PERPETUATING NATIONALIST MYTHOS? PORTRAYALS OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY IRELAND IN TWENTIETH CENTURY IRISH SECONDARY SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

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ABSTRACT

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This case study has sought to examine degrees of nationalist bias found in Irish secondary school history textbooks over an 80 year period (1922-2002). Specifically, this study will be examining textbook narratives of four major topics in eighteenth century Irish history: the Penal Laws, “Grattan’s Parliament”, the Rebellion of 1798, and the 1801 Act of Union. The eighteenth century was selected for study, as opposed to more comparatively recent and controversial events, such as the Easter Rising of 1916 or the partition of Northern Ireland, to look at an era that would be outside the living memory of textbook authors. These are topics that are also susceptible to distortion or appropriation by later generations of Irish nationalists to fit a teleological narrative of a centuries-long struggle for Irish independence from Britain. This study has sought to determine: whether nationalist bias is present in the narratives of the selected textbooks, whether levels of bias have changed over the course of the period studied, and whether bias found was found pervasively throughout textbook accounts or limited to isolated passages that do not reflect the rest of the text’s account. A total of seven Irish secondary level history textbooks were selected, published at different times during the 80 year period. To conclude the extent to which the textbooks displayed levels of nationalist bias, the narratives were compared with a current historical consensus that was established through a comparison of relatively recent academic and popular works on eighteenth century Ireland. A theory forwarded in similar studies (Janmaat, 2006; Mulcahy, 1988) supports a relation between the age of a state and the nationalist tone of its historiography, with levels of nationalist bias decreasing as a state matures. The trajectory of textbook narratives found in this study does seem to show a trend toward more moderate accounts of the past. Pervasive nationalist bias was found in only one textbook, while the other textbooks evaluated saw only isolated passages that seemed colored by an Irish nationalist perspective.
If one harbours anywhere in one's mind a nationalistic loyalty or hatred, certain facts, although in a sense known to be true, are inadmissible.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Nationalist accounts of history, particularly in their treatment of conflict, often are assigned blame for perpetuating and inciting chauvinist and ethnocentric attitudes. This has been shown to be the case in the histories of established European states in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries where the vilification of rival states and the glorification of war have been given a portion of the blame for the destructive wars between the European powers during that time period (Marsden, 2000). This study will build upon the idea that such nationalist attitudes are present and likewise detrimental to relatively young states as well as older and more established political entities.

Ireland is a comparatively new European country, having gained its independence from Great Britain in the early twentieth century. Though Ireland does not have the history of inter-state warfare and rivalry with Britain similar to France or Germany, there is a history of conflict between various forces in Ireland and the Crown. In the centuries following the Protestant Reformation, the rejection of the Anglican Church by a majority of the Irish population in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries added another cultural division between the native Irish and the predominately Protestant English and Scottish who settled in Ireland. Even after Irish independence, tensions have continued over the controversial partition that formed Northern Ireland by keeping six counties within the United Kingdom. In the latter half of the twentieth century, as once antagonistic nations of Western Europe such as France and Germany were entering a new era of economic cooperation, violence between the Irish Republican Army, Ulster Unionist paramilitaries, and British military and security forces erupted over the destiny of Northern Ireland.
Irish nationalists often trace the violence of the Troubles to centuries of resistance to foreign rule by Britain. Just as nineteenth and early twentieth century nationalism in Europe has been blamed for war and unrest in that era, Republican and Unionist constructions of Irish nationalism can be held to account for the turmoil in Northern Ireland (Marsden, 2000). The primary question in this study is the degree to which nationalist constructions of Irish history are to be found in Irish secondary school textbooks. This work examines nationalist bias in Irish history curriculum from the creation of the Irish Free State to the beginning of the twenty first century, covering an 80 year period of time from 1922 to 2002. Specifically, this study will be concerning itself with Irish secondary school history textbooks as these textbooks exist as one of the foremost sources of information on the past available to young people. This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1) Is there evidence of nationalist discourse in Irish secondary school history textbook accounts of events of the eighteenth century?

2) To what extent is nationalist bias present? Is it pervasive, with nationalist discourse being found throughout the textbook accounts, or incidental, with nationalist themes present in isolated instances but not general throughout the accounts?

3) Has nationalist discourse in Irish textbooks changed over the 80 year period of evaluation? Does it follow the hypothesis used by Janmaat (2006) that bias decreases as a state matures, therefore being more prevalent in those textbooks published in the years closest to independence?

4) What are the probable reasons for any changes in levels of nationalist bias?
Background of the Study

The Republic of Ireland is a comparatively young country, gaining independence from the British Crown as the Irish Free State in 1922. This independence was negotiated by treaty following a guerilla conflict that had erupted in Ireland following the end of the First World War. Several of the Irish Republican leaders and participants in this conflict had also participated in the failed Easter Rising of 1916. Many of the men and women who fought in and helped to sustain these conflicts saw themselves as part of a much longer struggle that dated far back, before 1916, to the twelfth century and arrival of the first Anglo-Normans who began to carve out Irish fiefdoms for themselves in the name of King Henry II of England. The story of the “long struggle” for Irish independence is popular in nationalist narratives of Irish history. It is a teleological construct that lumps medieval Celtic kings, sixteenth century earls, seventeenth century generals, eighteenth century radicals, and nineteenth and twentieth century rebels together into a common thread of resistance to British governance. This is a narrative that did not end with the creation of the Irish Free State, and continues to influence Irish Republican Army members seeking to bring Northern Ireland into the Republic.

An Irish nationalist construction of Irish history commonly interprets the relationship between Ireland and Britain as one of conquest and resistance. British conquest was carried out not only militarily through force of arms and economically through control of markets, but also culturally through dress, customs, and language. Cultural nationalists such as Douglas Hyde (the founder of the “Gaelic League”) and Padraig Pearse (founder and first headmaster of St. Enda’s School) sought to reassert a Celtic-Irish cultural identity through a revival of the Irish language, celebrating traditional sports and activities, and teaching a heroic and nationalist interpretation of Irish history (Hutchinson, 1987). There was often an overlap between militant Irish nationalism
and cultural Irish nationalism as exemplified by Pearse, who became a national martyr following his capture and execution following the Easter Rising of 1916. Several pupils and former students of his St. Enda’s School fought alongside him (O’Callaghan, 2009). The example of Padraig Pearse and St. Enda’s School provides a ready example that an explicitly nationalist school curriculum can foster nationalist sentiment and inspire students to act on those sentiments.

Justification of the Study

A young person’s ideas about the past may be shaped by a variety of influences and media. Stories about the past may be informally passed down through the stories of older family or members of the community. Media such as film and television, both fictional and documentary, can communicate powerful images that influence one’s personal ideas about historical figures, events, or eras. Books ranging from scholarly works, to history texts for the general readership, to historical fiction can inform one’s construction of the past. And finally, the internet provides access to an incredibly vast amount of sources; ranging from digitized historic archives and collections, to online encyclopedias, social networks, blogs, and special interest pages all providing information or, in some cases, misinformation. For students seeking information on the past there is a wide variety of sources available. Unless students are required to engage in research for school assignments or have a personal interest in history that spurs them toward independent inquiry, school history textbooks provide one of the chief sources of information on the past.

Textbooks and official curriculum documents may not necessarily reflect what exactly is being taught to students in the classroom, or whether or not students accept or reject the information from the textbooks. Instructors may elect not to use the textbook all or part of the time and students may not to read the textbook as diligently as their teachers would wish.
Students’ conceptions of the past may be shaped by any number of the outside influences mentioned above that could conflict with the information presented in the textbooks. This is not to say that textbooks are unimportant documents unworthy of study. School history textbooks provide what is essentially an approved and official account of past events that education officials and publishers have determined as important for instructors to teach and pupils to study (Hutton and Mehlinger, 1987). Whether or not instructors and students make use of school textbooks as intended by the officials who drafted the curriculum and the authors and publishers who followed that curriculum, it is clear that studying the textbook is useful in establishing what can considered an “officially sanctioned” narrative of history.

This study’s analysis of nationalist bias in Irish textbooks will focus on four selected events from the eighteenth century. The study will seek to determine if nationalist bias exists in the selected textbook accounts of these four eighteenth century events. This will be determined by comparison with a consensus account of the selected events. This historical consensus is arrived at through a review of recent history scholarship of eighteenth century Ireland. If a textbook is determined to be displaying a level of nationalist bias, it will be evaluated as to whether that bias is pervasive, with a nationalist tone throughout a text’s accounts, or isolated, being discernible in some parts of a text, but not general throughout. Finally, the accounts of these various textbooks will be compared to one another. This will show whether or not levels of nationalist bias in Irish textbooks, if extant, have changed over the course of the 80 year period and if the hypothesis that ethnic and nationalist biases subside as a state matures bears out in the Irish case.

The eighteenth century was deliberately selected for a number of reasons. First, the eighteenth century would be outside the living memory of the textbook authors. If the period of
time chosen for analysis would have included the Home Rule debates of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries or the Easter Rising of 1916, the authors of the earlier textbooks could have had firsthand knowledge of these events that later authors would not have. Also, if accounts of a more recent event were chosen for analysis, such as the Troubles in Northern Ireland, the study could not cover textbooks from as wide a period. Second, the choice of eighteenth century events allows for a considerable distance in time between when the events took place and when the textbook authors drafted their accounts of them. This passage of time allow for the creation of folk memory and nationalist myth-making surrounding these events that could become inserted into the narrative of the textbook accounts. Third, the eighteenth century in Ireland saw the emergence of the first modern constructions of an Irish national identity, which makes it a period of interest in regards to nationalism. Finally, the relative obscurity of the eighteenth century may mean that these are topics which are more unfamiliar to instructors and students than more modern events. Teachers are more likely to rely on textbook accounts if the time period and events they are teaching are obscure or unfamiliar to them (Huffer, 2009).

Eighteenth Century Events Selected for the Study

Four major topics from eighteenth century Irish history were selected for this study. The first is the Penal Laws, a series of different and unconnected pieces of legislation passed at different times in the first half of the eighteenth century by the Protestant-dominated British and Irish Parliaments. These sought to limit the presence of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland and severely curtailed the ability of Irish Catholics to participate in the public and economic life of the country. These laws were enacted by Anglican Protestants of the established Church of Ireland, and limited the rights of Protestant Dissenters as well as Catholics. As sectarian tension has played a large role in Irish history in general and the conflict in Northern Ireland in
particular, textbook accounts of the Penal Laws may reflect boundary making between the Roman Catholic majority and the Protestant minority in the Republic of Ireland.

The second topic selected in this study is the Volunteer movement and the campaign for an independent Irish Parliament. The Volunteers and “Grattan’s Parliament”, named for Henry Grattan, a prominent figure in achieving an independent Irish Parliament in 1782, serve as examples of an emergent Irish Protestant identity wherein Protestants identified themselves as being “Irish” instead of English or Scotsmen living in Ireland. Textbook accounts written in a society with a strong Catholic influence may downplay this distinctly Protestant Irish nationalism or appropriate it under a common “Irish” identity.

The third topic to be used in this study is the Rebellion of 1798, a rebellion initially planned by the Society of United Irishmen, a group of mainly Protestant Irish radicals influenced by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. The subsequent rebellion was characterized by atrocities by both rebel and Crown forces. Instead of bringing Irishmen of all creeds together, as the United Irishmen had hoped, the 1798 Rebellion deepened the divide between Protestants and Catholics. As well as being a source of sectarian tension, the Rebellion of 1798 has been mythologized in many popular folk ballads, which may have influenced textbook accounts.

The fourth and final event selected for this study is the Act of Union, which took effect in 1801 after much political wrangling and heated debate. It made the previously separate Kingdom of Ireland a part of the United Kingdom and brought an end to “Grattan’s Parliament.” Accounts of this event will be of interest because later generations of Irish nationalists sought to bring an end to the Union. Meanwhile, a majority of Irish Protestants would style themselves as Unionists seeking to remain British subjects. The name of Unionist is still used to describe present-day citizens of Northern Ireland who wish to remain part of the United Kingdom. All of
these events have influenced the development of Irish nationalism. Any degrees of nationalist bias should be easily discernible in the textbook accounts of these events.

Organization of the Chapters

Following the introduction, Chapter II provides a review of previous scholarship relevant to this work. This chapter will first trace the historiography about the creation of the “Irish nation” and how “Irishness” has been constructed, challenged, and altered over the passage of time. From that point, two distinct but often overlapping forms of nationalism, political and cultural nationalism, will be examined in the case of Ireland. It will be shown how political nationalism, rooted in a classical liberal tradition that conceives a legal-rational concept of nation, was overshadowed by cultural nationalism, which conceives a nation as being inseparable from its unique ethnic and cultural heritage (Hutchinson, 1987). The influence that Irish cultural nationalism exerted over the education system of independent Ireland, particularly through the Catholic Church, shall then be examined followed by an account of the challenges to this status quo that resulted in curriculum reforms in the 1960s. Next, scholarship relating to school textbooks will be surveyed to provide insight into the roles textbooks play in communicating information and building a student’s conception of the past. Finally, descriptions of the four selected eighteenth century events will be given to provide necessary background information if the reader is not familiar with these episodes of Irish history.

Chapter III outlines the methods used in this study. First, the manner in which the textbooks will be analyzed for nationalist bias will be described and what constitutes nationalist bias for the purpose of this study will be defined. This consists of determining an historical consensus on the selected eighteenth century subjects to which the textbook accounts of these events will be compared. Deviations from the consensus view can indicate inaccuracies in the
textbook accounts and can highlight nationalist distortions of these events. Next, the process by which the textbooks were selected will be explained. This will illustrate how the list of selected textbooks used for this study builds upon the work of previous studies evaluating bias in Irish history textbooks (Mulcahy, 1988; Janmaat, 2006). Finally, it will be explained how the historic consensus of these events to which the textbook accounts will be compared was arrived at. This process essentially involves comparing various recent texts on Irish history, both scholarly and for the general readership, in order to determine a current consensus account of each of the four selected eighteenth century subjects.

Chapter IV presents the findings of this study, summarizing the accounts of the four eighteenth century events as they are recorded in the selected textbooks. This chapter is organized in the chronological order of the four eighteenth century subjects beginning with the Penal Laws, followed by the Irish Volunteers and parliamentary independence, then the Rebellion of 1798, and ending with the Act of Union. Under each of these subjects the accounts of each textbook are summarized in order of publication beginning with Hayden and Moonan (1922) and ending with Lucey (2002).

Chapter V provides the discussion of the information collected in Chapter IV. In this chapter the textbook narratives of the eighteenth century subjects will be compared to the established historical consensus view on these subjects. The comparison between textbook accounts and the consensus narrative will help to determine the extent to which an evaluated textbook displays nationalist bias. It is in this chapter that the research questions central to this study will be addressed. This chapter will be organized by the chronological order of publication of the selected textbooks beginning with Hayden and Moonan (1922) and ending with Lucey (2002). The evaluation of each textbook will be presented and this will be followed by a general
conclusion discussing discernible trends in the level of nationalist bias in Irish textbooks over the 80 year period surveyed.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Historiography and the Creation of the Irish Nation

The Republic of Ireland is relatively young as an independent country, having gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1922. In the minds of many of those who had campaigned politically or fought actively for Irish independence, however, the Irish nation was considerably older. The concept of the Irish nation and the idea of nationalism itself arise from the era of the Enlightenment. The modern concept of nation, as it emerged in the eighteenth century, is a political category with power and value placed in historical communities themselves instead of a providential order. Prior to this, ethnic communities were often scattered and commonly administered by other cultural communities. The emerging belief that each national group should take control of its own destiny and express its unique culture has produced significant consequences and conflicts, resulting in distinctive and territorially consolidated political communities (Hutchinson, 1987). The generation of Irish nationalists who brought about independence and built the institutions of the new state, inspired by the Gaelic revival movement that began in the later nineteenth century, looked beyond the eighteenth century to ancient and medieval Ireland and saw in these historic periods the foundation for the Irish Republic, the “modern Irish nation in embryo” (O’Callaghan, 2009, p. 2).

This conceptualization of the nation and its roots in history is not unique to Ireland. The linear, evolutionary, and teleological narratives common to nationalist constructs of history are discussed both by Comerford (2003) and Duara (1995). National histories commonly assemble historical knowledge to shape a narrative that leads to an end or goal. This goal generally being the current state of affairs or the one about to be achieved (Comerford, 2003). The nation is “the newly realized, sovereign subject of History embodying a moral and political force that has
overcome dynasties, aristocracies, and ruling priests and mandarins, who are seen to represent merely themselves historically” (Duara, 1995, p. 4). For nationalist histories, particularly in a separate ethnic enclave, colony, or former colony, this current or to be achieved state of affairs generally is independence from outside rule and the achievement of self-determination. Irish nationalist historiography often refers to a Gaelic “golden age” prior to the arrival of the Anglo-Normans and frames the ensuing centuries up to Independence as being a struggle wherein the native Irish sought to preserve native culture, language, and religion against a foreign oppressor. Independence was framed as a recovery of lost culture and prestige and something of a return to this “golden age” (Hutchinson, 1987; Stewart, 1998).

A teleological construction of history is a fundamental aspect of an essentialist view of nationality which views the nation-state as the end goal that has been achieved or is about to be achieved. This essentialist understanding of nationality regards nations as being prescribed by nature or a divine plan with naturally defined membership and territory and an informing spirit about them (O’Callaghan, 2009). This essentialist concept of the nation is questioned by Duara (1995) who states that what a nation is, what the nation does, and what the nation means is often contested by regimes, politicians, and the everyday people within the nation. The individual self resides in a network of changing and conflicting representations, of which national identity is but one. Nationalism seeks to prioritize national identity as the chief and overriding identity in a society, putting it in a privileged position above and encompassing other identities such as religious, racial, linguistic, class, and gender identity. National identity exists as one of many identities that can be laid claim to. An individual’s national identity is as easily changeable, and conflicted or harmonious as any other form of self-identification. Therefore, national identity can be quite unstable with a susceptibility to splitting by different criteria of identity formation or
by transferring loyalty away from the nation to a subgroup (Duara, 1995). In the case of Ireland in the fifty years after independence “Irishness” was characterized as being Catholic, white, settled, and Gaelic (Tormey, 2006). Although post-independence Ireland still had populations of Protestants, Jews, and the Irish Traveller community, all of whom were citizens of the Republic of Ireland, these groups did not fit the popularly-held definition of “authentic Irishness.” This concept of Irish national identity would be largely unchallenged and it was only with the large influx of immigrants during the country’s “Celtic Tiger” years beginning in the late 1990s that this definition would be seriously and critically reconsidered (Devine, Kenny, & Macneela, 2008; Tormey, 2006).

An alternative to the linear and causal concept of the past and its relation to the present is a bifurcated conception of history. In this sense the past is not only transmitted forward in a linear way but its meanings are dispersed in space and time. In writing on the history of China, Duara (1995) states that “bifurcation points to the process whereby, in transmitting the past, Historical narratives and language appropriate dispersed histories according to present needs, thus revealing how the present shapes the past” (p. 5). This process of appropriating these histories to fulfill present needs is common to nationalist constructions of history. Historic events and figures can be appropriated by the nation and recast in such a light as to justify the current state of affairs or the eventual desired state of affairs and thus being made to fit within a teleological, causal narrative of history. Irish nationalist history is no exception. Theobald Wolfe Tone, one of the leading figures in the Society of United Irishmen in the 1790s, has been canonized by Irish nationalists as a martyr in the struggle for Irish independence. Whereas Wolfe Tone and the rest of the leadership of the Society of United Irishmen advocated the separation of Ireland from the rule of the British Crown and the establishment of an Irish
Republic; the secular republic that the United Irishmen wanted to bring about in the 1790s, inspired by the American and French models of the day, would likely bear little resemblance to the Irish state created after 1922 with its strong, pervasive Catholic ethos (Curtin, 1994). The government of an Independent Ireland had a strong vested interest in disseminating a view of history that offered justification for its own existence and a grounded rationale for its political goals. The majority of the population accepted a Catholic-nationalist view of history, and in the years immediately following independence, “to question this popular cult of history would have amounted to questioning the legitimacy of the Irish Free State” (O’Callaghan, 2009, p. 62).

In a similar vein to these ideas of historic appropriation, is the idea of the existence of a difference between the concepts of “past” and “history.” Plumb (2004) describes the “past” as being informal and either remembered improperly or deliberately distorted to serve an ulterior motive. The “past” is mythical and serves to enhance social cohesion in a group. “History,” or rather, academic and revisionist history sees things as they were without consideration of what conflicts might be created by invalidating traditional interpretations of the past. History is more factually true but it is not as emotionally satisfying for the group as the “past.” Although the “past” does not have the same factual truth as history, it can still hold moral, theological, or aesthetic truths for a community. Therefore the “past” is considered to be a more powerful social force than history (Plumb, 2004). In the context of Irish history, the notion of a widely held, semi-mythological “past” is particularly pervasive. This Irish sense of the “past” was forwarded by Gaelic revivalists and political nationalists. It looked back to pre-Norman Ireland as an idyllic era disturbed and derailed by foreign invasion and oppression that could be boiled down into dichotomies of “good” Irish/Catholic and “bad” English/Protestant. These simplistic, and popularly held, constructions of Irish history have little regard for nuances and subtleties and
rest instead on sweeping generalizations. Lee (1989, quoted in O’Callaghan, 2009, p. 2) goes so far as to bluntly opine that the Irish “have little sense of history. What they have is a sense of grievance which they choose to dignify by calling it history.”

Political Nationalism and Cultural Nationalism in Ireland

Irish nationalism, itself, can be broken down into the realms of political nationalism and cultural nationalism. Political nationalism is defined as being rooted in a secular and classical liberal ideology with a legal-rational concept of the nation (Hutchinson, 1987). The early twentieth century example of John Dillon, a leader in the Irish Parliamentary Party, illustrates an ideology advocating the mobilization of diverse constituencies within Ireland. Dillon sought to bring together Catholic and Celtic Irish with Protestant and Anglo-Irish toward the goal of political autonomy in the form of Irish home rule. Dillon’s contemporary, Douglas Hyde, serves as an example of the cultural nationalist. Hyde was the president and founding member of the Gaelic League and advocated for the preservation of the Irish language. It was argued that a return to the unique history and culture of the Irish people that would allow them to realize their full human potential. According to Hyde, political independence without the development or reemergence of a distinct native culture would be hollow and meaningless (Hutchinson, 1987; O’Leary, 2009). The political nationalist looks to reason as an ethical source and advocates a cosmopolitan and rationalist conception of the nation in contrast to the cultural nationalist who sees the essence of the nation in its distinct history, culture, and geographical profile. To the cultural nationalist, nations, instead of being merely political units, are organic beings with living personalities founded not strictly on consent or law but on the passions founded in nature and history (Hutchinson, 1987; Pinter, 2010).
The interpretations of national history forwarded by those who established the Irish Free State and the later Republic were greatly influenced by the views of cultural nationalists such as Hyde. In the Irish case, the cultural nationalists have exerted a greater influence on Irish historiography and the development of an Irish national identity than the less divisive and ethnically exclusive views of the political nationalists such as Dillon. As has been previously touched upon, the construct of the Irish nation that emerged after independence saw itself as the destined outcome of a centuries-long struggle for political and religious freedom; a recreation of the Gaelic “golden age” in a modernizing world. The identity associated with this nation was strongly attached to the Catholic faith and Gaelic/Celtic traditions, including the study of the Irish language (Coakley, 2011; Hepburn, 2001; Hutchinson, 1987; Lloyd, 2001; O’Leary, 2009). Irish Protestants and other communities such as the Travellers found themselves as out-groups in connection with this emergent Irish national identity. How this identity directly impacted education in Ireland will be further discussed below.

Nationalism in Irish Education and Reforms in the Curriculum

Prior to Irish independence, the education system in Ireland followed a model set forth by the British administration under Chief Secretary, Lord Stanley, in 1831. Under this system, the responsibility of running the National Schools was delegated to the churches. It had been the hope of the British administration that these schools would be established through cooperation among the various church trustees to create schools that were Christian, but non-confessional in their makeup and instruction. In the predominately Catholic country, with mistrust between Irish Catholics and Protestants, the reality was that Irish schools were largely sectarian by mid-century (Walsh, 2008).
Although many schools were administered by the Catholic Church, the curriculum and textbooks were approved by the National Board of Education in conjunction with representatives from the major Christian denominations; the Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland, and the Presbyterian Church. This would result in a curriculum and textbooks that were acceptable to all the major religious groups as well as the British administration. Whereas the use of these textbooks was not compulsory, they became ubiquitous due to their comparatively low cost. The price as well as the non-sectarian tone of the textbooks contributed to their popularity outside of Ireland. By the middle of the nineteenth century textbooks produced for the Irish market were being bought by schools throughout the British Empire, including schools in England itself. In the year 1859, for example, one million Irish books were being utilized by schools in England (Walsh, 2008).

These textbooks were popular across the Empire, being adopted for use in over a dozen colonies (Walsh, 2008). But these Irish textbooks and the National School system that created them were not looked upon favorably by the Irish cultural nationalists of the Gaelic revival movement. Those who advocated for the compulsory teaching of the Irish language and a reconnection with the country’s history saw the National Schools as a tool of Anglicization and cultural imperialism designed to detach the Irish from their native culture and assimilate them as “West Britons.” According to cultural nationalists, it was the influence of the National Schools and British policy, not a natural process of decay, which had caused the decline in the Irish language (Hepburn, 2001; Hutchinson, 1987; O’Callaghan, 2009). Padraig Pearse, an educator who would be executed as one of the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising, decried the school system put in place by the British as a “murder machine” that contained no national material and kept the Irish people in a state of cultural slavery of which they were generally unaware. Pearse
felt that the exam-dominated and exclusively English language system was incapable of instilling the ingredients of Irish identity, a love of Irish history, language, and literature, in Ireland’s youth. The school Pearse founded in 1908, St. Enda’s School, was bilingual and explicitly nationalist. The curriculum sought to impart a love of all things Irish and a heroic and patriotic spirit among the boys who attended. Several students and faculty members of St. Enda’s would fight alongside Pearse in 1916 (O’Callaghan, 2009).

Although the St. Enda’s School was never a commercial success, shutting down in the 1930s, Pearse’s promotion of knowledge of the past and the Irish language to counter the cultural colonization of the British education system was similar to education policies formulated following Irish independence (O’Callaghan, 2009). Cultural nationalists, such as those of the Gaelic League, advocated a kind of “cultural revolution” in education that would include the compulsory teaching of the Irish language and Irish history with the view to establishing a wholly Irish Ireland. The support that the Gaelic League and other cultural nationalists had given to the independence movement and the active role that many such people had played in the struggle for independence meant that the newly formed government was supportive of the educational goals of this “cultural revolution” (O’Callaghan, 2009).

As previously noted, religious institutions played a central role in education during the British administration and this would be continued following independence. The Catholic Church, as the largest denomination in the newly-established country, would play the most prominent educational role. A majority of secondary school teachers at this time were priests, religious brothers, or religious sisters (O’Callaghan, 2009). Even in the twenty-first century the Catholic Church is a dominant force in the administration of Irish schools, although there have been increasing movements toward greater secularization (Devine, Kenny, & Macneela, 2008;
The Catholic Church in Ireland embraced the program of Gaelicization that made Irish history and language compulsory. Protestant schools would rather have opted out but were faced with losing government funding if they did not implement Gaelicization policies (O’Callaghan, 2009). The influential Catholic professor of education at University College Dublin, the Rev. T.J. Corcoran S.J., saw history as an integral branch of Catholic religious, moral, and sociological training. To Corcoran, the Church should assume its rightful place in the history curriculum as the driving force of civilization and progress (Coakley, 2011; Norman, 2003; O’Callaghan, 2009).

An emphasis on a “glorious” interpretation of the past as opposed to an alignment towards future progress appealed to Catholic Church leaders skeptical of liberalism and modernity. From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, the sustaining force of the Catholic Church in Ireland was found in the Irish Catholic middle class of farmers and merchants whose means helped to provide for the financial needs of the Church. The interests of the Catholic Church were bound with the interests of the Catholic middle class, and so many of the values espoused in the predominately Catholic-run secondary schools reflected middle class values such as the primacy of private property (O’Donoghue, 1999; Williams, 1999). From the 1920s through to the 1960s secondary education was largely only available to middle class children with only the brightest of poorer students being encouraged to continue past primary school. In the 1920s only 5 percent of Irish students who completed primary school went on to get a secondary education. By 1960 this had increased to only 16 percent (O’Donoghue, 1999). These rates were enough to provide for the necessary number of educated graduates to enter the professions or public service. As long as the economic needs of the country were met by the system as it stood, none of the major political parties saw reason to institute free secondary
education for all students or interfere with the Catholic Church’s role in education (Norman, 2003; O’Donoghue, 1999).

For the first thirty years of independence it was government policy that the state had no place interfering with the authority of the Church in education. It was only in 1950, under pressure from the Labour Party, teachers’ organizations, and Protestant school administration that an educational council was formed to be consulted on major questions of educational policy and legislation. This council only had advisory powers, however (O’Callaghan, 2009). Between independence and the 1960s there was very little change in the Irish education system. In the late 1950s and early 1960s the formation of teachers’ groups such as the Dublin Historical Association and History Teachers’ Association of Ireland sought to bring together academic historians and school faculty and create lectures and seminars for the professional development of school history teachers. Teachers’ groups sought to bring history education in Irish primary and secondary schools in line with contemporary academic scholarship in history. This included shifting from the traditional narrative of Irish history that had been taught and focusing on developing skills of critical thinking and reflection in Irish students (O’Reilly, 2012). It was also groups such as these that lobbied for a shift in the history curriculum away from the focus on political and military history and towards the inclusion of social, cultural, and economic history (O’Callaghan, 2009; Tormey, 2006).

In the late 1960s new concerns in Irish history education emerged as violence re-ignited in Northern Ireland. As the Troubles of the second half of the twentieth century arose, the Republic of Ireland sought to improve its relationship with Northern Ireland. In this political climate, concerns had been raised that the tone of Irish history courses had taught a prejudiced and jingoistic view of Irish history and that this image of Ireland’s history “was an underlying
factor in IRA violence because it instilled hatred of England as an evil oppressor and glorified the militancy of the campaign for independence” (O’Callaghan, 2009, p. 3). Criticisms of history texts and the curriculum had been made by historians and teachers’ groups as far back to the 1920s. These concerns regarding nationalist tone and the need to develop a history curriculum to be in line with current scholarship in history education were not seriously addressed until the 1960s and ‘70s. This possibly indicates that the Department of Education was happy to maintain the status quo regarding the history curriculum until the clamor over IRA violence and curriculum revision became too loud to ignore (O’Callaghan, 2009; Tierney, 1971).

The curriculum reforms undertaken in the 1960s and 1970s not only addressed political issues, but also reflected the changing nature of Ireland and the economy. Further industrialization prompted a revision in the curriculum with history and the other humanities suffering in an increased focus on the sciences (O’Reilly, 2012). Along with this shift in the overall curriculum, the history curriculum began to move away from the Gaelic nationalist discourse, with its near worship of heroes and emphasis on political and military history. The new history curriculum allowed for more social, cultural, and economic history, although these topics would not be covered to as great an extent as political history in school examinations (Drudy & Lynch, 1993; O’Callaghan, 2009).

The next, and last, significant revision of the Irish curriculum occurred in 1999, nearly thirty years after the last major educational reforms. As well as meeting the natural need to update the curriculum, the educational reforms of 1999 reflected an improving relationship with Great Britain and Northern Ireland following the 1998 Good Friday Peace Accords. The reformed curriculum also sought to address the growing patterns of immigration that had begun during a period of economic boom (Faas & Ross, 2012; Tormey, 2006). This influx of
immigrants included many who came from outside of Europe whose ethnic backgrounds and religious traditions contrasted with the traditional “white and Catholic” notion of Irish identity. As well as seeking to be more inclusive in terms of ethnic and cultural diversity, the new history curriculum had shifted at the primary school level to help develop the skills of the historian in students; searching for and evaluating evidence and analyzing how claims of truth have been constructed in relation to the past. This child-centered focus on the development of historical skills was inspired by the New History adopted in the UK in the 1970s (Tormey, 2006). These skills were nurtured at the primary level but at the post-primary level the curriculum is still regarded as being more formalized, less flexible, and less student-centered in content and methods (Faas & Ross, 2012). While the current curriculum has been considered not as overtly nationalistic in tone or content, there has been concern that the traditional construction of “Irishness” as being white, Catholic, settled, and Gaelic/Celtic is still dominant in Irish society (Devine, Kenny, & Macneela, 2008; Faas & Ross, 2012; Williams, 1999).

The Importance of Textbooks

Schools play an important role as agents of socialization; transmitting to students a consensus view of what the dominant forces in society considers as important (Faas & Ross, 2012). In terms of history education, the history that students are taught represents what is considered important for them to know about the past (O’Callaghan, 2009). It is considerably less clear what role school textbooks play in the realm of education. The impact that textbooks have played in shaping students’ perception of history and the formation of national identity has been up for debate. Textbooks and official state syllabi and curriculum documents are readily accessible artifacts for researchers; however their value in determining exactly what is taught is somewhat limited. As O’Callaghan (2009) states “official state policy for a subject reveals little
about what actually takes place in the school and history classroom, where a number of variables apply” (p. 62). These variables can include the textbooks that are used, how these textbooks are employed in the classroom, the attitudes of the teacher, possible divergence between the official curriculum and actual implementation, the media consumed by the pupils, the attitudes of the pupils, and the pupils’ home environment.

Not all scholarship is as doubtful of the overall impact that textbooks play in imparting knowledge and socializing children. Hutton and Mehlinger (1987) view school textbooks as playing an incredibly vital role in the socialization of students, and compare school textbooks to the village story-tellers of non-literate societies. Although they recognize that there are many other sources of socialization besides textbooks, “none compares to textbooks in their capacity to convey uniform, approved, even official versions of what should believe” (Hutton & Mehlinger, 1987, p. 141). Faas and Ross (2012), in examining diversity and individual identity formation in Irish schools echo this concept, although not as vehemently, stating that textbooks and curriculum documents represent “the perceived core values and goals to be promoted through education” (p. 575). In the examination of textbook biographies of the revered American Presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, Hutchins (2011) discusses the influence that conservative citizens groups in the United States in general, and Texas in particular, exercise in how textbooks are written and how a nation’s heroes are remembered. This is comparable to the influence of Irish cultural nationalists and the Catholic Church in the canonization and reinterpretation of Irish heroes of independence, maintaining the pervasive Catholic ethos in Irish education, and suppressing or dismissing episodes of Irish history that did not fit with the popular nationalist conception of history (O’Callaghan, 2009; O’Donoghue, 1999).
In regions with ethnic strife, school curriculum and social studies textbooks can often reflect ethnic stereotypes and reinforce existing prejudices. The influence that textbooks exert can, according to some, be revised and improved to promote inter-ethnic harmony. Murgescu (2002), whose work concerns ethnic instability in the fragmented former Yugoslavia, feels that a return to nationalist and ethnocentric discourse in education following the dissolution of Tito’s Yugoslavia helped contribute to the ethnic conflicts and associated war crimes of the 1990s. While not blaming textbooks alone for the formation of ethnic prejudices, Murgescu (2002) feels that they are partly responsible and that the revising and improving of school textbooks in the region “would be a significant step in setting up a more stable and peaceful Southeastern Europe” (p. 90). A study published in 2013 by the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land examined Israeli and Palestinian textbooks to evaluate the long-held belief that the two parties are “taught to hate” the other from childhood, and that these beliefs are reinforced through formal education. After evaluating Israeli state textbooks, Israeli ultra-Orthodox textbooks, and Palestinian textbooks, the following findings were presented as common to all the textbooks: dehumanizing characterizations of the other, non-critical unilateral national narratives that present the other as an enemy, and a lack of information on the culture and daily life of the other. The authors felt that a revision of the Israeli and Palestinian textbooks to show a less distorted view of the other would be an important step towards a lasting peace (Adwan, Bar-Tal, & Wexler, 2013). A comparison can be made to the Irish situation where nationalist bias in education was blamed, particularly in the 1960s and ‘70s, for contributing to IRA recruitment and violence in the North of Ireland (O’Callaghan, 2009). The persistence of the dichotomies of “good” Irishman and “evil” Englishman, “poor” tenant and “cruel” landlord in the curriculum, textbooks, and in popular and widely held prejudices certainly contributed to a hostile view
towards England (Doherty, 1996). However, the extent to which school history teachers and
texts provided a specific blueprint for violent political action or simply legitimized existing
feelings of resentment and injustice is debatable (O’Callaghan, 2009).

Textbooks provide an important source of content knowledge not only to the students
who are to read the book, but sometimes to the teachers themselves. This would be particularly
the case if teacher training regarding content is limited. Huffer (2009), in evaluating the quality
of world history education in the United States, stresses the important role that textbooks play.
Many American history teachers have comparatively little background in world history yet may
be required to teach it. Because world history content training is limited and teachers are
burdened with varied and demanding curriculum standards “it stands to reason that their
classroom textbook would play a central role in the development and teaching of their course”
(Huffer, 2009, pp. 93-94). This concern regarding a lack in teacher training echoes the Irish
experience prior to the curriculum reforms of the 1970s. “If the only history that many teachers
knew was what they had picked up from the same texts that their pupils use, it is understandable
that the opinions of the authors of these books could assume significant authority” (O’Callaghan,
2009, p. 46). The pressures of the exam system further increased a strong reliance on textbooks.
In situations where the textbook was a dominant force of historical knowledge, the only
alternative source of such knowledge would be from the students’ homes or wider communities.

It seems clear that textbooks do play some role in developing a student’s sense of
national identity and conception of history. Textbooks and school curriculum help to cultivate a
common culture but they do not exist in a vacuum. As well as shaping culture they are, in turn,
shaped by culture and reflect the larger society (Goodson, 1988). Doherty (1996) argues that
much of the nationalist tone of Irish history education in the decades after independence was not
simply the top-down implementation of policy by the state, shaping popular conceptions of history. It is argued that state policies of history education conformed to popular demands. Irish teachers, particularly in the years directly following independence, had little professional training and were under rather vulnerable terms of employment. There was little job protection in the event that they caused displeasure to the school officials and the communities in which they worked. Teachers were often active in spreading beliefs about the past that were socially acceptable to the community (Doherty, 1996). It is in this sense that O’Callaghan (2009) contends that history teachers in Ireland were followers of public opinion rather than shapers of public opinion; “teachers, textbooks, and syllabi reflect rather than create the values of their society. However, in turn, they also influence the development of that society’s values” (p. 63).

Therefore, whereas history textbooks undoubtedly play a role in developing students’ conceptions of their nation’s history and national identity, it should be remembered that without extensive analysis of lesson plans or teacher observations to see how these texts are used, it is problematic to draw too many conclusions regarding the influence textbooks are able to wield.

Eighteenth Century Ireland as the Period of Examination

Ireland in the Eighteenth century was considered by many historians as a relatively peaceful period and something of a backwater of Irish history when compared to the high drama of the centuries surrounding it which saw the Williamite Wars of the late seventeenth century and Daniel O’Connell’s campaign for Catholic Emancipation in the early nineteenth century. The eighteenth century was seen as an era of stability under the oligarchic rule of the Protestant Anglo-Irish Ascendency punctuated by the explosion of the Rebellion of 1798. Other than the events of 1798, political issues regarding tariffs, trade, and parliamentary independence dominated academic historians’ accounts of the eighteenth century (McBride, 2009). However,
the eighteenth century for Ireland was a far more dynamic period than this well-used theme would suggest. Despite being on the periphery of the European world, Ireland was subject to the same political, social, religious, and intellectual forces shaping the rest of Europe in the eighteenth century. The course of events in eighteenth century Ireland would be influenced by the lingering effects of the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation, and the scientific and philosophical advancements of the Enlightenment. The American War of Independence and the French Revolution would provide inspiration and leverage to reformers and revolutionaries alike, resulting in legislative reforms and mixing with deep-seated political and sectarian tensions to result in the outbreak of the 1798 Rebellion.

The eighteenth century was chosen as the period of examination in which to evaluate national bias for two primary reasons. First, with perhaps the exception of the 1798 Rebellion, the events of the eighteenth century in Ireland are left comparatively alone. Outside of the niche of eighteenth century history, studies of Irish nationalism tend to favor the movements, both political and militant, of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and show a general preference for the more recent Troubles of Northern Ireland. Second, looking into the textbook accounts of eighteenth century Ireland in order to evaluate nationalist bias could provide a different picture than would an examination of later events of Irish history such as the Easter Rising of 1916, the Irish War of Independence of 1918-21, or the Northern Ireland Troubles of later twentieth century. The events of the eighteenth century are far outside living memory, and accounts of these events could reflect either popularly-held folk memory of the event or a measured and impartial account as a result of centuries of detachment from the era.

This study will be examining textbook representations of four events associated with the eighteenth century in Ireland. All of these events have largely been susceptible to nationalist and
sectarian biases in written history as well as in popular folk memory. First, the implementation and application of the Penal Laws will be examined. This series of legislation put into place by the Protestant-dominated Irish Parliament following the conclusion of the Williamite Wars severely curtailed Irish Catholic participation in public and economic life, limited the movement of the Catholic clergy, forbade Irish Catholics from joining the military, and prevented Catholic families from sending their children overseas to gain an education (Bartlett, 1992). This episode in Irish history contributed directly to the rise of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy of Protestant landlords and has been the cause of much bitterness in Irish Catholic folk memory. It is important to understand that the Penal Laws also affected Dissenting Protestants and that, outside of the laws that limited Irish Catholic economic and social participation, enforcement of the Penal Laws by the Crown authorities was markedly lax (Connolly, 1992). It is also important to note that liberal Protestants in the Irish Parliament, influenced by the ideals of the Enlightenment, began to advocate for Catholic relief in the mid-eighteenth century and began a slow process of dismantling the Penal Laws toward Catholic emancipation (Bartlett, 1992; McBride, 2009).

The second event to be examined will be the campaign for Parliamentary Independence beginning in the 1770s, spurred on by the weakened state of Britain during the American War of Independence, and culminating in the achievement of legislative independence and the drafting of a constitution in 1782. This was achieved through pressure by the Irish Volunteers, independent military companies raised by Irish Protestant gentry to counter the possibility of foreign invasion while British regular forces were occupied with the war in North America. The leaders of these units, such as the renowned orator and MP Henry Grattan, were involved politically in the campaign for free trade and an independent parliament. It is the intimidation by
these armed volunteers that is often credited with persuading the British Parliament and Crown to grant independence to Ireland’s Parliament. Until the Act of Union in 1801, the Parliament of Ireland, while still subject to the British Crown, would be able to chart its own legislative course without the oversight of the British Parliament or the Privy Council. This is a similar level of independence that would be sought by the Irish Parliamentary Party and the Home Rule movement in the late nineteenth century. Although “Grattan’s Parliament” would alleviate some of the Penal Laws affecting Irish Catholics, the majority of the population would not be able to serve in its chambers. The Dublin Parliament was dominated by Irish Protestants who considered themselves not as Britons settled in Ireland, but members of a Protestant Irish nation. The period of Parliamentary Independence provides a unique chapter in the history and development of Irish nationalism and is one of the primary events of the eighteenth century in Ireland (Bartlett, 1992; McBride, 2009).

The third event that will be examined in this study is the 1798 Rebellion and the associated United Irishmen movement. The Society of United Irishmen, which began strictly as a political reform movement of liberal-minded Irish Protestants, was heavily influenced by the ideals of the American and French Revolutions (Curtin, 1994). Once the organization went underground following British proscriptions of radical societies, members actively sought French military aid in the establishment of a secular Irish republic. A French fleet was prevented from landing an invasion force in 1796 due to inclement weather. Fearful government authorities committed excesses in seeking to stamp out the conspiracy. These repressive actions contributed to the outbreak of violence two years later. The popular image of the Rising of 1798 includes brutal massacres carried out by both rebels and government forces and committed largely along sectarian lines. Irish cultural nationalists have included the rebel leaders of 1798 among the
pantheon of martyrs for Irish independence while Unionists remember the massacres of Protestant civilians carried out by rebel forces at Scullabogue and Wexford Bridge. The popular sectarian interpretations of the rebellion, however, ignore important nuances. Although highly regarded by later Catholic nationalists as heroes in the struggle for independence, the principal leaders of the United Irishmen were Protestants seeking to create a secular republic after the French model. While the British military is given much of the blame for excessive cruelty and brutal treatment of captured or suspected rebels, a great deal of the Crown forces in Ireland that took part in the campaign of intimidation that led to the explosion of violence in the late spring of 1798 were not British regular troops but units of the Irish Militia and local forces of Yeomanry that consisted of Irishmen and included many Irish Catholics among their ranks (Curtin, 1994, McBride, 2009, Reid, 2011).

The fourth and final event that will be covered is the Act of Union that took effect in 1801. While technically just within the nineteenth century, the Union is regarded as the culmination of events of the eighteenth century in Ireland (McBride, 2009). Particularly it is seen as the political outcome of the 1798 Rebellion which caused the British Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger, to see the Irish Parliament as incapable of restoring and keeping order in Ireland. Thus, Pitt sought to dissolve the Irish Parliament and end Ireland’s existence as a separate kingdom by bringing it into union with Great Britain and under the direct rule of the British Parliament. The Act of Union was reviled by later nationalists as another instance of British imperialism stomping out whatever independence there was in Ireland (MacManus, 1944). A more nuanced look at the Union would recognize that Irish Catholics, not being able to represent themselves in the Irish Parliament, had little say in governance during Grattan’s Parliament. While the Irish Parliament had been dominated by Anglo-Irish Protestants,
distrustful of the Catholic population, the new unified Parliament included many more liberal and moderate MPs considerably more inclined toward the cause of Catholic Emancipation than the hardliners of the Ascendancy had been (Bartlett, 1992).

These four events have been remembered in a manner that often conflicts along sectarian divisions as well as conflicting with the general consensus of academic histories. Because of their divisive and controversial nature, they should provide relatively clear examples of nationalist bias in textbook accounts of the eighteenth century. It is hoped that this will provide a ready picture of whether or not nationalist bias has, indeed, diminished in Irish school textbooks.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY AND SELECTION OF TEXTS

In seeking to determine if nationalist bias exists in Irish textbooks in their recounting of events of the eighteenth century, to what extent it exists, and what effect it might have, it is important to define what is meant by “nationalist bias,” what constitutes nationalist bias, and what are considered neutral and balanced depictions. This study will follow the standards of objectivity set in previous studies by Mulcahy (1988) and Janmaat (2006) that evaluated nationalist bias in Irish textbooks. Mulcahy (1988) examined the portrayal of the British in post-independence Irish history textbooks while Janmaat (2006) focused on one event, The Great Famine of the 1840s. These studies used the general consensus among historians on historical events to serve as the benchmark by which to evaluate texts for nationalist bias. These criteria of evaluation will be used and applied to textbook accounts of the eighteenth century events selected for this study. An account that significantly departs from the historical consensus in interpretation of events in such a way as to favor an in-group over the out-group or “other” will be regarded as displaying a nationalist bias. Nationalist bias that reflects ethnic or cultural nationalism in history texts can be found in ethnic boundary-making which creates an attitude of “us versus them.” In the Irish case, the British government and government loyalists may be characterized as “English” or “Protestant” in opposition to the “Irish” and “Catholic” in-group. This boundary-making can also result in the characterization of in-group exclusively as victims and the out-group exclusively as perpetrators (Janmaat, 2006).

Textbook accounts that correspond with the historical consensus, on the other hand, would be considered as a more neutral, balanced, and even-handed narrative of these events. To provide an example: an account of the Rebellion of 1798 that recalls atrocities committed by Crown forces during the insurrection but omits or gives only cursory treatment of the massacres
of loyalist civilians by rebels at Scullabogue House and Wexford Bridge would reflect a nationalist bias. An account that describes atrocities committed by both government and rebel forces, however, would be considered more balanced. In this study the following criteria will be used to assess degrees of nationalist bias found in the selected textbooks:

1) Ethnic boundary-making which creates a sense of “us versus them” between the Irish Catholic majority, the Irish Protestant minority, and the British;

2) A non-critical presentation of the self which selectively describes the in-group (Irish Catholics) exclusively as victims and the dominating out-group (Irish Protestants and the British) exclusively as the perpetrators;

3) Failure to mention the rationale and motivations behind the actions and policies of the British government and administration in Ireland.

The events of interest in this study, the Penal Laws, Irish Parliamentary Independence, the 1798 Rebellion, and the Act of Union, constitute some of the most significant events of an important century in Irish political history. These events deal with the lingering effects of the Protestant Reformation in Ireland and the external influences of the Enlightenment, the American War of Independence, and the French Revolution. From independence to the present day, Irish history textbooks have included most of these events in their coverage. In this study the sections or chapters covering selected events in each textbook were examined through a comparison with the consensus view of historians. The prefaces, introductions, and closings of the selected textbooks were scrutinized to gain an impression of the general views on Irish history and its importance held by the authors, publishers, and those who commissioned the texts. Curriculum documents, state generated syllabi, and teacher guidelines set out by the
government have also been analyzed to provide an insight into the views of state education on the role Irish history in developing citizenship.

The Department of Education created in Ireland after independence continued a hands-off approach toward textbooks similar to the policy of the British. Publishers have printed textbooks reflecting the curriculum standards set by the Department of Education with individual schools or teachers deciding which textbooks to use and, as a result, there has been no official list of state-sanctioned history textbooks (Janmaat, 2006). This study has relied on the list of Irish textbooks developed by Mulcahy (1998) and used again by Janmaat (2006) in their respective studies on the portrayals of Anglo-Irish relations and the Great Famine in Irish history textbooks. Mulcahy divided the textbooks used into two distinct generations. The first generation of textbooks published from Independence to the end of the 1960s was considered, in Mulcahy’s view, to be notable for nationalist leanings, anti-English tone, and black and white portrayals of notable historic figures. The second generation of textbooks, those published after the 1970s, has been considered to portray a less biased and more neutral view of Irish history (Mulcahy, 1998).

This study has used the lists created by Mulcahy and Janmaat as a point of reference for what textbooks to use. However, due to the difficulties in obtaining many of these textbooks in the United States, a smaller sample of textbooks was utilized in this study. Also absent in this study are Irish-language history textbooks. Janmaat (2006) notes that despite a very probable nationalist bias in Irish-language textbooks, those published by the Christian Brothers in particular (O’Donaghue, 1999), the number of schools in Ireland teaching exclusively in Irish was never greater than a quarter of all Irish secondary schools. That said, a study by Devine-Wright and Lyons (1997) found that Irish adults who had studied in Irish-language schools, were
fluent or nearly fluent in Irish, and participated in traditional Irish sports or cultural activities were more likely to associate strong feelings of national pride with important historic sites in Irish history compared to a “non-traditional” group of Irish adults who spoke little or no Irish and were not involved in traditional cultural activities. The Irish language had been associated with cultural nationalist movements such as the Gaelic League and those who speak it and participate in traditional Irish cultural activities do seem to display greater national pride. It could be assumed that the Irish-language history textbooks may exhibit a greater deal of nationalist bias than English-language Irish history textbooks. This study, however, focuses on English-language textbooks which would have been used by the majority of Irish pupils over the years.

The sample of textbooks used in this study includes books from Mulcahy’s two generations but also includes textbooks printed after the time of Mulcahy’s study. These newer textbooks were found by searching Irish school book publisher and supplier websites for textbooks covering the period studied. Of the selected books, the Kee (1995) text is not a traditional school textbook, but rather a general history originally written as a companion piece to the 1981 BBC series *Ireland: A Television History*. It was selected for this study as it is one of the approved history texts for the Senior Cycle/Leaving Certificate history course for students ages 16-19 and was listed on the site of Irish textbook supplier Eason School Shop (www.easonschoolshop.com).

The following Irish history textbooks were analyzed for this study in order of publication:


This study seeks to determine not simply if nationalist bias exists in recent Irish textbooks, or in early Irish textbooks, but rather if degrees of bias have changed over time. Therefore, the selection of textbooks from several decades is necessary. The history presented in these textbooks may not only be colored by the long-standing grievances of folk-memory, but also by the events occurring in the era when the textbook was written. The earliest textbook used in this study, the Hayden and Moonan (1922) text, was published just after the close of the Anglo-Irish War and the establishment of the Irish Free State, this may very well influence how historical events, even going back to the eighteenth century, are presented in the text. The span of time in which the selected textbooks were published includes the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1921, the period of tension between Ireland and Britain due to Ireland’s neutrality in the Second World War, the ebb and flow of the Troubles in Northern Ireland with recurring episodes of violence and peace talks, and the changes in Irish history education marked by shifts in the curriculum in the late 1960s through the 1999 reforms. These external events, while not directly related to the events of the eighteenth century, could shape the narratives of the textbooks and how the relationships between Irish Catholics, Irish Protestants, and Britain are
presented. It is vital, therefore, that the political and cultural climate of the dates of publication be taken into account in analyzing these textbooks.

After the textbooks were chosen the units and chapters covering the four selected subjects were read through in order to gain a general sense of the tone adopted by the textbook authors and to check for any glaring inconsistencies in textbook accounts of the selected events in comparison to the current historical consensus. For those textbooks which did not have chapters or subheadings devoted to one or more of the selected events, chapters on related themes and events were scanned to see if any discussion of the selected events is included there. To give an example: The Lucey (2002) textbook has no chapter or section devoted specifically to the Penal Laws of the eighteenth century. The chapter that covers the seventeenth century settlement of English and Scottish Protestants in Ireland through the establishment of plantations, however, closes with a short discussion of the Penal Laws limiting the rights of Irish Catholics. The Penal Laws are again referenced briefly at the beginning of the chapter devoted to Ireland in the era of the American and French Revolutions.

After the initial read-through, the chapters and sections on the selected events were examined again to ascertain themes within the books and across the spectrum of selected texts. Codes were created both by using language from the previously stated standard for determining nationalist bias and through open coding of the textbook passages themselves. The following themes were identified: degeneration of Irish Catholic respect for law, selective implementation of the Penal Laws, referencing an idealized Gaelic past, “tyrannical” Protestant landlords, presentism, survival of the Catholic Church and centrality to the lives of Irish Catholics, teleology of “the long struggle” in Irish history, the independent Parliament as an Irish Parliament and not an Irish Protestant Parliament, broad and narrow definitions of “Irishness,”
the emphasized importance of Wolfe Tone, secular politics of the United Irishmen, government atrocities in 1798, rebel atrocities in 1798, exacerbation of sectarian divides after the rebellion, opposition to the Union among some Protestants, Catholic reactions to the Union, government conduct in lobbying for the Union. The texts were analyzed again with a focus on these common themes. Differences in interpretation or the omission of certain subjects related to the selected events were particularly noted. As well as carefully reading the chapters related to the selected events, any front matter or back matter of the textbooks such as introductions and conclusions were also analyzed to glean any indication as to whether or not the author is approaching their subject from a nationalist frame.

In order to establish a current historic consensus on the selected eighteenth century events, a variety of texts were selected including academic and popular histories. General histories of eighteenth century Ireland were consulted as well as texts dealing specifically with the particular events examined. By choosing both works written for the general readership as well as academic histories, it is hoped to gain a broad consensus view of the interpretation of these events in the wider public and academic circles. The texts selected are relatively recent publications, 1990s or later, with a few exceptions. Carty’s 1957 text *Ireland: From Grattan’s Parliament to the Great Famine, 1783-1850* was included because of its extensive use of firsthand accounts of important eighteenth century events. MacManus’s 1944 *The Story of the Irish Race: A Popular History of Ireland* has been used, not as an example of current historic consensus, but as an extreme case of Irish history written from an unabashedly nationalistic and anti-British slant. To provide but one example; MacManus, in discussing British Prime Minister Pitt’s political project of bringing Ireland into the Union with Great Britain, states that, “Lies, perjury, and fraud were the official stock-in-trade during all of Britain’s connection with Ireland”
(MacManus, 1944. p. 527). MacManus’s work illustrates what were popularly held views among nationalists of Ireland’s history and its relationship with Britain. MacManus was not a professional historian but a literary author writing a national history for popular circulation. It is telling that MacManus personally consulted and solicited the input of Irish nationalist historians and intellectuals of the independence generation such as Dr. Douglas Hyde of the Gaelic League and Sean Ghall, an historian highly praised as the “greatest living authority on Irish history” (MacManus, 1944. p. x) by the first President of the Irish Free State provisional government, Arthur Griffith. If the other texts selected serve as examples of objective or neutral interpretations of Irish history, MacManus’s work has been selected to provide a recognizable example of history told from an Irish nationalist perspective.

The following texts were consulted to establish an historical consensus on the events of the eighteenth century in Ireland:

After the selection of these works, those chapters most relevant to the selected events were read through in each text. The particulars of the history of the events as recalled in each text were noted to allow for comparison between the various texts. This would assist in finding any major inconsistencies between the various accounts. The use of multiple histories and specialized texts, such as Reid’s (2011) military account of the 1798 Rebellion, allows for the construction of a more complete historic consensus on these events. Inconsistencies in one text can be triangulated against the accounts of other texts to determine what the general consensus among scholars and historians on the selected events. In reviewing the selected historical texts there were no fundamental inconsistencies between their general accounts of the events used in the study.

Limitations

As this study concerns itself with nationalist bias in textbooks, it is difficult to draw conclusions about what is actually taught by teachers in the classroom and to what extent students’ ideas of national identity are influenced by what is written in the textbooks. In order to gain a fuller picture of what actually occurs in schools further analysis into teacher lesson plans, the observation of teachers in the classroom, and interviews to solicit teacher and student response would have been necessary. It would also be helpful to examine how students’ and
teachers’ concepts of national and cultural identity are shaped by institutions outside of school; such as family, church, and the mass media. This, however, would have gone beyond the scope of this study, which is strictly the analysis of the textbooks. It should be noted, however, that these textbooks are based upon the official curriculum, so while they may not tell the reader exactly what students are learning, they do provide an insight into the official state-sanctioned ideas of what is important to learn.

In the Irish education system the state creates an official curriculum which publishers use as the basis for their textbooks, but the decision as to which textbooks to use is left up to the individual schools. This has been the case going back to the days of British administration (O’Callaghan, 2009) and has continued since. This results in a wide range of Irish history textbooks over this 80 year period, some of which would likely be utilized more than others. Although only five percent of students went on to secondary school in 1922, increasing to only 16 percent in 1960 (O’Donoghue, 1996), the Irish secondary school textbook market was likely much smaller in the first generations of textbooks compared to the later generations where a variety of different textbooks are available. As noted above, the textbooks used in this study were largely taken from the lists developed by Mulcahy (1988) and Janmaat (2006). The textbooks used for these previous studies are all published by larger publishing houses in Ireland and so are likely to have been in relatively wide use. That said, the difficulties of accessing many of these texts in the United States has led to a somewhat smaller sample of textbooks to analyze than in these previous studies. These limitations constrict the generalization of the findings of this study to the Irish education system as a whole, to a broader range of Irish textbooks outside of this sample.
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

This chapter relates the accounts of the four eighteenth century events as described by the selected textbooks. A general summary of the event based on the current historical consensus is provided first, followed by a description of each textbook’s account organized in chronological order by date of publication.

The Penal Laws

The establishment of Protestantism as the dominant faith in Britain under the Tudors and Scotland under the Stuarts was not replicated in Ireland. The native Gaelic inhabitants and the descendants of Medieval Anglo-Norman settlers remained loyal to the Roman Catholic faith in spite of the attempts of the English crown to bring about a general conversion to the Church of Ireland; an Irish branch of the Anglican faith. Even in the face of repressive measures and the seizures of lands belonging to members of the Irish-Catholic aristocracy during the Plantations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Protestant Reformation never was able to take a firm hold in Ireland (McBride, 2009). The situation of Catholics in Ireland deteriorated after James II was deposed by Parliament in 1688 and his attempt to regain the throne through a military campaign in Ireland was thwarted in 1691 by the armies of his successor William III. The Protestant-controlled Irish Parliament was fearful that Irish Roman Catholics would continue to support Stuart claims to the throne and enacted a series of laws that curtailed Catholic participation in politics and economic activities and sought to limit the practice of the Catholic faith (Bartlett, 1992; Connolly, 1992). At least in theory, these laws intended to bring about religious conformity by encouraging Roman-Catholics and Protestant Dissenters to convert to the established Church of Ireland. In effect, these Penal Laws created a social and economic gulf between the Protestant Anglo-Irish Ascendancy and the Roman Catholic majority. The Penal
Laws have been a source of grievance for a sense of Irish nationalism that distinguishes Roman Catholicism as an important component of Irish identity (Connolly, 1992).

*Hayden and Moonan (1922)*

The Hayden and Moonan text was published just after the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1921. The end of British control of the national school curriculum allowed the emerging Irish education system to introduce the previously neglected subject of Irish history into the curriculum. This chance to tell Irish history from an Irish perspective could conceivably facilitate a very partisan interpretation of events. Roman Catholicism was an integral part of Irish society in the early twentieth century and the Penal Laws had sought to weaken and usurp the Catholic faith in favor of the Protestant Church of Ireland. This could be interpreted by Irish Catholic nationalists as an attack on “Irishness” itself.

In addressing the Penal Laws, Hayden and Moonan (1922) begin first with an examination of the violation of the Treaty of Limerick which brought the Williamite War to an end in the autumn of 1691. Intended to end the hostilities between supporters of the Catholic James II and the Protestant monarchs William and Mary, the articles of the Treaty of Limerick sought to return the religious, property, and political rights of Catholics to the state they had been under King Charles II. Hayden and Moonan are relatively charitable in their treatment of William III stating that he “had every intention of observing the articles on the faith of which the city of Limerick had been ceded” (p. 360). The blame for the breach of the articles is laid squarely against the Parliaments of both kingdoms with “the Ascendancy Party in England, and still more in Ireland, determined to profit to the fullest extent by its victory” (Hayden & Moonan, 1922, p. 360). The authors acknowledge that the violation of the Treaty of Limerick is not atypical of the religious intolerance of the era, exemplified by Louis XIV’s persecution of the
Huguenots, and that it was also prompted by fear that Irish Catholics may support a foreign invasion. After giving this rationale the authors respond by stating that “the fact remains that what was done was in itself indefensible; disgraceful alike to the Parliament which was guilty of it and the Monarch who consented to it. For generations the memory of it lived on” (Hayden & Moonan, 1922, p. 362). Here the authors hint at the common themes of memory and sense of grievance in Irish nationalist histories.

The Penal Laws are considered by the authors to be, together with the violation of the articles of the Treaty of Limerick, part of a “general policy which aimed at the political and social extinction of the Catholics of Ireland” (Hayden & Moonan, 1922, p. 363). This anti-Popery legislation that effectively excluded Irish Catholics from participation in the life of the kingdom is presented not as an organized, systematic, and coherent series of oppressive laws, but as different acts of legislation passed at different times over a span of several decades; an interpretation that is seconded by more current accounts of the Penal Laws (Bartlett, 1992, Connolly, 1992; English, 2006, McBride, 2009).

Hayden and Moonan organize their chapter on the Penal Laws not by the chronological order in which the acts were passed by Parliament, but by what aspects of Catholic life they touched. Subheadings discuss the laws against Catholic clergy, laws excluding Catholics from public life, laws restricting Catholic property rights and professions, educational and inheritance restrictions, and laws against Protestant Dissenters. As in the violation of the Treaty of Limerick, the authors discuss the rationalizations made for the Penal Laws by the Protestant Ascendancy: that the Irish Catholics must be kept out of power to prevent them from assisting a possible foreign invasion and the comparable persecution of the Huguenots by Louis XIV.

These are contested by Hayden and Moonan, who argue that a foreign invasion grew unlikely in
the decades following the Williamite Wars, and that the Penal Laws were left intact after the persecution of French Protestants had ended. However, this seems to discount the fact that the Stuart dynasty was recognized by France and the Papacy as the rightful monarchs of Britain and Ireland into the 1760s, and that foreign soldiers had landed in Scotland twice during this period to support rebellions in the name of the Stuarts in 1719 and 1745. French troops had landed in Ireland itself in 1760, very briefly occupying Carrickfergus in the north of the country. With this in mind, the fears of an invasion in the decades after the Williamite Wars were perhaps not entirely misplaced (McBride, 2009). The authors ascribe the continuation of the laws to a desire among the Protestant Ascendancy to maintain their superior position in the country, “and to that love of tyranny which always, when one race, creed or political party is suffered to dominate over another, comes into prominence” (Hayden & Moonan, 1922, p. 367).

Hayden and Moonan give special attention to the negative effects of the Penal Laws on the character of Irish Catholics and Protestants as well as the country itself. With Catholics barred from public life, the authors present a picture of a people with broken spirits, devolving into a serf-like population of “slaves and drudges” (1922, p. 363). The Irish Catholics became “lazy because they had nothing to work for; lawless because they knew the law only as an enemy, to be defied or evaded when possible” (Hayden & Moonan, 1922, p. 367). This attitude of opposition to English law formed during the Penal days is a common theme in Irish histories, as will be seen. This resistance to English law is contrasted against the idealized Irish Celtic past, referred to often by nationalists, which valued truth as a great virtue and where laws were obeyed “supported by no force save that of public opinion” (p. 367). Irish Protestants, according to Hayden and Moonan, “developed the vices of slave-owners, becoming idle, dissipated, and neglectful of their duties” (p. 367). The authors do not enter into discussion as to what extent the
Penal Laws were enforced. Later histories (Bartlett, 1992., McBride, 2009) provide evidence that many of the Penal Laws were either weakly enforced from the onset or enforcement had grown so lax over the decades that they had essentially ceased to be in effect even before their repeal in the later eighteenth century. By not addressing the issue of enforcement, Hayden and Moonan allow the reader to assume that the full force and prosecution of the law was behind all the Penal Laws.

The history of the Penal Laws related by Hayden and Moonan is perhaps not as partisan as one might have expected; acknowledging that Protestant Dissenters were also impacted by the legislation, and that there was a political reasoning behind their passage instead of simple religious bigotry. However there are still some notable passages in the text that indicate a level of sectarian and nationalist framing. The authors do not assign blame to William the III for violating the Treaty of Limerick, but do reproach him for allowing it to happen. The authors compare the Protestant Ascendancy to slave-owners and the Irish Catholic majority is portrayed as becoming a class of degenerate serfs, fallen from an idealized image of Ireland’s Celtic past. Although the lot of the Catholic peasants in Ireland was better than the contemporary slaves in the West Indies or the serfs of Russia, it was not much better (Bartlett, 1992). The authors also do not clearly mention that many of the Penal Laws were laxly enforced by the authorities. Hayden and Moonan’s descriptions of the Penal Laws are not highly inflammatory, but they are arguably speaking from a nationalist and Catholic frame.

Casserly (1943)

Casserly’s text was published about two decades after that of Hayden and Moonan. Ireland had been independent from Britain for this period, but the political leadership of the country was still dominated by those of the generations that had fought against Britain and either
for or against the Free State in the Irish Civil War. The political climate in Ireland at this time was tense due to the Second World War and the determination of the Free State to remain neutral in spite of its membership in the British Commonwealth. The fact that nationalists of the independence generation still held political power, and that the relationship with Britain was strained because of Ireland’s commitment to neutrality would give cause to expect a partisan or sectarian account of the Penal Laws in Casserly’s text.

Much like Hayden and Moonan, Casserly (1943) also begins the discussion of the Penal Laws with the breach of the Treaty of Limerick, stating that it “was treated as waste paper” (p. 44). Casserly acknowledges that the actions of Parliament in breaking the terms of the Treaty went against William III’s wishes, which could be considered surprising in view of the infamous reputation “King Billy” had in the popular beliefs of more modern generations of Irish nationalists. Irish Catholic nationalists supported the claims of the deposed Catholic Stuarts and it was William of Orange who defeated James II’s army at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, crushing James’ hopes to reclaim the throne. King William was, and still is, a revered figure among Protestant Unionists, particularly in Ulster. The exclusively Protestant Orange Order, named for the monarch, was a stronghold of conservative Protestant resistance to the broadening of rights for Catholics (English, 2006).

Casserly states that the causes of the Penal Laws are not so much related to religion as they are with politics; the ill treatment of Roman Catholics was not due to the fact that they were Catholic but because it was assumed that the Catholics of Ireland would actively support the Catholic Stuart claim to the Crown against Protestant Stuart and Hanoverian monarchs. In the view of later historians (Connolly, 1992; McBride, 1998; McBride, 2009) this discounts the
influence that religion still had on the worldviews of late seventeenth and early eighteenth
century Europeans. Casserly opines that:

   Nowadays we should say that the best way to guard against this would be to treat the
   Roman Catholics so kindly, and make them so contented, that they would have no wish to change
   the order of things, but unfortunately the English government (which really ruled Ireland, as you will see)
   thought that the best way was to keep the Roman Catholics so poor, so ignorant, so degraded, that
   they would never have the courage or the determination to rise in arms (1943, pp. 44-45).

In the quoted passage, the author highlights the apparent intention of the Penal Laws and their
consequences for Irish Catholics. Blame is placed on the English government without reference to
the role of Irish Protestants who controlled the Irish Parliament. Casserly falls to “presentism”,
passing judgment on the Penal Laws through a modern worldview which removes the issue from
the historical context of the era.

   Casserly states that the Penal Laws were not as rigidly enforced as the government had intended
   and that it was primarily laws connected to property and public life that were the most strictly
   imposed rather than the laws regulating educational and religious matters. The author touches
   upon the status of Protestant Dissenters under the Penal Laws, specifically Presbyterians. Casserly
   says that “with regard to public positions and education, Presbyterians were on exactly the
   same footing as the Roman Catholics” (1943, p. 48). As it was the Roman Catholics who faced
   most of the legal restrictions, the focus in Casserly’s text remains on the effects of the Penal
   Laws on Catholics, with the Protestant Dissenters being only mentioned. The author’s description
   of the effects the Penal Laws had on the attitudes of Irish Catholics is the same as
those detailed by Hayden and Moonan. Because Irish Catholics were “deprived of any chance of raising themselves in the world, they lost their self-respect, and grew lazy and thriftless” (Casserly, 1943, p. 49). Despite the unfavorable situation, Casserly states that the poor of Ireland clung to Catholicism even as they suffered for it while Protestants (referring to the established Church of Ireland) “grew overbearing, tyrannical, and self-important” (p. 49).

Casserly’s closing discussion of the Penal Laws echoes that of Hayden and Moonan by implying that a long-lasting effect of the Penal Laws on Ireland’s Catholic population was a distrust and hostility of the law and legal system. The common Catholic people of Ireland “saw it was the law and the government that kept them oppressed and ignorant, and so they inevitably grew to sympathize with all law-breakers, and to have a hatred for all law and government” (Casserly, 1943, pp. 49-50). Again, this contrasts with an idealized ancient Celtic past. The blame for the moral degeneration of the Irish common people is placed at laws originating from an “outside source.” The lack of thrift and enterprise and a distrust and contempt for the rule of law among Irish Catholics is portrayed as the result of English or Protestant laws.

Casserly’s account of the Penal Laws is quite similar to that of Hayden and Moonan. Again, William III is not personally held responsible for breaking the terms of the Treaty of Limerick. And, as in the Hayden and Moonan text, the legislation is discussed as shaping an attitude of apathy and disrespect for the law among common Irish Catholics and developing a superior and tyrannical attitude among the Protestant Ascendancy. Casserly also mentions that Protestant Dissenters’ lives were also impacted by the Penal Laws. In contrast to Hayden and Moonan, Casserly does acknowledge that many of the laws were not strictly enforced to the letter. Most interestingly, Casserly puts much of the blame for the Penal Laws on the English government. The role played by the Protestant-dominated Irish Parliament and the influence of
Irish Protestants in passing the Penal Laws is somewhat minimized. This contrasts Irish against English, perhaps a reflection of the tensions between Ireland and Britain at the time of the book’s publication.

Collins (1969)

When the Collins textbook was published in the late 1960s the Troubles of Northern Ireland were just beginning to flare up. The Penal Laws were instrumental in the formation of the political and economic divisions between Catholics and Protestants. An historical account of these laws written at a time when these sectarian divisions in the North were highly visible in the media reports of protest and violence may well be expected to have a nationalist tone. However, the Collins text was also written at a time of change in the Republic of Ireland. The independence generation of politicians was fading from the public sphere. Curriculum reforms had replaced a history curriculum focused on political and military history with one that included an increased focus on social history. These developments could indicate a more rounded and less politicized approach to the subject of the Penal Laws.

Collins (1969) addresses the Treaty of Limerick in a similar fashion as Hayden and Moonan (1922) and Casserly (1943), stating that William III supported the terms of the treaty, “but most of his Irish supporters considered them too lenient” (p. 134). Irish Protestants, according to the author, believed that Irish Catholics would support the return of the Stuarts to the throne which would put the Protestants’ privileged position in peril, “therefore everything possible must be done to exclude Catholics from political power” (p. 135). In introducing the subject of the Penal Laws themselves, Collins describes the divisions between Irish tenants and landlords by language and religion. These divisions were further exacerbated by laws depriving Catholics and Presbyterians from equal political rights to those of the Established Church.
Collins first discusses those Penal Laws that limited the practice of religion, reduced the number of priests allowed in Ireland, banned all higher clergy, and offered rewards for turning in illegal priests or bishops. It is also noted how Catholic priests were only permitted to hold mass in “chapels” built in back streets or outside of town boundaries. A building could only be called a “church” if it described the places of worship of the Church of Ireland. Due to the extent of these religious laws, the author states that “had they been fully enforced, the Catholic Church in Ireland would have been in a very serious position” (Collins, 1969, p. 181).

Collins covers the prohibitions against Catholic and foreign education, noting that they largely only affected wealthy and middle class Catholics, since many of the poor either went without schooling or made do with the rudimentary education provided by hedge-schools, informal classes held in barns, private homes, or out of doors and often conducted by itinerant schoolmasters. In agreement with other textbook authors, Collins explains that the laws relating to property and civil rights were much more severe for Irish Catholics. The author ascribes to these laws a strictly political motive, “the Ascendancy feared Catholics because of their numbers, and wanted to keep them from having any political influence whatsoever” (Collins, 1969, p. 184). The basics of the political and property restrictions are covered and mention is also made of the “discoverers” who were men that, according to the author, “made a profession of discovering breaches of the Penal Laws” (p. 185).

Collins goes on to describe the easing of the many of the Penal Laws in the latter half of the century and cites a liberalization of the government’s attitude toward Catholics following the death of James II’s son, “The Old Pretender” to the English throne, and the Pope’s recognition of George III as the legitimate King of Britain and Ireland. Collins notes the Penal Laws were repealed through various Catholic Relief Acts beginning in the 1770s and by 1795 Catholics
were denied only the rights to sit in Parliament and hold important government positions. As well as describing the position of Catholics in the eighteenth century, Collins describes the various religious minorities and their places in Irish society, covering the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterians, Quakers, and Protestant refugees from France and the Palatine of the Rhine that were encouraged to settle in Ireland (Collins, 1969).

Collins’ text, with its description of the real impacts of the Penal Laws on Catholic worship and education as well as the economic effects, reflects the changes in the Irish curriculum that increased the focus on social history instead of the strong emphasis on political history of the earlier textbooks. The Collins text agrees with the earlier texts in recognizing that the laws impacting property and civil rights for Catholics were more strictly enforced than those regarding religion but refrains from the more strident depictions of Protestants as a repressive ruling class as found in the Hayden and Moonan (1922) and Casserly (1943) texts. In spite of the heightened tensions between the Protestants and Catholics in the North of Ireland, the Collins text presents a relatively balanced view of the Penal Laws.

Kee (1995)

The Kee text is an approved reading for Senior Cycle history but it is not a traditional textbook. It was originally written in 1980 during the Troubles. When the updated edition was published in 1995, the Troubles were still continuing. The text was published as a companion book to the BBC’s documentary series Ireland: A Television History which sought to provide the viewing public with a general history of Ireland that would put into an historical context the nationalism and sectarianism of Irish Catholics and Protestants. This goal gives an expectation that the dynamics of nationalism would be discussed in a balanced and thoughtful manner. It should also be noted that unlike the previous three textbooks discussed, the Kee text was
published in Britain, a fact that may allow the assumption of a British or Protestant bias instead of an Irish nationalist bias.

Kee (1995) begins his treatment of the Penal Laws by discussing one of the effects of the Protestant Reformation, the turning over of all existing Catholic churches to the Protestant Church of Ireland. “At the beginning of the eighteenth century…Irish Catholics had to celebrate Mass on primitive altar tables in ruined churches and other desperate places simply because there was nowhere else where they could do so” (Kee, 1995, p. 53). The author goes on to state that this lack of formal space to worship was far from being the only handicap for Catholics in this era. Kee outlines in basic terms the laws limiting Catholic participation in public life and the limitations on property. Kee’s text relegates direct discussion of these civil and political Penal Laws to a single paragraph, with more focus given to those laws dealing with the Catholic faith.

Kee does not assert that the Penal Laws prohibited worship of the Catholic religion, noting that while Bishops, Archbishops, and friars of Catholic orders were ordered to leave Ireland on pain of death or transportation (forced removal; commonly to serve as slave labor on plantations in British West Indian colonies), parish priests were allowed to remain and officiate provided they registered with the authorities. As stated in the previously examined texts, these laws concerning the practice of religion were not strictly enforced, “there were occasional official drives against what everyone knew was actually happening, but alongside official harshness went an unofficial tolerance” (Kee, 1995, p. 54). The reason for this, according to the author, was that it was simply impossible to enforce the religious Penal Laws because the Catholic Church still enjoyed the support of the vast majority of Ireland’s people. Provided the clergy and laity observed civil law and were loyal to the Protestant succession of the Crown, authorities tolerated breaches of the religious law (Kee, 1995). Kee illustrates the lack of zeal on
the part of local authorities in enforcing the Penal Laws by describing a humorous instance of a search for Catholic monks in Galway, where the friars concealed themselves but left wine out for the refreshment of the sheriff’s men ostensibly searching for them.

If the religious laws could have been enforced, Kee postulates, like Casserly (1943), that the Catholic Church would have died out as per the laws’ intentions. The fact that the Catholic Church endured these laws strengthened it and its bond with the majority population of Ireland. In the absence of political participation, Kee states that the Church was the one representative organization Catholics could turn to. “The Church subsumed those popular energies which in other circumstances might have gone into politics” (1995, p. 55). Only the rural secret societies, the “Whiteboys” or Defenders, gave another avenue for participation although the ambitions of these groups were limited to local agrarian issues such as protesting high rents and unpopular landlords. These rural resistance movements did not seek change on a national scale. Thus, in an era when the great majority of Irish people were deprived of civil rights and living in poverty, Irish Catholics “reserved their loyalties for organizations outside politics, for their Church and the secret societies” (Kee, 1995, p. 56).

The Kee text does not dwell very long on the economic hardships created by the Penal Laws, which could be interpreted as glossing over the harshest effects of the anti-Popery legislation. However, as the goal of Kee’s book is to give historic context to the Catholic and Protestant divisions underlying the Troubles instead of providing a comprehensive history, it is natural that the focus is on the religious aspects of the Penal Laws. Kee illustrates how the Catholic Church survived in Ireland in spite of the legislation, and how the faith became a central part of the lives of Irish Catholics. The author, therefore, uses the case of the Penal Laws as one
of the explanations for the significant position Catholicism had taken as a part of Irish identity in the modern era as well as in the past.

*Brockie and Walsh (1997) and Lucey (2002)*

The History Curricula and Syllabi created by the Department of Education and Science’s National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in 1999 and revised in 2004 do not reference the Penal Laws in the Junior Cycle history courses for students ages twelve to fifteen (NCCA, 2004). Neither of the textbooks written for the Junior Certificate history course by Brockie and Walsh (1997) and Lucey (2002) includes an extensive history of the Penal Laws or the events of the eighteenth century directly linked to them. Brockie and Walsh mention the Penal Laws only briefly, stating that “The majority Catholic population had very few rights and suffered from a series of laws against their religion known as the Penal Laws. While most Irish Protestants supported the existing situation some tried to end the Penal Laws” (1997, p. 192). No mention is made of the laws against Protestant Dissenters. Lucey’s discussion of the sixteenth and seventeenth century plantation settlements of Protestants in Ireland, states that Protestants cemented their control of wealth and power by introducing the Penal Laws. A short, summarized list of the Penal Laws is provided; stating that the laws “forbade Catholics to: keep weapons, send their children to schools on the Continent or schools in Ireland, buy land, hold government positions, sit in parliament, vote” (Lucey, 2002, p. 176). Prior to the chapter “Ireland in the Age of Revolutions,” which deals mainly with the United Irishmen and the 1798 Rebellion, Lucey again makes a brief mention of the Penal Laws, stating their purpose to be the maintenance of the power of the Protestant Ascendancy. Lucey (2002) mentions that the laws discriminated against Presbyterians as well as Catholics, and that after 1770, some of the laws were repealed but discontent among both sects remained.
The very brief mention of the Penal Laws in the Brockie and Walsh and Lucey texts reflect the changes in the curriculum where discussion of the Penal Laws fit into the Senior Cycle history rather than the Junior Cycle. The very basic information provided by the texts serves only to give a rudimentary understanding of the Penal Laws in the broader context of Irish history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Penal Laws served as a source of grievance for Irish Catholic nationalists. The fact that these later textbooks and the curriculum that they are based upon devote so very little space to discussion of the Penal Laws conceivably reflect a move away from a more nationalist reading of Irish history.

Comparison of Accounts

In their accounts of the Penal Laws the history texts examined seem to show the expected change over time. The Hayden and Moonan (1922) and Casserly (1943) texts do reflect a nationalist interpretation of events. Both texts describe the Irish Catholic population as degenerating due to the effects of the anti-Popery legislation and developing mistrust and contempt of the law. Both texts also describe the Protestant ascendancy class as developing superior, tyrannical, and overbearing attitudes. The Collins (1969) text is mellower in its political tone and reflects a shifting toward the inclusion of more social history, as illustrated by descriptions of daily life during the time of the Penal Laws and discussing the religious diversity in Ireland during this time. Kee (1995) provides a different picture of the Penal Laws, focusing on the how they contributed to the evolution of Irish Catholic identity up to the modern age. Finally, Brockie and Walsh (1997) and Lucey (2002) provide a cursory description of the Penal Laws, describing in a few sentences what the previous texts devoted entire chapters to. The pattern shows a transition from somewhat nationalist accounts down through less politicized and more objective interpretations to only a few passing remarks.
The Volunteer Movement and Irish Parliamentary Independence

Until the Act of Union creating the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1801, Ireland existed as a separate kingdom, sharing a monarch with Britain, but having its own Parliament. Poyning’s Law, passed in 1494, and the Sixth Act of George I (also called the Declaratory Act), passed in 1719, dictated that the Irish Parliament was subordinate to the British Parliament in Westminster. Any legislation passed in Dublin had to be approved by the Privy Council while laws passed by the British Parliament also took effect in Ireland (McBride, 2009).

The Irish Volunteers, independent companies of soldiers raised by Irish gentry during the American War of Independence to respond to a French or Spanish invasion, became active in the politics of the island by campaigning for free trade and an independent Irish Parliament. The threat of rebellion insinuated by the Volunteers and the achievement of a nominally independent Parliament in Dublin in the year 1782 are considered by later Irish nationalists as important developments in the struggle toward a fully independent Ireland.

Hayden and Moonan (1922)

Published immediately following Irish independence and at the beginning of the Irish Civil War, the Hayden and Moonan text could be expected to treat the case of Irish legislative independence and the Volunteer movement in a highly nationalist light. Irish history was just now beginning to be covered separately in schools instead of simply a small part of the history of the British Empire. The more militant nationalists of the period, many of whom had actively fought the British, could identify with the Volunteers’ role in achieving an independent Irish Parliament. Indeed, the rebels of the 1916 Easter Rising referred to themselves as Irish Volunteers. On the other hand, independence was only recently achieved at the time of
publication and the school system was still largely organized on the British model which could possibly suggest a less partisan view of the events.

Hayden and Moonan’s text, being primarily a political history, discusses the Irish Parliament of the eighteenth century at some length. Prior to addressing legislative independence gained in 1782, the faults and virtues of the Irish Parliament are presented. While criticizing the Irish Parliament as unrepresentative, corrupt, and weak due to the dominance of the English Parliament through Poynings’ Law, Hayden and Moonan do offer some praise. In spite of having what are considered some serious flaws, the authors praise the Irish Parliament for being Irish. The members of the Irish Parliament “however narrow and prejudiced were the majority of them, however dishonest a large number, were still Irishmen living in Ireland” (Hayden & Moonan, 1922, p. 377). The authors contend that members of Parliament, despite being in the Protestant minority, were able to understand the needs of the country to some extent. While offering criticism of the Protestant Ascendancy who controlled the Irish Parliament, the authors’ favorable views are centered on the concept of a Parliament separate from that of Britain.

Haydn and Moonan (1922) relate the formation of the Volunteer Movement in 1777 as a measure to defend the country against the possibilities of raids by American privateers or a French invasion. Many of the regiments of British regular troops that had garrisoned Ireland had been sent to fight in Britain’s rebellious American colonies. While it is stated that, following the decreasing likelihood of an invasion “the Volunteers began to turn their attention decidedly to domestic questions, and the [British] Government viewed them with increasing suspicion and dislike,” Hayden and Moonan are clear that, “the Volunteer Movement was far from being one of rebellion” (1922, p. 396). The role of the Volunteers in the campaign for trade parity with
England in 1779-80 is presented as the first case of the movement using armed demonstrations to influence a change in British policy. According to the authors, Britain “urged by arguments founded on considerations of justice and of mercy to redress the crying grievances of the country…had refused any appreciable concession till exasperation increased to the brink of revolt” (Hayden & Moonan, 1922, pp. 399-400).

Following their treatment of the Volunteers’ role in the free trade campaign, Hayden and Moonan move on to describe the campaign for legislative independence headed by prominent Volunteers including, most notably, the Volunteer officer and MP, Henry Grattan. The Dungannon Convention of 1782, where delegates of the various Volunteer formations met to draft political resolutions in support of legislative independence, is recalled as another example of the influence of the Volunteers. The authors recount the debates in the Irish and British Parliaments and the initial reluctance of the Government administration which eventually gave in when faced with overwhelming support for legislative independence among Ireland’s educated classes, both Catholic and Protestant (Hayden & Moonan, 1922). The constitution of what became known as “Grattan’s Parliament” separated the Irish Parliament from Westminster, acknowledging only the King’s authority over the Parliament in Dublin. The authors point out, however, that the previously discussed issues of corruption in the Irish Parliament went unresolved. While executive authority, theoretically, rested only with the King, the chief government officials for Ireland, the Lord Lieutenant, Chief Secretary, and several other leading officials were selected by the leaders of the political party in power in Britain. The Irish Parliament was consistently loyal to Great Britain. Its leadership was not yet inclined to grant the franchise to Catholics or to push for further independence. The authors do acknowledge that the independent Parliament did bring benefit to Ireland “by fostering her industries and
increasing her material prosperity, and by constituting itself as an object of national pride and a centre of national life” (Hayden & Moonan, 1922, p. 410). The independent Irish Parliament, despite its faults in regards to corruption, and representing only a narrow portion of Ireland’s population, is regarded as a significant achievement by Hayden and Moonan. As argued by later nationalists in the nineteenth century Home Rule movement, an Irish Parliament that was free from the oversight of the British Parliament in Westminster could better serve the concerns of the Irish people.

The account of the Volunteers and the Irish Parliament presented in Hayden and Moonan text provides a mixed, but largely positive, account. The Volunteers are portrayed as patriots of the Irish nation concerned over the unequal trade status of the country and the subordinate state of the Irish Parliament. Not much is made of the fact that the Volunteers were almost exclusively Protestant, giving a rather non-sectarian view of the movement as Irish patriots instead of Irish Protestant patriots (McBride, 1998). The authors regard the Irish Parliament, both before and after the legislative independence achieved in 1782, as a flawed institution given to political corruption and unrepresentative of the Catholic majority. On the other hand, the authors make much of the fact that it was an Irish institution, separate from Britain at least in theory. As is the case of the authors’ account of the Volunteers, there is a degree of non-sectarian attitude in the description of the independent Parliament. It is important for being an Irish Parliament even if it was dominated by the Protestant minority. This is not that surprising considering that the Volunteers and the independent Irish Parliament fit a teleological narrative of the road toward Irish independence favored by Irish nationalists. In spite of their faults, the Volunteers and the Irish Parliament are considered worthy of praise for being steps on the way toward a truly independent Ireland.
The Irish Free State had fully developed and established its own education system by the time this text was published. The war with Britain had been over for two decades and the Irish Civil War had also drawn to its conclusion. The Irish government at the time was at loggerheads with Britain over Ireland’s determination to stay neutral during the Second World War. This tension, as well as the fact that the Irish government was headed by more ardent nationalists at the time, would give reason to believe that the accounts of the Volunteers and legislative independence might be more nationalist in its tone than the previous text. While under pressure from Britain and the United States to join the allies during the Second World War, Ireland’s political leadership was set on neutrality and an economic policy of self-sufficiency (English, 2006). This political climate could conceivably lead to a positive interpretation of the independence-minded Volunteers and “Grattan’s Parliament.”

Casserly’s (1943) account of the Irish Parliament clearly states what the author sees as its deficiencies; that it only represented Anglican Protestants who were barely one-tenth of the population while Roman Catholics were not able to serve as members or vote in elections. Another deficiency the author lists was its subordinate position to the Parliament of Britain, which could pass legislation that also was binding to the people of Ireland. Prior to discussing the Volunteer Movement, Casserly recalls the political influence of the famous Dean of Dublin’s St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Jonathan Swift who “wrote and spoke constantly and forcibly, about the injustice with which Ireland was treated” (1943, p. 60). Swift’s advocacy for equal terms of trade with England and his suggestion for Ireland to refuse trade with England have the author state that “because of this he has been called ‘the first Sinn Feiner’,” who, “attacked the entire way in which Ireland was governed by England” (Casserly, 1943, p. 60). Although Swift was
certainly a vocal critic of the British Parliament’s domination over Irish politics, his views as a strong advocate of the established Church of Ireland who did not endorse equal rights for Catholics or Dissenters make the author’s association of him with the later Sinn Fein movement highly problematic. Like many other Irish Protestants, Swift advocated for greater political rights for the Kingdom of Ireland and not expanded rights for the broader population (English, 2006; McBride, 1998).

Casserly narrates the formation of the Volunteers during the American Revolution to counter the threat of invasion from France or Spain. The author also notes that the principal officers in the Volunteers were leaders of the Patriot party in the Irish Parliament. The rank and file, according to Casserly, were of the same political stripe as their leaders which caused consternation among the government, “for it was one thing to refuse the request of a few members of the Parliamentary minority, but another thing to refuse the demand of eighty thousand Volunteers with arms in their hands” (1943, p. 64). Casserly states that the Volunteers used the threat of force to intimidate the government to address the free trade issue:

It was evident that the Volunteers would follow the example of the Americans and rise in armed rebellion unless their demand was granted… the Viceroy had no choice but to make an urgent appeal to the English Parliament to repeal the laws that restricted Irish trade (1943, p. 64).

This comparison of the Volunteers to the rebellious American colonists could be seen as an instance of the legitimation of the gun in Irish politics, either as a means of intimidation in the case of the Volunteers or through its use in open rebellion seen in 1798 and later revolts against British rule. This calls to mind the teleological view of Irish history held by later nationalists.
who advocated armed rebellion and often looked back on previous unsuccessful revolts as preceding chapters in the progressive struggle toward independence.

Turning from the issue of free trade, Casserly discusses the influence of the Volunteers and Patriot party in the passing of Relief Bills in 1778 and 1780. These repealed the restrictions on land ownership for Catholics and granted equal political rights for Protestant Dissenters. The author then turns toward Henry Grattan and the campaign for an independent Parliament which was, again, helped along by the intimidating presence of the Volunteers. “It is probable,” Casserly writes “that if England had won the American war she would have refused to listen to these representations” (1943, p. 67). Due to the course of events in the 1780s, however, the author states that the government had little choice but to repeal Poyning’s Law and the Sixth Act of George I, thus granting Ireland Parliamentary independence. According to the author, this situation had its benefits and its shortcomings. “After nearly three centuries of dependence Ireland was once again free to make her own laws, unimpeded by any outside interference. Unfortunately, she did not always use her power in the wisest way” (Casserly, 1943, p. 67). Casserly highlights the same issues with the independent Irish Parliament as Hayden and Moonan (1922). “The Parliament was free, but it was still as badly constituted as ever…the Viceroy received his orders from England, and only voted, and allowed his party to vote, as he was directed” (Casserly, 1943, pp. 69, 70). The author also illustrates the remaining influence of the British Parliament over Ireland through the British Prime Minister’s ability to appoint the chief government officials for Ireland, therefore keeping Ireland, to a degree, dependent on the British legislature (Casserly, 1943). Casserly’s view of “Grattan’s Parliament” is mixed, like that of Hayden and Moonan (1922). While considering it an important event, it is not considered as
ultimately beneficial toward Irish independence and the development of an Irish nation as it was portrayed by the earlier textbook.

Casserly’s (1943) account of the Volunteers and “Grattan’s Parliament” shows some differences and similarities with the earlier text of Hayden and Moonan (1922). Casserly very strongly discusses the deficiencies of the Irish Parliament prior to legislative independence, particularly its unrepresentative nature and subservient status to the British Parliament. The Volunteers are praised as a force working towards independence and self-governance for Ireland, but the Irish Parliament, even after the gaining of legislative independence, is portrayed as being too weak and still in the hands of a privileged Protestant minority. This gives a less than rosy picture of “Grattan’s Parliament.” Casserly portrays legislative independence as not having gone far enough instead of being a clear step in the “right direction”.

_Collins (1969)_

Changes in the Irish history curriculum in the 1960s had lessened the focus on political history and included greater coverage of social history. This would not likely impact any possible nationalist bias, but could change the amount of space devoted to an explicitly political topic such as the Volunteers and the Irish Parliament. The Troubles in Northern Ireland were just beginning at the time of this book’s publication. The influence that crisis has on the content of the text would likely be minimal.

_Collins’ (1969)_ text traces the origins of the early nationalist feelings among Irish Protestants and the foundations of the Patriot party back to the beginning of the eighteenth century and the writings of William Molyneux and Jonathan Swift protesting of the dominant English presence over Irish political affairs and the restrictions placed on Irish trade. It is important to note that Collins discusses this early nationalism as developing only among the
Protestant middle and upper classes, the only ones able to actively participate in politics. Collins addresses the important influence that the outbreak of the American War of Independence had on the political climate of Ireland. The author notes the links of kinship between many of the rebelling American colonists and Ireland as well as shared political goals in regard to taxation and fair representation. The author also addresses the formation of the Volunteers following the entry of France and Spain into the war and the transformation of the Volunteers from an organization for the defense of Ireland to a political organization. Collins states that while the Volunteers were loyal to the king “they were deeply interested in the welfare of Ireland and resentful of the limitations which the British parliament had placed on Irish trade” (1969, pp. 197-198).

In the campaign for free trade, Collins recalls the formation of non-importation associations that refused to purchase any goods imported from Britain that could be produced or manufactured in Ireland. These commercial measures combined with demonstrations by the Volunteers helped to secure free trade from a British government anxious to avoid problems in Ireland while it was embroiled in the war in America. Collins notes that the repeal of trade restrictions did not satisfy Grattan and the Volunteers, who resolved to push for parliamentary independence and a free constitution that would bind Ireland only to laws made by the King, and the Irish Parliament. The author states that a 1782 change in the ruling party of the British government from the Tories to the Whigs, who were more sympathetic to the Irish Patriot party, was crucial for parliamentary independence (Collins, 1969). It is interesting that Collins, in contrast to the two earlier textbooks examined, does not focus entirely on the demonstrations of the Volunteers but gives a deal of attention to the economic measures taken in Ireland, such as the boycott of British goods in order to gain equitable trade. Collins also mentions that the
change of political administrations in the British Parliament was as important as the exertions of the Volunteers and the Patriot party, if not more so, in gaining legislative independence.

Collins does not overstate the importance of Ireland’s legislative independence and constitution. Supreme authority still rested with the King who ruled through the Lord Lieutenant. Those who sat in the Irish Parliament and controlled its agenda were still a minority of wealthy noblemen. Although Grattan and the Volunteers were able to influence reforms such as free trade, parliamentary independence, and passing some Catholic relief bills, Collins maintains that changes in the actual governing of Ireland were not incredibly significant; “the name ‘Grattan’s Parliament’ has been applied to the Irish parliament in these years, but Grattan and his friends had little influence in it” (1969, p. 201).

Collins’ (1969) text gives an image of an independent Irish Parliament that is more concerned with the real implications of Parliamentary independence rather than the symbolic. The militancy of the Volunteers is not given as much importance as in the previous texts. Collins also makes note that the Parliament after legislative independence was still a Protestant-controlled body still beholden to Britain. Instead of praising the idea of an independent Parliament as a step towards ultimate Irish independence the author, writing at a time further removed from the independence struggle than the earlier textbooks, gives a more even-tempered assessment of the Irish Parliament.

Kee (1995)

The first edition of the Kee text was written in the early 1980s during the Troubles. It is largely focused on providing the cultural and historic context of the unrest in Northern Ireland. The text sought to delve into the root causes of the tensions and divisions between Irish Catholics and Protestants. Like Collins (1969), Kee’s work is less focused on the strict politics of the
events but rather relates how these events shaped and were shaped by the cultural groups in Ireland. Because of this, a more nuanced view could be expected in the space the author devotes to the Volunteers and the push for an independent Parliament.

Kee’s (1995) text notes how it was Irish Protestants who began to speak of demanding rights for an Irish nation while Catholics found a replacement for civic life through participation in the Catholic Church and secret agrarian societies. Kee describes this first version of modern Irish nationalism that grew from the Protestant ascendancy as “the nationalism of colonists expressing that sense of restless impatience with the mother country which colonists, growing away from their roots like adolescents in family life, invariably develop” (1995, p. 56). The author recalls the emerging individual identity of Irish Protestants that was influenced early in the century by Jonathan Swift, who used the term “Irishmen” to describe himself and his co-religionists who in preceding centuries would have seen themselves as Englishmen in contrast to the Gaelic and Catholic Irish.

Kee credits the influence of Swift in the development of ideas in protesting the importation of English goods and the theory that the English Parliament had no right to legislate for the Kingdom of Ireland. The thought of an Irish Protestant nation took its cue, according to Kee, for “spirited independence from colonists still further away from the mother country than themselves—those in America” (1995, p. 59). The author characterizes the formation and politicization of the Volunteers as a Protestant nation taking advantage of the situation the British government found themselves in with their dealings in America. Kee describes Grattan’s hand as being strengthened by the Volunteers and this situation enabled the 1782 Constitution. The new relationship between the two kingdoms was, according to Kee, only nominal independence with much political influence still being held by government ministers in Westminster.
Kee’s (1995) text clearly regards the Volunteers and the campaign for legislative independence as a Protestant project that was intended to benefit a Protestant construction of an Irish nation. The author portrays a sense of Irish patriotism that was associated not on the broader sense of “Irishness” that included Catholics as well as Protestants, but a narrower definition created by a minority who dominated the political life of the country. The Catholic population, as a result of the Penal Laws, was cut off from politics. Kee’s account does not claim the Volunteers or “Grattan’s Parliament” for a broad Irish nationalism, but rather portrays a more historically-grounded version of the events.

_Brockie and Walsh (1997) and Lucey (2002)_

As is the case of the Penal Laws, the history of the Volunteers and Grattan’s Parliament are not covered in the Junior Cycle history syllabus (NCCA, 2004). Brockie and Walsh (1997) make no direct reference to the Volunteers or the independent Irish Parliament. At the conclusion of a chapter on the American Revolution, they state that “In Ireland, both Protestants and Catholics hoped to use the ideas coming from America to reduce the power of the British government there” (p. 177). Lucey (2002) very briefly mentions the Volunteer movement and the campaign for legislative independence. As is the case with the Brockie and Walsh textbook, this is located at the end of a chapter on the American War of Independence. It is limited to one sentence stating “In Ireland, a Volunteer movement grew up which won greater independence for the Irish parliament from the British government” (Lucey, 2002, p. 190). In very short passages both of these textbooks portray a desire amongst the Irish population to move away, politically, from Britain. The brief passages that relate to these events are incredibly simplified and while they do not clearly indicate any nationalist bias they illustrate that the Volunteers and “Grattan’s Parliament” are not considered to be as worthy of study as in previous generations.
Comparison of Accounts

The earlier textbooks (Hayden and Moonan, 1922; Casserly, 1943) devote a greater amount of coverage to the Volunteers and “Grattan’s Parliament” fitting with the history curriculum of the day and its focus on political history. The Volunteer movement is considered, by these texts, to have exerted a great influence and the independent Parliament is considered an important, if imperfect, achievement. The Collins (1969) and Kee (1995) texts devote less attention to these subjects. Both cast the Volunteers and the independent Parliament as achievements of Protestant Irishmen for a Protestant Irish nation, the Roman Catholics being excluded from the political realm. The later texts (Brockie and Walsh, 1997; Lucey, 2002) mention these subjects only in passing, the Volunteers and independent Parliament not being included in the 1999 Junior Cycle history curriculum.

The United Irishmen and the 1798 Rebellion

The Society of United Irishmen was founded in 1791 as a political club advocating parliamentary reform and expanded political rights for Roman Catholics (Curtin, 1994). Their politics were rooted in the political philosophies of the Enlightenment and inspired by the American War of Independence and the French Revolution. The membership was largely composed of Presbyterian Dissenters with some liberal Protestants (Church of Ireland) and middle class Catholics. Belfast was home to the founding chapter and another prominent chapter was founded in Dublin. Theobald Wolfe Tone, a Protestant lawyer who had campaigned with the Catholic Committee in the late 1780s to repeal the remaining Penal Laws, became an influential member of the United Irishmen (Curtin, 1994; McBride, 2009). Dissident political organizations were suppressed by the British and Irish governments following war with Republican France in 1793. The United Irishmen were proscribed as a radical group in 1794.
The harsh government measures caused the group to become a secret society. Under the influence of Wolfe Tone and other militants the organization became more radical in its politics, seeking to establish an independent Irish Republic on the French model.

The United Irishmen sought aid from the French Republic and also reached out to the Catholic secret societies of “Defenders” in order to bring about a revolution (McBride, 2009). An attempted French invasion in winter of 1796 failed due to poor weather which prevented French ships from landing the army. The government forces in Ireland at the time included a combination of different military units. A small core of British regular soldiers was supplemented by the Irish Militia, a conscripted body of 37 infantry regiments raised to counter the threat of invasion and act as a police force. In addition to these, were locally-raised volunteers known as the Yeomanry who, unlike the Irish Militia regiments which served outside of their home counties, acted as a community police and defense force (Reid, 2011). All of these forces were mobilized under orders to confiscate weapons from civilians and seek out United Irishmen and rebel sympathizers. Using intimidation and torture, Crown forces sought to pacify Ulster in 1797 and the rest of the country the following year. Government spies had infiltrated the organization of the United Irishmen and, acting on their intelligence, arrested much of the leadership of the organization in March of 1798 (Curtin, 1994; McBride, 2009). The planned uprising went ahead in May of 1798 although the lack of leadership hampered the rebellion greatly. Most of the outbreaks against the government were sporadic and uncoordinated with significant risings taking place only in counties Antrim and Down in the north, Wexford in the southeast, and Mayo in the west (Reid, 2011). The Rebellion of 1798 was a very bloody affair resulting in tens of thousands of people killed and atrocities against prisoners and non-combatants committed by both rebel and government forces. The United Irishmen had been an
organization mainly led by liberal Protestants, Dissenters, and middle class Catholics inspired by ideals of secular republicans (Curtin, 1994). The bulk of the rebel forces participating in the rising, however, were rural Roman Catholics. Many of the atrocities committed, particularly in Wexford, were strongly sectarian in nature with Protestant loyalists being targeted. An important result of the rising was that these atrocities served to further drive a wedge between Irish Protestants and the Catholic majority (McBride, 2009).

*Hayden and Moonan (1922)*

The newly-established Irish Free State of 1921 had gained its independence from Britain following two and a half years of guerilla warfare between the IRA and Crown forces. The militant Irish nationalists had looked to the past as a source of inspiration, seeing themselves as the next wave of freedom fighters taking the places of those who had fought in earlier rebellions. Figures like Padraig Pearse, a leader executed after the 1916 Easter Rising, and Theobald Wolfe Tone, who committed suicide after his capture following the Rebellion of 1798, were hailed as martyrs for Ireland’s freedom. The earlier rebellions were considered steps in the teleological idea of the long struggle for Irish independence. Considering the publication date of the Hayden and Moonan (1922) text, soon after independence, it is reasonable to expect some nationalist bias, particularly a lionization of prominent figures in the rebellion as martyrs.

Hayden and Moonan place the formation of the United Irishmen within the context of the French Revolution and its impact on Ireland and Irish politics. The Irish Catholic gentry had traditional ties to France and the French monarchy while the Catholic clergy was fearful of the anti-religious tone of French Republicanism. Both of these groups were suspicious and unsupportive of the new French Republic. Likewise, the Protestants of the Church of Ireland with their dominant economic and political position were nearly unanimous in supporting the
British Government’s position on the crisis in France. Favorable opinions of the French Revolution were found primarily among the Ulster Presbyterians, according to Hayden and Moonan, “whose religious faith inclined them to democracy, and to sturdy independence, and who felt themselves aggrieved in many respects by the English Government” (1922, p. 427).

In the year 1791, led primarily by Theobald Wolfe Tone and Samuel Neilson, according to the authors, a group of liberal-minded Dissenters, “enthusiasts whose passionate idealism raised them above fears of personal danger,” (Hayden & Moonan, 1922, p. 427) formed the first chapter of the Society of United Irishmen. Another chapter was soon formed in Dublin. The authors report that the initial aim the Society was the reform of the legislature to incorporate principles of civil and religious liberty. However, many members “undoubtedly…looked far beyond this, and dreamt of independence and an Irish Republic” (Hayden & Moonan, 1922, p. 427). With the repression of the United Irishmen by the Government in 1794, the organization became a secret society and a greater number of Catholics were admitted, although few were given leadership roles. Hayden and Moonan write that “naturally it now became more extreme…By the end of 1795 the policy of the United Irishmen had become distinctly Republican, and they looked to an armed insurrection as a means of obtaining their end” (1922, p. 428).

Following the proscription of the organization and the growing republicanism of its members, Hayden and Moonan (1922) recall the overtures made by Wolfe Tone and the leadership of the United Irishmen to the French Directory in order to secure military assistance for a planned insurrection. The authors discuss the French expedition of 1796 and its failure to land in Bantry Bay because of a powerful Atlantic storm. Following the failure of the Bantry Bay expedition, Hayden and Moonan dwell upon the repressive response of the government to
the threat of insurrection. They describe the sectarian violence between the Protestant Orange Society and Catholic Defenders in County Armagh. They authors also describe the Government’s passing of the Coercion Acts and the suspension of Habeas Corpus as the military was tasked with disarming the population and finding suspected rebels among them. “All sorts of license was permitted to the soldiers, who tortured the peasants by ‘picketings,’ half-hangings and the pitch cap” (Hayden & Moonan, 1922, p. 430). According to the authors, “Districts always hitherto perfectly peaceful were often provoked into retaliation by the brutalities of the soldiers sent among them” (1922, p. 430).

As the authors recall, the United Irishmen proceeded with their preparations for insurrection despite the repressive actions of the Government. The infiltration of Government spies into the United Irishmen kept the authorities informed and allowed them to arrest the leadership of the society in the spring of 1798. Before the outbreak of the rebellion “the entire machinery had been put out of gear…Nevertheless, the insurrection broke out, but in a form very different from what the leaders had intended” (Hayden & Moonan, 1922, p. 431). These local and isolated risings were “foredoomed to failure.” The authors provide a narrative account of the course of the 1798 Rebellion in each of the major centers of unrest: Mid-Leinster, Counties Antrim and Down in Ulster, and Wexford and Wicklow. The Rebellion in Wexford, having been the largest and longest of the campaigns, is given particular attention. The brutal character of the Rebellion is made clear in Hayden and Moonan’s account; the excesses of Government forces prior to the outbreak and the common executions of suspected and surrendered rebels are covered as well as the retaliation by Government forces against women, children, and non-combatants. “Rebels captured were, as a rule, instantly shot or hanged” (Hayden & Moonan, 1922, p. 432). The authors also present atrocities committed by the rebel forces including the
trials and executions of Loyalists carried out at the rebel camp at Three Rocks, the burning alive of Loyalists prisoners, including women and children, at Scullabogue, and the murder of unarmed Loyalists on Wexford Bridge. In numbering those killed in massacres committed by rebel and Government forces, Hayden and Moonan state that “figures given vary greatly, as a rule according to the political creed of the authorities, either eye-witnesses or writers, responsible for them” (1922, p. 434).

Following the authors’ account of the rebellion in Wexford, they briefly cover the last French expeditions. The landing of approximately 1,000 French soldiers under General Humbert in County Mayo, despite some initial successes, is portrayed as being too little aid given too late in the rebellion. Hayden and Moonan note that by the time of Humbert’s landing in August of 1798 the insurrections in the rest of the country had already been crushed. The surrender of the main French force on the 8th of September and the storming of the town of Killala, held by a mix of French soldiers and Irish rebels, on the 23rd are poetically recalled by the authors who state “the last embers of the insurrection were quenched in blood” (Hayden & Moonan, 1922, p. 438). The coda of the rebellion, a second French expedition that sailed for Ireland in September of 1798 and failed to land its troops following its interception by a British Royal Navy squadron is also related. It was after this exchange that Wolfe Tone was captured and, like other rebels, was denied treatment as a prisoner of war and was sentenced to hang. His suicide by knife in his prison cell is described and the authors go on to style the notable member of the United Irishmen as being:

one of whose abilities, as judged by his own writing, by the opinions of his contemporaries, and most of all by the impression made by him on the personages
of distinction with whom he came in contact, we are inclined to form the highest estimate (Hayden & Moonan, 1922, p. 438).

Much as he is given a central role in the formation of the United Irishmen, Wolfe Tone is portrayed as a martyr in his death.

Certainly, the authors’ description of the capture and death of Theobald Wolfe Tone fit the picture of a nationalist hero and martyr. Although other United Irish leaders are mentioned, Wolfe Tone is made the patriotic nucleus of Hayden and Moonan’s account, conforming to a “great man” view of history. The authors’ account of the 1798 Rebellion is a generally balanced and complete report. The atrocities committed by both rebels and government forces are portrayed and no attempt is made to justify the actions of the rebels. This might be surprising, considering the expectation that a rebellion such as this might have been portrayed in a more heroic or nationalist light. Much of the heroism in the Hayden and Moonan account, as has been seen, is attributed to Wolfe Tone and not the violence of the rebellion itself.

_Casserly (1943)_

In the previous eighteenth century events discussed, Casserly’s 1943 text seems to be in general agreement with the interpretations of Hayden and Moonan’s 1922 work. The expectation would be to find few major deviations in Casserly’s account of the United Irishmen and the Rebellion of 1798 compared to that found in the earlier textbook. Therefore, it would be likely to see the same emphasis placed on Wolfe Tone’s role in the United Irishmen and the 1798 Rebellion.

_Casserly (1943)_ goes so far to say that the Society “was founded by Wolfe Tone” (p. 73) without attributing credit to Samuel Neilson or the other founding members. The society, according to Casserly, was “for Irishmen of all creeds and classes, and its aims were, firstly, to
gain complete religious equality for all, and secondly, to have the Irish Parliament reformed” (1943, p. 73). The author states that following the association’s repression by the Government in 1794, the now secret organization sought help from Republican France and became definitely republican in its aims. Following the failed French expedition in 1796, Casserly describes the Government’s harsh reaction to the expected insurgency and opines that:

   It would have been wiser if they had tried to conciliate the people, and give them cause to feel loyal to England, instead of terrorizing them into an unwilling submission, but in the eighteenth century very few rulers thought it worthwhile, or even wise, to conciliate those whom they called the ‘lower orders.’ (1943, p. 77).

As seen in the author’s accounts of the Penal Laws and “Grattan’s Parliament,” Casserly cannot seem to resist inserting a modern worldview on eighteenth century events.

   In discussing the excesses of the Government forces, Casserly states that they “were very badly disciplined, and performed their duties with unnecessary brutality which, if not encouraged, was at any rate not checked, by the commander of the army in Ulster, General Lake” (1943, p. 81). The creation of units of local volunteer formations of Yeomanry is also presented with the author stating that the discipline of the Yeomanry corps was worse than that of the regular soldiers. The result of this behavior was to “drive peaceable people into the ranks of the United Irishmen” (Casserly, 1943, p. 81). Following the arrest of the United Irishmen’s executive committee and the declaration of martial law, Casserly dwells on the outrages Government forces visited upon both rebels and innocents. With the outbreak of the rebellion, Casserly states that “it was a rising of victims revolting against cruelty and oppression, rather than an attempt to change the mode of government” (1943, p. 84). Casserly is not universal in the condemnation of Crown forces and makes mention of the change in leadership with Viceroy
Lord Cornwallis replacing General Lake in command of government forces in the field. Considering the amnesty Cornwallis granted to rebels that agreed to disarm, leave the field, and return to their homes, he is praised as “a merciful man as well as an experienced soldier” (1943, p. 87).

Casserly does not provide the same blow by blow account of the Rebellion of 1798 as that provided by Hayden and Moonan. Instead, Casserly states that “the story of the rebellion of 1798 is a melancholy and painful one, and nothing is to be gained by dwelling upon its details” (1943, p. 84). After providing a brief summary of the course of the rebellion, its atrocities, including those at Scullabogue and Wexford Bridge, and the French intervention, the author states that “perhaps the most tragic part of the whole affair came when the strife degenerated from the early ideals of the United Irishmen into the worst sort of warfare—war between Roman Catholics and Protestants” (1943, p. 85).

Casserly’s account of the United Irishmen and the 1798 Rebellion is considerably shorter than that of Hayden and Moonan. Not as much space is devoted to the politics of the United Irishmen. Interestingly, Wolfe Tone is given all of the credit for founding the society. This is untrue, although he was an important and influential member. A good deal of information is given regarding the brutal reaction of government forces to the expected rebellion. Casserly regards the rebellion not as a politically-motivated revolution, but an uprising of a populace angered at mistreatment. This gives a slightly different political tone to the rising, lending an air of justified reaction by the rebels. There is no in-depth military account of the rebellion as there is in the earlier text. The mention of atrocities committed by rebels against loyalists is comparatively brief. Of interest is the mention of Marquis Cornwallis as a merciful man, showing that the author is not painting the Crown forces with too broad of a brush. While it is
significant that Casserly discusses the deeper sectarian rift caused by the rebellion, the primary role given Wolfe Tone and the justification given for the rising do present a nationalist view of events.

_Collins (1969)_

The curriculum reforms of the 1960s saw the inclusion of more social history and less emphasis on political and military history in Irish history courses. This may influence how the United Irishmen and the 1798 Rebellion are presented in the Collins textbook, perhaps resulting in less space devoted to a discussion of the legislative aspirations of the United Irishmen or a detailed account of the military campaign of the rebellion. The outbreak of violence and civil rights demonstrations in Northern Ireland at the time of publication was very recent and may have some influence on the tone of the author’s account, but this is not likely.

Collins’ (1969) account of the United Irishmen begins with Wolfe Tone. A brief account of his early personal life is given, followed by his interest in politics following the French Revolution. This is said to have inspired him to begin authoring pamphlets in support of equality for Catholics and Protestants. The author states that Wolfe Tone’s work was received with enthusiasm especially among the Presbyterians of Belfast. Tone, Thomas Russell and Samuel Neilson are credited as the founding members of the Society of United Irishmen. The United Irishmen are initially portrayed as a reform movement which was proscribed by the government in 1794 following the start of hostilities between Britain and Revolutionary France. Collins goes on to address the religious tensions in parts of the country such as the founding of several Orange Lodges by loyalist Protestants as an organized response to violent encounters with Catholic Defenders. Collins states that in further response to the establishment of these Orange Lodges many Catholics who had been involved in the Defenders or Whiteboys joined local chapters of
the United Irishmen. They were not inspired as much by revolutionary ideals or parliamentary reform, rather “their grievances were high rents, enclosures, and the tithes, and when the rebellion started it was against these grievances that they fought” (Collins, 1969, p. 213).

Collins gives a description of the abortive French expedition in 1796 and the measures taken by the government to prevent a possible uprising. The author describes the Arms and Insurrection Acts passed by Parliament and the raising of an Irish Militia and Yeomanry units to supplement the small numbers of regular army soldiers in Ireland. An account of the disarming of Ulster is given wherein “the houses of suspected United Irishmen were burned, and many people were tortured, flogged, or shot. Thousands of men were forced to join the British navy” (Collins, 1969, p. 215). In expectation of the rising, Collins states that “in 1798 the reign of terror had been extended to the other provinces” (p. 215). This prompted the leaders of the United Irishmen to begin the rising in May of that year. The author states that disturbances in Counties Kildare, Dublin, Meath, Carlow, Laois, and Wicklow were easily subdued but the risings in Antrim, Down, and Wexford were put down with more difficulty.

After a brief description of the Ulster rebellions, Collins describes the Wexford rebellion as having exploded in response to brutality at the hands of troops searching for arms. Following the major defeat of the rebels at Vinegar Hill Collins states that many rebels “were killed by the government’s soldiers, who were eager to avenge the Protestants whom the rebels had ill-treated and killed during the rebellion” (1969, p. 218). No direct mention is made of the massacres at Scullabogue or Wexford Bridge. Collins ends the chapter on the 1798 Rebellion with brief descriptions of General Humbert’s expedition to Connaught, and the final expedition to Lough Swilly that resulted in Wolfe Tone’s capture and eventual suicide in custody.
Collins’ textbook includes much of the same material covered in the Hayden and Moonan and Casserly texts. In the case of the United Irishmen and the Rebellion of 1798 Collins spends less time than the previous texts on the society prior to the rebellion. More space is devoted to the Rebellion itself. Wolfe Tone’s role is considered notable, but he is not credited as the soul founder of the United Irishmen. More biographical information on his early personal life is included instead of a mere description of his political activities. Collins puts emphasis on the alliances made between the United Irishmen and the Defenders, which is largely overlooked in the earlier accounts. Collins clearly explains the differences in the aspirations of the two organizations; that the United Irishmen were national in their scope and sought to establish an independent and secular republic while the Defenders’ goals were to address local grievances against landlords. This, according to Collins, contributed to the lack of coordination and strategy among the rebels after the beginning of the rising. The author discusses the brutality of Crown forces and, while acknowledging that atrocities were also committed by rebels, Collins does not specifically mention the infamous occurrences at Scullabogue or Wexford Bridge. In all, Collins’ text continues the theme of lionizing Wolfe Tone as seen in the earlier textbooks. While going into more depth regarding the rising, the overall interpretation is not significantly different from that of Hayden and Moonan (1922) or Casserly (1943).

*Kee (1995)*

The different nature of the text by Kee has already been discussed. Written with the intention of providing historical background to the divide between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland that was the root cause of the Troubles, the text should be expected to provide less of a “glorious” nationalist view of the United Irishmen and the Rebellion of 1798. The Rebellion resulted in widening the rift between Irish Catholics and Protestants and laid the foundations for
the 1801 Union. There is an expectation that Kee would focus on this divide, but in a more contemplative sense.

Kee (1995) opens the discussion of the United Irishmen with a reflection on the influence of the French Revolution on Europe in general and Ireland in particular. In this revolutionary atmosphere “an open radical organization was formed, mainly by Presbyterians from Belfast, to promote the twin objects of parliamentary reform and the unification of the Catholic and Protestant nations into one” (p. 59). Kee does not credit Wolfe Tone with the founding of this Society of United Irishmen, but simply states that he enthusiastically joined. The author does not discuss the events that drove the society to become a more radical and underground organization, but simply states that by 1796 the society had transformed and adopted more radical and violent republican views, seeking an alliance with France. Kee describes the Bantry Bay expedition in some detail, detailing what was a narrow escape for British interests in Ireland. Kee (1995) outlines the responses of both the government and the United Irishmen to the failed invasion. The author describes the government’s repressive measures to prevent a rebellion and the attempt of the United Irishmen to integrate the agrarian Defenders into the society in order to gain broader support for the planned rebellion.

In discussing the government’s response to preempt the expected rebellion, Kee vividly describes the tortures used by the government forces such as flogging, pitch-capping, and half-hanging. This campaign of military terror is credited with the explosion of the rebellion in Wexford which was initially an area “in which anyone expecting rebellion in 1798 would have expected it to be particularly menacing” (Kee, 1995, p. 63). But with the discovery, through government informers, that the port of Wexford was considered a likely French landing site made it an area of interest. The task for searching for arms and rebels was given to the local
Yeomanry who were primarily Protestant and stated as being “notoriously sectarian in outlook” (p. 63) together with a regiment of militia from North Cork. According to Kee, the outbreak in Wexford was the result of one locality rallying behind a local priest, Father John Murphy, and deciding to no longer submit to torture and intimidation by government forces. This gave the rising “more the character of an indignant local peasants’ revolt than that of a national rebellion” (p. 64).

Kee (1995) continues on to give an account of the revolt in Wexford and mentions the massacres of Protestant prisoners that took place at the rebel camp on Vinegar Hill and at Scullabogue in the absence of central leadership or coherent strategy on the part of the rebels. Kee describes these atrocities as being poor propaganda for a rebel cause that had originally intended to unite Protestants and Catholics as Irishmen. The eventual defeat of the Wexford rebels, the defeat of risings in Ulster, the French expedition to Connaught, the final French expedition, and Wolfe Tone’s capture are briefly outlined. Kee (1995) closes the discussion of the 1798 rebellion with the statement that the “high-minded and patriotic attempt of the radical political theorists who had founded the United Irishmen to bring the two separate Irish ‘nations’ together had foundered on primitive confusion and prejudice” (p. 65).

Kee (1995) diverges from the other texts in the treatment of Wolfe Tone. He is shown as a significant contributor to the cause of the United Irishmen but is not hailed as the single great figure of the movement. Like Collins, Kee discusses the efforts of the largely Protestant United Irishmen to bring the Catholic Defenders into the planned revolution and describes the differences in each of the organizations’ goals. The author does not shy away from graphic descriptions of the brutality of the Crown forces nor the atrocities committed by the rebels. Kee describes the detrimental effect that the course and ferocity of the rebellion on relations between
Irish Protestants (including Dissenters) and Irish Catholics. In spite of the Enlightenment-influenced ideals of the United Irishmen to unite the island’s inhabitants under the name of “Irishman” regardless of religious creed, long-held sectarian prejudices still divided the population. Kee illustrates this as part of the deep-seated animosity and mistrust between Catholic and Protestant that would continue through the course of Irish history to the Troubles.

Brockie and Walsh (1997)

The textbook by Brockie and Walsh had not discussed the Penal Laws or Irish Parliamentary independence beyond a few sentences. The United Irishmen and the Rebellion of 1798 are a different matter. An entire chapter is devoted to these events. This chapter fits within a unit focusing on the Enlightenment and the revolutions of the eighteenth century. Prior chapters focus on the American War of Independence, with a particular focus on George Washington, and the French Revolution, with a focus on Maximilien Robespierre. The chapter devoted to the United Irishmen and their rebellion, likewise, pairs the events with the life of a revolutionary figure, unsurprisingly in this case, Wolfe Tone. It is logical to expect to find Wolfe Tone portrayed in a similar light as in the earlier texts. The bicentennial of the rebellion was approaching at the time of publication, so it may be the case that a great deal of historical interest and attention would be paid to these events. This could be manifested in either a highly nationalistic and prideful retelling of the rebellion or a more critical look at the events.

Brockie and Walsh’s treatment of the United Irishmen and the 1798 Rebellion focuses a great deal on Theobald Wolfe Tone. After a brief narrative of Tone’s early personal and political life, the authors describe his admiration for the French Revolution which inspired what they list as his three main political aims: to separate Ireland from England and establish a republic following the examples of America and France, to use violence in achieving this, and to unite
Irishmen of all religions in the struggle (Brockie & Walsh, 1997). In order to achieve these aims, “Tone and his followers founded a new society in Belfast on 18 October 1791. They called themselves the Society of United Irishmen, as one of their main aims was to unite all Irishmen against England” (Brockie & Walsh, 1997, p. 193). It is notable that the authors accredit the principal founding role of the society to Tone and that no mention is given of the society’s original aim of Parliamentary reform.

The authors describe the proscription of political societies such as the United Irishmen following the state of war between France and Britain in 1793. They recall Tone’s departure for America in 1794, and from there to France in 1796 where he lobbied for French aid that resulted in the Bantry Bay Expedition. The authors give a complete account of the actions of the government who, informed by spies within the society, took measures to deter the outbreak of the rebellion. It is reported how laws were passed to ban the importation of arms into the country and to grant authorities broad powers to search houses and arrest suspects. In Ulster in 1797 “soldiers were given complete freedom to search houses as they pleased. The homes of suspected United Irishmen were burned to the ground and many people were flogged or shot by the soldiers” (Brockie & Walsh, 1997, p. 194). Following the government campaign to disarm Ulster, the authors recount the arrest of the United Irishmen’s leaders and the expansion of the campaign of intimidation and disarmament beyond the north. “Soldiers went from place to place, hanging and flogging suspects and burning their houses. Half-hanging and pitch caps of boiling tar were other methods of torture widely used” (Brockie & Walsh, 1997, p. 195).

“In spite of these conditions,” the Rebellion began on 24 May 1798 (Brockie & Walsh, 1997, p. 195). The authors briefly recount the rebellions in Leinster and Ulster, but then turn their focus to the larger and more serious threat against the government in Wexford. The state of
County Wexford in May of 1798 is described as incredibly unstable with “great tension and bitterness between local Protestants and Catholics” (Brockie & Walsh, 1997, p. 197). Government forces began their campaign of intimidation on 20 May. Following an incident on 27 May where twenty-eight prisoners were killed by a “Protestant mob” (p. 197) in Carnew, panic spread and a Wexford priest, Father John Murphy of Boolavogue, agreed to lead a local rebellion. The course of the Rebellion in County Wexford is described from its outbreak, to the capture of the towns of Enniscorthy and Wexford by the rebels, through to the decisive rebel defeat at Vinegar Hill. The imprisonment of suspected Loyalists and the massacres at Scullabogue and Wexford Bridge are described in connection with the lack of discipline in the rebel army (Brockie & Walsh, 1997).

The French expedition to Connaught led by General Humbert in late August of 1798 is briefly summarized, as is the final French expedition to Lough Swilly that ended in Wolfe Tone’s capture. A short account of Wolfe Tone’s trial and suicide is given. The authors describe the important place given to him in Irish history as the “Father of Irish Republicanism” due to his advocacy for separation from Great Britain and the establishment of a republican form of government. “Many people admired his republican views and his desire to unite Irish people of all religions,” but others were critical of “Wolfe Tone’s belief in the use of violence in order to achieve complete separation from Great Britain” (Brockie & Walsh, 1997, p. 199). The reasons for the failure of the rising are deliberated in some detail; that outside of Wexford the rebellions were small in scale, that religious leaders of all denominations including the Catholic bishops strongly opposed it, that the government was well informed by spies within the United Irishmen, and that untrained rebels were no match for regular soldiers (Brockie & Walsh, 1997). Finally, the authors discuss one of the lasting results of the rebellion, that instead of bringing
Protestants and Catholics together it drove the groups apart. “Protestants and Presbyterians in the north of Ireland were particularly horrified at the massacre of Protestants in Wexford…most of them began to see the connection with England as being essential to their well-being and prosperity” (Brockie & Walsh, 1997, p. 200).

The authors’ chapter on the United Irishmen and the 1798 Rebellion is no less thorough than the accounts in previous textbooks. Notable is the similar treatment of Wolfe Tone, who is, again, portrayed as the central figure of the United Irishmen. Also of note is that Brockie and Walsh (1997) make no mention of the parliamentary aspirations of the United Irishmen. The organization is portrayed as a revolutionary society from its inception, ignoring its earlier incarnation as a reform society. The description of the rebellion itself does not differ greatly from earlier textbook accounts. The atrocities committed by rebel and government forces are both covered although it is of interest that the murder of suspected United Irish prisoners at Carnew is blamed on a “Protestant mob” instead of the military forces commonly associated with that event (McBride, 2009). Brockie and Walsh are thorough in discussing the failure of the rising and the ramifications it had on the relationship between Irish Catholics and Protestants. The account of the rebellion is rather straightforward without the nostalgic or overtly nationalistic fanfare that might be expected to coincide with the bicentennial of such an event.

Lucey (2002)

The Lucey text was published only five years after the Brockie and Walsh textbook. This could cause the expectation of relatively few differences between the two textbook accounts of the United Irishmen and the 1798 Rebellion. On the other hand there could be some differences when it is taken into account that, between the publication of the Brockie and Walsh text in 1997 and the 2002 publication of the Lucey book, a modified curriculum was adopted in 1999.
Although the content of the Junior Cycle history syllabus was not greatly altered, recommended changes in how history was presented included a greater emphasis on students examining primary sources (NCCA, 2004). These changes may have some influence as to how the United Irishmen and the Rising of 1798 are presented.

After a brief description of the state of Ireland in the late eighteenth century, including a passing mention of the Penal Laws, the influence of the French Revolution, and the formation of agrarian societies in response to high rents, Lucey (2002) introduces the United Irishmen with a look at the life of Theobald Wolfe Tone. The author tells of Wolfe Tone’s admiration of the French Revolution and his role in founding the United Irishmen, but does not credit him solely. The beliefs of the organization, as stated by the author, were:

That the parliament should be reformed to give a greater say to the people, that no reform is just which does not include Irishmen of every religious persuasion, and that English control of Irish affairs should be ended (Lucey, 2002, p. 203).

The author also notes that the society’s membership was largely middle class and did not initially favor open rebellion or the establishment of a republic. The author describes the government’s fears of a domestic revolution following the beginning of war between France and England in 1793. Lucey (2002) then describes the repression of political societies that resulted from this. The proscription of these reform societies caused the United Irishmen to become a secret society advocating open rebellion and the establishment of a republic (Lucey, 2002).

The French expedition of 1796 and the response of the government to the threat of rebellion are both briefly discussed. In particular, the harsh measures taken by the government are outlined. The arrest of the principal leaders of the United Irishmen and the outbreak of the rising are also briefly discussed. The separate risings, their leaders, the course they took,
Humbert’s expedition, and atrocities committed by both sides are simply stated in a few paragraphs. This is followed by an account of the final French expedition and Tone’s capture and suicide. As laid out by the authors, the failure of the rising is attributed to: “poor organization, stronger government forces, spies, and insufficient French help” (Lucey, 2002, p. 207). The final results of the Rebellion of 1798, both immediate and long-term are covered and include mention of the bitter and broadened divisions between Irish Catholics and Protestants. The author regards Wolfe Tone as the “Father of Irish Republicanism” who:

provided inspiration for the later revolutionary leaders who followed his beliefs.

In particular, Tone’s example helped to inspire the Young Ireland rising in 1848, the Fenian rising in 1867, and the 1916 Rising (Lucey, 2002, p. 207).

Lucey’s (2002) account of the United Irishmen and the 1798 Rebellion is rather brief compared to that of Brockie and Walsh (1997). Lucey does not deviate significantly from the other textbooks in recounting the formation of the organization and the rising itself. Mention is made of atrocities committed by the rebels as well as the government forces and Lucey discusses how the rising resulted in further divisions between Irish Protestants and Catholics. Like all previous accounts, Wolfe Tone is given a central role in the story of the United Irishmen. His example in the 1798 Rebellion is stated to have been an inspiration to subsequent Irish rebellions, complimenting the teleological view of a centuries-long campaign for Irish independence.

Comparison of Accounts

All of the textbooks evaluated provide similar general accounts of the United Irishmen and the 1798 Rebellion. The nature and aims of the organization are not disputed although the Brockie and Walsh (1997) text neglects to mention that the society had been initially founded for
political reforms rather than armed insurrection. Not one of the textbooks omit, gloss over, or attempt to justify atrocities committed by the rebels. The Collins (1969) text, however, does not mention the massacres of Protestant loyalists at Scullabogue or Wexford Bridge by name. Each text recognizes the widening of the divisions between Irish Catholics and Protestants following the rising and the detachment of the rebels from the original goals of the United Irishmen. Most notably, all of the textbooks emphasize the importance of Wolfe Tone. Although it must be said that Wolfe Tone was, indeed, a very important figure in the United Irishmen and the subsequent rebellion, some of the textbooks over-emphasize his role in the organization as Casserly (1943) does in crediting him with founding the society. It is of interest that it is only the Kee (1995) text, the only book evaluated that was not specifically written as a textbook, which does not assign Wolfe Tone a so incredible and over-arching role. The fact that the Kee text was also written and published in Britain, where Wolfe Tone does not enjoy the status of a national hero, may have an influence on this as well. The other texts portray Wolfe Tone in a very heroic light. The Lucey (2002) text plainly places Wolfe Tone in the teleological narrative of the “long struggle” for Irish independence from Britain, stating the inspiration his life story has exerted on later nationalist independence movements. This is somewhat surprising considering that the Lucey text is the most recent of those reviewed. In contrast to the other events selected in this study, the Rebellion of 1798 is consistently covered in the textbooks from Hayden and Moonan (1922) to Lucey (2002), indicating that it has remained a significant event in Irish history even as coverage of the Penal Laws and the Irish Parliament has been dropped.

The Act of Union

The Act of Union, which was ratified in 1800 and came into effect in 1801, created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The Irish Parliament was dissolved.
would be represented in the Westminster Parliament, where seats were added in the House of Commons and the House of Lords to accommodate Irish MPs. Unlike the Union of 1707 which united England and Scotland as a common kingdom, Ireland continued to have the offices of the Viceroy and Chief Secretary, which were appointed by the Prime Minister and exercised executive power in the name of the King (McBride, 2009). The concept of the Union had been considered by British authorities well before the 1798 Rebellion, but given the calls among Ireland’s Protestant political class for more independence from Britain in the 1770s-80s, it was politically unfeasible. Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger saw the aftermath of the rebellion as a time when the case could be made for the Union as vital for the interests of public safety (Carty, 1957). The Union was passed by both Parliaments following much political bartering. The absorption of Ireland into the United Kingdom was opposed by Grattan and other Irish Protestants who had been involved in the Volunteers and the campaign for an independent Irish Parliament. Later Irish nationalists in the Home Rule movement sought a return to Irish self-government as it had been prior to the Union (minus the restrictions on Catholic political participation) (English, 2006; Hutchinson, 1987). Many Irish Protestants, despite the initial opposition to the project, would come to see preserving the Union with Britain as vital in preserving their interests and safety.

*Hayden and Moonan (1922)*

The Hayden and Moonan text was written at a time when the Union with Britain had been dissolved, with the exception of those six counties that made up Northern Ireland. The authors’ focus on political events in Irish history would cause one to expect that the political debates around the project of the Union would be given a great deal of attention. The Union was a target for both militant and moderate nationalists. Both groups wanted to see the Union
brought to an end; the former through rebellion and the latter through parliamentary channels (English, 2006). The efforts of nationalists to dissolve the Union and the ultimate success of the militant branch would be within the recent memory of the authors and this may influence how the beginnings of the Union are presented in the textbook.

Hayden and Moonan (1922) provide evidence that the idea of a legislative union between the kingdoms of Ireland and Great Britain had been considered prior to the Rebellion of 1798. But such a scheme would not have the support of the Protestant Ascendancy in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The authors state that the British Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger, likely felt that the unrest and rebellion at the close of the century might have changed the opinions of Irish Protestants:

> to desire a closer connection with England for the sake of their own safety; while the Catholics, who were now clamoring for the removal of their remaining disabilities, might see in the union a means of attaining their object” (Hayden and Moonan, 1922, p. 440).

Opposition to the Union came from the Patriot Party, the Orange Lodges, and independents in Parliament. Support was found among Pitt’s own Tory Party as well as among the Catholic clergy, who hoped that a union would be advantageous to their congregations and the position of the Catholic Church. The authors also state, however, that there was opposition among the Catholic upper and middle classes who worried about the economic impacts of a Union (Hayden & Moonan, 1922).

Despite the lack of support for the Union in several quarters, Hayden and Moonan (1922) describe the means Pitt would use to gain the necessary votes to carry the measure. Merchants were assured that trade would benefit from a Union, Catholics were told that being a minority in
the United Kingdom would do away with objections to full emancipation, and the Protestants were reminded of the role that Britain played in their defense during the recent rebellion. Not much was gained through these methods of persuasion, and Pitt, through Viceroy Lord Cornwallis, Chief Secretary Lord Castlereagh, and Lord Chancellor John Fitzgibbon (Lord Clare), turned towards other means. Prominent anti-unionists were punished politically, losing appointments and influence. Supporters of the Union were given positions of high salary, peerages, and prime appointments as rewards. According to the authors:

Cornwallis, the Viceroy, heartily detested the work which he had been set to do, but, nevertheless, he bribed and punished as consistently as did the cold and cynical Castlereagh, who seems to have felt no scruples (Hayden & Moonan, 1922, p. 442).

The authors add, however, that it appears that both men appeared to have truly believed that the Union project would provide a real benefit to Ireland.

Hayden and Moonan (1922) provide a rather detailed account of the political wrangling that took place in order to secure the votes for the Union. The government party was victorious when the vote on the third and final reading of the bill was passed on June 7th 1800. The authors relate that “the passing of the Act of Union appears to have been received by the country at large with a tranquility which was scarcely to be expected” (Hayden & Moonan, 1922, p. 448). While the authors state that the Irish Parliament had been an object of national pride and interest for the educated classes, the exclusion from participation, “of the members of the Church to which the majority of the people belonged, had prevented it from being regarded as the Parliament of the Irish nation” (p. 448).
Although published as the Irish Free State had just been created and the Union dissolved, Hayden and Moonan (1922) seem to give a very balanced account of the formation of the Union. Prime Minister Pitt’s reasons for seeking to ram the Union through are adequately outlined as are the positions of others supporting and those opposing the project. The actions undertaken by Cornwallis and Castlereagh at the behest of the government to garner support for the Union are presented as distasteful, but the authors soften their remarks by stating that both men sincerely felt the project would be the best for Ireland. Hayden and Moonan (1922), recognizing the realities and limitations of “Grattan’s Parliament” do not mourn its dissolution which could be regarded as surprising, considering that the Irish campaign to separate Ireland from Great Britain had just concluded at the time of writing.

*Casserly (1943)*

At the time of the Casserly (1943) textbook’s publication, the Irish Free State had been independent of Britain for over twenty years, but there were still many politicians and civic leaders who had participated in the achievement of Irish independence or, at the very least, had been alive to witness the events bringing about the dissolution of the Union. At this time there were also tensions between Ireland and Britain connected to the Second World War. These factors may influence how the creation of the Union is portrayed in the Casserly text. It has been seen previously that in some cases the Casserly textbook is a bit more partisan in its tone and evaluations of events in comparison to the earlier and later textbooks. The expectation is that this tone would be continued in the coverage of the Union.

Casserly’s (1943) discussion of the Union makes little mention of the recent rebellion as the rationale for bringing Ireland definitively under British control. According to Casserly, the primary concern of Pitt’s government was that since Ireland had achieved its legislative
independence, it was possible for the Irish Parliament to “pass Acts that might be damaging to English interests—for instance, it might forbid the import of English goods” (1943, p. 89). The author describes the objections of the Patriot Party and others opposed to the Union and also recounts how Pitt and the Irish government ministers insinuated to Roman Catholics that Catholic emancipation would follow the establishment of the Union. Therefore, “the Roman Catholic Church, and consequently the majority of Roman Catholics, either favored, or at all events did not actively oppose, the Union” (Casserly, 1943, p. 90).

The legislative debates are briefly discussed in Casserly’s text. Much is made of the methods used by the government to muster support. As well as granting of titles, pensions, and patronage to supporters of the Union project, Casserly states that the Pitt, Cornwallis, and Castlereagh also engaged in direct bribery with hard cash. On the other hand anyone who spoke against the Union and “who held a government position, whether high or low, was dismissed” (Casserly, 1943, p. 92). In the face of strong government influence, the Act of Union carried. Casserly states that Catholic emancipation, which had been promised to Irish Catholics by the government ministers, did not follow as guaranteed. According to the author “the anger and disappointment of the Roman Catholics at what they considered a breach of faith, created in their minds from the very beginning a prejudice against the Union” (Casserly, 1943, p. 95).

Casserly’s account of the passage of the Act of Union has some interesting differences from that of Hayden and Moonan. The author squarely frames the Union as a means for Britain to prevent the Irish Parliament from acting too independently. No mention is made of Britain’s concerns for security that arose after the rebellion or the possibility of another French landing. Casserly portrays the methods used by Pitt, Cornwallis, and Castlereagh to rally votes for the Union as bald-faced corruption. The author also claims that Irish Catholics were strung along to
support the Union on the promise that the Union would bring about Catholic emancipation. When this failed to happen, Casserly states that the Irish Catholic population became set against the Union. Altogether, the account given by Casserly is, as expected, a more partisan in comparison to the earlier text.

_Collins (1969)_

The historical coverage of Collins’ text ends at the year 1800 while the Act of Union came into effect in 1801. Collins does discuss the political debate surrounding the proposed Act of Union from 1798 through to its passage in 1800. With the focus of the Collins text leaning more toward social history, rather than the political history privileged in the earlier texts, it can be expected that Collins’ account of the Union is either much shorter or focuses as much on the everyday consequences of the Union as well as the broader political results.

Collins (1969) recalls that Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger had advocated a legislative union even before the 1798 Rebellion. Although he had lacked the political support for such a measure, Collins states that Pitt’s belief in the necessity of the Union was strengthened by the rebellion as “many members of the ruling class, who before would hot have dreamt of surrendering their independent parliament, had been badly frightened by the rising” (Collins, 1969, p. 220). However, there was opposition from the Patriot Party, many Orange Lodges, and Irish merchants. Collins discusses Pitt’s appeal to Catholics, promising “the right to sit in a united parliament” (p. 221) and promising merchants that the elimination of tariffs resulting from the Union would be beneficial for trade. The financial rewards and compensation given by the government to supporters of the Union are discussed, although Collins, unlike the previous textbook authors, does not use the term “bribery” to describe this.
Collins’ coverage of the Union is considerably shorter than the accounts given in the previous two textbooks. The account given is very basic; outlining the important points of the debate over the Union and its results. It is interesting to note that the author does not refer to the methods of persuasion used by the government to gain votes as “bribery” while Hayden and Moonan (1922) refer to these actions as distasteful and Casserly (1943) does not shy away from labeling it as corruption and bribery. Perhaps due to the shifting focus away from political history and toward the inclusion of more social history, Collins gives only a brief and to the point coverage of the Union.

Tierney and MacCurtain (1969)

The textbook by Tierney and MacCurtain (1969) is part of publisher Gill and MacMillan’s “A History of Ireland” series which is the same series of secondary school history textbooks as the Collins (1969) text. Tierney and MacCurtain’s text begins at the period where Collins leaves off, starting at the year 1800. Although this text does not cover the earlier events of the eighteenth century, it is included here to provide additional material concerning the Union published in the same series and at the same time as the Collins text. Considering the changing focus of the curriculum to include more social history at this time, it can be expected that the Tierney and MacCurtain text would be similarly basic in its outline of the political process of the Union.

Tierney and MacCurtain (1969) state that “to many Irishmen, the passing of the Act of Union seemed like a deathblow” (p. 7). This perhaps is an accurate description for the reaction of Grattan and the others who had strived for an independent Parliament, but it is doubtful that the non-voting majority population would be so aggrieved (Carty, 1957). The authors state that after being brought into the United Kingdom, Ireland, unlike Scotland and Wales, retained a
Viceroy and Chief Secretary to act as representatives of the Crown. Tierney and MacCurtain describe the Act of Union as a decision by the English government that Grattan’s parliament was too independent. However, “the Irish parliament had never been the parliament of the Irish people. It had always represented the rights and privileges of the English or Anglo-Irish” (Tierney & MacCurtain, 1969, p. 12). The authors state that, seeing as the majority Irish Catholic population had no say in their country’s governance, the Union made little difference to them. The chapter on the Union goes on to mainly describe daily life in the opening decades of the nineteenth century with little more discussion on the politics of the Act of Union.

The Tierney and MacCurtain (1969) text does not devote a great deal of discussion on the Union. Although this text is part of the same series as the Collins text, the authors do not describe the concerns for national security following 1798 Rebellion that helped to get the Union passed. The authors echo Casserly (1943) by stating that the Union was brought about in order to reign in the independent Irish Parliament. Similar to what was written by Hayden and Moonan (1922), Tierney and MacCurtain describe the dissolution of the Irish Parliament as having little real impact on the lives of Irish Catholics, who both before and after the Union had no say in how the country was run.

Kee (1995)

The first edition of the Kee text was written in the early 1980s during the Troubles of Northern Ireland. The conflict of the Troubles could be boiled down to the almost entirely Catholic Republicans seeking to unite Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland, and the mainly Protestant (both Anglican and Presbyterian) Unionists wishing to keep Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. As Kee’s text seeks to explore the root causes of the religious and political divisions in Ireland, it is expected that the Union, which these later Ulster Unionists
seek to preserve, would be examined with special attention as to how Irish Catholics and
Protestants responded to its initial passage.

In fact, Kee (1995) does not devote a good deal of space towards the discussion of the
Act of Union. The Union is given as a postscript to the 1798 Rebellion. Following the rebellion,
Kee states that Irish Protestants thought themselves less as a Protestant “nation” as had been the
position of Swift and other early nationalists, but as the ascendancy class which would look to its
co-religionists in England to protect its interests. At the time of the passage of the Act of Union,
many old Protestant patriots opposed the Union, while:

Catholics, on the whole, favored it on the grounds that union with a more tolerant
Protestant majority, the English, would afford better protection for their interests
than they were likely to get from their own Protestant minority ascendancy (Kee,

Kee states that Irish Protestants gradually came to see supporting the Union as the best hope to
preserve their status, while Catholics would come to see the repeal of the Union as the
opportunity to advance their own interests, thus shaping the debate of Irish nationalism in the
nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Kee, 1995).

Kee’s (1995) very short discussion of the Union focuses on what the two groups,
Protestants and Catholics, stood to gain from the Union. A Protestant ascendancy that saw itself
threatened by the Rebellion of 1798 saw a cementing of ties with Britain as a means toward
protection while Catholics could benefit from a Parliament with a more liberal-minded Protestant
majority than Ireland’s ascendancy class. Kee does not go into the supposed promises made to
the Irish Catholics regarding Catholic emancipation, but describes how later Catholic nationalists
would seek to repeal the Union and reinstate Home Rule. All told, Kee does not devote a great
deal of discussion towards the issue of the Union but, importantly, describes how Irish
Protestants, who had once backed the independence of the Irish Parliament, now saw their future
inextricably bound to Union with Britain. This feeling among early nineteenth century Irish
Protestants could still be considered alive among the Unionists of modern Ulster.

*Brockie and Walsh (1997) and Lucey (2002)*

The recent curricula and Junior Cycle syllabi do not include the Act of Union as one of
the topics to be studied during the Junior Cycle (NCCA, 2004). Therefore the Brockie and
Walsh (1997) and Lucey (2002) textbooks would likely not include any detailed account of the
debate over the Act of Union. As seen with the Penal Laws and the independent Irish
Parliament, not much more than a few sentences could be expected about the Union in either of
these textbooks.

Brockie and Walsh (1997) do not directly address the debate over the Act of Union at all.
Only in the introduction to Chapter 60, which covers the debate between Unionists and the Home
Rule movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is any mention given to the
abolition of the old Irish Parliament and the inclusion of Ireland in a single United Kingdom.
Lucey (2002) gives a little more information, discussing the Act of Union and the abolition of
the Irish Parliament as being among the results of the Rebellion of 1798. The reason for the
Union, according to the author, was that “the British government decided that Ireland needed to
be brought under greater control” (Lucey, 2002, p. 207). As in the cases of the Penal Laws and
Irish Parliamentary Independence, there is not much information given about the Union in these
textbooks. The basic information that is given does not differ widely from any of the previous
accounts.
Comparison of the Accounts

Irish Nationalists in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century sought to bring an end to the Union of 1801, either through the political process or revolt (English, 2006; Hutchinson, 1987). It would be assumed that a textbook exhibiting nationalist bias would describe the Act of Union as a wholly undesirable event for the Irish. The earliest of the textbooks, that of Hayden and Moonan (1922), was published very shortly after the Union was dissolved and includes the most thorough account of the passage of the Act of Union. It does not take a definitive stance, describing the Union as either beneficial or detrimental to Ireland. The Casserly (1943) text is rather critical of the questionable methods used by the government to garner support for the Union. The desire to bring about the Union is framed as Britain seeking to limit Ireland’s independence. Finally, Casserly (1943) describes the Irish Catholics as feeling betrayed when full emancipation did not follow after the passage of the Act of Union. The Collins (1969) text does not dwell very long on the Act of Union other than to outline the basic facts associated with the debate and passage of the Act. Tierney and MacCurtain (1969) also have little to say about the Union other than echoing Casserly’s (1943) contention that the primary reason for the Union was to bring Ireland further under British control. Kee (1995) provides only a short description of the Act of Union and its impact on Ireland, focusing on the ramifications it had on the Irish Catholic and Protestant populations. The Brockie and Walsh (1997) and Lucey (2002) texts include only very brief mentions of the Act of Union which serve to illustrate the declining importance accorded to the eighteenth century in the secondary school curriculum where discussion of the beginning of the Union is ancillary to the events that led to the Union’s dissolution in the twentieth century.
CHAPTER V: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The previous chapter presented the textbook accounts of the four eighteenth century events selected for this study. In this final chapter, each textbook will be evaluated in comparison to the historic consensus to determine whether or not nationalist bias is found and to what degree this bias is. Following an evaluation of the individual texts, the trends as to how the level of national bias in Irish history textbooks have changed over this eighty year period will be charted. Janmaat (2006) argued that nationalist bias is often very prevalent in the political and educational discourse of a newly-established state, particularly in the early years of independence when democratic and civic structures are at their most fragile. A new country, particularly one that had been dominated by a foreign power or rival ethnic group may seek to reassert their own ethnic identity, language, and cultural traditions as important in establishing a national identity as part of the new state. This tendency towards an ethnic-nationalist bias in a newly-independent country could be even more pronounced in a country such as Ireland, where there has been a particularly long history of domination by an external power (England, later Great Britain) and a local and religiously different elite (the Protestant Ascendancy Class), where armed conflict in opposition to external rule was common, and where independence was brought about following armed resistance.

In the idealized evolution of the state, as the state matures and becomes more stable, democratic and civil institutions become more established. In the case of Ireland, where economic growth made it a destination country for immigration, changes in demographics may make the state’s population less ethnically homogenous. These changes, according to Janmaat (2006) can often lead to the gradual mellowing and disappearance of ethnic and nationalist bias in history textbooks. According to this hypothesis, the level of nationalist bias in the selected
textbooks should be most notable in those textbooks published in the first few decades after Irish independence. Progressing from those textbooks published in the early days of Irish independence, the expectation is that textbooks printed in more recent times will reflect historical distance from the gaining of Irish independence, a more stable and democratic government, and shifts in Ireland’s culture and demographics and will thus show less nationalist bias in their accounts of Irish history.

Discussion of Nationalist Bias in the Texts and Change over Time

The evaluations of the selected textbooks given above do illustrate levels of nationalist bias in some of these accounts of eighteenth century Irish events. Not all of the textbooks evaluated were found to have pervasive bias, and the levels of bias in those textbooks differ. This will be addressed below, as will other conclusions regarding the changes in Irish school textbooks over time. Janmaat’s (2006) hypothesis held that nationalist bias in newly-independent states is strongest in the years immediately following independence, that these ethnic and nationalist biases are reflected in the historical accounts of school textbooks, and that over the passage of time, as the state and its democratic and civil institutions become more stable, the levels of bias in school history textbooks lessens and eventually disappears. By following this hypothesis, the Hayden and Moonan (1922) text would be expected to be show the greatest degree of bias while the Lucey (2002) text would be expected to have the most even-handed account of the selected eighteenth century events. This is, however, not the case.

The Hayden and Moonan (1922) textbook opened with a preface that describes the book as being written from a “frankly national stand-point” but that “the authors have made every effort to attain accuracy and avoid prejudice” (p. iii.). The textbook did not include a pervasive nationalist bias but there were a few prominent passages that reflected isolated instances of
nationalist bias. Notable is Hayden and Moonan’s (1922) account of the Penal Laws that describes the effects of the laws as causing the degeneracy of the Irish Catholic population and domineering and tyrannical attitudes of the Irish Protestant ascendancy class. What is even more notable is the author’s comparison of the Irish Catholics’ lack of respect for the rule of law with the attitudes of the Celtic Irish centuries before, which is an attitude firmly held by the cultural attitudes of Irish cultural nationalists like those of the Gaelic league (Hutchinson, 1987) and echoes Plumb’s (2004) conception of the “past” as an important and symbolic construction for a nation’s sense of itself.

The Hayden and Moonan (1922) textbook was published at the very beginning of an independent Ireland during a time when other new countries were emerging (primarily in Eastern Europe) following the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires. It was also published at a time when very few Irish students went on to secondary school. Secondary education was not free and universal at this time and those whose families could afford to send them to secondary schools were largely of the upper and middle classes (O’Donaghue, 1999). The Irish Free State of 1922 may have been politically independent of Britain, but it was still part of the Commonwealth and was in no position to be economically independent of its neighbor and largest trading partner. If secondary education at this time sought to reproduce the values of the middle class, as O’Donaghue (1999) asserts, then there is no practical purpose achieved in perpetuating an antagonistic attitude toward Britain. This could explain why the Hayden and Moonan (1922) text is largely balanced in its accounts of the eighteenth century events. Although the textbook was published in 1922 and including the events of the early 1920s in its coverage, the research and writing process for the book likely began well before the year of publication and the beginning of Irish independence. This may help explain the lack of
nationalist language, although there was nothing preventing the Gaelic League or other nationalist organizations from printing and disseminating their material while Ireland was still under British rule during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Hutchinson, 1987).

Published 21 years after the Hayden and Moonan (1922) textbook, the Casserly (1943) textbook begins with an introduction addressed directly to Irish students with the apparent assumption that all those students reading this text would share a common conception of the Irish nation. The author consistently uses the phrase “we Irish” and contends that the Irish “have a fuller knowledge of our ancestors than has any other nation of Western Europe…We Irish still possess our old language, our old learning, our old culture” (Casserly, 1943, p. 3). The author portrays these as things that should be highly valued by Irish students, echoing the cultural nationalist constructions of the past described by Hutchinson (1987) and Plumb (2004). The textbook includes multiple examples of nationalistic bias, including the spurious claims upon Jonathan Swift as being akin to the “first Sinn Feiner” which is an example of the type of appropriation described by Duara (1995). Casserly’s (1943) ends with an afterword describing Ireland as “now sinking under the waves of adversity, now rising above them, but never completely subdued, never quite losing her sense of nationality” (p. 142).

The Casserly (1943) textbook was published during a period of tension between Ireland and Great Britain, although, as in the case of the Hayden and Moonan (1922) textbook much of the research and writing may have been conducted years earlier. In spite of still being a member of the Commonwealth at the outbreak of the Second World War, the Irish Free State elected to remain neutral in the conflict; a stance which angered Britain’s political leadership, hampered trade between the two countries, and ushered in a policy of economic isolationism intended to foster Irish self-sufficiency. As described above, the Casserly (1943) text is significantly more
nationalist in its language and interpretation of events than any of the other textbooks evaluated in this study. By and large, the accounts of the events themselves presented in Casserly’s textbook are not shockingly different from the historical consensus, but issues of nationalist bias do arise in the interpretations the author has taken from them and the spin put on them. While it is not as strident or intemperate in its interpretations as those of the MacManus (1944) text written for the general readership, Casserly’s textbook remains the most biased of the textbooks evaluated in this study. Whether this is due to the period of national tension at the time of publication or a personal bias of the author is difficult to determine. It is most likely, however, that the author was influenced by the independence movement that had achieved the Free State two decades earlier. If the Hayden and Moonan (1922) textbook reflected the influence of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Casserly’s work was just as likely to have been influenced by the independence movement and the Civil War, reflecting the politics of the independence generation that was still the dominant force in Ireland’s politics at the time.

The Collins (1969) and Tierney and MacCurtain (1969) textbooks were both published as part of the same series of history textbooks; the former covering the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries and the latter covering Irish history since 1800. Both began with a common preface authored by the editors. The study of Irish history is described as a “special kind of experience associated with a memorable past that goes back into antiquity” (Collins, 1969, p. vii). The preface then goes on to say that in the study of Irish history there is “a responsibility of being impartial on both writer and reader” (Collins, 1969, p. vii). Both textbooks devote much less discussion to political issues and include many more illustrations and information on aspects of daily life in these times in history which is due to the inclusion of social history into the curriculum during the 1960s. What is notable is the inclusion of elements of some of the
subjects not presented in the previous textbook accounts, such as the discussion of religious
diversity in eighteenth century Ireland beyond the three major denominations and the importance
that the nonviolent non-importation associations played in the free trade disputes of the 1770s.
The nationalist bias in both these texts is considerably more muted. However, both texts differ in
their interpretations of the one event covered in both: the Act of Union with the Tierney and
MacCurtain (1969) textbook displaying a more nationalist tone in its account.

Irish society had undergone changes since the publication of Casserly’s textbook in 1943.
The isolationist economic policies of the 1940s and 1950s had been detrimental to Ireland’s
economy and changes in government in the early 1960s brought the Fianna Fail party to power.
Policies of modernization were implemented not only in the economic sector but touched
education as well (O’Reilly, 2012). Under pressure from teachers unions and professional and
disciplinary organizations, the history curriculum began to move away from an emphasis on
political and military history and include more social history (O’Callaghan, 2009). This is
reflected in the Collins (1969) and Tierney and MacCurtain (1969) texts, both of which include
extensive sections detailing aspects of daily life during the time periods they cover. The Collins
(1969) text spends much less space devoted to political issues such as the Volunteer movement
or the Act of Union when compared to the earlier textbooks. The Collins’ (1969) account is
largely balanced and matches up to the accounts of later historians. The Tierney and MacCurtain
(1969) text, included for their account of the Act of Union, does present a slightly more
nationalist interpretation of the event compared to Collins’ (1969) account. The fact that both of
these texts are part of the same textbook series and published the same year leads one to see this
discrepancy in these accounts of the Act of Union to be the result of differences in interpretation
by the authors, themselves. The subdued levels of nationalist bias present in the Collins (1969)
text are likely part of the emphasis on social history that had been introduced into the curriculum in the 1960s. The political changes that took place at this time, and the pressure by teachers’ organizations to reform the curriculum led to a history curriculum that did not focus as heavily on political and military history and did not conform to the traditional, nation-centered history taught in previous textbooks. This broader approach to history brings a broader construction of the nation.

The late 1960s through the late 1990s saw the violence of the Troubles of Northern Ireland. The Troubles had their origins in the divisions between the overwhelmingly Catholic Republicans, who sought to bring Northern Ireland into the Republic of Ireland, and the largely Protestant Unionists who wished to Northern Ireland to remain a part of the United Kingdom. The mainly religious divisions of nationalism were considered to be deeply rooted in Irish history and Kee’s 1995 book (originally published in 1980 as a companion volume to a television series on the history of Ireland) sought to explore the historic causes of the divide. The 1995 text by Kee used in this study is singular among the textbooks selected in this study: it is the only one not purposefully written as a school textbook but as a history written for the general readership. It is one of the recommended texts for the Senior Cycle history course and the only Senior Cycle text used in this study. Kee’s (1995) book is also unique among the other texts in that it is the only one to be written by a British author and published in Britain. One could logically suppose that the account given in Kee’s text would avoid bias from an Irish nationalist perspective. It could also invite questions regarding possible bias from the British perspective. The strident feelings on connected to this crisis on all sides of the Republican/Catholic and Unionist/Protestant divide, may have strongly influenced the narrative of the text. While the text was not specifically written for use in schools, its adoption as a school
text and the fact that it was not written by an Irish author make it an intriguing text to include in this analysis.

Kee (1995) includes a preface to the revised edition of the book is a statement of astonishment that the violence and destruction of the Troubles, which had been going on for nearly ten years at that time, had continued even longer without anything being resolved. The author states the purpose of the text as not to provide a complete and thorough account of Irish history, but to put the historical events that were at the root of the Troubles into perspective for the common reader “In the hope that the great problems that remain may at least seem more understandable, if not necessarily easier to resolve” (Kee, 1995, p. 9).

Kee’s (1995) accounts of the selected events is unique, not only for the reasons previously stated, but also in the sense that the primary purpose of the author has been to provide an historical understanding of the deep cultural nationalist feelings held by both Irish Catholics and Protestants in the more recent Troubles in Northern Ireland. The Penal Laws, the Volunteers, the Irish Parliament, the 1798 Rebellion, and the Act of Union are all described in terms of how they relate to the tensions of the Troubles at the time of writing. Kee’s text thoughtfully addresses the issues of nationalism in a manner that none of the previously examined textbooks have done. Although not providing as thorough accounts of the selected events as earlier textbooks, Kee’s examination of the events and their connection to modern incarnations of Irish nationalism provides an analysis of events not attempted by other authors. Kee’s (1995) text provides one of the most insightful accounts, providing deeper scrutiny of the events instead of a collection of facts. Perhaps as a result of not being an Irish text, there is no discernible Irish nationalist bias in this book. Nor is a pro-British or Protestant bias evident. Among the textbooks selected for this study, this text provides one of the most balanced accounts
of the four eighteenth century events together with a critical and nuanced view of Irish nationalism. One could surmise that, as a British author writing about an incredibly divisive and ongoing crisis situation, Kee (1995) would be conscientious about writing a book that would Kee’s (1995) approach, however, does seem to follow a teleological narrative that expressly links the emergence of the competing Catholic/Republican and Protestant/Unionist affiliations to the events of the past. This teleological narrative describes history leading to an end result, the result being the state of affairs surrounding the Troubles, but it is dissimilar to nationalist teleological narratives described by Comerford (2003), Duara (1995), and Hutchinson (1987) that portray the end result (the state) as being something positive and inevitable.

Ireland’s membership in the European Union and increased European integration in the 1990s stressed trade and cooperation between EU member countries. These years saw the emergence of Ireland’s economy as the “Celtic Tiger”. They also saw changes in the Irish school curriculum to keep up with alterations in pedagogy and the field of education (O’Reilly, 2012). The emphasis of a teacher’s role began to shift from teaching facts to helping students develop skills. The Junior Cycle history textbook authored by Brockie and Walsh (1997) differs from the previously evaluated textbooks. It is not, specifically, an Irish history textbook. Although events of Irish history occupy a prominent place, with 31 out of 76 chapters being devoted to Irish topics, the overall focus of the textbook is on European history. This likely reflects Ireland’s integration within the European Union as even Irish events are discussed in a broader European context. There is no preface or introduction as in earlier textbooks to communicate the authors’, editors’, or publisher’s purpose in creating the textbook. The first unit consisting of chapters one through three (pp. 1-10) introduces the subject of history, its connection to present events, and a description of how historians and archaeologists interpret...
documents and discoveries to paint a picture of the past. Readers are told that history can “help us to understand man of the problems which trouble us today. Wars throughout the world, starvation in the Third World and violence in Northern Ireland can all be tracked back to the past” (Brockie & Walsh, 1997, p. 3).

The shift away from an isolated Irish history in the textbook is evident. Discussion of some of the selected events is eliminated entirely. The Penal Laws, the independent Irish Parliament, and the Act of Union, get barely a mention. Of the events examined in this study, only the Rebellion of 1798 is given coverage. The Rebellion of 1798 is included in a unit with the Enlightenment and the American and French Revolutions, placing the United Irishmen and their attempted revolution in the context of an age of revolutions and new political thought. The account given by Brockie and Walsh largely fits with the general historic consensus with a couple exceptions; namely, the great importance given to Wolfe Tone reminiscent of Casserly (1943) and the interpretation of the killing of suspected rebels at Carnew which could reflect an isolated instance of nationalist bias, or it could simply be a factual oversight. All told, these instances are relatively minor and isolated. The Brockie and Walsh (1997) text does not display a pervasive nationalist bias in its accounts of the four events when these events are described at all.

Irish curriculum reforms continued throughout the 1990s, with a new curriculum adopted in 1999. This did not greatly alter the secondary history curriculum as can be seen in Lucey’s 2002 textbook; the most recently published of the textbooks used in the study. The structure of the Lucey text and the subjects covered do not differ significantly from the Brockie and Walsh (1997) textbook. The first sections of the first chapter include the same introductory material on the study of history. The only eighteenth century event covered in detail by the Lucey textbook,
like the Brockie and Walsh text, is the Rebellion of 1798. The discussion of skills used by historians and archaeologists is included, and events are presented in a larger European context. As in Brockie and Walsh’s (1997) textbook, the Penal Laws, the Volunteers, “Grattan’s Parliament”, and the Act of Union are only mentioned briefly or not at all. The Rebellion of 1798 is the only one of the selected events given any depth of coverage. The account given by Lucey (2002) does not differ from the general historic consensus. The Rebellion is presented in a balanced way, but the account of it is briefer and less thorough than in any of the previously published texts. It is indisputable that goals of Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen to create an Irish republic were inspirational to later Irish republicans. No connection is specifically drawn between Wolfe Tone’s methods and the IRA violence in Northern Ireland, but Irish Republicans have claimed a teleological continuity from the rebellion of the United Irishmen through nineteenth and early twentieth century resistance down to the present day. Much like the Brockie and Walsh (1997) textbook, the Lucey (2002) text does not show evidence of pervasive nationalist bias. The description of Wolfe Tone, however, showing him as a figure of great inspiration to later revolts against Britain, does feed into a teleological sense of struggle for Irish independence. This is the only notable and isolated example in the Lucey (2002) text that points toward a nationalist bias.

The Hayden and Moonan (1922) text gives relatively balanced accounts of the selected eighteenth century events, providing an exception to the hypothesis used by Janmaat (2006) that nationalist bias in history textbooks is most prominent early in the emergence of the state. The general trend proceeding from the Casserly (1943) text does seem to fit this hypothesis, however. Casserly’s text was shown to demonstrate the greatest and most pervasive degrees of bias in its accounts of the eighteenth century. Subsequently published textbooks generally showed more
even-handed treatments of events. Nearly all of the other textbooks (Collins, 1969; Tierney & MacCurtain, 1969; Brockie & Walsh, 1997; Lucey, 2002) displayed some discrepancies when compared to the current historic consensus or had some nationalist bias but these were generally isolated and did not reflect a pervasive nationalist tone. Only the Kee (1995) text provided an account seemingly free of nationalist bias, isolated or pervasive. This is notable, as it is the only evaluated text that was not written explicitly as a school textbook and it is the only one of the evaluated books that was written and published outside of Ireland.

Although this research was begun using a deductive approach, expecting the findings to reflect Janmaat’s (2006) hypothesis of nationalist bias, there were a few inductive findings of note besides the general absence of significant nationalist bias in the accounts. One of the notable findings was the consistent importance given to Theobald Wolfe Tone in accounts of the Society of United Irishmen and the 1798 Rebellion. Although historians (Bartlett, 1992; Carty, 1957; Curtain, 1994; Jackson, 1798; McBride, 2009; Reid, 2011) universally agree that Wolfe Tone was a figure of great significance, not only in his own day, but also as a source of inspiration to later Irish nationalists, his importance could reasonably be considered overblown by some of the textbooks. Much like his American contemporaries, the “founding fathers,” he is a figure that can easily be mythologized by a “great man” view of history and his death celebrated as martyrdom. Even in accounts like Hayden and Moonan’s (1922) that describe the full tragedy and atrocity of the Rebellion of 1798, Wolfe Tone is portrayed in a heroic light. In the accounts of Casserly (1943) and Brockie and Walsh (1997) Wolfe Tone is credited with being the founder and leader of the Society of United Irishmen, which is at odds with the other textbooks as well as the historical consensus that show an organization with major chapters in Belfast and Dublin with their own governing directories instead being under one single leader.
Wolfe Tone was indeed a figure of great importance in eighteenth century Irish history, and it is perhaps understandable that his life is highlighted in secondary school history textbooks much as George Washington or Thomas Jefferson would feature prominently in American textbooks.

One of the possible indications of nationalist bias expected in this study was the appropriation of eighteenth century events or figures by later generations of Irish nationalists to fit a teleological narrative of Irish history that saw independence from Great Britain as the ultimate outcome. The later nineteenth century Home Rule movement referenced “Grattan’s Parliament” advocating a return to parliamentary independence gained in 1782. Militant nationalists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw themselves as continuing the goals of Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen even though the Irish Free State and the later Republic with their strong ties to Catholicism bore little in common with the secular republic advocated in the 1790s (English, 2006; Hutchinson, 1987). These examples are reminiscent of Duara’s (1995) descriptions of instances of appropriation in the history of China where various political and cultural movements used interpretations of the past to provide a sense of legitimacy and continuity through the linking of historic events and figures to modern ideology. While Hutchinson (1987) and Comerford (2003) describe the use of appropriation by the Gaelic League and other cultural nationalist organizations, and O’Callaghan (2009) and O’Donoghue (1996) describe the Christian Brothers and other Catholic organizations’ furthering of a uniquely Catholic view of Irish history, this appropriation is not readily seen in the accounts of the eighteenth century. While some accounts (Hayden & Moonan, 1922; Collins, 1969) portrayed the gaining of an independent Irish Parliament in a positive light, the fact that the Parliament was still not representative of the majority Catholic population was never glossed over. The only
glaring instance of appropriation found in the evaluated textbooks was that of Casserly (1943) in claiming the broad-minded, but staunchly Protestant Dean of St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Jonathan Swift as “the first Sinn Feiner” (p. 60).

Another of the inductive findings that emerged in this research is the notable fact that by the 1990s, three of the four eighteenth century events, considered to be very notable in that century (McBride, 2009), had been dropped from the coverage of the Junior Cycle history curriculum. The two most recently published textbooks used in this study (Brockie & Walsh, 1997; Lucey, 2002) only devote significant attention to the Rebellion of 1798. The Rebellion of 1798 fits neatly with the study of the Enlightenment and the era of the American and French Revolutions, putting the Irish events in a global perspective. The Penal Laws, the Volunteer movement, “Grattan’s Parliament”, and the Act of Union are only mentioned very briefly in these texts if they are mentioned at all. Judging from the official school curricula and syllabi, students would only be exposed to these events if they were to pursue the optional Senior Cycle history, or if their instructors wish to supplement their course of study. This raises some questions. If a majority of students are not being taught about these events in their textbooks or at school, where are they getting information on these events? Are they getting any information of these events at all? Lack of formal instruction regarding events such as the Penal Laws may result in the perpetuation of popularly-held folk histories that include distorted accounts of these events. Students may develop their conceptions of these events rooted not in Plumb’s (2004) definition of “history,” but in the sense of the “past” or folk history and memory favored by some cultural nationalists described by Hutchinson (1987) and Comerford (2003).

These four events of eighteenth century Ireland are among the most important of their century and had far-reaching effects on the course of Irish history. This was an era that saw the
emergence of an early form of Irish national identity and exacerbated social, cultural, and economic divisions between Irish Catholics and Protestants. The Penal Laws, “Grattan’s Parliament”, the 1798 Rebellion, and the Act of Union are all events which could easily be distorted or appropriated by a nationalist reading of history. Janmaat’s (2006) analysis of textbooks’ (including many of the same books used in this study) accounts of the Great Famine did conform to the theory of diminishing levels of nationalist bias over time. So why are the textbook accounts of these events largely free of nationalist bias? There could be a number of reasons. The historical distance between these events and the publication of even the earliest textbook may have softened nationalist passions related to these events and allowed for a more balanced account. The Great Famine, by comparison, was more recent and even conceivably still within living memory of some people when the Hayden and Moonan (1922) text was published. The Famine, which resulted in many thousands of deaths and even an even greater number of emigrants, was a nationally traumatizing event beyond even the 1798 Rebellion (Janmaat, 2006). It is also possible that the selected eighteenth century Irish events, which included the emergence of a Protestant brand of Irish identity and the United Irishmen’s desires for a non-sectarian Irish Republic, were not controversial or antagonistic to the dominant values of Irish society following the establishment of the Irish Free State and therefore not subject to the distortion or appropriation common to nationalist narratives.

This study has shown that while some textbook accounts of the eighteenth century in Ireland display elements of nationalist bias, the accounts have largely been balanced, with only isolated instances of nationalist bias instead of a pervasive theme. Deviations from the historic consensus have been relatively minor. Even the event most liable to be shown in a nationalist light, the Rebellion of 1798, is not portrayed as one of the “glorious failures” in a struggle for
Irish independence. Instead it is shown for what it was; a tragic and brutal episode of violence that further inflamed sectarian divisions and whose ramifications have been felt into the modern era. Perhaps the fact that these events took place in a distant past, outside the living memory of the authors of even the earliest textbook evaluated, have allowed for more measured and balanced accounts of the events. An examination of textbook accounts of more comparatively recent events such as the Great Famine, the Easter Rising of 1916, or the Irish Civil War, may give different results than looking at the events of the eighteenth century. Whether this would be the case or not, it is beyond the scope of the current study.

Irish textbook accounts of eighteenth century events, while not entirely perfect or wholly satisfactory, have been found to be generally even-handed. While instances of nationalist bias have been found in some cases, it has been shown to have decreased since the 1940s. Textbook coverage of the eighteenth century has also decreased in later years. Curriculum changes in the 1960s began a process that deemphasized political and military history and began the inclusion of more social history. During a period of increased European integration and globalization in the 1990s, the Irish history curriculum began to broaden its coverage and placing Irish history within a European and global context. It has often been the part of curriculum specialists and textbook authors to emphasize certain events and cut down the coverage of others when deciding what a textbook should cover. As a result, the history of eighteenth century Ireland, wherein a true sense of Irish national identity first began to develop, has been cut back considerably in Irish textbooks.
REFERENCES


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