

**Factors Influencing Sectarian Conflict and Peace through Education in Lebanon:
An Ethnographic Analysis of Equal Access, Social Inclusion, and Social Contract**

by

Miranda (“Mina”) Hogsett

B.A., Marshall University, 2008

M.Ed., University of Maryland, 2010

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This dissertation was presented

by

Miranda (“Mina”) Hogsett

It was defended on

April 20, 2020

and approved by

Chair: Dr. Maureen Porter, PhD, Associate Professor, Administrative and Policy Studies

Dr. Müge Finkel, Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs

Dr. Noreen Garman, PhD, Professor, Administrative and Policy Studies

Dr. Maureen McClure, PhD, Professor, Administrative and Policy Studies

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Factors Influencing Sectarian Conflict and Peace through Education in Lebanon: An Ethnographic Analysis of Equal Access, Social Inclusion, and Social Contract

Miranda (“Mina”) Hogsett, PhD

University of Pittsburgh, 2020

This is an ethnographic study with the purpose of spotlighting factors related to K-12 education in Lebanon that tend to reduce or exacerbate sources of sectarian conflict. The following research questions guided my research: (1) How do education stakeholders operationalize equal access, social inclusion, and social contract through education? (2) What features in K-12 education contexts exacerbate sectarian conflict in Lebanon? (3) What features in K-12 education contexts contribute to conflict-reduction in Lebanon? Data sources include interviews with education stakeholders and school visits I conducted throughout Lebanon, curriculum documents and documents outlining education purposes and policies in Lebanon that I analyzed.

I present a model for examining factors that precipitate and exacerbate sectarian conflict in Lebanon that contributes to theory-building related to equal access, social inclusion, and social contract. Findings pointed to the following seven factors to intensify sectarian conflict: related to unequal access to education were (1) the sectarian structure of the school system and (2) the inadequate access to free and compulsory education in the country; related to social exclusion in education were (3) policies that prohibit dialogue about religion and politics in school that are nonetheless relevant to students’ everyday lives and (4) minimum power-sharing and multi-stakeholder engagement in education decision-making; factors that exacerbate conflict by

weakening social contract in Lebanon included (5) the misuse of political power among elites to benefit themselves and members of their affiliated sect, (6) a contradiction between curriculum content and reality, and (7) a lack of autonomy for students and teachers. All of the seven major structures, trends, and inadequacies in education that I found to exacerbate sectarian conflict originate from the national level and stem from Lebanon's modern interpretation of its consociational system of government.

On the other hand, seven out of eight major factors that I found contribute to reducing sectarian conflict through education originate from the school and classroom levels, primarily from teachers and principals of varying religious sects. This highlights how model educators and school administrators already play a critical role in contributing to conflict-reduction through education in Lebanon. The eight factors that contribute to conflict reduction were the following: related to equal access are (1) the government's stated commitment to free compulsory education and (2) a rise in nonsectarian private school options; related to social inclusion were (3) linguistic inclusion and (4) the prevalence of teaching approaches centered on common threads that bind students across sectarian differences; related to social contract included (5) teacher protections, (6) opportunities among educators and students in some schools to exercise choice and influence, (7) opportunities for reconciliation in some after-school NGO-facilitated programs, and (8) capacity-building. The study concludes with pragmatic recommendations for practitioners (government, Ministry of Education, school directors, and teachers) in Lebanon to address factors that contribute to sectarian conflict and to enhance those factors that make a difference in reducing conflict.

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1.0 Introduction: Past the Point of No Return

The Mediterranean Sea peeks through the gaps in the hushed array of potted herbs and hanging plants on the café patio as I sit with Sarah¹ after she's finished teaching for the day. Although the setting for our previous meeting was the elementary school where she teaches, she preferred to meet away from school for this follow-up interview. "I wanted to be able to speak freely about these sensitive issues," she explains. She then gives more detail:

"We have religiously- and politically-charged issues at the school—no matter that it's a private, nonsectarian school. And even though religion and politics are forbidden in schools, you'll see that everywhere in Lebanon, there are sectarian issues between everyone. We're always judging each other based on the religion of the other. Just recently we had one male teacher ask a female teacher to stop wearing her cross necklace because it's a religious symbol and it has no place in a school. The woman told him she'll stop wearing it when teachers like his wife stop wearing the hijab. This was between colleagues in a professional setting. Among teachers there are inner conflicts, can you believe it! Teachers need interventions ourselves! So it's better we met here this time so we can speak freely."

As this shows, sectarian conflict and religious divisions in society and in schools is pervasive in Lebanon. As a result, teachers like Sarah struggle to describe bright spots in education. She continues:

"How can we do this? The themes in curriculum completely avoid sensitive topics. We used to teach about customs and traditions of religions in the country, but even that was canceled to stay neutral. It's a plural society, so we should know about each other. But we don't, we avoid it. So the conflict continues. How can you fix something if you ignore it, and all the time it's right there smelling badly under your nose? How can the stench disappear if you don't address its source?"

¹ This study uses pseudonyms for all participant names to confer anonymity.

Her frustration invokes lessons I've learned from other educators and professors in Lebanon.

The limitations to bridging sectarian divisions in classrooms are substantial. Education stakeholders from historically divided sects have not been able to agree on how to present sensitive topics about the country in curricula for decades. Nationally, political leaders are debilitated by fear to lose the support of their constituents if the history of their country is written and taught from another sectarian group's perspective. Locally, parents and community members fear the potential adverse implications of their children learning divergent histories of the country that could paint a negative picture of their community and threaten the religious and cultural identity of their youth. The controversial nature of sectarianism is understandably sensitive and not easily addressed.

"What if you had no limitations?" I ask Sarah. She struggles at first, then she begins to daydream. She narrates:

"Ideally we would make campaigns – *توعية* [*towaya*] – it translates to awareness, to deeply understanding. It's a realization. Maybe transformation. Campaigns and projects for transformation. Class content would relate to topics that could address conflicts between groups. We could do workshops where we bring in people from different sects and they teach about their beliefs to students. Survivors from the war could come speak, and even teachers like me could talk about our own experiences of the war. I would love to discuss with them why we should do all we can to avoid returning to a war like that, why continuing our sectarian ways is an extension of the war. Then students and visitors can work together to identify commonalities, shared values, shared things together. But this is not enough, you see. They also should talk about differences and how to overcome them together and how to understand the differences. How to deal with inequalities. This is what led to the war in the first place. Then we could do activities with the students, mixing them with other sects and working together on a neutral project, which must be related to something they like, for example the theme of animals in nature or the environment or music or art. Or perhaps it should not be neutral, but the goal is to work together with each other, *with* our biases, *with* our identities. To construct something beautiful and meaningful together. To *practice* things we say we believe in this country, like peace and reconciliation."

Sarah's energy is palpable. Her words have transported me to the alternate universe they construct. She abruptly stops at this point, the twinkle of wonder vanishing from her eyes almost immediately. Her shoulders drop; her tone deepens and her enunciation becomes sharp:

“It is unrealistic though. Lebanon is becoming more fanatic in many ways—parents, teachers, and political leaders. We too easily think ‘it’s not in our hands.’ In Arabic we say *فلت الملق* [*felit al-mala*']. It means past the point of no return. It is out of our hands. The red line has been crossed. I mean not just teachers, but people in general in Lebanon feel this way. Sectarianism is everything and there will be no peace until something is done about it. But what can we do?”

She repeated the Lebanese phrase with a nod of the head, “فلت الملق”.

Sarah is not alone in her sentiments. Dozens of educators I spoke with shared her feeling of hopelessness—the sectarian roots of Lebanon's conflicts are past the point of no return, too long gone, and out of the hands of those working in education.

Sarah began a new thought, rolling her eyes at herself in anticipation of what she was about to say: “But I feel we must try to do something anyway.” She confessed reluctantly. “We have such a responsibility in the field of education. If anyone could try to help the next generation to see how silly, but actually serious, these sectarian conflicts are, maybe it is teachers and schools. I mean, no one else is doing it!”

“You know your idea for a transformative awareness campaign in schools that you described?” I asked. “There are some incredible teachers and principals with similar thinking who are doing that kind of thing. There seem to only be a few people doing it, so it is a bit slow and small-scale, but it's happening. And there are some amazing education professors working with teachers to support them.”

Before I could finish, she exclaimed “Who? I have to meet them!” She was astounded anyone has been able to go beyond the confines of Lebanon's ‘politics and religion should be avoided in schools’ policy. Surprise over the positive strides that some education stakeholders

are indeed making in Lebanon to mitigate sectarian tensions has become a regular reaction in my interactions with Lebanese educators. Teachers feel isolated and lonely because they cannot see across sectors and sects to catch glimpses of bright spots.

This encounter with Sarah brings to the foreground a number of problematic issues that are of focus in this dissertation. This research concentrates on the relationship that education mechanisms, policies, and practices have with sectarian conflict in Lebanon. Building on theoretical understandings in conflict and peace studies, I have generated a model that identifies mechanisms, strategies, and approaches in K-12 school and afterschool contexts that exacerbate sectarian conflict in Lebanon and, at least as important, my investigation spotlights factors that reduce sectarian conflict at the same time.

1.1 Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

Education policies and practices have a strong relationship with a country's dynamic positioning on the conflict/peace spectrum. Education is among the most controversial of policy issues in any country (Koneska, 2012) and can influence conflict and division (Bush, Saltarelli, & Centre, 2000; Davies, 2010; Hilker, 2011; Smith, 2005; Smith & Vaux, 2003). As education interacts with dimensions of society and governance, it significantly influences the incidence of violence, especially in fragile settings (Barakat, Connolly, Hardman, & Sundaram, 2013). Conversely, education can be a platform for building and restoring social bonds within communities, for cultivating respect and equality between historically divided groups, and for forging trust between governments and citizens after a conflict subsides (Barakat et al., 2013; Bush et al., 2000; Smith, 2005).

Tenebrous aspects of Lebanon's post-war education system that linger in the legacy of sectarian conflict are widely known in the country. For example, the school system is highly factional; 54 percent of K-12 students in the country attend private sectarian schools and only 30 percent of all students attend public schools (Bank Med, 2014). Public education is underfunded, underdeveloped, and low-quality compared to education in private schools. The political leaders linked to sectarian communities and their schools defend their own group's interests and influence the education system to asymmetrically favor or disadvantage competing groups (Cammett & Issar, 2010). As Cammett (2014) explains, education, as a component of welfare, is a public good that can be manipulated by non-sovereign entities:

“The welfare regime is highly fragmented and relatively unregulated, providing ample opportunities for sectarian organizations to supply social services and to take credit for the public benefits. Nonstate actors with vested interests in the status quo both profit from and sustain the underdevelopment of government welfare functions” (p. 38).

These politically-driven and sectarian aspects of governance reinforce sectarian inequalities that outstrip low-quality government infrastructures such as those in the education sector. There is an unequal distribution of education resources and spending, which feeds the socioeconomic disparities between sectarian groups across regions (Salti & Chaaban, 2010). Above and beyond this segregated education system in Lebanon, education is severely inequitable and further segregated for the more than two million Palestinian and Syrian refugees in the country (Human Rights Watch, 2016b). A tense atmosphere and sectarian confrontations emerge as a result (Meier, 2014). Finally, there is a dissonance between the unified national civics curriculum and the realities that individuals experience as members of sectarian communities, which ultimately reinforces the low confidence that students have in the

government (Akar, 2016). Sectarianism thrives in the darkness cast by these challenges and vested interests in segregation.

1.2 Research Questions

These problems stemming from sectarianism set a dim stage for education outcomes to play out, overshadowing progress toward resiliency, tolerance, reconciliation, and peacebuilding. The primary purpose of this research is to spotlight factors that tend to reduce sources of sectarian conflict through education. Delineating the most salient structures, trends, and pedagogical inadequacies that exacerbate sectarian conflict in Lebanon is the secondary purpose. Fragmented, compartmentalized approaches to the analysis of education through a conflict lens is common and insufficient for addressing the influence of education on conflict (Smith, 2005; Smith & Vaux, 2003), so this research aims to provide systematic analysis on multiple levels for various stakeholders. Through this project, I provide a descriptive account of the negative and positive roles that key education stakeholders do and could play in Lebanon amid the continued sectarian politics that saturate the education system.

With these purposes in mind, the research questions that guide this study are as follows:

1. How do education stakeholders operationalize equal access, inclusion, and social contract through education?
2. What features in K-12 education contexts exacerbate sectarian conflict in Lebanon?
3. What features in K-12 education contexts contribute to conflict-reduction in Lebanon?

1.3 Personal Past and Positionality: Why Lebanon?

Growing up, I often heard words about war muttered by my grandfather in Kentucky. He served in the U.S. army in the Korean War and was awarded the Medal of Honor, the highest valor of honor medal awarded in the United States, because he saved three comrades after his patrol was ambushed by a grenade that destroyed half of his face. “War is hell,” he used to repeat, persistent in message but stingy with details, “and we’ve gotta learn to respect each other as equal humans.” However, other influences throughout my Appalachian childhood precluded against those of peace and respect inculcated by people like Papaw.

At least as early as age six, dichotomies between the West and the Middle East were gaining a grip on my conceptions of the world. The Persian Gulf War consumed U.S. media and my conservative church’s prayers every Sunday in West Virginia in late 1990 and early 1991. My childhood babysitter, “Nana,” went to our church too and had a son who fought in Operation Desert Storm. My family still passes around a picture of him holding me before he went off to fight. Although my memories are mostly painted with the prayers and worries of those around me for loved ones such as Chad, they also served as an early exposure to the concept of war. In fact, my younger sister Ally was praying for the “Gulf War” to end and then we turned the news on as its end was just being announced, according to my family’s folklore. “You never know, maybe it was because of her prayer,” my religious folks reminisce to us on occasion. Most loved ones who fought for the U.S. like Chad made it home safely, while echoes of victory and relief filled the U.S.-centric narratives around me. It was many years later that these memories would surface during a conversation with one of my Iraqi students, whose cousins and uncle were killed by U.S. soldiers during that same battle.

September 11th was the next major milestone in my life to reinforce the Middle East/United States dichotomy. I was in 10th grade, playing a game in a youth mentorship class called “Eagles Nest” when the principal came on the school intercom to prompt everyone to remain calm. He informed us of the tragedy that took place in New York and instructed teachers to turn their TVs to channel three. The day proceeded in a blur of fears and tears as students in my high school tried to reach parents or guardians, incited by phrases repeated from the media such as “America under attack.” Soon to follow came yellow ribbons around trees and on doors throughout my hometown on trees and front doors in support of troops deployed for the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. As was the case during the Persian Gulf War, a narrow scope of the conflict that focused on the security of U.S. citizens distracted from the more than 3,000 civilians killed in Afghanistan during my remaining years in high school as a result of the war (Crawford, 2015).

Later in the same school year as 9/11, my world history teacher, Mrs. Greenstein, was covering a unit about world religions. When she got to Islam, she faced daily confrontations from the mostly Christian-affiliated students. Some in my class simply refused to study it. One student reminded her that Christianity is the only true religion and we shouldn’t learn about other ones, especially ones associated with the so-called “axis of evil².” I remember getting the unit test back with “Islam” circled over and over throughout my essay and a note clarifying the difference between the words “Muslim” and “Islam” because I’d used them interchangeably so many times. On the last day of class, Mrs. Greenstein brought her famous caramel brownies and Greek baklava. While we scarfed down the sweets, she spoke to us about the importance of

2 This is a phrase coined by George W. Bush in January 2002 to describe governments his administration accused of associating with terrorism and/or weapons of mass destruction.

tolerance and being open to learning from the perspectives and experiences of others. Students noticeably rolled their eyes at her “lecture,” but it is clear to me now how moments like this helped prepare me for a future with intercultural peacebuilding. It wasn’t until two and a half years after that class that my friend who had been in Mrs. Greenstein’s class with me told me he was raised Muslim, but had been too afraid to tell anyone due to the hostility against his religion.

My high school years continued with this pattern of xenophobic and anti-Middle Eastern intolerance competing against lessons of open-mindedness, plurality, and tolerance. The U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003 corresponded with anti-Islamic and anti-Arab rhetoric leading up to the U.S. presidential election of 2004 that would see George W. Bush re-elected. Meanwhile my aunt Debbie, who was dying of cancer at the time, was eager to share her life stories of starting an English as a Second Language program for immigrants in public schools in Florida. She showed me the papyrus art a student from Egypt gave her and chopsticks from a student from China. Her stories were permeated with lessons about the good that people have in them, no matter where they’re from or who they are.

Around the same time, my language arts honors teacher for two consecutive years, Mrs. Gensler, shared her fascination with the lessons we could learn from political and social injustices from the real world and how they are depicted creatively in literature. On the heels of a wave of racially-charged hate crimes at my school against students of color, she once wove through our desk aisles with red cheeks and a raised voice, animatedly listing inequalities and power struggles in a long stream-of-consciousness monologue—from poverty to gender inequality to racial intolerance to war. Then her face suddenly lit up with an enormous smile and in a fervent voice said something like, “but we can learn from all of this and stop repeating the same mistakes and fighting about everything! This is our purpose! I invite you to use your minds

to overpower urges to follow down the same silly paths repeated throughout history! Diverge from the examples of bigotry you see in our community!” She went on to encourage us to think in new and creative ways to solve problems, embody our beliefs, and coexist with others whose beliefs differ from our own.

Influential teachers in my life such as my Aunt Debbie, Mrs. Greenstein, and Mrs. Gensler offered quite divergent narratives from the echo chambers found throughout most of Appalachia. They challenged me to listen to narratives from every side of a story, to wonder why inequalities exist, to question sources of injustice, and to stand in solidarity with the underserved and misunderstood. They taught me that curiosity, critical thinking, tolerance, and compassion should be intimately woven into our daily lives. They undoubtedly inspired me to become a teacher and to now seek opportunities to work with teachers through my research.

A succession of experiences during my transition to adulthood in Navajo and Yakima Native American communities, in Appalachia, in urban areas in New York and the DC area, in Kenya, and in Finland deeply influenced my trajectory to pursue my passions in the area of international education. Since those experiences, I have taught thousands of international students, immigrants, and refugees in the U.S., many of whom were from the Middle East. I also taught Bedouin students in the Naqab Dessert, Israel/Palestine, for a year and have taught and learned alongside educators from the Middle East for over a decade in Europe, the Middle East, and the United States. There are more questions and understandings that have influenced my desire to work in the Middle East than I could state succinctly here.

One lesson amalgamated from these experiences was an understanding that the people in the Middle East are among the most misunderstood and discriminated of this time on our planet, and this injustice is particularly fueled by people in the United States. As the number of students,

classmates, colleagues, and friends I knew from the Middle East grew throughout my 20s, my understanding of the diverse region became more muddled, but my love and respect for the people there grew as well. I became deeply drawn to the cultures, languages, and peoples of the Levant and was ‘past the point of no return’ myself, but in a good way, desiring to focus on understanding it as much as possible for the rest of my life.

When learning about the Middle East, my mind (and some professors, and many books I read) constructed unfair generalizations about countries and communities of the region. Never has a country been a single story. However, dynamic conditions cannot be reductively traced back solely to a succession of occupations, conflicts, revolutions, government changes, and economic trends. In this way, it is likely that there is no place on earth where contradictions and paradoxes don’t exist. As I learned evermore about the Middle East in the last decade and a half, I focused my studies on the region during my graduate studies. Thanks to the University of Pittsburgh’s Global Studies Program, I had the opportunity to win the Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship award funded by the U.S. State Department three years during my doctoral studies. This allowed me to focus on my studies and take classes in Arabic language, Middle East studies, and peace and conflict studies. During this time, one country continued to stand out with unparalleled paradoxes and ostensible contradictions—Lebanon. The following section explores these paradoxes and contradictions in more detail and shows thus why I chose to study my research questions there.

1.3.1 The Contradictions and Paradoxes of Lebanon

Many of Lebanon’s contradictions stem from Lebanon’s recent history of occupation and conflict. The paradoxes of Lebanon are most apparent when remnants of occupation and conflict

are juxtaposed with stability and prosperity. Perhaps these are most readily visible in the architecture of Lebanon, especially in Beirut.

Across the urbanscape stand a range of buildings that embody the country's rich past and diverse cultural heritage—Arabesque Ottoman buildings, French-style blocks, Roman and Byzantine structures, religious establishments spanning faiths and centuries, and contemporary architecture such as Zaitunah Bay and the New Souq³ texture the city. Between buildings such as these stand some hundreds of buildings distinct in that they are crumbling. They remain as a haunting reminder of the civil war, most of them riddled with bullet holes and many with blown-out areas from bombs 25 years ago or longer. Now destruction and decay are a normal part of the landscape.

The thriving downtown that predated the war and sat at the end of the Green Line (the civil way's demarcation line) remains destroyed and empty, except for serving as a parking lot and housing the small Martyr Square Monument⁴. "What a shame it is that the old downtown is gone..." people in Beirut echo. The new downtown area sits just adjacent to the old flattened one. It is a checkerboard of neatly-organized streets covered in old-fashioned style bricks and lined with beautiful, brand new stone buildings filled with stores and elite companies such as Nike, Dolce & Gabbana, Dior, and Juicy Couture. The area is named "the Souq", which aims to conjure nostalgic traditional *souq* (market) with small, locally-owned shops that are passed down from generation to generation—none of which exist in such a traditional market area any longer in Beirut.

3 "Souq" in Arabic refers to a traditional market or bazaar.

4 The monument was erected in 1930 to symbolize nationalism and unity and to memorialize Lebanese nationalists hanged during World War 1.

At the end of the new *souq* is the historic Phoenicia Hotel, which was destroyed during the war but has since been restored. Close to that stands the 26-story ghost of the Holiday Inn. The hotel was completed in 1974, the year before the civil war began. Throughout the conflict, as with other hotels, the warring sides fought for the building to use as a fort. Now people tell legends of rockets and artillery exchanges to and from the hotel, and of massacres and battles that took place inside. After the war, the hotel was stripped by scavengers and now stands, severely damaged and completely barren—not even the windows and walls were spared—and surrounded by development and charm overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. Historical and cultural edifices, urban expansion, industry, and tech development blossom around architectural skeletons of war. Now military guards pepper the urban intersections, standing in pairs on corners or alone in street-side bunkers with automatic weapons meant to maintain peace. While this creates a sense of security, it is simultaneously a haunting reminder of the country's latent sectarian conflicts and potential imminent threats.

Lebanon's paradoxes also extend to its sociocultural features. There is a politics of forgetting in Lebanon (Barak, 2007; Haugbolle, 2012) that play out on many stages, especially in education. In the countrywide history curriculum across all schools, national history after 1946 is muted in classrooms (van Ommering, 2015). Children grow up amid the abandoned and destroyed buildings from the war, hearing stories of the war from their families, yet they never formally learn in school the causes or histories of the war, the divergent narratives, or the stories of collaboration and reconciliation across historically-divided groups.

Despite this politics of forgetting, Monroe (2016), an ethnographer who gives a beautiful and rigorous examination of mobility and the visibility of sectarianism throughout Lebanon in her book *The Insecure City* notes that “suffering and violence endure in people's bodies and

souls” (p. 45). Indeed, I found this to be poignantly true in 2018. One professor I met for coffee and a snack described how she hasn’t been able to eat Akkawi cheese since she was a child during the civil war because it reminds her too much of her neighbor she saw shot on her street. Another man I met always keeps the TV as loud as his wife will allow so he’ll be “less likely to hear a bomb if it falls outside.” Similarly, van Ommering (2017) documents how teachers’ experiences with armed conflict influence their work and weigh on their memories and sentiments associated with their communities and schools. Lebanon’s politics of forgetting collide with enduring suffering to leave sources of conflict and trauma exposed but unaddressed.

Another contradiction from the education system relates to policy. Education policy after the civil war focused on الانصهار (“al-insihar”), or fusion, rather than diversity or reconciliation. Education is thus a deliberate mechanism for homogeneity and uniformity, while important issues of sectarianism, difference, and recent internal conflict are avoided altogether. Diversity is recognized as one of Lebanon’s greatest strengths and is offered as omnipresent throughout school curricula, but is intended by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to be addressed on the surface level only—that is, studying the country’s flag, foods, and geographical features is found throughout the curricula. In this way, reductionism is a tool to overlook complex problems connected to the intercultural and religious histories and issues in the country to meet national civic goals. Studying religions, cultural groups, political groups, and competing histories and perspectives are left out as this treads on precarious ground that could easily lead to more conflict. Diversity is celebrated while issues of identity and difference are avoided, and, not surprisingly, sources of conflict persist.

Despite destabilizing factors and periodic political instability, there are a number of indicators that point to Lebanon’s overall story of resilience, and in many ways, success. In

1990, Lebanon adopted a consociational government and reformulated a power-sharing cabinet in 2010 (BBC News, 2017). Through liberal economic policies, a free foreign exchange market, a flexible exchange rate, and conservative fiscal and regulatory policies, Lebanon's economy expanded dramatically after the conflict period (Makdisi, 2004). It continues to grow due in large part to tourism and private consumption (World Bank, 2017). The literacy rate among citizens is excellent at 91.3 percent (World Bank, 2015) and Lebanon's school access and literacy rates were in the 66th percentile compared to other United Nations countries in 2014 (Education Policy and Data Center, 2014). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2017) reported gender parity at all levels of education. In 2017, Bloomberg's healthiest country index listed Lebanon as the healthiest country in the Arab region and 32nd healthiest worldwide, just before the U.S. and slightly behind Denmark. For transparency and peace during the country's 2016 elections, the UN (2017) pointed to Lebanon as exemplary for demonstrating Sustainable Development Goal 16 centered on peace, justice, and strong institutions. The UNDP (2017) likewise described Lebanon's progress toward Millennium Development Goals as notable. It is for reasons such as these that Lebanon is looked to as exemplar for other countries in the wake of conflict.

As these examples show, Lebanon is a land of contradictions and paradoxes. Despite and also because of these, the two most recurring statements I heard from participants during ethnographic data collection in Lebanon were that (1) people would not be surprised if a war broke out again today in Lebanon, and (2) Lebanon is a beautiful and safe country that everyone should visit. Most often, these sentiments were combined: "The war could continue anytime, but people should visit!" Unnerving sentiments bind these two opposing conceptions together and

have moved me to investigate how features in education influence these paradoxes that easily obfuscate the distinctions between sectarianism and stability.

1.4 Significance of This Study

This study will be useful in informing how policy, curriculum, and practices in Lebanon and potentially in other consociational (sectarian power-sharing) countries may approach mitigating sectarian conflicts through education. This study will be practical in helping stakeholders in education such as policy-makers, principals, teachers, and parents to assess areas for improvement essential to meeting national goals for social and political stability. It will additionally elucidate areas for intergroup peace-building in order to avoid a return to conflict in the future. Finally, this study could equip and inspire policymakers, principals, and teachers to scale up practices already being utilized for conflict-reduction in Lebanon.

1.5 Organization of This Dissertation

This dissertation is organized as follows: In Chapter 2 I provide a literature review of contextual information about Lebanon, of factors that lead or have led to civil war and ethnic conflict, and of consociationalism, a power-sharing form of government common to conflict-affected countries that was adopted by Lebanon. In Chapter 3 I outline my research design for this study, highlighting how ethnographic methods and narrative inquiry underlie this research. In Chapter 4 I present the first half of this study's findings with an analysis of structures, trends,

and inadequacies in K-12 educational contexts related to unequal access, social exclusion, and the weakening of social contract, all of which contribute to sectarian conflict. In Chapter 5 I present the second half of this study's findings in educational contexts and spotlights mechanisms, strategies, and approaches for equal access, social inclusion, and social contract through education. In Chapter 6 I first articulate the role that Lebanon's consociational government structures play in sustaining sectarian conflict, based on findings presented in the previous two chapters. I then delineate recommendations for roles that key stakeholders such as the Lebanese Government, the Ministry of Education, and school faculty could play in reducing sectarian conflict through education. Next, I outline the importance and contribution of this study to theory, methods, and practice. Finally, I conclude with suggestions for future research.

2.0 Literature Review

In this chapter, I first provide contextual information about Lebanon's education system, economy, political structures, and history of conflict. Then, I situate this study within relevant research in the fields of comparative and international literature in conflict and schools. Specifically, I examine literature that theorizes and delineates factors that lead to civil war and sectarian conflict within a country; this lays the foundation for the data collection and analysis tool used for this research. Subsequently, I describe findings associated with consociationalism, a common form of governance in politically charged sectarian settings transitioning from war, including in Lebanon. A focus on literature surrounding education in consociational countries assists in contextualizing findings from this study and serves as a springboard for this study to explore the implications of Lebanon's form of consociationalism.

2.1 Contextual Information about Lebanon

2.1.1 Education Context

2.1.1.1 Background Statistics and Trends in Education

Statistics and trends in education demonstrate the relative strengths of Lebanon's education system among other conflict-affected countries. Lebanon's school access and literacy rates were in the 66th percentile compared to other United Nations countries in 2014 (Education Policy and Data Center, 2014). The latest data from United Nations Educational, Scientific, and

Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019) reported the average literacy rate for all individuals age 15 and older to be approximately 91 percent in Lebanon—88 percent among females and 94 percent among males. However, gender parity has been achieved at all levels of education for individuals under age 24 in the country, so young males and females have equal literacy rates, above 99 percent (UNDP, 2017). However, there was only 75 percent gross enrollment rate in 2012 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013), indicating the high dropout rates among students in secondary schools. Data delineating school attendance and performance by sect was unavailable.

2.1.1.2 Education System Structure

The levels of education in Lebanon are the following: elementary, which is divided into cycle one (grades 1 to 3) and cycle two (grades 4 through 6); intermediate, serving grades 7 through 9; and secondary education, serving grades 10 through 12. Lebanese law number 686 of 1998 made primary education to age twelve or grade 6 mandatory. The core subjects in elementary include Arabic, math, science, civics, art, and physical education. While religion is not mandatory, it is often included as a means of inculcating values in both private and public schools. During intermediate school, students begin one of two streams—academic, or vocational and technical.

In the academic stream, the subjects include Arabic, math, science, history, geography, civics, art, physical education, an initial foreign language, and a second foreign language. A student must pass the *Brevet d'Etudes*, or Baccalaureate I exam in grade 9 to continue to secondary school, or the *Brevet Professionnel* to continue from intermediate school to vocational and technical secondary school. General education for secondary schools includes languages, math, sciences, civic education, humanities, and miscellaneous elective offerings. At the end of

the 12th grade, students take the *Terminale*, or Baccalaureate II Exam, also called the General Secondary Diploma, to qualify for university studies. Due to the two major official exams—the Baccalaureate I and II—years nine and twelve in particular are more dedicated to ‘teaching for the test’ (Akar, 2007).

2.1.1.3 The Private/Public School System

Private education is considered superior to public education in Lebanon. Public education is underfunded and low-quality compared to education in private schools. In 2013, approximately 2.6 percent of Lebanon’s GDP was spent on education, which is among the lowest in OECD countries and deficient compared to the eight percent average spent among OECD countries (OECD, 2019). Private schools serve 70 percent of K-12 students while public schools serve only 30 percent. 54 percent of K-12 students attend private sectarian schools, illustrating the sectarian structures of the country (Bank Med, 2014). Private schools typically have smaller class sizes, averaging approximately 10 to 15 fewer students than public school classrooms. Private schools also offer a greater diversity of courses, more elective offerings, greater opportunities for experiential learning, and a diversity of quality curriculum in addition to the required national curriculum. All schools must teach using the national curriculum, although private schools have more freedom to supplement the curriculum with non-required materials, textbooks, and course offerings. There also tend to be more support materials for teachers and more discipline in private schools.

Despite the clear discrepancies between private and public schools, there are many benefits to teaching in public schools that help to draw and retain excellent teachers. For example, private school teachers are typically paid only once per year, they have inconsistent salaries, and can be fired or laid off at any time with little to no protections in their contract.

Public school teachers, on the other hand, have long-term job stability after passing a difficult exam and being hired by the Ministry of Education; they maintain consistent salaries and are paid on a monthly basis. They also have good medical benefits that can cover themselves, their children, and other members of their family such as their parents. Generally, schools that are public are more diverse. Although they tend to draw students from religiously homogenous neighborhoods, classrooms are more likely to have students of different sect and socioeconomic groups than in private schools.

2.1.2 Economic Context

Lebanon's economy expanded dramatically after the conflict period ended in the 1990s (Makdisi, 2004). This was accomplished primarily through liberal economic policies, a free foreign exchange market, a flexible exchange rate, and conservative fiscal and regulatory policies; Lebanon's economy has additionally continued to grow due in large part to booming tourism and private consumption (World Bank, 2017).

In recent years, Lebanon's economy has struggled. The World Bank (2018) reported the real GDP growth rate to be two percent, unchanged since 2016, and characterized Lebanon's economy as "sluggish". There continue to be increases in imports and a drag in net exports of goods and services. A number of foreign banks also imposed tightened lending provisions. The fiscal deficit is above eight percent of the GDP, on a similar level to those in developing countries such as Nepal, Eritrea, Syria, and Haiti, and is predicted to rise due to persistent increases in public debt interest payments (World Bank, 2018). The employment rate is 43.7 percent, similar to that of Egypt in the years after the Arab Spring. As a means of comparison, Iraq's employment rate is 35.3 percent and that of the U.S. is around 71 percent (Organization

for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2019). The average income in Lebanon is 13,312 U.S. dollars, or approximately 20 million Lebanese pounds. Remittances comprise a large part of the economy, between seven and eight million U.S. dollars per year, or about 14 percent of the country's GDP. This rate is much higher than most countries as developed as Lebanon, but similar to remittance rates in most developing contexts.

Enormous economic challenges have also arisen from the Syrian refugee influx in Lebanon. 28 percent (or nearly 1.5 million) of Lebanese citizens live below the poverty line, so the vulnerable community within Lebanese society was substantial even before the arrival of Syrian refugees (Relief Web, 2017). The standards of living have slightly declined overall in recent years due to average per capita income losses. The GDP growth rate has plummeted 6.5 percent since the onset of the Syrian war (World Bank, 2019). Reports estimate that tourism has declined throughout the country by as much as 66 percent, but a study by the World Travel and Tourism Council (2017) described the resilience of Lebanon's tourism industry and points out the importance of leveraging this strongpoint in its economy. Nevertheless, Hamdar et al. (2018) found that 50 percent of those surveyed in Lebanon believe that Syrian refugees have a strong negative impact on the economy. To make matters worse, there is a lack of economic policies to alleviate the negative impacts of Syrian refugees on Lebanon's economy.

2.1.3 Political Context

Citizens view the country's political system as highly flawed due to its many weaknesses. Examining core political areas of weakness in Lebanon's parliamentary democracy will assist in contextualizing the country's education system and its consociational structures.

2.1.3.1 Election Processes and Government Features

Prevalent features of Lebanon's political system that indicate its weaknesses include inconsistent elections, sectarian structural features, weak separation of powers, and corruption such as vote-buying and nepotism. The following provides further explanation for each of these points.

Inconsistent elections and unconstitutional term extensions

The terms for every election since Lebanon's Taif Agreement of 1989 have been extended well beyond their four-year limit. At the national level, the only seats that are elected by the Lebanon constituency are parliament members whose terms are set at four years. According to the Lebanese Government's website, the current representatives were elected into parliament in 2007, then their terms were extended by two years; Parliament voted for the extension during a period when there was no government in place in the country, violating the Lebanese Constitution (2019). The terms for the same parliament members were extended again in 2013 without public elections. The same representatives continued to serve without a public vote for a total of eleven years until elections in May 2018. Elections within government are also inconsistent. In the last two decades, Lebanon experienced several periods without a president (including a two-year period that was filled in October 2017) and six months without a government at all.

Structural flaws related to sectarian political system

National elections and political structures do not proportionally reflect the country's people. Lebanon's political structure has a consociational system (Lijphart, 1977), which means there is meant to be proportional representation of the 19 sectarian groups. Proportionality is

based on the last census in the country, which took place 88 years ago in 1932. The national assembly selects the president every six years, while the president and parliament nominate the prime minister. The president, prime minister, and parliament choose the cabinet. At the national level, the public votes only for parliament members. Parliamentary seats are divided among major sects under the constitutional formula that does not reflect their current demographic weight. This system requires that the president must be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister must be a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the National Assembly a Shiite Muslim. According to the Lebanese Constitution (2019), the parliament should not be based on religion (article 95), so this system actually violates the constitution in addition to it failing to accurately reflect the country's political ideologies.

Weak separation of powers

According to article 28 of Lebanon's constitution, cabinet members may simultaneously serve as members of parliament. The goal of ministers to defend their political party's interests interferes with the role of cabinet members. Even though the country claims separation of powers between its three branches of government—executive, legislative, and judicial—the concept of checks and balances becomes difficult or impossible to uphold in this case.

Additionally, the Doha Agreement (UN Security Council, 2008) stipulated that all major decisions passed by the Lebanese government require approval by all major religious communities in the country. This further integrates religion and government, prompting sources such as the Brookings Institute (Al-Chaer & Saab, 2007) to label Lebanon's political system as a form of religious autocracy and lacking in the separation of powers.

Vote-buying and nepotism

Due to the consociational system in place and the selection process for political leaders in Lebanon, vote-buying from coalition-building is extremely prevalent. Another common practice is *wasta* (واسطة)—the Arabic term for the extensive nepotism that occurs in governments like that of Lebanon. Media sources and the general public are widely aware of the nepotism that so prevalently defines Lebanon’s political system. As Bellin (2012) noted, this lack of a merit-based system is a source of social grievance and therefore a marker of instability.

2.1.3.2 Weaknesses in Civil Liberties and Fundamental Freedoms

In addition to weak electoral and political processes, the second major area of weakness politically relates to civil liberties and fundamental freedoms. Under these umbrellas, Lebanon leans away from democratic governance with concerns to refugee rights, women’s rights, freedom of speech, and the right to peaceful assembly to protest the government.

Freedom of Speech as Punishable

Public figures such as comedians, television personalities, musicians, and journalists are regularly prosecuted and occasionally sentenced to prison for any public comments about members of government that are not positive or supportive in nature. Although Lebanon’s constitution guarantees free speech, it delineates that it should be “within the limits established by law.” Parliament has yet to repeal any laws that allow peaceful criticism or free speech about people or symbols related to Lebanon’s politics. According to Human Rights Watch (2018), this pattern of free-speech criminalization is intensifying and 2018 alone saw dozens of public figures facing prosecution to punish free speech.

Violent Government Response to Protests

As Human Rights Watch documents, tear gas and water cannons are an intermittent response by Lebanese security forces to large peaceful protests. Force and detainment are used to disperse lawful protests, even in cases that do not oppose the Lebanese government, such as in 2017 and 2018 when hundreds gathered peacefully to demonstrate at the U.S. embassy in Beirut against President Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

Lack of Refugee Rights

According to United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2018), two million Syrians and 450,000 Palestinians live as refugees in Lebanon, comprising approximately 30 percent of the country's population. Lebanon's policies restrict citizenship rights, property ownership, legal residency, freedom of movement, and employment. For example, more than 20 professions remain restricted to Palestinian refugees (UNRWA, 2019) and Syrians are restricted to only three sectors—agriculture, construction, and cleaning (Irrighi & Griesse, 2016). Hundreds of thousands of minors who are refugees still do not receive free and universal education due to poor geographical access and required school fees. There is also no pathway to citizenship for these populations, so the third of the population living as refugees in Lebanon effectively have little to no opportunity to participate in civil society or access pathways to social mobility. This is a major concern for the country's stability because grievances and inequalities such as these contributed to precipitating the Lebanese Civil War in 1975.

Gender Inequality

Women do not have equal access to rights that men have in Lebanon. Women face discriminatory policies related to inheritance, property ownership, marriage and divorce, and

child custody. Men have the choice to accept or reject Lebanese nationality while woman do not have this option. As a remnant of the Ottoman millet system, personal identity and status matters are ruled under law by religious authorities through confessional jurisdiction, so no central authority assures consistent and equal rights among people of different genders.

2.1.4 History of Conflict Context

Conflict and colonialism have fractioned Lebanon for five centuries. The sultan Salim I invaded Lebanon in 1516 and colonized it as a part of the Ottoman Empire from 1516-1918. In 1860, there was a civil war between Druze and Christians that saw thousands dead and drove thousands more to emigrate elsewhere. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, France declared the formation of Lebanon in 1920. The League of Nations established Lebanon as a French Mandate in 1923. Lebanon became occupied by British troops in addition to French troops in 1941 and a revolt took place in 1943 when an agreement could not be reached regarding an end to the French occupation. In 1946, the French Mandate ceased in Lebanon and both France and Britain withdrew from the country, officially affording Lebanon its independence.

In the years that followed, Lebanon experienced unprecedented tourism and development. However, political turmoil caused a brief civil war in 1958. Political strife and poor governance continued. In the 1970s, these, along with changes, tensions, and inequalities that accompanied waves of Palestinian refugees from the Israel/Palestine conflict and political tensions from Arafat and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), combined to bring increasing instability. Lebanese individuals historically derived their social and political identity and support from their religious and ethnic communities, but increasing political tensions

situated these national assets as intercommunity threats that tenaciously divided the country across these lines.

A protracted civil war, resulting from both internal and external political and social factors, broke out in 1975. Lebanese society was divided along more than 11 sectarian lines during the war. This war ravaged Lebanon for 15 years while the country simultaneously experienced Syrian occupation, ongoing clashes between Israel and Hezbollah, and a war with Israel; this brought Lebanon to near collapse before the war came to an end in 1990 (Gaub, 2015). Amid the transition from war, transnational parties such as Hezbollah, Iran, and Saudi Arabia have continued to threaten Lebanon's stability.

In the wake of these conflicts, as authors such as Jabbour (2014) and Monroe (2016) have pointed out, the intensification of sectarian political dynamics during and after the Lebanese civil war led to an extreme version of subnationalism wherein individuals' religious, political, and ethnic affiliation loyalties became prime over their allegiance to country. Much of Lebanon's identity as a diverse country and reputation as a fractured state is intertwined with its recent and prolonged history of colonialism and conflict. In the following sections, I provide definitions of core concepts throughout this study and I outline factors that tend to lead to civil war and ethnic conflict described in previous literature, lending insights into this study's data collection and analysis framework.

2.1.5 Definitions of Core Concepts throughout This Study

2.1.5.1 Conflict

The definitions of conflict and peace I used in this study are based upon participants' descriptions of these concepts in the data I collected for this study. Conflict in Lebanon was

consistently defined by participants in terms of sectarianism in the country. One school director, Ibrahim, captured it succinctly: “Sectarian political structures, sectarian thinking, sectarian divisions, sectarian education system...it consumes us. It is the root of economic inequalities, social injustices, and more than anything, conflict. Sectarianism is the definition of conflict in Lebanon to me.” The concept of a pressure cooker that some participants used serves as a good metaphor for this definition of conflict. Pressure and tensions continue to rise in the country from the persistence of sectarian systems and practices, making respondents consistently and unanimously believe that the country could explode again at any time—that is, a return to civil war could come any day, even today.

2.1.5.2 Peace

Based on data from this study, the definition of peace has three core features: peace reaches beyond nonsectarianism toward equity, it is not conflict-free, and it is active and sustainable. First, like the definition of conflict delineated in the previous subsection, peace is directly tethered to the reduction of sectarianism. As a professor put it, “having peace is not having sectarianism interfering in every single thing in our life. Everything is divided according to the sect you are from, not even the religion. I hate that. I hate that. Peace is not like this.” The meaning of peace extends beyond nonsectarianism and was further defined by participants in terms of social and economic equity issues such as respect for human rights, minority justice for refugees and domestic workers, equal rights for women and religious minorities, and economic opportunity. These are the factors of society that, if they remain unaddressed, would cause people to more readily pick up arms. One peace educator stated, “If people’s needs are covered, they have justice, they have no reason to revolt or fight.” Replacing sectarianism with equity largely defines Lebanese conceptualizations of peace.

Second, peace is consistently *not* equated to a lack of war or lack of conflict. A founder of an NGO who specializes in nonsectarian projects spoke to this, after I asked her definition of peace, saying:

“peace is not conflict control or conflict annihilation; it’s conflict transformation – transforming that conflict in that situation to become or to lead to a positive result. There’s a saying in Lebanese, it goes, more or less, ‘if it doesn’t grow, it wouldn’t shrink.’ *إذا ما متكبر ما يتصغر*.’ If the problem doesn’t escalate to the point of being recognized as a conflict, it probably wouldn’t be...it wouldn’t raise a red flag for people to deal with it; it couldn’t lead to opportunity to transform it.”

Similarly, one professor stated that there *must* be forms of conflict in order to reach more productive, collaborative, and profound understandings and solutions to problems in such a diverse context. Without conflict, negotiation and compromise across divisions is impossible.

Third, peace is not transitory. One professor said, “when I think about peace I think about sustainable peace. I think about, it’s not just something that happens for a moment. It’s something that...it’s a condition that allows us to live without fear.” Similarly, a representative at the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) described the durability and depth of peace, explaining that peace is a cultural shift. It is active and strong, unlike concepts commonly coded as being for peacebuilding, such tolerance, that are actually weak and passive. Peace is concrete; it is tangible. It entails sustainable practices that persistently work to recognize and transform conflict.

2.1.5.3 Quality Education

When I use the term quality education throughout this study, I am referring to the specific concept as defined by the UN General Assembly (21 October 2015) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #4 centered on quality education, with particular emphasis on three aspects that participants in this study emphasized consistently as denoting quality versus a lack thereof.

The first aspect of education quality defined in this way is core life skills, which the UN SDG defined as “relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.” Participants often cited areas such as problem-solving, decision-making, communication, entrepreneurship, character development, and technical skills as essential building blocks of quality education that should take greater precedence than the rote memorization and teaching to the test that is so pervasive throughout Lebanese classrooms.

The second aspect of quality education is equal access to education for vulnerable populations, which the UN SDG elaborates as to “ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.” Schools, programs, education policies, and systemic elements in Lebanon that afford equal access to refugees, especially Syrian refugees, were examples that were commonly described throughout data as addressing this aspect in Lebanon.

The third aspect centers on education to build a more sustainable society. The UN SDG related to this calls for the following:

“All learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.”

In Lebanon, this looks like education that teaches youth to appreciate and navigate Lebanon’s heterogeneous sectarian landscape in peaceful ways while valuing human rights and cultural diversity.

2.2 Factors That Lead to and Exacerbate Civil War and Ethnic Conflict

2.2.1 Factors Cause Civil War and Ethnic Conflict

The reasons and processes underlying societies' deterioration into violent conflict have been explored in academic literature for over half a century. This section offers a summary of the most salient theories explaining the causes of conflict, specifically those that combine to lead to civil war. I first delineate the core factors that lead to civil war as laid out by Collier and Hoeffler (2004) and expanded upon by Murshed and Tadjoeeddin (2007). I also draw upon literature by Byman (2011) and Bara (2014) to delineate internal factors that further intensify a conflict's trajectory down a path to war once conflict escalation is apparent. Finally, I present understandings brought forth by Posen (1993) that explain conditions that can ripen a context for civil war once violence between the main actors in a conflict has begun.

The greed and grievance theory put forth by Collier and Hoeffler (2004), expanded upon by Murshed and Tadjoeeddin (2007), and enriched by others lay robust theoretical foundations attempting to explain and predict the onset of violent ethnic conflict and civil war. In this theory, *greed* refers to incentive and opportunity for leaders, elites, and/or combatants to profit from resource control in a country; *grievance* refers to the criticisms and objections of citizens to their government or ruling body that most commonly lead to uprising and conflict. Theories explaining the onset of civil war originally provided arguments that sought to prove which is the most influential of the two arguments—greed or grievance—as a cause of civil war.

Collier and Hoeffler's (2004) seminal piece on this theory hypothesized and tested a greed and grievance framework for explaining the onset of civil war. The authors proposed a range of conflict drivers they postulated may contribute to precipitating civil war. Those drivers

that persisted throughout later literature as significant in the greed model include corruption of elites, resource control among elites, and opportunity for gain among elites (Ballentine & Sherman, 2003; Collier & Sambanis, 2005; Østby, 2008). In the grievance model, Collier and Hoeffler found predecessors to conflict to be driven by social and political exclusion and inequality. They analyzed a dataset of 79 civil wars that occurred between 1960 and 1999 to argue that the opportunity model associated with the greed of elite leaders best explains the onset of armed conflict as compared to the grievance model, but that grievance-centered variables are still significant causes of war. They also found that grievances tend to increase with population in fragile contexts due to rising heterogeneity and divisions among more groups.

Murshed and Tadjoeeddin (2007) built upon Collier and Hoeffler's model to argue that greed and grievance are not independent or competing, but rather are complementary concepts. As they pointed out, "grievances can be present without greed, but it is difficult to sustain greedy motives without some grievances" (p.23). They constructed a combined model to suggest that grievance plays a far more significant role in precipitating conflict than previously proposed by Collier & Hoeffler. Over time, more authors came to view causes related to greed and grievance as complex and inseparable, reinforcing one another, rather than as disconnected and competing.

Murshed and Tadjoeeddin (2007), along with other authors, also pointed out that not all the catalysts for conflict always lead to a war. Byman (2011) explained that there are four directions for a country's rising conflict to go: the government can repress grievances, like what happened in Bahrain during the Arab Spring; grievances can be accommodated through reform, as in Morocco in the wake of the Arab Spring; the regime can be overthrown and/or surrender, as in Egypt and Tunisia's responses to the Arab Spring; or the regime can fail to contain unrest and

often will contribute to violence, as in Syria in 2011. This final path most often leads to conflict-escalation toward civil war.

For a country to get to any of these points, the missing piece of the greed and grievance puzzle that influences the rise of conflict is social contract (Murshed & Tadjoeeddin, 2007). Social contract is an informal agreement between a government and its citizens to uphold responsibilities common to the perspective roles of each. It is measured by the gap between citizens' expectations and the perceived delivery of services and protection from government structures. Frail social contract is a source of grievance among citizens that drives conflict in a country.

Scholars have increasingly claimed that conflict is most likely a result of a complex interaction of incentives and opportunities for greed as well as grievance (Ballentine & Sherman, 2003; Collier & Sambanis, 2005; Østby, 2008). In an analysis of 102 conflicts between 1990 and 2009, Bara (2014) confirmed that an “either/or” framework to the grievance and greed theory is flawed. He proposed to frame causes of ethnic conflict and civil war using a complexity-oriented approach to identify “constellations” of risk patterns as greed and grievance conflict-drivers interact. Despite the equifinality of interactions between variables, his analysis found that political instability was the most common underlying factor among the variant risk factors that lead to civil war.

A simple model synthesizing the greed and grievance literature outlined in this section is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

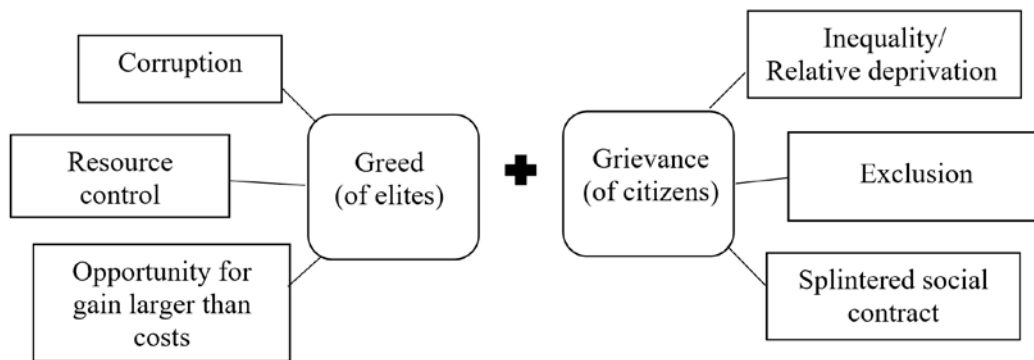


Figure 1: Major factors that lead to civil war or ethnic conflict within a country
 (original synthesis based on analyses and components in Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Murshed & Tadjoeddin, 2007).

2.2.2 Factors that Exacerbate Conflict within a Country

Conflict drivers underlying issues of greed and grievance within a society explain the initial onset of violent ethnic conflicts and civil wars historically. In addition to these, there are many other variables that further escalate and exacerbate conflict once a country is on a conflict-escalation path.

The first two, societal division and minority representation among elites, tend to work together to influence escalation paths toward conflict (Byman, 2011). For example, government response is more likely to be coherent and effective in conflict suppression when a society is more divided, and even more so when a minority group comprises the elite leadership in the country. This was the case in Iraq where the Sunni minority dominated during Saddam Hussein's rule, in Jordan where a Hashemite monarchy rules over a majority-Palestinian society, in Bahrain where a Sunni monarchy rules over a Shia majority, and in Syria where the Alawi minority sect comprising only 12 percent of the population has dominated government positions and power for

over half a century. It is notable that both heterogeneous societal division and minority representation among elites are extant in Lebanon.

Posen (1993) contributed to this discussion with ideas about security and how group conflicts escalate into a state of conflict. When security from uprising is the foremost concern of a government, a fragile atmosphere conducive to conflict emerges. Security-fueled civil war is also likely to develop when fighting sides have similar technology and offensive military might; this is known as the security dilemma. One side enhances its security by taking some sort of action, which is perceived by the second side as a potential threat. In response, the second side will enhance its security, which is in turn also perceived as a potential threat by the first side. The cycle continues to escalate as each side takes action to “secure” itself. In the end, each action to secure a side actually makes that side less secure. Sometimes a side is unaware that their actions could be perceived as a threat, and sometimes it doesn’t matter because a side doesn’t trust the other side. In this way, each group must “assume the worst because the worst is possible” (p. 28). If one side has an advantage that it may not have later, that side may act upon it if it anticipates the action will heighten its position or security to a desirable point. Thus, Posen’s arguments are altogether based on group perceptions, assumptions, and compared goals for survival. This conflict-escalation path tends to be fueled by an old rivalry, a memory of a disagreement, a history of the other side being violent, and by the media.

A final major factor that influences the onset of civil war and also tends to extend a war’s duration is outside involvement in the country (Regan, 2000). Exogenous variables often layer upon a conflict’s endogenous causes to foster increased violence and escalation (Kerr, 2006). As Fisher (2016) explained, conflict often leads to foreign intervention, parties competing and participating in proxy wars, and increased weapons supplies for governments and for rebel

groups. Financial, military, and political support from outside governments can lend weapons, logistical support, and fighters to governments and to rebel groups. This foreign involvement and support decreases the possibility for incentives to protect civilians, so structural incentives are strengthened and mass civilian killing can more easily proliferate (Fisher, 2016). The international and proxy aspects of a conflict can greatly intensify a conflict and diminish durable prospects for peace. As Lebanon's history of conflict shows, transnational involvement from countries such as France, Britain, Israel, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and the United States exacerbated and perpetuated conflict in the country.

2.2.3 Contributions of This Study to Conflict Studies in Education

As this literature review outlines, a wide range of political and economic interactions drive societies to conflict. The greed and grievance model provide profound insights into how conflicts begin, and is compelling to continue problematizing potential understandings to complex issues leading to conflict. It also leaves room to build upon the inquiries that previous research findings extend regarding ethnic and sectarian struggles, opening up a space for this research to supplement the work of previous studies with understandings into the role that specific policies and practices play in fostering or mitigating the three main sources of grievance that lead to conflict—inequality, exclusion, and splintered social contract.

2.3 Conflict, Peace, and Education in Consociational Countries

In this study, I examine teaching approaches as well as pragmatic and policy mechanisms embedded within Lebanon's consociational government system. Consociationalism is common among conflict-affected countries such as Lebanon, Cyprus, South Africa, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Northern Ireland. It blends aspects of centralization and decentralization with the aim of yielding strengths that are particularly salient in deeply divided societies separated along ethnic, religious, linguistic, and/or political lines. Lijphart (1977) first described consociationalism as a power-sharing government commonly established in fragile countries in the wake of a deeply divisive and violent conflict. As historically-divided groups of varying size and influence contend for power and authority, the power-sharing mechanisms of consociationalism aim to level the political playing field to include proportional minority representation at the federal level. This system often decentralizes certain government sectors such as education through regional and occasionally local decision-making.

Lijphart (1977) outlines four key features that set consociational governments apart from other types of hybrid governments lying between the poles of federations and unitary constitutions; these features are: (1) grand coalition, which calls for diverse and inclusive multi-party parliamentary representation to govern together; (2) mutual veto, which entails that certain decisions require cross-community support and coalition-building; (3) proportionality, so the allocation of political and civil service positions proportionally and democratically represent ethnic and ideological statistics of each group in a country; and (4) segmented autonomy and federalism, so that minority groups within regional territories mostly govern themselves. These four components are intended to facilitate partnership across groups, to balance interdependence and autonomy among groups, and to promote sociopolitical stability for the future.

Consociationalism's characteristic decentralization—when approached strategically and executed well—is proactive and responsive to heterogeneity and especially to a country's devastated social circumstances in the wake of war. Lijphart (1999), the original author of consociationalism, analyzed 36 countries to suggest that, without increased subgroup autonomy and capacity through decentralization mechanisms, a diverse and fragmented post-conflict society is even more likely to return to violent conflict. Noel (2005) built upon these findings to point to cases where subgroup autonomy has helped to bring representation and stability to semi-consociational countries such as Kosovo and Macedonia. In these ways, consociationalism seems capable of constructing conditions for reconciliation, minority social justice, equality, and participatory rebuilding of infrastructures.

Education is typically decentralized in consociational countries, allowing geographical regions divided by ethnicity, religion, and/or political affiliation educational autonomy (Lijphart, 1977; Noel, 2005) so that local voices and views can be considered (Fisman & Gatti, 2002; Nickson, 1995; Norris, 2008). Since each region commonly has governmental autonomy to an extent in consociational countries, then districts and schools theoretically serve to strengthen groups within each region so that values, faith systems, and histories taught align with regional preferences and beliefs (Noel, 2005). In addition, the social, cultural, and economic interests within communities such as local taxation and education spending can purportedly be protected by regionally-concentrated groups. In these ways, decentralization can facilitate deeper micro-level stability and the continuity of distinct cultural, religious, and linguistic communities. However, while mechanisms exist in consociational states to increase group cohesion and local autonomy in these ways, mechanisms are lacking that facilitate unity and reconciliation across

historically divided groups within and across regions or within a country as a whole in consociational systems, especially those that are the most diverse such as Lebanon.

Thus, despite strengths in consociational systems, decentralized government systems in fragile countries seldom live up to the standards of their transformative potentials. This is first because decentralization in sectors such as education does not always lead to greater political democracy; in fact, it typically leads to elites playing a disproportionate role in planning and implementation rather than among local stakeholders such as principals, teachers, and parents (Whitty & Seddon, 1994).

Second, decentralized control does not always lead to higher quality in education because leaders at the regional or local level do not always have the best interests of students and teachers in mind, nor the expertise to manage the complexities of an education system (Lewis & Nakagawa, 1995). Some countries like those in Scandinavia have overcome this challenge by entrusting school control to professional educators (Meuret, Prod'hom, Stocker, & Centre for Educational Research & Innovation, 1995) and optimizing teacher quality, preparation, and compensation (Tucker & National Center on Education and the Economy, 2011). Other countries such as El Salvador, Indonesia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua and Paraguay have addressed this by devolving authority to community stakeholders such as parents, teachers, students, and principals through shared participatory decision-making for education-related pursuits, and by increasing mechanisms for accountability and transparency (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007).

A third reason that consociational decentralization tends to not meet its transformative potential is that consociationalism tends to be inefficient. The complex government structures that a mixture of centralization and decentralization entail can be sluggish to respond to large

problems because bureaucracy leads to slow policy processes and there are multiple opportunities for veto, disparity, and overlap across entities (Wibbels, 2005). This is costly and facilitates inefficiency in service provision (Prud'homme, 1995).

A consociational system additionally features added layers to its challenges in countries such as Lebanon with confessional forms of consociationalism. Horowitz (1985) contended that although grand coalition allows for minority groups to collaborate across cleavages to work against larger, more powerful political groups, there is still too little opportunity for small, weak groups represented in power-sharing states to have equal government influence. Mozaffar and Scarritt (1999) pointed to dispersed multiethnic communities in Africa where decentralization and territorial autonomy do not seem to progress the country beyond complex, historically-imbedded ethnic differences. Daalder (1996) described how social changes since consociationalism took effect in the nineteenth century Netherlands caused the crumbling of the once distinct subcultures there. Suny and The American Council of Learned Societies (1993) explained how territorial governance in ethnofederalist systems encourages heightened ethnic and religious identification, accentuating intergroup differences and exacerbating conflict.

In conflict-affected countries, consociational mechanisms in formal education meant to facilitate peace actually tend to contribute to exacerbated tensions and increased divisions in a country. A study by Sayed (2008) showed that education reforms to strengthen group autonomy in South Africa's local schools aggravated the ethnic and socioeconomic tensions that regionalized education sought to alleviate, only further strengthening dominant groups and reinforcing divisions. Norheim (2016) similarly described how cultural autonomy in formal education settings contributed to propagating ethnic conflict instead of alleviating it in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He used both quantitative measures and qualitative analysis to suggest that

structures in place that increased internal cohesion within each subgroup simultaneously exacerbated already fragile divisions across ethnic lines. These studies lend insights into common perils related to education in conflict-affected countries with consociational structures, indicating the strong relationship that education and conflict have in fragile settings.

Many of the documented trends of consociationalism described above hold true in Lebanon. Exclusion and hostile narratives across sectarian lines are legitimized and perpetuated through Lebanon's highly confessional education system (Fontana, 2016). Consociation does not continue to provide long-term resolution of sectarian conflicts that it first was put into place to address (Kerr, 2006). Indeed, power hierarchies and identity separations of Lebanon's formal education system played a significant role in Lebanon's violent conflicts and continue largely unchanged today (Fontana, 2016).

Despite the similarities Lebanon has with other consociational countries, confessionalism in Lebanon is unique. Rather than decentralizing education regionally, as in most other consociational countries, Lebanon instead maintains a centralized public-school system, which serves only 30 percent of K-12 students (Bank Med, 2014). Education is decentralized to the 70 percent of schools that are private in Lebanon. These private schools are almost all affiliated with a religious sect and the political party and/or coalition with which it affiliates. Private sectarian schools therefore function under the decision-making control of the religious sect overseeing each, which influences its affiliated political party regarding issues such as education.

2.3.1 Contributions of This Study to Consociationalism Literature

Previous research has documented many strengths, weaknesses, and challenges of education in consociational settings. However, Lebanon is different than the cases previously

documented. In most consociational governments, public education is decentralized regionally and private education only comprises a small proportion of schools. Contrastingly, education in Lebanon's public sector remains centralized and comprises a small proportion of schools, while private schools are decentralized and serve the majority of students in the country. This gives decision-making and spending power to different political parties and confessional communities affiliated with private sectarian schools. I hope to extend the understandings of previous studies by analyzing how Lebanon's form of consociationalism influences sectarian conflict through specific factors in education; this will help pinpoint key aspects of Lebanon's consociational system that sustain sectarian conflict and therefore should be addressed. I hope to also elucidate education practices that are largely undocumented and that contribute to conflict-reduction in Lebanon. Documenting these will be useful for sharing and scaling up factors that contribute to conflict-reduction in the country.

Methodologically, previous literature related to consociationalism has principally focused on analyzing federal policy and budget documents, conducting surveys, doing interviews with political leaders at the federal level, or using regression models with international datasets to analyze variables such as democracy, heterogeneity, power-sharing, stability, ethnic violence, and direction of power distribution. A detailed study by Khanal (2013) revealed insights for how, in the case of Nepal, actors at various levels navigated many of the common challenges outlined in this section amid political turmoil, poverty, and natural disaster. His study exposed how the transition to decentralization posed a challenge to uniform policy implementation in Nepali schools. Although local teachers and community leaders gained great influence through education decentralization, systematicity and accountability were difficult to achieve. Power-sharing and multi-stakeholder involvement was also lacking in education planning. To overcome

these challenges, management committees of parents and school leaders were formed within communities and connected across each region. Both horizontal and vertical relationships were forged and strengthened over time through collaborative efforts among education stakeholders. National policies also emerged to allow for local languages and cultures to be promoted in all schools, which increased inclusion and helped to overcome the challenge of divisions fostered within communities through curricula. Khanal's study illustrates the opportunity for and the value in incorporating ethnographic methods into consociational research for a rich and nuanced analysis of how complex factors interact with one another in a specific context to produce problems and solutions. Like Khanal's research, I aim through this study to contribute to consociational studies through ethnographic methodology by elucidating specific education practices, policies, opportunities, and challenges influencing conflict and conflict-reduction in Lebanon's consociational system.

3.0 Research Design

3.1 Methods

3.1.1 Data Collection

This study's data is comprised of semi-structured, open-ended interviews with the following: 16 public school teachers and school directors (principals), 17 private school directors and teachers, five university professors specializing in education and/or education policy, two education specialists from transnational organizations in Lebanon (UNICEF and UNESCO), and seven representatives from NGOs that specialize in education and outreach for peace and tolerance (see Table 1 below for details). In addition to interviews, data also included school visits, analysis of curriculum and teaching documents, and analysis of documents outlining education purposes and policies in Lebanon.

Table 1: Distribution of individuals contacted for this study and those who chose to participate

	Public school directors & teachers	Private school directors & teachers	University Professors	Representatives from transnational organizations	NGO Representatives	Total
People contacted	unknown ⁵	35	12	9	13	69
People who did not participate	unknown ⁵	18	7	7	5	35
People who participated	16	17	5	2	7	47

⁵ I record these values as unknown since Lebanon's Ministry of Education executed this study's recruitment of educators from public schools (discussed further on p. 45) and this specific information was not provided to me.

Prior to data collection, I first conducted five pilot interviews with teachers and a school director. The purpose was to pretest the problem areas and deficiencies of the interview questions I developed. These pilot interviews were tremendously helpful in shaping the interview questions, particularly with regards to the language used in the interview questions. Pilot interviews helped me reshape questions for specificity, combine or extend questions when appropriate, and eliminate questions. I then practiced the new interview questions with a sixth teacher; they proved to be clearer and more effective in promoting recall, encouraging storytelling, and connecting with participants' experiences. This process was also helpful as it gave me the opportunity to practice the pre-interview conversation about the purposes and aims of the study. See Appendix B for this study's interview questions.

After the pilot interviews process, I began collecting data for this study. This was on my first visit to Lebanon, during which I interviewed school directors and teachers from private schools, professors, representatives from transnational organizations, and representatives from NGOs. Two of my Lebanese colleagues assisted me with participant recruitment from private schools and transnational organizations. I came to know both colleagues from attending the same graduate school at the University of Pittsburgh and having a shared professor and advisor. One is a trusted colleague and friend with a multitude of connections to individuals in private schools across Lebanon. The other is a faculty member at the American University of Beirut who is also connected with teachers and directors in private schools and is colleagues with a number of people from transnational organizations in Lebanon. These colleagues were invaluable to this research, and on a more personal level, were my support and my family while in Lebanon.

3.1.2 Recruitment and Representation

The following is a detailed description of the recruitment process for each data point.

1. The first data point for this study was semi-structured, open-ended interviews I conducted with educators, which included 34 public and private school teachers and school directors, as well as five university professors of education.

For selection of private school participants, I aimed to recruit from a diverse array of schools that roughly represented the demographic distribution of sects in the country. In addition to participants from private sectarian schools that represent the major sect groups in the country, I sampled from private international schools that claim nonsectarianism. I sought to interview teachers who are known by colleagues to be outstanding, working to cultivate a better and transformed future for Lebanon through bridge-building. With these criteria in mind, my colleagues and I contacted school directors and teachers at private schools across Lebanon, but mostly concentrated in the greater Beirut area, within approximately an hour drive of the capital. The reasoning for the concentrated proximity to Beirut was for practicality's sake— to save travel money since I was taking public transportation, and to save on travel time between visits— as well as for security's sake since I was traveling through Lebanon alone as a foreign woman.

I based teacher participant selection on all of these standards and used snowball sampling to identify potential participants. To initiate this process, my two Lebanese colleagues listed people they knew who may potentially fit these criteria or who may know someone who fit these criteria. They contacted individuals to briefly explain the study and the recruitment criteria for interviews. After approximately two weeks of contacting their initial list of private school teachers and directors, then contacting recommended educators in the private sector, I examined the list of potential participants to identify areas with no representation from the most prominent

ethnic and religious groups in the country; for example, the list did not include any individuals from Maronite, Armenian, Evangelical, or Druze private schools. For these communities, I found contact information for the schools online and contacted them via telephone to speak with the director of each school, explain the study, and inquire into recommended participants for this study. The list also included a disproportionate number of individuals from private Christian schools. I contacted these individuals and deduced which candidates best fit the criteria for participation and designated the others as alternate choices.

Next I contacted school directors and teachers via email and phone, depending on the contact information I had, to extend more detailed information about the study, a personal invitation to learn about the study, and an invitation to participate in it. Based on each individual, one of three things happened from here: the person chose immediately to participate in the study; the person requested more information through phone conversation, email, or a face-to-face meeting; or the person chose to not participate in the study. The reasons for nonparticipation were due to either holiday travel (data collection took place during winter and summer, both of which include teacher holidays) or the individual felt ill-suited to participate in the study because she/he reported not deliberately implementing education for coexistence or tolerance across sects. Three educators could not participate due to travel, four did not respond, and eleven chose to not participate for other reasons. I met with four teachers who chose to not participate due to their self-reported lack of intentionality toward reducing sectarian divisions. This was to inquire into their reasons and reservations for avoiding this type of instruction. Otherwise, 17 teachers and directors from private schools chose to participate. Table 2 below shows the types of private schools that were represented in interview data after the aforementioned process was complete.

Table 2: Types of private schools represented in interviews and site visits

Types of private schools	Number represented	Percentage of Lebanon's population this group represents^{6 7}
Sunni	3	27%
Shia	3	27%
Maronite (Catholic Christian)	3	21%
Armenian (Orthodox Christian)	1	4%
Evangelical	1	7%
International (nonsectarian)	4	Not applicable
Syrian refugee	2	25%

For professor recruitment, I gathered the email addresses of professors in education and education policy from university websites. This generated a list of eight professors. My colleagues also gave me the names and contact information of four additional professors. I contacted professors via email to explain the study and extend an invitation to participate. Five agreed to interviews, five did not respond, and two were unable due to travel (see Table 1).

During my second visit to Lebanon, I continued interviews with educators, this time interviewing teachers and directors in public schools. For public school recruitment, I underwent an approval and recruitment process executed by Lebanon's Ministry of Education that took approximately four months. The following describes this process:

⁶ Population data obtained from CIA World Factbook (2019).

⁷ The total percentage of Lebanon's population that each group represents in this table sums to more than 100 percent because Syrian refugees not only comprise their self-named category in the table, but are also mostly Sunni and otherwise Shia and some are therefore additionally accounted for in the rows showing Sunni and Shia.

I submitted a research proposal and request documents to the Ministry of Education to receive approval from the Director General of Education to conduct this research and enter public schools. After the study was approved to take place in public schools, a representative at the Ministry of Education contacted the Primary and Secondary Directorates to nominate schools for participation per the following criteria:

- Half basic education (grades 1-9) and half secondary schools (grades 10-12)
- Diversity in locations within Beirut and nearby schools in Mount Lebanon
- Diversity in social fabric of students coming from different social backgrounds
- Schools at risk of violence due to their locations
- Schools with high numbers of Syrian refugee students

In addition to these factors that the Ministry of Education and I settled on, another factor that influenced public school participation was the willingness of the school director and teachers to participate in this research and allocate the time needed.

After a pool of schools was nominated, the Projects Manager at the Ministry of Education called nominated schools and chose the four schools (two basic education and two primary schools) where all criteria were met and principals and teachers were very positive and welcoming to conduct this research. The letter of approval from the Director General was then sent to the schools to officially indicate the Ministry's approval to conduct this research (see Appendix C). Representatives from the Ministry of Education then created an interview schedule based on each school's calendar of events and school location. I visited schools per the given schedule and conducted interviews with 14 public school teachers and two public school directors. Table 3 below shows the distribution of interview participants from K-12 schools.

Table 3: Distribution of interview participants from K-12 schools

Education level	Private school teachers	Private school directors	Public school teachers	Public school directors	Total
Basic (grades 1-9)	5	2	6	1	14
Secondary (grades 10-12)	8	2	8	2	20
Total	13	4	14	3	34

2. The second data point was comprised of semi-structured, open-ended interviews with directors and specialists at seven NGOs specializing in peacebuilding and interfaith outreach, and education specialists from two transnational organizations in Lebanon—United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). For recruitment of individuals from transnational organizations, my colleague from the American University of Beirut gave me the personal contact information of people at United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Before beginning the recruitment process for individuals from NGOs that specialize in education and outreach for peace and tolerance, I did an extensive search into organizations that do work in the areas of peace education, peace governance, tolerance education, diversity projects, and interfaith projects throughout Lebanon. After constructing a list of organizations, I attempted to contact 13 NGOs. I was unable to reach five organizations and I learned later that one of these no longer exists. Seven NGOs participated total. Table 4 below gives a brief description of the type of work that each participating NGO specializes in and the specific connection that each one has to this research’s focus on conflict-reduction.

Table 4: Description of participating NGOs

Organizational mission	Work connected to reducing sectarian conflict
Syrian and Palestinian refugees	Peace education in refugee schools
Community service	Nonsectarian projects and peace education trainings for students and young adults
Islamic afterschool programming	Coexistence and democratic problem-solving
Peace governance and civic education	Peace, tolerance, and conflict resolution projects through afterschool programming
Peacebuilding	Cross-sect collaborative projects and peace education
Syrian refugees	Peace education in NGO-ran Syrian schools
Christian interfaith (includes members of non-Christian faiths)	Regular meetings, projects, and classes for peace, tolerance, and shared values

3.1.3 Research Timetable

I carried out data collection over a 10-month period, beginning in September 2017, which allowed me to conduct interviews and site visits in both private- and public-school settings and with many different education organizations and professors. The following table outlines my data collection and analysis timeline.

Table 5: Research timetable

September – December 2017	Conducted pilot interviews; analyzed pilot interviews to redevelop interview questions
December 2017 – January 2018	Conducted interviews with private school directors and teachers, professors, representatives from transnational organizations, and representatives from NGOs; took extensive field notes
February 2018 – April 2018	Transcribed and coded interviews; developed further interview questions based on recurring themes; member-checked with participants about trends and divergences in the data
May 2018 – August 2018	Conducted interviews with public school teachers and public-school directors; met again with some participants from prior interviews with private school teachers; transcribed, coded, and analyzed interviews with public school teachers and directors

3.1.4 Methodological Underpinnings

Ethnography and narrative inquiry play specific roles in answering the research questions for this study. Both approaches are grounded in interpretivism, which is value-bound, is inductive and inquiry-driven, is context-specific, and aims to understand how people make meaning. Good interpretivist research attempts to capture emic perspectives and understandings, as well as provide “thick” descriptions of the problem and inquiry context (Geertz, 1974). The ethnographic process is collaborative and interactive because sociocultural nuances cannot be observed, but can only be inferred through such engagement and confirmed via careful interviews (Wolcott, 1997).

Ethnography and narrative inquiry methodologies are particularly suited for this investigation into factors influencing conflict and conflict-reduction. Findings in conflict studies

suggest that large-scale internal conflicts arise frequently from perceived grievances of citizens and groups within a country that arise from a complex array of factors (see Chapter 2.2 for more detail). Teachers, in particular, have unique insights into how ethnicities, religions, histories, socioeconomic groups, and political beliefs within a community and in a society converge. Ethnography and narrative inquiry are approaches for inquiring into perceptions related to this confluence of context-specific factors influencing conflict and conflict-reduction in Lebanon. The following provides more information about each of these methodologies.

3.1.4.1 Ethnography

Etymologically, ethnography literally means “writing about the nations,” from the Greek “graphy” meaning “to write” and “ethnos,” the Greek word for “nation” or “people” (Erickson, 1984). With its attention to people and inquiry, ethnography is a powerful way to focus in-depth on a particular sociocultural phenomenon in the field to provide a detailed account of what is occurring. In the words of Lecompte and Schensul (2010), ethnography generates “explanations of how people think, believe, and behave—that are situated in local time and space” (p. 12). As Erickson (1984) pointed out, it is a deliberate and detailed inquiry process that, through dynamic questioning, investigating, and creating, is guided by the experience derived from the ethnographic process (Erickson, 1977). Hence, ethnography is iterative and interpretive. And as Wolcott (1997) added, it is a long-term and systematic endeavor that is founded in methodological process, is underpinned by theory, and is substantiated by rigorous ethnographic data such as interviews, observation, and textual analysis.

Mead (in Wolcott, 2008, p. 25) emphasized that the goal of ethnography is to understand as much of the “whole” as possible with the realization that social, cultural, and material

productions are not random, but form a complex sum. The researcher asks new questions as understandings are learned from the field setting and participants to work toward forming this complex sum. Finally, ethnography in its sharing stage is a process of storytelling and theory-building, during which ethnographers synthesize the extensive field notes, memos, speculations, interviews, collaborative understandings, reflections, and theorizing with as much finesse and cohesion as possible to bridge the emic understandings gained from fieldwork with the etic perspectives of an audience (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein, 2007; Wolcott, 1997, 2008). In these ways, ethnographies offer complex insights into the people, institutions, and sociocultural phenomena in a specific place.

3.1.4.2 Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry emphasizes the importance of perceptions and lived experience as they intersect with historical, cultural, and political contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Considering the dynamic relationship between the divergent perspectives people hold and the realities that are manifest based on perspectives and actions of people within a context, insights from narratives can profoundly contribute to understanding a phenomenon, a context, problems, and solutions. Narrative inquiry was essential for this study since my goal was to obtain a range of narratives from a diverse sample of participants from many sect backgrounds and school affiliations rather than collecting data at only one or two school sites as most ethnographies do. More details about how narrative inquiry enhanced credibility for this study is discussed in the following section.

Narrative inquiry is founded upon coherence claims of truth, which contrast with correspondence claims of truth. Researchers whose worldview and lines of inquiry align with correspondence theory follow a positivist tradition and correspond truth with facts that are quantitatively substantiated; thus, truth consists in correspondence to ideally measured data. As

Ronen (2010) describes it, research using correspondence theory “attributes objective reality to sense perception in transmitting information about the world” (p. 488), so accounts of phenomena are “issued in an authoritative and apparently neutral tone” (Chew & Mitchell, 2015). This theory of truth is especially valuable and appropriate for research that seeks to quantitatively examine the essence of a phenomenon or relationship in a non-complex, ideally controlled context. It does so by reducing a phenomenon to its constituent parts, excluding or controlling confounding variables, and concentrating on the most essential variables that can be measured and are appropriate to the research question (Piantanida & Garman, 2009).

Conversely, coherence theory posits that reality in many contexts is multifaceted and therefore different realities hold true for different people and groups, both in unique circumstances and within shared places (Wright, 1995; Young, 2001). In contrast to emphasizing what is measured and controlled, coherence theory stresses details and realities that are complex, consequential, and significant. Modern coherence theory maintains that the perceptions and perspectives of different people with unique lived experiences hold the potential to construct a rich understanding of phenomena within a place, group, and/or society. Researchers who conduct research using coherence theory acknowledge through their line of inquiry and research methods that truth is constructed and shaped by people and by socioeconomic, historical, political, ethnic, gendered, and/or cultural experiences, perspectives, and interpretations. Truth exists with rich and detailed evidence to illustrate its coherence, or its truth (Bradley, 1914).

Using interpretive research employing coherence theory was integral for me while conducting this study to unearth the meanings inherent in context-dependent research that views people’s consciousness and self-consciousness as imperative to understanding knowledge and truth (Piantanida & Garman, 2009). As an interpretivist approach in this way, narrative inquiry

entails a distinct commitment to attempting to capture and communicate the context-specific perspectives and meanings that research participants understand and convey (Geertz, 1974; Greene & Hall, 2010; Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979). It assumes that reality is socially constructed and it affords the reality, story, and experience of an individual to be told from her or his own perspective. Maxwell (2013a) points out that we do this because “these perspectives are the reality that you are trying to understand” (p. 30). Access to this reality is attempted via personal social constructions of language, meaning, intentions, and consciousness (Myers, 2008).

Reciprocity is a key component of ethical narrative inquiry. Tolman and Brydon-Miller (2001) conceptualizes interpretivism in which the qualitative researcher works collaboratively with participants to generate knowledge and understanding that is both beneficial to participants themselves and to the outside world in attempt to recognize the already-existing agency and voices of participants rather than exploiting them. Similarly, as Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) states, research collaborations “reflect a more responsible ethical stance and are likely to yield deeper data and better social science” (p. 138). By highlighting the contributions of educators to conflict-reduction in Lebanon, I hope to not only produce findings useful for education stakeholders in Lebanon, but to also honor the participants who partnered with me for this research and lent insights into the education structures, policies, curriculum, and everyday circumstances that influence conflict and peace in Lebanon.

3.1.5 Data Collection and Analysis Framework

To construct a data collection and analysis tool for analyzing conflict and conflict-reduction in Lebanon, I first reviewed theories and frameworks for analyzing large-scale internal conflict (see Chapter 2.2 for a detailed literature review). An understanding of precipitating

factors to conflict allowed me to construct a data collection and analysis tool to investigate the role that education plays in conflict-reduction in Lebanon. Chapter 2.2 explained how civil war is most commonly caused by a combination of greed from leaders of a country and accumulated grievances among citizens (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Greed refers to motivation for conflict from elite and/or militant leaders' profitable opportunity and desire to gain benefits from conflict within the country. Grievance refers to conflict driven by perceived or real needs of citizens for identity or security from exclusion, economic inequality, and the absence of social contract (Murshed & Tadjoeeddin, 2007). A synthesized model of these theories and findings was shown in Chapter 2.2 and is illustrated again below in Figure 2.

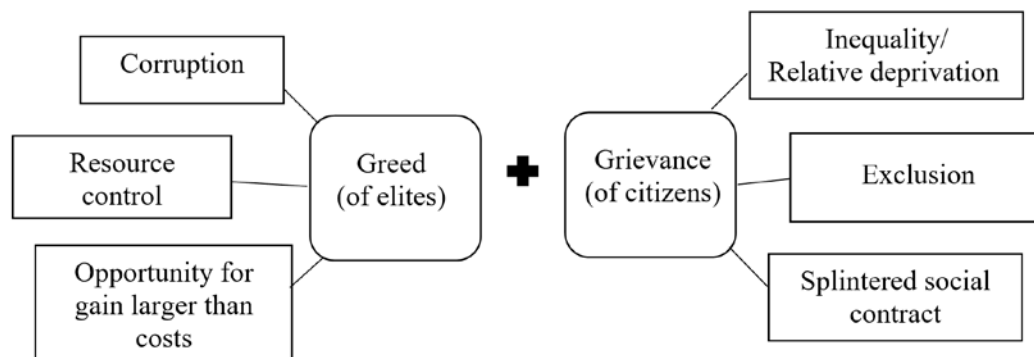


Figure 2: Major factors that lead to civil war or ethnic conflict within a country
(original synthesis based on analyses and components in Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Murshed & Tadjoeeddin, 2007).

The left side of this model, “greed”, has a strong relationship with national- and international-level factors such as resource availability, macroeconomic opportunity, and political power structures. The right side of the model, “grievances”, is influenced most by social structures and perceptions of citizens related to sociocultural, economic, and political experience. K-12 education settings, the context of this study, intersects most directly with this side of the

greed-grievance model. I hypothesize that education policies and schools are a stage for grievance-related factors that lead to conflict proliferation. Conversely, I believe that mechanisms, practices, and stakeholders in public education can facilitate a space that reduces conflict. This can be accomplished through declines in exclusion, in inequality, and in splintered social contract; thus, through increased inclusion, equal access, and social contract, education can theoretically reduce conflict in a country. These three constructs—equality, inclusion, and social contract—lay the theoretical foundation for data collection and analysis in this study of conflict-reduction through education.

The process of reviewing analysis frameworks that would influence this study's analysis tool was guided by my desire to situate Lebanon as a counter-example to common monolithic assumptions that view Arab countries primarily as places of protracted internal conflict, instability, and needing intervention (Abu-Lughod, 2013; Narayan, 2005). I deliberately sought to avoid common Eurocentric paradigms characterized by the researcher's desire to describe a change that participants have experienced and/or align participants' ideologies and practices more with my own as a teacher (Syed, 2010). Additionally, I also sought frameworks that avoid the common hyper-focus on scrutiny of failure and instead are concerned primarily with documenting how participants define, observe, and contribute to self-identified constructive practices in their environments. Inevitably, however, dark shadows that interfere with constructive practices come to light through this process and are thus not overlooked by a focus on the positive. The following describes the specific frameworks I chose to influence this study's analysis tool.

My analysis tool centered on inclusion, equal access, and social contract was influenced conceptually first by the dividers and connectors analysis approach to conflict and peace created

by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (2012). Researchers using this framework seek to reveal and describe factors that bring people or groups together and factors that push people or groups apart. It is used to build on local capacities that are conducive to promoting peace. I used this framework as a basis for developing interview questions to ask participants.

My analysis framework is likewise informed conceptually by USAID (2012) “bright spots” approach to conflict assessment. As a former student of physics with a particular interest in optics, light propagation, and interactions of light with objects and darkness, I’m drawn to the “bright spots” metaphor. This framework seeks to identify, support, and scale up bright spots, or instances that bring about “sustainable behavioral and social change” across potentially or historically divided groups. Thus, rather than only analyzing dividers that contribute to grievance and conflict, I additionally examine factors contributing to bright spots of conflict-reduction through education.

Figure 3 below shows how the three major constructs that reduce conflict—inclusion, equal access, and social contract—work as spotlights to illuminate sources of conflict-reduction. In the visible light spectrum, overlapping different frequencies of light creates new shades of color, and combining the range of frequencies produces white light. Similar to this process of additive coloring, the progression of overlapping these spotlights to illuminate conflict-reduction creates new shades of light that, when combined, produce a bright spot of white light; for the purposes of this research, a bright spot will represent the convergence of inclusion, equal access, and social contract. In this way, bright spots are key approaches to conflict-reduction through education. Specific bright spots I document in this study are delineated in Chapter 6.2.2.

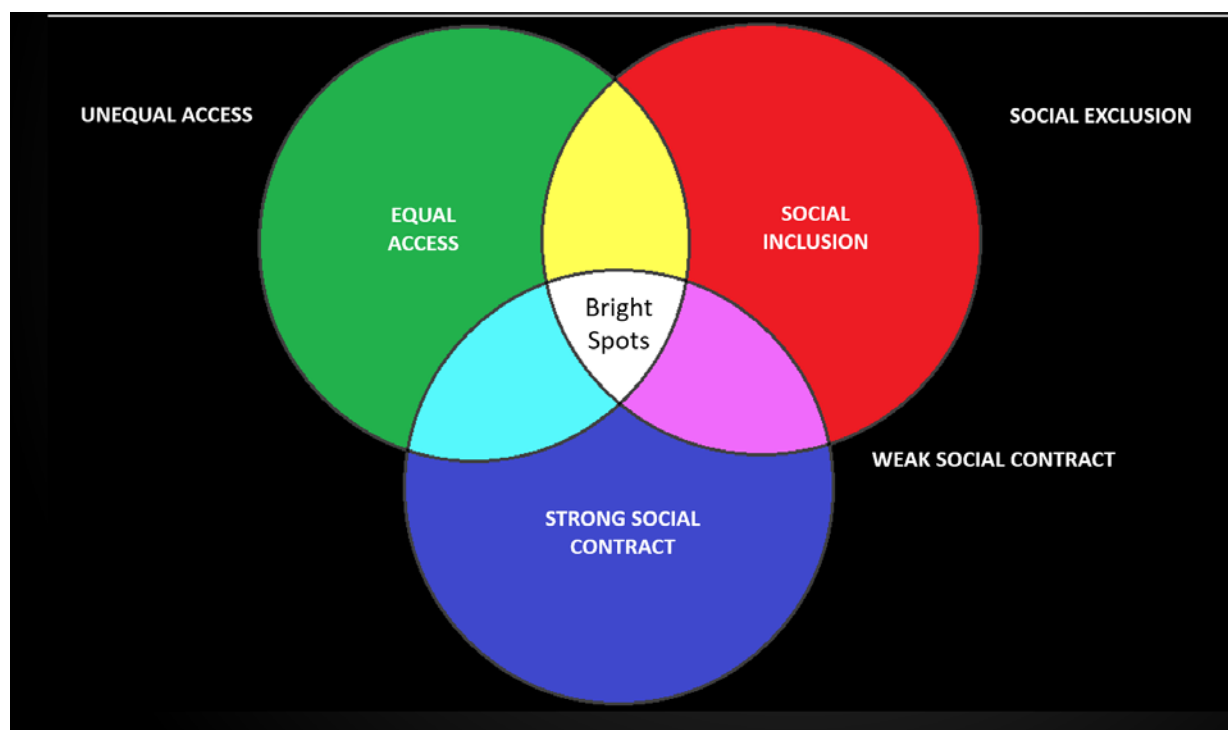


Figure 3: Spotlights framework for identifying sources of conflict-reduction in education

3.1.6 Data Analysis

Once data collection was complete, I first infused intentional theory-driven structure into the analysis process; intentionally approaching analysis in this way enhanced credibility, helped to sort through truth claims, and lent to more ethical analysis and interpretive representation of participants (Elman & Kapiszewski, 2014).

After data collection, I reformatted, input, and analyzed all data using NVivo 11 data analysis software. I chose to use this software because it is a comprehensive tool that enables the user to easily organize various types of data, to code and track coding, to make memos about coding and analysis, and to identify themes and contradictions throughout data.

Before collecting or analyzing any data, I first created data folders to store all data I would collect in an organized and prepared way. The folders and subfolders I constructed to organize data as I collected it were the following:

- Documents
 - Data & reports
 - Docs from participants
 - Interview transcripts
 - Pictures
 - Policy Docs
 - Research literature
 - Websites
- Audio files
 - NGO interviews
 - Prof interviews
 - School Dir interviews
 - Teacher interviews

In addition to creating folders for data collection and organization, I also created predefined categories to use while coding deductively. These focused on the theoretical factors that contribute to conflict (social exclusion, unequal access, and weak social contract) and conflict-reduction (social inclusion, equal access, and strong social contract), as well as other nodes that I anticipated would be prevalent throughout data I would collect. The following illustrates the initial coding structure I organized:

- Equal/unequal access
 - Examples
 - Non-Examples
- Social inclusion/exclusion
 - Examples
 - Non-Examples
- Weak/strong social contract
 - Examples
 - Non-Examples

- Conflict
- Definitions
- Great quotes
- Metaphors
- Peace
- Refugees
- Sectarianism

As I collected data, I began transcribing interviews, sorting, labeling passages, grouping them, and arranging excerpts into the above preformulated categories. During deductive node analysis, I sought clear examples, consistencies, inconsistencies, and intersectionality in the data within groups and across groups. This structured approach to building the initial construction for this study's node tree was an important starting point in order to align my research questions with the theoretical lines of inquiry directing this research (Atkinson & Delamont, 2008). It also simplified the analytic work that a qualitative study with this many participants and data points entails (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

After closely coding data deductively, I then conducted inductive, or open, coding; building upon the wisdom of Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), I used this less bounded approach as it helps in “developing new themes and insights as she [the researcher] views the entire corpus of her notes through fresh eyes” (p.188). This assisted in constructing analytic points that are supported by excerpts, and that I could connect to each other, connect to literature, and built upon with commentary analysis (Seidman, 2006). Maxwell (2013b) points out that “less structured approaches, in contrast to structured approaches, allow you to focus on the *particular* phenomena being studied, which may differ between individuals or settings and require individually tailored methods” (p. 88). Since the phenomena I examined in this research include groups, approaches, and policies nested within certain communities across Lebanon,

deductive and inductive iterative processes lent themselves to analysis that was analytic, systematic, and flexible (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I was able to use the definitions and concepts operationalized by participants from deductive analysis, in addition to unanticipated concepts throughout data, to influence how to code inductively. Some of the node categories I created inductively for analyzing data after round one of deductive analysis included the following:

- Avoiding Difference
- Celebrating Difference
- Challenges/Negatives
 - Curriculum
 - Ministry
 - Parents/families
 - Resources
- Civic Education
- Combating Negative Stereotypes
- Culturally Responsive Education
- Curriculum
- Fusion (انصهار)
- History Education
- Initiative or Project
- Positive to Neg turn (I asked a positive question, but participant gave a negative answer)
- Private vs Public schooling
- Religion or faith
- Sense of Belonging/Ownership

In agreement with Bazeley and others in the field (Becker, 1998; Goertz, 2006), I approached the examination of concept interactions and complex theme analysis by formulating hypotheses based on empirical analysis from coded content. I then created thematic connections based on relationships' sets of conditions and interactions (Bazeley, 2013). I could subsequently corroborate, contradict, or eliminate theoretical propositions. I was able to identify and organize

specific factors in education related to equal access, social inclusion, and social contract, as well as excerpts and examples to illustrate each, through this process. For instance, related to the deductive category *social inclusion*, I identified two major categories inductively that were related to social inclusion. These categories were *common thread teaching approaches* and *linguistic inclusion*. Inductively creating new node categories in this way was possible because I could easily examine cooccurrence using a number of NVivo functions for identifying trends and coding overlap. Functions that allow for this that I used most were the following: (1) coding stripes, which indicate the node categories I coded throughout portions of text, their location, and their density in the text; and (2) query wizard, which allows me to identify text I coded in combinations of node categories that I indicated (for example, what content did I code at equal access, social inclusion, and social contract?), identify text from interviews that have specific attributes (for example, what did private school teachers in schools in Lebanon's southern region say about equal access?), identify text overlap with a refined query (for example, what do public school teachers say about social contract?), and search for text that is not coded in a specific node category (for example, what content did I code at social inclusion but not at social contract).

After coding and organizing examples and excerpts related to these two newly emerged categories, I further grouped education approaches related to *common thread teaching approaches* into four subcategories. Throughout these stages in the analysis and interpretation process, I also conducted member-checks with interview participants for feedback, confirmation, and concerns related to coding, interpretation, and representation. The process of inductive coding enabled me to answer the research questions for this study, especially the first and third ones, and construct them into successions of stories to present coherent and compelling accounts

of conflict reduction or its converse. The following shows the final thematically-structured categories that resulted from the iterative process of coding data related to the three main analysis lenses in this study—equal and unequal access, social inclusion and exclusion, and strong versus weak social contract:

- Equal Access
 - Free compulsory education
 - Rise of nonsectarian private schools
- Unequal Access
 - Sectarian structure of the school system
 - Unequal access to free compulsory education for minorities
- Social Inclusion
 - “Common thread” teaching approaches
 - Education for nation-building
 - Moral education tied to shared religious values
 - International, global, and multicultural education
 - Common experience education
 - Linguistic inclusion
- Social Exclusion
 - Sensitive topics important to students (politics; religion) are avoided in schools
 - Minimum power-sharing & multi-stakeholder engagement in education decision-making
- Strong Social Contract
 - Teacher protections
 - Opportunities to exercise choice and influence
 - Opportunities for reconciliation
 - Capacity-building
- Weak Social Contract
 - Misuse of power among elites
 - Contradictions between curriculum content and reality
 - Lack of autonomy for students and teachers

During rounds two through four of the iterative coding process, I coded excerpts of narratives, curriculum documents, and policy documents that corresponded with each category, or multiple categories when applicable. Among other advantages that using NVivo 11 data analysis software offered related to data organization, coding, and tracking, it allowed me to easily visualize coding overlap, or excerpts that I coded into more than one category or subcategory simultaneously, with colored and labeled ribbons alongside text. This was essential for understanding complex interactions, contradictions, and identifying “bright spots,” or examples of equal access, social inclusion, and social contract converging. Figure 4 below is a screenshot of NVivo’s coding stripes, which I include here to illustrate how this tool enabled me to easily reference and examine how I had coded data. Coding stripes appear directly to the right of coded text and indicate the node categories I coded throughout the text.

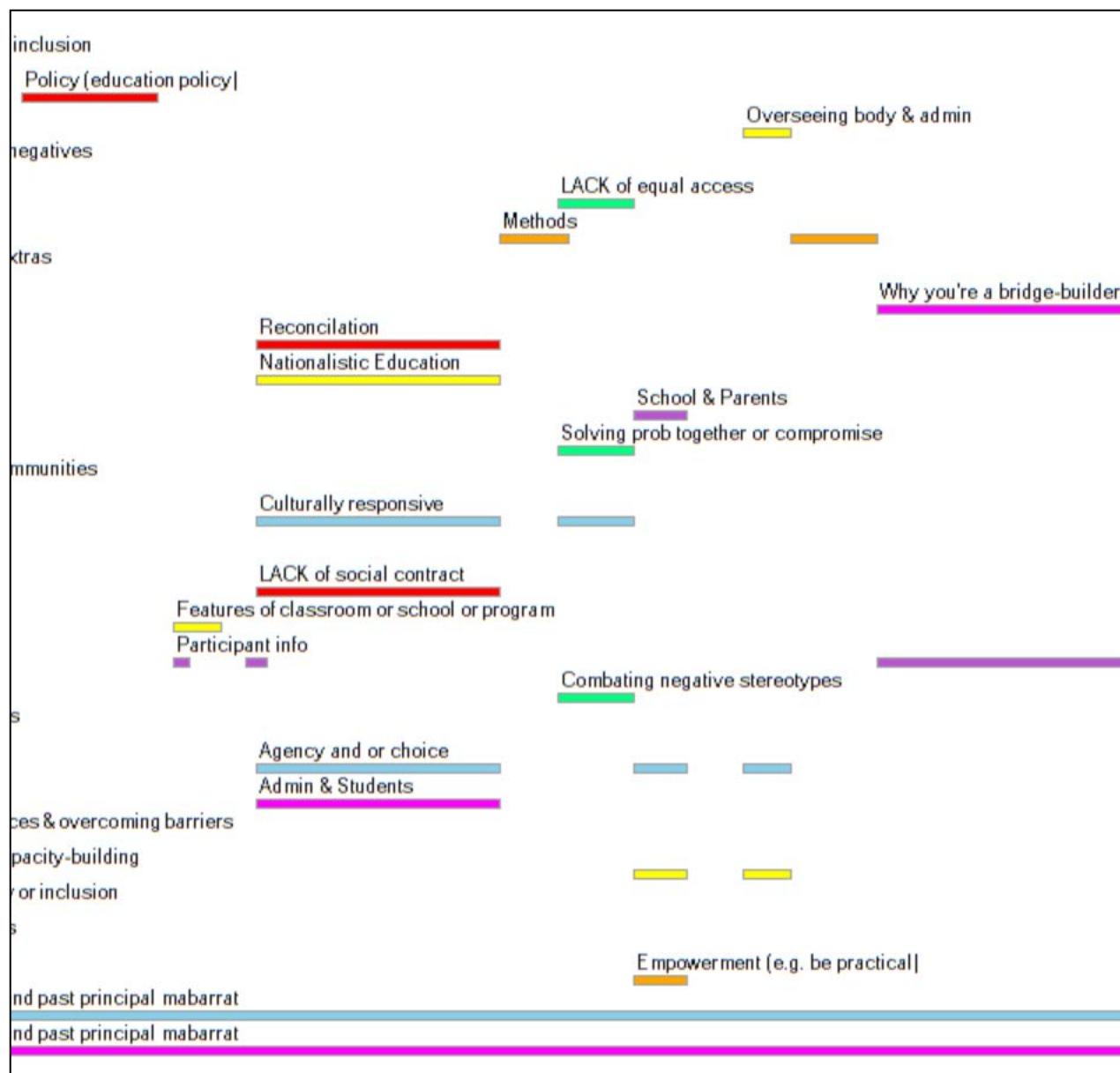


Figure 4: Screenshot of NVivo's coding stripes

As Figure 4 above demonstrates, coding stripes allowed me to easily code each word, phrase, sentence, or excerpt I deemed appropriate into one node, or code category, or into multiple nodes. Table 6 below shows a narrative excerpt from an interview with Lila, a representative from a peace education NGO, to give a specific example from an interview transcript of how I coded parts of each text into more than one category simultaneously:

Table 6: Example of coding in interview transcript excerpt

Interview Excerpt	Coding
<p><i>So we had a grid that would allow us to see if, you know, names, feasts, were mentioned in curriculum. And there was a study which was done on this, which, it appeared, for example, names are neutral names. In all of Lebanon, names are either George or John or Ali or Mohammed. None of those appear. They don't appear; it's only neutral names in textbooks. Feasts, religious feasts are not mentioned, except in one program in 12th grade. So difference, identity are practically not present.</i></p> <p><i>And so, based on that, we developed a new curriculum. It's auxiliary curriculum. It's not fully new curriculum. So this would be the curriculum for all of Lebanon, for everything. So it is how to teach on citizenship that is inclusive, or religious diversity.</i></p> <p><i>Yeah. In parallel, something we started doing within the ministry, in parallel to the CERD and the ministry, to stress something that is even more problematic is history education.</i></p> <p><i>So we did a pilot project in collaboration with the history department at St. Joseph University and the UNESCO chair at St. Joseph University and soon we will publish them online. What we did is we selected moments of history during the last 100 years and...it's not moment, but it's more points of view in history. So, for example, economic history in Lebanon, women in Lebanon...themes like that. Or, for example, social resistance to war. So things like that, to tackle different things in history from different points of view through documents.</i></p> <p><i>I mean, because our problem is not only the content of our books, but it's the way they're done. It's not only who contributes, but it's not student-centered. They're very much book-</i></p>	<p>Initiative or project; Curriculum</p> <p>Avoiding difference</p> <p>New initiative/project; Civic education; Religious diversity; Celebrating difference</p> <p>New initiative/project; CERD; Problematic; History education</p> <p>New initiative or Project</p> <p>History; Celebrating difference; Multiple perspectives</p> <p>Problematic</p>

<p><i>centered and teacher-centered. So to make them student-centered, they have to be around documents that they want to discuss and that they do activities. So this is what we're trying to shift also. Now it's rote memorization for the Brevet Exam that the students don't care about and they forget.</i></p> <p><i>What we do also is community service. So going from انصهار, from fusion, to valuing diversity and collaboration. From tolerance to partnership and participation. These are our goals. Bridging the divides through collaborative action is definitely what we focus on.</i></p>	<p>Book-centered; Teacher-centered</p> <p>Brevet Exam</p> <p>Community service; Fusion (انصهار)</p> <p>Collaboration; Social Inclusion-Common thread approach-Shared experience</p>
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After iterative rounds of both deductive and inductive analysis, my analysis and interpretation strategy shifted to focus predominantly on articulating valid and compelling answers to my research questions and implications of these findings. Building matrices using NVivo allowed me to compare codes across different types of interview participant. These matrices served as both catalysts and early compasses to prompt my analysis of trends and divergent patterns across different interview groups or learning context. Table 7 illustrates one such matrix; in this particular matrix, I designated each row as a different education context discussed in data while I designated each column as a different node, or code category. This matrix indicates some of the trends that I analyzed for this study's findings. For example, participants referred to concepts delineated by nodes that have positive connotations—that is, equal access, social inclusion, and strong social contract—more often in the context of describing public schools compared with private schools. Two nodes in particular—weak social contract and avoidance of politics and religion in class—are represented in the data mostly in

descriptions of public schools. Patterns such as these were easily identifiable using matrices, which prompted me to investigate trends and relationships in depth.

Table 7: Example of coding matrix

	Equal Access	Unequal Access	Social Inclusion	Social Exclusion	Strong Social Contract	Weak Social Contract	Avoidance of Politics & Religion in Class
With NGOs	2	0	56	0	13	0	0
In Private Schools	10	14	36	9	14	0	11
In Public Schools	2	32	27	22	8	22	34

Narrative inquiry allowed me to apply several strategies to enhance credibility for this study. These included immersed daily data collection during two engagements that amounted to eight weeks in Lebanon, peer debriefing with colleagues and experts in Lebanon, member checks with study participants, and the use of ethnographic methods for thick contextual description (Geertz, 1974; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1998). I triangulated data from field notes, interview transcripts, curriculum artifacts, policy documents, and my researcher diary during the data analysis process outlined herein. The triangulation process allowed me to identify, analyze, and describe factors in education that alleviate sectarian conflict or exacerbate it (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein, 2007).

Since I used narrative inquiry as a methodology for this study, stories were channels through which participants revealed their epistemological stances, or ways of knowing. Participants told stories during interviews for either of the two following reasons: in response to elicitation during an interview question that specifically prompted a story, like “How do you

usually handle tensions and conflict in the classroom? What stories do you recall when you did this?” Second, participants used stories to explain their point, such as when Nida shared stories about volunteering and fundraising projects that her students chose to cooperatively complete across sectarian divisions in order to illustrate her point that students collaborating with agency can build peace. Similarly, when Aameena explained her definition of social inclusion, she told stories about two schools—one that did not practice social inclusion, and one that did.

The particular stories that participants chose to share not only lend insights into their experiences, perceptions, and how they desire to represent themselves, but also into their contexts and lived experiences with the core concepts in this study—equal access, social inclusion, social contract, sectarian conflict, and peace. As (Frank, 2004) points out, the way the universe works can be described by rigid laws, such as the laws of gravity; however, other phenomena like black holes remind us that our knowledge of concepts such as gravity is only part of the complex story unfolding in the universe and that we have plenty to learn—much of which we cannot understand without data and approaches that lend nuanced insights into the phenomena. Research conducted with methods that allow for analysis of such complex phenomena have the capacity to give such complexity an articulate form. This enables us to approach discussing, analyzing, understanding, and addressing issues that, without methods such as narrative inquiry, could not be articulated or understood as having cogency.

Studying the complexities of participants’ narratives and stories in particular can reveal how the educators, school directors, NGO specialists, professors of education policy, and specialists at transnational organizations who participated in this study consider the role that education plays in exacerbating conflict or building peace. Conceptualizations of experience coalesce to construct complex and practical understandings from narratives that can and, I argue,

should inform policy, practice, and knowledge communities (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006; Riessman, 1997, 2002, 2008). This project has taught me that the meanings brought to light through narrative inquiry expose ever deeper import, intelligibility, and emotional force to the experiences, perspectives, voices, and stories of those whose truths need to be heard.

3.1.7 Research Quality

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I used the model for excellent qualitative research constructed by Tracy (2010) to guide my research practices toward as much quality as possible. Table 8 below shows where you can find each of the eight criteria for rigorous qualitative research throughout this study. This table also illustrates the essential nature of each section of this work in contributing to the quality of the study.

Table 8: Modified model by Tracy (2010) delineating eight criteria for excellent qualitative research and examples of each from this study

Criteria for quality	Means, methods, & practices through which research can achieve the goal	Where to find explanation/examples in this dissertation
Worthy topic	Research topic is relevant, timely, significant, interesting, and evocative	1.0 Introduction: Past the point of no return 1.1 Statement of the problem & purpose of the study 1.3.1 The contradictions & paradoxes of Lebanon 1.4 Significance of this study
Rich rigor	Study uses sufficient data to support claims; uses appropriate & complex theoretical constructs, data, and data collection and analysis processes	3.1.1 Data collection 3.1.2 Recruitment & representation 3.1.3 Research timetable 3.1.4 Methodological underpinnings 3.1.5 Data collection & analysis framework 3.1.6 Data analysis

Sincerity	Self-reflexivity and transparency by being earnest and vulnerable	1.3 Personal past & positionality 3.1.8 Modifications to the original study plan 3.1.9 Caveats & constraints
Credibility	Proves to be plausible and trustworthy by providing thick description to support findings, showing rather than telling, expressing realities that are coherently true for multiple and varied participants	3.1.6 Data analysis 4.0 In the dark: Education factors that exacerbate sectarian conflict 5.0 In the spotlight: Education factors that reduce sectarian conflict
Resonance	Meaningfully resonate and affect an audience to promote greater understanding of people & context	1.0 Introduction: Past the point of no return 1.1 Statement of the problem & purpose of the study 1.3.1 The contradictions & paradoxes of Lebanon 1.4 Significance of this study 2.1 Contextual information about Lebanon 4.0 In the dark: Education factors that exacerbate sectarian conflict 5.0 In the spotlight: Education factors that reduce sectarian conflict
Significant contribution	Provides a contribution conceptually, practically, morally, methodologically, and heuristically (through action)	3.1.5 Data collection & analysis framework 4.0 In the dark: Education factors that exacerbate sectarian conflict 5.0 In the spotlight: Education factors that reduce sectarian conflict 6.0 Illuminating the future
Ethical	The research considers procedural ethics with people, situational and culturally specific ethics, relational ethics, and exiting ethics	3.1 Methods
Meaningful coherence	The study achieves what it purports to be about, uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals, and meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions, findings, and interpretations	2.0 Literature review 3.1 Methods 4.0 In the dark: Education factors that exacerbate sectarian conflict 5.0 In the spotlight: Education factors that reduce sectarian conflict 6.0 Illuminating the future

3.1.8 Modifications to the Original Study Plan

I made changes to my original data collection methods plan in two main areas—participant recruitment and data source selection. For changes related to recruitment, I originally planned to interview at least 25 teachers from private schools and 25 teachers from public schools to ensure data quantity and quality. However, I reduced this number to instead conduct interviews with fewer people to allow for multiple meetings and so each could be longer in length; in the end, 13 teachers from private schools and 14 teachers from public schools participated in the study.

Related, ended up recruiting from a diverse array of public schools that would roughly represent the demographic distribution of sects in the country. I was required to gain approval by the Ministry of Education for these interviews, then a project coordinator from the General Directorate of Education contacted schools and set up interviews. Although the Ministry of Education tried to follow my protocol, representatives explained that time constraints at the end of the school year resulted in school personnel being over-occupied with preparations for final exams and official examinations. I also suspect, based on conversations with public school teachers and principals, that the sensitive nature of the interview topic may have caused a number of principals to decline; the added layer of my requisite loose association with the Ministry of Education may have further deterred individuals who feared that interviews were a form of potential oversight or judgment from the Ministry of Education, even though my research is unaffiliated with Lebanon's Ministry of Education and the data I collected remained encrypted and in my possession for this independent research. As a result, the number of public schools I visited was limited to only four, which compares to 17 private schools.

I additionally made changes related to data sources. I originally planned to interview government representatives in the education sector. In the end, I did not interview any government representatives in education, though I met informally with two. This is due to three reasons. First, representatives from the Ministry of Education, a government official, and a UNICEF specialist advised that I forego interviews with government officials because the process to set them up would take too long—months or years. Second, the Lebanese government and Lebanon’s Ministry of Education have published numerous documents and there have been a number of studies about their efforts related to civic education and education policy aimed at sectarian peacekeeping. Third, many participants and trusted colleagues recommended against interviewing government representatives, explaining that interviews with them were not likely to shed light on undocumented experiences or realities of teachers and students related to the sectarian conflict or practices for conflict-reduction through education. For these three reasons, I decided to forego interviews with government representatives and remain focused on actors and practices in schools that are not well documented in research literature. This still left room for participants in my study to discuss efforts in schools initiated by the government and the Ministry of Education, and I also reference government-published documents throughout this study in lieu of interviews with government officials; this enabled my time in Lebanon and the focus of this research to remain on actors in schools.

I additionally planned to conduct a semi-structured interview with a representative from the United Nations Peace Operation in Lebanon (UNIFIL). UNIFIL remains in place to assist in continuing a peaceful transition from conflict. UNIFIL representatives are specialists in studying and facilitating peace operations in Lebanon, so I thought that meeting with a representative could provide understandings into the role that education on local, regional and national scales

plays in conflict-reduction. However, I decided against visiting the area where UNIFIL representatives are located in the country due to safety concerns. For privacy and confidentiality reasons, I chose to not conduct an interview over the phone. The scope of this study was thus narrowed by reducing the number of individuals with whom I originally planned to conduct interviews.

3.1.9 Caveats and Constraints

There are four major caveats and constraints to this study. First, I analyzed interviews, school visits, and curriculum documents for this study; other ethnographic data types, especially classroom observations and extended participatory research, might have produced different results. Observing lessons would have allowed further insights into how sectarianism manifests itself daily through classroom interactions and would have allowed more concrete insights into the relationship that teaching methods and curricula have with facilitating and mitigating sectarian conflict in classrooms. This was outside the scope of the current study as it would have required additional years for approval and oversight from the Ministry of Education and for data collection and analysis.

Second, I employed chain referral (also known as snowball) sampling based on educators' and colleagues' recommendations for recruitment in private schools. While chain referral sampling is non-probabilistic and does not produce a representative sample, this technique has a number of strengths that were a worthwhile trade-off for this study. This sampling method is conducive to finding samples that have traits that are difficult to find. Since the topics for this study center on sensitive issues such as the sectarian conflict and education (which is associated with politics and society), chain referral sampling assisted in being able to

recruit individuals who might not otherwise have been identifiable or would have been hesitant to participate if not referred and at times contacted by trusted colleagues and friends. Despite these justifications for preferring chain referral sampling for this study, a more probabilistic sampling method would have achieved a more representative and unbiased sample in some ways.

Third, by confining the study to Lebanon, a unique multicultural and sociopolitical context, concentrating most data collection to the Beirut area, and using qualitative collection and analysis methods, the findings of this research are not generalizable to a larger, international context. Instead, the purpose of the data collection methods used was to provide a snapshot of pathways and barriers to conflict-reduction through education in Lebanon. However, findings and implications from this study could offer symbolic meaning to other contexts, defined by Arnheim (1974) as “the sensing of the universal in the particular” (p. 454 in Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997). I argue that the detailed insights this ethnographic study lends into the intersections of education and political sectarianism make it possible to learn from the case of Lebanon in ways potentially meaningful and productive in other contexts, albeit not generalizable.

The final major caveat to this study is that my identity as a white woman from the U.S. living most of my life outside of Lebanon positions me as an outsider to the emic perspectives of those I spoke with in Lebanon. The complex natures of the country’s historical, political, and social landscapes entail that no amount of reading about education, politics, and society in the country could substitute the reification of concepts possible from experience there. This, indeed, is the very reason I chose to conduct this research and to use ethnographic methods—no matter how much I tried to understand Lebanon’s unique circumstances, reading only brought forth more questions and confusion that only immersion can reveal. A further limitation related to my

being an outsider to Lebanon is that I speak only limited Arabic and conducted most interviews in English and otherwise with a French or Arabic translator. Like the contradictions and paradoxes in Lebanon, I experienced the contradictions and paradoxes of my externality during data collection. The following excerpt from my field notes the first week of my time in Lebanon illustrates a common challenge I faced as an outsider:

Before the interview, we spoke for about an hour. As the conversation unfolded, I felt increasingly like I was on trial. “The situation here is just so complicated. I don’t think any outsider knows that. I don’t know if you or anyone who reads this research will understand.” Soon thereafter, she echoed, “It’s just so difficult”... “It’s just so complicated. It’s just so much.” Her worries and desire to avoid causing more misunderstanding and confusion about an already plagued issue was understandable. Who am I to try to understand?

Nevertheless, I feel from her early questions that this conversation is an essential step in the process to gain privileged access to the complicated and sensitive knowledge that only she and others like her have insights into. “Do you know anything about the history of Lebanon? Are you aware of the sectarian situation? Do you know about our government? Lebanon’s special challenges?” She asked in succession. At this point in the conversation, I was reminded of the integral role that my doctoral studies program in social and comparative analysis in education has played in preparing me to work internationally to examine sociocultural and geopolitical issues in complex contexts. My relationships with individuals from Lebanon have also played a vital role, as well as critical educational opportunities I’ve had in addition to my doctoral courses. For instance, the University of Pittsburgh’s Global Studies program offerings and the 13 extra courses that the Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship allowed me to take in

Middle Eastern studies, peace/conflict studies, and Arabic have made it possible for me to immerse myself in these issues we're discussing everyday.

I explained that I actually know that I can't understand fully given my positioning as an outsider, and that for years, the more I understand, the more complicated everything emerges to be. I shared about the classes I've taken, the books and articles I've read, the people I've spoken with, and some of the complexities of Lebanon that I've learned about (many of which I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2). I acknowledged many of the most salient and influential historical and current arcs and issues related to sectarianism in Lebanon. After each brief conversation about an event or aspect of Lebanese sectarianism, she would sound a firm, affirmative "okay, good." At the end of the hour, after her shoulders had relaxed and she was beginning to share stories of her experiences with sectarianism in and out of the classroom, she smiled and said, "Alright. You did your homework. You passed my test." I'm so thankful that she wanted to help me and others understand.

This story captures how my purposes, perspectives, and knowledge of Lebanon were examined by this teacher for approval. This experience became ritual before interviewing each participant in Lebanon. Another common sentiment I heard from participants was how exclusive the access was that they were affording me. Teachers and principals commented, "I've never told anyone these things" and "I can't share this with anyone else." While my positioning as an outsider to Lebanon inevitably veil me from insights that emic perspectives and Arabic fluency would allow, my positioning as a visitor did, perhaps counterintuitively, provide unique ground to gain access to and build understandings of practices and experiences in classrooms and schools that participants expressed they felt more comfortable and trusting doing *because* I am

an outsider, *because* I have no motives tied to any politics or institutions in Lebanon, and *because* I don't claim to understand, but I want to attempt to nevertheless.

4.0 In the Dark: Education Factors That Exacerbate Sectarian Conflict

As usual at schools I visited in Lebanon, it wasn't difficult to find the main door on this particular visit to a new school, but it was unclear where the main office was. As soon as I entered the second floor, all of the lights in the school went off. The "daily Beirut power loss," I thought as I continued my search and wondered how long it would take before the school's generator kicked on. I wanted to use the bathroom and fill up my water bottle before my interviews, but doing anything except the most basic would have to do for now as I simply could not see.

After I did find the main office, the office manager greeted me warmly and told me that she would take me to the school director's office as soon as the lights returned. Suddenly, the lights above us blinked and came back on, so she escorted me to the office adjacent to the room we were in. As I entered the school director's office, his face lifted into an enormous smile and he shouted "Ahlan wasahlan! Welcome." We got to know more about one another's professional career a bit over tea, then we shifted to conversation about my research. We also discussed support that he receives from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Lebanon, but he focused the conversation on wish-list items such as more funding for education projects that allow specialists and technology into the school, training for teachers, and experiences for students. Then there came a knock at the door and three teachers walked in, each greeting me with a handshake and short introduction before the school director left us.

I interviewed the teachers in a small group together before speaking with each of them individually. Two are Sunni and one is Christian, and they are quite close as friends. The head teacher, Sabah, set the tone. She teaches Biology at the school and I know immediately from her

demeanor that she is the teacher that the school director described moments ago; he said “she glows. Her passion for students is just contagious.” The second teacher, Reem, is tall, blonde, and energetic and specializes in teaching English. The third, Sawsan, is a science teacher who loves Chemistry and is a bit shy, but poignant and direct in speech.

While conducting each individual interview, each of the teachers focused multiple times on sectarianism, both in the country and in schools and classrooms. “It is everything. It is everywhere,” Reem said. Sawsan mentioned that “everything comes from a lens of sectarianism. We try to bring a lens of non-sectarianism, but we are overwhelmed.” They share many positive and hopeful stories worthy of spotlighting as well. As our interview comes to a close, Sabah laughs and says, “How do you like the power going out so much here in Lebanon? It’s certainly different here. The way you were trying to find your way in the dark earlier—this is how we feel in classrooms with our students with all of these sectarian issues.” “Yes, it’s very difficult to navigate through that,” I affirm as we walk to meet the others for lunch together.

In this chapter, I outline factors in K-12 education contexts that are “in the dark” and precipitate and exacerbate sectarian conflict. I do so by examining aspects of Lebanon’s K-12 education system that signal or yield unequal access, a lack of social inclusion, and weak social contract, the three core factors that lead to and exacerbate sectarian conflict and ethnic war (see Chapter 2.1 for further details). This chapter stands in contrast to the chapter that follows, which will spotlight factors that contribute to reducing sectarian conflict in Lebanese K-12 education contexts by spotlighting examples of equal access, social inclusion, and social contract through education.

Figure 4 below provides a preview of findings found in this chapter. As the figure shows, the most influential factors related to Lebanon’s education system that contribute to sectarian

conflict in the country exist in the dark. In physics terms, a space of darkness lacks energy, has no capacity for movement, and is abundant and consuming. Prolonged darkness is unsustainable for human life. It causes fatigue and disorders such as depression and diabetes, among others. Similarly, education factors that contribute to sectarian conflict dwell in darkness that is unsustainable for human flourishing. It negatively impacts the wellbeing of individuals and of society, allowing sectarian conflict to fester and grow like a deadly and fast-spreading fungus in the dark.

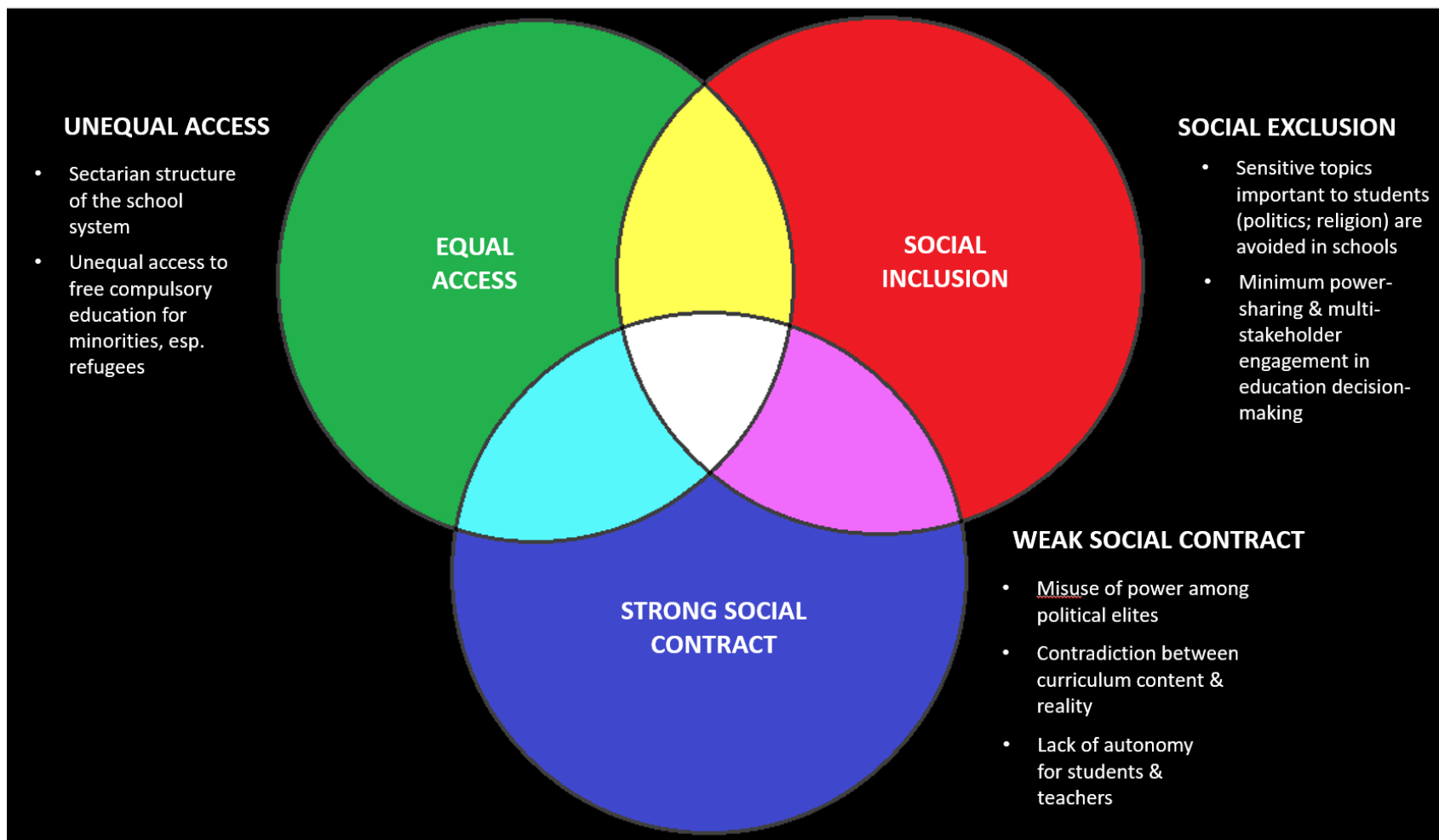


Figure 5: Negative education factors that increase sectarian conflict

4.1 Darkness around Unequal Access

4.1.1 Sectarian Structure of the School System

The sectarian structure of Lebanon's school system is a major hindrance to equal access to quality education. Two elements of Lebanon's education system resulting from the country's sectarian interpretation of consociationalism—privatized sectarian decentralization in education and extreme school competition—illustrate how Lebanon's sectarian school system sustains conflict and continues to deepen divisions and increase polarization between sectarian groups.

There are enormous quality and attendance disparities between private and public schools in Lebanon. 70 percent of K-12 students in Lebanon attend private schools. 54 percent of those students attend schools owned and operated by religious sects. The recent influx of Syrian refugees has since strained the public school system even more and led to even more transfers of students from public to private schools (Deeb, 2017). Competition between private schools is fierce and on the rise due to this privatization of the education system. Education privatization has fueled innovation and driven quality among many private schools, while public schools remain mostly stagnant in terms of quality. Meanwhile, private school prices soar and continue to rise. Private school tuition costs between 6,000 Lebanese Pounds and 23,000 Lebanese Pounds (4,000 to 15,000 US Dollars) per year, equivalent to between 15 and 50 percent of the average salary for a Lebanese parent. Public schools tend to serve the least affluent thirty percent of people in the country who cannot afford the high prices of private schooling. Parents of children who attend public schools have little power or influence over issues of education quality due to

their low socioeconomic status. This unequal access to quality education creates and sustains grievances among the underserved and marginalized Lebanese communities.

Unfortunately, the Lebanese government has little incentive to develop or invest in public school education for a number of reasons. First, increasing public school excellence for equal access to quality education in the country would require major financial investments from the government. Allotting few resources to education development creates opportunities for the government to use funds elsewhere.

Additionally, under the current organization of the school system, sects have an unfair influence on education decisions due to their expansive market share in the education sector and due to the close relationship between political leaders and private religious schools. Political elite hold close business and personal connections with religious clerics and private sectarian schools (Henley, 2016). As a result, leaders' decisions in government typically serve private schools affiliated with them, their confessional communities, and their business ties far more than public schools that serve students from all sects.

Further, as representatives of both UNICEF and UNESCO discussed in interviews for this study, political leaders often do not view public schooling as a pressing need since it “only” serves 30 percent of K-12 students. Unequal access to quality education stemming from sectarian political structures enables leaders to disregard opportunities to improve public education and to establish pathways for equal access to quality education.

School competition and sectarian political structures connected to the education system have also opened space for higher numbers of private sectarian schools to increase their dogmatism and religious extremism. Families find it overwhelming and difficult to sift through and choose a school most appropriate for their child or children in such a competitive and

consumer-driven education system, so schools differentiate themselves from one another to attract families. Increasing numbers of private sectarian schools are doing this by becoming more extreme ideologically and/or by inculcating religious beliefs even more in schools. This is occurring both in Beirut and more commonly outside of Beirut in areas concentrated with members of common sect affiliations. As families seek schools that represent their political and religious beliefs and support political parties that they identify with, they typically choose schools owned and operated by their choice of political party that will either foster the ideological perspectives through education that they value for their children or whom they wish to affiliate themselves with sociopolitically. It's no wonder that schools' efforts to differentiate themselves from one another have grown to become increasingly extreme since there are more than 100 political parties in Lebanon, most of which directly affiliate themselves with religious groups and schools. Increasing dogmatism and extremism in schools not only limits access to high-quality sectarian schools that offer moderate values and teach tolerance, but it is also troubling in light of the already tense and, at times, violent environment stemming from sectarianism in the country.

This growing ideological extremism in educational establishments situates schools as a battleground in Lebanon's war for ideological, political, and socioeconomic supremacy. A representative from UNICEF spoke to the danger of the increasing extremism in Lebanese schools. As a result, UNICEF has established new initiatives to address the spread of violent extremism in schools called Global Citizenship Education and Prevention of Violent Extremism. This program entails training sessions, resource materials, and peacebuilding forums for religious leaders and in-service teachers. UNICEF has piloted the program in schools across the country and is now spreading it to all schools in Lebanon. According to one UNICEF specialist,

these efforts are critical but not nearly enough for curtailing extremism in the country and to increase access to high-quality, moderate education. This is especially true amid increasing divisions caused by the sectarian structures of the school system in Lebanon, driving inequalities and grievances.

4.1.2 Unequal Access to Education, Especially for Refugees

Another factor that exacerbates sectarian conflict in K-12 education is inequitable access to education for Palestinian and Syrian refugees. The more than two million refugees living in Lebanon account for one fifth of Lebanon's population, making Lebanon the highest per-capita host of refugees in the world. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA, 2019) reports approximately 450,000 Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports about one million Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2019). Lebanon's government estimates Syrian refugees to surpass 1.5 million (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

Lebanon's Ministry of Education and Higher Education has taken significant steps to increase equal access to education for refugees (see Chapter 5.1.1). One important example of this was the government's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1991, which committed the government legally to afford every child in Lebanon—defined as any person 17 or younger—access to education, regardless of nationality, heritage, religious decree, or citizenship status. Despite this commitment, less than 40 percent of refugees in Lebanon are enrolled in formal education (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016) and less than three percent of refugees age 15 to 18 are

enrolled. Refugees comprise the largest group of school dropouts in Lebanon, typically discontinuing their studies in order to find work.

As these numbers illustrate, barriers to refugees' equal access to education in the country intractably persist. First, refugee minors still do not receive free and universal education. This is due in part to required school fees after grade nine. Fees amount to approximately 130 thousand Lebanese pounds, or 80 U.S. dollars, annually. Since refugees in Lebanon are becoming poorer over time, with Syrian refugees living on less than four U.S. dollars per day, this fee is insurmountable for many refugee families (UNHCR, 2018b). Another source of this is lack of free, universal education is policy. According to UNICEF representatives, national policy changes from year to year stating the quota of how many Syrians can be in schools nationally. It also varies how strict schools are in requiring certain paperwork for entrance or not.

Second, there is not enough room for underserved populations of students in Lebanese public schools. In fact, if refugee students had fewer barriers to entry, public schools would only be able to accommodate less than half of the refugees estimated to be living in Lebanon (Human Rights Watch, 2016b). Refugees wishing to enroll in a Lebanon school further face poor geographical access to schools and a lack of transportation to the limited number of public schools that report to have openings for refugee students.

Third, according to an UNESCO representative specializing in education in Lebanon, school directors impose arbitrary school enrollment requirements that prohibit refugees from being able to attend. For instance, schools may require evidence of past test scores or grades that refugees do not possess (Human Rights Watch, 2016a). All other participants in this study that I inquired about this with confirmed it to be true. This intentional exclusion of refugees to education denies refugee youth from their right to equal access to schooling.

Fourth, academic requirements beyond refugees' former education level exclude them from school participation. The founder of an NGO school for refugees in Lebanon pointed out that refugee students must prove academic achievement equal to their age-appropriate grade level upon entry into Lebanese schools. Since most Syrian youth have little to no education background due to war in Syria, many Syrian students who attempt to enter the Lebanese school system struggle tremendously to reach grade-level expectations requisite to remain in their age-appropriate class, especially students beyond grade four. This is inequitable for refugee youth who enter Lebanon below grade level due to war and a lack of prior education in their home countries.

Finally, some public-school officials simply refuse to accept refugee children (Human Rights Watch, 2016a). Many educators I spoke with confirmed this widespread practice they have witnessed their colleagues do. Some school headmasters fear that increasing refugee numbers in their school will actually cause conflict within their sect community; this is especially true for sect communities that are in competition for sectarian representation in the country and are threatened by the increasing Sunni representation in the country from the refugee population. However, as Meier (2014) discusses, such unequal access to education clearly driven by identity politics creates a tense atmosphere and leads to sectarian confrontations in the country. Creating inequalities for refugees will simply shift the specific causes underlying conflict rather than prevent conflict.

Considering these barriers, it is no surprise that non-Lebanese youth make up the largest percentage of youth not enrolled in Lebanese schools. When school is not a feasible option, it is prevalent for refugee youth in Lebanon to turn to begging for money, low-wage labor, and child marriage. Unequal access such as that experienced by refugees in Lebanon is a factor that could

build to exacerbate conflict in the country as year after year, the refugee community struggles to gain equal access to avenues for a better future and for survival.

4.2 Darkness around Social Inclusion

4.2.1 Avoidance of Potentially Sensitive and Politically Charged Topics in Schools

A factor related to social exclusion that exacerbates sectarian conflict in Lebanon is that teachers are forbidden to engage in or allow discussions of sensitive and politically-charged topics such as politics or religion in Lebanese classrooms, save specifically what is outlined to teach in the national curriculum. Classrooms, as places of convergence for the diversity of ideologies in a conflict-affected country, can easily become ‘sites of war’ (Korostelina, 2010). Conflict is so tied to sectarianism that any discussion of the country’s sensitive topics, such as recent history of the country, politics of the country, or the country’s ethno-religious communities, can potentially stir up conflict in the classroom and bias for and against other political or religious groups. Understandably, and according to this study’s participants, Lebanon’s Ministry of Education views this potential risk as severe enough to warrant the rule against sensitive discussions to be agreed upon in teachers’ work contracts.

Aspects of this phenomenon are well-documented in previous literature. Studies suggest that this policy is detrimental to advancing reconciliation of lingering historical violence and healthy dialogue across sectarian divisions. van Ommering (2015) describes the controversial nature of history as a school subject in Lebanon. Political struggles and groups are legitimized or disenfranchised by the ideological lens through which the curriculum is written and presented.

Modern political and conflict histories are muted in Lebanese classrooms as a result. This omission encourages students to look to politicized, extreme, and faulty sources to learn independently about the country's conflict history. van Ommering's findings suggest that Lebanon's lack of formal history education about the country's conflicts misses opportunities to foster understanding, analytical skills, and reconciliation through education.

A dissertation study by Nassif (2016) further elucidates the obstacles to implementing school curricula aimed at reducing sectarian conflict. She used phone interviews with principals across Lebanon to inquire into perceptions toward the potential for peace education initiatives to be implemented in Lebanese schools given the sectarian conflict simmering in the country. Her study found that principals see themselves as peace leaders and want to incorporate peace education in schools, but they report that a lack of policy and capacity to initiate and facilitate programs that build bridges across sects remain major obstacles. Lebanese schools thus avoid peace education due to the school policy forbidding discussions of sensitive topics such as politics and religion.

The country's rule forbidding sensitive discussions of politics and religion in schools lowers the quality of instruction and actively excludes students' perspectives, curiosities, backgrounds, and cultures. As Amirah described,

"We cannot discuss these issues. No politics, no religion. It is a rule. The curriculum is very general and diluted. It avoids sensitive topics. For example, themes in the Arabic curriculum are about back to school, the weather, aspects of nature—nothing about religions in the country or issues that interesting to the students or to teachers. If the curriculum talks about the country at all, it is rote memorization of facts and ideas with no possibility for interpretation, for critical thinking or discussing of important issues that actually impact the well-being of the country. Instead it's simple geography, the flag, the sea...how can students learn from this? How can we respect their backgrounds? It is not inclusive in this way. It excludes students in their own classrooms, in what is supposed to be their school curriculum."

This teacher highlights how practices of conflict-mitigation, education quality, and inclusion are forfeited for the sake of conflict-avoidance.

As the excerpt above illustrates, teaching the process for how to productively discuss and navigate difference and diversity are forgone due to the risk of stirring sensitive sectarian issues. As a result, teachers focus on positive or “easy” rather than misunderstood or controversial issues. Teachers often employ multicultural education to teach about unique characteristics of people around the world. However, instruction does not highlight differences or delve into how to navigate them, how to negotiate them with your own identity and beliefs, or how to confront them in the real world or local community positively. Without these components centered on critical thinking, dialogue, and negotiation, multicultural education can reinforce stereotypes about groups without providing students the necessary tools to constructively move beyond differences that divide them (Turner & Brown, 2008). It is further limiting in that students are not passive recipients of information, so they can easily dismiss, reject, distort, or forget information taught due to the lack of higher-order thinking skills engaged through multicultural education. Despite its popularity and reputation, multicultural education’s role of simply serving as a foundation layer for cultural competency limits the extent of this approach’s potentialities, showing that the approach simply isn’t enough in a conflict affected context such as Lebanon.

Teachers who I interviewed realized the limitations associated with multicultural education and were not disillusioned by its limited benefits that the government touts. One noted, “songs and, you know, presentations, reading about foreign cultures...that’s nothing. This happens everywhere, not only here. It is not special. Lebanon is a conflict country. That instruction means nothing to resolving the problems we have. It’s not enough.” In a classroom with conflict potentially stemming from or exacerbated by diversity such as in Lebanon,

multicultural education approaches do little to cultivate cultural competency because they do not inculcate anti-bias values or negotiation and problem-solving techniques. Multicultural education should be used as a complement to more critical approaches that more deeply penetrate student understandings of diversity for increased cultural competency and social inclusion. However, multicultural education is perhaps the closest that teachers can come to teaching cultural competency as long as the rule forbidding sensitive topics such as religion and identity politics persists.

Every teacher and administrator I interviewed for this study discussed the seriousness of the rule excluding sensitive topics in classrooms. Teachers reported being afraid to answer students' questions about important current issues and events that influence them today, fearing castigation from higher up. For example, high school teachers had to continually stifle discussions about the past and future political circumstances in the country the week of the 2018 parliamentary elections, even though they and the students viewed the topic as critical to the country and extremely relevant to their lives. Teachers had to directly respond to students' inquiries about the elections with stern statements to divert or shut down their questions by telling students that there was no time for that discussion or that it was too off-topic to discuss. This communicated messages of disinterest, disapproval, and negativity to students for their curiosity and care toward critical issues influencing them and their country. The policy to avoid sensitive topics allows for very little to no connection to students' concerns, interests, backgrounds, or current events around them if they in any way connect to the most influential issues in the country—current politics, the country's conflict history, sect groups, religion, and faith.

The pervasiveness of this policy has led to it taking on a mythical nature. Discussing the rule stirred paranoia among educators during our interviews. And although educators reported that no one they knew has ever been caught or punished for crossing the line into politics or religion in the classroom, most teachers still view it as a serious offense to challenge the rule, even when they disagree with the rule itself.

The fear and restrictions of discussing politics, religion, and war also increases the teacher-centeredness of instruction through control mechanisms to avoid sensitive topics. Teacher-centered instruction, with little debate or emphasis on critical thinking, is one of the three major factors that Hilker (2011) found to exacerbate conflict through education in Rwanda. This cascade of control, beginning at the level of national government and trickling down to the levels of school administration and teachers, compounds the exclusion that this policy causes. Teachers struggle with taking on the responsibility of minimizing opportunities for student agency, voice, and deductive reasoning for fear of it potentially leading to politically-charged or conflict-riddled discussions, which could get the teacher fired. Many teachers described the struggle of balancing these restrictions with the students' thirst to discuss relevant issues such as politics, religion, and conflict in the classroom. The following interview excerpt with Nadia illustrates this struggle:

MH: "Do students ever bring up sensitive topics related to politics, history, or religion such as the conflict in Lebanon or the civil war or elections?"

Nadia: "Sometimes, sometimes. Sometimes they talk about these things...politics, elections, the civil war, conflicts, sectarian groups...but I make them, I try to not let them talk about it and to bring their struggles into the classroom and I tell them that they have to, that in Lebanon there are differences between people, they have different points of view, they have different political points of view, but they can't discuss these things in the classroom. I must be very strict, although I disagree to do that. That is the most difficult part. Well, and silencing the students. This is our responsibility as teachers."

MH: "How do students respond?"

Nadia: “They sometimes listen. Sometimes, yeah. Sometimes it’s as if they *need* to talk about it, so it’s difficult to handle that. I feel that they need it sometimes, but I’m not supposed to let them talk about it or ask the questions they have.”

The scenario outlined by Nadia above shows how Lebanon’s policy to avoid non-sanctioned discussions of politics and religion in classrooms puts teachers in what they perceive to be a lose-lose predicament. It is a precarious position to be stuck between the choice of either avoiding anything related to recent history, politics, and religion or broaching sensitive, politically-charged topics and being fired. This is especially true considering that most educators do not believe that discussions of politics and religion in the classroom feed sectarian conflict, but on the contrary view it as a positive step to social inclusivity.

4.2.2 Lack of Power-Sharing

A second form of social exclusion in Lebanon that contributes to the widening chasm between sectarian groups is a lack of power-sharing and multi-stakeholder engagement in educational decision-making. Few individuals hold power in educational decision-making in Lebanon. Due to both the extreme sect-based competition between private schools and the political structures that distribute great power to political and religious leaders explained in Chapter 4.1.1, there is little to no room for power-sharing and multi-stakeholder involvement in education decision-making. Those who are included are comprised mostly of political and religious leaders, predominantly at the federal level and lesser at the regional and local levels. This spells out the exclusion of school administrators, teachers, parents, students, and minorities in the country. When discussing this issue with this study’s participants in Lebanon, the feeling of exclusion was palpable. “Oh no, no teacher or school director or parent can change this,” one teacher asserted. Another said, “We work and work and care so much; we all pay taxes and these

are our children and our neighbors' children in schools. But do teachers or taxpayers have any say? No. Absolutely none.” A school director lamented that “unfortunately, this is a systemic arrangement. No one really has influence in education except those already in power.” Generally, people from all sect groups and socioeconomic backgrounds do not feel that their voices are listened to by those in power and they have no opportunity to contribute directly to decisions related to education.

This finding lends nuance to a common narrative found throughout academic literature emphasizing how consociational, power-sharing mechanisms and decentralized education in conflict affected countries serve to reduce sectarian conflict. Consociationalism's power-sharing mechanisms at the federal level typically help to facilitate the continuity of distinct cultural and linguistic communities and can ease tensions across two or three historically divided groups in conflict-affected countries. However, as Horowitz (1985) points out, there being no opportunity for power-sharing at lower levels excludes the majority of education stakeholders and constituents in the country and allows too little opportunity for small, weak groups represented in power-sharing states to have equal government influence. Social exclusion such as this leads to grievances that threaten a country's stability.

Data collected for this study illuminate the sharp line between those in power to make influential change in education policies and curriculum and those who are excluded from exercising such influence. Participants were quick to point out that political and religious leaders—primarily male, due to Lebanon's patriarchal structures—at the regional and, more typically, national level monopolize access to this influence. Educators who are contracted to write national curriculum for Lebanon are kept under strict orders to design curriculum that entirely aligns with what political leaders set out as appropriate content for schools. Most

teachers I met described the compromise to their integrity it would pose to write curriculum for the Ministry of Education, despite the honor that would accompany it, because it would be so restrictive. Interestingly, these same teachers design lessons and teach within the same confines set by the national curriculum. They viewed teaching under these confines quite differently than constructing national curriculum under the same restrictions because teachers generally associate curriculum development, rather than teaching, with active participation in the perpetuation of curriculum problems centered on censorship, rote memorization, and a lack of dialogue to address conflict. As Welsh and McGinn (1999) point out, it is necessary to involve a plurality of stakeholders at all levels, especially at the community level, in a country to most profoundly increase inclusion, thereby mitigating sectarian conflict. The restrictions on curriculum content development exclude or otherwise silence a number of what should be key stakeholders in education, particularly the most educated and impactful teachers most knowledgeable and capable of critical and transformative pedagogical practices.

4.3 Darkness around Weak Social Contract

4.3.1 Misuse of Power among Political Elites

The most cited factor that weakens social contract and sustains sectarian conflict in Lebanon centers on political elites' misuse of power. Distrust of government runs deep in Lebanon. Most political leaders make decisions to benefit themselves and members of their affiliated sect rather than do what is best for citizens. Polls by the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index, 2018) found that the

majority—approximately two thirds—of Lebanese citizens have no trust in political institutions. A study published by the Arab Barometer and conducted by the International Development Research Centre, the United States Institute for Peace, University of Michigan, and Princeton University (Cuyhun, 2017) found that only 9 percent of Lebanese citizens believe that politicians are concerned with their needs and found that Lebanon ranks among the lowest throughout the Middle East in satisfaction with the government's approaches to addressing educational needs. Most citizens perceive political decisions in Lebanon as driven by each politician's response to political threats and hope for political gains. While there are abundant examples of dishonesty and deceit by Lebanese politicians to cause grievances centered on distrust among citizens, I will present two related directly to education that participants referred to time and time again during this study.

A first example of corrupt political decision-making in Lebanon's education system that interviewees saw as significant to them was the baccalaureate fraud tied to teachers' pay scale. In 2014, public school teachers rallied to increase the salary scale for educators in the country. In an attempt to gain leverage, teachers refused to score the 12th grade students' baccalaureate exams until the pay scale was passed. Pressure mounted after students took their baccalaureate exams and waited anxiously for their scores, which they worked toward during their entire secondary school experience and they knew would impact their future forever. In order to avoid passing a new pay scale, Lebanon's education minister at the time, Alias Bou Saab, decided to pass the exams of all students who took the test that year, regardless of their score, and gave each a "certificate." However, teachers, students and parents were devastated because this meant students were unable to obtain an official baccalaureate; consequently, they were unable to apply to and be accepted by some universities in Lebanon and all universities outside of Lebanon (Jay,

2014). Since governing institutions proved unresponsive and ineffective to fulfil their roles and responsibilities during this crisis, weak and exclusionary state-society relations contributed to the further crumbling of social contract between the Lebanese government and its constituents, especially those most impacted by the fraud of passing all students without scoring them, but awarding no official baccalaureate.

The government did not approve the pay scale until four years later, in 2018, leading up to Lebanon's general elections. However, since most citizens have children in private schools, they are reluctant to support decisions to fund improvements in public schools. Focusing on public school development causes most parents to pay twice for education—once for their child(ren)'s private school tuition and once through taxes that support public schools. Thus, the pay scale being passed for public school teachers caused weakening of social contract among members of groups even outside those who were most directly impacted, especially between the government and families that are patrons of private schools. The teacher pay scandal illustrates how, without justifiable or coherent premises for a government's enactment of its principles, deterioration of social contract will inevitably ensue (Rawls, 1999).

A second example of the misuse of power among political elites cited as important by participants can be summarized by a statement made by one education professor I interviewed: “all the decisions that came out to govern the access to education for refugees has been politically grounded, not what is best for Lebanon or lawful internationally or right for Syria's refugees.” Although most, if not all, politicians around the world make decisions about refugee acceptance on the basis of political agendas, decisions around Syrian refugees in Lebanon are particularly fraught due to the highly fractioned sectarian context and the country's history with Palestinian refugees.

The Lebanese government's erratic policies toward Syrian refugees has made trust in government more difficult among Lebanese citizens. Politicians' polarization on the topic of Syrian refugees in the country initially led to a deadlock, so Lebanon's lack of early response stemmed from a "policy of no policy" toward refugee influxes in 2011 (Geha & Talhouk, 2018). In 2012, the government enacted the Baabda Declaration, formally dissociating Lebanon from the Syrian conflict, despite increasing arrivals of Syrians into Lebanon's eastern, coastal, and northern communities and an enormous shift among Lebanese NGOs to focus around 70 percent of efforts toward Syrian refugees, all of which previously went to other groups in Lebanon (European Union—South Program, 2015). United Nations agencies and donors attempted to fill the void left by the government's non-response by contributing to NGO efforts, beginning in 2012 and picking up speed in 2013. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2014), this was not enough to address the more than 95 percent of refugee youth without access to education in Lebanon.

UN agencies refused to provide funding directly to the Lebanese government ministries for Syrian refugee initiatives and programming out of distrust that the government would misuse the funds (Geha & Talhouk, 2018). In 2014, Syrian refugee numbers more than doubled to 1.2 million into Lebanon. Socioeconomic burdens from refugees increased tensions in Lebanese communities, particularly among host Sunni communities. Meanwhile, non-Sunni citizens were sensitive to these influxes that directly impacted sectarian population balances in the country since the distribution of power has been purportedly tied to demographic data since 1932. The dominant perspective among political leaders in Lebanon's Christian- and Shia-affiliated parties was that Syrian refugees, comprised primarily of Sunni individuals, constitute an existential political and economic threat to them. This convergence of interests among Lebanese sect

communities in power led to strict government policies in 2015 aimed to reduce the number of Syrian refugees in the country.

In the same year, the Lebanese government began to shift their strategy to deal with the refugee crisis by creating infrastructure to support some Syrians, which gave the government access to funds from United Nations agencies and international donors. As interviews with political party representatives conducted by Geha and Talhouk (2018) point out, Syrian refugees became a business opportunity for politicians in the country and were even used to blackmail the UN for funding unrelated to refugees. With money from the UN, the Lebanese government swiftly established a “second shift” in schools comprised of classrooms that would serve 400,000 Syrian refugee youth after regular school hours in the country. The second shift became independently governed by the same political party as the current president, the Free Patriotic Movement. This party is affiliated with the Maronite Christian sect, which has little incentive to provide quality education to predominantly Sunni refugees from Syria. As Karam and Zellman (2017) highlight, second shift teachers tend to have little teaching experience and are paid less compared to first shift teachers, they lack training related to supporting refugee students, and they face larger class sizes and shorter class times on average. As I found during my visits in 2018, more experienced teachers who have chosen to teach Syrians in second shift classrooms tend to feel under-supported, underpaid, and frustrated with the unknowns associated with the future of these students. These challenges combine with their knowledge of the government’s financial benefits and poor handling of the intense influx to unravel any trust they had left in their government.

As all of this indicates, successions of wavering, sectarian-driven, politically-charged decisions that Lebanese citizens view as decisions to benefit politicians and sectarian groups

intensify the breakdown of social contract in the country. There has been hesitation and unpredictability of government decisions related to Syrian refugees, leaving Lebanese communities feeling neglected. Public mistrust from United Nations agencies toward the Lebanese government combined with political leaders' corrupt threats and blackmail toward the UN further paints the Lebanese government as dishonest. The government has taken extreme approaches of being both hands-off and creating new but insufficient education accommodations in order to benefit financially. As Castillejo (2015) points out, political parties have a unique role to play in mediating state-society relations and shaping the social contract. However, in many fragile contexts with feuding and dysfunctional political parties such as Lebanon, the government acts to undermine rather than strengthen the social contract. In this context political parties have no incentive to represent citizens' interests, address the grievances that fuel conflict or promote a more inclusive social contract through honesty, transparency, and power-sharing.

4.3.2 Contradiction between Curriculum and Reality

A second factor that weakens social contract through education is a disconnection between curriculum and reality. Core values such as peace, justice, equality, and tolerance are taught in Lebanon's weekly civics education courses at all grade levels in Lebanon; however, teachers report that students find lessons that loosely attempt to address the country's socioeconomic divisions as confusing, unrealistic, and laughable.

Curriculum lessons instruct behavior that directly contradict how students see people act around them when misunderstandings, disagreements, and conflicts arise. Some teachers illustrated this point with descriptions of how students make fun of textbook scenarios and advice they give students for how to handle misunderstandings and disagreements since people's

real actions are in such stark contrast to those taught in the curriculum. Younger teachers described how they remember making fun of the curriculum when they were students, and now are faced with teaching the same content; indeed, many teachers reportedly mock it as well. Teachers such as Aameena described how stuck students and teachers are between this contradiction between curriculum and reality. She illustrated this point with the following:

“Once your neighbor throws something on your balcony, you don’t go to them and do what you learned in civics education. When no one practices tolerance from the textbook, it’s actually quite strange to be this type of person who is understanding about anything from other sects or even strangers. Even if we do certain, design certain activities for that. Because these kids, they see violence everywhere, on the tv. They imitate everything. Even what’s in the text is something and the behavior outside is something else, so here, how can they develop their concept of peace education?”

As this excerpt details, the contradiction between general life and textbook content create a tension and drive a wedge between students and those they associate with curriculum content—the Ministry of Education and the government of Lebanon. While instruction that attempts to teach character values is better than its absence, students cannot well learn lessons of how to apply complex values of tolerance and peace in a divided society by reading or hearing unrealistic lessons. Missing pieces include understanding the sources of sectarian divisions, experiencing reconciliation, and learning realistic strategies to navigate deeply-embedded sources of conflict within and around them.

Another aspect of the mismatched message the education system sends to students is that plurality is touted as being valued, but religious education in most public and private schools teaches values from each school’s majority sect religion. That is, public and private schools that are run by and serve primarily Shia Allawite students have religion courses that teach Shia Allawite values; public and private schools that are run by and serve primarily Armenian students have religion courses that teach Armenian values, and so on.

I learned this during my first visit to Lebanon while visiting various schools of many sectarian affiliations across the country. When I asked education policy professors about how most schools, both private and public, teach religion classes supporting that school's majority sectarian set of beliefs, some were unaware that this was occurring. Upon my second visit to the country, four months later, a new study by professors in education was being initiated to interview students in schools to learn more about these practices because of the threat that it poses to the country's stability. One professor emphasized that this perpetuates sources of conflict and increases division between members of different sectarian groups—two trends that weaken the social contract with the government. The hidden curriculum inculcated by Lebanon's education system and school practices centers on maintaining the deep chasms across sectarian divides while shallow and impractical lessons about peace and tolerance are often glazed over and laughed at in schools by both teachers and students. Indeed, this achieves the exact opposite that civics curriculum superficially attempts to address; conversely, as educators and education specialists pointed out in frustration, teaching conservative religion in the absence of anti-extremism education fuels sectarian conflict in this already highly divided sectarian context.

An additional aspect of this contradiction between curriculum and reality is an education policy focus on الانصهار ("al-insihar"), or fusion, but not diversity or reconciliation. The curriculum acknowledges and at times celebrates diversity, but doesn't teach students how to navigate it. In one of the most diverse and conflict-affected countries in the world, instruction about how to act when confronted with a different culture, a new set of ideas, or an argument that diverges from one's own is avoided in schools. Students flag their alarm with this issue and express frustration that they are not given tools to deal with difference and disagreement, especially across sects. Jamila described how one of her fifth grade students once asked her

questions about the differences between Christians, Muslims, and other religions because she found it quite confusing and wanted to be prepared for middle school. The teacher resisted, so the student begged, “Please, please! I can’t tell the difference. I need to know.” So Jamila told her, “I’m sorry, but you know I’m not permitted to discuss religious differences in school.” The student replied, “Then how can I know anything in this country?” Dilemmas such as this comprise students’ everyday reality in Lebanon. Students need strategies, tools, examples, and practice with navigating difference and conflict in positive and proactive ways. Education policy that disallows education about or preparation for everyday confrontations with members of different and historically divided groups causes friction in education contexts, designated as places for learning and preparation, to fray trust in government.

Without any signs that political leaders and other role models to Lebanon’s youth can themselves exercise and allow meaningful instruction about curriculum centerpieces such as peace, justice, equality, and tolerance across sects in their daily lives, the contradictions between concepts in the national curriculum and the outside "realities" will remain stark. Among the roles and responsibilities of the government and the Ministry of Education is to equip students to confront everyday challenges and institute policies that will lead the country away from conflict. This section’s findings suggest that inconsistencies between curriculum and reality do not fulfil that role, contributing to the waning of social contract.

4.3.3 Lack of Autonomy for Students and Teachers

A country’s governing body and its citizens should share the autonomy to exercise agency in voicing local and national concerns and to influence social and political realities. If the balance of power and potential influence is vastly inequitable, with the political body and its

representative political leaders possessing levels of autonomy that far outweigh levels accessible to students, teachers, and parents, then actors within the political system have failed to perform their functions and contribute to exclusionary state-society relations and the buckling of social contract that fuels conflict (Castillejo, 2015).

The educators I interviewed for this study spoke often of their own lack of autonomy and of the restrictions that students have as a result. “Everything is limited. We cannot cross the red lines that the Ministry puts for us, which inhibits students’ dialogue and learning in the classroom” one public school teacher stated. Another asserted, “No one in public schools has any freedom, and when I taught in private schools, I also did not have freedom because you are checked not only by the Ministry of Education but also by the education supervisors for the sect associated with that school. So forget freedom to think for my students.” Limitations on learning topics, speech, and creativity stifle agency in the classroom and social contract.

Others described in detail the amount of restriction and surveillance that they as teachers experience—from detailed lesson checks to frequent unexpected classrooms visit and an ethos of distrust and professional illegitimacy toward teachers. For example, parents regularly call the Ministry of Education hotline to report teachers for any issue—perceived or observed—that they dislike, and teachers report that these calls often result in the Ministry of Education’s rebuke of the teacher. As Milena concluded, “So these are huge limitations to doing education for bridge-building, I think, because you really need to stick with the curriculum rather than do something that students really need for peace and stability in this country.” Therefore, restrictions on teachers and students take away the opportunity for students to gain tools and understanding for a more stable Lebanon, and the lack of autonomy experienced increases paranoia toward government as a result of the scrutiny, weakening teachers’ trust in the government.

Many educators reacted to their lack of autonomy in more extreme ways than that discussed above. When I asked, “How do you think education in schools like yours is building or unraveling trust between parents and kids with the government?” teachers answered similarly to Zara, whose opening to her answer is below:

“Personally, I have this view of the Lebanese government...it’s sad to say this, but they want people to remain thinking as sheep. They don’t want them to critically think, be open-minded, especially think for ourselves...they don’t want people to think like this because if they do, all of Lebanon will change. Then they cannot continue in power. This is my own personal view. So, there’s a reason why history textbooks are so outdated. There’s a reason why schools remain traditional. There’s a reason why students are not trying to think in classrooms, to make choices and all that. And for me, it’s all politically-oriented. So from that point, I don’t know how much the Lebanese government would want students to be independent, for teachers to do what they know is best. Because that’s all about developing inquiry skills, questioning, democratic problem-solving, communication skills, decision-making together...it’s never gonna happen.”

Not only are educators like Zara aware of ways the Lebanese government limits their own and their students’ opportunities to exercise autonomy, but many explain this to be a mechanism for subduing potential change that would uproot existing power structures and dynamics that serve hegemonic classes and individuals in power.

Not only is autonomy infrequent in Lebanese schools, but when it is given, educators and students do not know how to react. One private nonsectarian school principal elaborated on this:

“Lebanese schools are highly autocratic. There’s no concept of autonomy, of freedom. There are just so many restrictions and rules and guidelines. I even did this in my school, I gave teachers extreme autonomy. I encouraged it and required it. Teachers thought there was a catch! There was paranoia at actually being given agency. They thought it was a trick to test or catch them, even though it was actually the opposite.”

Mistrust of the autonomy offered to teachers in this new private international school was so foreign that it was perceived as too good to be true. The autonomy initiative at this administrator’s school was continued and extended to both teachers and students in as many

ways as possible. Like teachers, students reacted with confusion and disbelief that they were given the autonomy to have far more opportunities to exercise creativity and personal choice in deciding how to apply their learning and express themselves. This eventually strengthened the trust among the members of the school community. However, this further alienated them from the Lebanese government because the autonomy that teachers and students experienced gave them more perspective about the extent to which the country's education policies and overseeing bodies silenced them and empowered those already in power. While social contract among members of the school community became strengthened, the weakened social contract with the government exacerbated a sense of macroscopic mistrust that accompanies conflict in fragile and divided contexts.

5.0 In the Spotlight: Education Factors That Reduce Sectarian Conflict

Upon my arrival to the peacebuilding and conflict resolution NGO I visited today, the interactions with people were quite similar to interactions with people in the schools I've visited (a warm welcome; hospitality; tea and snacks; personal and professional conversation). However, the space I was in today was so different. Compared to both private and public schools I've been in, this NGO was much brighter, cleaner. In some schools hung pictures of students from that school, especially in private nonsectarian schools, flags from around the world and students' posters, each focused on a different country worldwide. In this NGO, though, hung pictures of events and projects of students collaborating interculturally within Lebanon, across sects, bussed from their school to meet, learn with, and do projects with students from other schools and backgrounds.

After being there about an hour and learning about many of the NGO's initiatives and programs, I ask the director, "Can you tell me about the sectarian tensions and divisions you've witnessed among students?" She replies,

"When kids don't know each other yet and are from different sect groups, we inevitably see conflict because they really didn't know each other's cultures and the people in their lives and almost everything in society reinforces for them that these divisions already exist. It's so sensitive, so volatile. Like, one student said one small word in front of another girl—it was so small that I can't even remember what she said—and a huge conflict started! And this was definitely because they were from these different sects. Then the students of course became involved in this conflict and it escalated. Like many other groups of students in schools, we worked with this group to transform, to resolve this conflict, and to address the deeper conflicts, but you must think how millions of youth across Lebanon usually don't get these prolonged opportunities for personal transformation and conflict transformation."

She continues,

“Truly, the possibilities are amazing. I must tell you one more brief example that shows what an impact these projects, these carefully-designed, multi-year, cross-sect projects have. We went to this, a school that is in the southern suburbs, so it’s 100 percent Shiites. Very conservative, very protective. They don’t want anything to threaten their kids’ religious views. There, it’s so common for parents or educators to hesitate or refuse to give permission for kids to participate in these projects with youth from other regions of Lebanon, other religions, other sects. They say, “what are you doing? You are getting the students out of their religion!” So we were in this conservative area and kids shared a sketch that they made, so they acted it for us. The sketch is about two girls telling one of their moms, ‘mom, can we help you cook?’ And the mom is like ‘mmhmm, so what do you want?’ and the girls say ‘we want to go to the movies.’ The mom says ‘okay, go tell your dad,’ and the girls say ‘no, we don’t want to go with you and dad, we want to go to the movies with our friends!’ And she says, ‘Okay, what friends?’ And they say, ‘Violette and John.’ The mom responds, ‘Whaat?! Where did you ever hear those names? You don’t have neighbors by those names! You don’t have people in the school by those names! Where did you hear those names? So the girls, they say, ‘well we met them through a project in our school where we’re meeting students from other parts of Lebanon. These are our friends from the north of Lebanon and we always want to go with them and we’re communicating with them on Facebook and we want to see them again and again!’

Friendships and intercultural futures such as these can grow in the light of such transformative opportunities for conflict transformation.

In this chapter I synthesize factors that contribute to reducing sectarian conflict in Lebanon in K-12 education contexts done by educators and NGOs such as the one above. The previous chapter delineated the structures, trends, and inadequacies that precipitate and exacerbate sectarian conflict through K-12 education contexts, which situates the findings in this chapter as significantly juxtaposed against the dim backdrop set by the previous chapter. By shining spotlights on conflict-reducing factors, similar to the properties and characteristics of light defined in optics, the lights shined will vanquish darkness within that area with light that is concentrated and intense. This fills the space, making it possible to detect objects with energy, or the capacity to enact action. As this chapter shows, spotlights illuminate the agency, potential

action, and movement toward of the energy for peace of some teachers, principals, and NGOs throughout Lebanon.

The purpose of the findings herein is to recognize the positive trends and potentialities extant in Lebanon with the hope of sharing, building upon, and scaling them up in the future. To accomplish this, I present the mechanisms, strategies, and approaches that contribute to equal access, social inclusion, and the building of social contract through education, which Figure 5 represents graphically below. This chapter also provides examples based on my ethnographic data to illustrate ways in which equal access, social inclusion, and social contract are visible in the context of Lebanon's education system.



Figure 6: Positive education factors that reduce sectarian conflict in Lebanon

5.1 Spotlight on Equal Access

5.1.1.1 Equal Access

According to the United Nations, equal access to education centers on fair access to school, school facilities and resources, and literacy and numeracy rates (UN, 2016b). The United Nations General Assembly's Sustainable Development Goals (UN General Assembly, 21 October 2015) prescribes equal access to education and literacy at all levels for all genders, vulnerable or disadvantaged persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children from minority communities.

Lebanon adopted a similarly inclusive definition of equal access upon ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991. Similar to these definitions, participants in this study defined equal access as attendance in school for all children. As one school director, Naila, put simply, "equal access is any child having the ability to attend school and learn." A common explanation I heard can be encapsulated by Lena. She said, "you know a person has equal access to education when they can be in school with no barriers from outside of their home." Another teacher, Amirah, operationalized equal access by its converse when she asserted, "It is simple to recognize" because equal access is not present for any youth of school age who is not in school, "period." The following sections highlight two factors that reduce conflict related to equal access; these are the Lebanese government's stated commitment to free compulsory education and the rise of nonsectarian private school options.

5.1.2 The Government's Stated Commitment to Free Compulsory Education

The government of Lebanon and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education have taken significant steps to increase equal access to education. The Lebanese government first adopted a policy in the Legislative Decree of 1955 to provide free primary education from grades one to six to all children of Lebanese nationality in the country (Lebanese Government, 1955). This was an important step toward the expansion of the Lebanese education system that would support Lebanon's swift economic development and would nurture progress toward equal access to education, providing schooling for children outside of the privileged classes in the country's Maronite and Beirut's Sunni communities (Tfaily, Diab, & Kulczycki, 2013). However, this actually contributed to the widening of socioeconomic disparities between sectarian groups due to the unevenly distributed increases in wealth and opportunities, in part precipitating the country's civil war (Nagel, 2002; Traboulsi, 2007).

The Lebanese government also ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1991, which committed the government legally to the framework set out by the UNCRC to protect and serve all children in the country, defined as any person who has yet to reach age 18 (Lebanese Parliament, 2002; UN General Assembly, 21 October 2015). Among its commitments, the UNCRC mandates for every youth age 17 or younger in an adopting country to have access to education. This step signifies a commitment to initiating and maintaining enrollment of all children in schools, regardless of nationality, heritage, religious decree, or citizenship status. However, as Chapter 4.1.1 outlined, this commitment is only a gesture and does not require a country to provide the equal access to education to which it pledges. For example, education among socioeconomic minorities remained low in the past, and among refugees remains low today. Nevertheless, in the years following Lebanon's ratification

of the UNCRC, school enrollment increased, especially among girls and children with special needs.

In addition to signing the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Lebanese government established the Higher Council for Childhood in 1994, run by the Ministry of Social Affairs, to report regularly to the United Nations about the progress made across the articles of the UNCRC in Lebanon. According to the council's website, "The Higher Council for Childhood is the national framework for complementary work between non-governmental organizations and the public sector as to child care and development in compliance with international conventions and especially, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in collaboration with international organizations" (Higher Council for Childhood, 2019). It was able to negotiate with donors in the past two decades to help children without access to school. Although registration and schooling fees were and still are considered by many in Lebanon to be minimal—approximately 130 thousand Lebanese pounds, or 80 U.S. dollars, annually—tens of thousands of children remained out of school, especially in rural areas and from large families, prior to the strides made by the Higher Council for Childhood. Providing available funds for Lebanese students from financially unstable families was another step toward ensuring that all children obtain equal access to public schools.

In 2015, 34 years after Lebanon ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Higher Council for Childhood's advocacy and negotiations with donors for underprivileged children unenrolled in school led to a declaration by the Lebanese government that public schools would provide free education to all children in the country, whether Lebanese or non-Lebanese, until grade nine. The initiative was funded and supported by United Nations agencies and international donors to cover the costs of students' school registration, parents'

fund fees, and school supplies such as textbooks, paper, and pencils. The specific agencies that sponsored it were UNHCR and UNICEF education initiatives, which are funded by the Governments of Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Italy, the Swedish Postcode Lottery, the Sheikha Jawaher/Big Heart Foundation, the LEGO Foundation and Kuwait. Public school students in grade 10 or above were required to pay fees prior to this initiative, but since its formation it has allowed children from low-income families of any background or grade to pursue scholarships from local municipalities to cover public schooling costs. Most children impacted by the initiative have been Syrian refugee youth, but more than half of Syrian children still remained out of school as of June 2018 after the initiative began (UNHCR, 2018a). Lebanon's Ministry of Education and Higher Education was also able to double the availability of school space for Syrian refugees by opening a second shift of classrooms that serve non-Lebanese youth (see Chapter 4.3.1 for more details).

These examples illustrate Lebanon's major official efforts to afford all youth in the country equal access to education. While these do not entail the institution of actual mechanisms and practices to give equal education access to all children in Lebanon, they are symbols of progress toward equal access to education; some have certainly contributed to increases in equal access to education in the country's last half-century, leading to wider gains in socioeconomic opportunity among sect groups—an important step toward reducing conflict in the country.

5.1.3 Nonsectarian Private School Options

A second trend that contributes to equal access to education significant for reductions in sectarian conflict is that a small but growing number of private schools in Lebanon claim nonsectarianism, purportedly opening their doors to students of any culture or sect to study there

without discrimination. Most nonsectarian private schools in Lebanon advertise themselves as international schools, which provide similar standards of schooling to university preparatory schools in countries such as France, the United States, or the United Kingdom.

As parents and teachers have become increasingly frustrated with private school options affiliated with sect communities, there has been an increasing demand for nonsectarian schools. One professor discussed the challenges of finding a nonsectarian private school for his children outside of Beirut. “Schools such as International College and American Community School have been around for decades, but there is limited space and they are in Beirut only,” he recalled. Ultimately, he was unable to find the type of school that he hoped for his children – a problem that his family and friends now still face with their children a decade later, but with increasing options every few years. Now more than 35 nonsectarian private schools exist across Lebanon, concentrated in urban areas and providing increased access to nonsectarian education. According to the director of one such school, “nonsectarian options are about understanding other people, understanding the other, and learning together. Parents want to bring their children to them. Teachers want to teach in them.” Against the backdrop of Lebanon’s highly sectarian education system, demand for such unique schooling is momentous, albeit slow.

Educators on the ground spoke to the importance of this steady shift toward more new private schools that claim nonsectarianism. “It’s really promising,” Lisa asserted, “Nonsectarian means letting any student study there. Anyone from any group can come. It is about understanding other people, not focusing on religions or anything else. You learn together. This is really, really different and very important.” Others at those schools noted that, while nonsectarianism could be claimed to an extent in public schools, they tend to have much lower quality education than in private schools. Professors I spoke with confirmed that nonsectarian

private schools are among the best schools in quality in the country, giving this option even more strength.

Furthermore, since most private nonsectarian schools in Lebanon are international schools, the curricula offered in these schools tend to focus on diversity, equal rights, and social justice. For example, Sabah shared pictures with me of activities that she did with her third-grade students centered on stereotypes and dismantling divisions. Through a series of lessons, activities, and projects, they learned about stereotyping from multimedia texts and shared stories of how they have been on the giving and receiving end of it themselves. Students also worked through kinesthetic activities that revealed how classroom, school, and societal divisions are so easily constructed and upheld. Students critically thought about the reasons why this is so common and the importance of being aware of it. They additionally did simulations for confronting unfamiliar difference in constructive ways, and for identifying stereotyping and pointing it out to friends. Finally, the unit culminated with projects that students did in small groups that gave them the opportunity to creatively conceptualize their ideas for creating more inclusive spaces in their school and in their community. Unlike public and private sectarian schools, private international schools such as Sabah's stray away from teaching stories, values, and information that are only associated with one religious community, instead emphasizing skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving necessary to navigate conflicting information and difference. Inclusive practices such as these contribute to conflict-reduction because they provide expanding access to quality education without inculcating divisive sectarian values prevalent in most public and sectarian-run private schools.

5.2 Spotlight on Social Inclusion

5.2.1.1 Social Inclusion

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, social inclusion through education differs from equal access in that inclusion reflects socioeconomic equity (UNESCO, 2013). In other words, social inclusion removes barriers to achievement in education for students from disadvantaged and minority communities. It furthermore enhances opportunities available and increases voice and the inclusion of cultural heritage through education (UN, 2016a). Finally, social inclusion increases the rights and services for disadvantaged students and groups through education rather than simply acknowledging them (Levitas et al., 2007). Lebanon's education sector development plan of 2015 delineated social inclusion as a necessary component of education and defined it as preventing social marginalization. In contrast, this study's participants didn't discuss social inclusion in terms of achievement as much as they focused on respecting children's differences, namely gender, religion, nationalities, ability, or socioeconomic status. According to a school director from southern Lebanon,

“It means in terms of boys and girls, in terms of education for disabled children, in terms of inclusion for minorities, for Palestinians, for Syrians. For example, inclusion, we ask, how can we include each group of children with any background more in schools? In classrooms? In engagement with learning and with classmates?”

As this excerpt shows, social inclusion is not only considered for children with disabilities, but is operationalized in terms of children from any and all backgrounds. Similarly, the following quote from the director of an NGO illustrates how social inclusion is connected to sociocultural heritage: *“Usually people speak about it, about children with disabilities. But actually, in our curriculum, we think about it as removing bias against groups and including*

perspectives and cultures for all, to make it inclusive.” Based on how participants operationalized this term, social inclusion is characterized in this study by policies and practices that bolster the sharing of diverse heritages, voices, and histories in schools. The following sections spotlight two factors that reduce conflict related to social inclusion; these are linguistic inclusion and “common thread” teaching approaches.

5.2.2 Linguistic Inclusion

One educational approach related to social inclusion that contributes to conflict-reduction through Lebanon’s education system is the country’s flexible language policy in schools. This allows the offering of varied and culturally appropriate language instruction. The official language of Lebanon is Arabic and the national curriculum only requires schools to teach the Arabic language, but a school may request to teach any other language it chooses. Multilingual education is the norm in schools across the country. English and French are among the most widely offered second languages beginning in elementary school, but according to participants I spoke with, languages from most minority groups can be found in Lebanese schools.

The linguistic inclusion that Lebanese education policy and curriculum allows is important in a number of ways. To paraphrase one Lebanese professor I interviewed, the purpose of bilingual education is inclusion that prepares and supports all children in the society for socioeconomic participation in the future. The relationship between language learning and socioeconomic success cannot be understated. There is a direct relationship between linguistic capital and economic and social capital (Bourdieu, 1991). Indeed, languages hold power in this world, and a person’s capacity to use languages can have immense impact on her or his opportunities and life outcomes. And in the multicultural, multilingual, tourist-driven context of

Lebanon, linguistic, economic, and social capital lead to better developmental, behavioral, emotional, and socioeconomic outcomes for individuals (Andary, 2013). Linguistic inclusion also attempts to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate education to minority students and supports cultural maintenance, classroom motivation, and identity formation of minority communities rather (Català, 2015), psychosocial development (Schoon, Parsons, Rush, & Law, 2010), and learning (Atkinson, 1987; Deller & Rinvold, 2002; Harbord, 1992).

For example, in addition to teaching the Arabic language and the English language, Armenian schools in Lebanon also teach the Armenian language. This prevents cultural attrition and supports positive identity formation. A second example I saw was an NGO school for Syrian refugees in the Beqaa Valley decreased the amount of English it teaches and increased the amount of Arabic instruction in order to optimize student learning and psychosocial development amid trauma recovery for young refugees. According to the NGO's academic director, "We try to keep up with the needs as needs change. An open policy like the language policy of the Lebanese government helps us achieve that." Culturally appropriate language instruction facilitates social inclusion because it honors the specific cultural backgrounds of students in schools by including their native language as a mode of instruction.

There are many other examples of how schools across Lebanon acknowledge the importance of student preparedness through varied language instruction. One public school I visited teaches Arabic to all students, then offers one track that teaches English and German, funded by the Lebanese government and the German Institute respectively, and another track that teaches French and Italian, funded by the Lebanese government and the Italian Ministry, respectively. According to the school's director, the purpose is to equip students in the best ways possible to build connections, have meaningful cross-cultural experiences, and obtain a job in the

future. Of course, another purpose is to attract students in such a competitive education market. Most schools offer at least two languages, none of which are compulsory, in addition to Arabic.

Culturally appropriate language offerings support students' identity development, motivation, and learning. Varied language instruction expands social, economic, and educational avenues for students' future participation. In these ways, inclusion can honor difference and increase opportunity, thereby increasing people's sense of belonging and strengthening social contract.

5.2.3 “Common Thread” Approaches

Among the factors that contribute to reducing conflict in Lebanon, ones that highlight the common threads between students have stood out to me as the most prevalent way that educators in Lebanon practice social inclusion. There are 71 separate instances in this study's data of participants describing examples of common thread instruction—more than any other approach. These lessons and approaches facilitate social inclusion by engaging and connecting students across sects through identifying similarities, common interests and challenges, and shared sets of principles and experiences. Indeed, a UNICEF study by Bush et al. (2000) concluded that a focus on shared values aids communities in peacebuilding across identity divisions. This section divides common-thread approaches into the following four strands, which I list in order of prevalence throughout my study's data: nation-building education; moral education tied to religious values; international, global, and multicultural education; and common experience education.

5.2.3.1 Education for Nation-Building

The first strand of common-thread approaches is nation-building education. There is an emphasis in Lebanese classrooms to connect students via shared national values while simultaneously strengthening nationalism. Central nationalistic topics most ubiquitous in classrooms aim to draw connections between concepts and themes that are generally valued and shared in Lebanon across sectarian differences. Teachers discuss themes that highlight the neutral and common national customs and characteristics treasured across sects in the country. By doing so, they aim to focus on the common threads that bind students together and that could potentially influence students to think of classmates and neighbors as interconnected through shared heritages and national features.

National customs, traditions, and country characteristics are commonly taught as a common-thread approach to social inclusion. For instance, Arabic teachers teach units centered on shared Lebanese holidays in their classes. They teach the histories and meanings of collective holidays such as New Years Day, Labor Day, and Independence Day. Others teach the cherished and influential musicians of Lebanon such as Fairuz and Wadiah El Safi. Geography and history teachers weave common thread narratives into topographical, archaeological, and historical lessons of the country, from cedar trees in the mountainous north to Phoenician ruins on the central coast to Roman temples of Baalbek in the eastern foothills of the Beqaa Valley. National and civic education is a common subject area aimed at implementing common-thread approaches tethered to national identity.

Nationalistic education is the most common form of “common thread” approaches. That is because it is generally agreed-upon across sects that these approaches in education are inclusive of everyone and, if they remain shallow enough, will not stir up controversy related to

politics or religion. Thus, education for nation-building aims to increase cohesion in the country across sectarian divisions by building a shared national identity among students.

5.2.3.2 Moral Education Tied to Shared Religious Values

The second strand of common-thread approaches is moral education. The common thread connecting students in moral education is typically a small set of values that are common across religious sects. This type of education tends to take place in religion classes. Religion class typically centers on the religion chosen by the school director and is approved by the Ministry of Education. One public school I visited was in a Sunni Muslim neighborhood, so most of the students were Sunni. When I asked teachers there about the religion class, Maryam said,

“The religion class here is Christian. It talks about it in general—about how you have to treat others. This is what the principal insists on, the director insists on. It’s not just for Christians. I am Muslim and I attended it twice. I felt that I was in an Islam class because the values are so similar. There are slight differences in the core...there are slight differences. But there are very common things. That is the point—to show students the common things between their religions and beliefs.”

Teachers at schools that focus their religious instruction on inculcating shared values expressed that they see great importance in teaching shared values across religions, but many noted how much more ideal this would be if religion classes would not focus on teaching only one religion. Requiring students to take a religion class that is misaligned with their own religious identities is in some ways inappropriate and exclusive (see Section 4.3.2 for further discussion on this). Parents could also become upset and the circumstances could lead to religiously-charged arguments in the school and in the community from students being required to attend a religion class that teaches a competing religion.

One optimist elementary public school teacher, Safiyyah, discussed how, from her perspective, the class helps to cultivate positive relations between students for the future, despite the diversity of faiths represented among the students at her public schools:

“Because of this class, my elementary students, they didn’t even know the differences between their religions. They thought that the cross and the crescent moon belonged to them both instead of one for Christians and one for Muslims. Some didn’t know the difference between a church and a mosque. It’s true that maybe it’s confusing for them and they have a lot of questions, but it’s so nice that they learn the similarities and they focus on those. And they can all connect to it with their beliefs.”

From this teacher’s perspective, the solidarity that the religion class’s shared values approach offers is beneficial and inclusive. Another teacher added,

“Students think they all share concepts in their religions and they are together in a beautiful and simple way. When they inevitably realize the differences, this class has already instilled that there are shared values and beliefs and we are not so different after all. Maybe it isn’t such a big deal if our religions are different, you see.”

These excerpts highlight how religious instruction that focuses on connecting students by identifying their common moral threads can be beneficial and in some ways better than segregating students based on differing religious beliefs, contributing to exacerbating differences. The great strength of moral education tied to shared religious values is indeed the emphasis on common values across different religions. Students lack without these spaces carved out in schools for constructive and inclusive opportunities to connect with one another and learn.

5.2.3.3 International, Global, and Multicultural Education

Implementing international, global, and multicultural education is a third common-thread approach that advances social inclusion. It does so by connecting all students to global issues and peoples through local and global learning and problem-solving. International, global, and multicultural education aims to reduce ignorance, thereby cultivating cultural understanding for

the students in a classroom. Overall, the focus is on learning facts about other cultures (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). This approach is based on the key assumption that prejudice is caused by ignorance and/or false understanding, so teaching students about culture should reduce prejudice and/or construct new understanding (Appl, 1996). As Banks (1995) theorized, if children learned prejudiced attitudes toward members of other cultural groups, then they can also learn positive attitudes through similar mechanisms. International programs are the cornerstone of international private schools in Lebanon; they are likewise components of some other types of private schools and public schools alike.

International, global, and multicultural lesson topics span from influential people around the world such as Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, and Nelson Mandela to global challenges, social justice, and human rights issues such as gender equality, the world water crisis, and global warming (Centre for Lebanese Studies, 2014). Other common themes that underpin topics include accepting others, tolerating difference, and respect for the other. Many schools I visited have extracurricular programs that connect students in Lebanon with students in countries such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Japan, India, Egypt, Palestine, and the United States through virtual exchange programs. Students learn about other cultures, leading to new questions and slow restructurings of concepts about people of other cultures as they build new schemata about groups of people around the world, but not necessarily in Lebanon.

Alongside the positive aspects of using international and global education with multicultural components as a common thread educational tool, teachers also discussed its shortcomings. Although students learn about other cultures and can change their minds about them, this openness to the “other” does not extend to understandings about their own classmates or neighbors. Maryam said, “we can see that our students come to respect the traditions and the

weird things others have in other countries better than accepting his, just, his own classmate.” Other teachers celebrated the millions of curriculum dollars spent on building these programs that can cultivate more open-mindedness among students to learn about people in cultures that seem foreign or exotic to them; nevertheless, they noted that a curiosity and respect for others in their own community or country does not arise as an outcome.

For example, Nida and Zara, teachers at different schools, explained in separate interviews the increased prevalence of scenario-based learning in the classroom. Its purpose is to teach tolerance and human rights, especially in international schools, with the ultimate aim being to change students’ perceptions and behaviors across sects to be more tolerant themselves. In Nida’s school, students learned about the U.S. civil rights movement in great detail. In addition to projects students completed on the topic, they also acted out many scenarios set historically and today as members of different social and racial groups in the U.S. Similarly, students in Zara’s school completed units about Mahatma Gandhi and Rosa Parks. They, too, completed many activities that asked them to act out, draw, or write out their responses to inequitable and socially unjust situations, such as those set in apartheid South Africa. Students in both schools trumpeted to their classmates the importance of respect and equality, acting out scenarios across racial and ethnic lines with intense respect and articulating responses to injustice like well-seasoned civil rights warriors. None of this prevented students from disrespecting one another in their own classrooms and school, though, which remained steadfast across sectarian lines.

Researchers such as Turner and Brown (2008) have pointed out the shortcomings of education that relies on multicultural pedagogies as a transformative approach, noting the limitations inherent to teaching information *about* other cultures. Multicultural education that views students as passive recipients who can therefore easily dismiss, reject, distort, or forget

information taught. It can also reinforce stereotypes about groups. Experimental studies (Bigler, 1999; Turner & Brown, 2008) further suggest that this approach often fails to reduce prejudice in the classroom.

Despite its popularity and reputation as necessary, the extent of this approach's potentialities as a springboard for conflict-reduction across sectarian divisions hold limitations and is therefore insufficient; nevertheless, it may be a critical foundational layer for intercultural competency. In a classroom with conflict stemming from or exacerbated by cultural diversity, multicultural education may therefore be an imperative starting point rather than comprehensive approach to alleviating hostility and increasing prosocial community among students. As I will discuss in Chapter 6, the most transformative classrooms employ multicultural education as a complement to more critical approaches that can penetrate student understandings of diversity more deeply for increased intercultural competency and decreased negative biases.

5.2.3.4 Common Experience Education

The fourth strand of common thread approaches consistently present in the data is common experience education. As a specialist at UNESCO explained, common experience education “finds bases to be together in informal and meaningful ways.” Although data for this study suggests that common experience education is the least common type of common-thread approach in education because it is impractical and costly, it also seems to hold the greatest potential for positive transformation among students of differing sect groups. Collaborative experiences that educators associated with common thread education for social inclusion had two core features: they first combine democratic planning and decision-making, and second, they include problem-solving of shared local or societal problems through collaborative volunteering.

Democratic planning and decision-making, the first important feature of common experience education, recognizes the agency of students through opportunities to co-construct projects that are both individually and collectively meaningful to them and their communities. As I discussed in 4.3.3, this is an key component of building social contract. Gutmann (1987), political scientist and president of the University of Pennsylvania, also pointed out that people's different ways of understanding the source of their moral commitment to democratically-arranged educational endeavors can be compatible and constructive when approached with the goal of finding consensus approaches and goals regarding courses of action. Shereen explained how she was in shock the first time she witnessed secondary school students employing democratic processes, or steps that included the voice of each student, across sectarian divisions to plan a shared experience. "Some Sunni, some Shia, Christians, a Druze student...they said 'Now we are going to solve problems of suffering that are important.' They joined one another...doing it democratically was the best way for them to learn conflict resolution." They interviewed a mixture of people from different confessional communities in the surrounding area and represented them by collaboratively planning a school initiative to support refugees in the community. As this teacher and others I interviewed pointed out, the best problem-solving projects necessitate that students in diverse groups employ strategies such as dialogue, compromise, and conflict resolution for reaching agreement.

The second important feature of common experience education that contributes to conflict-reduction is collaborative volunteering, not only connecting participants to a problem and a solution in a community through service, but also binding participants to one another through the shared experience. As Sumayra explained, "focusing on things that are common among students of all sects, all socioeconomic groups, when they identify community problems

that they all suffer from or that affects them all, they see that they are all responsible together.” Layla emphasized, “Just having this common experience, one that is meaningful and memorable and positive and transformative...I see this really builds empathy and caring.” Shared experience of suffering and of responsibility, when combined, can be a strong impetus for both action and the development of empathy.

Examples of common experience education are abundant in Lebanon. In the early 1990s, during the country’s transition from civil war, schools implemented a program to bus kids across the war’s front line that divided the conflicting sides, from East Beirut to West Beirut and from West Beirut to East Beirut. This project aimed to increase contact through joint visits to sites of destruction in one another’s neighborhoods and culminated in service projects across communities. This was often the first time each child had been in direct contact with a peer of a sect group from another side of the war. Teachers described how, prior to these projects, students harbored extreme negative assumptions, animosity, and fear toward the other group. “Students changed every time,” described Fatima, a teacher of 30 years who is now a professor of education. “They learned empathy for the other students. They made friends with other sects.” This example highlights the importance of students connecting and constructing a common positive experience together. Shared experiences that combine democratic planning and decision-making with collaborative volunteering could decrease enmity between members of historically divided groups and can even develop compassion toward those they were previously taught to mistrust and hate.

In a more recent example, a public school struggled with teenage boys from different sect groups fighting on a daily basis. “They had the mentality like, ‘I’m the boss and I’m better than you,’” explained the school’s director. The school struggled with these students’ feuds for years.

Many had given up on the students, but the principal explained how he and his colleagues finally tried something that worked, “We planned projects that these trouble students could be proud of and put their energy into. That also brought them together on common ground.” The boys were given the autonomy to choose together what their project would be. Since they all shared disgust and concern at the trash crisis in the country, they decided to lead clean-up and trash pile-up projects in their neighborhood. The fighting dissipated at the school and to everyone’s surprise, the boys not only remained friends, but became school leaders as they transitioned from the school’s intermediate grades to secondary.

In a third example, an outreach specialist at an NGO that specializes in peacebuilding and peacekeeping explained how collaborative experiences are the most necessary culminating projects throughout their year-long extracurricular program that matches schools across sects with one another. The more than 2000 students involved organize and implement projects in small groups throughout the duration of the school year that embody the principles of democracy, service, and peacebuilding they learn from learning experiences centered on peacebuilding, reconciliation, respect, and equality.

As a final example, a UNESCO representative shared a simple and powerful project like the three above as an example of common experience education for social inclusion and peacebuilding. In it, Lebanese families of different religions go camping together. They have also arranged for Lebanese families to camp with Palestinian families, and they are now arranging for Lebanese families to go with Syrian families. During camp excursions, participants plan and implement collaborative service projects.

As with the other examples, common experience education that includes components of democratic decision-making and service weave a common thread that connects individuals to

one another across contrasting sectarian fabric. In a place where progress toward conflict-reduction seems improbable or impossible, common experiences through education reify the possibility that sectarian conflict can be influenced for the better by people working together.

5.3 Spotlight on Social Contract

5.3.1.1 Social Contract

Social contract has been defined classically as an agreement of moral responsibility between a country's government and its citizens (Locke, 2003). It delineates the minimum contractual elements for mutual contentment between government and citizens. It is measured by the gap between citizens' expectations and the perceived delivery of services and protection from government structures (Murshed & Tadjoeeddin, 2007). UNDP (2014) synthesized literature on social contract and reduced it conceptually to a trust scale—a spectrum of trust/distrust between a state and society. Simply put with regards to education, social contract is built by a government providing adequate and safe opportunities for educational and job attainment and citizens accordingly following laws and paying taxes (Horne & Sherington, 2010; Tienda, 2017).

I found that social contract was operationalized by this study's participants in more diverse ways than the classical definition establishes. Due to lack of experience with a reciprocal, trustworthy government (see Chapter 4.3 for elaboration), this study's participants focused on social contract horizontally, between members of different sect communities and teachers and parents, and vertically, between school directors and teachers, and teachers and students.

This section highlights four main mechanisms, strategies, and approaches that contribute to the strengthening of the social contract for conflict-reduction through education. Participants

made it clear that the only mechanism for bolstering social contract that the government delivers in public schools are protections that provide a sense of security. One public school teacher captured this common sentiment: “The only trust that is built between the government through education is probably only the benefits for public school teachers...everything else makes people not trust them.” As shown by this idea, participants for this study defined social contract in terms of the positive implications of relationship-building; however, they also defined it by its absence. According to one professor, “All these things, these things that undermine the purposes of education and what schools are supposed to serve—this shows a lack of social contract.” Splintered social contract was defined by principles or unlawful acts that citizens find neglectful and incoherent by the government, which builds antagonism and mistrust.

While the first mechanism delineated in findings related to social contract in this chapter exists in public schools and aligns with the traditional definition of social contract, defined by OECD (2008) as a “dynamic agreement between state and society on their mutual roles and responsibilities” (p. 17). The second, third, and fourth contrastingly exist in NGO and private school settings; these are therefore not associated with the government and do not contribute to building social contract between citizens and the state. I include them here as examples of how non-government education bodies build social contract with those whom they serve, and to show how public schools could implement practices that would both build social contract and contribute to mitigating sectarian conflict. Transformative and powerful examples from private schools and NGOs illustrate opportunities that are ready and proven ways for Lebanon’s government to make strides to cultivate peace through the development of social contract in public schools. The following sections shine light on four factors that reduce conflict related to

social contract; these are teacher protections, opportunities for teachers and students to exercise choice and influence, opportunities for reconciliation, and opportunities for capacity-building.

5.3.2 Protections that Provide Teachers a Sense of Security

The first mechanism that participants associated with bolstering social contract was protections that provide a sense of security. The most prominent examples of this in Lebanon's school system are the unparalleled protections in the form of benefits and job security that teachers in public schools are afforded. Public school educators associate these protections with a mutual trust with and loyalty to the government.

Public school teachers receive many protections from the Ministry of Education that teachers in private schools do not. For example, full-time public-school teachers have long-term job stability, they maintain consistent salaries, and are paid on a regular, monthly basis. If they or the school is unsatisfied or sees the teacher as a bad fit for the school, the Ministry of Education transfers the teacher to a different public school. Private school teachers, on the other hand, are paid inconsistently and rarely, usually on a yearly basis. They can also be fired at any time and without clear reason. Public school educators have benefits such as paid time off and medical coverage for all members of their families, including their parents, whereas the benefits for private school teachers are on a short-term, contract-by-contract basis and often do not include medical coverage. Finally, public school teachers are required to pass a rigorous exam exemplifying the expertise they hold in their discipline, which is not necessarily a requirement in private schools. Due to these differences, working for the government in public schools is generally deemed a respectable and highly desirable job. Protections that provide a sense of

security play a major role in the strong social contract between the Lebanese government and public-school educators.

5.3.3 Opportunities to Exercise Choice and Influence

A second set of approaches that strengthens social contract through education is opportunities, most prevalently in private schools, for school directors, teachers, parents of students, and students to exercise choice and influence. Ibrahim and Alkire (2007), in a paper supported by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and published in an issue of Oxford Development Studies, proposed choice and influence as indicators for agency and empowerment. There is a dynamic relationship between choice and influence. As Sen (1999) noted, choice “enhances the ability of people to help themselves, and also to influence the world” (p. 152). Indeed, the more freedom of choice a person has, the more influence and satisfaction she or he reports to feel. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2016) affirmed these connections and has related them to progress in human development. Repression and restriction signal a buckling of social contract and likewise threaten social contract. Conversely, opportunities for choice and influence indicate development, stability, and contribute to an increasingly robust social contract.

Prominent examples of opportunities for choice and influence through K-12 education in Lebanon often manifest as the freedom for school staff, most commonly in private schools, to initiate projects, trips, and learning experiences for both educators and for students. Opportunities such as these highlight the agency of those planning them and bolster the developing capacities of the participants. These opportunities likewise build trust with students and parents for offering meaningful experiential learning opportunities. When projects and trips

are planned as collaboration across sect communities (as I described in detail in subsection 4.2.2.4 centered on common experience education), social contract is cultivated across sectarian divides. This strengthening of social contract across sectarian groups is a profound contributor to conflict-reduction.

A second example of how opportunities for choice and influence can build social contract came from the founder of a private international school and fierce advocate of open and free experiential education. She collaborated with other administrators and teachers at their school to establish an internal system for staff to advance. The founder shared,

“Teachers ran with it. Students thrived more than ever! Staff advanced and were energized to share and learn from each other, with each other. They were proud of the progress they made and happy because the program’s freedom was a sign that they were respected. It had high fidelity.”

Teachers there collaboratively built avenues for internal knowledge and expertise to be recognized and shared. Educators were given no restrictions and were encouraged to think, teach, and work in creative ways that felt meaningful and empowering to them. Teachers democratically decided that contributions should reflect their areas of expertise and passions, and that they could respond to their students’ needs.

A third example of choice and influence contributing to social contract took place in a number of private schools and during after-school NGO-led enrichment programs. After learning about democratic processes in civil government, students worked in groups to learn about, discuss, and reflect upon problem issues in Lebanon’s society. Groups brainstormed ideas and built plans for how government could address the issues. They then organized arguments and went together to the Lebanese Parliament to meet with government representatives. They presented their proposals and discussed with representatives the strengths and challenges to their plan. Planning and sharing their personal ideas for the future stability of the country was an

opportunity to exercise choice and influence with members of the government. By exploring possibilities through democratic civic engagement with representatives, students felt heard and social contract was fortified.

As these examples illustrate, opportunities to exercise choice and influence that build social contract through education in Lebanon were reported by participants as moderately prevalent in private schools. Stakeholders at all levels in some private schools—from governing bodies to school directors to students and their parents—are coming to understand that increased opportunities for choice and influence translate to trust, loyalty, progress, and for those on the business side, revenue. The government increasing instances for agency and empowerment as generated by choice and influence in public schools would have similar impacts by building loyalty between citizens and the government. This would additionally help to draw more students to public schools, increasing constituent representation in public schools, which could lead to increased quality in public schools.

5.3.4 Opportunities for Reconciliation

A third way that educators can build social contract through education is through opportunities for reconciliation among students. Participants defined reconciliation for social contract as building or restoring positive relations with members of other sect groups and coming to terms with the civil war. Opportunities for reconciliation are highly uncommon in both public and private school classrooms; they tend to occur through projects and initiatives implemented by NGOs that focus on peacebuilding during out-of-school time and in extracurricular spaces. The paucity of reconciliatory practices in formal education settings derives from three main trends: first, activities centered on politics or religion, especially as they intersect with sectarian

conflict, are not addressed in classrooms (see Chapter 4.2.1 for elaboration); second, there is no consensus on the causes of conflict or how to handle it moving forward, especially in classrooms; and third, reconciliatory experiences are quite difficult to plan and are not viewed as requisite to or aligned with the national curriculum.

Opportunities for reconciliation that do arise in K-12 education settings tend to have great value as powerful, transformative learning experiences for participants. In programs implemented by a twenty-three-year-old NGO that specializes in interfaith projects for reconciliation, people of all ages, varying denominations, and faith communities meet weekly together to teach one another about each other's religion, to pray together, to celebrate one another, and to collaborate together to better their communities through service projects. According to a founding member, the purposes of the program are reconciliation, respect, and love between members and across sects to cultivate peace for the future of the country and to reflect the teachings of their faith. Members explained how this is one of the only open and free spaces dedicated to facilitating interfaith dialogue and reconciliation in the country. In the beginning, participants naturally have discrimination and criticism in the back of their minds that they bring. Slowly, they weed out prejudices so that respect, healing, friendship, and faith grow in their place.

In another program implemented by an NGO that specializes in inclusive, active citizenship and peacebuilding, students learn from a series of activities about the process of reconciliation. Then, students themselves have the opportunity to practice reconciliation with the past and with members of other sects. In one activity, students learn from war survivors how they reconciled with neighbors of other religious affiliations after Lebanon's civil war ended. As the program director explained,

“To reconcile, we have to know what really happened. We have to have interviews with people who lived the war. So here they met...actually in every session, in the program’s section of historical memory, students meet with war survivors to engage in dialogue about the reconciliation process and how the war and these conflicts really affected them negatively.”

Through these lessons, students learn from firsthand testimonies in a documentary and from in-person visits about the destructiveness of war, the reasons to avoid it in the future. The reconciliation process that people underwent to resolve personal conflicts with neighbors of other sect groups after the war ended.

Other units in the two-year long program that center on reconciliation include three additional documentaries with accompanying lessons. One features four people who walked against the current during the war by working to protect members of other religions and embodying reconciliation through their actions. For example, the first documentary features how a priest protected Muslims during the Lebanese civil war. The second documentary is about an Imam and a Christian pastor who collaborate to assist with the reconciliation process among communities in Lebanon. The third provides information about religions and is presented during a unit that centers on knowing “the other” on a personal basis and building understanding together, even across different sects with troubled pasts. In addition to these learning opportunities, students practice reconciliation through role plays and cross-sectional small group projects.

In another project executed by the same NGO, Syrian refugees age seven to fifteen are brought together in Lebanon or in Syria, depending on their location, to reconcile experiences of fear and victimization across divided groups. The program begins with psychosocial support and education on peace and resilience. It focuses on reconnecting children with their own emotions and understanding those emotions, and reconnecting with people and places of safety to heal, helping to reconcile memories of violence and insecurity. It starts with the self and teaches how

to identify their feelings. It then teaches about diversity in Syria so students learn about common values and the importance of reconciliation. The program director noted,

“One of the first martyrs in war is values, so focusing on them is very important for reconciliation. Corruption, theft, all of that happens, so during war it becomes a society that gets used to the loss of values. We do this to remind the kids of the basic values, and through that also show that these values are common between Christians and Muslims and all the groups.”

To conclude, this program teaches how to believe in themselves and to reconstruct trust between communities. It has run since 2015 with evaluations and renovations every year and had reached more than 2000 children by 2018. In addition to the transformative reconciliation that children in the program experience, “the 180 educators involved, they themselves feel the transformation, the educators themselves,” explained the director. She gave an example of an educator who joined the program because he knew he needed reconciliation himself. All of his brothers were killed by members of another village in Syria. Through the project, he realized that he doesn’t want to live with revenge and hatred in his heart anymore. Reconciliation with warring sides and with events of the past propel people in Lebanon toward both inner and interpersonal peace. As one girl who participated in this program commented, “before, I used to grow war. Now I only grow flowers.” Shining light on education for reconciliation blossoms peace within and among people.

Although these examples are approved by the Ministry of Education, they are not affiliated with the government and therefore do not necessarily build social contract between the Lebanese government and its citizens. Transformative education for reconciliation, if adopted as a part of Lebanon’s national curriculum, could play a pivotal role in reducing sectarian conflict and increasing stability, transforming the country.

5.3.5 Capacity-Building

A fourth way that social contract can be built through education is through capacity-building. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2012) defined capacity-building as “the process of helping local actors to acquire and use information relevant to successful policy implementation” (p.2); it was defined similarly by this study’s participants as a student or educator becoming equipped with the skills, abilities, and resources for meeting broad goals in education. Investments in capacity-building such as those from schools, school directors, private school funders, or the Ministry of Education signal trust and partnership to the teachers and students impacted by capacity-building initiatives, often leading to a more sustainable and interconnected approach to service implementation and education (National Center for Biotechnology Information, 2009). Capacity-building generates and sustains education quality and contributes to building social contract (Horne & Sherington, 2010; Tienda, 2017).

This study’s participants describe how capacity-building in private schools strengthens social contract with students, teachers, and administration; this points to the opportunity the government has for building social contract if it were to invest more in capacity-building in public schools. Participants also reported that opportunities for capacity-building in Lebanese public schools are lacking compared to what one finds in private schools. Two examples below illustrate these points.

In the first example, teachers at International Baccalaureate schools describe the focus of private international schools is to build the critical capacities of students for the future. As Iman explains,

“The national curriculum is not trying to make students think critically in classrooms, to make choices and all that. That they don’t invest in building students’ capacities in public schools to, to be successful in the future, in the long-term, after high school for example. And for me and many of my colleagues, it’s all politically-oriented. So from that point, I don’t know how much the Lebanese government would want students to be IB students. Because international schools can set additional curriculum. Because it’s all about developing inquiry skills, questioning, democratic problem-solving, communication skills, decision-making together, negotiating for mutual benefit...that’s never gonna happen in public schools. International schools build these capacities for global citizenship, global success. I see it only in some private classrooms. It builds this trust between students. They and their families, it builds trust with the school and the teacher. But not, it doesn’t build trust with the government in the sense of social contract. That is because it’s not connected to public schools at all.”

This excerpt highlights the clear connection between investment in students’ higher-order thinking and trust-building. Private international schools in Lebanon play a prominent role in building social contract among certain students and between students and teachers. However, the lack of investment in capacity-building from the Lebanese government in public schools makes people like Iman skeptical as to how much the government has the best interests of students in mind, weakening her trust in government.

Fatima, a former teacher and current school director and professor in the south of Lebanon, the area most associated with Shia communities, elaborated on the connection between capacity-building and cultivating social contract. In one of her examples, she described how an initiative, originally centered on capacity-building for school staff, trickled down and led to a strengthening of social contract with staff, students, and the community. In the private Mabarrat school where she worked, teachers in the school were constantly trying to problem-solve through challenging classroom problems as they arose. They had a lack of training in making sense of research in education to find solutions for issues in their classrooms. The school’s director explained, “they were struggling with problems that were solved, like, 10 years or 20 years ago! But they didn’t know how to find research or how to read it to apply to their classrooms.” She set

up an initiative for teachers at her school to build their capacities for learning about, sharing, and implementing research-grounded practices that addressed their classroom struggles.

They organized a school-wide capacity-building initiative to equip teachers to find, read, and apply research findings in their classrooms. They also connected teachers with university professors in education who could answer questions they had about research findings in certain areas such as classroom management or assessment. As teachers continued facing challenges, they increasingly employed literature review and problem-solving strategies and formed discussion groups in the school. The investment of time, practical resources, and support from administration and the investment of time and energy from teachers greatly increased trust between the two groups. The initiative was so successful that teachers extended the initiative to students in their classrooms. They taught students how to identify problems, ask questions, seek scholarly answers, sift through materials, and choose appropriate solutions. Now, horizontal and vertical relationships at the school are all stronger due to the schoolwide capacity-building project that involved collaboration, problem-solving, and personal investment. This example from Fatima shows the direct connection between opportunities for capacity-building and the bolstering of social contract.

Although it is common for the Ministry of Education and public schools to offer trainings and one-day teacher development workshops, teachers describe them overall as weak, infrequent, and impractical. Public schools do little to enhance social contract between citizens and government, signaled by the comparatively lower quality education in public schools. An emphasis on building teacher capacities to face their greatest challenges in the classroom and student capacities to face their biggest challenges for the future is necessary to build social contract that would lay the groundwork for reducing sectarian conflict.

6.0 Illuminating the Future

6.1 Study Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between education factors and sectarian conflict in Lebanon to deepen the discussion about sectarian and consociational structures and practices throughout Lebanon and to identify ways to reduce conflict and increase peace through both formal and informal education. With this purpose in mind, the following research questions guided my research design and analysis:

1. How do education stakeholders operationalize equal access, inclusion, and social contract through education?
2. What features in K-12 education contexts exacerbate sectarian conflict in Lebanon?
3. What features in K-12 education contexts contribute to conflict-reduction in Lebanon?

For data collection, I conducted interviews over two fieldwork stays in Lebanon in 2018. I conducted interviews with 13 private school teachers, 14 public school teachers, seven school directors (principals), five university professors who specialize in education and/or education policy, two education specialists from transnational organizations in Lebanon (UNICEF and UNESCO), and seven representatives from NGOs that specialize in education and outreach for peace and tolerance. Educators I interviewed were comprised of a mixture of public and private school teachers who identified with an assortment of religious and political parties and teach at a variety of different types of schools throughout Lebanon, including private schools with Sunni, Shia, Maronite, Armenian, and Evangelical affiliations, schools that claim nonsectarianism, and

schools for Syrian refugees. I also conducted school visits, analyzed curriculum and instruction documents, and analyzed documents outlining education purposes and policies in Lebanon.

This study was grounded in ethnographic and narrative inquiry methodologies because they are context-specific, inquiry-driven, and attempt to resist reductionistic and esoteric analyses of complex phenomena by offering “thick” descriptions of the problem and inquiry context (Geertz, 1974). Unlike research using correspondence theory of truth, which analyzes controlled and simplified variables of a non-complex phenomenon, ethnographers devote themselves to capturing multifaceted and contextual descriptions of reality and to examining related implications. Hence, rather than statistical correspondence, the relation between propositions and truth in narrative inquiry is coherence that highlights and lends insight to lived experience and phenomena in complex circumstances. This is particularly suited to my study’s aim to propel open dialogue about the complexities of consociationalism and how it intersects with education in Lebanon.

My use of narrative inquiry driven by coherence theory also aligns with the purpose and questions I set out for this study as the methodology allows a focus on perceptions and lived experience as they intersect with historical, cultural, and political contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Through narrative inquiry using coherence theory, this study is a venture of making visible and heard the complex and internal understandings among educators in Lebanon for individuals interested in education and/or conflict and stability in Lebanon. Teachers, in particular, have unique insights into how ethnicities, religions, histories, socioeconomic groups, policies, and political beliefs intersect and manifest in the everyday lives of individuals together in both diverse and segregated classroom contexts. Narrative inquiry grounded in coherence

theory of truth was therefore an imperative approach for inquiring into perceptions related to this confluence of factors that contribute to conflict-reduction.

For data collection and analysis of conflict factors in education, I presented and used an analysis framework I synthesized based on previous research (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Murshed & Tadjoeeddin, 2007) that delineated factors leading to ethnic, sectarian, and civil war. The analysis framework is influenced conceptually by the dividers and connectors analysis approach to conflict and peace created by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (2012). This framework's indicators were also formative in my crafting of guiding questions for data collection.

I also found “bright spots” approach to conflict assessment by USAID (2012) to be illuminating. It seeks to identify, support, and scale up bright spots, or instances that bring about “sustainable behavioral and social change” across potential or historically divided groups. I revised the model by conceptualizing three lenses to use for examination—equal access, social inclusion, and strong social contract—to shine light on factors in K-12 education contexts that contribute to conflict-reduction in Lebanon. I likewise examined the inverse to these concepts—unequal access, social exclusion, and weak social contract—to identify and describe factors in K-12 education contexts that are “in the dark,” or exacerbate sectarian conflict in Lebanon.

I first examined structures, trends, and inadequacies in K-12 education contexts that precipitate and exacerbate sectarian conflict in Lebanon. Findings centered on unequal access to education pointed to the sectarian structure of the school system and inadequate access to free and compulsory education. Data suggested that two major factors related to social exclusion in education contribute to sustained sectarian conflict: policies that prohibit dialogue about religion and politics in school relevant to students' everyday lives, and minimum power-sharing and

multi-stakeholder engagement in education decision-making. Three major factors that exacerbate conflict by weakening social contract in Lebanon include the misuse of political power among elites to benefits themselves and members of their affiliated sect, a contradiction between curriculum content and reality, and a lack of autonomy for students and teachers.

I also spotlighted mechanisms, strategies, and approaches that contribute to reducing sectarian conflict through equal access, social inclusion, and social contract in education. Two factors related to equal access that contribute to conflict-reduction in Lebanon include the government's stated commitment to free compulsory education and a rise in nonsectarian private school options. Related to social inclusion, two factors that contribute to conflict-reduction are linguistic inclusion and the prevalence of teaching approaches centered on common threads that bind students across sectarian differences. Finally, four factors that contribute to conflict-reduction through education that are related to social contract include teacher protections, opportunities among educators and students in some schools to exercise choice and influence, opportunities for reconciliation in some after-school NGO-facilitated programs, and capacity-building. See Figure 6 below for a visual representation of all of these major factors that influence sectarian conflict and conflict-reduction through K-12 education in Lebanon.

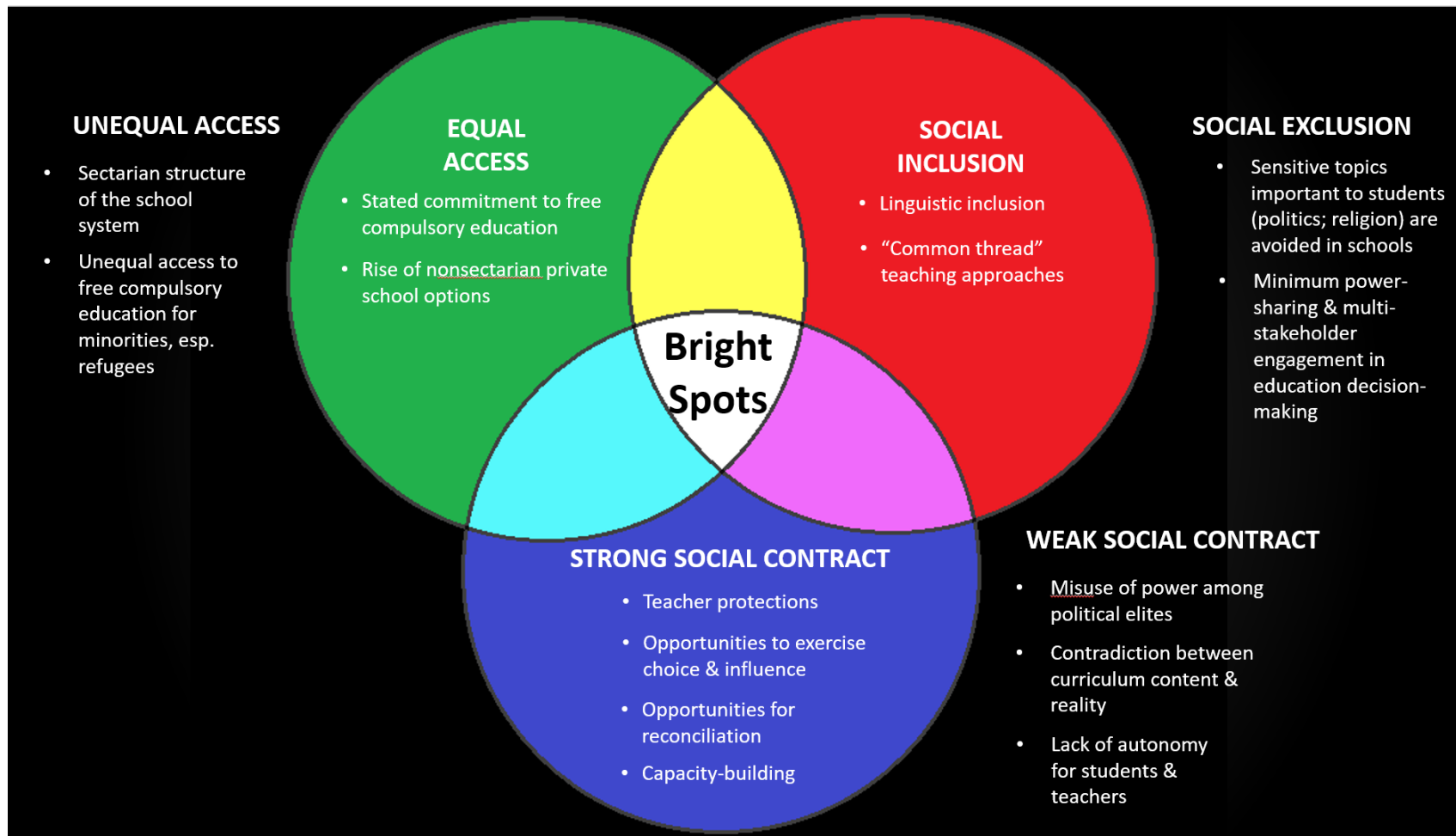


Figure 7: Summary of major factors that influence sectarian conflict and conflict-reduction through K-12 education in Lebanon

6.2 Conclusions from Findings

6.2.1 Shedding Light on the Role of Lebanon's Consociational Government Structures in Sustaining Sectarian Conflict through Education

All seven major factors in education that I found to exacerbate sectarian conflict originate from the level of national government in Lebanon. These include: (1) the sectarian structure of the school system; (2) unequal access to free compulsory education; (3) the avoidance of topics related to government and politics; (4) minimum power-sharing and multi-stakeholder engagement in education decision-making; (5) corrupt education decision-making among political leaders; (6) the contradiction between curriculum and reality; and (7) a lack of autonomy for educators and students.

All seven factors stem from Lebanon's modern interpretation of its consociational system of government, established in the Ta'if Agreement. The premise of the country's consociational structures outlined in the text of the Ta'if was to institute power-sharing among leaders of different Lebanese communities. This system was important for managing conflict amid the country's divided minority groups and the region's instability upon its establishment in 1989 (Barclay, 2007). As Chapter 2.3 discussed, consociationalism stands out in many ways for its potential strengths. Authors such as Lijphart (1999) and Noel (2005) argued that decentralizing mechanisms in consociational governments help increase autonomy, representation, and stability among a country's feuding subgroups. In this way, local voices and views can be considered and included (Fisman & Gatti, 2002; Nickson, 1995; Norris, 2008).

However, other research shows that, despite strengths in consociational systems, decentralized systems in consociational countries seldom reach the potential benefits that decentralization's transformative advantages might facilitate. However, as the case of Lebanon seems to indicate, some of the country's consociational government structures originally instituted to contain sectarian conflict now and always may have contributed to sustaining sectarian conflict through inequality, exclusion, and weakening of social contract in education.

Some of my findings confirm previous findings centered on the potential downfalls of consociationalism. First, as Whitty and Seddon (1994) found, decentralization in education tends to lead to disproportionate power among elites rather than power-sharing among stakeholders at various levels. Findings from the current study confirm this for the case of Lebanon, illustrating how consociationalism there has led to minimum power-sharing and multi-stakeholder engagement in education decision-making. The current study also finds that consociational government structures have led to the misuse of power among political elites to make decisions to benefit themselves and members of their affiliated sect rather than to do what is best for all. In this way, the Lebanese government acts to undermine rather than strengthen social contract, an essential factor in conflict-reduction. Disproportionate power among elites in Lebanon has also driven a lack of autonomy among educators and students in Lebanon, also weakening the social contract and threatening the country's stability.

Second, previous research by Lewis and Nakagawa (1995) pointed out that decentralized control can easily lead to low-quality education because political stakeholders do not usually have the best interests of all, or even most, students and teachers in mind. Two findings from the current study suggest this to be true for Lebanon. My finding centered on the common misuse of power among elites to make corrupt decisions related to education supports the idea that political

leaders in Lebanon's consociational government do not have the best interests of students and teachers in mind. My finding centered on the continuing sectarian structure of the private school system that maintains low-quality education in public schools, sustained by political elites with ties to certain private sectarian schools, also supports the concern that Lebanon's consociational mechanisms do not lead political leaders to support the best interests of students and teachers.

Third, previous research by Suny and The American Council of Learned Societies (1993) explained how territorial governance in ethnofederalist systems encourages heightened ethnic and religious identification, accentuating intergroup differences and exacerbating conflict. The current study's findings that the Lebanese school system's sectarian structures further set sectarian groups against one another in market competition for students and political support, which has led to increased dogmatism and religious extremism in schools, aligns with these previous findings.

Additionally, I offer three findings that add new insights to the body of literature on consociationalism. First, Lebanon's consociational government is influential in creating and sustaining unequal access to education, especially for refugees in the country, in order to maintain the status quo for political parties, sects, and elites. Therefore, consociational mechanisms are used as a crutch to sustain power structures and policies that benefit some and exclude others.

Second, Lebanon's form of consociational government has influenced schools to adopt a strict policy against discussion or instruction about politics and religion in schools. There is a need for a more durable solution than consociationalism for how Lebanon can move forward as a country that needs to be increasingly unified across sectarian divisions. Otherwise, policies that silence people in schools and that forbid constructive understanding of issues most relevant to

students' everyday lives will remain; this contributes to sustaining sources of conflict that threaten the country's stability.

Third, Lebanon's consociational system perpetuates sectarian divisions and helps to highlight the stark contradictions between curriculum and reality in the country. Core values such as peace, justice, equality, and tolerance are taught in Lebanon's weekly civics education courses, but students interpret lessons about how to confront conflict as confusing, unrealistic, and laughable. This contradiction between the curricula lessons and reality weakens social contract and fails to inculcate values and teach realistic strategies for the country's future conflict resolutions.

These findings do not necessarily point to the inadequacies of consociationalism, but illuminate the limitations of Lebanon's current form of consociationalism. Deliberate, strategic, and brave changes to the country's form of consociationalism could light the path to transformations toward increasing equality, inclusion, and social contract to reduce sources of sectarian conflict and set the country on a path toward durable peace and stability. The following delineates suggestions for how various stakeholders in education could address the most threatening aspects to equal access, social inclusion, and social contract of Lebanon's education system.

6.2.2 Examining the Properties of Bright Spots

The previous chapter examined the eight major factors that contribute to reducing sectarian conflict through education in Lebanon. Drawing a focus to the convergence of equal access, social inclusion, and social contract makes it possible to examine the properties of bright spots, or key approaches to conflict-reduction through education. Instances of practices wherein

equal access, social inclusion, and social contract overlap to create a bright spot in education have four shared properties.

First, bright spots equip a diversity of students to collaborate equally across difference. The most transformative collaborations bridge students across socioeconomic disparities, sectarian divisions, and ethno-religious divergences. Second, bright spot approaches support the shared interests of those involved, but crucially, they also foster a constructive space to negotiate unshared goals. Collaborating in light of similarities is essential, but is far easier than collaborating across difference. Initiatives that honor the individual heritages and perspectives of individuals while empowering them to navigate these differences is a pivotal aspect of reducing conflict. Third, bright spots bolster a shared sense of ownership. This goes beyond connecting individuals based on predetermined similarities such as shared national heritage and further builds a *new* and *unique* shared connection that is empowering and binding to those individuals collaborating across difference. Finally, projects and initiatives categorized as bright spots dismantle and reconstruct the previous thinking of participating individuals for cohesion across communities. In this way, education practices such as these empower teachers and students to conceptualize new possibilities grounded in personal and interpersonal experience firsthand.

Bright spots that contribute to reducing conflict through education in Lebanon help to shed light on a path forward for Lebanon; however, examining them closely reveals the sporadic, short-term, and typically isolated nature of such transformative practices and policies. The current reality is that bright spots are rare but extant among NGOs, especially during extracurricular activities and with a few exceptional educators in the country. There is tremendous opportunity for stakeholders at all levels in Lebanon to draw on the expertise and

inspiration of those implementing practices that create bright spots, which the following section proposes.

6.2.3 Creating Bright Spots: Roles that Key Stakeholders Could Play in Reducing Sectarian Conflict

This section outlines recommendations for practitioners to reduce sectarian conflict through education in Lebanon based on the findings from this study. Each recommendation would bolster all three major areas that contribute to conflict-reduction—namely, equal access, social inclusion, and social contract—to construct bright spots of conflict-reduction through education.

6.2.3.1 The Lebanese Government

Strengthen Education Quality in Public Schools

The competitive and robust private school market resulting from the sectarian structures of Lebanon's school system creates unequal access to quality education for public school students. This is an injustice to the students who attend public schools and receive lower-quality education, creating and sustaining grievances that threaten the country's stability.

Education access and quality have profound impacts on economic growth and stability (Fasih, 2008). Economic development through investments in education are important not only for cultivating fiscal autonomy and stimulating job growth in Lebanon, but also because economic development aids democracy and stability (Fortna & Huang, 2012). Education quality is especially important because as the public-school system becomes stronger, employment and

health prospects for individuals will overall increase, expanding the workforce and positioning the country in a better economic position nationwide (Bonnie et al., 2014). However, as Fasih (2008) pointed out, improved labor market, trade, and industrial policies are necessary to catalyze demand for educated workers to optimize economic gains from increased access to education quality. These policies along with access to quality public education are crucial for bolstering economic productivity and equal access to quality education, social inclusion, and social contract in order to mitigate sectarian conflict in the country.

Fulfil the Country's Commitment to Free Compulsory Education for All

There are many barriers to free compulsory education for all in Lebanon, especially for refugees. Secondary schools are inequitable, indicated by the less than 40 percent of refugees in Lebanon enrolled in formal education at this level (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016) and less than three percent of refugees age 15 to 18 enrolled. As Smith and Vaux (2003) pointed out in their 2003 study commissioned by the Department for International Development, “there is a tendency to regard education as a luxury rather than a right” in conflict-sensitive contexts (p.61); however, education is a right for all and should be treated as such in countries such as Lebanon that claim equal access for all. The elimination of barriers to refugees’ equal access to education is necessary to address this inequality that threatens the country’s future stability.

Without question, there are deep-rooted challenges to achieving free compulsory education for all in Lebanon, especially for refugees in the country (see Chapter 4.3.1 for more details). I do not wish to overshadow the importance of these concerns and the realities of the sociopolitical tensions around supporting refugees and the negative perceptions of many in the country toward equal access to education for refugees. As Chapter 5.1.1 outlined, Lebanon’s

Ministry of Education and Higher Education has taken steps to increase equal access to education for refugees; this included the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which committed the government legally to afford every person in Lebanon age 17 or below access to education, regardless of nationality, heritage, religious decree, or citizenship status. Lebanon's government must take action to either de-ratify the UNCRC or, ideally, institute changes to its education system to meet its commitment to the UNCRC.

If the government chooses to meet its commitment to the UNCRC to achieve free compulsory education for all, the following should be ensured: First, all refugee minors' (age 18 and below) school fees should be subsidized. Refugees in Lebanon are becoming poorer over time, with Syrian refugees living on less than four U.S. dollars per day (UNICEF, UNHCR, & WFP, 2017), while school fees amount to approximately 130 thousand Lebanese pounds, or 80 U.S. dollars, annually. Refugees cannot afford school fees, so these should be subsidized to ensure equal access to education. Second, more public-school classrooms are necessary to accommodate refugees in Lebanon in addition to the promising steps such as shared facilities and second shift classes. Third, school directors should no longer be allowed to impose arbitrary school enrollment requirements that prohibit refugees from attending, and should no longer be able to refuse acceptance of refugee children (Human Rights Watch, 2016a). Schools at times unlawfully require evidence of past test scores or grades that refugees do not possess (Human Rights Watch, 2016a), which should be made punishable or addressed through accountability mechanisms. Fourth, academic requirements beyond refugees' former education level should not exclude students from school participation. As with most other countries that host refugee populations, refugees in Lebanon should have access to appropriate transition classes to teach

them on their entry level, or should be placed in the grade level apropos to their capacity level. Equal access to education in these ways lay critical groundwork for a future of reduced sectarian conflict.

Increase Power-Sharing in Education Decision-Making

Power-sharing and multi-stakeholder engagement in decision-making should increase at multiple levels in Lebanon, especially at local levels of education governance to include principals, teachers, and parents. Few individuals hold power in education decision-making in Lebanon. Due to the extreme sect-based competition between private schools and the political structures that distribute great power to political and religious leaders. Political and religious power-holders leave little to no room for power-sharing and multi-stakeholder involvement in education decision-making. Those who do hold power are comprised mostly of political and religious leaders, generally at the federal level where most education decisions are made, and less so at the regional and local levels. This indicates the exclusion of school administrators, teachers, parents, students, and minorities in the country's decision-making process for policies related to education.

As Welsh and McGinn (1999) pointed out, it is necessary to involve a plurality of stakeholders at the community-level in a country to most profoundly mitigate sectarian conflict through inclusion. UNICEF and UNESCO (2007) described how countries such as El Salvador, Indonesia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua and Paraguay have addressed similar lack of power-sharing. They restored authority to community stakeholders such as parents, teachers, students, and principals through shared participatory decision-making for education-related pursuits, and by increasing accountability and transparency. Some countries like those in Scandinavia have overcome this challenge by entrusting curriculum development and school

control almost exclusively to expert professional educators, who also consult local stakeholders such as teachers and parents (Meuret et al., 1995). Entrusting authority to community stakeholders such as parents, teachers, students and principals through shared participatory decision-making for education initiatives increases accountability and transparency in the education sector and signals social inclusion, essential for cohesion-building and social contract in fragile settings.

6.2.3.2 Ministry of Education & Higher Education

Align Curriculum and Reality by Allowing and Supporting Instruction about Religion, Politics, and Difference

Due to Lebanon's education policy focus on الانصهار ("al-insihar"), or fusion, teachers and students are not allowed to discuss sensitive topics such as politics, religion, and difference in the classroom for fear that this could further divide society rather than work toward fusion. Despite the legitimate reasons underlying this policy, it is the extreme and restrictive interpretation of the policy that has actually prohibited possibilities for teachers and students to productively discuss and navigate difference and diversity in order for individuals and groups to reconcile conflicts and be equipped to embody the fusion that الانصهار ("al-insihar") envisions. Additionally, this extreme interpretation that insists on avoidance lowers the quality of instruction and actively excludes students' voices, concerns, and cultures. Further, it instills fear and control over teachers. Finally, the anxiety from restrictions on discussing politics, religion, and war also increases the teacher-centeredness of instruction through control mechanisms to avoid sensitive topics, lowering education quality and lowering social contract with students.

While risks exist that dialogue and lessons about religion and politics could feed sectarian conflict, I have learned from teachers, school directors, and professors that there are enormous benefits that would make the risks worth taking. To benefit students, curriculum content and instruction should align with reality by acknowledging and confronting the truths of difference and division in the country. To benefit teachers, allowing and supporting instruction that equips students to confront issues of politics and religion in constructive and collegial ways would also honor educators' capacities by giving them opportunities to exercise choice and influence in their classrooms; this would strengthen social contract in the country, promoting stability. To benefit the community, if conflict-avoidance would not take such precedence in Lebanese classrooms, instruction about critical issues in students' lives and society would increase opportunities for conflict-mitigation, education quality, social inclusion, reconciliation, and social contract across Lebanese society. If taught from multiple perspectives and navigated with nuance using dialogical approaches, the multifaceted benefits of instruction about religion, politics, and difference would outweigh the risks and culminate in the fusion that Lebanon's education policy calls for.

Increase Capacity-Building

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education should increase initiatives and mechanisms to support capacity-building for educators and students in areas of most needed development. Investments in capacity-building such as those I saw in schools, by school directors, by private school funders, or by the Ministry of Education signal trust and partnership to the teachers and students impacted by capacity-building initiatives, often leading to a more sustainable and interconnected approach to service implementation and education (NCBI, 2009).

Capacity-building generates and sustains education quality and contributes to building social contract (Horne & Sherington, 2010; Tienda, 2017).

Specifically, capacity-building is necessary to support teachers in their efforts to reduce prejudice among students and to navigate conflict in constructive and tolerant ways that build understanding and cooperation. As Chapter 4.2.1 discussed, multicultural education, which is prevalent in schools across Lebanon, is an important foundation layer for cultural competency; however, it is limited in its potentialities as a peace-promoter and often reinforces stereotypes about groups and does not lead to positive transformation (Turner & Brown, 2008).

Similarly, “common thread approaches” that connect students through their similarities and shared identities and values fall short of giving students tools to address and navigate difference. In classrooms with conflict stemming from cultural diversity such as in Lebanon, multicultural education and common-thread approaches should be used to complement critical approaches that more deeply penetrate student understandings of diversity for increased cultural competency. I heard firsthand from teachers working on the ground that anti-bias education and culturally responsive education are two approaches that complement each other well to cultivate transformative outcomes for students toward peace.

The first approach, anti-bias education, aims to reduce prejudice and mitigate aggression toward members of other cultures. It is meant to go beyond learning facts about “the other.”

The goal in anti-bias education is to decrease or eliminate negative bias, attitudes, and behavior toward people of other identity groups through critical and educational examination of histories and issues related to groups (Derman-Sparks, 2015; Derman-Sparks & Anti-Bias Curriculum Task Force, 1989; Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011; Derman-Sparks, Ramsey, & Edwards, 2006). During anti-bias lessons, students’ attitudes are actively engaged by confronting

inequities and by challenging former or common beliefs that feed stereotypes, misunderstandings, and aggression across groups (Jacobson, 2003). Students gain skills and language to talk about themselves and about others in constructive ways (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010). Curiosity, respect, and cooperation replace fear, resistance, dispute, and aggression toward identities other than their own. Students view themselves as participants in educational contexts and in society with the ability to counteract negative biases and shape spaces for a more just future for all.

The second approach I recommend equips students with, culturally responsive education, uses “the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 2010, p. 31). Culturally relevant education uses constructivist, assets-oriented methods to include students’ cultural references and engage them meaningfully with class concepts, it includes students in critical reflection of their lives, community, and society, it nurtures students’ cultural competency, and it reveals, dismantles, and pursues social justice and equality for all members of a society (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

Culturally responsive education has a number of documented benefits. First, it helps to reduce discipline issues among students (Cartledge, Gardner III, & Ford, 2009; Elias, 2003; Sigler & Aamidor, 2005; Speights Roberts, Tingstrom, Olmi, & Bellipanni, 2008). It also actively nurtures positive social and psychological development by including relevant cultural components into diverse social interactions and providing opportunities for students to feel accepted, give acceptance, understand relationships, and overall reduce antagonisms and problem behaviors between students (Cartledge, 2009; Cartledge et al., 2009). In addition to these benefits, researchers (Bui & Fagan, 2013; Copenhaver, 2001; Hill, 2009; Nykiel-Herbert,

2010) have described a connection between the use of culturally responsive education and students' improved engagement and interest in school. Fulton (2009) concluded that this approach cultivates deeper content learning through engagement, but that it also gives "an opportunity for students to learn to value their own and each other's differing perspectives that support the development of stronger democratic citizenship" (p. iii). Increasing capacity-building for teachers to use anti-bias and culturally responsive education in Lebanon would equip teachers to build the cultural competency of students and reduce sectarian conflict in the country for increased cooperation.

6.2.3.3 Principals and Teachers

Seven out of eight major factors that I discovered through data collection contribute to reducing sectarian conflict through education originate from the school and classroom levels. This suggests that many educators and school administrators already play a critical role in contributing to conflict-reduction through education in Lebanon. Based on challenges to conflict-reduction that I found, the following outlines two strategies that principals and educators can employ to provide students tools for future stability and peace in the country.

Generate Opportunities to Exercise Choice and Influence

Opportunities for choice and influence indicate development, stability, and contribute to an increasingly robust social contract. Prominent examples of opportunities for choice and influence through K-12 education in Lebanon often manifest as the freedom for school staff and students to learn and grow through project-based learning and experiential learning. Examples from this study (see Chapter 5.3.2) illustrate how increased opportunities for choice and influence translate to trust, loyalty, progress. Additionally, for those on the business side,

increased opportunities for choice and influence draw students to private international schools, thereby increasing revenue. Increasing instances for agency and empowerment through choice and influence in public schools would have similar impacts by building loyalty between citizens and the government and increasing quality in public schools.

Generate Opportunities for Reconciliation

Reconciliation is pivotal for students with coming terms with Lebanon's past and current divisions, for building or restoring positive relations with members of other sect groups, and for bolstering social contract across Lebanon's sectarian divisions for an increasingly stable future. As Chapter 5.3.3 showed, some educators and schools, both private and public, throughout Lebanon feel that the reconciliatory practices they are implementing are powerful and transformative for the students and teachers involved. Successful approaches that NGOs are using in Lebanon to build reconciliatory bridges across sectarian divisions include dialogue to learn about one another, collaborative service projects to bind one another, and lessons from those in Lebanon who have reconciled and are now close with others of differing sects. Transformative education for reconciliation, if adopted as a part of Lebanon's national curriculum, could play a pivotal role in reducing sectarian conflict and transforming the country toward increased peace.

6.3 Importance and Contribution

6.3.1 Contributions to Theory

This study contributes to research on peace and conflict studies in education in both conflict-affected and consociational countries. Although peacebuilding and peace education are well-documented, conflict-reduction is a concept that is not yet operationalized or described in terms of its working parts, especially as connected to education. It is important to note that prescriptive models for conflict-response through education should be avoided (Barakat et al., 2013), but continuing to refine a model for the analysis of education and conflict-reduction will add to literature discussions on conflict, cohesion, peace, and conflict-mitigation necessary for future analyses, education restructuring, and policy-making. The visualization I built through this study's spotlights framework and findings also helps to show relationships between concepts and specific content of each concept.

Additionally, this study offers the following new insights to literature on consociationalism: (1) consociational mechanisms are used in Lebanon to sustain sectarian power structures and policies that benefit some and exclude others; (2) Lebanon's form of consociational government has influenced the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to adopt a strict policy against politics and religion in schools, which silences teachers and students on topics most relevant to their lives and forbids future understanding of these issues essential to peace; and (3) Lebanon's consociational system perpetuates sectarian divisions and helps to highlight the contradictions between curriculum and reality in the country, weakening social contract and perpetuating sources of conflict.

6.3.2 Contributions to Methodology

The application of my research methodology could be useful for identifying factors that contribute to building, sustaining, or reducing conflict through education curriculum, practices, policies, and infrastructures in other conflict-affected countries such as Iraq, Cyprus, Sudan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central African Republic. The ethnographic methodology I used in this study to analyze factors that build and prevent equal access, social inclusion, and social contract in education could be useful in any context that aims to include structures, mechanisms, strategies and approaches in education for alleviating conflict and lowering the likelihood of civil war and ethnic conflict.

6.3.3 Contributions to Praxis

Furthermore, I hope that the ethnographic nature of this research will help to make visible the complex and previously internal understandings of educators, students, and parents as they intersect with education and society and may therefore contribute to a fuller understanding of the realities, challenges, and opportunities through education within Lebanon. My positioning as an outsider to Lebanon, while it hindered me from more intimately understanding the complexities of Lebanese society, education, and sectarianism as insiders there do, was also an essential aspect to gaining privileged access to participants' narratives. Individuals were extremely cautious and fearful to share insights, stories, and perspectives and only did so with me because of my motives to understand and my lack of affiliation with Lebanese politics or institutions (see Section 3.1.9 for more on this topic). This aspect of this research is critical for such a controversial and politically divided topic as sectarianism in Lebanon; after having conducted

this research. This prompts a charge to other researchers to use ethnographic methods when conducting work with sensitive issues, which is commonly inappropriate or impossible for most stakeholders, especially government-affiliated individuals, to inquire into without alienating participants. Further, it underscores the importance of anonymity for participants who agree to be interviewed about sensitive and controversial issues. Methods from this study could furthermore impact interested stakeholders to better support teachers who are fearful to share openly and honestly about challenges they face with people affiliated with the Lebanese government or the Ministry of Education.

Finally, this study could be practical in helping stakeholders in education to assess areas for opportunity, such as with underserved communities most marginalized by education policy and praxis, especially students in public schools and refugee youth, and to scale up approaches that some teachers are pioneering in Lebanon such as education for reconciliation.

6.4 Suggestions for Future Research

The results from this study have several implications for future research. First, future research related to conflict and education in Lebanon should employ other types of data sources such as classroom observations and surveys. Classroom observations would add to the ethnographic elements here and help to unveil how participants actively use strategies for equal access, inclusion, and social contract, which may reveal new understandings than the self-report interview and curriculum analysis methods used in this study. Research of this nature could also corroborate findings from this study that examined interviews and curriculum materials. Observing lessons would additionally allow further insights into how sectarianism manifests

daily in school contexts. The use of surveys in future research would assist in collecting data from more individuals in a wider area throughout Lebanon.

Second, future research into factors that influence conflict in Lebanon could redesign this research to additionally analyze *external* factors influencing civil war. In many cases and indeed in the case of Lebanon, transnational factors such as foreign involvement, intervention, and proxy wars play a significant role in intensifying factors that precipitate conflict (Fisher, 2016; Kerr, 2006; Regan, 2000). The current research focused on internal factors that influence sectarian conflict through education, but future research could also examine international influences such as those stemming from Lebanon's relationship with its neighboring countries, the United States, and United Nations entities.

A third recommendation for future research is to use portraiture methodology to deeper examine the role that education stakeholders play in mitigating conflict. As Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis (1997) explain, portraiture is "an approach to inquiry that resists the more typical social science preoccupation with documenting pathology and suggesting remedies" (p. 141); instead, portraiture aims to ethnographically capture the positive and detailed role a participant plays in her/his context and society, linking analysis to public discourse and social transformation. This methodology was unfortunately outside the scope of the current study, but the remarkable strides of excellent teachers and principals from all sects in Lebanon to build bridges across sectarian divides should be captured through portraiture research. Deeper insights into the creative approaches that individuals engage in for conflict transformation in Lebanon would be a powerful and inspiring narrative to share through portraiture analysis.

Finally, there is opportunity for future research to inquire into the role that gender plays in mitigating or increasing conflict through education in Lebanon. Despite my efforts to achieve

proportional representation among interview participants, every educator I interviewed for this study was female, all school directors except for one was female, and all representatives from NGOs that conduct work related to peace education and outreach were female. Future research in this area could extend the findings from the current study about the role teachers play in mitigating conflict to analyze how gender intersects with education for conflict-reduction. Future research could further inquire into trends related to women's participation in education decision-making, policy-creation, and how decisions and policies influence conflict in Lebanon.

I would like to end this study with a quote from Shereen, a secondary school teacher I met during one of my field stays in Lebanon. She said:

“In Lebanon, sometimes you say a word and it causes conflict and you have to spend hours or months reconciling, rebuilding that bridge. This is everyday sectarian conflict here. Imagine the work that needs done from the war. We build many walls and not enough bridges. I wish we could all just abandon our sectarian ways and come together to change this.”

Shereen makes a simple and poignant point here; there is great work to be done ahead. May the insights from teachers, school directors, NGO directors, representatives from transnational organizations, and professors in Lebanon throughout this study help to irradiate paths forward for others like them, in government, and at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to build bridges. As a result, walls that separate and cast shadows on the future can be dismantled.

Appendix A IRB Approval



University of Pittsburgh *Institutional Review Board*

3500 Fifth Avenue
Suite 105
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
412-383-1480

MEMORANDUM

TO: Miranda Hogsett

FROM: Human Research Protection Office (HRPO)

DATE: January 10, 2018

SUBJECT: IRB# 1801004: Education and Conflict-reduction in Lebanon

The above-referenced research study has been reviewed by the University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board. Based on the information provided to the IRB, this project includes no involvement of human subjects, according to the federal regulations [45 CFR 46.102(f)]. That is, the investigator conducting research will not obtain data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or will not obtain identifiable private information. Should that situation change, the investigator must notify the IRB immediately.

Appendix B Interview Questions: Teachers

1. How long have you taught?
2. Where do you currently teach? What type of a school is it (private/public)? What level/age and subject(s) do you teach? Why?
3. What do you do in your classroom to reduce conflict or build bridges between students from different backgrounds?
4. Describe struggling students and your school's support for those students. What do teachers do to try to give extra support to struggling students? What does your school do?
5. How does your school prevent dropouts or support students at risk for dropping out?
6. What's the average cost for most students to come here? For textbooks and other materials? How does the school or school system give equal access for students who can't afford that?
7. What differences between students create tension? How do you and the school address or include those differences?
8. How do you handle tensions and conflict in the classroom? What is your school policy for handling these?
9. What examples of peace education, anti-bias education, intergroup dialogues, or bridge-building projects through education do you know of?
10. Did your university program discuss how to address issues of conflict resolution or reconciliation in the classroom? How do teacher trainings or meetings address it?

11. What processes exist for public participation (teachers, students, parents) in education decision-making and feedback to schools?
12. What do you do to build trust with students? With their parents?
13. What does your school do to build trust with students? With their parents?
14. Describe the commitment and support you receive as a teacher.
15. Are there any more activities, lessons, topics, etc for conflict-reduction you've heard of or have implemented yourself?
16. Is there anything else related to sectarian conflict and addressing sectarian conflict through education that you think is important for this study?
17. Would it be okay if I contact you in the future to see what you think of my analysis and to let me know of any changes you'd like me to make?
18. Would you be interested in future projects or collaborations with this topic or with educators from other schools or countries?
19. What questions do you have for me?

Appendix C Interview Questions: Professors of Education

1. What area of Beirut or Lebanon are you from?
2. How long have worked in education?
3. What potential role do you think education could play in moving toward stability, cohesion, and/or peace?
4. (eq. access) What do you think policymakers and policy are doing well related to equal access to education?
5. (eq. access) In what feasible/realistic ways could access to education be more equal for all students?
6. (soc. inclusion) Students typically have different values, faiths, and histories. How does education policy address or include those differences?
7. (soc. inclusion) What do you think policymakers and policy are doing well related to including different groups?
8. (soc. contract) What role do you think schools, curriculum, or educational policies play in building trust between people and the government?
9. What potential role do you think education could play in moving toward stability, cohesion, and/or peace?
10. What are some ways you see teachers/schools building bridges and reducing tensions between student from different backgrounds?

11. What realistic/feasible recommendations or changes would you make for reaching these possibilities? (classroom level, school level, teacher prep level, policy level?)
12. For you, when people talk about the term “peace” in Lebanon, what does that mean for you?
13. Would it be okay if I contact you in the future to see what you think of my analysis or to make changes to your statements if you’d like?
14. What questions do you have for me?

Appendix D Interview Questions: NGO Representatives

1. What are the projects/programs/outreach you have done/are doing/plan to do for conflict management and peacebuilding between sects among youth?
2. What stories can you share that capture the potential outcomes of this type of education?
3. What are the greatest challenges you face with attempting education and outreach related to reducing sectarian divides, teaching tolerance, and/or doing “bridge-building” projects?
4. What feasible/realistic ideas through education, outreach, and projects do you have for overcoming challenges and moving forward toward building bridges between sects?

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وزارة التربية والتعليم العالي

المديرية العامة للتربية

الإرشاد والتوجيه

رقم الصادر : ١٠/١٣٨٦

بيروت في : ٢٣ / ٤ / ٢٠١٨

حضرة مديرة الإرشاد والتوجيه

الموضوع: طلب الموافقة على اجراء مقابلات مع ١٥ أستاذاً في مدرّس رسمية.

المرجع: ديوان التربية - رقم التسجيل ٣/٦٧٤

المستدعية: وفاء القاضي، منسقة مادة التربية الوطنية والتنشئة المدنية.

نفيد حضرتكم أننا اطلعنا على كتاب ميرندا هوغست، المتضمن طلب الموافقة على اجراء

مقابلات مع ١٥ أستاذاً في مدارس رسمية، وتدرج الأسئلة في ٣ مجالات:

- ما هي الاستراتيجيات والأساليب التي تمارس في بناء الجسور والحد من الصراع المجتمعي، مستقبلاً، في سياقات التعليم في لبنان؟
 - ما الدور الذي تلعبه الآليات البراغمية والسياسية في التعليم للحد من النزاعات؟
 - كيف تعمل الجهات المعنية بالتعليم على تحقيق المساواة في الوصول والادماج والعقد الاجتماعي من خلال التعليم؟
- كُننا وبعد الاطلاع على الأسئلة التي ستطرح خلال المقابلات مع الأساتذة، والواردة في الطلب، وبعد تبادل الأفكار فيما بيننا، نرى أن لا مانع من الموافقة للطلبة ميرندا على اجراء هذه المقابلات.

المستشارة التربوية

د. نينا هيفا

منسقة مادة التربية الوطنية

وفاء القاضي



University of Pittsburgh

School of Education
Department of Administrative and Policy Studies



5902 Wesley W. Posvar Hall
230 South Bouquet Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
412-648-7101
Fax: 412-648-1784

15 January 2018

To the Ministry of Education in Lebanon:

I am a fourth-year PhD student at the University of Pittsburgh studying comparative and international education. The purpose of this letter is to formally request to interview at least 15 teachers in public schools in Lebanon for my PhD dissertation research. The following explains the rationale behind the study.

Internationally, Lebanon stands as an example of resiliency and steady propulsion away from internal conflict. The country shines through education in particular: the youth literacy rate is above 98 percent (UNICEF, 2013); Lebanon's school access and literacy rates were in the 66th percentile compared to other United Nations countries in 2014 (EPDC, 2014); and the UNDP (2017) reports gender parity at all levels of education. I propose to examine Lebanon as a case study upon which to document and build understandings of positive social development through the education system, especially through schools, classrooms, and teachers at the local level. In this way, I hope the insights gained from the study can stand as an example for other societies recovering after conflict for how to implement mechanisms for equal access, social inclusion, and social contract.

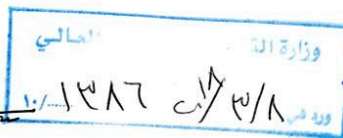
Interviews with teachers will provide detailed insights that are not being documented or highlighted in other research, but that are important to the stability and future of the country. It is my hope that the Ministry of Education will deem this worthwhile research and will grant me access to at least 15 public school teachers so that this project may come to fruition. You may choose the teachers and schools from which the teachers come. I hope to interview exemplar teachers that are building strong social bonds between students, within and across communities.

Attached to this letter is a brief summary of the research project, followed by the formal letter of approval to conduct this research from my university's ethical Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Thank you for this opportunity and I hope to build a positive partnership with you and your schools in the future. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

With warm regards,

Miranda L. Hogsett



Foreign Language & Area Studies Fellow and Doctoral Candidate
Social & Comparative Analysis in Education PhD Program
Research Adviser: Dr. Maureen Porter (mporter@pitt.edu)
School of Education | University of Pittsburgh, U.S.
e: mlh126@pitt.edu | L: 81/795902 | US: 304/942-8464

Handwritten notes in Arabic: ٧٤٨٦, حبيب الإرشاد والتوجيه, للنظر في الطلب, حبيب الإرشاد والتوجيه, الممتنع العام للتدريس

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