasis on the role of the individuals –whether in positive or negative terms– tends to neglect the complexities of deeper sociopolitical and economic structures. The resulting historiography, therefore, becomes individualist and voluntarist. Without balancing the

individualist theme with some attention to sociopolitical structures, the text simplifies a complex history to a story of a series of individuals' contributions or misconducts.

This approach was criticized by many of the students in the interviews. They argued that the textbooks portray "unrealistic" images of the historical figures. The motivation behind this "biased historiography" is, according to the students, to serve the "political agenda" of the textbooks' authors. In other words, the student believed that those with whom the textbooks' authors agreed would appear as perfect and errorless personalities in the textbooks; and those with whom the textbooks' authors disagreed would be presented as negative figures. In the latter case, even the positive contributions of the "unfavored" figures will be neglected and removed from the historiography. The students' examples of "unfair" treatments of historical figures all came from the textbooks' coverage of Iran's modern history. Some of the students believed that the textbooks demonized the Qajar and the Pahlavi kings in order to justify the Revolution. Meanwhile, they believed that the coverage of more ancient history in the textbooks was more realistic and objective for it did not relate to the political agenda of the textbooks' authors. Somayyeh summarized this view in her response:

> "[…] the Islamic Republic came to power by defeating the Pahlavi dynasty. So they [i.e. the Islamic Republic] try to vilify them [i.e. the Pahlavis] so that they [i.e. the Islamic Republic] can say we deserved to take the power. They [i.e. the Islamic Republic] talked about negativities all the time. I know there has been abuse [of power] and oppression [before the Revolution] but the way they treat it from a very specific point of view. Studying history should have nothing to do with personal beliefs."

Zeynab was another participant who criticized the textbooks' treatment of historical figures. She particularly took issues with the final lessons of the eighth grade textbook, which covers modern history:

"Our Middle School textbooks, especially in the eighth grade, were too exaggerated. The final lessons were honestly ridiculous and sometimes funny. Even the [Iran-Iraq] War was [represented as] something beautiful and [as] a test that we came out of successful. The quality of the lessons was really deteriorating as we got closer to the end. […] They would exaggerate so much; or censor what has really happened; […] good people and bad people were mixed up. You would find out later on that someone that they had portrayed as a tyrant had actually done a lot of things for the country."

The frequently mentioned example of "unfair treatment" by the students was the textbooks' representation of Reza Shah. The students often believed that he had done many positive things for Iran's development. Therefore, they considered the textbook's negative portrayal of Reza Shah –and the text's labeling him as a "British puppet"– as unfair. It must be added, however, that the students had more information about Reza Shah for the teacher had provided them with some alternative resources in the class. Hengameh explained this more sophisticated position regarding Reza Shah:

"I do not think our textbooks are fair. They would show only the good things from someone they like; but for those kings they do not like, they would only write negative things like he was not a good king; and [he] did not care about the people; and [he] only cared about having a good time and such. They do not talk about his positive works at all. For example Reza Shan had done a lot of good

things. We read about them in our history class. But in our textbooks, none of them are even mentioned."

Representation of Religious Figures

The textbooks generally represent religious figures as national heroes who have always been on the people's side. This becomes yet more evident in the textbooks' historiography of modern history in which religious figures emerge as the most prominent defenders of the interests and the will of the people. It must be noted that a dominant theme in the textbook's modern historiography is the rising conflict between the ruling class and the people during the Qajar and Pahlvai eras. Built on this context, the religious leaders' status becomes one of fighting against the tyranny and oppression. In almost all significant positive developments of the past century, the clergy are presented as either the sole, or the most influential leaders of the people.[40]

In line with the above historiography of the clergies, the textbooks generally omit disagreements among the clergies regarding political and social issues. Instead, the clergy appears as a united and homogenous elite group with clear and effective ideas about the causes of social malaise and their solutions. Furthermore, those members of the clergies who supported the ruling monarch –or advocated the institution of monarchy– are treated with silence. Arguably the most prominent example of this treatment is the Constitutional Revolution, during which the clergies divided into pro-Constitution and pro-monarchy camps with forceful disagreements. In the text, the Revolution is presented as a progressive movement initiated and led by the clergies. A prominent religious leader of

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[40] Examples of these significant events include popular movements against international treaties and concessions made during the Qajar dynasty, the Constitutional Revolution, Oil Nationalization movement, and, indeed, the Islamic Revolution.

the pro-monarchy camp, i.e. Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri[41], has also been presented as a national hero. The text argues that Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri noticed that the Revolution was going astray and that he realized Western value systems were being used in designing the Constitution –instead of Islam. Therefore, he turned against the movement. By this arguably questionable historiography, the text dismisses Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri's treatise in support of authoritarian rule of the Shah. It also avoids mentioning other prominent religious leaders of the time who continued supporting the Revolution; and those clergies who eventually sanctioned, or acquiesced to, Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri's execution. According to the textbook's historiography of the Constitutional Revolution, a positive movement that had the support of all major clergies abruptly became an instrument of "westernization"; and while other clergies are consigned to obscurity, only Sheikh Fazlullah Nuri stood against the deviation. The historiography ends with depicting the execution of Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri as a scheme conspired by pro-West and anti-Islam "hijackers" of the Revolution.[42]

The homogeneous representation of the clergies continues throughout the lessons on the Pahlavi era and the Islamic Republic. In the textbook, there exists no discussion of differences of opinion, disagreements or hostilities among religious leaders. There is also no account of divergence between the wishes and interests of some of the prominent clergies and those of the people. The clergies are repeatedly introduced as those who

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[41] Having been initially in favor of the Revolution, Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri became disillusioned about the prospect of the movement and became the most prominent voice among the clergies who fought against the Constitutional Revolution based on religious arguments. His opponents among pro-Constitution clergies responded again within the Muslim paradigm. Eventually, the pro-Constituion gained the upper hand and Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri was executed for his his support of the authoritarian system in 1909.

[42] This conclusion is despite the historical fact that a clergy, i.e. Sheikh Ebrahim Zanjani, presided over Sheikh Fazlullah Nuri's trial and issued the execution verdict.

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sacrificed their life and comfort to defend people's rights and to restore religious values. It is in such a context that the activities of other political groups who have not affiliated with the clergies are dismissed, ignored, or viewed with suspicion –for having ties with foreign powers. This lopsided historiography culminates in granting the clergies all of the credits for the victory of the 1979 Revolution.

The by-and-large absence of non-religious figures from the textbooks' historiography has backfired among the participants of this study however; for one can find a general absence of religious figures in the students' list of –positively– influential people. In a stark contrast to what the textbooks aim at, the students generally did not have a positive impression of the role of religious figures throughout the history. They either did not consider religious figures significant enough to include them in their lists, or had perceived their significance in a negative light. This issue will be discussed in further detail in the following section.

Represented and Perceived Significant Historical Figures

In this section, I have discussed the historical figures whom the participants, and the textbooks, consider influential. In doing so, I have examined the surveys, the interviews, and the textbook contents to figure out who are the most frequently mentioned and discussed figures. In particular, I paid attention to the emphasis given to political elites, religious elites, foreign powers, and ordinary people. I have also compared the students' accounts with the textbooks' representations to better understand whether and how the narratives of the textbooks' authors have had an impact on shaping the students' perceptions. Finally, I have examined and compared the students' and the textbooks' assessments of the impact of these influential figures.

The participants' list of the influential figures included mostly those individuals who had been discussed in the textbooks. In other words, with the exception of the clergies, there exists a noticeable overlap between the textbooks' list of important figures and those mentioned by the students. Although, as will be discussed later, there are cases in which the students' assessments of the role of a person contradicts what the textbooks portray of him.

Who Makes History?

In order to better understand who are considered most influential figures by the students, I categorized historical figures whom the students remembered as most significant into five categories. These include a) kings, which consist of Cyrus, Darius, Shah Abbas, Nader Shah, Karmi Khan Zand[43], Agha Mohmmad Khan Qajar[44], Naser al-Din Shah[45], Reza Shah, and Mohammad Reza Shah; b) non-religious political elites, which include Amir Kabir, Mosaddeq, Khatami, and Ahmadinejad[46]; c) religious elites, which include Ayatollah Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei; d) foreign invaders, which include Genghis Khan, and Alexander the Great; and e) public intellectuals, scientists, or artists, which include Ferdowsi and Shariati[47]. Table 19 demonstrates how often each of these categories has been mentioned by the students in their survey responses. For a

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[43] The founder of the Zandieh dynasty who ruled Persia from 1775 to 1779.

[44] The founder of the Qajar dynasty who ruled Persia from 1794 to 1797.

[45] The fourth Shah of the Qajar dynasty who ruled Persia from 1848 to 1896.

[46] The current President of the Islamic Republic of Iran who has been in office since 2005.

[47] Ali Shariati (1933 – 1975) was a gifted preacher who partially shaped the revolutionary discourse in Iran through his speeches and books prior to the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

comparison between the students' perceptions of influential historical figures and the textbook's accounts, I have broken the results of the surveys into different time periods. This is in-line with the textbooks' division of history into three grades. As mentioned earlier, Grade 6 textbook covers Persia's pre-Islamic history. Grade seven textbook covers Persia's independent dynasties after Islam until early Safavid era, and the Safavid era to the Islamic Republic is covered in eighth grade textbook.

Table 19

Categories of Influential Historical Figuers Mentioned in Surveys

| | Time period covered in textbooks | | | |
Category	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Total
Kings	78	-	123	201
Political elites	-	-	91	91
Religious elites	-	-	36	36
Public intellectuals, scientists, or artists	-	3	12	15
Foreign invaders	-	10	-	10
Total	78	13	262	353

As the above results show, kings are by far the most frequently mentioned category of influential figures discussed by the participants in surveys. A similar trend could be observed in the interviews where the participants often recalled kings and political elites. The group least remembered by the students were the artists –with only one participant mentioning them as influential. Despite the general absence of artists in their responses, the students seemed to be inclined towards talking about "culture", "arts" and "literature" when articulating their vision of "Iranian identity". The same tendency could be observed when they related the sources of their pride as Iranians. The interest in notions such as "culture", "arts" and "literature" remained at the abstract level as they

seemed to not know many historical figures in that category; or they did not consider them to be influential.

Furthermore, most of the historical figures students remembered and considered as influential are covered in the eighth grade. In fact, 74 % of influential figures in the students' accounts belong to the modern era. This is not surprising for the students remember more from the era that they have studied more recently. In fact, some of them mentioned in the interviews, and also in the survey responses, that they did not remember much from the earlier periods of Iran's history. At the same time, the interviews showed that most of the students believed that the more recent history was more relevant, and thus more important. Therefore, they generally considered historical figures from modern times as more important.

To better understand the textbooks' representation of the above historical figures, I have created four Figures that summarize the results of a quantitative analysis. Figure 1 provides an overall image of the categories of historical figures represented in the textbooks. The data shows how many individuals from that category are introduced or discussed, how many times their names are mentioned in all textbooks, and how many pages are allocated to them. Figures 2, 3, and 4 show the same results for each grade. Breaking the data into different grades and showing how each textbook treats these different categories gives us a better understanding of how historical figures are represented in different historical periods and which groups are emphasized and which ones are ignored in each era.

Figure 1

Textbooks' Overall Coverage of Categories of Historical Figures
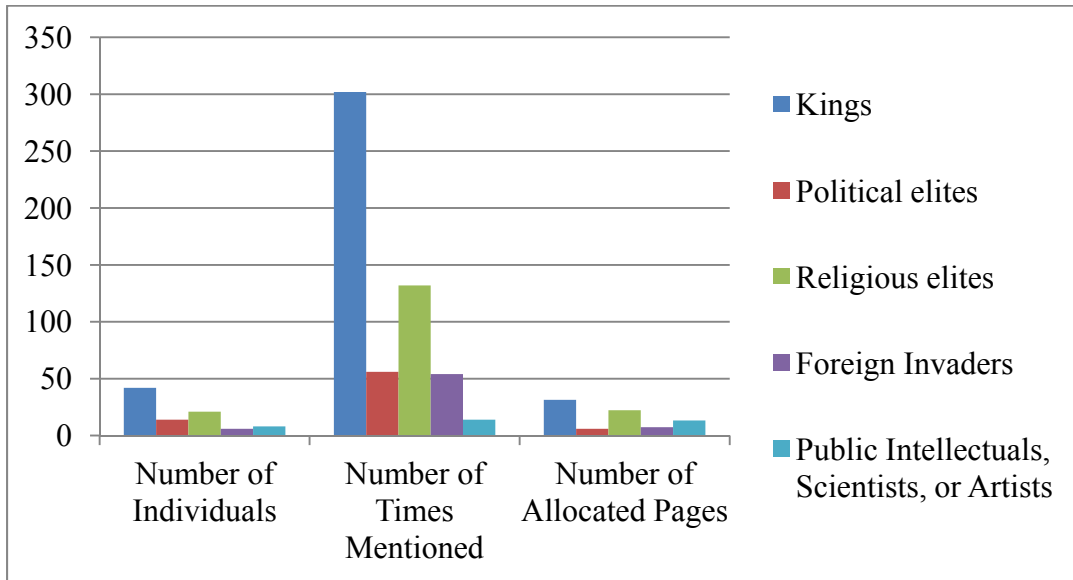
Figure 2

Sixth Grade Textbook's Coverage of Categories of Historical Figures
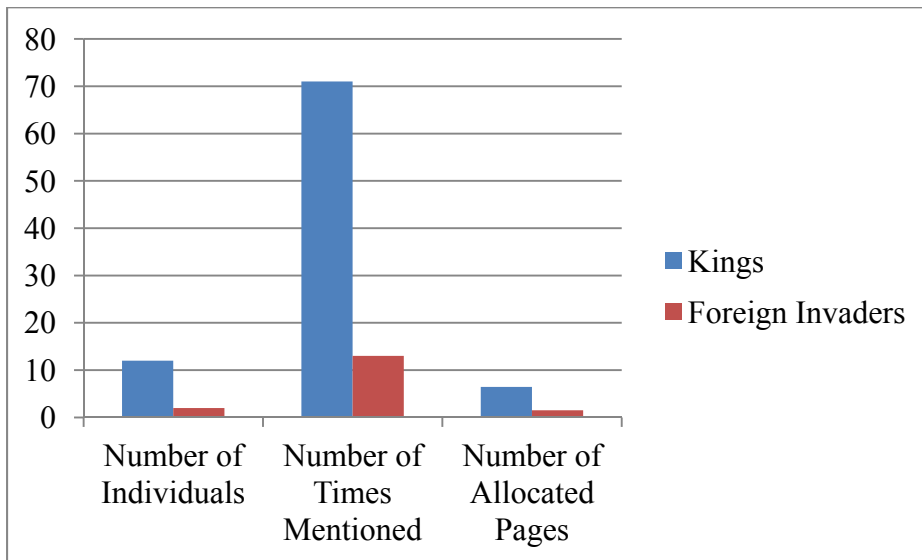
The results show that the priority given to most groups –except for foreign invaders – loosely corresponds to the hierarchy of influential figures in the students'

accounts. For instance, kings are the most discussed group in the textbooks and they are also remembered by the students as influential people more than other four groups.

Figure 3

Seventh Grade Textbook's Coverage of Categories of Historical Figures
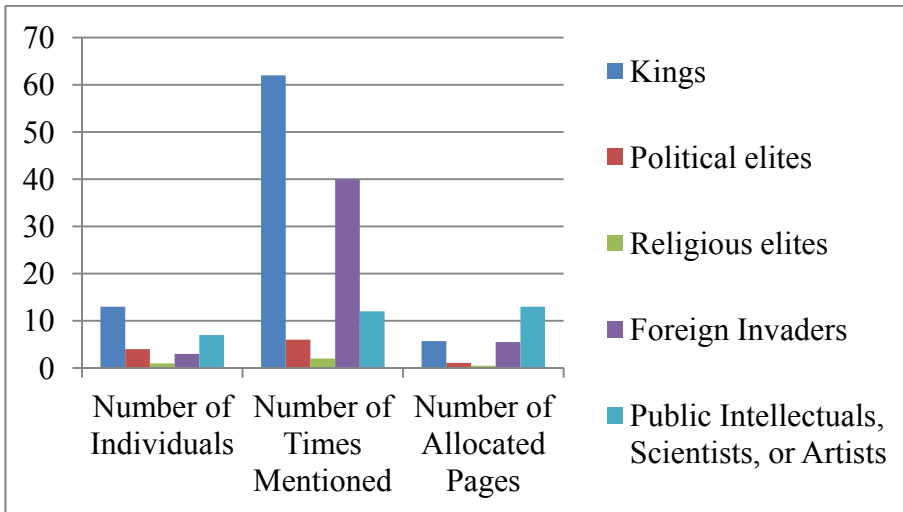
Figure 4

Eighth Grade Textbook's Coverage of Categories of Historical Figures
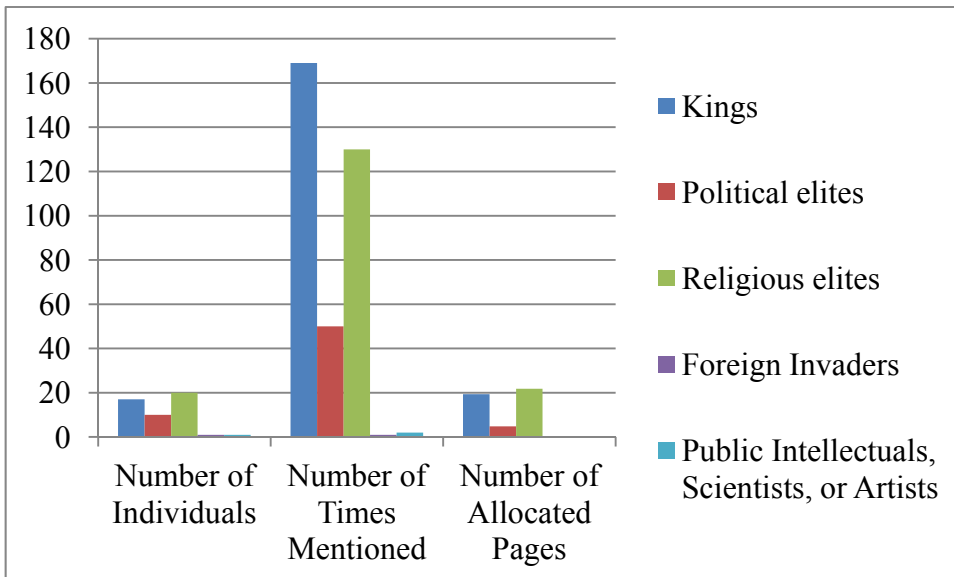
As the data shows, the kings are by far the most mentioned and discussed group in the textbooks. Yet, the space allocated to religious elites increases dramatically in the eighth grade textbooks. Figure 5 provides a comparison between the coverage of different categories of historical figures before and after Qajar.

Figure 5

Space Allocated to Categories of Influential Figuers Before and After Qajar
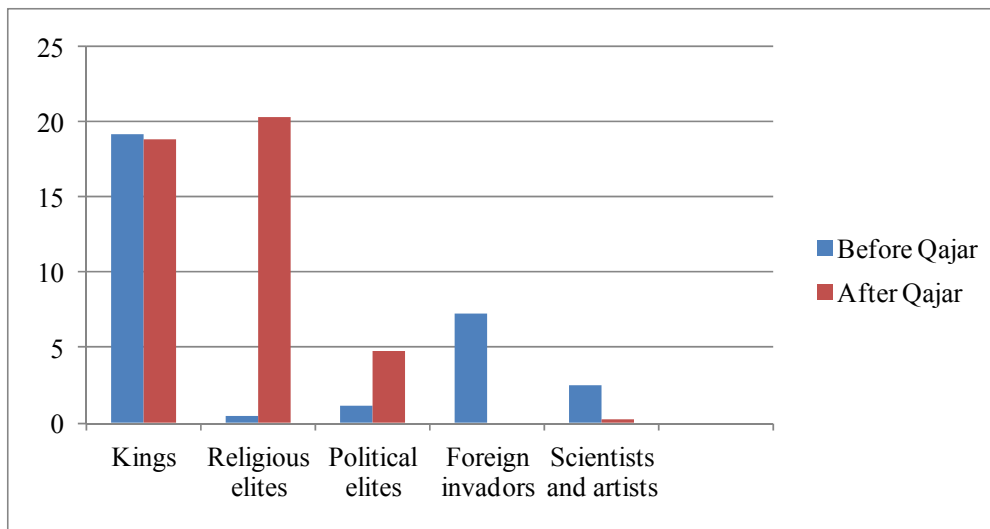
In fact, up until the Qajar dynasty, when the positive role of religious figures begins to be emphasized, kings dominate the historiography of the textbooks. They receive the largest number of pages allocated to a group; and their names are mentioned more than others. This trend changes when the textbooks begin discussing the Qajar dynasty. The shift from the kings to religious elites concludes in the historiography of the Pahlavi era. Here, the text is essentially focusing on the religious elements of history as the main topic of discussion. The role of religious figures dramatically increases in the text; and they are portrayed in an unequivocally positive light. Once again, the conflicts among different groups of clergies are ignored as they are all introduced as a unified

opposition to the kings. This monolithic image of Shi'ah clergies dismiss alternative historiographies of the Qajar and the Pahlavi periods, in which major divisions among Shi'ah clergies have been reported (Ajodani, 2011; Akhavi, 1980; Algar, 1980). According to these alternative historiographies, during the Qajar and Pahlavi eras, the Shi'ah clergies were divided into three groups: those who chose to steer clear of politics and followed a "quietist" approach in dealing with the ruling class; those who decided to support the institution of monarchy and the kings; and those who opposed the kings' rule. Based on the above analysis, one can argue that the students' assessments of the most influential actors in history are relatively similar to what the textbooks represent. In the period covered in the sixth grade textbook (pre-Islam dynasties to the Arab Invasion) the students' accounts is dominated by the kings and so is the textbooks' narrative.

In the era covered in the seventh grade textbook, i.e. Persia's independent dynasties after Islam to early Safavid era–, the students' image of history is dominated by foreign invaders, i.e. Genghis Khan and the Afghan tribes, and so is the textbook's narrative. In this period, the text allocates almost the same amount of space to the kings and to foreign invaders. Yet, the kings of this period do not appear in the students' list of influential figures. This might be due to rather brief introductions of each of the 13 kings of this period; as none of them receives more than half-a-page discussion. In contrast, only four foreign invaders have been discussed in the same amount of space as the 13 kings.

Finally, in the era covered by the eighth grade textbook, i.e. from the later Safavid era to the Islamic Republic, the students recall kings, religious elites, and political elites as the most influential figures; and so does the textbook. One noticeable difference is that

the text's emphasis on the role of religious elites is much stronger than what one may find in the students' accounts. The text introduces quite a number of religious leaders –who lived during the Qajar and Pahlavi dynasties– as the defenders of people's rights and at the forefront of the fights with the authoritarian kings. None of these religious elites appears in the students' account except for Ayatollah Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei. Moreover, the students' assessment of the role and impact of these two individuals differ sharply from what the text represents. This discrepancy will be discussed in some more details later in this Chapter.

Judgments about the Legacies of Influential Figures

In order to have an overall image of the students' accounts of historical figures, I have conducted two statistical analyses on the survey responses. First, I examined how often various historical figures mentioned by the students were considered to be of positive or negative influence. Going back to Fairclough's proposed method for analyzing evaluative statements, I searched for particular adjectives, adverbs, and verbs employed by the students. These include words that implied clearly negative or positive judgments. In addition, the students sometimes expressed their opinions directly by using phrases such as "bad influence" or "positive impact". I then assigned values of +1, −1, and 0 respectively to each positive, negative or neutral evaluation made by the students. For example, I assigned a value of +1 to comments such as: "Cyrus created a great civilization and culture, and also defended the country," or "Shah Abbas made Iran great for a long time'; a value of -1 to comments such as: "Genghis Khan invaded Iran and destroyed its culture and art," or "Imam Khomeini had a negative impact and made people dissatisfied."; and finally a value of 0 to the comments that did not provide a

direct judgment. Then I summed up the numbers for each of the participant to find out whether her overall image of influential figures is positive, negative or neutral. The results are summarized in Table 20. Following this analysis, I focused on most frequently motioned historical figures by the students to understand whether they have been seen in a positive light or a negative one. I conducted a similar analysis on the textbooks so that the textbooks' historiography could be compared with that of the students.

Table 20

The Aggregate Influence of Historical Figures Mentioned by Each Student

The Aggregate Impact	Frequency (Number of Students)	Percentage
Positive	70	78%
Neutral	11	12%
Negative	9	10%
Total	90	100%

The results show that most of the students had a positive overall image of influential figures, meaning that they mentioned people whom they considered to be of positive influence more than "negative" figures. If one compares the results in the above Table with the results discussed in the preceding Chapter, one finds a contrast between the students' overall image of significant historical events and their overall image of significant historical figures. While about 60% of the students hold a negative overall image of significant events, about 78% of them had a positive overall image of influential historical figures. The students seemed to identify these historical figures as their "heroes" based on an abstract –and sometimes glorified– image of them. Yet, once asked about significant historical events, the students generally did not mention those events involving these "heroes" and their positive contributions. Instead, they tended to refer

more to "negative" events in which there had been no "heroes" involved. The limited knowledge of the students regarding the actual contributions of their "heroes" also indicates that the mythical image of these figures was more important to the students than their actions. This shift from historiography to mythology seems to have limited the students' perspective on possibilities and human potential. It also undermined the power of the masses in their minds by instilling a hero-oriented attitude. Waiting for a hero implicitly prevented the students to recognize the potential of ordinary people's agency. The same attitude could be observed in some of the interviews. Sarin took the argument to its logical extreme by stating that the problem of our country is "that we do not have a role model; a hero. Someone that can lead us for a change"

This observation can also imply an understanding of history in which human factor has been marginalized. One may argue that this might be a sign of the students' more sophisticated understanding of history –for instance a structuralist historiography. Yet, the overall paradigm in which the students responded implied an inconsistent, rather than a sophisticated, historiography. The students' assessment of various historical events and their decisive value judgments closely followed the textbooks' representation, which is an inconsistent combination of individualistic historiography and structuralism[48]. In the interviews, many of the students expressed their grievances over how "we were left behind"; how "we did not progress"; or how "we stopped [progressing] and the West developed". Yet, they did not seem to have an explanation for the causes of Iran's

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[48] The textbooks' structuralism appears in their historiography of the influence of foreign powers on Iran's domestic affairs; as well as their projection of the existence of a domestic structure of "foreign puppets" among the political establishment in modern times. Yet, there is no reference to socioeconomic and political structures, as one may expect in a consistent structuralist historiography.

"demise". The textbooks' uncritical examinations of the demise of various dynasties seemed to have left an enduring mark on the students' historiography; for they were unable to provide a consistent analysis of historical events they deemed significant. In particular, they were unable to explain either the role of human actors in those events, or that of the sociopolitical structures, let alone a systematic combination of both.

One other reason that caused many of the students disassociating "significant" events from "responsible actors" could be nature of these events. The majority of significant events according to the students involved foreign invaders attacking Iran. In their list of influential figures, however, the students generally focused on Iranian figures.

In order to examine the textbooks' overall narrative of historical figures, I created a list of all the individuals mentioned in the text; the amount of space allocated to each of them; and the context in which these individuals are introduced. The results are summarized in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Textbooks' Evaluation of Historical Figures
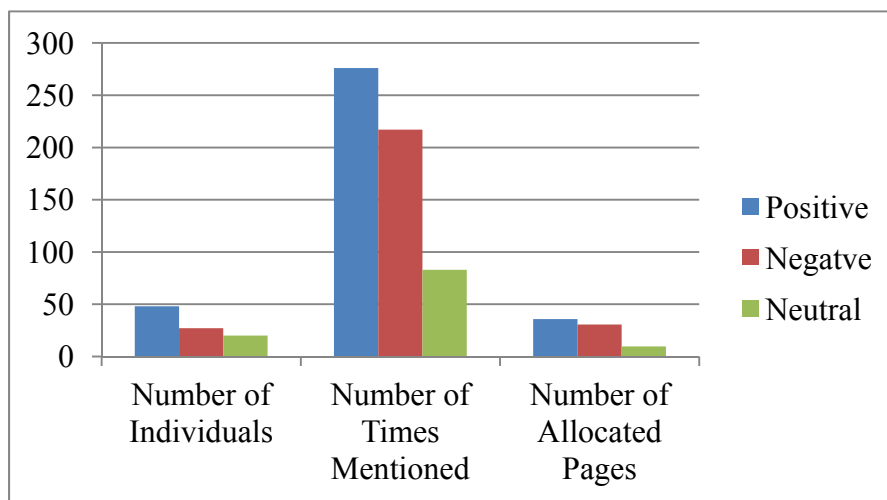
As discussed earlier, in most of the cases it is not difficult to decipher the text's biases towards various figures due to explicit normative judgments made. The authors' intentions in creating a positive or a negative image of historical figures become apparent in their use of unequivocally positive or negative adjectives. One example is the text's accounts of the wars between Iranian kings and foreign enemies. In cases where the authors intend to defend the king, for instance Shah Abbas, they employ words such as "conquer" and "victory". In contrast, when the authors intend to project a negative image, for instance in the case of the wars of the Ghaznavid dynasty[49], they employs words such as "occupy" and "plunder".

Figure 6 shows that in the textbooks, the number of historical figures whose influence are projected as positive is more than twice those described with negative influence. This distribution is similar to what one can find in the students' accounts as well. The above Table, however, shows that the spaces allocated to these two groups are almost the same. The reason is that many "positively influential" figures, such as artists, scientists, and poets, are briefly introduced in the text. Therefore, their share of space in the textbooks becomes negligible. In contrast, most of the figures whose influence is considered negative are the kings and political elites. These individuals are discussed in more details and, therefore, in more pages. Historical figures who are categorized as "neutral" in the above Table are those about whom the textbooks do not express any normative judgment.

Reviewing some examples of the textbooks' treatments of historical figures in each category can further clarify the criteria for this classification. Karim Khan Zand is

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[49] This was a dynasty of Turkic origin who ruled over large parts of Persia from 975 to 1187 C.E.

one of the figures I have included in the "positive" category. Here is an excerpt from the text where he is being introduced:

> "[a]fter defeating the contenders, Karim Khan chose Shiraz as his capital and built significant monuments such as Vakil Bazaar, Vakil Mosque, etc. He strived to establish positive relations with the people. In his time, the country became secure again and economic activities grew." (The History Group of Textbooks' Planning Office, 2007, p. 14)

Shah Sultan Hoseyn[50] is one of the historical figures I have included in the "negative" category. Here is an excerpt (which has been discussed in preceding chapters) from the text about him:

> "The Safavid dynasty collapsed during Shah Sultan Hoseyn's reign. He was a weak and cowardly man who was not able to lead; and [he] had handed over the governance to opportunistic people. […] When the Afghans attacked the capital, Shah Sultan Hoseyn was taken off-guard because of his ignorance and the fact that he was not aware of what had been happening in the country." (The History Group of Textbooks' Planning Office, 2007, p. 6)

Finally, Mahdi Bazargan[51] is one of the historical figures I included in the "neutral" category. Here is how the text introduces him: "[on]n the 15th of the month of Bahmam [of the year 1979], Imam [Khomeini] appointed Mr. Bazargan as the head of the interim

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[50] He was the last king of the Safavid dynasty who ruled Iran from 1694 to 1722 C.E. and was overthrown following the Afghan's invasion.

[51] The long time pro-democracy activist and the head of Iran's interim government after the Islamic Revolution, Mahdi Bazargan (1907 – 1995) is considered by many as a moderate liberal Muslim. After serving as the prime minister for a short period, he resigned due to increasing disagreements with other leaders of the Revolution including Ayatollah Khomeini.

government. People showed their support for this appointment with a big rally." (The History Group of Textbooks' Planning Office, 2007, p. 77) The text does not provide any value judgments about Bazargan himself, and even people's reaction is presented as a support for Ayatollah Khomeini's decision (appointment) and not necessarily Bazargan himself.

Similar to the textbooks' presentations, the students' overall image of influential historical figures is positive. However, a more detailed analysis is required to understand whether the students' judgments about a specific figure closely match that of textbooks. In other words, the analysis so far deals with the aggregate image of historical figures in the textbooks and in the students' accounts. Before turning to specific figures, however, we might be able to infer some more information from another "aggregate analysis". I have already referred to the categories of historical figures deemed –positively or negatively– influential in the textbooks and in the students' accounts. In the following analysis, I have applied the same categories of kings, political elites, religious elites, foreign invaders, and scientists and artists to the result shown in Figure 6 above. I have conducted a similar analysis of students' responses in surveys. Tables 21 and 22 summarize the results of these two analyses.

Table 21

Textbooks' Positive and Negative Coverage of Categories of Influential Figures

Textbooks' evaluation	Category	Number of Individuals	Number of Allocated Pages	Number of Pictures
Positively Influential	Religious elites	128	21	16
	Kings	94	8.6	3
	Political elites	39	4.4	3
	Artists and scientists	15	1.8	2

Negatively	Kings	147	21.8	5
Influential	Foreign invaders	54	7.3	1
	Political elites	16	1.4	0

Table 22

The Students' Assessment of the Influence of Categories of Historical Figures

Students' evaluation	Category	Frequency
Positively influential	Kings	136
	Political elites	80
	Artists and scientists	7
	Religious elites	4
Negatively influential	Kings	25
	Religious elites	19
	Foreign invaders	9
	Political elites	7

The above results show an emphasis on the positive influence of religious leaders in the textbooks. It also shows that such an emphasis is generally absent from the students' accounts. In fact, most religious leaders or clergies mentioned by the students as influential were considered to be negatively so. The textbooks, on the other hand, do not include any negative portrayal of individuals from this group. In a reverse manner, most of the kings mentioned by the students as influential were described either as heroes or as being of positive influence; while the textbooks' coverage of the kings is mostly negative. The above analyses demonstrate that while the students' and the textbooks' aggregate assessments of the role of influential figures seem to be similar, there exist consequential differences and disagreements between the two. It must be added that the students' negative image of religious elites was generally associated with Ayatollah Khomeini and not other members of this group.

Case Studies

To better understand the students' images of influential figures, I have examined those individuals most frequently mentioned by the students in both the surveys and the interviews. First, I conducted a quantitative comparison between the textbooks' coverage of these figures and the students' accounts of them. Then I have conducted qualitative in-depth analyses of the students' images of these specific individuals and contrasted their images with those in the textbooks. These selected historical figures have been categorized in three groups. The first group includes those individuals who were considered by all the students who identified them as having had a positive influence. The second group includes those individuals who were considered by all the participants as having had a negative influence. The third group includes those individuals about whose influence the students disagreed with each other.

A comparison between students and textbooks' most frequently discussed positive and negative figures are provided in Table 23. The results show that the students and the textbooks are more similar in their respective lists of "positive" figures compared to their lists of "negative" figures. There are some other differences not shown in the bellow Table. For instance, most of the students considered Reza Shah as a "positive" figure, while he is one of the most negative figures represented in the textbooks. Also, most of the students viewed Ayatollah Khomeini's role and leadership in the Islamic Revolution as negative, while he is the most celebrated figure in the textbooks. In the following sections, a more detailed analysis of the students' responses and the textbooks' narratives can be found.

Table 23

A Comparison of Dominant Figures in Textbooks' and Students 'Accounts

Students' Accounts (in order of their frequency)		Textbooks' Accounts (in order of the allocated space)	
Positive Figures	Negative Figures	Positive Figures	Negative Figures
Cyrus	President Ahmadinejad	Ayatollah Khomeini	Mohammad Reza Shah
Amir Kabir	Genghis Khan	Mosaddeq	Reza Shah
Mosaddeq	Fath Ali Shah	Amir Kabir	Teymur
Shah Abbas	Agha Mohammad Khan	Shah Abbas	Genghis Khan

Figures perceived as positive. In this section, I will focus on the historical figures whom the students believed to have left a positive legacy in Iran's history. These are also the individuals towards whom no negative feelings were expressed by the students'. For the following detailed analyses, I only included the first four of the most frequently mentioned figures.[52]

Cyrus. Among 94 students who took the survey, 67 mentioned Cyrus as one of the most influential figures with 35 considering him at the top of the list. Most of these students did not provide any explanation for why they considered Cyrus influential. Many of them merely referred to him as being "good"; some stated that Cyrus did not "need any introduction" and that he had been "the greatest king", an "awesome" individual, or "the best monarch". 14 students, however, mentioned the ancient "Human Rights Charter" attributed to Cyrus. On this particular point, one could observe the influence of the media and alternative sources on the students' mythical historiography.

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[52] Those historical figures who were mentioned by less than 8% of the students were excluded from this analysis.

The textbooks do not discuss this Charter. Just few months before I conducted my study, however, the Iranian government managed to borrow the Charter, which is engraved on a cylindrical stone, from the London Museum for a few-month public display. The government also embarked on a massive public relations campaign to publicize the "Cyrus Cylinder" and to encourage people to visit it. It seemed, therefore, the students' discussion of the Charter had been informed in important ways by this public relations campaign. The general fever around the Charter maybe understood as indicating the students' strong craving for something "positive" about their past.

Equally frequent in the students' responses were references to Cyrus's establishment of "Iran" as a powerful empire. 14 students mentioned Cyrus's reign as the time during which Iran was "at the peak of its power". Some of them went on to celebrate it as the "most powerful country on earth". In these recurrent emphases on "power" and on "being powerful", one could observe the students' craving for Iran's international status. Therefore, Cyrus's time was referred to with a sense of nostalgia by the students. Yet, as discussed before, they did not provide much detailed information about this period.

Finally, the students referred to what they saw as Cyrus's role in "improving Iranian culture and civilization". Some of them believed that Cyrus was the "founder of Iranian culture and civilization". Their responses to the questions related to nationality[53] showed that the –somewhat nebulous– notion of "culture" constituted a major dimension of their understanding of being Iranian. To many of them, it was the single notion they took pride in, albeit without clarifying what it meant. The students seemed to have had

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[53] See the following Chapter.

different subjective and essentially intuitive understandings of "culture" and "being cultured". One could observe in the interviews that to some of them, culture referred to the arts and literature. To others, however, it denoted social values, norms, and "proper" behaviors. It should be mentioned that the textbooks do use the word "culture" in different context without providing any definition.

In the interviews, eight participants mentioned Cyrus as an influential figure. They considered him as the "founder" of Iran's "rich" culture and civilization. They also mentioned that Iran had been "most powerful" during his reign. One could observe a sense of pride in the students' voice and facial expressions when they were talking about him. Some of the students even used emphatically emotional phrases such as "I really really like him!"; "I had to do a research project on him; and I really enjoyed his morality and his justice"; "I feel a sense of devotion to him for every bit of service he has done for this country". Azarin went further and projected him as an international figure for his "Human Rights Charter" concluding that "everyone is still talking about him".

The sixth grade textbook introduces Cyrus in half a page. The focus of the introduction is on his wars and the establishment of the Achaemenid dynasty. In the brief introduction, there is no reference to "Persian Empire", "the Human Rights Charter", or other progress made under the rule of Cyrus. The only judgment made in the text about his character reports that "some historians believe Cyrus was a very wise man". As mentioned earlier, this is also the only sentence in the three textbooks where the possibility of various historical perspectives and opinions is implicitly acknowledged by referring to "some historians". Yet, even this reference to "some historians" has been

employed to implicitly undermine the claim that Cyrus was "a very wise man"; for it means that there is no consensus among "all historians" about the validity of the claim.

The text does not project Cyrus as a national hero. It also fails to include some of his verified accomplishments. This approach is in harmony with the overall tone of the texts in which the kings and monarchs are presented in a negative light. With regards to Cyrus, the textbook does not cast him negatively. Yet, by neglecting his achievements – and those of the Achaemenid Empire–, the text avoids an otherwise uncomfortable exception to its paradigm of "bad monarchs". Indeed Cyrus's unrivaled standing in Iranian popular historiography and his status in popular constructions of Iranian identity make it impossible for the text to cast him in any negative light.

The students, however, seemed to have formed their own idea about Cyrus independent of the textbook. The abundance of alternative sources of information regarding this period of Iran's history is arguably an important reason. In fact, many of the students talked in the interviews about having conducted research on Cyrus as a project for their history class.

Amir Kabir. 47 of the 94 students counted Amir Kabir as one of the most influential figures. The main reasons they mentioned included his role in increasing awareness among the people, cultural developments –such as establishing modern schools and publishing the first Iranian newspaper–, and the general development and progress of the country during his ministry. Some of the students talked about his "wisdom" and his "efforts to restore justice" in spite of the "incompetent and tyrannical" Qajar dynasty. The students' accounts of Amir Kabir's life and accomplishments seemed to closely follow what the textbooks had discussed; for they did not provide any

information beyond what stated in the textbooks. Unlike Cyrus, Amir Kabir's name has not been frequently mentioned in the mass media and other alternative venues in recent years. This might be one of the reasons the students did not show any deeper familiarity. In addition, the textbooks' positive presentation of Amir Kabir is compatible with the popular sentiments towards him.

Three interview participants described Amir Kabir as a "good man" who helped develop the country. Their accounts also followed the textbook's representation of him as single noble man within a "corrupt and incompetent" political establishment. The students focused on how much of an exception he had been in his time more than they referred to his actual contributions and the progress he had initiated. In the students' words, Amir Kabir appeared as a measure of others' utter incompetence more than a national hero or a cause of national pride. As such, his story –and indeed his ill fate– had turned into one of frustration for the students and yet another reminder of an old sense of despair. Saghi argued "[h]ad we not had him, we would have not gained even this much of development" implying her dissatisfaction with current situation and her generally negative image of the past.

In the textbooks, one page is dedicated to Amir Kabir. He is introduced as a competent and resourceful man who worked hard for the country's progress and development. He has been credited with establishing Dar al-Fonun, the first institution of higher education in "modern" Iran. He is also praised for publishing the first Iranian newspaper, and for fighting against deep-seated "corruption" in all ranks of the Persian royal family at the time. At the same time, his fall from power and his eventual assassination by a royal verdict are explained in details concluding with this sentence:

"[a]fter Amir Kabir, Mirza Agha Khan Nuri, who was an incompetent and treasonous man became the chancellor [i.e. Amir Kabir's successor] and because of his incompetence in governance, the country fell back to its previous chaos" (The History group of textbooks' planning office, 2007, p.28). The backward transition from "wise and competent" Amir Kabir to "corrupt and incompetent" Agha Khan Nuri is in line with the textbooks' general historiography of Iran prior to the Islamic Revolution. This image of transitory and fruitless periods of progress and prosperity juxtaposed with long and enduring eras of failure and incompetence have, in turn, seared a powerful mark in the students' perception of their history.

Mosaddeq. 34 of the survey participants considered Mosaddeq as a positive and influential figure in Iran's history. They perceived him as someone who cared about Iran in a time that "no one else did". Some of them did not provide any reason for why they attributed to him "great influence" or "good influence". Others mentioned his leading role in the Oil Nationalization movement. Among this latter group, some argued that Mosaddeq "had restored Iran's lost independence". For this reason, they believed him to be a national hero and Oil Nationalization to be a national victory.

At the same time, Oil Nationalization seemed to be the only thing the students knew about Mosaddeq. Indeed, this is the only issue discussed about him in the textbook as well. The only difference between the textbook's account of Mosaddeq and those of the students is that the students showed higher admiration of him. In the interviews, some of the students stated that Mosaddeq had been one of the main topics of their research for the history classes. This might be one reason why his role was visibly dominant in the students' image of Iran's history.

Five interview participants mentioned Mosaddeq as an influential historical figure. All of these students mentioned Oil Nationalization when discussing Mosaddeq. Yet, they went beyond his role in the Nationalization. They referred to what they saw as Mosaddeq's role in "unifying the country", "bringing back our pride", and "restoring national independence". One could also observe an emotional attachment in the students' accounts. Ladan said "I really love Mr. Mosaddeq because I think he really was a legend. Not only he nationalized the oil [industries], but he gave our people independence. We realized we could do whatever we wanted." In fact, an undertone of nationalism seemed to exist in the students' accounts of Mosaddeq, which is absent in the textbook's account. This shows that the students' knowledge about him had been shaped not only through official education, but also through alternative media. It must be added that Mosaddeq is a generally respected national figure whose legacy is recognized by the state only half-heartedly. On the popular level and especially among the middle class, his name has remained venerated despite the attacks made against him in the early years of the Islamic Republic, and despite the government's policy of neglecting him that followed the early attacks. In contrast, Mosaddeq enjoys a positive and visible presence in the discourse of reformist political parties, as well as in the satellite media such as BBC Persian and other opposition satellite TV stations broadcasted from abroad.

The textbook's narrative of Mosaddeq and the Oil Nationalization movement is noticeably different from the students' historiography of the man and the episode. The text gives more weight to the role of Ayatollah Kashani, who was a religious leader at the time and a supporter of the movement. He is the first person introduced in the discussion of the Nationalization movement; he enjoys more space in the textbook compared to

Mosaddeq; and his picture comes before that of Mosaddeq. A comparison between the two phrases that introduce the two figures can help to better understand the textbook's historiography of the movement:

> "The oil nationalization movement was led by two of the religious and political figures of the time, Ayatollah Kashani and Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq. Ayatollah Kashani was one of the great clergies of the time who had fought bravely alongside his father against British colonialism. He was the leader of the Islamic forces [in the Nationalization movement]. And Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq had a lot of experience in political matters." (The History group of textbooks' planning office, 2007, pp. 54-55)

Mosaddeq's introduction in the text does not go beyond the above sentence. The text then talks briefly about the victory of the movement and allocates the next one-and-a-half pages to discuss the obstacles, divisions, and finally the failure of the movement and "that of Mosaddeq". In contrast, none of the students remembered Ayatollah Kashani as an influential figure or even as a champion of Oil Nationalization, as the textbook seems to imply.

Shah Abbas. 12 of the survey participants considered Shah Abbas to have been a positively influential figure. They recognized him for his role in making Persia a "powerful country" and in advancing the arts, architecture, and "culture". Six of the interview participants also mentioned Shah Abbas as an influential figure. Their accounts of the era were similar to that of the textbooks. Sarin talked passionately about how "all European countries" wanted to have relations with us during Shah Abbas's reign. Shadan mentioned how Shah Abbas "stood up to Russians" and created a "powerful Iran"

protected against foreign aggressions. One again, one could see in these passionate accounts of him a craving for international respect, status and power.

The textbook introduces Shah Abbas as the great king of one of the most powerful Shi'a dynasties of Iran and enumerates his victories in wars with other nations. The focus, in other words, is on the conflicts in his foreign policy. Later on, a section has been dedicated to the progress and developments made during the Safavid dynasty including discussions of the growth in arts and sciences, expansion of domestic and international trade, as well as mentioning of Shah Abbas's strong position in his relations with other countries. Persia's upper hand in its foreign affairs is explained, however, in terms of European countries' competition to achieve their colonial objectives.

The students' overall image of the era and of Shah Abbas, it can be argued, is similar to that of the textbook. A difference of emphasis is recognizable however. The textbook seems to downplay Persia's strong international status by focusing on issues such as colonialism and foreign interferences. The students, in contrast, viewed international status of the country as the most impressive aspect of Shah Abbas's reign. Some of the students made an explicit comparison between Persia's powerful international position in Shah Abbas's time and Iran's "disastrous" and "humiliating" situation now.

Finally, some of the scholarly works on Shah Abbas era discuss the atmosphere of religious tolerance under his patronage (Zarrinkoub, 2008). Although –Shi'ah– Islam was the declared religion of the state, the multi-faith architecture and arts of the Shah Abbas era have often been seen as a testimony to –religious– minorities' freedom in practicing – and maybe even preaching– their religions. This theme however is missing both from the

textbook and from the students' accounts of the time. The students, in other words, respect and recognize Shah Abbas for the similar reasons the textbook praises him, albeit with different levels of emphasis.

Figures perceived as negative. In this section, I will focus on the historical figures whom the students believed to have left a negative legacy in Iran's history. These are also the individuals towards whom no positive feelings were expressed by the students. For the following detailed analyses, I only included the first five of the most frequently mentioned figures.[54]

Genghis Khan. 10 of the survey participants mentioned Genghis Khan as a negatively influential figure in Iran's history. They all recalled his invasion of Iran and four of them specifically stated that he "had ruined the Iranian culture". This is similar to how the textbook introduces Genghis Khan. It must be added that some of the students could not recall Genghis Khan's name. Yet, they did remember his attack and his legacy and, therefore, put down the "Mongol invasion" in reference to Genghis Khan in their responses to the "influential figure" list question.

In the interviews, only one of the participants mentioned Genghis Khan as an influential figure. In contrast to all other responses about him in the survey, Baharan described the invasion with a surprisingly rare positive tone:

"I think it [i.e. the Mongol invasion] had a positive impact. Because people got motivated to reproduce the books and the knowledge that had been lost; and in the

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[54] Those historical figures who were mentioned by less than 2% of the students were excluded from this analysis. This is a looser criterion compared to the 8% cut-off line applied above to "positive figures". The looser criterion is due to the fact that, in general, "negative" figures appeared less in the students' accounts compared to the "positive" ones.

process, they completed them [i.e. the books] and made more progress. If it was not for the invasion, the books might have remained in the libraries and no one would have cared [for them]. But because they burnt the libraries, people started working again."

Baharan's interpretation is not, in fact, far from the textbook's analyses of the aftermath of the invasion. The textbook dedicates three pages to the Mongol invasion where Genghis Khan's name appears 16 times. His invasion of Iran is described as "one of the most savage and the most detrimental invasions [ever happened] to Iran" (Javadian, Kheirandish, and Abbasi, 2007, p. 43). However, in a box offering some "extra reading" and also on the back cover of the seventh grade textbook, the authors emphasize that the Mongols were not able to "kill the spirit of independence and progress" (p. 46) among the Iranian people; and that people's resistance and their "great Islamic and Iranian culture and civilization" (p.46) eventually brought back independence, freedom, and development to the country. This optimistic account is generally absent in the students' accounts. They seemed to perceive Genghis Khan's invasion as an extremely destructive event with enduring legacies.

President Ahmadinejad. 10 of the survey participants mentioned President Ahmadinejad as an influential figure with negative impacts. Two of these negative impacts stated by the students include creating a "negative image of Iranians around the world" and "damaging the country" by Ahmadinejad. In some cases, the students employed strong expressions such as "really really bad" and "ruined the country" in reference to him. Few of the students went further and used derogatory terms in

describing him. Some others used exclamation marks or red pens in writing his name as an influential figure without any further explanation.

None of the interview participants talked about President Ahmadinejad. It should be noted however that the students were generally more cautious when discussing current issues during the interviews. Fear of consequences, in other words, might have been a cause of this caution. None of the bold opinions about the current political system that were expressed in anonymous surveys appeared in the face-to-face interviews. Since the text covers the history of the country up to the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, there is no mentioning of President Ahmadinejad in the textbooks to make a comparison possible.

Fath Ali Shah. Eight of the survey participants mentioned Fath Ali Shah as a negatively influential figure in Iran's history. They often recalled him as an "incompetent king" who lost vast parts of Iran's territory to foreign powers. The territorial loss appeared to be the hallmark of the students' narrative of the Qajar dynasty. The students' perceptions –and reduction– of the Qajar era to a disastrous episode in Iran's history closely follows the textbook's historiography.

In particular, the students' image of Fath Ali Shah corresponds to his portrayal in the textbook. He is introduced in a three-and-a-half-page lesson solely through references to his political and military incompetence, his losing of wars and territories to Russians, and his triggering of people's anger, dissatisfaction and frustration. The role of the clergies in leading people against the ruling monarchs becomes more prevalent in this lesson. Yet, their role in forcing the country at the time of weakness into a second more disastrous war with the Russian Empire is not dealt with. . Instead, Persia's defeat in this second war is also blamed solely on Fath Ali Shah.

Agha Mohamammd Khan. Eight of the survey participants mentioned Agha Mohammad Khan as a negatively influential figure in Iran's history. The main issue raised by the students against him was his role in founding the Qajar dynasty, which was considered by almost all the participants to be a disastrous development. The students also recalled Agha Mohammad Khan's reported atrocities committed during his attacks against various Iranian cities in the course of establishing himself as the sole ruler of Persia. Once again, some of the students mentioned that Agha Mohammad Khan had diminished the "glory" and the "high status", which Iran supposedly had before him. This, of course, contradicts the official historiography according to which Agha Mohammad Khan's brutal campaign united a weak and divided Persia into a more powerful political unit. The students, however, did not refer to the state of Persia before him; and they did not explain what they meant by the "glory" and the "high status", which he had destroyed. Once again, they seemed to be using an abstract notion, which resembles the textbook's heavily negative historiography of the Qajar dynasty. This historiography fits the textbooks' general narrative of the backward trend of Iran's royal history and the implicit suggestion that each dynasty has been more decedent than the previous ones. This representation has had mixed success in shaping the students' image of the past dynasties. In general, aside from the Achaemenid Empire and the Safavid dynasty, the students usually used the abstract notion of "Iran's glory" as a tool to criticize and dismiss other periods and dynasties.

The textbook's discussion on Agha Mohammad Khan focuses on his wars with others who laid claim on monarchy in order to establish his own dynasty. The text also reports his cruelty in killing and torturing scores of civilians in his military campaigns, as

well as his wars with neighboring countries. The Qajar family is also introduced as a tribe who entered Persia along with the Mongols during Genghis Khan's invasion. This association is yet another subtle way of creating a negative image of the upcoming Qajar dynasty by the text. To summarize, the students' images of Persia during the Qajars' reign, and their assessment of the Qajar kings, seemed to have the highest correlation with the textbooks' representation.

Figures perceived as both positive and negative. There were also a number of historical figures about whom the students had disagreements. Some considered them in a positive light; others saw them of negative influence; and still others believed that their roles and legacies could not be summarized into being only positive or negative.

Reza Shah . Reza Shah is often viewed as one of the most controversial figures in Iran's modern history. It is not surprising, therefore, that the findings of this study show a great disagreement about him between the textbook and the students. As shown in Table 8 above, Reza Shah is presented as one of the most negative figures in Iran's history in the textbooks. He was, indeed, considered by many of the students to be "influential" as 39 of the survey participants mentioned his name. However, the students' assessment of his impact on Iran's history was not unanimous. 26 of the participants considered him a positive figure, three considered him a negative figure, and 10 expressed neutral or mixed assessments of his influence.

Those who did not provide any opinion about his influence simply stated his name as an influential figure; or mentioned his decision to ban traditional female covering –i.e. the Hijab– without any normative judgment. Three of the students offered a more nuanced approach stating that he had done both positive and negative things. For

instance, they argued that "what he did with banning the Hijab was not good; but he did a lot for the development of Iran"; or "I know he was a dictator; but he also contributed to the country's development] a lot". In other words, only a small percentage of the students considered Reza Khan as an influential figure and examined his influence through a relatively critical lens. They agreed with some of his actions while rejecting others.

Most of the students, however, had a positive impression of Reza Shah, which stands in stark contrast with the textbook's narrative. Most of these latter group considered him as someone who had "developed the country" by building roads, railways and universities. They recalled him as someone who "was a great king"; who "did a lot for his country"; and who "built and advanced Iran in a short period of time". One even went further to claim that "we have everything that we have because of him".

In the interviews, one could observe more of a nuanced and critical approach in discussing Reza Shah compared to the surveys. Half of the interview participants mentioned Reza Shah as an influential figure and had an opportunity to further explain. Similar to the survey participants, most of the interview participants stated that Reza Shah had contributed to the development of Iran. Yet, they also criticized some of his "authoritarian measures" such as banning the Hijab and going against the "will of the people". Some also mentioned his "dependency upon the British" and considered it damaging for Iran.

Six of the interview participants mentioned Reza Shah as an influential figure. Among these, Shirin simply stated that "I think they also talked about Reza Shah" without clarifying whom she meant by "they". It appeared that she was recalling the textbooks' accounts and did not necessarily have an opinion of her own about Reza Shah.

Elahe and Nazli had a critical view of him. They acknowledged his role in the development of the country's infrastructure; but they considered this development a small part of his legacy. Elahe believed that he had oppressed people; and Nazli believed that he had implemented all of those reforms to please his "British bosses". These two assessments are similar to that of the textbook. The other three participants provided more sophisticated assessments. They talked about his positive influence in building roads and universities. Yet, they also stated that he had made mistakes such as banning the Hijab in a society that was deeply traditional. Azarin showed some sympathy towards him saying that "the poor guy saw the [rest of the] world and wanted us to progress; so he banned the Hijab. Of course this was a mistake because many Iranians were Muslims."

The textbook on the other hand, presents an unequivocally negative image of Reza Shah. He is introduced as a British puppet brought to power to serve the British interests. He is depicted as a brutal king who deceived people and disrespected their religious beliefs. And he is condemned as a weak leader who was unable to protect the country against foriegn aggressions during the World War II . The text does mention his role in building the first railroad system and in establishing the first Western-type university in Iran. However, it claims that the people did not approve of the Shah's projects for they considered those projects to be in line with the British interests –and not the national interests.

The differences between the students' and the textbooks' accounts about Reza Shah seem to be the result of the students' access to alternative sources of information. From time to time, some of the students had heard about him in the family gatherings where their grandparents had told stories about the time of Reza Shah and his impacts.

Some of the students talked about the –mostly positive– stories they had heard about him from family members. In addition, Reza Shah seems to have gained some level of popularity in recent years for his role in the development of Iran's infrastructure.. Furthermore, the students had been exposed to an alternative narrative of Reza Shah in a documentary they had watched in their history classes. Many of them explained that the teacher had asked them to try to look at Reza Shah "from a different perspective" to understand different aspects of his legacy. Instead of combining the negative account of the textbook and the positive narrative of the documentary, most of the students seemed to have adopted the positive image of Reza Shah as presented in the movie. In rejecting what they saw as the biased narrative of the textbook, they seemed to have formed their own biased image of Reza Shah. This was yet another example of their craving for national heroes as well as an indication of their distrust in the textbooks' historiography when it comes to modern times.

Ayatollah Khomeini. Another controversial figure frequently mentioned in the students' responses and also discussed at length in the textbook is Ayatollah Khomeini. Again, there is a stark difference between the textbook's narrative of him and what many of the participants perceived about his role and legacies. From 35 survey participants who considered him an influential figure, 18 assessed his legacy as negative, 13 expressed mixed or neutral opinions, and only four considered him to have positively impacted the country.

Some of the participants felt comfortable expressing their explicit opinions; and sometimes they did so passionately. Others, however, were more reserved in their responses. As a result, in some cases I had to make inferences based on snipped sentences

or by paying attention to the students' use of emoticons and punctuation marks. The different nature of the students' responses regarding Ayatollah Khomeini can be found in sentences such as: "look at our life. I think it is obvious what he has done.", "do I really need to explain for you [what he has done]?", "I have a lot to say but I prefer not to. It is too political", "I think it is better if I don't say anything.", and finally "….!!!!".

Different concerns or thoughts might be the cause of these different kind of responses. First of all, some of the students did not feel safe to express their opinions about issues or people related to the current political circumstances even in anonymous surveys. Secondly, a group of the students assumed their –negative– opinion about Khomeini to be obvious to me probably because the way I dressed[55].

At the same time, there were those participants who expressed strong unsympathetic judgments about Ayatollah Khomeini writing sentences such as "he ruined our lives"; "he destroyed Iran"; and "[he was] the founder of the worst dynasty!". The strong emotional expressions are not unexpected as the students had emotional attachments and personal experiences of what they saw as the direct results of Ayatollah Khomeini's leadership in the Islamic Revolution.

Nevertheless, there were also those students who praised him for what he had done during the Islamic Revolution. Four students considered him to be of a positive influence; as someone who "freed Iran and [who] became a good role model not only for Iran but for the whole Muslim world"; as someone who "cut the hands of colonial powers

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[55] The highly politicized issue of female dress in Iran has created quite a complex atmospheres in which one may –unduly or otherwise– jump into conclusion about a woman's religious, political and social beliefs based on the way she dresses. Because my Hijab was moderate and did not show any sign of strict religious affiliation, the participants could have made some assumptions about my political views.

from our resources", and finally as someone who "inspired new and positive ideas in [the minds of] people".

I also observed a larger number of nuanced judgments about Ayatollah Khomeini in the survey responses. Four of the students discussed his role not in simply negative or positive terms. Instead, they projected his Revolution as a historical development with both positive and negative impacts. References to "Khomeini's [good] intentions at the time and how they went astray", or sentences such as "he restored Iran's independence against foreign powers, but then the Revolution lost its way"; and "he did what people wanted at the time, but it was a mistake that everyone had a say in" demonstrates a more critical analysis of the Islamic Revolution and its aftermath by some of the students.

Six interview participants mentioned Ayatollah Khomeini in their responses. Their explanations about him were among the longest they provided for any historical figure. Not surprisingly, they were hesitant to take a clear side in a face-to-face interview. Maryam and Hengameh believed him to be "influential" but stated that they did not want to say whether he was "good" or "bad". Ladan, Shadan, and Somayyeh presented more sophisticated explanations, counting what they saw as the positive and negative elements of his legacy. They all mentioned that had the Revolution continued based on its "initial principles", it would have been a positive development. Yet, they believed, it went astray.

In the textbook, Ayatollah Khomeini is the most frequently mentioned historical figure. He also enjoys the largest share of space, and is praised in strongest terms. His role as the most respected religious leader of his time and the sole leader of the Revolution is stretched to 15 years before the Revolution. Throughout the text, he is

repeatedly introduced as a "beloved" and "brave" leader whose speeches and actions were always successful in reaching their political objectives; and in revealing the dark nature of the Pahlavi regime. In the absence of any discussion of other opposition groups during the Pahlavi era, Ayatollah Khomeini emerges as the only voice who stood up against the tyranny and the "brutality" of the second Pahlavi Shah and against the interventions of the foreign powers. In one instance, the text goes so far to call the popular movements against Pahlavi regime "Imam Khomeini's uprising." (The History Group of Textbooks' Planning Office, 2007, 2007, p. 61).

The textbook also puts an emphasis on the religious dimension of Ayatollah Khomeini's leadership. The textbook projects people's opposition to the Pahlavis as an effort aimed at establishing an "Islamic state". According to this projection, both people and Ayatollah Khomeini had a more or less clear objective of replacing the Pahlavi regime with an "Islamic state" even 15 years before the Revolution. Throughout the text, Ayatollah Khomeini's religious speeches and his references to Islam are also discussed in length to further emphasize the existence of a consensus among the people about Islam as the main point of reference for opposition.

Similar to the case of Reza Shah, the different accounts of the students' perceptions of the role of Ayatollah Khomeini –compared to the textbooks– relate to the impacts of alternative sources of information. In the case of Ayatollah Khomeini, the students had even more access to a variety of different sources even if they did not search for information. Discussions and debates about his role in Iran's history can be found not only in the official government media, but also in numerous opposition and news

channels on satellite TV. Indeed Ayatollah Khomeini's legacy directly affects the students' lives today and, therefore, triggers more interest among the students.

In discussing the legacies of Reza Shah, the students often referred to their classroom research, to their extra-curricular reading and to family discussions. When talking about Ayatollah Khomeini, however, many of them simply talked about the present conditions in which they were living. In other words, their emotional reactions towards Ayatollah Khomeini's legacies were mostly based on their first-hand experiences and not necessarily due to additional reading or having been exposed to alternative opinions. The textbook seemed to have succeeded in convincing the students that Ayatollah Khomeini had been the main person responsible for the Revolution; for the students seemed to hold him accountable more than others when they criticized the current situations.

Naser al-Din Shah. 16 of the survey participants mentioned Naser al-Din Shah as one of the most influential historical figures in Iran. In the surveys, three students did not provide any explanation for this choice; and they did not indicate whether they considered his influence to be positive or negative. One of the participants considered him to be a positive figure for he had imported elements of Western technology and Western cultural advances to Persia –including cinematography. Two of the students stated that he had been "both good and bad." Ten of the respondents, in contrast, held a negative view of Naser al-Din Shah. They considered him as someone who "had wasted all country's resources" for personal leisure; someone who had lost "much of the country's lands"; and someone who had made many concessions to the foreigners. One of the students called him a "big traitor".

Five interview participants mentioned Naser al-Din Shah as an influential figure. Three among them had a negative view of him. They blamed him for "holding the country back" and for "delaying the development Iran could have had". The other two – i.e. Baharan and Saghi– referred to his weak politics and "selfish decisions". Yet, they also praised him for his interest in arts and "culture" and for the fact that he had brought the art of photography to Iran.

The textbook introduces Naser al-Din Shah as a "traitor" whose negative legacies had long lasting consequences for the country and for the people:

> "After the death of Mohammad Shah [56], his son Naser al-Din Mirza rose to the throne under the name of Naser al-Din Shah. He ruled for 50 years and during this long period inflicted irreparable damages to the country and the people of Iran. Foreigners' influence in Iran increased and they received numerous concessions from Naser al-Din Shah. Although he pretended to care about Iran's progress, in action, his pleasure-seeking behavior and his selfishness pushed the country to the slippery slope of collapse." (The History Group of Textbooks' Planning Office, 2007, p.27)

The text then goes on to explain how Naser al-Din Shah ordered the killing of his former chief minister, Amir Kabir; how he lost control over some parts of the country resulting in secession; and how he conceded to foreigners in several treaties.

Once again, the students' negative image of Naser al-Din Shah was compatible with the textbook's representation of him. The students generally discussed the same

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[56] The third Shah of the Qajar dynasty who ruled Persia between 1834 and 1848 E.C.

critiques that had been explained in the textbook. However, some of the students mentioned the positive aspects of his reign, which are absent from the text. These students had obtained information about Naser al-Din Shah's interests in arts, photography and cinematography through alternative sources.

CHAPTER VIII

REPRESENTATION AND PERCEPTION OF IRANIAN IDENTITY

In this Chapter, I examine some of the direct representations of collective identity in the textbooks as well as in the students' accounts. I will first focus on the representations of the role of people in the textbooks to better understand how often they have been included in the historiography. I also pay attention to the contexts in which people's presence is usually recognized. This leads to the next question of whether people's role has been considered as passive or active throughout the books' historiography. I then compare the textbooks' representations with the students' perceptions of how ordinary people have influenced the history of the country. These perceptions relate to the students' understanding of their own role as members of the society and as citizens. In analyzing both the textbooks and the students' accounts, I have examined how first person plural pronouns have been used to express common experiences, struggles, loyalties, and, above all, identities. Finally, I turn to the direct question of national identity presentation in the textbooks by analyzing the usage of words such as "Iran" and "Iranian". I then discuss the students' understanding of Iranian identity as expressed in their survey and interview responses to the direct questions about national identity.

The overall analysis shows that the textbooks represent a conception of national identity that hinges upon religious beliefs. In contrast, ties to the land and to the collective historical trajectory have been sidelined. The textbooks' use of words such as "we", "us", "people", and "Iranian" projects and reinforces a sense of being Iranian defined by centuries of national humiliation. This failing collective identity, the textbooks

maintain, has been salvaged from time to time by Islam, which is depicted as the force of progress and independence. In contrast, the students often identified themselves with what they saw as one of the few "glorious eras" of Iran, namely the Achaemenid Empire. As such, their definitions of national identity were essentially rooted in their images of the ancient history. At the same time, they had adopted a theme of disappointment and shame from the textbooks in their articulations of national identity. As a result, in the conversations about national identity, one could observe a constant emotional and internal struggle in the students.

The Role of Ordinary People

One function of history texts is to recognize or dismiss various agents' engagements in different events and activities and to position various agents –or the texts' authors– in different situations. These recognitions and positioning then contribute to the formation of the text's projected notion of identity (Gee, 2005). In history textbooks, the representation of people can in particular feed into a specific projection of national identity. Textbooks can authoritatively define the role of people, and therefore, that of the students, through their historical representation of the lives of the ordinary people, and the popular movements. They can also directly engage the issue of people's impacts on various historical developments. To better understand how the textbooks project these impacts and how the students perceive it, I began with analyzing the patterns of the usage of the term "people" by the students and in the textbooks.

Representation of People in the Textbooks

To begin with, I color coded the text wherever the term "people" has been used; and then categorized the context of each usage. Figure 7 shows the frequency and the

contexts in which the word "people" has been used in the textbooks. The horizontal axis is divided based on different time periods. I chose this particular division for, as will be discussed later, there exist significant differences in the way the textbooks approach the role –and the experiences– of people in different eras.

Figure 7

Use of the Term "People" in Various Contexts in the Textbooks
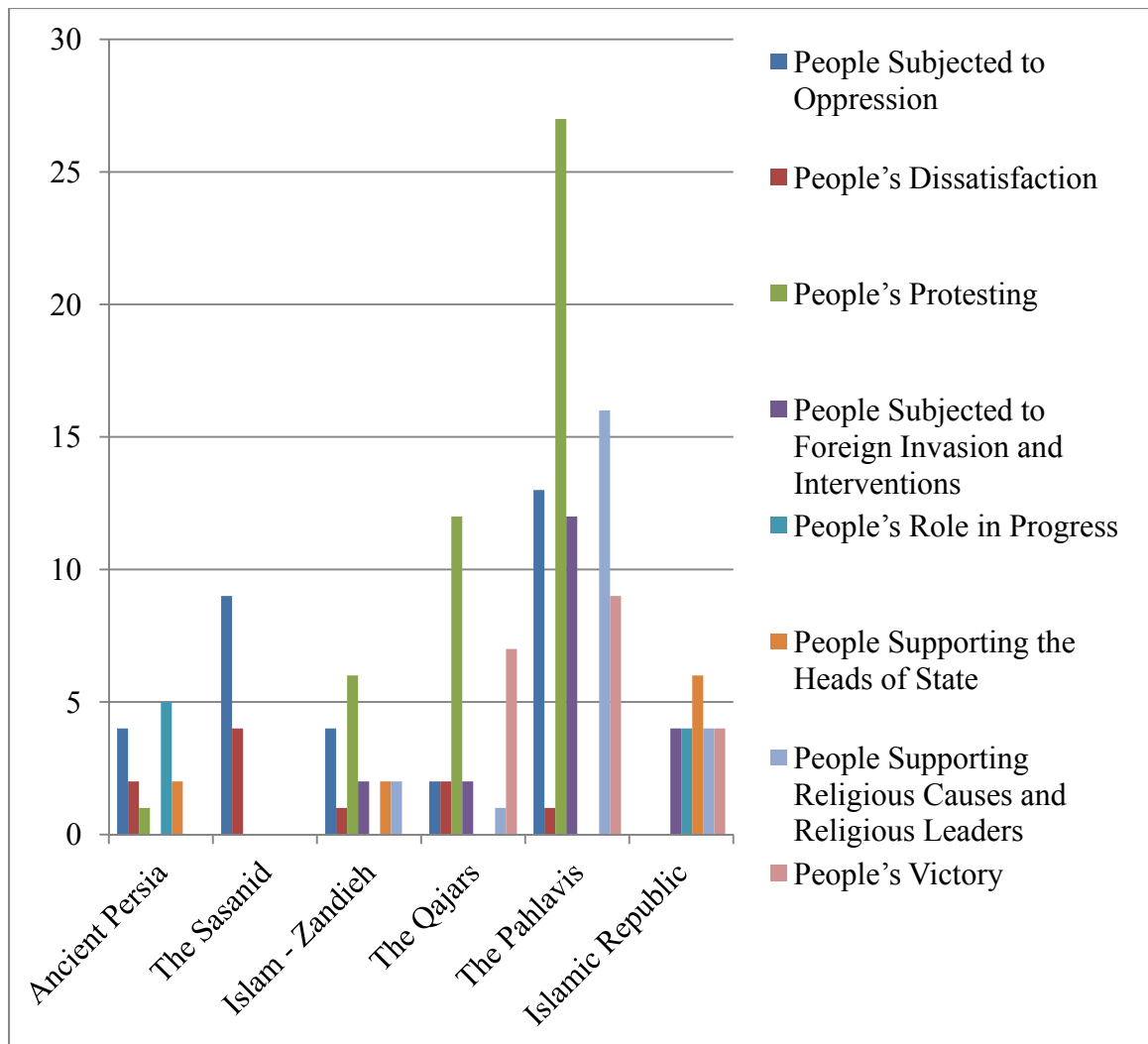
One of the frequent themes appearing in all the time periods in which "people" have been mentioned –except for the Islamic Republic era– is people's being subjected to

the state's oppression, brutality, and abuse of power. The frequency with which the textbooks discuss people's victimization at the hands of an oppressive state peaks in two eras, namely the Sasanid and the Pahlavi dynasties. In both cases, the "miserable" state of "ill-treated people" came to an end by Islam overthrowing the two oppressive dynasties. The Sasanid dynasty was defeated by Muslim Arabs who conquered Persia and integrated it into the expanding Muslim world; and the Pahlavis were defeated by an Islamic revolution. In regards to both dynasties, the text's accounts of the dire circumstances of the people built into the text's argument about Islam's upcoming role in salvation of Iranian people from oppression. In the discussion on the demise of the Sasanid dynasty, the text offers a relatively lengthy account of the brutality of the Sasanid oppressive kings. This is then contrasted with the "freedom" and "prosperity" that the "justice-oriented" message of Islam would bring to the people of Iran. This way, the text prepares the scene for introducing the Arab invasion and the fall of the Sasanid not as a national defeat, but as the vehicle of Iranians' ultimate salvation. Here is an excerpt from this lesson: "[p]eople were extremely dissatisfied with the Sasanid kings because of their oppression, corruption, and whimsical conquests" (Kheirandish, Abbasi, & Javadian, 2007a, p. 69). In the lessons on the Pahlavi era and the Islamic Revolution, the same strategy has used to introduce the Revolution as the savior of the Iranian people. The eventual collapse of the 2500-year royal system during the Revolution and the establishment of the ideal form of government, the textbook claims, indicate the final chapter of the long history of authoritarian dynasties in Iran. In these lessons, the description of the Pahlavis' oppression and abuse of power is detailed and is accompanied by pictures: "in the face of the people's resistance on the streets, the Shah's

thugs attacked them and killed thousands of men, women, youth, and kids" (The History Group of Textbooks' Planning Office, 2007, p. 74).

The oppression and the brutality of the political system associated with "people's dissatisfaction" in the text are often mentioned as the cause of the decline of various dynasties or that of the defeats of kings. Examples of this portrayal of people-king dynamics may be found in almost all time periods covered in the text. In cases where the text paints a more negative image of a dynasty –e.g. the Sasanid or the Pahlavi dynasties–, the last kings of the dynasty are directly blamed for the oppression of the people and the resulting popular dissatisfaction. In some other cases, where the text's position towards the ruling dynasty is more lenient, it is usually argued that the "weakness" of the rulers allowed local governments to abuse their power over the people. This strategy may be found in the lessons on the Achaemenid dynasty: "weakening and chaos of the state allowed the [local] governors of the Achaemenid dynasty to oppress and abuse the people as they wished." (Kheirandish, Abbasi, & Javadian, 2007a, p. 49). Another example of this more lenient judgment can be found in the lessons on the early dynasties that emerged in Persia –semi– independent from the Muslim caliphate after the introduction of Islam. In these cases, the text does not directly attack these Muslim Persian dynasties. Instead, it presents a more sophisticated analysis of the country's state at the time. Different social and political factors are discussed as the causes of the decline of each dynasty; and the ruling kings are not criticized as harshly as their Sasanid predecessors have been. Interestingly, even the people's condition is not presented as dire during these

early Muslim dynasties of Persia: "[t]he Taherid dynasty [57] was weak and [therefore] rebellions in different regions caused insecurity and hardship for the people." (Javadian, Kheirandish, and Abbasi, 2007, p.23)

Examples of people's accomplishments or victories can be found almost exclusively in the textbooks' coverage of modern history. In the case of the Qajar and Pahlvi dynasties, the victories are all presented in the context of the fight between the people on the one hand and the state on the other. In most of these anti-state struggles, members of the clergies lead the people. Here is an example from one of the lessons on the Qajar dynasty, which explains the background of the Constitutional Revolution: "[t]he people and the clergies took refuge in the holy mosques [to protest] and finally forced the autocratic state to retreat and to give in to the will of the people" (The History Group of Textbooks' Planning Office, 2007, p.35). Another example from the text's coverage of the Pahlavi era demonstrates a similar theme: "[t]he Shah realized that if he did not accept the will of the people, he would be confronted with the uprising of the people and the clergies and therefore [he] was forced to retreat." (The History Group of Textbooks' Planning Office, 2007, p. 63). In the textbooks' pre- Islamic Revolution lessons, "people's victory" is essentially defined as their success in forcing the state to change its policies or its course of actions. In the lessons covering the Islamic Republic, however, "people's victory" is defined in their fights against foreign enemies; and, expectedly, it is identified with the state's victory. According to the text's narrative, the objectives of the people and those of the state merged following the Revolution. This, in

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[57] The Taherid dynasty is one of the earliest Muslim dynasties emerged in Persia independent from the Muslim –essentially Arab– caliphate. They ruled parts of Persia from 821-873 C.E.

turn, resulted in freedom and prosperity: "[b]y overthrowing the dictatorship [of the Shah] and establishing the Islamic state, people finally found their freedom […] the poor in many cities and villages were [now] able to own land and houses" (The History Group of Textbooks' Planning Office, 2007, p.82). There are also several instances in which the text reports people's satisfaction with the new state for "the Revolution was able to respond to the goals and aspirations of the people and [to fulfill the wishes of] the martyrs. And the people, witnessing their country turning to Islam, defended the Revolution with an increasing passion and devotion" (The History Group of Textbooks' Planning Office, 2007, p. 81). This positive tone, which is generally rare in the textbooks' historiography, becomes the dominant paradigm throughout the lessons that discuss the Islamic Republic.

There are three instances in which people are reported to have supported the heads of the state. The first case can be found in the textbooks' accounts of ancient Persia in which a reference is made to a king chosen by the people to establish the first government –i.e. Deioces[58]. The second instance is in the textbook's account of the Safavid dynasty, which was one of the earliest powerful Shi'ah dynasties in Persia. The text reports that the people supported the Safavid due to "their love for and dedication to Islam". Finally, the highest level of popular support ever enjoyed by any state in Iran, the textbooks assert, belongs to the Islamic Republic.

Another issue that I examined in the textbooks was how active –or passive– "people" are presented in the text's historiography. Fairclough (2003) calls this process "activation/passivation" of social actors by a text. The process is specially significant in

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[58] Is known as the first king of Persia in the 7th century B.C.

the discussion of national identity construction and the (re)presentation of the role of the people; for "where social actors are mainly activated, their capacity for agentive action, for making things happen, for controlling others and so forth is accentuated; where they are mainly passivated, what is accentuated is their subjection to processes, them being affected by the actions of others, and so forth." (p.150) Whether ordinary people, as social actors, are presented in passive or active terms in a textbook can influence students' understanding of the power structures in society and in history. It can also have a significant impact on students' perceptions of their own role as members of society and their beliefs in their ability to make changes.

The following figure demonstrates whether the term "people" has been used in the textbooks in the –grammatical– form of the subject of an action or movement, the object of an action or event, or else, none of the two. In the text's historiography of ancient Persia, the use of the term as the subject of the sentence is more prevalent; for the text discusses the migration of the Aryan tribes to Persia and the establishment of the earliest political systems –both of which are highly agentive actions. As the text moves along the history, the term "people" appears less frequently in the text. Moreover, its infrequent appearances are often associated with passive roles –e.g. being oppressed and abused. In the text's historiography of the Qajar and the Pahlavi eras, one can observe a hike in the application of the term "people", which generally corresponds to state-society conflicts. These are also the same periods in which, according to the textbooks, the clergies' leadership is being solidified; and they are introduced as heroes championing national interests as well as the interests of the people. The active role of the people in these eras, therefore, is generally discussed in the context of their defiance vis-à-vis the state and

their following of the clergies' lead. As a result, the term "people" appears as the subject of the sentence in a large number of occasions in the text's coverage of this period. As the text moves into the discussion of the Islamic Republic, one can see a relative decrease in people's active role in the text's historiography. This is for, according to the text, the will and agency of the people and those of the state became identical after the Revolution. Therefore, the text employs "people" and "state" interchangeably, reducing the overall number of the word "people" occurs in the text.

Figure 8

Textbooks' Representation of "People" as Subjects/Objects of the Sentence
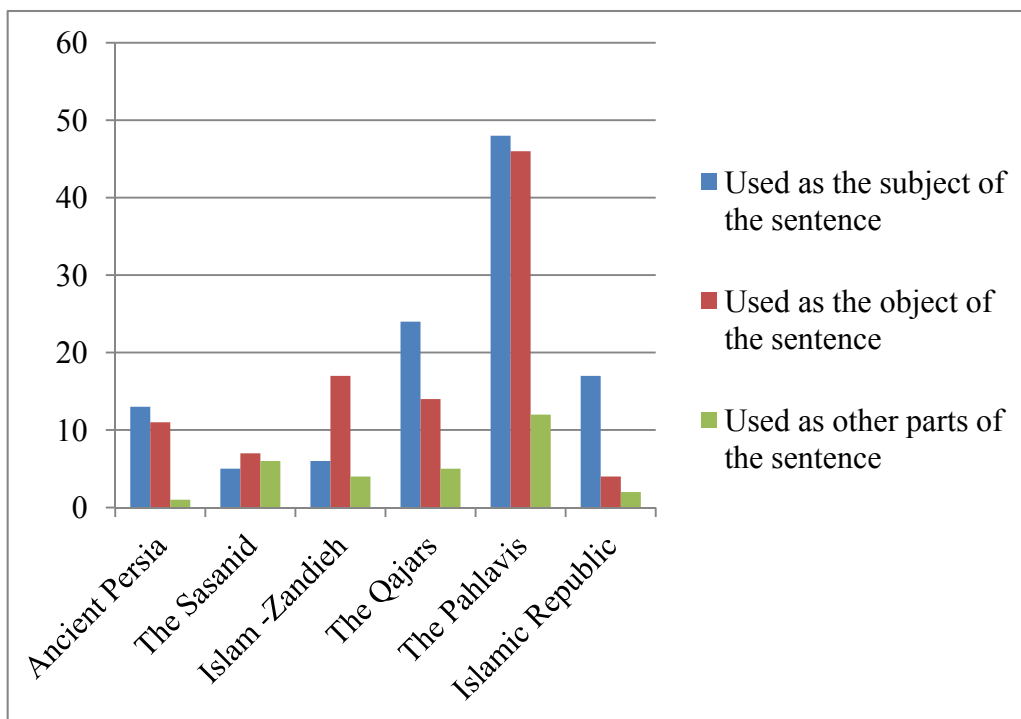
Role of Ordinary People in the Students' Accounts

The overall image of the role of people in the students' accounts is similar to the tone of the textbooks up until the Islamic Republic. The popular movements during the

Qajar, Pahlavi, and Islamic Republic, and how people had been historically and passively abused or humiliated by either foreign powers or incompetent and brutal kings were among the most common contexts in which the students used the term "people" during the interviews and in the surveys.

Table 24 summarizes the students' usage of the term "people" in their survey responses. I determined the –negative, positive or neutral– tone of the response based on the students' own evaluation of each historical development –i.e. whether they considered it a positive, a negative, or a neutral development. Similar to the general paradigm of the textbooks, survey participants often used the term "people" in the passive –and negative– contexts of oppression, abuse of power, deception, and foreign invasion. In all the cases, people's agency seemed to have been ignored and they seemed to have been positioned on the receiving end of social and political interactions.

Table 24

The Use of the Term "People" and Its Contexts in Surveys

Tone	Context of Reference to "People"	Frequency
Negative	Showing Negative Behavioral Characteristics	13
	Subject to Oppression and Abuse of Power	11
	Showing Disappointment	11
	Being Deceived	3
	Subject to Foreign Invasion	4
	Total	42
Positive	Participating in Protests and Contributing to Victories	10
	Positively Affected by Kings' Decisions and Actions	5
	Showing Pride, Dignity, and Positive Characteristics	3
	Total	18
Neutral	Influenced by Religious Leaders	8
	Neutral Descriptions	5
	Other	5
	Total	18

In discussing the historical conditions of the Iranian people in interviews, most of the participants alluded to the notions of oppression, humiliation, and helplessness. Many of the participants also expressed their regret about how people had been oppressed and humiliated throughout history without ever getting a real opportunity to make progress. The only difference was that the survey responses usually concentrated on what the students' saw as oppression and abuse of power by the Islamic Republic. Once again, the students refrained from making explicitly negative comments about the Islamic Republic during the face-to-face interviews.

Zeynab blamed "foreign powers" in forcing Iranian people to "lose belief" in their abilities: "they [i.e. foreign powers] called us the Third World and [they] told us you do not have anything and you are backward. Then our people believed that their culture is inferior." Samineh summarized the history of the country in a single sentence: "history means that people were miserable and different kings would come and go and just abuse and oppress people […]."

In terms of the role of people in popular movements, there is also a noticeable difference between the survey responses and the textbooks' accounts. Table 25 shows the list of popular movements in which survey participants discussed the role of the people.

Table 15

Survey Participants' Use of the Term "People" in Popular Movements

Popular Movement	Frequency
Constitutional Revolution	2
Oil Nationalization	3
Green movement	3
General (Not associated with any particular movements)	2
Total	10

As the results show, the term "people" has not been used in reference to the Islamic Revolution in the surveys. As was discussed in the preceding chapters, in most of the responses referring to the Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini was considered as responsible for the events. The students did not seem to project it as a national victory either. This was different from the interview responses in which "people" were mentioned in association with the Revolution and some positive assessments were also made about it. On the other hand, in a third of the cases "people" were mentioned in the survey, it was in reference to the students' praise for the role of the people in the "Green Movement". Reference to the Movement, however, only rarely came up in the interviews. Once again, both of these differences may relate to the students' cautious approach in face-to-face conversations.

In the interviews however, I observed a contrary trend. The Revolution was one of the few occasions where interview participants considered "people" an active and influential force in shaping history. What made the interview participants' accounts of the Islamic Revolution different from that of the textbook, however, was how they assessed the role of the people. In contrast to the textbook's heroic representation of the people's involvement in the Revolution, the interview participants appeared more critical in their responses. Indeed some of them refused to provide any value judgment about the Revolution. Others, however, considered it a collective "mistake" committed by the people. At the same time, almost all the interview participants seemed to be sympathetic to the people who were involved in the Revolution as they acknowledged the oppressive character of the Pahlavi dynasty. Several of them stated that people had been "shortsighted" in their decision. Saghi, who was generally cautious when talking about

controversial issues, said that "I think whatever we think [about the Revolution], we are more independent now [than the people at the time of Revolution]. […] people probably got what they wanted at the time."Azarin, who seemed unclear about her position towards the Revolution, argued:

> "[…] people were angry; and they revolted; and this is what happened. I think revolution is generally a good thing. But sometimes people are deceived. I think there are hidden hands behind the scene; sometimes foreigners, sometimes bad people. You can never be sure!"

Ladan was more direct and candid in expressing her opinion. While she acknowledged that the Islamic Revolution had overthrown an oppressive political system, she believed that the Revolution's negative legacies had outweighed its positive ones:

> "At that time […] people just wanted to throw out the Shah; they did not even think who would come after. […] I think it is always like this before revolutions. People are just excited and passionate. They do not think what would happen afterwards."

Many of the participants also viewed the Revolution as the backlash to decades of oppression and humiliation people suffered during the Pahlavi era. For instance, Azarin described the role of Ayatollah Khomeini in the Islamic Revolution as "someone [who] came and promised people to save them from their misery; and they made him an idol." In a similar vein, Baharan argued that "at that time people did not have any freedom and they could not do what they wanted. The Revolution was good in that it helped people to come out of that distress and hardship."

The reason for the difference between survey participants' and interview

participants' assessment of the role of the people in the Islamic Revolution might have been the fact that in interviews, students had the opportunity to explain their responses and were not asked to simply name the events. Therefore, they presented a more elaborate account of the past. On the other hand, in surveys, many students merely wrote "Islamic Revolution" in their response to the question about significant historical events without providing any explanation about their feelings and opinions about its nature. Therefore, there were fewer opportunities for them to discuss their answer and delve deep into the dynamics of the event.

Another theme present in both the interview and the survey responses, and absent from the textbooks, was the students' critical assessments of "people's failures". This was more prevalent in the survey responses where the term "people" had been used most frequently in reference to the students' direct –and sometimes unforgiving– negative judgment about social behaviors and traditions. In this group of responses, the students criticized people's "ignorance", "prejudices", "inaction", as well as their other "deficiencies" and "weaknesses". In the survey responses the term "people" was used 13 times in such negative contexts. In contrast, it was used three times in reference to positive qualities such as kindness and unity. In some cases, the students employed general and rather nebulous statements such as "lack of culture" or "bad behavior" in admonishing "people". Others were more specific and singled out particular behaviors that they deemed as "negative characteristic of Iranian people". Some of these included "interfering in each other's affairs"; "being prejudiced"; and "being disrespectful of the law". Some of the respondents referred to these negative characteristics when asked about their understanding of "being Iranian"; and some in their analyses of different

historical developments. It must be noted that in these cases of negative judgments, the students rarely considered themselves as a member of the collectivity they were judging. They generally used collective pronouns such as "us" and "we" to identify with the nation at large when discussing the "ancient glory" or the times of oppression of the people.[59] In contrast, the students tended to exclude themselves from "people" when judging the negative behaviors of the "people" and when blaming them for the current condition of the country. It seemed to be easier for the students to sympathize and identify with the victims of oppression and abuse of power, than to identify themselves as members of a collectivity they blamed for "weak ethics".

The overall passive and negative evaluation of the role of people in history was accompanied with a belief among the students that they themselves could not make a difference. They had internalized the textbooks paradigm about social actors, in which these actors had historically been subject to the will of the more powerful and who only rarely rose to action. On the other hand, one's perceptions of his or her influence on the trajectory of the country can partially shape one's vision for the future. This is why I asked the students about their future plans and asked them to speculate about the state of Iran 10 years from now. The social context of these two inquiries, I must add, is the increasing wave of emigration by educated adults, mostly from the Iranian middle and upper middle classes, in recent years. So, I examined how this group of high school students envisioned their future as the next generation of professionals. The results showed that only 25% of the survey participants stated that they would be living in Iran

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[59] For a more detailed analysis of the usage of terms "us" and "we" by the students and their context, see below.

in ten years. More than 50% were planning to leave the country and about half of this group even had specific ideas about which country they would emigrate to and the major they would study in college. Figure 9 summarizes the results (those categorized as "other" did not provide an answer to the question and talked about why it is not important where one lives).

Figure 9

Students' Decision about Emigrating from Iran
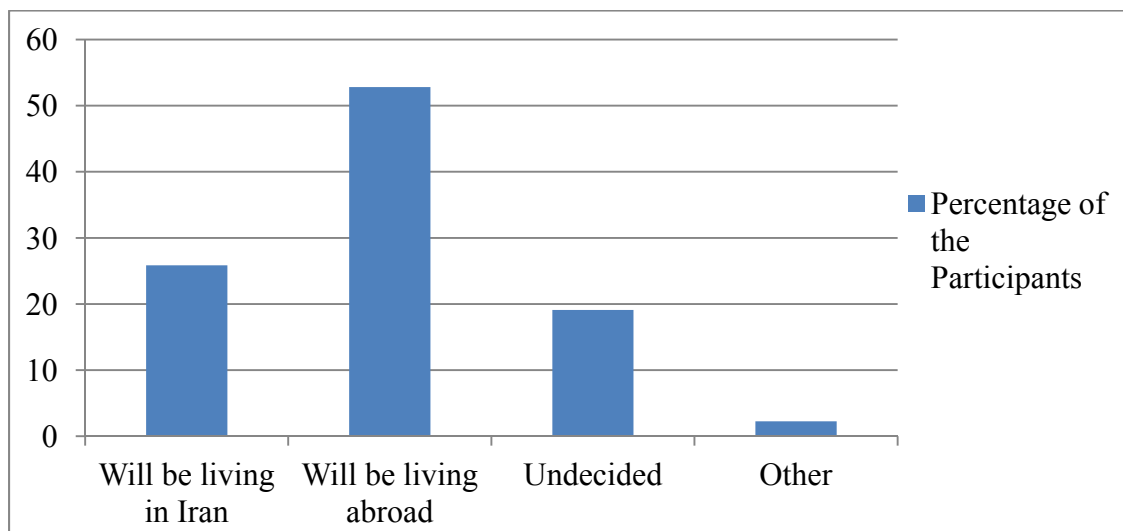
It is worth mentioning that some of the interview participants blamed the textbooks for their lack of knowledge about the lives of "ordinary people". They argued that textbooks "only talked about the kings and politicians" and that they provided little or no information about how people had lived their lives. When asked what she would have liked to read in her history textbooks, Ladan responded "I want to know more about what really happened. What was the role of the people? How did they influence the events? If we knew these things, we could make our own judgment about what

happened." The same sentiment was expressed by Samineh: "I really wanted to know what people had thought; how they had lived; what had it been like to be a kid at my age in those days. We really do not know anything about the lives of the people."

One of the teachers I observed seemed to have noticed this shortcoming. She tried in one of the sessions to focus on ordinary people's lives. To do so, she started the class with an activity in which the students had to write a one-page diary entry assuming they were girls living during one of Persia's ancient dynasties. The responses showed the students' general unfamiliarity with the context, the social dynamics, and the life-style of the people living in that era. Eventually, the activity turned into an entertaining exercise and failed to address the students' knowledge deficit in any significant way.

Representation and Perceptions of Diversity

Another aspect of representation of people is the way a historiography deals with the issue of diversity. It has been argued that history textbooks sometimes show the tendency to present a cohesive and homogenous image of the country's history and to neglect ethnic, religious, and language diversities. This presentation strategy is believed to foster a "unified identity" and to nurture a sense of "national pride" and "belonging" in pupils (Baranovic, 2001; Glyptis, 2007; Katsarksa 2007; Oteiza & Pinto, 2008; Popson, 2001; Zajda & Zajda, 2003). Iranian history textbooks do seem to have adopted this strategy in their presentation of the past. Throughout the textbooks, people are often presented as a homogeneous group who has always had a common goal –or goals. There are almost no discussions of diversity of opinions or opposing views among people. The term "people" is repeatedly used to represent the wishes and dreams of the whole in certain and unequivocal terms. In the sentences talking about "people" and their wishes,

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the verbs are often definitive creating a sense of certitude about how people thought and felt. Phrases such as "people were dissatisfied", "people were oppressed", and "people demonstrated their protest" are frequently used in the text's historiography of people. The only exception to this general narrative of homogenous people with similar aspirations, wants and needs is a reference to religious diversity that existed prior to the Safavid dynasty. Such diversity is argued to have been one of the main causes of social malaise. The state of "disunity" was resolved, the textbook maintains, when the Safavid established Shi'ah Islam as the official religion of the state. The only example of acknowledging diversity, therefore, appears in the text a negative light.

The image of "unified people" is further reinforced in the textbooks by a polarized representation of state-society relations. In the few instances in which the text provides an analysis of social conditions[60] , the word "people" is used to distinguish the masses from the ruling class. In the sixth grade textbook (Kheirandish, Abbasi, & Javadian, 2007a), there is a lesson on "The Condition of Iran during the Sasanids" (p. 65). In this lesson, two paragraphs have been dedicated to the introduction of "different social classes" (p.65), which are introduced as the "elite" and the "ordinary people". In the first paragraph, it is stated that "the majority of Iranian people [at the time] belonged to the second group". In the second paragraph, the text begins to use the word "people" in reference to the second group implicitly excluding the "elite" from being a part of the nation. The "alien" nature of the ruling class –compared to the "unified and homogenous people"– continues to inform the textbooks' historiography up until the Islamic Revolution.

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[60] All these cases belong to the text's historiography of pre-Islam Persia.

Ethnic and language diversities have been generally ignored throughout the text. There exists no mention of different ethnic backgrounds even though Iran is, and has always been, a multi-ethnic nation; nor exists any reference to various languages and local dialects –an increasingly politicized subject in modern Iran. This approach creates a false image of homogeneity and prevents students, especially those from the Farsi speaking majority, from understanding and appreciating difference and diversity. Furthermore, students from ethnic and linguistic minorities may feel alienated by the text's "national" historiography for these students often view their ethnic and language background as a major block of their identity. Yet, the textbooks' ignorance of ethnic and linguistic diversities goes along with several governmental policies in this regard –e.g. not allowing ethnic minorities to teach their language in their schools. It also prevents other students to understand and to be exposed to the considerable level of diversity that exists in their country.

Not surprisingly, people's religious diversity has also been brushed aside in the lessons covering the establishment of the Safavid dynasty onward. In the lessons covering the more recent history –e.g. the Pahlavi era–, one may see phrases such as "Muslim people of Iran" or "Muslim nation of Iran" even though the country has religious minorities and, indeed, those who do not identify themselves with any particular religious belief.

The sixth grade textbook covers the history of Persia prior to the introduction of Islam. In grade seven, the term "Muslim people of Iran" appears once when explaining people's resistance to the Mongol invasion. In the eighth grade, however, there is a strong emphasis on Islam as "the religion of the people". In four instances the text uses the

phrase "the Muslim people of Iran". In other instances, it introduces Islam as the main cause for "people"'s decisions and actions. The word "people" has been repeatedly used in the context of religious belief. For instance, the text introduces Grand Ayatollah Borujerdi as the universal Marja' of "the people" (The History Group of Textbooks' Planning Office, 2007, p.58). The same association of "people" with Islam can be found in the text's accounts of motivations behind the Constitutional Revolution (pp. 35-36) and behind the anti-Pahlavi movements (pp. 58-78); as well as in the text's claim that after the Islamic Revolution, it was "people" who wanted Islamic law to be practiced (p.80).

Numerous non-religious political groups and parties who participated in the Revolution and who had opposed the Pahlavi rule before 1979 are absent from the text. The only reference to a non-religious group can be found in the text's brief discussion of political assassinations during the Pahlavi era. Here, the text seems to subtly put the responsibility for those assassinations on the shoulders of non-Muslim groups. It then goes on to argue that "people" did not relate to these acts of violence because of their religious beliefs.

It should be noted that although recognized religious minorities[61] are allowed to use their own religious textbooks in their schools, they are required to use the same history textbooks as all other students.

Recognition of ethnic, religious and linguistic diversities was also absent from the students' accounts. The names of minority ethnic groups or minority languages and dialects rarely came up in the interviews, or in the survey responses; even though the

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[61] Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism are the religions officially recognized by the state.

students discussed issues such as "national identity" or "the meaning of being Iranian" in both. Only one of the students referred to different ethnic groups and languages in her survey response. As a result, it is difficult to analyze the students' understanding of the diversities in the country. One may conclude, however, that the students did not seem to be conscious about the issue of diversities. When explaining what "being Iranian" or "national identity" meant to them, many of the students referred to notions such as "common ancestors", or "common roots". As such, they seemed to be more inclined to adopt the homogenous image presented by the textbooks. More research is needed to be done to further examine this issue.

Articulations of Collective Identity

First person plural pronouns such as "we", "us", and "our" usually imply a sense of collective identity. Their usage is generally intended to solidify a sense of belonging and that of loyalty to a group. They may also be used to emphasize the distinction between "us" and "them" (Fairclough, 2003). When used in history textbooks, these terms represent what the authors consider to be the point of reference for national belonging; and how they want the readers –i.e. the students– to be positioned within the defined collective identity. The usage of these pronouns also demonstrates who has been identified as a member of the community or the group and who has been excluded according to the authors of the text. When used by the students, these pronouns reveal the students' understanding of their collective identity and how the students situate themselves in relation to others within the nation, and to other nations. The use of these plural pronouns also reveals in which contexts the students feel the strongest sense of

belonging to the larger community; and in which aspects they prefer to distance themselves from the community.

The first person plural pronouns of "we", "us" and "our" all translate into "mā" in Farsi. To analyze the use of this term in the textbooks, I color coded the sentences in which they have been used. Then I categorized them based on their context. This process involved two to three iterations of categorization due to the increasing number of contexts as the text moves along. In Table 26, the frequency and the context of the use of the pronouns in each textbook is presented. During the analysis, I realized that noticeable and arguably meaningful differences exist between the textbooks' use of these pronouns in discussion of periods presented in a positive light, and their use in discussion of those eras depicted as dark and gloomy. To better see these differences, I have divided each textbook into different time periods in the Table.

Table 26

The Use of the Terms "Us", "We", and "Our" in Textbooks

Grade	Historical Period	Frequency	Context
6th grade	Ancient to Islam (37 pages)	0	-
7th grade	Islam to Safavid (39 pages)	1	Foreign invasion
8th grade	Safavid (10 pages)	2	Domestic Chaos and turmoil
	Qajar (27 pages)	5	Foreign invasion and aggression
	Pahlavi (24 pages)	2	Foreign invasion and aggression
	Islamic Republic (7 pages)	3	Domestic development
		2	Foreign invasion
		2	Praise of religious leaders
		1	Defeating enemies

As the above data shows, in the sixth grade textbook, which covers the ancient history of Persia, no first person plural pronoun has been used. In this textbook, all the

historical content is presented in the third person form employing pronouns such as "they" and "them". The textbook seems to communicate a distant image of this period; and it implicitly rejects any significant continuity between the ancient –pre-Islam– history of the country and Iranian people today[62]. One indication of this projected detachment is that the tone of the textbook does not change when it moves from discussing non-Iranian ancient civilizations to the lessons on early Persian dynasties and the Achaemenid Empire. The use of the pronouns and the presentation style of text remain the same in both contexts –namely visibly neutral and descriptive. Following is an excerpt from the textbook where it introduces the Achaemenid Empire:

> "A group of Aryans were Parsis. The land they settled in was named after them as Pars. They included several tribes, one of which was Pasargad. The head of the tribe was Achaemenid. He was also the head of all Parsi tribes. Therefore the tribe of Achaemenid was considered [to be] the largest Parsi tribe. Achaemenid's children rose to power one after another and expanded their territory. They then became familiar with the progress made by the Babalions and the Ilamis and learned much about farming, construction, and writing." (Kheirandish, Abbasi, & Javadian, 2007a, p. 40).

In the seventh grade textbook, there is only one instance of the use of first person plural pronouns in the title of an image that depicts a battlefield and reads: "Genghis Khan's invasion of our country" (Javadian, Kheirandish, and Abbasi, 2007, p.47).

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[62] This is in contrast to the official historiography during the Pahlavi era, which heavily emphasized the pre-Islam era of the country's history sometimes at the expense of the Islamic era.

In the eighth grade textbook and in the context of Iran's more modern history before the revolution, these pronouns are more frequently used (nine times) to portray a negative and humiliating image of the country. In all cases, they demonstrate examples of domestic chaos and turmoil, foreign invasion and aggression, and the ruling monarchs' incapability to defend the country. These are some of the examples of the use of the term in the grade eight textbook (Javadian, Kheirandish, and Abbasi, 2007): "As mentioned before, our country's circumstances were chaotic and turbulent after Saljoughid" (p.1), "our country was invaded by foreign powers in the first World War. Russians and the British invaded and occupied our country." (p.43), and "From this point on, the period of Reza Shah's domination over our country began and the English were able to implement their policies." (p.48)

The above image turns around in the textbooks' coverage of post-Revolution era. For the first time, the first person pronouns are used in association with positive accounts of development and growth. Also, the number of these pronouns increases drastically in the lesson on Islamic Republic. While the average use of these pronouns is about 1 in every 7.5 pages before the coverage of Islamic Republic in the eighth grade text, this average jumps to 1 in every page for the lesson on Islamic Republic. In half of the cases, the pronoun is used in the context of victory and progress attributed to or associated with Iranians. This usage stands in a stark contrast to the images depicted before the Revolution; for even the obstacles and difficulties are now presented in a spirit of resilience, perseverance and optimism. Statements such as "they [i.e. Western powers] tried to prevent us from progress; but our beloved country continued the path towards development" (The History Group of Textbooks Planning Office, 2007, p.82); or "far

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from having a negative impact on our economy, the sanctions imposed by the United States [have] encouraged Iranian producers to fill the gap and become more innovative" (p.81) are telling examples of the text's new attitude and tone. The power of "people" emphasized by first person plural pronouns meshes in with anti-foreign power paradigm of the textbooks and, in the process, the conflict between Iran and other countries are projected as opportunities. In previous lessons, in contrast, international conflicts are often used by the authors to censure the Pahlavi and Qajar kings. In those lessons, the textbook authors tend to focus on Iran's repeated failure in dealing with its foreign adversaries and to the cost of this failure for Iranian people. In discussing the Revolution and its aftermath, however, the authors seem to abandon this approach as there is no discussion of the costs of international conflicts –such as sanctions– on Iranian people.

Furthermore, by using the first person pronouns, the authors imply a sense of collective accomplishment that is to further connect the reader to the "people" described in the text. This is also a representation strategy missing from most of the previous lessons, as if pre-Revolution historiography of the text is about "them" and only after the Revolution it becomes about "us". Even in discussing people's struggle against the Pahlavi dynasty, there appears to be a distance between the "people" as discussed in the text, and the reader. All verbs are in third person form and the authors never use the pronoun "we" when discussing the developments leading to the Revolution. The more engaging discourse of the text after when discussing the Islamic Republic is arguably an effort to create a positive sense of belonging to the new political system.

In addition to association of first person pronouns with national progress and achievements in the lesson on the Islamic Republic, there are two instances of these

pronouns being used in the context of foreign invasion. Even here, however, the tone of the text is one of national resistance against the foreigners instead of one of defeat or helplessness: "Imam [Khomeini] and the revolutionary people of our country stood strong in the face of these [foreign] conspiracies and got through the hardships with sacrifice and resistance" (The History Group of Textbooks Planning Office, 2007, p. 84); or "[f]inally after eight years of heroic war and the sacrifices of Basij [i.e. voluntary forces] and the [Revolutionary] Guards, Iraq was forced to retreat without taking even a centimeter of our soil" (p.85). The "people" of the text, who now have turned into "us" and "we", have also transformed from passive and receptive people of previous lessons into more active and agentive group refusing to tolerate any intervention.   In particular, the focus is laid upon "our resistance" and "our victories" against foreign invaders in contrast to the previous lessons in which foreign invasions were often presented as catastrophes causing misery for the people.

In two other instances where the pronouns are not directly associated with progress, they are employed to create a sense of collective respect and obedience towards the religious leaders of the country. One refers to the legacy of Ayatollah Khomeini and his "advice" for the nation, which is described to be "valuable and important for us" (The History Group of Textbooks Planning Office, 2007, p. 86). The other refers to the "beneficial" presidency of Ayatollah Khamenei for "our country" (p.87). Once again, students are assumed to have a positive and close relationship with the country's religious leaders. The textbook's use of the pronouns "us" and "our" in this context also takes for granted a sense of obedience and reverence towards the supreme leaders of the country.

It is also worth analyzing the students' use of first person plural pronouns in relation to patterns of identification. To do so, I conducted a similar analysis on the interview transcripts and on the students' responses to the survey questions –in particular those questions focused on the meaning of "being Iranian" and that of "national identity". The analysis of these pronouns in the participants' speech acts proved to be more complex than in the textbooks. The students' language in their responses was not as formal and calculated as the textbooks. Therefore, one must be cautious not to over-analyze the data. For example, some of the students' used the pronoun "we" instead of "I" as a figure of speech, which is a common practice in colloquial Farsi. In these cases, the first person plural pronoun really indicates a first person singular reference. Consequently, I paid more attention to the contexts in which the students had used these pronouns. There were also instances in which the students' use of the pronouns "we", "us", and "our" referred to their classmates –especially in the discussions related to classroom practices–, or else to their family members. In these cases, the first person plural pronouns did not relate to our subject of inquiry here, namely national identification. These instances were, therefore, excluded from the analysis too.

Contrary to the textbooks, the interview participants used the pronouns "we" and "us" most frequently in the context of their sense of pride towards Iran's ancient history and, in particular, towards the Achaemenid Empire. They often expressed a sense of close relationship, and even kinship, to the ancient people of Iran. This sense of belonging had been partly fueled by the students' image of the "Persian Empire" as a glorious and powerful empire of the day. By attaching themselves to this ancient period, they seemed to be transferring parts of that "lost pride" into their contemporary identities. Their

emphasis on the ancient times was further highlighted by an absence of similar feelings towards other historical periods. In fact, Achaemenid Empire was one of the few sources of "national pride" for the students –as excerpts from their accounts can reveal. Azarin talked about the Achaemenid Empire with a nostalgic tone: "[w]e used to have power and greatness. We used to be victorious all the time." Baharan showed similar emotions when discussing what came to her mind when she thought about the history of Iran: "I think about how popular Cyrus and Darius [i.e. two Achaemenid kings] were; how they worked for the country; how powerful we were at that time; half of the world was under our rule." Zeynab considered the glory of the Achaemenid Empire as why people should study history and know about their past:

"If you go to other countries [knowing about the Achaemenids], you can tell them that our history and culture goes back 2000 years. This is a strong backbone for our culture […]. I have a better feeling when I think about ancient times, like the Achaemenid Empire. We were powerful; we did not follow Western values; we had our own culture and norms and [we] were proud of it."

The second most common theme talking about which the students used first person plural pronouns was foreign invasions. This was more compatible with the textbooks' narratives especially regarding the modern history of the country –i.e. the Qajar and Pahlavi eras. The students seemed to be somewhat occupied with foreign invasions that "ruined our country" and "pushed us back". They talked about how "incompetent" kings "did not let us grow" or "took advantage of our resources for their personal interests". Self-victimization proved to be dominant in the students' accounts of Iran's recent history –as is the case with the textbooks' representation of the era. As a

result, "we" repeatedly refers to an oppressed and humiliated collectivity who has been the victims of foreign powers, tyrannical and incompetent kings, or both.

During the interviews, the students' use of the pronoun "mā" was also accompanied by an emotional engagement visible in their long pauses, shaking of heads, and facial –often sad– expressions. Some of the participants explicitly addressed this personal attachment to the subject of discussion by using words such as "sadness", "disappointment", and "shame". Baharan, for instance, stated:

"I am really upset that we had to lose a lot of our resources and [lose] what we deserved, because the kings did not do what they had to do. We have lost so much of our territory just because of their incompetence."

Ladan also expressed disappointment when talking about the foreign interventions:

"it really bothers me to think that foreigners were so influential in our country. Nobody likes others to make decisions for her. They deceived us; took our country from us; this really makes me sad. We are not even half of what we could have been if it was not for them."

Talking about the post-Revolution era, the students once again diverged from the textbook's paradigm. Their use of the pronouns "us" and "we" became associated with their discussion of negative social behaviors and what they saw as "lack of culture" –once again diversely and vaguely defined by each participant. They contrasted a glorious – ancient– past of "high culture" and "progress" with today's society. In fact, most of the students believe that current Iranian society had lost its culture. Zeynab expressed her disappointment in today's state of the society this way:

"we really do not have much left from our ancient culture. What we had is lost. It is all changed [...] I think at some point, we became static. We stopped developing. Then the west had its Industrial Revolution and moved forward. Now they call us the Third World; and I think we have believed it because we are not trying anymore […] Now it is not just the foreign powers anymore. Our own government is oppressing us. There is no way we can believe in ourselves like this."

Hengameh, who strived to be neutral in her responses, expressed similar feelings towards Iran's current circumstances:

"[…] well before the Revolution we were among the developing countries. But we are stuck now; we are not developing. I do not want to say it [i.e. the Revolution] was good or bad. Some people like it some do not. If you are religious you think it was a good thing. They [i.e. the "religious people"] say they [i.e. the Revolution] have kept their religion […] powerful. But in terms of development, well we are falling behind every day."

In the surveys, 21 of the 94 participants used at least one first person plural pronoun somewhere in their answers to the questions regarding "national identity" and "being Iranian". The contexts in which the students used these pronouns were similar to the interviews. Figure 10 breaks down the students' use of the pronouns "us", "our", and "we". Once again, the students' positive feelings were mostly associated with the ancient history, with some specifically mentioning the names of Cyrus and Darius. Their use of the pronouns in reference to the present condition appeared in negative themes along with

expressed emotions such as "shame", "humiliation", "hate", "dislike", or "disappointment".

The themes such as emphasis on the Achaemenid Empire, general negative perception of almost everything that came after, and disregard and rejection of the textbooks' positive image of the current situation reappear in the students' self-identification with the notion of "nation". It must be mentioned that in the lesson on post-Revolution Iran, the textbook includes "students" for the first time in its narrative of "success", "accomplishment", and "pride". This however, seems to be a futile attempt to get the participants of this study identify with this notion of Iranian identity as they seemed to have had a different idea about the meaning of "being Iranian" today.

Figure 10

The Use of the Terms "Us", "We", and "Our" in Surveys
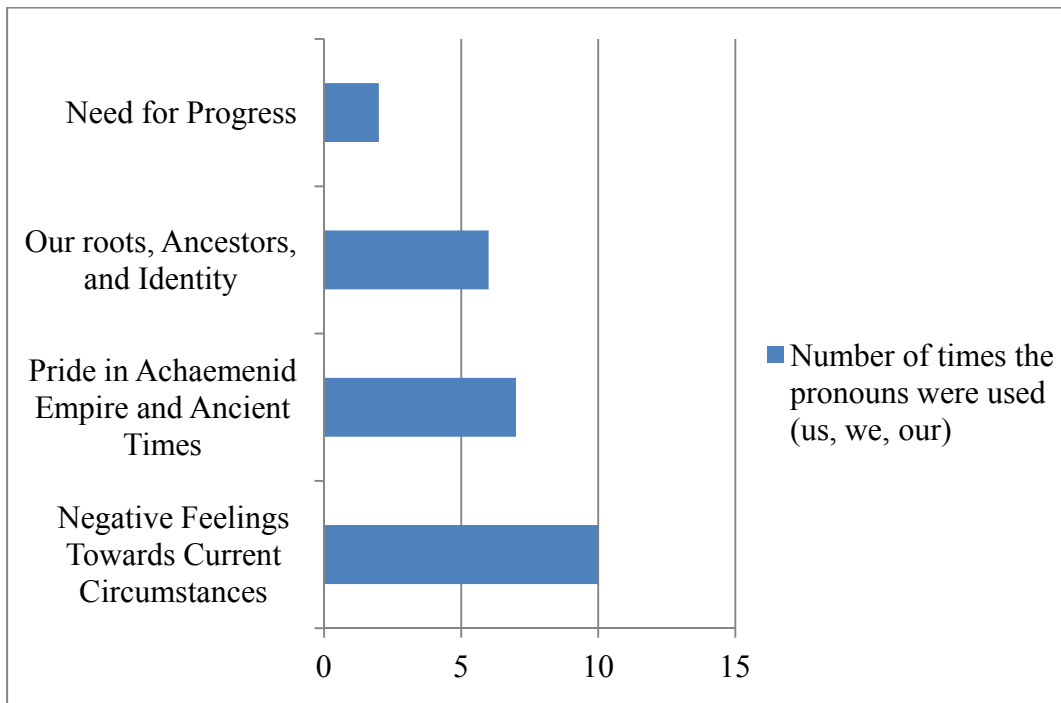
On Being Iranian

In the National Curriculum Document published in 2011 by the Ministry of
Education, which is the first of its kind in the Islamic Republic of Iran and describes and
prescribes the essential values and strategies of education, "strengthening national
identity" is introduced as a fundamental principle. The document explains this principle
as follows

> Educational curricula should create an opportunity for strengthening and elevating
> national Identity by paying attention and reinforcing Islamic values and beliefs,
> Islamic and Iranian culture and civilization, Farsi language and literature, values
> of the Islamic Revolution, patriotism, unity and national independence, and
> Islamic solidarity and should aim to elevate students' identity towards a the divine
> identity. (p. 20)

This definition clearly demonstrates the emphasis on Islam and Islamic values as
the main pillar of Iranian identity and with the exception of Farsi language and literature,
all other aspects of identity are introduced in the context of Islamic history, culture, and
values. Beyond the educational objectives of the Islamic Republic, a similar approach can
be found in the overall goals of the state documented in "Sanad-e Cheshm Andaz Bist
Saleh" (the 20 year vision document) which is a blueprint for the country's 20 year
strategic plan. In a section on cultural, scientific, and technological objectives,
strengthening national identity is mentioned as one of the 11 overarching strategies of the
plan,

Strengthening national unity and identity based on Islam, the Islamic Revolution, and the Islamic Republic and sufficient knowledge about the history of Iran, Iranian-Islamic culture, civilization and arts, and dedication to the Farsi language. Again, priority is given to Islamic aspects of Iranian identity.

However as the state officials aim to formulate a detailed and precise definition for national identity, individuals in each society have different ideas about what defines their nationality; as well as about the meaning of the collectivity called nation. Although direct inquiries about such a complex –and at times emotional– issue cannot provide us with the full picture of a people's identity discourses, it is still a useful exercise in terms of better understanding of each individual's representation of his or her identity.

In this section, I will analyze the theme of "being Iranian" in the participants' responses as well as in the textbooks. The goal is to better understand how the textbooks represent Iranian identity; and how the students define it in their own words. In the surveys and interviews, I had the opportunity to pose direct questions in this regard. When analyzing the textbooks, however, I was unable to find any direct discussion on the issue of identity. As a result, I decided to analyze the use of the words "Iran" and "Iranian" as an indicator of the text's representation of Iranian identity.

Textbooks' Accounts of Iranian Identity

To analyze the text, I searched and documented the use of the terms "Iran" and "Iranian". Tables 27, 28, and 29 summarize the results for the term "Iran" in each textbook. The results are presented based on the context in which the term is used and in the order of its frequency of use in that context.

Table 27

The Use of the Term "Iran" in Sixth Grade Textbook

Context (Sixth Grade)	Sub-Category	Frequency
Descriptions	Demographic Information	8
	Neighboring Countries	7
	Social Conditions (religions, organizations)	6
	Geography	6
	Total	27
War and Conflict	Foreign Invasion	17
	Defeating Enemies	5
	General	3
	Total	25
Progress and development	Arts and Architecture	5
	Infrastructure and Farming	3
	Commerce	2
	Total	10
Political Institutions	Kings Raising to the Throne	3
	Establishing new Dynasties	1
	Total	4
Other		5
Total		71

Table 28

The Use of the Term "Iran" in Seventh Grade Textbook

Context (Seventh Grade)	Sub-category	Freq.
War and Conflict	Foreign invasion	23
	Domestic conflicts	6
	Foreign dominance	5
	General war	2
	Defeating enemies	1
	Total	36
Political Institutions	Establishing new dynasties	7
	Describing political dynamics	6
	Total	13
Progress and	Culture and civilization	6

development	Role of Islam	3
	Praising Iranian elites	1
	Total	8
Descriptions	Social conditions (religions, organizations)	3
	Neighboring Countries	1
	Geography	1
	Total	5
Other		2
Total		83

Table 29

The Use of the Term "Iran" in Eighth Grade Textbook

Context (Eighth Grade)	Sub-category	Freq.
War and Conflict	Foreign invasion	21
	Domestic interference/dependence	18
	Foreign aggression	15
	Defeating sabotage and conspiracy	14
	Foreign treaties (negative)	12
	War (general)	8
	Defeating enemies	8
	Loss of territory	6
	Concessions to foreign powers	4
	Domestic chaos and conflict	4
	Total	105
Significant figures	Clergies' leadership	15
	Kings incompetence	9
	National heroes	7
	Kings' (dynasties') oppression	6
	Total	37
Descriptions	International relations	8
	Map of territory	7
	Political circumstances	4
	Social conditions (religions, organizations)	2
	Total	21
Popular movements	Islamic revolution	6
	Protest and revolt	6
	Constitutional revolution	4
	Total	16

Progress and development	Commerce and industry	8
	Political progress	3
	Oil nationalization	2
	Construction and reconstruction	2
	Total	13
Other		7
Total		199

The sixth grade textbook covers three of the most powerful dynasties in Iran's history, namely the Achaemenid, the Arsacid[63], and the Sasanid dynasties. According to mainstream historiographies, Persia under the Achaemenid dynasty has been among the most powerful empires of history. Yet, the above tables shows that the dominant theme in the lessons covering this era is one of foreign invasions and Persia's defeats and failure. The Persian Empire has also been reported to have experienced a relatively fast pace of progress compared to its contemporary powers. This was particularly noticeable in its relatively complex political system as well as the state of infrastructure, farming, arts and architecture under the Achaemenid, the Arsacid, and the Sasanid. Yet, there are few references to these aspects of ancient history where the name of the country is stated –i.e. 10 times, of which 3 refers to the early migration of Aryan tribes to Iran's plateau.

In the textbooks –and especially in the eighth grade textbook that covers the Pahlavi era and the Islamic Revolution– the term "Iran" is often used in the context of – usually ill-fated– wars and conflicts with other nations. Only in the sixth grade textbook we may find more descriptive data ; duo to the discussion of early history of Aryan's migration more than 3000 years ago and the existence of a large amount of geographical data. The prevalence of wars and conflicts grows as the textbooks get closer to modern

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[63] Persia's ruling dynasty from 247 B.C. to 224 C.E.

times; as does the number of detailed explanations about each one of such events. In fact, in the sixth grade textbook, in 35% of instances the term "Iran" is used in the context of foreign wars and conflicts. In seventh and eighth grade textbooks, this ratio grows to 55%.

In any case, the amount of space dedicated to the discussion of foreign invasions and interventions and to the negative impacts of those events grows steadily in the text. This eventually culminates in the eighth grade textbook; for the textbook is setting the stage for the Islamic Revolution and for celebration of one of the main thrusts of the Revolution, namely "restoration of Iran's independence". In several instances, excerpts from Ayatollah Khomeini's speeches in opposition to the interference of Americans and the British in Iran's internal affairs are used. These quotations allow the text to project "independence from foreign powers" as one of the pillars of the Islamic Revolution.

In all the textbooks, the frequency of the use of the term "Iran" in association with progress and development is low. In these few instances, the text explicitly discusses the positive impact of a historical development. In contrast to the text's few "positive" use of the term "Iran", it often uses the term "Iranian" in positive contexts. Table 30 shows how often and in what contexts the term "Iranian" is used in the textbooks.

Table 30

The Use of the Term "Iranian" in Textbooks

Grade	Category	Subcategory	Frequency
6th grade	Resistance against Foreign Invasion	General Population	3
		Individuals	2
	War	Victory	2
		Defeat	2
	Government and Military		2

|			
	Description of Religion		2
	Advances in Industry		1
	Other		2
	Total		15
7th grade	Scientists and Poets		10
	Government and Military		4
	Arts and Architecture		4
	Competent Politicians		4
	Culture and Civilization		2
	Resistance against Foreign Invasion		1
	Total		25
8th grade	War	Victory	3
		Defeat	2
	National Heroes		1
	Total		6

In grade seven, the word "Iranian" appears more than the other two textbooks and it does so in a positive light. The thrust of discussion of "Iranians" here is about the contributions they made to the Muslim civilization. As mentioned earlier, the seventh grade textbook covers Persian Muslim dynasties up until the Safavid era. As a result, the word "Iranians" is often used in close connection to Islam in this book. Out of 16 instances of using the word in the context of scientific and cultural developments, 10 are found in a lesson titled "Iran's Culture and Civilization from the Dawn of Islam to the End of the Teymurid". The first sentence in the lesson reads "[a]s Islam entered Iran, it formed a culture and [a] civilization that was unrivaled till that day". "Iranians" are then argued to be contributors to this "unrivaled civilization"; and in four instances, the used phrase is "Muslim Iranians". The historical context of this textbook is in fact the era in which Iranians were accommodating and internalizing Muslim beliefs. The textbook, therefore, employs this historical context to highlight Islam as the core of Iranian identity. As such, the "unrivaled civilization" claim dismisses Persia's pre-Islam civilization achievements. As discussed before, this lopsided presentation seems to have backfired as

the students expressed the opposite –and still lopsided– presentation of history in their accounts highlighting pre-Islam Persian civilizations.

The use of the word "Iranian" declines dramatically in the eighth grade textbook, which covers modern history of the country. In contrast, words such as "Islam", "Islamic", and "Muslim" begin to appear more frequently (see Figure 11).

Figure 11

Textbooks' Use of the Terms Islam, Islamic, and Muslim and the Term Iranian
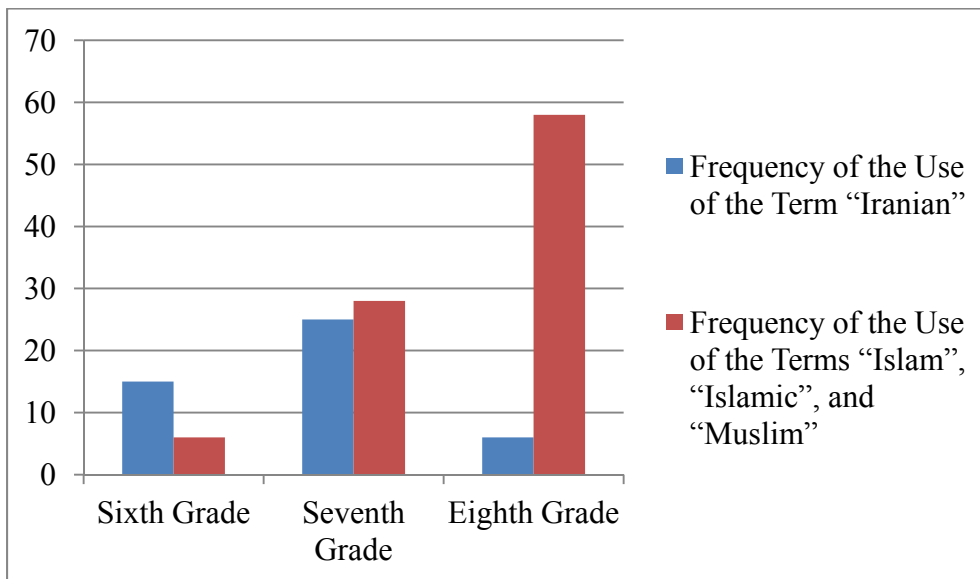
In this historical period, the prominence of Islam as the most dominant element of Iranian identity had arguably been established. This was especially the case before the introduction of modern nationalism in late eighteenth century. The text, therefore, builds its narrative by gradually replacing national ties with religious ones. For example, people's opposition to both the Qajar and Pahlavi dynasties, which is the dominant theme in the lessons on modern history of Iran, is framed as a religious movement led by the clergies. Islam is presented at once as an anti-oppression force and the pillar of Iranian

identity. This combination of Muslim and pro-justice beliefs also functions in the text as the bonds that bring the society together and inspire in Iranians a sense of belonging and loyalty.

Table 31 contextualizes the textbooks' discussions of Islam in relation to the notion of Iranian identity. To produce this Table, I have organized the contexts in which the words "Islam" and "Muslim" have been used in the textbooks.

Table 31

The Use of the Terms "Islam", "Islamic", and "Muslim" in Textbooks

Grade	Context	Freq.
6th grade	Inviting people to Islam	4
	Muslim political success	2
	Islam's social popularity in Iran	1
	Total	7
7th grade	Progress of Islamic culture and civilization	11
	Muslim political success	8
	Islam's social popularity	3
	People being invited to Islam	1
	Total	23
8th grade	Clergies raising awareness and leading people	21
	Islamic Revolution	17
	Islam's social popularity	12
	Muslim political success	2
	Progress of Islamic culture and civilization	1
	Total	53

As the above data show, "Islam" and "Muslim" have always been used in positive contexts. Whether it is the progress and development of the Islamic culture and civilization, the social popularity of Islam in Iran and people's fight for, and defense of, Islamic values and the Islamic states, the success of Islamic causes, or the role of Muslim clergies in raising awareness among people and leading them in their fight for freedom and independence, Islam is always presented as a positive and popular force. In a stark

contrast, however, Islam was largely absent from the students' understanding of Iranian identity. This will be discussed in more details in the following section.

Students' Accounts of Iranian Identity

I included a number of questions in the surveys and in the interviews to directly inquire about the students' perceptions of "being an Iranian". In the surveys, I first asked the students to write down what came to their minds when thinking about "being Iranian". Then I asked them to further elaborate on this subject. I also asked them to put down their general thoughts about the notion of "nationality". In the interviews, I began with asking the students to report their first –intellectual– reactions when facing the words "Iran" and "being Iranian". Similar to the surveys, then I asked them to further expound upon their thoughts about the meaning of being Iranian. Finally, I asked them to talk, if they wished so, about their feelings of pride and regret –if any– with regards to being Iranian.

Students' definitions of Iranian identity. The survey participants provided a wide range of responses to the questions about what "nationality", "national identity", and "being Iranian" meant to them. Some of the respondents offered their definitions of these notions; and some only discussed their feelings towards them. To analyze the results of the surveys, I reviewed the participants' responses and categorized them based on their definitions of Iranian identity. I repeated the process three times in order to ensure a meaningful categorization that would best represent the students' opinions. Figure 12 summarizes the results.

Figure 12

Students' Understanding of "Being Iranian"
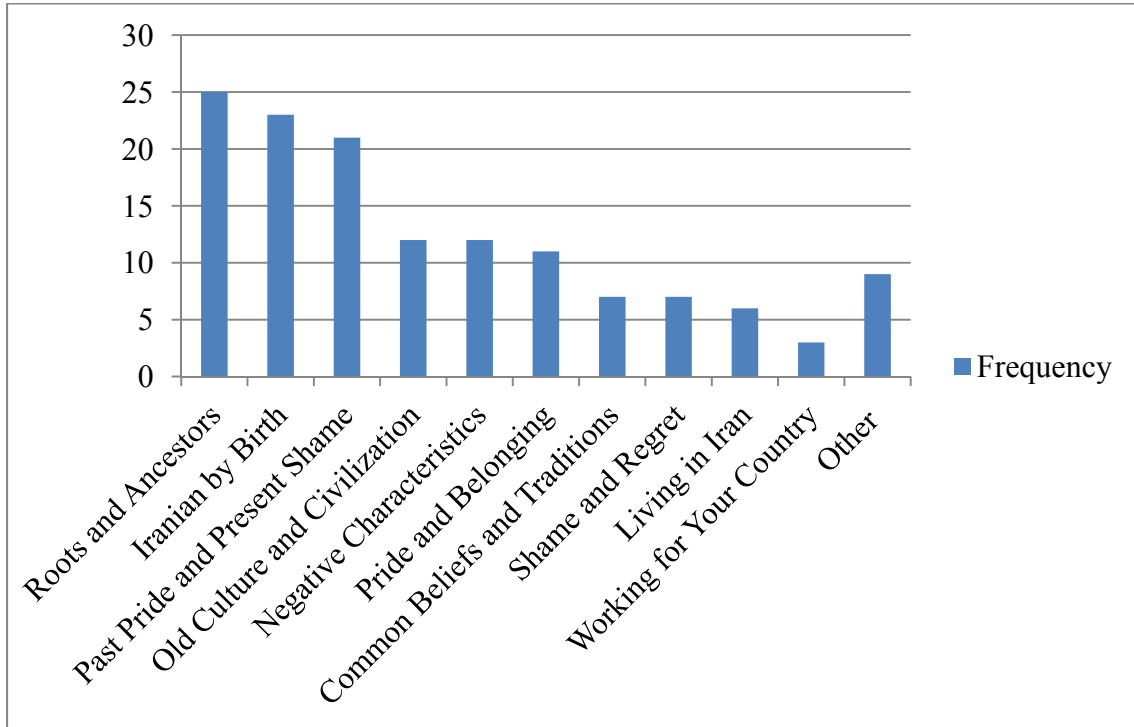
Having "common roots and common ancestors", and having "been born in Iran, or to Iranian parents" were the two most common themes the students mentioned as the meaning of "being Iranian". The notion that birthplace is a defining element of national identity once again reveals the centrality of territory in the students' understanding of nationality. At the same time, many of the respondents had had friends and relatives who live abroad with children born outside Iran. This observation seemed to have led them into inclusion of a new criterion in their definition of nationality, namely "having Iranian parents". In other words, many of the students seemed to view blood connection to the country as an essential prerequisite of Iranian identity. In fact, the reference to "common roots and common ancestors" is an extension to the blood-based approach to nationality.

The blood-based definition of Iranian identity also allowed the students to bridge between ancient Persia –and its powerful and celebrated patriarchs such as Cyrus and Darius– and today's Iranians. This relates to the third category of the participants' responses regarding Iranian identity, namely pride and shame. For many of the participants, a sense of pride in the distant past of the country has been transformed into feelings of shame about the present. Furthermore, a large number of participants referred to this transition from pride to shame as an aspect of Iranian identity. A number of the students put this notion in unequivocal statements: "being Iranian used to mean being proud; but today it only means [feelings of] shame and humiliation." This fits into the students' general opinions about the past and their efforts to base their national identity in the "glories" of the ancient times rather than "humiliation" of today's Iran.

Similar feelings were frequently expressed in the interviews as well. Most of the students talked about the ancient past when discussing Iranian identity. Three of them referred to the dual feelings of "past pride" and "present shame". Azarin said that "past is really important; but in reality, if you go somewhere [abroad] today, they do not say oh! you [i.e. Iranians] had the Achaemenid Empire. They say you are a terrorist." Salma who appeared to be more emotionally attached to the subject asserted:

> "I am proud of the past; of what Cyrus and Darius had done […] but nothing is
> left from that time. If you look at it now, there is nothing to be proud of […] we
> cannot brag about our past anymore because we do not have any of it [i.e. its
> glory] now."

And Samineh echoed similar feelings: "[being Iranian] used to be a good thing in the past. But I do not feel comfortable saying I am Iranian now." All the students showed

signs of emotional reactions when talking about their negative feelings towards their nationality. Their answers were often accompanied by pauses, sad smiles, and shaking heads –i.e. gestures indicating feelings of grief and disappointment.

In analyzing the students' understanding of national identity, one may also pay attention to the aspects of identity absent from the students' responses. One of these missing aspects was arguably the notion of religious ties in general, and "being a Muslim nation" in particular. Few of the students included religion in their responses and even then; and none of them referred to it as the most significant defining criterion of identity. Baharan argued that many countries were Muslim and, therefore, Islam was not a defining dimension of Iranian identity. When discussing national identity, she seemed to be particularly interested in differentiating criteria that would distinguish between Iranians and non-Iranians. This notion of identity based on distinctions with "others" seemed to be shared by the students.

Another observation was the absence of individual agency in the students' definitions of –and reflections upon– Iranian identity. Their definitions either refer to the past history, or to passive characteristics of identity such as "living in Iran" or "having been born in Iran". Out of the 94 participants, only three discussed issues such as "working for the good of the people" or "contributing to the development of the country" as defining elements of Iranian identity. In the majority of the responses, the Iranian identity had been defined in passive terms as something handed down to people. It also appeared as a static construction –or reality– in (re)shaping of which individuals' agency had no significant bearings. Focusing on territory and blood connections and dwelling in the bygone ancient –and sometimes projected– glory represented an understanding of

identity divorced from individual or collective action. Consequently, individual responsibility for national progress and development did not appear in the students' accounts of Iranian identity. Theirs was an identity hinged upon the past with little agentive bearings upon them or the future.

Expressed feelings towards Iranian identity. In analyzing the survey participants' feelings about "being Iranian", I created two Tables. In the first Table, I produced a detailed categorization of the students' responses based on the following scheme:

- Positive General: This category refers to generally positive responses such as "I am proud", or "I am happy" without providing any further explanation on why the respondent felt this way; or what was that the source(s) of their pride and happiness.

- Positive Specific: This category refers to the responses in which specific causes were mentioned for the students' positive feelings about their nationality. Examples include being proud of "rich literature", or "architecture", "having nice fellow citizens".

- Neutral: This category refers to the responses in which there was no normative judgment, such as "being Iranian" defined as having been born in Iran or to Iranian parents.

- Negative Specific: This category refers to the responses in which specific details were provided on why the student was not happy about her nationality. Examples include references to negative cultural behaviors and attitudes, moral issues, and "being oppressed".

- Negative General: This category refers to the generally negative responses such as "I am ashamed", or "I do not want to be Iranian" without providing any further explanation of the cause(s) of these feelings.

- Past Positive/Present Negative: This category refers to the responses in which the participants argued that "being Iranian" had been a source of pride due to Iran's "rich history"; yet it was no longer the case.

Table 32 shows the results of this analysis.

Table 32

Survey Participants' Feelings towards Being Iranian

Feelings Towards Being Iranian	Frequency	Percentage
Positive (General)	13	15
Positive (Specific)	13	15
Neutral	14	16
Negative (Specific)	17	19
Negative (General)	1	1
Positive Past Negative Present	30	33
Other	1	1
Total	89	100

The results show that 30% of the participants expressed positive feelings towards Iranian nationality. Half of this group provided specific details about the sources of their pride. For instance, they referred to Iran's "rich culture", "old civilization", and "glorious ancient history". The other half did not go beyond general statements such as "I am proud of being Iranian" or "I love it". 16% of the respondents used neutral –often brief– sentences such as "having Iranian parents", "growing up in Iran", "having been born in Iran", and "being from Iranian ancestors". The students who expressed some negative feelings towards Iranian nationality have been divided into two groups in the Table. The

majority of them related their feelings of shame or regret about the country's current situation while holding a positive image of "being Iranian" in the past. and the second group expressed a generally negative attitude towards "being Iranian" that stretched throughout history. The first group, who constituted more than one third of all the participants, used phrases such as "past pride and current shame" or "it has been a great thing before but not anymore" in describing Iranian nationality. Once again, there existed a strong sense of nostalgia in their sentences about Persia's ancient past. At the same time, while their sense of pride was rooted in the distant past, their sources of humiliation appeared to be close and tangible. In contrast to the few historical episodes of "glory" that the students could remember, there was a large number or references to various negative developments throughout history stretching from Alexander's invasion and destruction of the Achaemenid Empire to graphic recollections of the the government's suppression of 2009 protests.

20% of the participants expressed only negative feelings towards "being Iranian". Within this group, almost all –i.e. 97%– provided some specific details about the sources of their negative feelings. Issues such as being "oppressed", "un-cultured people", "rude people", "Third World", and "undeveloped", as well as "looking bad in the eyes of others" were among the most frequent causes of shame and regret according to the students. If we lump general and specific expressions of negative feelings together with negative feelings about the present, more than half of the students expressed negative feelings towards their nationality.

During the interviews, I had an opportunity to engage in a more in-depth discussion with the students about their understanding of, and feeling towards, Iranian

identity. I could also investigate more about their feelings of shame and pride through listening to the participants' emotional attachments and reflections. In particular, I asked them to complete two statements if they applied to them. These were: "[a]s an Iranian, I am proud that..." and "[a]s an Iranian, I regret that[64] (or I am sorry that)...." These exercise had been conducted by one of the teachers in a high-school class, where I had been an observer, and had ignited a heated discussion among the students. I decided, therefore, to use it in my own study to engage the issue of national shame and pride, keeping in mind that such direct questions tend to provoke exaggerated positive responses. To my surprise, however, I received quite calculated and solemn responses to this exercise.

Out of the 15 interview participants, three stated that there was nothing they were proud of. These responses were all expressed after long pauses, as if they were trying to think of something. The responses were also solemn and sometimes accompanied by a bitter smile and a shaking of their head. It appeared to me that they were unhappy about their negative response. To these three participants, "being Iranian" meant three different things. Sarin talked about people's negative social and personal behaviors when asked about the subject: "being Iranian means lying, talking behind people's back, [and] lacking culture. I do not consider myself Iranian." Similar to those survey participants who fantasized about Persia's "glorious past", Sarin shared her specific image of ancient Iranians: "when we were Zoroastrians, we never lied; we never talked behind people's back; we had our own culture and civilization." It was, in fact, in the discussion of the

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[64] This second statements can be translated into "[a]s an Iranian, I am sorry that…"; for the Farsi phrase has both of the connotations.

ancient "glories" that she began to use the pronoun "we"; for she saw herself attached to her projection of ancient Iranians and not that of Iranians today. Shadan reiterated similar emotions, albeit with fewer details: "I do not like being Iranian…. I ask myself why I was not born somewhere else."Similar to Sarin, she was mostly upset about "the way people were". In talking about her feelings of shame, or sorrow, she talked about how people did not learn about the past, or how they did not think. And Finally Maryam was more straightforward in criticizing the people as the main cause of her disappointment and lack of pride: "Our city is this dirty and ugly, there is traffic everywhere, and people are just bad."

Among those who expressed some pride in their identity, most referred to the long history of the country, the "rich culture", the "beautiful language", and the old civilization. Similar to what I found in the survey responses, most of the interview participants drew from the Achaemenid Empire and Persia's ancient history. Azarin referred to "a glorious past". Salma was more specific and gave some examples of Iran's old power: "[...] at some point, Iranian scientists were on the top of the world. There are things that we discovered first." Some of them even considered Iran's turbulent past and its difficult trajectory as a source of pride. Elahe said: "[a] history full of ups and downs, whether good or bad, I like it. It would be a pity not to learn from it." Nevertheless, none of them mentioned anything from Iran's modern history as the source of their pride. Although proud of their history, Elahe, Nazli, and Salma still complained about negative personal and social behaviors of the people. They talked about "lack of culture", "indolence", "disrespect for the law", and "dishonesty". These issues came up in their discussion of the sources of shame or sorrow as well.

Arguably one of the more refreshing responses in regards to the intentions behind the design of this research came from Saghi. With a visible passion and a telling smile she said: "the history we have means that we can create the same strength in ourselves that our ancestors [had]. [They] have done so many things. We definitely have that power then [to do the same]. Now we should all work together to develop and progress." In her feelings of hope and enthusiasm, Saghi was quite an exception among the students.

Nine of the participants provided long and detailed responses to the "regret" question. They offered specific examples in regard to their feelings of regret or shame in their nationality. Their preparedness in sharing their emotions in great detail was an indication that they had wrestled with the subject before. Unlike their sources of pride, the students' sources of regret, sorrow, or shame were more tangible. They talked, for instance, about "corrupt" kings and politicians who had wasted the country's resources or given it away to the foreigners. Shirin said: "I am sad about many unpleasant historical events [that] have happened and [have] caused us not being able to progress in many areas and we have gone backwards. All the kings and such who gave away large parts of our homeland to get money and [to] spend it on their own interests [make me sad…]. Generally most of the kings were like this." When asked what "being Iranian" meant to her, she again referred to the country's past and said that she was happy to see that Iran had had such a great civilization. Baharan specifically talked about the loss of land: "kings lost their competence gradually and so we lost many things that we deserved. For example our country is much smaller now and the kings spent their times having fun instead of working for the country."

The students also criticized people's behaviors and attitudes such as "being judgmental", "not thinking about the future", "not learning from the past", "not listening

to each other", "not being ready to fight", and "having lost their culture". Ladan expressed regret in that "our people do not think about some issues. They are too fast to judge. I think this is really sad." Salma used a more personal tone: "we do not listen to each other; we have lost our culture. We are just waiting to pick a fight."

There were also instances when the students decided not to elaborate on their responses. They sometimes finished their sentence with a smile or a shaking of their heads as an indication of unwillingness to continue. Others such as Elahe were more direct: "[w]e are not united. But I do not want to explain [smiles]." These responses were often related to the students' discussion of their emotions about the current situation.

To summarize, the main difference between the students' understanding of national identity and the textbooks' representation seems to be the role of Islam. The textbooks communicate a conceptualization of national identity that has historically been oppressed and humiliated; and that has been eventually rescued by Islam. This representation of national identity is reinforced in the textbooks' historiography through the discussion of introduction of Islam to Persia, which the students refer to as the "Arab invasion" and the textbooks as the "victory of the army of Islam"; that of the "glory" of the Safavid dynasty as a powerful Shi'ah government in Persia; and that of the continuous influence and leadership of the clergies in the popular movements of the past century culminating in the Islamic Revolution. This narrative, however, did not seem to resonate with the students. While they too had accepted mostly generally negative image of the past and had internalized a sense of humiliation as part of their national identity, they seemed to reject the textbooks' presentation of the role of Islam as the savior.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

In this study, I examined the representation of various religious and national dimensions of Iranian history and identity in Iranian middle school history textbooks used across the country from 2006 to 2010. I also conducted a case study in a middle class/upper middle class girls school in Tehran to investigate a sample of 9th grade students' perceptions of their history and their identity. The study is based on a critical discourse analysis framework, which proposes that the text and the social actors who interact with the text –i.e. the students in this case– participate in a recursive construction of identity. As the textbooks offer their narrative of history and that of Iranian identity, the students selectively and critically receive and internalize the information. In the process, the students often make sense of the text's historiography in a complex dialogue with the text and with other sources of information. The result is a perception of identity influenced, but not dictated, by the official discourse presented in the textbooks.

Furthermore, this research has been designed based on the ethno-symbolism paradigm of nation and national identity and the works of Anthony Smith (2001) who defines national identity as "the continuous reproduction and reinterpretation of the pattern of values, symbols, memories, myths and traditions that compose the distinctive heritage of nations, and the identifications of individuals with that pattern and heritage and with its cultural elements" (p. 18). I chose this paradigm for it accommodates both pre-modern –cultural– roots of a nation and the development and trajectory of modern political institutions. Therefore, it seems to be a suitable frame of reference for the complex circumstances and history of the countries in the Middle East. The fact that

these countries have been introduced to the modern concept of nation-state through the experience of Western colonization makes research such as this more challenging. To overcome the challenges rooted in the regional experiences, I draw on the works of some Iranian scholars who have propose a multifaceted conceptualization of national identity in an effort to incorporate both religious and national dimensions (Rajaee, 2004; Soroush, 1998).

To analyze the text I employed methods of discourse analysis as formulated by Fariclough (2003) and Gee (2005). I designed the guiding question using Gee's framework on various functions of the text. I also followed some of the strategies introduced by Fairclough to decipher the deeper meanings and underlying assumptions of the text. To examine the students' responses to the textbooks' historiography and their perceptions of Iranian identity, I conducted a case study during the Fall of 2010 in a private girl school in the capital city of Tehran. The school mainly serves middle class and upper middle class families. The data sources for the case study consisted of 94 surveys and 15 in-depth interviews with ninth grade students who had finished middle school the year before, and therefore who had studied all three textbooks. I also used classroom observations as a tool to become more familiar with the school's environment, the students, and the teaching methods in history classes. These observations informed my analysis of the survey and the interview responses.

Findings

In my analysis of the textbooks' representation and the students' perceptions of Iran's history and Iranian national identity, I examined four main issues. These include a) the nature of the discipline of history as introduced in the textbooks and as understood by

the students; b) dominant themes and significant historical events in the text and in the students' accounts, as the essential elements of collective memory and national heritage; c) "heroes and villains" as exaggerated embodiments of national virtues and vices according to the text and the students; and finally d) direct descriptions and representations of national identity by the text and the students. These four themes merge together to help me understand the dialogue between the textbooks' discourse and the students.

Representations, and perceptions, of the nature of historical knowledge are significant for they relate to one of the main functions of history education, namely to provide the students with necessary analytical skills and to nurture in them the ability for critical thinking (Thornton, 2006; Wain, 1990). This, in turn, allows students to engage more actively with the information they receive. The analysis discussed above found that in Iranian textbooks, history is generally presented as a series of definitive facts. The possibility of the existence of multiple yet valid perspectives, different interpretations, and inherent biases have not been discussed, addressed or assumed. Primary sources are used in few instances and only as supporting evidence for the textbooks narrative. Furthermore, nowhere in the text one can find a statement or an idea being challenged or opposing views being discussed.

The students' perceptions of the nature of historical knowledge, however, seemed to be more sophisticated. The findings of this study show that the students' experiences in the history classes was correlated to their understanding of the nature of historical knowledge. Those who had had the opportunity to actively participate in their history classes and to access resources other than the textbooks demonstrated a more critical

view of history and an acknowledgment of possible multiple perspectives. They recognized that personal biases may influence one's interpretation of the past and argued that one should study multiple sources to be able to better understand a historical event. Their critical views were more apparent in their accounts of modern history of Iran partially because they had had access to a more diverse pool of information, even if they did not actively seek them −e.g. family stories, satellite TVs, and public discussions. In contrast, those students who had had experience with lecture-based classes and had had to memorize the information seemed to have a view of the discipline more similar to that of the textbooks.

After analyzing the text's and the students' approach to history as a field of knowledge, I tried to identify the images of the past that are dominant in the textbooks and in the students' memories. This course of inquiry is related to a recent body of literature produced in Iran. Several Iranian scholars have argued that ignoring, or delegitimizing, national aspects of Iranian identity (for example Iran's pre Islamic history) and solely emphasizing religious elements in the official narratives of identity is not a constructive approach; that it would weaken the collective sense of national identity; and that it eventually may undermine the cohesiveness of the Iranian society (Mottahari, 1970; Rajaee, 2004; Soroush, 1998). In my analysis, I have found out that the textbooks' emphasis on religious dimensions of Iranian history and identity, which comes at the expense of diminishing the national elements, had failed to convince the students regarding the role of Islam. Yet, the textbooks seemed to have been relatively successful in instilling a sense of defeat and national failure in the students. The analysis shows that the dominance of negative themes such as foreign invasions and incompetent kings and

governments throughout Iran's history are common between the textbooks' and the students' historiographies. In contrast, while the textbooks introduce Islam as the savior of the Iranians in several occasions, the students did not seem to identify with this image. They either appeared neutral in regard to the impacts of the religion, or considered them to be negative. Consequently, the students seemed to have internalized the text's narrative of failures and defeats without accepting its narrative of victory and salvation. The latter dynamics between the text's and the students' historiographies were the strongest when it came to the Islamic Revolution and its aftermath. Despite the negative historiography of the past, the textbooks' representation of Iran's history concludes with a "bright" and "promising" development, namely the Islamic Revolution. The students, however, seemed to consider the Revolution as yet another step in the long series of collective mistakes and national misfortunes.

Loss of territory and foreign invasions and interventions constituted the dominant themes in the students' historiography. The few bright spots of history they discussed were also associated with the above themes and included instances in which Iran –or Persia– had been able to ward off or defeat foreign enemies; or had obtained international respect and status. In fact, the most significant cause of national pride, both in the surveys and in the interviews, appeared to be global status. Therefore, many of the students viewed the vast territory of the Achaemenid Empire as the source of their pride. They also mentioned the Oil Nationalization movement as another example of Iran's victory in a "fight for its independence". In other words, incidents of confrontation with the "other" and Iran's position in such confrontations seemed to occupy an important place in the students' memories of the past. The textbooks' representation of these confrontations is

generally dominated by victimizing themes of weakness and failure. To somewhat balance this image of a nation repeatedly violated by foreign others, the textbooks highlight the role of Islam and that of the religious leaders in defending people –both against the incompetent and oppressive ruling class, and against the foreign powers. This image, however, did not seem to resonate with the students. The most noticeable example of this dissonance can be found in the discussion of Arab invasion of Persia. The textbook represents the event as the victory of the faithful Muslim soldiers who freed Iranian people from the oppressive tyranny of the Sasanid kings. Most of the students, however, believe the invasion to have damaged Iran's culture and status, namely yet another example of Iran's defeat at the hand of foreign enemies.

Within their shared memories of the past, societies create national "heroes" and "villains" as high symbols of national virtues and vices. National heroes are either influential historical figures or imaginary characters from national legends and myths "elevated into exemplars of national virtue" (Smith, 1991; p. 128). In certain ways, they are realizations –or manifestations– of a people's ideals, aspirations, and values. These values are promoted to guide collective consciousness of the people. In the cases such as Iran, where the state exercises complete control over public education, an official narrative of heroes exists. This narrative is often in line with the state's agenda and value system. In this study, I have found two main areas of disagreement between the students' perceptions of national heroes and that of the textbooks. One was the differences in the themes, characteristics and values associated with the heroes –or villains. The other was the disagreements between the students' and the textbooks' assessments of specific figures and their historical legacies.

The prominence of the issue of territory and sovereignty, which could be found in the students' recollection of "significant" historical events, was evident in their judgments about historical figures as well. Figures such as Cyrus or Mosaddeq were frequently mentioned as positively influential, and were praised as heroes, for their role in "restoring Iran's power and independence". Cyrus was by far the most frequently mentioned "hero" in the students' accounts; and the students expressed an uncritical reverence towards him. On the other hand, Genghis Khan was frequently mentioned as a villain for his invasion of Persia; followed by Ahmadinejad for his role in "demoting Iran's standing in the international scene", and the Qajar kings for losing vast territories to foreign enemies. Meanwhile, the textbooks put more emphasis on the positive role of the clergies and Muslim leaders who fought for the "rights and freedoms" of Iranians. Nowhere in the text may one find a negative assessment of religious figures or any discussion of discord and disagreement among the clergies. This representation follows what Apple (1991) calls a discourse's contribution to the construction, or perpetuation of social hierarchies. In the students' accounts, however, clergies and religious figures were not generally considered to be heroes, or to be positively influential. The only members of the clergies mentioned by the students were Ayatollah Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei; and in both cases, negative assessments outnumbered the positive ones.

In addition to the general analysis of the students' and the textbooks' narratives of national heroes, it is also worth looking into how their assessments of specific figures converge or else differ. The two assessments seemed to be relatively similar when it came to figures from the ancient history of the country. The students' and the textbooks' narratives about influential figures and their legacies, however, diverge rapidly from each

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other as the discussion moves into the modern history of Iran. This difference is especially apparent in the cases where the students had conducted extra-curriculur research on a figure –e.g. Reza Shah or Prime Minister Mosaddeq–; or when they believed they had had firsthand experience of the consequences of the person's actions – e.g. Ayatollah Khomeini or Ayatollah Khamenei. More critical and nuanced reflections in the students' accounts of a number of modern figures may be partially attributed to the availability and accessibility of alternative voices including family stories, personal experiences, satellite TV, and extra-curriculum readings. During the interviews, I found that many of the students had conducted group research on topics of their choice in their eighth grade, where they studied the more recent history of Iran. The majority of the research topics had involved individual people, and not specific events or episodes. In conducting their research and in listening to their classmates' presentations, students had obtained an opportunity to be exposed to different perspectives about a number of modern historical figures leading to more sophisticated assessments of their legacies.

In the next step, I investigated how the above images of the past, the heroes and the villains related to the representations, and perceptions of, Iranian identity. It can be argued, based on the findings of this study, that feelings of shame, regret, and humiliation dominated the students' accounts of Iranian identity. The majority of the participants considered historical national failures as a significant component of Iranian identity. The image of centuries of oppression, humiliation, and inferiority to foreign powers overshadowed the students' definitions of national identity. Furthermore, similar to their recollection of historical events and their judgments about historical figures, their perceptions of national identity seemed to be tied to the issues of territorial boundaries

and national sovereignty. As a result, even their positive images of the ancient Persian empires succumbed to the prevailing narrative of failures that came after. In fact, for too many of the students, the negative emotions caused by the feeling of a "permanent loss" seemed to be more powerful than the positive emotions of joy and pride.

The textbooks provide a similarly negative image of Iranian identity. For instance, the text often uses keywords such as "Iran" and "people" in the context of conflict, oppression, and defeat. Yet, the text also tries to provide a balancing discourse by emphasizing the religious aspects of Iranian identity and by creating strong associations between "being Muslim" and "being Iranian". As discussed before, the emphasis on Islam grows dramatically in the lessons on the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic. Muslim clergies and their role rise in significance from being supporters of popular causes, to the leaders of popular movements. At the same time, Islam is introduced as the prime engine of people's social and political aspirations and finally an objective in itself. This representation is paralleled by a dramatic increase in the use of plural pronouns such as "we" and "us" in the positive contexts of victory, accomplishments, and resilience in the face of difficulties after the Revolution. In using these pronouns, the text aims at creating a strong sense of social solidarity and belonging around people's beliefs in Islam. Once again, the above image did not fully resonate with the students.

Another significant observation in the students' discussions of national identity was the limited presence of individual or collective agency. To most of the participants, Iranian identity was either associated with the aforementioned feelings of humiliation and shame at the hand of ruling dynasties or foreign powers, or defined passively through

blood relations. In most of the cases where the students discussed "people in history", the people were positioned at the receiving end of social and political interactions. Rarely did they rise in the students' accounts to active participants who would make a difference. A similar theme may be found in the textbooks, with the exception of the lessons on the Constitutional Revolution, the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic. In these three cases, people are depicted as playing an active role under the leadership of the clergies. Once again, however, the students did not identify with this more agentive image of people in the textbook's historiography. Most of the participants described the Islamic Revolution as a collective mistake, with some attributing the entire agency to Ayatollah Khomeini.

Generally speaking, there seem to be two main areas of divergence between the textbooks' representation of Iran's history on the one hand and the participants' perceptions of that history on the other. First, the students tended to disagree with the representation of the text when it comes to topics and figures for which they had had access to alternative voices and to competing narratives. These topics and figures mostly emerged in the modern history of Iran, for the participants were exposed to a variety of sources in addition to school textbooks in regard to modern history. These sources included, but were not limited to, family stories, programs on satellite TV channels, and the Internet. The participants had also had some opportunities in their history classes to conduct research on the modern history of the country. Therefore, their perceptions of this period had been influenced by a variety of rival discourses and differed from what the textbooks tried to communicate. In contrast, with regards to the ancient history of the country where the textbooks have a relative monopoly over the participants' access to

sources of information, the textbooks' representation and the students' perceptions seemed to be more similar. Secondly, one may argue that the textbooks had failed in convincing the participants about the "positive role" of Islam and Muslim clergy throughout Iran's history. While in the text, Islam is repeatedly introduced as the savior of the people, or the country; and Muslim clergy are praised as the defenders of people's rights, the students generally considered their role as either negative or negligible.

The participants' view of the past was generally correlated with an overall negative and passive perception of Iranian identity. This in turn seemed to have influenced their understanding of their own role as citizens of the country and as members of the society. When the text does not recognize people as the primary makers of history, it is not unexpected that the students did not envision themselves as change makers either. The resulting idea of inconsequentiality further fed into the participants' already existing pessimism about the future of the country. It is not surprising, therefore, that more than 50% of the participants had already decided to leave Iran in the future and another 20% were considering the idea of emigration.

It has been argued that a strong sense of national identity can bring people together, encourage people to act, and foster a sense of social solidarity among them. Passive, negative and discouraging conceptualizations of Iranian identity by the participants in this research seemed to have resulted in a fragile sense of belonging and a growing detachment from the rest of the society. The students did not see themselves as influential members of the society; and based on their disabling historiography, the participants often believed that "others" in the society should decide to make a difference in order to better the situation. Even in the cases where the participants criticized Iranian

people, they tended to distance themselves from the society by using third person pronouns: "I cannot change anything. People have to change themselves."; or "they [i.e. people] have to learn to obey the law." The passive account of people in the textbooks' historiography, therefore, had found its way into the students' image of themselves turning it into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study could arguably offer decision makers in Iran and researchers in the field of comparative education an insight into the complexities of the role of textbooks in shaping collective identities. From a research methods perspective, the findings of this dissertation provide some concrete evidence that an analysis of textbooks alone, and in the absence of an examination of their reception by students, does not portray a comprehensive image of an educational system and that of the functions of educational media. It is therefore crucial to recognize the agency of teachers and students in their interactions with official educational policies and specifically with textbooks. Teachers and students as the main audience for, and recipient of, textbooks play an active role in (re)making the meaning of the text by, inter alia, bringing in alternative discourses to their interpretation and understanding of the text.

For educational decision makers and textbook authors in Iran, this study presents a strong case for for the necessity of a more positive representation of Iranian history and identity in the school textbooks. The findings of this study show that the current narrative of a humiliating past rescued by an overly positive force of Islam does not seem to be resonating with the students. In addition to their failure in introducing Islam as a strong and positive point of reference for Iranian identity, the textbooks seem to have managed

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to create a negative sense of failure and defeat towards Iranian history and identity in students, which in turn is fueling their disappointment and their pessimism towards the future. A representation of the past that puts more emphasis on the positive aspects of Iranian history and identity and takes a more balanced approach towards the role of Islam may help students to form a more nuanced sense of identity and a more optimistic view of the future.

At the same time, the findings of this study regarding the influence of competing historical narratives (such as those found in family stories, satellite TV channels, and the historiographies of various opposition groups) on the participants' perceptions of Iran's modern history can benefit teachers in Iran. Teachers, in other words, may impact students' understanding of Iran's history and Iranian identity by providing them with a variety of resources that can inform students' understanding of the past. Therefore, even if changes in the textbooks and in national educational policies are not likely to happen in Iran today, schools and teachers do have a say in how students interact with, and respond to, the textbooks.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several areas for future research that can contribute to a clearer and more precise understanding of how educational policies and practices influence the formation of national and religious identities in Iran and in the Middle East.

First, a study of the politics of textbook publishing in Iran would be a valuable contribution to our understanding of the above issue. For instance, in the recent months, tensions have been growing among the ranks of Iranian government regarding different conception of Iranian identity and its relation to "Islamic identity." Some high-rank

officials in the government have even begun to emphasize the "pre-Islam roots" of Iranian identity in their public speeches. This attitude is creating a strong backlash among the more conservative sectors of the ruling class and the clergy. Future research can examine how these confrontations are playing out in educational policy circles and which voices are being considered in the eventual design of the textbooks.

Secondly, further research is needed through expanding the population of participants and by examining the perspectives of ethnic and religious minorities whose voices and contributions are largely absent from the text. Such studies can further deepen our understanding of how educational policies can strengthen or weaken students' sense of collective identity. Additionally, based on the findings of this study, future large-scale quantitative research can be designed that include participants from both public and private schools and from a wider range of socio-economic backgrounds.

Finally, I believe there exists considerable potential for an examination of how gender, national and religious identities interact with each other in the context of the Muslim societies of the Middle East. While analyzing Iranian history textbooks, I realized that women were largely absent from the historical narrative of the textbooks. Therefore, it would be an important contribution to examine how girls' and boys' responses to the text and their conceptions of national identity might differ in the light of the text's unbalanced gender representation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF MAIN GUIDING QUESTIONS IN INTERVIEWS

1. What do you think about your history classes? What about textbooks?

2. How do you feel about Iran's history? Are there any specific things that you like or dislike about this history?

3. Who are the 5 most important figures in Iranian history in your opinion?

4. What are the 5 most important historical events in Iranian history in your opinion?

5. I want you to talk about the first things that come to your mind when you hear these words:

Iran	Qajar	Pahlavi	Safavid
Arab	Afghan	Revolution	War
Achaemenid	Being Iranian	Europe	
Border	Foreigners	Enemy	

6. Where do you think you will be in 10 years? What will you be doing? Why?

7. How do you see Iran in 10 years?

8. What does Iranian identity mean to you?

9. Being Iranian, I am proud that, I am sorry that…..

APPENDIX B

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE ORIGICAL FARSI SURVEY

First I want to thank you for your participation in this study. Before you begin, I just want to reiterate that:

1. They surveys are anonymous.

2. The questions in this study have no right or wrong answers. They are merely designed to evaluate your opinion about the issues.

Maryam Soltan Zadeh

Section 1:

1. Age:

2. Sex:

3. Which area of the city do you live in?

4. Do you use Satellite TV at home?

5. Do you consider yourself to be from a religious family?

6. Do you consider yourself to be a religious person?

7. Do you practice praying and fasting?

8. Do you wear Hijab?

9. Do you follow the news?

10. IF your answer to the previous question is yes, please determine your use of the following news sources:

a. Iranian TV and radio	A lot	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
b. Newspaper	A lot	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
c. Internet	A lot	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
d. Satellite TV	A lot	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

Other (please explain)

Section 2:

1. How interested you are in the subject matter of History?

    a. I like history a lot

    b. I like history to some extent

    c. Neither like nor dislike

    d. I don't like history

    e. I hate history

2. Do you read about historical topics beyond school textbooks? If so, please name some of your resources.

3. Please name five people you believe to have been most influential in Iran's history and explain why.

4. Please name five historical events you believe to have been most influential in Iran's history and explain why.

5. How do you rank the following forces in shaping historical events in Iran's history? If you have any explanations, please add next to the list.

    a. Popular movements

b. Religious leaders

c. Non-religious leaders

d. Kings and governments

e. Military forces

f. Economic forces

g. Foreign powers

6. What do the following terms mean for you?

   a. Nationality

   b. Being Iranian

   c. Immigration

7. Where do you think you will be in 10 years and what will you be doing?

8. If you have anything to add about "Being Iranian" or "Iranian Identity" please add here.

VITA

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PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

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Soltan Zadeh, M. (April 2012). Narratives of failure and quests for pride: An examination of Iranian textbooks' portrayal of, and students' perceptions of, national identity. Paper to be presented at the meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society, Puerto Rico.

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