



To What Purpose? The Ends and Means of History Education in the Modern World

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INTRODUCTION

A music industry publication recently conducted a study on American's music listening habits and found that the average person stops keeping up with new music at the age of 33.¹ Even if the medium one uses to listen to music is on the cutting edge of technology, the playlists stored on that device are likely an aging musical accompaniment of that person's life in the years leading up to age 33. We found this study compelling because, at least for us, it is painfully true—even if one of us is not yet 33 years old. There were no definitive or generalizable findings from the study, it was a music industry publication study after all, but one might reasonably assume that our musical tastes take shape in our formative years because those are the years that we long for understanding of who we are and what we become. We are developing into who we will mostly become for the rest of our lives. After age 33, we may listen to music from our youth because that is what we are comfortable with, for nostalgic

¹Ajay Kalia, "Music Was Better Back Then": When Do We Stop Keeping Up with Popular Music?" *Skynet and Ebert*. December 30, 2015. <https://skynetandebert.com/2015/04/22/music-was-better-back-then-when-do-we-stop-keeping-up-with-popular-music/>

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reasons, or perhaps because the soundtrack for adulthood is not nearly as much fun. Music has changed considerably over the past few decades, with some genres and eras holding up better than others to the test of time, yet it would appear that the music we are exposed to during our formative years becomes entrenched as our preference.

When reading about this study, some questions pertinent to this chapter arose. First, how have various approaches to history education addressed the purpose for historical study over time? Secondly, how do these approaches stand the test of time when viewed by the harsh light cast by the state of our modern existence? Finally, what might the future hold? As three generations of scholars our formative years of development span nearly 40 years in the field, and while we share numerous similarities between our formative experiences, we also recognize the uniqueness that our individual stories hold. This affords us the opportunity to consider how the teaching and learning of history has evolved over time and what we need to consider if we want to stay abreast of future developments. Our academic lineage began in the 1980s with Author 3's entry into the field, continued into the early to mid-2000s with Author 1's time studying under Author 3, and currently carries on with Author 2 nearing completion of his doctoral studies in the early 2020s under Author 1. History education changed considerably over this span of time, so we start by identifying the dominant approaches that shaped our formative experiences.

FORTY YEARS AND FOUR ORIENTATIONS TOWARD HISTORY EDUCATION

In *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History*, Peter Seixas outlines three primary orientations toward teaching history that are employed in history education.² The first, history as collective memory, seeks to provide an overarching narrative for the past that serves to “define who we are in the present, our relations with others, relations in civil society – nation and state, right and wrong, good and bad – and broad parameters for action in the future.”³ The second orientation takes a disciplinary approach to teaching history by presenting multiple versions of the past and teaching students to determine which version is superior based upon evaluation utilizing disciplinary tools. The third orientation is a postmodern approach to history that questions the relationship between historical knowledge and power and views historical sources with a critical eye toward cultural convention and language. In addition to the three orientations outlined by Seixas, we have added a fourth orientation, the socio-cultural approach, which focuses on social practice and how people operate in

²Peter Seixas, “Schweigen! die Kinder! Or, Does Postmodern History Have a Place in the Schools?” In P. N. Stearns, P. Seixas, and S. Wineburg (Eds.), *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History*. 19–37. New York: NYU Press, 2000.

³Ibid.

real-life settings.⁴ Each of these orientations toward history holds at least some power over the history learner and each can tell us a great deal about what purpose is to be found in learning about the past. Taken together, they also represent the evolution of orientations to history education across the development of three generations of history education scholars. Author 3 completed his doctoral studies as history education shifted from developmental to cognitive theories of learning. Thus, he witnessed firsthand the emergence of the disciplinary orientation to history education and its emphasis on thinking like a historian. Author 1 entered the field as sociocultural history took root and pressed the importance of experience in context. Finally, Author 2 is completing his studies as postmodern/critical history critiques power dynamics and the status quo. Notably absent from this list is history as collective memory, which has in many ways reigned supreme over the past 40 years despite the challenges posed by newer orientations to the field. As such, we have all been shaped by history as collective memory—a claim that should become clear as we unpack each of these orientations further. Having identified the orientations toward historical study that will serve as the focal point of our examination, we turn now to establishing the purpose for historical study as a common basis for comparison.

WHY LEARN HISTORY? PURPOSE FOR LEARNING ABOUT THE PAST

When the philosopher George Santayana wrote in *Life of Reason*, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it,”⁵ he gave life to what would eventually become one of the most famous, overused, and misunderstood quotations regarding history, its importance, and its purpose. The notion that history teaches us lessons is a common one and it seems eminently reasonable. What better reason for studying history if not to avoid the mistakes of the past? Of course, not all agree with this assumption. One such dissenter was Henry Ford, who unabashedly argued for an orientation toward the present and future when he famously said, “History is more or less bunk.” What is far less known, if known at all, about Ford’s comment is what he said next. He followed this abrupt dismissal of history by adding, “What difference does it make how many times the Ancient Greeks flew their kites?”⁶

Henry Ford was almost certainly unaware that he was posing a glib example of a question that would come to be hotly debated. Disagreements over “what” history students should learn continue in the twenty-first century at a time when history has found itself reeling on its back foot as K-12 and undergraduate education have become increasingly focused on notions of “career readiness”

⁴Keith Barton and Linda Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004.

⁵George Santayana, *The Life of Reason*. New York: Collier, 1962.

⁶N.A. “History Is Bunk Says Henry Ford.” *New York Times*. October 29, 1921.

and the production of human capital. One way to approach this marginalization of history is to make a case for its contributions to our “salable” skillset, and while appropriate given the current neoliberal context of education, this is hardly history’s strongest argument.⁷

Writing on the American Historical Association (AHA) website, Peter Stearns answers the question that historians often face when queried about the usefulness of history.

Why study history? The answer is because we virtually must, to gain access to the laboratory of human experience. When we study it reasonably well, and so acquire some usable habits of mind, as well as some basic data about the forces that affect our own lives, we emerge with relevant skills and an enhanced capacity for informed citizenship, critical thinking, and simple awareness.⁸

Informed citizenship is a common refrain in rationales for historical study and Retz⁹ notes that history education in North America places considerably more emphasis on teaching about democracy than is typically afforded in other countries. There are a number of other reasons why engaging in historical study is important; however, since history falls within the domain of the social studies, which in turn serves as the laboratory for preparing future citizens in K-12 schools, we will rely on informed citizenship as our basis of comparison between orientations to history education.

Westheimer and Kahne describe three types of citizens and their roles in a democratic society.¹⁰ The first, the *personally responsible citizen* is honest, law-abiding, and responsible, though not necessarily outwardly active in public life. The *participatory citizen* takes an active role in society, solving social problems and improving society through active participation within established systems and community structures. The *justice-oriented citizen* also solves social problems and improves society, but takes a different approach that questions, debates, and challenges established systems and structures that reproduce patterns of injustice over time. The difference between these types of citizens is essentially a matter of means and ends, “if participatory citizens are organizing the food drive and personally responsible citizens are donating food, justice-oriented citizens are asking why people are hungry and acting on what they discover.”¹¹ Simply promoting personally responsible citizenship does not guarantee, and in fact may even hinder, the development of participatory or justice-oriented citizenship. Therefore, if fostering active and/or justice-oriented

⁷Peter Stearns, “Why Study History?” | *Historians.org*. 2018. <https://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/why-study-history/>

⁸Peter Stearns, “Why Study History?” | *Historians.org*. 2018. <https://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/why-study-history/>

⁹Tyson Retz, *Empathy in History*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2018.

¹⁰Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne, “What Kind of Citizen? The Politics of Educating for Democracy.” *American Educational Research Journal* 41, no. 2 (January 2004): 237–69.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 242.

participation in democratic life is an explicit goal for social studies educators, then these efforts must be explicitly outlined in the curriculum.¹² By extension, the content and method of historical study must also align with intended citizenship outcomes if we wish to reasonably expect informed citizenship to manifest itself in civic life.

History as Collective Memory

In the late 1980s, the Bradley Commission set about to report on the state of history in America's schools and to make recommendations for supporting history education. The primary theme behind their message was the importance of history education to maintaining America's democratic heritage. The Commission concluded that "If Americans are to preserve that vision and bring it to daily practice, it is imperative that all citizens understand how it was shaped in the past, what events and forces either helped or obstructed it, and how it has evolved down to the circumstances and political discourse of our time."¹³ For those espousing a collective memory approach to historical study, "...democratic citizenship and effective participation in the determination of public policy require citizens to share a collective memory, organized into historical knowledge and belief."¹⁴ History as collective memory holds a special attraction for citizenship education. A common narrative of the past can act as the glue that holds a diverse nation's people together in a common quest for liberty guided by a democratic process that relies on informed citizens to steer the ship. Collective memory insinuates a sense of shared ownership for a nation's history, the learning of which takes on unique importance for those who believe that knowing the history of America's common political vision is essential to liberty, equality, and justice.¹⁵

Featured elements of the collective national narrative include progress toward achieving national goals¹⁶; emphasis on ethnic success stories while downplaying ethnic struggles and conflicts¹⁷; current history of immigrant groups primarily within context of their lives in the United States, virtually devoid of reference to immigrants' experiences in their birth nation¹⁸; and

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Bradley Commission on History in Schools. *Building a History Curriculum: Guidelines for Teaching History in Schools*. Washington, DC: 1988. 2.

¹⁴ William McNeil, "How History Helps Us to Understand Current Affairs." In P. Gagnon (Ed.), *Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education*. 104–137. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1989.

¹⁵ Bradley Commission (1989, 2).

¹⁶ Stuart J. Foster, "Whose history? Portrayal of immigrant groups in U.S. history textbooks, 1800–Present." In *What Shall We Tell the Children? International Perspectives on School History Textbooks* 155–178. Greenwich, CT: Information Age, 2006.

¹⁷ Bruce VanSledright, "Narratives of nation-state, historical knowledge, and school history education." *Review of Research in Education*, 32, no. 1 (2008), 109–146.

¹⁸ Michael Olneck, Americanization and the Education of Immigrants, 1900–1925: An Analysis of Symbolic Action. *American Journal of Education*, 92 (1989): 398–423.

national development and a quest for freedom.¹⁹ Students learn “highly selective, sentimental, sanitized versions of American history [that represents] a severely simplified vision of how we came to the society we are now,”²⁰ and leave U.S. history courses knowing about the experiences of Americans through narrative accounts, but not necessarily believing what they have been told.²¹

Standards that promote a specific body of historical knowledge are important for codifying history as collective memory. The state of Alabama refers to the notion of a common political past as the “unique American heritage of liberty” in the front matter of its standards for history.²² The history standards for the state of North Carolina assert that,

Traditionally, the centerpiece of social studies, particularly at the middle and high school levels, has been history. This is as it should be because an understanding of our history is critical to being an informed and active citizen of the United States. Students must be aware of our past and its impact on our present. At the same time, however, there is a difference between learning history and learning FROM history. This distinction was made clear by George Santayana in his now famous quote that “those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” Learning from history requires more than the memorization of people, places, dates, and events. It requires that students are able to explain the causal connections between and among events, use historical knowledge to resolve contemporary problems, analyze contemporary issues in terms of historical knowledge, and understand that our heroes were people too. In the vernacular, they had “feet of clay.”²³

Biblical reference aside, this excerpt from the front matter of the North Carolina history plays upon the familiar theme of history serving citizenship, or the past serving the present for the purpose of a better future. The use of the first-person plural pronoun “our” in reference to the envisioned collective history students are to learn assumes shared ownership and responsibility for historical experiences. The first-person plural pronoun is repeated in reference to “our historical heroes,” a phrase that is immediately followed by heavenly forgiveness for the mistakes one will inevitably find historical heroes making if one looks hard enough. Studying historical heroes is a hallmark of history as

¹⁹ James Wertsch and Kevin O’Connor, Multi-Voicedness in Historical Representation: American College Students’ Accounts of the Origin of the US. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 4, no. 4 (1991) 295–310.

²⁰ Michael Kammen, “History Is Our Heritage: The Past in Contemporary American Culture.” In P. Gagnon (Ed.), *Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education*. 138–156. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1989, 139.

²¹ James Wertsch, “Is It Possible to Teach Beliefs, as Well as Knowledge About History?” In *Cognitive and Instructional Processes in History and the Social Sciences*. 38–50. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2000.

²² Alabama State Department of Education. “2010 Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies.” Accessed February 14, 2019. <https://www.alsde.edu/sec/sct/COS/2010%20Alabama%20Social%20Studies%20Course%20of%20Study.pdf/>.

²³ North Carolina, emphasis added.

collective memory, the theory being that historical heroes “convey a sense of civic responsibility by graphic portrayals of virtue, courage, and wisdom – and their opposites.”²⁴

The collective memory orientation is also attractive to educators who believe that history education should convince students of the glories found in their shared national past.²⁵ Emphasis is placed upon the exceptional rather than the common. Great political leaders and ideas take precedence over social issues or stories of the individual. Collective memory is also politically popular with legislative bodies that must approve state history standards, because, “legislators like to think they might buy loyalty and conscientious work habits with the money they pay for history teaching.”²⁶ It appears to be at least somewhat effective in that regard since students typically emphasize “prominent events,” “official history,” or “grand narratives” of U.S. history when asked to identify historical events they consider to be significant.²⁷

Viewing history as a collective body of knowledge that is a precondition for democratic citizen reveals the juxtaposition between the legion of “everyday” students and the great figures whose accomplishments they read about. It also paints a clear portrait of personally responsible citizen as the ideal form of civic participation.²⁸ Historical heroes, the vast majority of which resemble the social majority, are held up to esteem while the documents or movements they were responsible for serve as the bedrock upon which democratic principles are anchored and built out. It is easy to see why such an approach to learning history would be attractive to many, especially those in power. Despite the fact that the collective memory orientation to history education is the oldest of the orientations we cover here, it persists in many ways undisturbed in the classroom, due in part to its political draw and its deference to national heritage.

Disciplinary History

Early research into historical thinking conducted in the 1970s, examined historical thinking from a developmental perspective concluding that historical thinking occurred only after students reached Jean Piaget’s formal operational stage of development, suggesting that it was only appropriate for students of high school age.²⁹ Through the 1980s and 1990s, the study of historical thinking shifted as researchers began to study historical thinking using a constructivist

²⁴ Bradley Commission (1989, 5–6).

²⁵ Peter Stearns, 1996. “A cease-fire for history?” *The History Teacher*, 30 (1), 71.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Elizabeth A. Yeager, Stuart J. Foster, and Jennifer Greer, 2002. “How Eighth Graders in England and the United States View Historical Significance.” *The Elementary School Journal*. 103 (2). 213.

²⁸ Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne, “What Kind of Citizen? The Politics of Educating for Democracy.” *American Educational Research Journal* 41, no. 2 (January 2004): 237–69.

²⁹ Roy Hallam, Attempting to Improve Logical Thinking in School History. *Research in Education*, 21 (1979): 1–23.

rather than developmental approach.³⁰ The work of Sam Wineburg, a psychologist and historian, in the early 1990s led many researchers to consider the unique cognitive processes of learning history. The construct of historical thinking was now considered to be an active process of knowledge construction about the past as opposed to the ability to recall historical facts. This shift in research focus challenged the findings of the Piagetian developmental studies by showing that students in the elementary grades were indeed capable of historical thinking at a rudimentary level.³¹ The disciplinary orientation gathered considerably more momentum after the publication of Wineburg's *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts* in 2001. Wineburg's research, as well as others within the disciplinary history orientation, inspired much of the research conducted by Author 3 in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Of course, the disciplinary history orientation was not a uniquely American approach. In the United Kingdom, the Schools History Project sought to transform students from receptacles of historical fact into processors of historical evidence with an "emphasis on the logical, rational elements in historical study."³² The changes meant: (1) greater focus on interpretation, which lent importance to the individual's role in evaluating history³³; (2) students were to think like historians, and the exceptionality of history as a way of knowing was stressed³⁴; (3) history was increasingly viewed as explanatory in nature with an emphasis on the creation of historical analogies as frames of reference that depended upon the individual's interpretation³⁵; (4) students were expected to apply deductive logic to the historical evidence they studied³⁶; (5) knowing "how" history happened rather than just knowing the events that occurred elevated the roles of causation and use of evidence by students³⁷; and (6) emphasis on causation translated to deeper examination and interpretation of the decisions made by historical figures.³⁸

Those who espouse the disciplinary history orientation generally have a relatively low opinion of the collective memory orientation to history. Seixas

³⁰Linda S. Levstik and Christine C. Pappas, "Exploring the Development of Historical Understanding." *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 21, no. 1 (1987): 1–15.

³¹Nancy Dulberg, "The Theory Behind How Students Learn: Applying Developmental Theory to Research on Children's Historical Thinking." *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 33, no. 4 (2005) 508–531.

³²Barton and Levstik, 70.

³³Peter Lee, "Why Learn History?" In *Learning History*, London, UK: Heinemann, 1984: 1–19.

³⁴Martin Booth, "Skills, Concepts and Attitudes: The Development of Adolescent Children's Historical Thinking." *History and Theory*, 22 (1983) 101–117.

³⁵Lee (1984).

³⁶Denis Shemilt, "Beauty and the Philosopher: Empathy in History and Classroom." In *Learning History*, London, UK: Heinemann, 1984: 39–84.

³⁷Peter Rogers, "Why Teach History?" In *Learning History*, London, UK: Heinemann, 1984: 21–39.

³⁸Tony Boddington, The Schools Council History 13–16 project. *The History and Social Science Teacher*, 19, no. 3 (1984): 129–137.

dismisses it outright, calling it “consistent with an authoritarian political culture” preferring the disciplinary orientation because its epistemological focus between knower and known aligns with the goals for educating citizens in a liberal democracy.³⁹ Furthermore, collective memory’s promotion of patriotism through celebration of historical achievement rings hollow for disciplinary history educators who raise the likelihood of failure since, “...nothing can serve patriotism worse than suppressing dark chapters of our past, smoothing over clearly documentable examples of shameful behavior in public places high and low...If events like these are seen as mere footnotes to history, America’s youth are unlikely to swallow the story, especially when they see around them systemic problems that eat at the national fabric.”⁴⁰ Yet, VanSledright characterizes K-16 history learners as “naïve realists” who accept written historical accounts as eminently believable, which poses quite a conundrum in this arena of democratic process.⁴¹ Historical knowledge is crucial to the deliberative process, and without such knowledge as well as the ability to wield it as a shield against nefarious attempts to mislead, the “only alternatives are outraged rejection or gullible acceptance.”⁴²

The disciplinary orientation to history education addresses this concern by developing students’ historical thinking through the use of disciplinary tools such as invoking inquiry, using key habits of the discipline, and accessing multiple texts.⁴³ Historical thinking emphasizes the epistemological facets of interpretation, and the second-order historical concepts including, “historical significance, change over time, progress and decline, causation, evidence, and colligatory concepts that frame historical narratives.”⁴⁴

To assist in translating historical thinking to classroom instruction, Seixas and Morton unpack modern historical thinking into interdependent concepts: (1) establishing historical significance; (2) using primary source evidence; (3) examining continuity and change; (4) analyzing cause and consequence; (5) taking historical perspectives; and (6) attempting to understand the ethical dimension of history.⁴⁵ Through these concepts, students can interpret history for themselves and communicate their interpretations to others. Communicating conclusions is a form of disciplinary literacy, which in history is largely accomplished through the creation of narrative or argumentation.⁴⁶ Argumentation,

³⁹ Seixas (2000, 24).

⁴⁰ Gary Nash, Charlotte Crabtree, and Ross Dunn, *History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2000, 16.

⁴¹ Bruce VanSledright, *The Challenge of Rethinking History Education: On Practices, Theories, and Policy*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

⁴² Rogers (1987, 21).

⁴³ Michael Manderino and Corrine Wickens, “Addressing Disciplinary Literacy in the CCSS.” *Illinois Reading Council Journal*, 42, no. 2 (2014): 28–39.

⁴⁴ VanSledright (2011, 68).

⁴⁵ Peter Seixas and Tom Morton, *The Big 6: Historical Thinking Concepts*. Toronto, ON, Canada: Nelson, 2012.

⁴⁶ Moje, Elizabeth. “Foregrounding the Disciplines in Secondary Literacy Teaching and Learning: A Call for Change.” *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*. 52 (2008): 96–107.

in turn, is a key component of civic deliberation, especially as it is conceived of in most frameworks for citizen education.

Through the use of historical thinking skills and modes of thought, the disciplinary orientation is set to, “extend the range of situations one is equipped to recognize, and the range of possibilities one is prepared to meet.”⁴⁷ Grasping our place in the range of possibilities is enhanced by the “personal moorings, both secular and religious”⁴⁸ that history helps us establish based upon our unique pasts and perspectives. We find that history provides perspective beyond our contemporary concerns, establishing and grounding us in a unique time and place in the human story.⁴⁹ Perhaps most importantly, as our understanding of history’s unique temporal nature grows in depth and nuance, we come to appreciate the differences as much as the similarities. We come to appreciate how history that “reveals the utter differentness and discontinuity of the past tends to undermine that crude instrumental and presentist use of the past that we Americans have been prone to.”⁵⁰ Our transformation into “historically developed beings” empowers us as agents of the present and future because such beings are “not something easily manipulated or transformed.”⁵¹ In a modern world where students are bombarded by instantly available information from sources that are often quite dubious, the ability to judge sources, corroborate, and contextualize information is a powerful weapon against propaganda masquerading as news.

While fostering historical thinking in students focuses on historical process over historical content, there are frequent references to historical thinking in the front matter of state history standards. South Carolina, for example, describes the “unique, discipline-specific practices” of history:

Historical thinking requires understanding evaluating continuity and change over time...developing arguments about the past. It involves locating and assessing historical sources of many different types to understand the contexts of given historical eras and the perspectives of different individuals and groups within geographic units that range from the local to the global...[with the] goal of developing credible explanations of historical events and developments based on reasoned interpretation of evidence.⁵²

The Colorado history standards suggest that history “inspires by exposing students to the wonders and beauty of the past. The historical perspective prepares

⁴⁷ Lee (1984, 2).

⁴⁸ Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn, *History on Trial*, 9.

⁴⁹ Bradley Commission (1989).

⁵⁰ Nash et al. (2000, 14).

⁵¹ Gordon Wood, *The Purpose of the Past: Reflections on the Uses of History*. New York: Penguin Books. 2009: 11–12.

⁵² South Carolina Department of Education. “South Carolina Social Studies College-and-Career Ready Standards.” Accessed February 14, 2019. <https://ed.sc.gov/instruction/standards-learning/social-studies/standards/south-carolina-social-studies-college-and-career-ready-standards/>

for an ever-changing future by helping to understand changes in the past.”⁵³ Standing at the junction between past and future, denizens of the present are most likely more concerned about what is before them than what lies behind them. However, as the Colorado standards suggest, the manner in which we see the future is inevitably influenced by how we came to arrive at the present, so situating ourselves within history is important. In that sense, history serves as an organized body of knowledge to explain the world around us and our place in it.⁵⁴ As we situate ourselves in the past, present, and future, we are exposed to historical causation—the multifaceted chain of causes and effects that bring about evolution in the world around us. We come to understand historical concepts within the context of multiple historical events, revealing the temporal nature of history⁵⁵ and the attendant assumption that all historical events are, at least in some part, unique to their specific time and place.⁵⁶

In terms of citizenship, the disciplinary history orientation is somewhat agnostic outside of its rejection of the sanitized version of the past portrayed via collective memory. Disciplinary history privileges process and product over content, which may appeal to those who recognize that controversial content can be a flashpoint in the public and political sphere. It puts some of the tools needed for solving society’s problems in the hands of students but lacks a positional stance that would guide students in the direction of problems to solve. As such, it leaves many history educators with the sense that historical study should have an explicit civic purpose for the historical knowledge generated through inquiry in the classroom. The last two orientations discussed here address this concern in related but different ways.

Sociocultural History

The sociocultural orientation toward history education is a pluralist and humanist approach to democratic education that promotes reasoned judgment, develops powers of critical appraisal, promotes an expanded view of humanity, and, most importantly, includes deliberation over the common good.⁵⁷ The sociocultural orientation assumes that all human activity is situated in history and culture; therefore, history education should concentrate on what people do in the concrete settings of society beyond the concepts or procedural knowledge of the discipline. Therefore, history need not consist of a grand

⁵³ Colorado Department of Education. “Social Studies.” Accessed February 14, 2019.

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cosocialstudies/>

⁵⁴ Kenneth Nordgren, “How to Do Things With History: Use of History as a Link Between Historical Consciousness and Historical Culture.” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 44, no. 4 (2016): 479–504.

⁵⁵ Lee (1984).

⁵⁶ David Lowenthal, “Dilemmas and Delights of Learning History.” In *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspective*. New York: New York University Press. 2000. 63–82.

⁵⁷ Barton and Levstik (2004).

narrative of overarching explanation. Each individual starts with their own diverse social history, which is interpreted through daily experiences in life, family, stories, pictures, and artifacts.⁵⁸ Our histories may be similar to the histories of others with which we have common ties, but even within social, national, cultural, racial, and ethnic groups, humans are still fundamentally individuals who each retain their own personal histories.

Barton and Levstik's *Teaching History for the Common Good* is a seminal text for sociocultural history educators. In fact, it was the book that first inspired Author 1's early research agenda, as well as the text that he had permanently added to the tenured faculty collection at his university upon his successful tenure bid. In it, Barton and Levstik detail the manner by which students are expected to analyze and respond morally to the past—two actions that are important to the sociocultural orientation.⁵⁹ When analyzing history, students deconstruct multiple accounts while looking for patterns as well as causes and their attendant consequences. Much like the disciplinary orientation, the historical investigator embodies the instrument of analysis. However, the sociocultural orientation also considers how history has played out with respect to the common good. Sociocultural historical significance is determined as much by the realities of the past that have been repressed in the historical record as the events that have been reported, codified, and elucidated.⁶⁰ Revealing the repressed historical record opens new doors to analysis and opportunities to respond morally. Moral responses including remembrance, admiration, and condemnation are invoked by judgments about people and events from the past with one eye kept on the humanist and pluralist notion of common good. Students should be expected to come to grips with difficult issues and turn them into democratic actions, not merely ideals or beliefs.⁶¹ The belief that pro-social civic actions are the *real* outcomes that history educators seek to achieve is no small difference. If one is teaching history for the purpose of simply compiling historical knowledge for use in an undetermined future democratic choice, then questions about preferred historical knowledge and the learner's relationship with that knowledge are different than if one purposefully seeks to use knowledge to actually engender democratic actions in response to a specific issue or question.

As such, while the sociocultural orientation shares similar ideas regarding sourcing, inquiry, and analysis with the disciplinary orientation, it cannot afford a similar approach to eschewing expectations for historical content. While the disciplinary orientation assumes that all historical evidence is within the realm of consideration, the sociocultural orientation recognizes that some histories have been unquestionably repressed over time and that some historical

⁵⁸ Linda S. Levstik and Keith C. Barton, *Doing History: Investigating with Children in Elementary and Middle Schools*. 2nd ed. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001.

⁵⁹ Barton and Levstik (2004).

⁶⁰ Levstik (2001).

⁶¹ Kathy Bickmore, "Social Justice and the Social Studies." In *Handbook of Research in Social Studies Education*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2008. 155–171.

evidence, events, and individuals need to be drawn out of collective memory's long shadow.

The publication of the National History Standards (NHS) developed by the National Center for History in the Schools in 1996 brought historical thinking and content together into a single set of voluntary national standards.

From a balanced and inclusive world history student may gain an appreciation both of the world's many peoples and of their shared humanity and common problems. Students may also acquire the habit of seeing matters through others' eyes and come to realize that they can better understand themselves as they study others, as well as the other way around. Historical understanding based on such comparative studies in world history does not require approval or forgiveness for the tragedies either of one's own society or of others; nor does it negate the importance of critically examining alternative value systems and their effects in supporting or denying the basic human rights and aspirations of all their peoples.⁶²

The NHS included separate disciplinary standards for historical thinking including (1) Chronological Thinking, (2) Historical Comprehension, (3) Historical Analysis and Interpretation, (4) Historical Research Capabilities, and (5) Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making.

This list of specific skills was a lot less controversial than the debate sparked by the historical content contained within the standards, which was described as "influenced by contemporary socio-cultural historical scholarship that challenged traditional conceptions of the nation's history."⁶³ In a response from the collective memory camp, Cheney wrote that the proposed standards represented "The end of history" since, among other concerns, "not a single one of the 31 standards mentions the Constitution."⁶⁴ The controversy illustrated the tension between an approach to history education where students learn a "highly selective, sentimental, sanitized versions of American history [that represents] a severely simplified vision of how we came to the society we are now,"⁶⁵ and one that "reveals the blemishes, leaves rough edges intact, and eschews cosmetics."⁶⁶ The U.S. Senate passed a resolution denouncing the National History Standards with a vote of 99-1, with the lone holdout objecting based on the belief that the resolution did not go far enough in its denouncement of the standards.

Despite the NHS's failure to gain traction, its disciplinary and sociocultural influences can be found in National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

⁶² National History Standards.

⁶³ Linda Symcox and Arie Wilschut, *National History Standards: The Problem of the Canon and the Future of Teaching History*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2002, 3.

⁶⁴ Lynne Cheney, "The End of History." *Wall Street Journal*. October 20, 1994. http://www.trinityhistory.org/AmH/Cheney_WST.pdf/.

⁶⁵ Michael Kammen, "History Is Our heritage: The Past in Contemporary American Culture." In *Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1989. 138-156.

⁶⁶ VanSledright (2008, 121).

materials such as the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Standards.⁶⁷ By extension, some states have included disciplinary and sociocultural ideas in the front matter of their history standards. Michigan, for example, describes civic efficacy as, “the readiness and willingness to assume responsibilities of citizenship—knowing how, when, and where to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good in a pluralistic, democratic society.”⁶⁸

Ostensibly, students learning history under the guidance of such standards would be prepared to be participatory or even justice-oriented citizens based upon the emphasis of pluralism, democracy, and the public good. However, in many ways the sociocultural struggle for history’s pluralistic purpose is undermined by the entrenched hold that collective memory has on politicians, standards, textbooks, curricula, and even teachers. The sociocultural orientation avoids the use of first-person plural pronouns such as “our society,” “our country,” or “we fought,” yet these phrases are commonly used by high school students and teachers and teachers of all experience levels, not just the beginning or veteran teacher.⁶⁹

These habits may be ingrained over decades of collective historical memory and essentializing the past into an easily understood and commonly told tale in which “we” are presumably aligned with great American figures, which may provide some modicum of comfort. However, as Levstik warns, “Ignoring the complexity of the American experience may serve to maintain existing economic and social structures, but it certainly confuses students and teachers about a good deal of American history.”⁷⁰ It is the complex relationship between student and historical actors that continues to intrigue Author 1 and inspire his research to this day.

Postmodern/Critical History

One reason the preparation of future citizens sounds like a struggle to control the hearts and minds of history students is the crucial role that power dynamics play in the vision of citizenship and the historical narratives surrounding it.⁷¹ Power dynamics are imbalanced in many respects within democratic societies, heavily favoring those with the most resources or access to others in power.

⁶⁷National Council for the Social Studies. *The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History*. Silver Spring, MD: National Council for the Social Studies, 2013.

⁶⁸Michigan Department of Education. “Draft: Michigan K-12 Standards Social Studies.” Accessed February 14, 2019. https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/SS_Cut_Cap_Final_622356_7.pdf/

⁶⁹Linda S. Levstik, “Articulating the Silences: Teachers’ and Adolescents’ Conceptions of Historical Significance.” In *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History*. New York: New York University Press, 2001. 301.

⁷⁰Linda S. Levstik, “Articulating the Silences: Teachers’ and Adolescents’ Conceptions of Historical Significance.” In *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History*. New York: New York University Press, 2001. 284–305.

⁷¹Barton and Levstik (2004).

The critical orientation to history education seeks to disrupt these power imbalances and generate understanding by questioning modern discourses and practices while also turning them back to the conditions they were established under.⁷² Critical history education concerns itself with questioning why specific historical accounts exist, who actually created them, and what purposes they serve when we interpret them. As such, "...a critical approach is not simply interested in studying the past itself and for itself. Rather...it is interested in how and why particular pasts are constructed, legitimated, and disseminated by various discursive communities."⁷³ As an emerging scholar in the era of populism, tampered elections, and autocratic politicians, Author 2 is becoming steeped in critical civic and history education orientation as a way to educate others to disrupt and deconstruct power imbalances in society.

Critical history educators recognize that the history selected for use in the classroom, as well as the manner by which students engage with it, inevitably conveys powerful messages about the meaning they should make of the world and their place in it.⁷⁴ In that sense, our relationship with history is mutually reactive because our identities can influence the degree of significance or treatment we ascribe to a given event, agent, or era from the past. Segall contends that:

...history education is first and foremost about the production of identity and subjectivity. It positions and directs students as knowers and actors, determining the degree to which they view themselves as objects of history or as its subjects; whether they learn to accept existing societal structures, arrangements, and meanings as given, or break with the obvious and work toward what might be.⁷⁵

Not surprisingly, students are more likely to find history meaningful when they are given an opportunity to study people who were like them at times in which they were prominent agents in history.⁷⁶ It seems reasonable to imagine oneself or show interest in others like us in history, while at the same time using history to understand our own role in humankind's long story.⁷⁷

The critical history education orientation has its fair share of detractors. Some collective memory advocates view postmodern history's "bottom-up" interpretive ladder as historically insignificant favoring a top-down view of history instead. Diggins argues that this top-down view of the past is how history is made because, "If blacks, women, farmers, and laborers had to wait to be liberated 'from the bottom up,' they would still be waiting for history to make

⁷² Avner Segall, "What's the Purpose of Teaching a Discipline Anyway? The Case of History." In *Social Studies the Next Generation: Re-searching in the Postmodern*. New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2006. 1125–40.

⁷³ Ibid., 138.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 125.

⁷⁶ Barton (2009).

⁷⁷ Nash et al. (2000, 8).

its move.”⁷⁸ The history standards for the states of Florida and California illustrate the dichotomy of historical orientations with striking clarity. The front matter of Florida’s history standards states unequivocally that “American history shall be viewed as factual, not as constructed, shall be viewed as knowable, teachable, and testable, and shall be defined as the creation of a new nation based largely on the universal principles stated in the Declaration of Independence.”⁷⁹ The notion that history is knowable is not a question of epistemology—how the learner relates to knowledge—but rather one of ontology—the nature of knowledge itself. If American history is factual and knowable, then there is little to debate regarding interpretation of events or why certain interpretations even exist at all. Furthermore, by establishing the principles stated in the Declaration of Independence as the basis of fact for the narrative of American history, there really is not a compelling reason to even debate our ontological understanding of history—we already know it because the Florida state legislature has defined it for us.

In contrast, the California state history framework and standards, “emphasize the importance of history as a constructed narrative that is continually being reshaped and retold.”⁸⁰ While not specific about the nature of the reshaping and retelling, California’s standards at least allow for various interpretations at various points in time. Alaska’s frameworks are even more interesting in that they have “cultural” standards that complement content standards and guide students toward engaging in learning through local culture. The Alaska standards state, “We recognize all forms of knowledge, ways of knowing, and world views as equally valid, adaptable, and complementary to one another in mutually beneficial ways.

“These cultural standards are not intended to be inclusive, exclusive, or conclusive, and should be reviewed and adapted to fit local needs.”⁸¹ Unlike the first-person plural pronoun use of the collective memory approach that defines “we” as Americans, but really defines “we” as those represented in the dominant national narrative, Alaska’s use of “we” recognizes that it is impossible to definitively inform all cultures, wrong to exclude certain cultures, and myopic to believe it is possible to shut the door on future knowledge about cultures.

Disciplinary-oriented historians or history educators may also be dismissive of the postmodern orientation believing it is susceptible to relativism, which would mean, “...we can teach whatever serves our purposes in schools: history

⁷⁸ John P. Diggins, Teaching American History. *The American Scholar*, 67 (1998): 94.

⁷⁹ Florida Department of Education. “Social Studies.” Accessed February 14, 2019. <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/standards/subject-areas/social-studies.stml>

⁸⁰ California State Board of Education. “History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through Grade Twelve.” Accessed February 14, 2019. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/histsocscistnd.pdf>

⁸¹ Alaska Department of Education & Early Development. “Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools.” Accessed February 14, 2019. <http://ankn.uaf.edu/Publications/CulturalStandards.pdf>

as collective memory, disciplinary history, postmodernist history, or none at all.”⁸² A postmodernist might reply by pointing out that while the disciplinary orientation hopes to improve history curricula by including a broader range of figures, groups, and histories, those efforts can actually serve to legitimize the master narrative that was originally produced without them in mind.⁸³ This skirts the messy work of examining the social, political, and economic conditions that gave rise to the original narrative. Conversely, postmodern or critical historians waded directly into that messy work, asking “What and whose discursive conventions does it comply with so as to be considered true? How might it be taken up by others? What might it tell us about the assumptions, values and world views of the person making it and the discourses enabling its production? How does it position those engaging it to read it in particular ways and from particular subject positions?”⁸⁴ Whereas the disciplinary history educator might ponder whether or not their interpretation of all of the available evidence provides the most analytically complete version of the past, the postmodernist would instead raise questions about what other evidence must be missing because it did not suit influential needs at the time and whether their attendant constructed understanding of the past should be communicated to others if its flaws perpetuate the perception of authoritative approval.

It is perhaps rather obvious that the *justice-oriented* citizen most closely matches with ends and means of the critical history orientation. However, in response to the aforementioned imbalance of democratic power and its effects on humans in society, alternative critical views on citizenship such as “dangerous citizenship” have taken root and found support.⁸⁵ Dangerous citizenship centers on political participation, critical awareness, and intentional action to disrupt “exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence in both schools and society.”⁸⁶ Dangerous citizenship education counts on future citizens to expand the principles of freedom and democracy that are the backbone of contemporary notions of citizenship to marginalized and oppressed individuals and groups. History reveals the multitude of ways the marginalized and oppressed were denied realization of the founding principles that democratic citizenship universally touts. Using history as a language of counterpower is one tactic for posing a critical challenge to an establishment in order to influence the world.⁸⁷ The history standards for the state of Massachusetts open the door to the possibility of engendering a more critical citizenry by suggesting “The future of democracy depends on our students’ development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of citizens who embrace

⁸² Seixas (2000, 34).

⁸³ Segall (2006).

⁸⁴ Ibid., 138.

⁸⁵ E. Wayne Ross and Kevin Vinson, “Insurrectionist Pedagogies and the Pursuit of Dangerous Citizenship.” In *Rethinking Social Studies: Critical Pedagogy in Pursuit of Dangerous Citizenship*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age, 2018, 35–62.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 49.

⁸⁷ Nordgren (2016).

democracy's potential and its challenges." The concept of dangerous citizenship is a clear sign that the notion of "informed citizenship" must consider what the informed citizen actually *does* once empowered by historical knowledge. This notion is what drives Author 2 forward in his quest to foster dangerous citizenship in the social studies and other civic spaces.

Civics and History Education Moving Forward

As history education moves into the second decade of the twenty-first century, it is important to pause and consider modern themes in what it means to become an informed citizen now and in the future since informed citizenship is the most widely recognized purpose for studying history. In the sections that follow, we briefly summarize the last five years of civics scholarship published in *Theory and Research in Social Education*, the leading journal for social education, to better understand trends in citizenship education. Following the review of civics literature, we provide a similar survey of scholarship in history education to ascertain similar trends and their alignment with the purposes for teaching history. What follows is not offered as a thorough review of the literature in civics or history education. Instead, we endeavor to use leading scholarship as a beacon pointing toward what might be ahead for teaching history.

WHAT KIND OF CITIZEN?

Our review of leading research on civics education in recent years revealed that scholars are emphasizing the importance of civic action, immigrant citizenship, and critical citizenship in the preparation of future citizens. The first theme in the literature we reviewed was civic reasoning, decision-making, and action. Studies in this category of research were particularly interested in the ways in which students interact as citizens as individuals and groups in democratic society. For example, Jane Lo drew upon sociocultural understanding of identity "as a way that one is positioned and positions himself or herself both in the moment and over time across social practice" to understand how students' identities are shaped by simulations and role play.⁸⁸ In addition to this examination of the interplay between individual identities and democratic practice, research also explored collaborative efforts at democratic deliberation. Kohlmeier and Saye utilized Collaborative Communities of Practice to explore students' moral reasoning of just versus unjust laws,⁸⁹ while Blevins, LeCompte, and Wells explored the effectiveness of action civics programs, the curricula and programs that combine civic education with civic action by leading students

⁸⁸ Jane Lo, "Adolescents Developing Civic Identities: Sociocultural Perspectives on Simulations and Role-Play in a Civic Classroom" *Theory and Research in Social Education* 45, no. 2. (2017): 192.

⁸⁹ Jada Kohlmeier and John Saye, "Ethical Reasoning of U.S. High School Seniors Exploring Just versus Unjust Laws." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 42, no. 4. (2014): 548–78.

through six stages of problem finding through action to affect policy.⁹⁰ These empirical examinations of students' civic identities, decision-making, and action fit well with the sociocultural orientation's focus on the interaction between the individual and the context in which the individual thinks and acts.

The second theme we found in the literature is immigrant citizenship. Rather than focusing on immigration as a civic issue from society's perspective, scholars have examined immigrant citizenship from the perspective and experiences of immigrants themselves. The literature includes studies on immigrant education and socialization in schools⁹¹; the utilization of sociocultural and immigrant optimism theory to explore immigrant's civic identities⁹²; an asset-based civics education approach for/with/by immigrant students based on a theoretical framework of additive acculturation, civic education, and codetermination⁹³; and culturally responsive civics pedagogy and education.⁹⁴

Critical citizenship, or the use of critical theory as a framework for research, was the third and most commonly represented theme we found in our review of civics scholarship in recent years. It was also the most theoretically diverse group of studies, with frameworks related to Black Critical Patriotism,⁹⁵ multicultural citizenship,⁹⁶ critical race theory,⁹⁷ feminist transnationalism, and Latina citizenship identity.⁹⁸ The research into critical citizenship unearthed topics and pedagogies that have been buried under many years of "blind allegiance to liberal democracy; i.e., authoritarian patriotism and democratic patriotism."⁹⁹ Topics of study included minority (Asian) elementary teachers

⁹⁰ Brooke Blevins, Karon LeCompte, and Sunny Wells. "Innovations in Civic Education: Developing Civic Agency Through Action Civics." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 44, no. 3. (2016): 344–84.

⁹¹ Dafney Blanca Dabach, Aliza Fones, Natasha Hakimali Merchant, and Adebowale Adekile, "Teachers Navigating Civic Education When Students are Undocumented: Building Case Knowledge." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 46, no. 3 (2018): 331–73.

⁹² Rebecca M. Callahan and Kathryn Obenchain, "Garnering Civic Hope: Social Studies, Expectations, and the Lost Civic Potential of Immigrant Youth." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 44, no. 1 (2016): 36–71.

⁹³ Jeremy Hilburn, "Asset-Based Civics For, With, and By Immigrant Students: Three Sites of Enriched Teaching and Learning for Immigrant and Native-Born Students." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 43, no. 3 (2015): 372–404.

⁹⁴ Ashley Jaffee, "Social Studies Pedagogy for Latino/a Newcomer Youth: Toward a Theory of Culturally and Linguistically Relevant Citizenship Education." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 44, no. 2 (2016): 147–83.

⁹⁵ Christopher Busey and Irene Walker. 2017. "A Dream and a Bus: Black Critical Patriotism in Elementary Social Studies Standards." *Theory & Research in Social Education* 45, no. 3 (2017): 456–88.

⁹⁶ Antonio Castro, "What Makes a Citizen? Critical and Multicultural Citizenship and Preservice Teachers' Understanding of Citizenship Skills" *Theory and Research in Social Education* 41, no. 2 (2013): 219–246.

⁹⁷ Ashley Woodson, "We're Just Ordinary People: Messianic Master Narratives and Black Youths' Civic Agency." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 44, no. 2 (2016): 184–211.

⁹⁸ Jennifer Bondy, "Latina Youth, Education, and Citizenship: A Feminist Transnational Analysis." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 44, no. 2 (2016): 212–243.

⁹⁹ Busey and Walker (2017, 460).

disrupting normative conceptualizations of citizen¹⁰⁰; the role of gender, sexuality, race, and state institutions in the making and unmaking of the Nation and bodies that fit and do not fit the national character¹⁰¹; messianic master narratives¹⁰²; how Black historical figures and their efforts are represented in elementary social studies standards¹⁰³; and digital media production as a counter-hegemonic act supporting active citizens dedicated to promoting social justice.¹⁰⁴ Civic education from a critical perspective would prepare students for participation in a version of democracy that, “embodies a vision of an ideal society and calls for citizens to take action to make this justice-oriented vision a reality.”¹⁰⁵

If the leading scholarship in recent years is an indication of where civics education is heading in the future, students will be asked to eschew “personally responsible” notions of democratic life and take up the mantle of “justice oriented” or at the very least “participatory” citizen.¹⁰⁶ The literature we reviewed is heavily influenced by sociocultural and postmodern or critical theories of democratic education. In turn, if students are to answer the call of citizenship for such purposes, it stands to reason that history education should address the content and modes of inquiry needed to be considered “properly informed” civic actors.

History for Informed Citizenship

Our review of recent scholarship in history education revealed two primary takeaways for history educators interested in fostering informed citizenship that aligns with contemporary scholarship on civics education. First, the studies were unpacked into two main categories—historical thinking and critical history—that largely align conceptually with visions for participatory and justice-oriented citizens. However, the research findings also reveal that history has a very long way to go if it hopes to prepare students for civic outcomes as outlined by recent scholarship in citizen education.

¹⁰⁰Noreen Rodríguez, “From Margins to Center: Developing Cultural Citizenship Education Through the Teaching of Asian American History.” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 46, no. 4 (2018): 528–73.

¹⁰¹Bondy (2016).

¹⁰²Woodson (2016).

¹⁰³Busey and Walker (2017).

¹⁰⁴Sarah Montgomery, “Critical Democracy Through Digital Media Production in a Third-Grade Classroom Production in a Third-Grade Classroom.” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 42, no. 2 (2014): 197–227.

¹⁰⁵Montgomery (2014, 201).

¹⁰⁶Westheimer and Kahne (2004).

HISTORICAL THINKING

What stood out immediately about the recent research related to historical thinking was that we could characterize all but two of the articles as specifically addressing history teaching and learning. That is, nearly all of the studies were empirical examinations focused on investigating some aspects of historical thinking in the classroom. A smaller subset of the historical thinking research inquired into specific concepts valued by disciplinary history. These studies included students' ability to perform historical perspective taking,¹⁰⁷ the concept of historical distance,¹⁰⁸ as well as epistemological views of historians and how they can help students understand the nature of historical knowledge.¹⁰⁹

There larger subject of the historical thinking literature explored historical thinking or understanding with influence from the sociocultural orientation toward history education. Of this group of studies, one explored how middle school social studies teachers demonstrate, or invite students to make, past/present connections,¹¹⁰ while the remainder placed students' learning at the center of inquiry in most of the studies. This research was marked by a purposeful interjection of the students' identities, values, beliefs, or judgments when developing historical understanding. Research questions inquired into the relationship between learners' social identity and their historical practices and understanding,¹¹¹ how students negotiate the cognitive–affective process of engaging in historical empathy,¹¹² and the manner in which students construct narratives of events they share a heritage with.¹¹³ Topics of historical study also indicated a distinct sociocultural influence. Santiago utilized a court case about Mexican American school segregation in the 1940s to explore how a class of primarily Mexican American students came to understand that court

¹⁰⁷Tim Huijgen, Carla van Boxtel, Wim van de Grift, and Paul Holthuis, "Toward Historical Perspective Taking: Students' Reasoning When Contextualizing the Actions of People in the Past." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 45, no. 1 (2017): 110–44; Bjorn Wansink, Sanne Akkerman, Itzél Zuiker, and Theo Wubbels, "Where Does Teaching Multiperspectivity in History Education Begin and End? An Analysis of the Uses of Temporality." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 46, no. 4. (2018): 495–527.

¹⁰⁸Stephan Klein, "Preparing to Teach a Slavery Past: History Teachers and Educators as Navigators of Historical Distance." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 45, no. 1 (2017): 75–109.

¹⁰⁹Jeffery D. Nokes, "Elementary Students Roles and Epistemic Stances during Document-Based History Lessons." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 42, no. 3 (2014): 375–413.

¹¹⁰Sarah Brooks, "Connecting the Past to the Present in the Middle-Level Classroom: A Comparative Case Study." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 42, no. 1 (2014): 65–95.

¹¹¹Tsafirir Goldberg, "It's in My Veins: Identity and Disciplinary Practice in Students' Discussions of a Historical Issue." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 41, no. 1 (2013): 33–64.

¹¹²Jason Endacott, "Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 42, no. 1 (2014): 4–34.

¹¹³Sara A. Levy, "How Students Navigate the Construction of Heritage Narratives." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 45, no. 2 (2017): 157–88.

case in light of their heritage.¹¹⁴ In a somewhat similar study, Levy asked Hmong, Chinese, and Jewish students to construct historical accounts of the Vietnam War, Modern China, and the Holocaust, respectively.¹¹⁵

The two articles from this time period that were not empirical were still oriented toward informing history teaching in theory and practice. Kenneth Nordgren, for example, outlines the relationship between history and the idea of its use, pointing out the need for considering “nearby and overlapping concepts such as collective memory and heritage.”¹¹⁶ He proposes a hermeneutical process that sees history as a communicative action between encoder (recorder of evidence or history), message (meaning), and decoder (student) across four analytical levels. The final article we reviewed detailed the manner in which ethical judgment could be applied to the case of the *MS St. Louis*, a steamship in 1939 that carried nearly a thousand Jewish refugees from Germany, was barred from port in Cuba, and was further denied entry by the United States and Canada, before finally being sent back to Germany.¹¹⁷ The authors posit the philosophy of ethics as a conceptual lens for making judgments in history and point out that such a framework is needed given the seeming regularity of humanitarian crises, specifically in light of the Syrian refugee crisis of the 2010s.

One thing that all of the studies we reviewed as related to historical thinking had in common was the goal of improving history teaching and learning. Of those with sociocultural influence, most dealt with epistemological concerns for connecting history learners with historical knowledge within a given social context. Given the specificity of the research into historical thinking concepts, many of these studies reflect an advanced state of knowledge generation for the purposes of improving history education. One could reasonably conclude that even though some of the history represented in these articles has been excluded from the collective memory of school history, and many of the learners are being exposed to topics that were previously repressed, the research into the method by which students learn about this history is relatively well developed.

Critical History

Unlike the studies related to historical thinking, the leading critical history research in recent years has coalesced around examination of curricula, curricular materials, and historical content as well as empirical examinations of teaching and learning history. Originating from a multitude of theoretical frameworks, recent history education research has witnessed empirical studies

¹¹⁴Maribel Santiago, “Erasing Differences for the Sake of Inclusion: How Mexican/Mexican American Students Construct Historical Narratives.” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 45, no. 1 (2017): 43–74.

¹¹⁵Levy (2017).

¹¹⁶Nordgren (2016, 498).

¹¹⁷Andrea Milligan, Lindsay Gibson, and Carla L. Peck. “Enriching Ethical Judgments in History Education.” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 46 no. 3 (2018): 449–79.

based on anti-oppressive education,¹¹⁸ AsianCrit,¹¹⁹ silencing the past,¹²⁰ Critical Race Theory,¹²¹ critical consciousness,¹²² and Postcolonial Theory.¹²³ Not surprisingly, two of these studies have provided critical content analyses of U.S. history standards to determine the manner in which state standards represent Asian Americans and their experiences,¹²⁴ as well as Indigenous histories and cultures.¹²⁵ In addition to these analyses, King and Womac examined how Black American history is misrepresented through television as an educational outlet,¹²⁶ while Woysner and Schocker investigated representation of Black women in high school history textbooks.¹²⁷

The results of this most recent body of research illustrate just how much further history education has to progress if it hopes to fulfill notions of democratic citizenship based on the principles state standards tout as guideposts for informed citizens. After analyzing the educational television program *Founders, Fridays*, King and Womac concluded that the programming likely did more harm than good if its mission was to better educate viewers about Black American history:

We contend that the viewers of *Founders* learned about race and Black American history in the following ways: (a) the White Founding Fathers were not racist, (b) the “true” history of the Black American experience was not as bad as it is typically presented, and (c) Black Americans’ historical perspectives excluded women and were similar to mainstream society. First, by presenting the White Framers as non-discriminatory toward Black Americans, viewers get a sense that race was not (and still is not) a major issue in Black Americans’ quest for citizenship...They also understand race not as an institutional system that was embedded within the legal structures of society but as aberrations or single acts of immorality that have been solved.¹²⁸

¹¹⁸Anita Chikkatur, “Teaching and Learning African American History in a Multiracial Classroom.” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 41, no. 4 (2013): 514–34.

¹¹⁹Sohyun An, “Asian Americans in American History: An AsianCrit Perspective on Asian American Inclusion in State U.S. History Curriculum Standards.” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 44, no. 2 (2016): 244–76.

¹²⁰La Garrett J. King and Patrick Womac, “A Bundle of Silences: Examining the Racial Representation of Black Founding Fathers of the United States Through Glenn Beck’s *Founders Fridays*.” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 42, no. 1 (2014): 35–64.

¹²¹Christopher C. Martell, “Race and Histories: Examining Culturally Relevant Teaching in the U.S. History Classroom.” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 41, no. 1 (2013): 65–88.

¹²²Hillary Parkhouse, “Pedagogies of Naming, Questioning, and Demystification: A Study of Two Critical U.S. History Classrooms.” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 46, no. 2. (2018): 277–317.

¹²³Sarah Shear, Ryan T. Knowles, Gregory J. Soden, and Antonio J. Castro, “Manifesting Destiny: Re/Presentations of Indigenous Peoples in K-12 U.S. History Standards.” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 43, no. 1 (2015): 68–101.

¹²⁴An (2016).

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶King and Womac (2014).

¹²⁷Christine Woysner and Jessica B. Schocker. “Cultural Parallax and Content Analysis: Images of Black Women in High School History Textbooks.” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 43, no. 4. (2015): 441–68.

¹²⁸King and Womac (2014).

After analyzing 823 images in Black history and mainstream history textbooks, Woyshner and Schocker discovered that mainstream texts actually balanced the proportion of women and men more equitably than the Black textbook, though the Black textbook portrayed Black women in a greater variety of roles. However, when the researchers emphasized race over gender in their analysis, they found that the Black text reified the oppression framework by representing Black historical figures most frequently in relation to famous firsts and Afro-centrist narratives.¹²⁹

Following her analysis of Asian American representations in state history standards, Sohyun An points out that while representations of other minority groups continue to be manipulated to fit the dominant national narrative, Asian Americans are nearly invisible in the standards. She concluded that the “invisibility of the Asian American experience in the official script of U.S. history sends a message that Asian Americans are not legitimate members of this nation and have little place in the story of the United States.”¹³⁰

Arguably most destructive, however, is the manner in which Indigenous Peoples are reflected in the state standards for all 50 U.S. states and Washington, DC. The content analysis of Shear et al. revealed that nearly 87% of the standards require student learning about Indigenous Peoples in the context of U.S. history prior to 1900, after which point Indigenous Peoples virtually disappear from the educational documents. Not only are Indigenous Peoples nearly invisible in U.S. history standards after the nineteenth century, but also, in the years up to that point, their history is always framed within the context of Euro-America. Examples included “describe the characteristics of other indigenous peoples that had an effect upon New Mexico’s development” and “identify the Wampanoags and their leaders at the time the Pilgrims arrive, and describe their way of life.”¹³¹ The authors describe how such depictions are dangerously deleterious by pointing out that the standards frame Indigenous Peoples as both insiders and outsiders to American history, the latter of which is reinforced in post-American Revolution to smooth over the invasive and genocidal progression of Manifest Destiny within the national narrative.

Fortunately, the critical research we reviewed for this chapter also highlighted the potential that new approaches to history teaching and learning may hold for the future. Martell, studying the intersection between his students’ race/ethnicity and their experiences learning history, found that culturally relevant pedagogy had a positive impact on students of color in the history classroom.¹³² He also concluded that culturally relevant pedagogy could be improved by including more culturally relevant content and listening to the voices of students of color during instructional planning. Parkhouse studied the manner in which teachers engaged students in the pedagogies of naming,

¹²⁹Woyshner and Schocker (2015).

¹³⁰An (2016).

¹³¹Shear et al. (2015).

¹³²Martell (2013).

questioning, and demystification to enhance students' critical consciousness and agency as civic actors. The research revealed that teachers were able to engage in typical practices related to presenting mandated content, giving tests, and assigning grades while also maintaining emancipatory aims for instruction based on specific pedagogical decisions they made for their specific students.¹³³

The historical thinking and critical history are from the first takeaway; where is the explanation of the second takeaway? Is it the next section on the future?

The Future of History Education

Democratic citizenship may be a widely accepted goal in history education, but Barton and Levstik argue, "saying that schools should prepare students for democratic citizenship may say so much that it says nothing at all. Sometimes it seems little more than a mantra, changed without reflection on its deeper meaning or implications for practice."¹³⁴ Typical proposals for citizenship education focus almost exclusively on the relationship between individual citizens and the state. It is assumed that citizens' positions, developed with the benefit of history or without, are conceptualized independently of the political process before entering the public sphere to engage in deliberation. It is further assumed that citizens' positions must then compete for influence with other citizens' views that were conceptualized under similar circumstances. This process inevitably leads to a binary win or lose scenario in which the public sphere serves as the field of play (or battle) that amounts to little more than argument between competing perspectives.¹³⁵ Competing perspectives in a democratic nation often become entrenched in partisan politics, with both sides using history as a weapon for those who hope to influence our deliberations.¹³⁶ This is the quagmire within which students learn history on the eve of a new decade and it is unclear what the 2020s will hold for democracy and democratic processes.

However, while our brief summation of recent leading scholarship in civics and history education certainly does not represent a comprehensive review of the literature, it can tell us a great deal about the concerns that history educators and scholars are grappling with as the 2010s roll into the 2020s. The disciplinary and sociocultural orientations to history education are supported by research into advanced modes of history teaching and learning, while postmodern or critical history is still fighting marginalization, or in some cases exclusion, from the documents that guide educators' instruction. One might counter this conclusion by pointing out that critical research sees its charge as disruption of repressive structures, which politically influenced state history standards are a prime example of. However, as long as critical educators are

¹³³ Parkhouse (2018).

¹³⁴ Barton and Levstik (2004, 28).

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Rogers (1984).

diverting effort to critiquing hegemonic history standards and fighting for anti-oppressive inclusion in the classroom, they cannot fully commit to conducting research into the most impactful modes of historical study that promote informed and critical citizens. The disciplinary and sociocultural orientations may struggle less in this regard because their approaches are primarily process oriented, and the content-related pluralist goals of sociocultural educators are far less threatening to the hegemony of collective national memory than most critical orientations.

It is at this point that we have to step back and marvel at the fact that despite all of the progress made in the field of history education outlined in this chapter—as a nation we are still subject to the confines of history as collective memory and the political motives of those who promote it. Looking back over the past three decades, perhaps it was the standards movement, the point at which history content became a codified body of knowledge subject to approval from legislative bodies, that shielded collective memory from other orientations with far more to offer students.

Yet the idealized national narrative codified in state standards is anything but ideal. It runs counter to the complexity of people in general and the constantly changing face of democratic life in particular. As globalization and an increasing number of immigrants to the United States add to the richness and complexity of American society, we must remain mindful of the continuing problem our nation faces to “recognize and legitimize difference and yet construct an overarching national identity that incorporates the voices, experiences, and hopes of the diverse groups that compose it.”¹³⁷ U.S. history, as currently taught in American schools, emphasizes the development of national identity at the expense of the voices and experiences of many groups who compose it. As we have seen here, the resulting effect on history curriculum is one of relative prominence, marginalization, and irrelevance. Prominent American heroes take center stage in a national narrative in which societal problems are often portrayed simply as opportunities for further achievement.¹³⁸ For some historically marginalized groups, such as African Americans, inclusion in the pantheon of figures that compose collective memory has broadened in recent years to include figures such as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr.¹³⁹ However, when these groups are incorporated into the typical curriculum, their experiences and achievements are often depicted only to the extent that they reinforce the image of progress and national achievement.¹⁴⁰

History has so much more to offer than a list of causes, problems, and events that were addressed by a mostly homogenous ruling class of White men.

¹³⁷ James Banks, “Diversity, Group Identity, and Citizenship Education in a Global Age.” *Educational Researcher*, 37, no. 3 (2008): 133.

¹³⁸ Barton (2009).

¹³⁹ Sam Wineburg and Chauncey Monte-Sano, “‘Famous Americans’: The Changing Pantheon of American Heroes.” *Journal of American History*. 94, no. 4 (2008). 1186–1202.

¹⁴⁰ Barton (2009).

Regrettably, under the current approach taken in most social studies classrooms, students are exposed to “an incoherent, disjointed picture of those who are not White,”¹⁴¹ and to resources, textbooks, and curricular materials that lack sufficient, thoughtful, and substantive historical examples of civic action by individuals and groups.¹⁴² How can we expect our students to become active agents of democracy if they do not have the opportunity to learn about how people from all stations in life engaged in civic activity in the past? How can we expect our students to work toward rectifying injustice if they are not exposed to the struggles that preceded them?

Democratic societies are defined in part by the people that comprise them and by the place and time in which they are set, and the principles upon which each one is based can serve as common ground among them. In the United States, documents such as the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights provide written elucidation of democratic principles and ideals. However, these types of documents lack voice, which creates a problem for students when they try to interpret them.¹⁴³ Also, documents such as the Constitution are consensual documents that are representative of a range of voices, whose interpretation is contextualized in time and place. The richness and diversity of the contributing voices are missing, and such documents fail to even hint at the excluded voices. As King and Womac remind us in their study of *Founders Fridays*, when Chief Justice Robert Brook Taney penned the majority opinion in the Dred Scott case in 1857, he wrote that “it was obvious that [Black Americans] were not even in the minds of the framers...and were never intended to be citizens of the United States.”¹⁴⁴ Relying heavily on such documents excludes those that were not permitted to politically participate, such as women, non-Whites, and the economically disadvantaged of the time, while also setting up the eventual expansion of rights to those groups as a grand national achievement rather than the righting of an oppressive wrong.

Yet, despite the sluggish change in history practice, the future holds considerable potential for thinking deeply about epistemological notions about our relationships with historical knowledge and how that informs our identities, situates us in the world, and prepares us to act as informed citizens for the common good. History unquestionably provides us with a lens on the present, but that lens need not present history as a maze of possibilities with the correct solution highlighted for the student to easily follow. Citizenship, when done correctly, is messy and rarely leaves everybody completely satisfied.

¹⁴¹ Gloria Ladson-Billings, *Critical Race Theory Perspectives on the Social Studies: The Profession, Policies, and Curriculum*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2003, 4.

¹⁴² Judith Torney-Purta, “The Second IEA Civic Education Project: Development of Content Guidelines and Items for a Cross-National Test and Survey.” *Canadian and International Education* 25 (1996): 199–214.

¹⁴³ Richard Paxton, The Influence of Author Visibility on High School Students Solving a Historical Problem. *Cognition and Instruction*, 20, (2002): 197–248.

¹⁴⁴ King and Womac (2014).

Of course, historical study affords us much more beyond informed citizenship. The aforementioned and much-maligned National History Standards provide a succinct yet descriptive summation of the role that history plays in our lives as human beings:

Historical memory is the key to self-identity, to seeing one's place in the stream of time, and one's connectedness with all of humankind. We are part of an ancient chain, and the long hand of the past is upon us—for good and for ill—just as our hands will rest on our descendants for years to come. Denied knowledge of one's roots and of one's place in the great stream of human history, the individual is deprived of the fullest sense of self and of that sense of shared community on which one's fullest personal development as well as responsible citizenship depends.¹⁴⁵

Taking guidance from this statement, we recognize the power history has to inform our outward-facing identity, the one we present to the world, as well as our inward-facing reflection that processes the past and present as our identity evolves. The human mind craves history as a usable past for identity formation and development,¹⁴⁶ because it serves as a filter on the lens through which we confirm our own identities and begin to understand the identities of others.¹⁴⁷ When entering into a new situation it is quite normal to consider the context in which we are interacting with others (e.g., personal, professional, and social) as well as wonder how others came to occupy a shared place in space and time. Historical knowledge, be it personal, institutional, societal, legal, economic, or any other given viewpoint on the past, helps us navigate these situations as it informs our awareness of human differences, similarities, motivations, and aspirations¹⁴⁸ that shape behavior in specific contexts. Since our identities develop over time, history can deepen and even complicate our identities as our current sense of self often contradicts who we used to be.¹⁴⁹ As history reveals more about us, it also allows us to appreciate the rational and irrational aspects of our behavior and the behavior of others, reminding us that we remain fallible human beings.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵National Council for History Education. *National Standards for History* (Los Angeles, CA: National Council for History Education, 1996).

¹⁴⁶Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn, *History on Trial*; C. Portal, Empathy. *Teaching History*, 58 (1990): 36–38.; National History Standards, National Council for History Education.

¹⁴⁷Kenneth Nordgren, "How to Do Things with History: Use of History as a Link Between Historical Consciousness and Historical Culture." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 44, no. 4 (2016): 479–504.

¹⁴⁸Michael Kammen, "History is our heritage: The past in contemporary American culture." In P. Gagnon (Ed.), *Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education*, 138–156. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1989).

¹⁴⁹Wood (2009).

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

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