Construction of collective memory through official history education in North Cyprus (1971-2003)

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Abstract

Fundamental to recalling memories and remembering is to look at the past and the future concurrently. Remembering is crucial to have a temporal association so that present changes and developments can be elaborated in understanding the construction of memory. Historical trauma is a psychological and emotional collective and subjective injury which are transmitted from adults to children in a cycle process, and it continues over a life span of individuals and across generations. Soft memories are created and shared as a social process. These are narratives, historical texts and similar, less tangible forms of memory. History education has a profound influence on social discourse and the way soft memories are perceived, and since formal schooling is at the centre of shaping a generation and textbooks are the main medium of knowledge transmission, the official narrative shapes it and is often presented selectively. This research explores how the official regulation of history education is used to align official state discourse with social memory. This research employs secondary data and document analysis by examining the compulsory textbook (1979) used since 1971 in history education. It explores history education's impact on individual narratives of remembrance and collective memory. It examines the long-term effects of what has been taught in secondary school history education on adulthood perceptions of past historical occurrences. Findings confirm that a consistent, official historical discourse supported by exposure to "hard" and "soft" memories enables the maintenance of collective memory as represented in the official discourse among society members. It also concluded that when difficult history is transmitted to the younger generation as part of education, they may experience trauma and similar negative associated feelings; furthermore, they do not necessarily unconditionally embrace the official history but question it in their adulthood.

Keywords: history education, historical trauma, collective memory, hard and soft memories, Turkish Cypriots

Introduction

Textbooks issued by government publishing firms and distributed widely in schools are susceptible to centralised political control and uniform message delivery (Martin, 1975). It is also a medium for collective discourse on historical trauma or glories (Volkan, 1997). These collective discourses, in time, shape the collective memory and inform the perceptions of the past and future. This article explores an answer to the research questions of how collective memory has been constructed through history education in North Cyprus and how those born in 1974 and learnt official history through Dr. Vehbi Zeki Serter's history textbook remember history.

The main argument of this article is that official history education is a powerful tool to transfer historical trauma to create collective memory. It seeks to explore how history education impacted individual's collective memory in adulthood. Data were collected through documentary research. Documentary and narrative analysis methods were used to analyse the data collected through existing written and visual sources. Research was completed through three main steps: exploring the history textbook used and how history was taught during the late 1980s; then collecting accounts of people who used to be secondary school students during that decade and examining their narratives on the experience of learning history. Lastly the memory items and emotions related to them are cross-examined and compared and were explored through which means they were transferred during the history education. While doing this, both hard and soft memory items were utilised. The individuals' learning experiences were derived from secondary data, consisting of 26 interviews with those born in 1974 by Güngör. Within this written work, where appropriate original Turkish text has been provided, followed by English translation by the author which is represented in square parenthesis. Within the interview transcriptions this type of parenthesis is also used to provide clarification.

Collective Memory and History Education

Historical trauma is a psychological and emotional collective and subjective injury which are transmitted from adults to children in a cycle process, and it continues over a life span of individuals and across generations (Atkinson et al., 2010). Collective memory helps describe the human experience (Roudometof, 2007). The modern world erodes the memory of places (milieux de memoire). The memories attached to those sites are only preserved through preservation (Nora, 1996). Fundamental to recalling memories and remembering is to look at the past and the future concurrently. Remembering is crucial to have a temporal association so that present changes and developments can be elaborated in understanding the construction of memory (Six-Hohenbalken, 2018).

Psychodynamic theories focus on the psychological urges and facts that shape human personality and behaviour. The view stems from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, which

identified the unconscious mind as the root of psychological discomfort and dysfunction (Teater, 2015). Through psychodynamic theory, Vamık Volkan argues that substantial historical components are necessary for creating and preserving group identity and distinctive intergroup relations (Volkan, 1997, 2004, 2006). Assmann (2011) also puts this view forward, who argues that groups are formed based on individual association or disassociation people create in their minds. When people choose to belong to a group or change their group belongingness, they do this based on affiliative connections. These connections can be maintained through memories.

Similarly, collective memory is stored away and objectified in symbolic forms and transferred from generation to generation (Assmann, 2011). Volkan (1997, 2004, 2006) suggests two components for storing away group identity: chosen glories and chosen traumas. Chosen traumas are painful losses, defeats, humiliations or mythologised occurrences that are painful to mourn. Chosen glories, on the other hand, are historically significant and idealised victories (Volkan, 1997). Chosen glory or trauma is a shared representation of an occurrence, including realistic facts, fantasised expectations, powerful sentiments, and defence against unacceptable thoughts. These glories or traumas foster a sense of unity around collective gains and losses (Volkan, 1997). Table 1 provides an overview of how Assmann (2011) describes the journey of memory from the individual to the collective reservoir.

Table 1

Individual, Social and Cultural Memory (Assmann, 2011, p. 109)

Level	Time	Identity	Memory
Inner (neuro-mental)	Inner, subjective time	Inner-self	Individual memory
Social	Social time	Social self, a person as carrier of social roles	Communicative memory
Cultural	Historical, mythical, cultural time	Cultural identity	Cultural memory

At individual level, memory is part of an individual's neuro-mental system. It is understood as an individual's memories. Memory is also seen as a phenomenon which enables people to live together. At social level, memory is still considered part of the dynamics of social life but is still an individual's unconscious construct. The table put forward the dissection of collective memory into cultural and communicative memory, where Halbawach's conceptualisation excludes transmissions and traditions. Assmann (2008) considers cultural memory as a part of collective memory and suggests cultural and communicative memory as ways of remembering but still part of collective memory. History and the past have real, symbolic and material effects on individuals and societies. However, rather than simple factual information, it is constructed through memories. Hence, collective identity provides a point of identification, yet it is unstable and exists within a society's history and cultural discourses. Since it is not a factual past but provides

a positioning, it is always associated with politics of identity and positioning politics (Hall, 2015).

In official state discourses, segments of past traumas and memories are organised into master memorial narratives that shape collective memory (Roudometof, 2007). According to Todorov (2000), in the 20th century, totalitarian governments attempted to control collective memory fully. States have their version of narrations of history and remembrance, which shape society's collective memory through "hard" memories such as monuments, state laws, court decisions and memorial sites (Gang, 2020). This official narrative of history is taught both in the formal education system and through state narratives and symbols surrounding society members during their daily lives. There are many examples of this process in Bendect (2006), from China to Hungary (Benedict, 2006). "Hard" memories in the form of monuments and sites are also known as placemories, where memory is spatialised through geographical sites as memorial sites, and emotional and symbolic transformation of the memory can occur (Hubner & Dirksmeier, 2023). "Soft" memories are created and shared as social processes. These are narratives, historical texts and similar, less tangible forms of memory.

History education has a profound influence on social discourse and the way "soft" memories are perceived (Korostelina, 2008), and since formal schooling is at the centre of shaping a generation and textbooks are the main medium of knowledge transmission, the official narrative shapes it and often presented selectively (Boon & Gopinathan, 2005). It provides information on the collective past, influences perspectives on the shared past, and shapes loyalties to certain social groups. Through textbooks, official knowledge can be transformed. Furthermore, the formation or transformation of national, religious, ethnic, and regional identities is possible through history education (Korostelina, 2008). Nevertheless, Stoddard (2022) argues that difficult histories, if not avoided at the primary and secondary education levels, can lead to trauma in engaged students and further solidify the division within post-conflict societies (Stoddard, 2022).

Previous Studies

There have been various studies which explored history education within the context of social representations (Psaltis et al., 2017), nationalism, recording history (Davies, 1976), pedagogy, and curriculum (Stoddard, 2022; Powell, 2020). Davies (1976) provided insights into how the Second World War has been officially recorded. He concluded that the historical accounts vary in terms of the detail provided, the style and scope, and the degree of candour (Davies, 1976). Davies's study evidences that official history reflects whose account is written down as official history. Official history is the "work of historical offices" that serve the government (Trask, 1989).

A recent example is from Russia. From February 2022 onwards, the government designed the history education content and curriculum, exposing approximately 17.7

million primary and secondary students to this newly curated content (Pachkov, 2023). Teachers are also provided with materials, so their autonomy is limited. Students who attended meetings with veterans of Special Military Operation team members have shown increased patriotic behaviour, and they have also introduced early military preparation classes, which are expected to run very shortly (Pachkov, 2023). There are also references to Russian leaders in the history textbooks and depictions of them heroically.

In the Russian case, Pachkov (2023) discusses that the main drives in redesigning the historical narratives originate from the desired image of the past, in line with Anderson's concept of an imagined community (2006). Pachkov (2023) also argues that educational institutions have a pivotal role in transmitting the dominant ideology and culture to the younger generations. The US education system also has similar official narratives in history textbooks. The textbooks are considered dominantly telling the story of successful nation-building processes through economic, military and political achievements, with a Eurocentric and Anglo-Saxon men-oriented narrative (VanSledright, 2008).

Nevertheless, the existing literature is dominant in how governments use history education as a tool for nation-building or strengthening a particular discourse in a society. However, the studies that explore student perceptions or longitudinal outcomes are comparatively limited. One example is from China, which examines how Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong university students perceive history education (Chen, 2007). Chen's research concluded that students know the state's indoctrination efforts and can oppose such hegemonic intentions through critical thinking. Thus, students are not passive recipients of official ideology but active agents who utilise available resources and critically examine educational knowledge (Chen, 2007).

Özsezer and Özkul's (2019) work explores history textbooks about power within the Turkish Cypriot context. Although the article does not utilise any primary data, it thoroughly analyses the existing history textbooks and their relation to political power through documentary analysis. In a European Union-funded publication, scholars examined history education in terms of conflict transformation within a socio-psychological framework. Examples included Belarus, Italy, and Cyprus (Psaltis et al., 2017). A particular contribution to history education in Cyprus is from Zembylas and Karahasan (2017) where they compared both Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot history education and how it has been used by political parties to promote official narratives (Zembylas & Karahasan, 2017). Another study focusing on history education within the Cypriot context is by Makriyianni et al. (2011). Authors not only explore the political antecedents of history education for Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots but examine history education in terms of curricula, training history teachers, the content of the material taught and use of field visits such as burial places, museums and visual media (Makriyianni et al., 2011). Latif (2019) also examines the changes to history textbooks from 1971 until today in North Cyprus.

A common conclusion in all these references suggests that history textbooks effectively convey and legitimise official narratives and create, change, or reinforce identities (Latif, 2019). Existing research agrees that history textbooks are crucial in transferring historical and past experiences to young generations and creating an official narrative (Perikleous et al., 2021). Therefore, politicians, the public and educators may be sensitive to textbook changes. Their crucial role in establishing social identity and official narratives explains why Vehbi Zeki Serter's textbook has been used from 1971 until 2004 (Özsezer & Özkul, 2019) and was the only Cyprus history textbook which was used at public and private schools. Although the literature agrees that history textbooks are central in shaping social identity and collective memory and are utilised by politics (e.g., Carretero et al., 2002; Montgomery, 2005; Vickers, 2024; Oteiza, 2003; Zajda, 2017), no study has been found which explores the longitudinal conception of the narrative of history textbooks through people's perspectives who experienced the education.

Cyprus Context

During the transition from being a British Colony to an independent Republic, Cyprus Island went through an ethnic conflict from 1963 until 1974. These ethnicities included and still include Jewish, Gypsies known as Ghurbetis and Mandis, the British, Latins, Armenian, Maronites, and Turkish and Greek Cypriots (Akçali, 2007). Although other ethnicities have been living on the Island, including Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, the latter two are the largest and were the two parties who signed an agreement to form the Republic of Cyprus on 16 August 1960 (Emilianides, 2022).

According to official Greek Cypriot discourse, until 1974, all ethnicities were living together in peace until the junta government in Greece plotted a coup against the president of the Republic of Cyprus. Coupe provoked a military invasion of Turkey, and the Island has been divided since then. With the military intervention, Turkish Cypriots living in the north fled to the south and Turkish Cypriots living in the south fled to the north. (Bryant, 2012). Until April 2003, borders were closed, and the Island was divided into two by the border called the Green Line (Boedeltje et al., 2007).

Official Turkish Cypriot discourse narrates how Greek Cypriots' struggle to unite Cyprus with Greece excluded Turkish Cypriots, and these unification efforts continued after the independence from British Rule in 1960. The independent state had a constitutional arrangement of power sharing where a vice-president had veto powers and quotas on Turkish Cypriot legislators and public servants. In late 1963, the Republic's president, Makarios, sought changes in the constitution, leading to the breakdown of the Republic and an inter-communal conflict forcing 25,000 to flee their homes, with 90% of the community retreating to militarised enclaves (Bryant, 2012).

Both ethnicities experienced serious traumas, and both societies were exposed to remembrance politics for their losses. Nevertheless, the inter-communal conflict could not

override the peaceful co-existence narrative and longing for a prelapsarian past. (Bryant, 2012). Since April 2003, several borders have been opened for crossing between the north and the south for leisure, shopping, work and studying (Boedetje et al., 2007).

Method

Epistemology

Recognising the construction of social reality and understanding how language shapes our worldview and how it paradoxically facilitates and hinders comprehension are critical in understanding the necessity of reflexivity in qualitative research (Corlett & Mavin, 2018). Taking an epistemological position that reality is socially constructed (Burr, 2015), our knowledge as researchers is restricted, incomplete and influenced by our constructions and the context of the research (Corlett & Marvin, 2018). Dominantly, it is social experiences that shape our identities, and language is at the centre of this construction process (Burr, 2015). Therefore, to access the socially constructed reality from the actor's perspective, a qualitative research design was pursued for this study.

Research Design

Qualitative research was employed in this study as it provides a medium for interpreting various forms of qualitative data such as interview transcriptions, photographs, field notes and similar others through representations (Saldaña, 2017). In this research, the photographs that provided visual data on the textbook content and field trip locations were analysed to understand better what students experienced in content and context. Visual data enables the detailed assessment of social contexts and human subjectivities (Margolis, & Zunjarwad, 2018; Spencer, 2023;). Image directly addresses the senses and emphasises the human body, culture, social interactions, and aesthetics instead of concepts, meanings and ideas (Crowder & Marion, 2024). Secondary data interviews provided individual accounts of how students who experienced these content and context perceived and constructed the meaning of these experiences. Between methods, triangulation enabled this research to cross-examine the history education content about the construction of collective memory longitudinally.

Triangulation can be done by comparing and combining multiple data collection methods, multiple data sources, and research methods in investigating a single phenomenon (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Flick, 2018; Denzin, 1978). Among several types of triangulation, such as investigator, theory, data and method, this study employed between-methods triangulation to capture all the relevant features of reality as a mono-method approach is insufficient to achieve that (Denzin, 1978). Furthermore, it prevents researchers from sticking with their initial assumptions and makes all possible assumptions available before the study begins (Flick, 2018).

Therefore, in this research, between-method triangulation enabled a more accurate analysis of the findings due to cross-validation of the textbook content with the interview transcriptions. Secondary data were collected for this study; therefore, ethical approval was not required. Used figures were selected from non-copywrited materials and references were provided.

Data Collection

Data have been collected from two main sources in three different formats. A 1979 print of the history textbook and secondary interview data from Çağla Güngör's (2002) work were used as two main sources. From the textbook, both visuals and written texts were chosen to help analyse the effect of official history education on collective memory construction.

Figure 1

Sources of Data
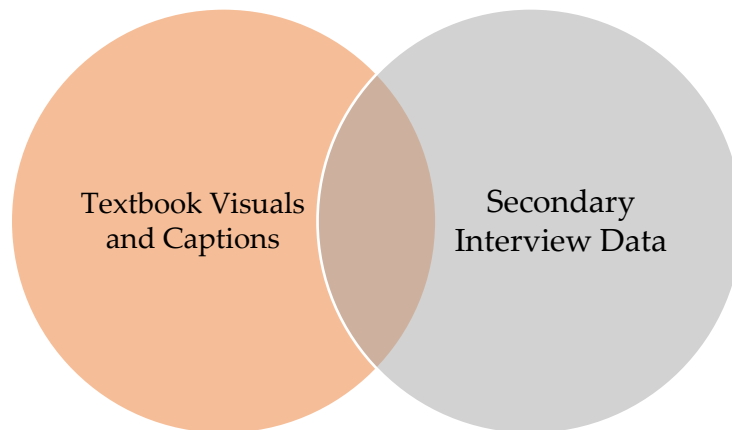
The government published the chosen textbook and was the only Cyprus history textbook used in all public and private schools as part of national education. It was first used from 1971 until 2003 (Özsezer & Özkul, 2019). The particular textbook for which extracts were analysed is a secondary school-level textbook written by Dr. Vehbi Zeki Serter for secondary schools. The sample examined is a 1979 press, which received minor revisions in the following years. The content was quite similar throughout the years. Therefore, the earliest accessible version of the textbook was selected, enabling cross-checking of the content about interview responses. As part of the national history education, students had field trips to particular locations such as the Museum of Barbarism, Cengiz Topel Monument, and Mass Graves until the beginning of the 2000s (Özsezer & Özkul, 2019). These field trips can be considered part of solidifying the information and creating more effective soft memories through hard memories in students' collective memory reservoirs.

There are several different visuals in the textbook. The photographs which are chosen were not only mentioned as highlights in the memory of interviewees but also were milestones discourses of Turkish Cypriot history of the conflict years: Bloody Christmas

(December 1963), civil mass graves of genocide, and Captain Pilot Cengiz Topel. There is a commemoration week called "21-25 Aralık Mücadele ve Şehitler Haftası" [Eng: 21-25 December 1963 National Struggle and Martyrs Week], and Muratağa-Sandallar and Atlılar martyrs are commemorated every year on 14 August on 14 Ağustos Murağa-Sandallar-Atlılar Şehitlerini Anma Günü [Eng: 14 August Maratha-Sandalari-Aloda Martyrs' Memorial Day]. The resistance movement in Erenköy, where Captain Pilot Cengiz Topel was captured and killed, is known as "8 Ağustos Şanlı Erenköy Direnişi ve Erenköy Şehitlerini Anma Günü" [Eng: 8 August, Memorial Day of the Glorious Erenköy Resistance and Erenköy Martyrs] and marks a significant period of Turkish Cypriot resistance (KKTC Mahkemeler, 2019).

Chosen photographs were analysed through ethnographic content analysis, and three photographs were selected according to the importance attached to these in Turkish Cypriot history education and socio-psychological discourse on chosen traumas (Volkan, 1979; 2014). There are better-resolution photographs available; however, the original photographs from the textbook pages are shared in this study so that the perspective of the interview participants may be better understood.

Çağla Güngör wrote a book called "Kıbrıslı Türk Gençleri Konuşuyor" [Eng: Turkish Cypriot Youth is Speaking], which published raw data transcriptions of interviews she has conducted. The interviews were unstructured, and the main theme of inquiry was how the Cyprus Conflict affects your life. During the interviews, some participants expressed conflict's effect on their psychology by sharing their experiences about history education and how conflict is taught as part of their compulsory education. She interviewed 26 individuals born in 1974, during which the Island was permanently divided into two sectors. Only the participants' current city and gender were shared. Content analysis was applied to all 26 transcriptions, and those in which a referral to history education was present were selected and analysed.

Transcriptions were originally published in Turkish, and the author translated them into English. Original transcriptions can be accessed through Güngör (2002). Interviewee details of which city they are from, their profession and other relevant information have been provided in Table 2. All of the interview transcriptions are from Turkish Cypriots who received their formal education in North Cyprus after 1974, and during their history education, they used Vehbi Zeki Serter's history textbook. Some of these participants had field trips during their primary or secondary school years, which are stated respectively in their transcriptions. Their narrations provided a promising nexus to bridge history education based on the textbook and how it shapes collective memory reservoirs.

Table 2

Details of the Selected Interviewees

Participant Number	City	Gender	Age	Profession
1	Nicosia	Male	31	Public Relations Executive
2	Nicosia	Male	28	Public Clerk
3	Nicosia	Female	28	Postgraduate Student
4	Famagusta	Female	28	Academic
5	Nicosia	Male	29	Finance Consultant
6	Nicosia	Male	31	Unemployed
7	Kyrenia	Male	28	Small Business Owner

In the results section, presented photographs are coded as P; for example, photograph 1 is referred to as P1. Interview transcripts are coded, stating both the participant number and gender. For instance, the first male interviewee is coded as MP1, stating participant, male, and first person.

Analysis of Data

Photographs have been analysed through ethnographic content analysis, useful when context and culture are important elements of the interpretations. Through this, thematic and enumerative analysis can be conducted (Grbich, 2012). Ethnographic content analysis helps to answer the question of "how have particular concepts been used in context and why? And for what purpose?" (Grbich, 2012, p. 189). It enables the discovery and verification of narratives and reflexive research design (Altheide, 1987). Therefore, individual photographs were examined in terms of both the content of the photographs and the context and the discourse they represent in the examined textbook. They also further explored what these photographs' representation means to the interviewees.

The interview transcriptions were initially analysed through content analysis, crosschecking existence of words "eğitim" [Eng: education], "eğitim sistemi" [Eng: education system], "Barbarlık Müzesi' [Eng: Museum of Barbarism], "müze" [Eng: museum] "kanlı noel" [Eng: bloody christmas], "kanlı banyo" [Eng: bloody bath], "anne ile üç çocuğu/çocukları" [Eng: mother and her three children] "şehitleri anma" [Eng: commemoration of martyrs], "marş" [Eng: anthems], "çukurlar" [Eng: holes], "toplu mezar(lar)" [Eng: mass grave(s)], "Atlılar/Murataağa/Sandallar" [Eng: Aloda/Maratha/Sandalari], "ağlayan adam" [Eng: crying man] "şehit(ler)" [Eng: martyr(s)], "şehitler haftası" [Eng: martyrs' week] "şiir" [Eng: poem(s)], "kabus" [Eng: nightmare], "eğitim sistemi" [Eng: education system], "tarih dersi" [Eng: history education], tarih kitabı [Eng: history textbook]. These keywords enabled the identification of the interview transcriptions with any history education data.

Seven interviews had explicit referrals to history education. As the second step of this process, the interviews were analysed line by line, exploring any reference to three aspects: hard memory items (e.g., mention of field visits, any photographs that they recall and talk about and the like), soft memory items (e.g., anthems, remembrance day, poetry and similar others) and emotions they have expressed. Any emotion explicitly expressed has been included in the analysis along with the relevant memory item. In some instances, interview transcriptions may refer to both a memory item and a photograph along with an emotion; those are also presented in the analysis. Since both the textbook and the interview transcripts were originally in Turkish, the researcher translated them from Turkish to English, and the original Turkish text is provided so that readers can also benefit from the original text.

Results

Language Analysis of the History Textbook

The analysed textbook is titled "Kıbrıs Tarihi" [Eng: Cyprus History] and is a black and white print. It was the only Cyprus history textbook used in all public and private schools. The following information is provided on the cover: 12th print, Dr. Vehbi Zeki Serter – Ministry of Education, Culture and Youth, Director of Inspection Department, Nicosia, 1979. On the first page, it states: Cyprus Turkish Education Directorate's decision dated 1 February 1971, issue number 28/62, this is accepted as secondary school's first, second and third years as "COURSE BOOK". The author's preface states that no history textbook appeals to students. The secondary school students were in the age group of 11-14.

The analysed textbook is 155 pages, and the first half presents in the following order: Cyprus as an Island, its geographical location, its importance, its prehistorical period; BC 15th century until the end of Old Age, Middle Age, Byzantine, British, Lusignian, and Venetian Rules, New and Close Age and the Ottoman Rule (In the textbook this period is referred as Turkish Rule). From page 81 onwards, the textbook covers the British Colonial Period, the Cyprus Conflict, and occurrences from 21 December 1963 onwards.

On page 92, of the textbook, it states: "Bütün bu hareketlere bir avuç silâhsız Türk, gögsünü kurşuna siper ederek karşı durmuş ve prensiplerinden asla vazgeçmemiştir" [Eng: A handful of unarmed Turks stood against all these movements, shielding their chests from bullets, and never renounced their principles][1] (Serter, 1979, p. 92). Meanwhile, many Turkish villages were attacked and destroyed by wild EOKA murderers. Here, Serter (1979) emphasises the bravery of regular, non-army members of the Turkish Cypriot community, who epically stood by their beliefs and group.

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[1] The original quotes from the textbook have been translated from Turkish to English by the author.

İngiliz devrinde genel olarak Türk okulları büyük baskı altında bulunduruluyordu. Hatta okullardaki Atatürk ve diğer Türk büyüklerinin resimleri kaldırılarak yerine İngiliz kralı ve büyüklerinin resimleri konuldu. Okullarımızda İngiliz bayrağı çekilir ve Kral Marşı okuttturulurdu. İngiliz hükümetinin bütün baskısına ragmen vefakâr Türk öğretmeni, gençliği, Atatürk devrimlerine bağlı olarak yetiştirdi [Eng: During the British Era, Turkish schools were generally oppressed. The pictures of Atatürk and other Turkish public figures in schools were removed and replaced with pictures of the British king and their public figures. The British flag was hoisted in our schools, and the King's Anthem was sung. Despite all the oppression from the British government, Loyal Turkish teachers raised the youth adhering to Atatürk's revolutions.] (Serter, 1979, p. 96)

This quote uses the phrase despite all the oppression, emphasising removal of Turkish public figures, and removal of the Turkish flag as pressurising acts, and stressing the devotion of the teachers and implies that Turkish Cypriot students are all loyal to their Turkishness. The term Turkishness has a long-standing ambiguity of what it represents (Cook, 2010). Within political literature it may define a group, or an individual based on cultural ethnicity or reconstruction of tradition (Akıncı, 2014). However, based on the existing literature the Turkishness that is referred in this research represents the language spoken and the Turkish flag which serves as a symbol of their group identity (Cook, 2010; Akıncı, 2014).

Another quote from the textbook is on page 116:

Huzur içinde sakin bir hayat sürmekten başka bir kavgası olmayan Lârnaka Türkü, bu tarzda düşünürken düşmanın kendisine diş bilediğinden habersiz bulunuyordu…Azınlıkta olmakla beraber Lârnaka Türkü, her ne pahasına olursa olsun bu ata yadigârı toprakları Rumlara kaptırmamak, namus ve şerefini korumak azmiyle silâha sarıldı. Çarğışmaların başladığı ilk gün bir müchait şöyle haykırıyordu: 'Arkadaşlar! Hiç korkmuyoruz. Mevzilerimiz yoksa göğüslerimiz, imanımız ve yanıbaşımızda 30 milyonluk Anavatanımız var. Bu yolda ölmek var dönmek yok' [Eng: Larnaca Turks, who had no other struggle than to live a peaceful life, was unaware that the enemy was targeting them while they were thinking this way. …Even though they were in the minority, the Larnaca Turks took up arms with the determination not to lose this ancestral land to the Greeks and to protect their honour and dignity at all costs. On the first day of the fighting, a mujahid shouted: 'Friends! We are not afraid at all. If we do not have trenches, we have our chests, our faith, and our Motherland of 30 million people right next to us. There is death on this road, but no return.'] (Serter, 1979, p.116)

On page 119, right before the narrations of the occurrences on 8th August 1964, when Captain Pilot Cengiz Topel was captured, the text states:

Pallikaryalar[2] Türk jet uçaklarını görünce şaşkına döndüler. Olaylara şahit olan yabancı muhabirlerin ifadelerine göre Rumlar, silahlarını bırakarak çil yavrusu gibi dağılmaya başlamışlardı. Anavatan'dan gelen 34 ay-yıldızlı jet uçağı, Rum ve Yunan Pallikaryalarına kan kusturdu ve Rum mevzilerini alt-üst etti" [Eng: The pallikaryas were astonished when they saw the Turkish jet planes. According to the statements of foreign reporters who witnessed the events, the Greeks laid down their weapons and began to disperse like little birds. Thirty-four star-crescent jet planes from the Motherland made the Greeks and Greek Cypriot pallikaryas vomit blood and turned the Greek positions upside down.] (Serter, 1979, p. 119)

Under the photograph of a mass grave, the textbook explains the process of the second Operation that took place on August 1974. The text follows:

Doğu ve Batı istikametinde yapılan harekâtlar sırasında Rum ve Yunan sürüleri, MEHMETÇİĞİN keskin süngüsü önünde diz çökmüş, dağılmış, perişan olmuştu. Bunlar, senelerce müdafaasız Türk toplumuna görülmedik işkence ve baskıyı reva gören Grivas bozuntusu ile baştethişçi ve katil Makarios'un "Hellen torunları" (!) diye adlandırdıkları ve onlara göre yenilmez (!) saydıkları korkak ve pısırık levantin sürüleri idi [Eng: During the operations carried out in the East and the West directions, Greek and Rum and Greek herds knelt before the sharp bayonets of the MEHMETÇİK; were dispersed and devastated. These were the cowardly and wimpy Levantine hordes whom the Grivas scoundrel, who had inflicted unprecedented torture and oppression on the defenceless Turkish society for years, and the chief terrorist and murderer Makarios, called "Hellenic grandchildren" (!), and whom the considered invincible (!).] (Serter, 1979:140)

The epic writing language of the text emphasises Turkish Cypriots' vulnerability, unawareness and bravery. It is also valuable to note that although Turkish, Greek, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot are different terminologies in political science, throughout the textbook, Turkish Cypriots and Turkish were used simultaneously and sometimes in place of each other, and vice versa for Greek Cypriots and Greeks. One of the main differences between mainland Greeks and Greek Cypriots is linguistic, as the Greek Cypriot dialect is different from the Greek dialect (Terkourafi, 2007); this applies to Turks and Turkish Cypriots, and mainland Turks and Turkish Cypriots linguistically.

There are many words between Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot dialects (Peler, 2022; Peler, 2020). Some words originate from French, Cypriot Greek, Latin, Armenian, Italian (mainly Genoese and Venetian), English and Arabic due to different reigns ruling Cyprus (Peler, 2020; Cihirli & Pehlivan, 2009). This difference does not only lie in language dialect but also culture, history and geographical differences. As Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots lived together for centuries, they created a common culture, language, history, culture and identity (Karacaoglu & Reyhanoğlu, 2015). However, in the history

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[2] The textbook uses the word pallikaryas to refer to Greeks and Greek Cypriots as "bullies who are cowards".

textbook analysed, Turkish and Turkish Cypriot terminologies are used interchangeably, which is also noted by other researchers (Papadakis, 2008).

The writing language and style emphasise ethnic nationalism, presenting Turkish Cypriot history as a continuation of Turkish history. The presentation of the perspectives is one-sided, and the link between Turkish Cypriots and the Ottomans is explicitly narrated. There are numerous referrals to the motherland Turkey, and all the resistance, battles, mass graves, displacements, and sorrows are articulately supported with photographs (Papadakis, 2008). This writing style and presentation mostly dictates the history from an official narration, dictates ethnic identity and implies future political ideology.

"Hard" and "Soft" Memories in Collective Memory Reservoir

Some of the historical narratives in the textbook were supported with pictures. Many of them were striking, violent and traumatising. Three particular photographs were chosen to triangulate with interview data. The pictures were chosen based on socio-psychological discourses. Socio-psychological helps to describe the general views as an explanatory phenomenon (Braito et al., 2017). Therefore, for this research, photographs that have been generally accepted among Turkish Cypriot society members as a representation of the 1963-1974 period have been chosen. The incidents that are associated with the photographs all have official commemoration days. Photograph 1 represents three boys and the wife of the Cyprus Turkish Forces Regiment's doctor who were killed in their house's bathroom where they were hiding. The following photograph was presented on page 116 of the textbook.

Figure 2

Photograph of the killing of the mother and three boys (Serter, 1979, p. 116)

The title of Figure 2 in the textbook is given as: "Barbar Rumların Kumsal bölgesi'nde yaptıkları baskın esnasında, şehit ettikleri K. Türk Alayı doktorunun çocukları ve eşi" [Eng: The children and wife of the doctor of the Cyprus Turkish Regiment whom the Barbarian Greeks martyred during their raid on the Kumsal region (Serter, 1979, p.116). The explanation beneath the photograph is given as the children and wife of the doctor of the Turkish Cypriot Regiment, whom barbaric Greeks martyred during the raid in the Kumsal

region. The significance of this incident is that 21 December 1963 marks the start of years of struggle for Turkish Cypriots living under fear, poverty and enclaves. The killing of the wife and the children of the doctor occurred on 24 December 1963, along with seven other people in the same neighbourhood (Reo-Tek, 2024). This period when systematic killings started is known as the Bloody Christmas, and it marks a period when the de-facto separation of Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots started (Kasım, 2020).

Figure 3

Museum of Barbarism after renovation (KKTC Enformasyon Dairesi, 2022)

The house where this incident occurred was turned into a museum called the Museum of Barbarism in 1974. This place became a public building in 1980 with the Council of Ministers decree, and it showcases pictures, newspaper clippings, and personal belongings of the family and their pictures. Primary and secondary school students have visited this place as part of their official history education. Their accounts and reflections are presented as part of the interview data analysis.

Figure 4

Bathtub in the Museum of Barbarism (Fikrigil, 2018)

Figure 5

Mass Grave in Tochni village (Serter, 1979, p. 140)

Devastated man on his knees next to mass Turkish Cypriot graves in Tochni village during the Peace Operation in 1974. Beneath the photograph the explanation states: "Kıbrıs Barış Harekâtı sırasında Rum ve Yunan vahşiler tarafından çocuk, kadın, erkek ayırt edilmeksizin canlı canlı toprağa gömülen masum Türkler..." [Eng: Turks who were buried alive, indiscriminately, children, women and men, by Greek and Greek Cypriot savages during the Cyprus Peace Operation…] (Serter, 1979, p. 140).

Several other mass graves have been part of Turkish Cypriot trauma, including Muratağa (Maratha), Sandallar (Sandalari) and Atlılar (Aloda) Mass Graves. The traumatising losses and memories have been turned into "hard" memories through monuments. The total number of people missing was in 2002, according to 2006 data. The Committee of Missing Persons (CMP) states that more than 1205 people have been exhumed as of 2024, and 292 of those who have been identified are Turkish Cypriots, and 742 are Greek Cypriots. Many of these missing people are exhumed from mass graves, house yards, open fields, wells and similar other locations (Abate et al., 2019; en.philenews, 2024; Mikellide, 2014).

Figure 6

Atlılar (Aloda) Martyrdom Site (Güvenlik Kuvvetleri Komutanlığı, 2024)

Figure 7

Pilot Captain Cengiz Topel (Serter, 1979, p. 119)

The photograph title is given as "Erenköy çarpışmaları esnasında uçağı düşürülüp, şehit edilen Türk pilotu CENGİZ TOPEL" [Eng: Turkish pilot CENGİZ TOPEL, whose plane was shot down and martyred during the Erenköy clashes] (Serter, 1979, p. 119). Next to the photograph, on the right-hand side, the textbook describes what happened to Pilot Captain Cengiz Topel as "Bu gün yer alan çarpışmalarda Yüzbaşı Cengiz Topel'in uçağı, Rumların açtığı uçaksavar ateşiyle düşürülmüş, pilot ise paraşütle atlayarak kurtulmuştur. Rum çeteleri tarafından esir alınan Türk havacısı barbarca işkenceye tabi tutularak şehit edildi" [Eng: During the clashes that took place today, Captain Cengiz Topel's plane was shot down by anti-aircraft fire opened by the Greek Cypriots and the pilot survived by jumping with a

parachute. A Turkish airman who was captured by Greek gangs was martyred after being subjected to barbaric torture] (Serter, 1979, p. 119).

Figure 8

Pilot Captain Cengiz Topel Monument Vieew 1, Cengizköy (Lefke Municipality, 2024)

Figure 9

Pilot Captain Cengiz Topel Monument View 2, Cengizköy (Lefke Municipality, 2024)

"Soft" memories of narrations and past events, transmitted from one generation to the next, were also presented as part of collective identity through "hard" memories, which became collective memory reservoirs through textbooks, monuments and museums (Etkind, 2004). Through individual reflections of interview participants, the following section discusses how these "soft" and "hard" memory elements in the collective memory are processed.

Reflections of 1974 Generation

This section of the analysis provides quotes from interview transcriptions about history education and individual reflections on the perception of the education experience and related emotions.

MP1 reflects on his experiences on martyrs' commemoration days and school field trips:

In primary school, I read a poem once at the 21 December commemoration ceremonies. I was so excited both because I was going to read poetry in front of all those people as a little child and because of the meaning of the poems I read. Some emotions awoke within me. I saw Cengiz Topel in an exhibition opened at school. The Greeks tortured and killed him. Of course, people are affected. When I saw these things, a feeling of hatred towards the Greeks arose in me. It was not exactly hatred but a different feeling. When we went to the Museum of Barbarism, some friends could not resist and went out, but I stayed. I wanted to stay longer, to feel what those people were going through. (Güngör, 2002, p. 138)

MP2's reflection explains the highlights of what struck him most through his history education:

What struck me the most was the photograph of the murdered mother in the bathroom, her three kids, and the man whose family was buried alive. The distraught weeping man over the excavated corpses of his family crying. It was a disgusting sight. I used to shudder at this photo every year. There was also a photograph of a decapitated man in the Museum of Barbarism. Even now, I get goosebumps when I see it. When I looked at those photos, the mind of a child would naturally think, "I wish I had killed Greeks too", and I would be very angry. I am at this age; I am still impressed when I hear military marches; my feelings for the Greeks rise, and I feel like crying. I always have an impulse, a grudge against them. (Güngör, 2002, pp. 19-22)

FP3, a female participant, explains how their history field trip affected her for the rest of her life:

When I was in the first grade of primary school, I think it was Martyrs' Week, they took us to the Museum of Barbarism. The murder of that mother and her three children has been told everywhere, at home and abroad, as long as I knew myself. After going to the museum, my dreams increased a lot. I will never forget when I got home from the museum; there were kolokas [also known as Taro/Colocasi] for dinner. After that day, I never put kolokas dish in my mouth again. (Güngör, 2002, pp. 11-18)

FP4, a female participant, reflects on her memories from her schooling years:

When past events were told and photographs were shown during commemoration ceremonies at school, I did not believe that humans could do all these things. Everything was so murderous. Atlılar (Aloda) and Sandallar (Sandalari) massacres, photos of the mother and her children killed in the bathroom... You know, death during war seemed normal, but killing people by cutting them was a terrible thing. When I think of war, pictures of dead people immediately come to me. (Güngör, 2002, pp. 90-94)

It is evident from this participant that commemoration ceremonies and photographs used during history education are rooted strongly in her memory.

MP5 reflects on his memories of lessons at school with the following quote:

Our history, religion and national security teachers were generally from Turkey. The History of Cyprus, which we were taught in middle and high school, is a thin book that starts everything from 1955 onwards. There is nothing about what happened before that; it is just that "Turkey came and saved us." The main theme in the books is that Greeks are bad, Turks are good, Greeks are barbarians and Turks are angels. (Güngör, 2002, pp. 153-157)

MP6 talks about how he perceived the inter-communal conflict based on his reflections from his schooling years:

Houses in various parts of Lefkoşa [Eng: Nicosia] were heavily shot. We would go to the border with our friends and look at those bullet-ridden houses and think about what war could be like. The house we lived in at that time was a Greek Cypriot house. Even though we moved to another house, we found the cabinets and bedside tables that we still use in that house. As a child, I thought of Greek Cypriots as monsters, which is what a child's mind is. They were all bad people according to me. Such things were not said at home, but we were made to think like this everywhere else, at school and so on. On commemoration days, it was told how the Greeks hanged and slaughtered us. What does a child understand about 21 December? I used to dream of playing marbles in the neighbourhood during such ceremonies. They took us to the Museum of Barbarism every year in primary school. At that age [ages 6-12], when you go to the Museum of Barbarism, you do not say `war is a bad thing`; you say `Greeks are very bad people.` Brains on the wall, bloody towels; I feared that museum. (Güngör, 2002, pp. 113-120)

Although this participant was living with the "hard" memories (i.e., bedside tables and cabinets) of the Greek Cypriots who left behind their furniture when they were running away from Turkish soldiers in 1974 and displaced to the South of Cyprus, his mind would challenge the idea that furniture belonged to another human being. In a way, the depiction of a Greek Cypriot could not match with a human being. However, he would rather imagine Greek Cypriots as monsters due to the transmission of collective memories through official

discourses and memory politics he was exposed to. Therefore, it was hard for him to comprehend that Greek Cypriots were humans just like him, and they used cabinets and bedside tables.

MP7 stresses that he feels hostile towards Greek Cypriots and expresses his experiences of history education during his secondary school education as follows: Before I started school, when someone said Greek, I would imagine people like us. When I was little, everything was rosy. However, when I went to school and started studying history, I understood what they were, and as I saw those pictures and as our teachers explained them, I grasped the facts. In primary school, we read poems on the days of commemoration of the martyrs; pictures of people were shown. I would feel sad when I saw those pictures. I would ask myself, why would people die? I was also afraid. Are not pictures of dead people scary? We also visited Karaoğlanoğlu (Agios Georgios) Martyrdom many times. We commemorated our martyrs in the same way every year in secondary and high schools. (Güngör, 2002, pp. 86-89)

Analysis of the Triangulated Data

Table 3 presents "Hard" and "soft" memories experienced as part of their history education and related emotions of secondary interview data. The "hard" and "soft" memory items are derived from the interview transcriptions and, similarly, the associated emotions, as presented in the following table. The content analysis linked the memory items with emotions, and in stated instances, interviewees referred to particular photographs that were presented in the textbook as part of their memory.

Table 3

"Hard" and "Soft" Memories and Related Memories

"Hard" Memory Items	Associated Emotions	Participant	Related Figures
Museum of Barbarism Visit	Empathy	MP1	F2
	Stunned/Terrified	MP2, MP6	F2
	Murderous/Revengeful	MP2	F4
	Trauma	FP3, MP6	F2, F3, F4
Written Poetry & Textbook	Disbelief	MP5	
	Hatred	MP6	
Photographs & Exhibitions	Hatred	MP1	F7
	Stunned, Anger	MP2	F5
	Trauma	FP4	F2, F5, F6
	Saddness	MP7	
	Terrified	MP7	
Mass Grave Site Visit	Saddness	MP7	
"Soft" Memory Items			
Rememberance Day	Excitement	MP1	
	Terrified	FP4	
	Hatred	MP6	
	Sadness	MP7	

Poetry (Reading)	Excitement	MP1
	Sadness	MP7
Military Anthems	Emotional Upheaval	MP2
	Revengeful	MP2

When interview transcriptions are analysed, it can be concluded that the epic writing language and striking photographs of the official history textbook effectively construct collective memory and identity (Todorov, 2000). This official history education curriculum created and solidified the collective memory reservoir of those born from the 1970s onwards. All the emotions expressed concerning the context are extreme negative emotions such as hatred, sadness or anger, and feeling revengeful, murderous or terrified (Volkan, 2004; 2006). In their memory recollection, all of the participants refer to either a mass grave site, Pilot Captain Cengiz Topel, or the Museum of Barbarism. Even though the traumatising incidents which were presented in the official history textbook were not experienced first-hand by the interviewees, what was presented in the textbook is not individual cases of extreme trauma, but it is a representation of the trauma and wounds of all Turkish Cypriots (Volkan, 2006).

Once "soft" memories of Turkish Cypriots, which caused them humiliation, anger and inhumane treatment, have been transformed into placemories; in other terms, geographical places of memory for a society to feel, remember and mourn (Etkind, 2004; Gang, 2020). A generation's collective memory reservoir was created through site visits to these places, using the pictures and narrations in the textbook and during commemoration days. This approach enables the solidification of memory at the individual level and the individual's social constructions and is transmitted from one generation to the next (Assmann, 2008; Roudometof, 2007; Volkan, 2004; 2006). Interview transcripts evidence (e.g. FP4, MP7) After the field trips to mass graves and particularly to the Museum of Barbarism, they started questioning occurrences. They developed a sense of belongingness and empathy with their group. However, they had no recollections or memories beforehand because they had not experienced the events first-hand. The official state discourse successfully positions and constructs the narrative as a pivotal ground and solidifies the memory by triggering traumatising experiences or transmitting them between generations through official history curriculum utilising soft and hard memory items such as textbooks, field visits, commemoration days, anthems and so forth (Hall, 2015; Volkan, 2004; 2006).

Conclusion

Previous studies in different contexts show how powerful history education can be in creating, moulding and maintaining a collective identity and memory reservoir with strategy and political involvement. The findings of this study confirm Stoddard's (2022) statement that transmitting traumatising difficult history to the younger generation, particularly at an early age, can cause trauma and is also in line with Pachkov's (2023)

argument on the pivotal role of history education in transmitting officially chosen culture and ideology to younger generations. It is evident from the results of this study that the narrated official history and curriculum design reflected a heuristic depiction of Turkish and Turkish Cypriot leaders and communities, whereas the historical narrative was mono-vocal, similar to the USA history education example of VanSledright (2008) and Packhov's (2023) curriculum and depiction exemplar from Russia.

When students with different group identifications are present in a classroom, the education experience may be different as the official history narration is challenged, as in the case of the USA (Epstein, 2009). Turkish Cypriot students have acquired a well-solidified official narration of the difficult history transmitted to them, yet as in Chen's (2007) research on Chinese students, several Turkish Cypriot students challenge the official narrative and question the curriculum they have been exposed to during their education.

Turkish Cypriot history is a paradoxical story with diverse actors throughout history, and due to political, geographical, and economic reasons, Cyprus has always been a ground for external actors' power struggles. When history is told to future generations, it is told by each actor based on particular experiences and perspectives, which may result in contradictory, contested histories. Common heritage represents a common past, history and shared experiences (Assmann, 2011). It is one of the most crucial elements that brings together a group of people and makes them a nation. Therefore, this is one of the reasons why nations have their official discourses on history, that is, to create and maintain a collective identity. One of the tools for creating and maintaining collective identity is through narrations of history, which provides a common identification for people who have been through the same experiences or heritage, which can be shared with future generations for the nation's sustenance. These can be chosen, collective traumas or glories. When history stays in oral narrations, in the form of tales, myths or stories, it may change shape, have variations or disappear.

When memory is transmitted in "hard" forms, such as books, photographs, memorial sites and so on, they not only help the creation and maintenance of collective memory but also acquire permanency in the collective memory through materialisation. This phenomenon is explored through the case of Turkish Cypriot inter-communal conflict story narrations through official public narrative in the medium of secondary school textbooks. The analysed textbook has been used for over two decades as an official Cyprus history textbook for secondary school students. Similar narrative and content was used at all levels of official education from primary to high school.

It is evident that epic narrations of the history textbook analysed, supported with violent and dramatic pictures, have effectively transmitted chosen traumas to the next generation of Turkish Cypriots, thus creating and maintaining a collective memory reservoir. However, it is concluded in this study that when supported with "hard" memories such as field trips to mass graves and museums and the use of photographs,

creating and maintaining a collective memory reservoir have been very effective. History education is quite central to achieving effective transformation. This claim is particularly valid when collaborating with "hard" and "soft" memory items. It is a key aspect of a nation to have a collective memory reservoir to maintain its existence; however, one of the most crucial and very first steps as a society is to heal past wounds to move forward towards progression and a well-designed history curriculum supported with memory items may be considered as a very effective way of creating, maintaining and transforming collective memory to achieve progression. It would have further increased the contribution of this research if interviewees could have been interviewed once again; however technically that would not be possible as there was no traceable information and this research relied on secondary data.

Examination of the only history textbook used for decades in Turkish Cypriot history education and history curriculum, along with self-reflection of seven individuals on how their history education curriculum influenced them in their adulthood, provide an insightful, longitudinal understanding of the phenomenon at the individual level. However, the number of participants limits the generalizability of the findings, which, then again, is not particularly a condition that is necessary for qualitative research.

Existing research predominantly focuses on the functions of history education in nation building or collective identity. Future research should explore the impact of history education on individual identity at the micro-level and on social representations, collective identity, and international politics at the meso- and macro-levels.

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