

**THE PURPOSE AND PRACTICE OF HISTORY EDUCATION:  
CAN A HUMANIST APPROACH TO TEACHING HISTORY FACILITATE  
CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION?**

**AARON P. STOUT**  
**Bachelor of Arts /Bachelor of Education, University of Lethbridge, 2006**

A thesis submitted  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

in

**EDUCATION**

Faculty of Arts and Science  
University of Lethbridge  
LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA, CANADA

© Aaron Stout, 2019

ProQuest Number:27671478

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent on the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 27671478

Published by ProQuest LLC (2020). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All Rights Reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code  
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

THE PURPOSE AND PRACTICE OF HISTORY EDUCATION:  
CAN A HUMANIST APPROACH TO TEACHING HISTORY FACILITATE  
CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION?

AARON P. STOUT

Date of Defence: November 19, 2019

Dr. Amy von Heyking Thesis Supervisor	Associate Professor	Ph.D.
Dr. Lance Grigg Thesis Examination Committee Member	Associate Professor	Ph.D.
Dr. Bruce MacKay Thesis Examination Committee Member	Assistant Professor	Ph.D.
Dr. Janay Nugent Internal External Examiner Department of History Faculty of Arts and Science	Associate Professor	Ph.D.
Dr. David Slomp Chair, Thesis Examination Committee	Associate Professor	Ph.D.

## Dedication

Every story has a beginning, middle and end. I recognize that this project began before me and will extend beyond. In the span of this project, my family have shared the joys and challenges. In many ways this project is theirs as much as my own. Morgan, your support and inspiration provides encouragement. Your unending belief in me was the foundation for this project. Cooper and Dixon, your lives provide me with hope for the future. The stories you share teach me more about love, wonder, and optimism than any text. I'm fortunate to have you add rich colour to each day.

## Abstract

History has a longstanding relationship with citizenship education (Osborne, 2000). Pedagogically, history classes were used to pass on established narratives to students that reinforced predetermined social priorities. Needless to say, the transmission of nationalistic content has not developed students who know history (Dominion Institute, 2009). Recent scholarship argues that a procedural approach to history education will foster the development of students' historical consciousness (Seixas & Morton, 2013, Seixas, 2006). This thesis questions the effect of a historical thinking pedagogy, suggesting that the procedural approach does little to shift the historical consciousness of students. Instead, inspired by the work of Barton and Levstik (2004), this thesis argues that history should be taught as a humanity (Nussbaum, 2006), that strives to foster disciplinary thinking, open-mindedness, and imaginative understanding, in order to be relevant as a means of citizenship education in a pluralistic democracy.

## Acknowledgments

This project started out as a question: “How could history education be more effective in the lives of students?” I brought this question to Dr. Amy von Heyking who saw potential in asking big questions and chasing them where they lead. I am indebted to Dr. von Heyking’s encouragement and support throughout this project. She has been an inspiration, a model of academic scholarship, and a mentor to me personally and professionally.

During this project my paradigms about history education were challenged. Dr. von Heyking, Dr. Lance Grigg, Dr. David Slomp, and Dr. Kristine Alexander offered additional perspectives that deepened my ideas. I felt supported and encouraged in my academic work. I’m indebted to my committee, comprised of Dr. von Heyking, Dr. Grigg, and Dr. MacKay, who have provided a critical eye and important suggestions that have added clarity to my work.

Living and working in an academic community has provided stimulating conversations and new perspectives. I want to acknowledge my colleagues at the University of Lethbridge Faculty of Education and Lethbridge School District 51 for their support. It is rich to have people to connect with who are interested in questions about pedagogy and practice.

As a final recognition, I want to recognize my students (past and present), who have taught me more than I ever taught them. It is their enthusiasm for the present and the past that inspired me to think about how we experience history.

Stories are what bind people together – thank you for sharing yours with me.

## Table of Contents

Dedication.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgments.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures.....	ix
CHAPTER 1: Why Contemplate The Purpose and Practice of History Education? .....	1
Key Concepts .....	5
History.....	5
History Education .....	6
Historical Thinking.....	7
Historical Consciousness .....	8
Humanism.....	9
Methodology.....	10
Thesis Outline.....	11
Conclusion .....	13
CHAPTER 2: Has History Education Contributed to the Education System's Goal of Citizenship Education? .....	15
Introduction.....	15
Did the Study of History Contribute to Citizenship Education?.....	17
Has the Disciplinary Structure of History Changed over Time? .....	26
Can a Social Studies Program Prioritize the Discipline of History to Strengthen Citizenship Education? .....	35

Conclusion .....	42
CHAPTER 3: Has the Shift Toward a Historical Thinking Pedagogy Changed History Education?.....	
Education?.....	45
Introduction.....	45
What Pedagogical Shifts Brought Historical Thinking to Prominence? .....	46
How was Historical Thinking Conceptualized in North America? .....	55
What are the Key Concepts of Historical Thinking? .....	60
What Effect is the Model of Historical Thinking Having on History Education? 69	
What are the Challenges to a Curriculum Framed Around Concepts of Historical Thinking? .....	73
Conclusion .....	77
CHAPTER 4: Does Historical Thinking Facilitate the Development of Students' Historical Consciousness? .....	
Historical Consciousness? .....	79
Introduction.....	79
What is Historical Consciousness? .....	81
What is the Relationship Between Historical Thinking and the Development of a Historical Consciousness? .....	88
Does a Procedural Pedagogy Enhance Students' Historical Consciousness? .....	95
How Does a Focus on Historical Consciousness Change an Educator's Pedagogy? .....	108
Conclusion .....	111
CHAPTER 5: How Can a Humanist Approach to History Education Prepare Citizens?.....	
Citizens?.....	113



Introduction.....	113
What Does a Humanist Approach add to the Historical Thinking Framework?	116
Can Citizenship Education be Enhanced Through a Humanist Approach to History Education?.....	132
Conclusion .....	147
Epilogue .....	151
References.....	162
Appendix: Historical Thinking Construct: A Proposal for Curriculum Development...	182

## List of Figures

Figure

1. Rüsen's disciplinary matrix demonstrates the competing influences of one's historical consciousness. This model was translated and published by Megill (1994). ..... 87
2. Seixas (2016a) offers a model that seeks to position history education at the intersection between Disciplinary History and Memory and Life Practice..... 89
3. Lévesque (2016a) maintains the placement of History Education that Seixas (2016a) proposed. He adds the consideration of the Historical Culture to the model. .... 94

## CHAPTER 1:

### Why Contemplate The Purpose and Practice of History Education?

How can a history lesson engage students? This spring I had the opportunity to witness a grade two history lesson that did engaged students critically and imaginatively. The Galt Museum, in Lethbridge, AB, runs a number of programs that have been structured for elementary school children. A grade two program titled, “Downtown Lethbridge Treasure Hunt,” is designed to help students explore Lethbridge as an example of a prairie community (Henrickson, 2018). The program involves meeting students in downtown Lethbridge, providing them with archival pictures of buildings, and having them match the photos to the existing buildings. The students were provided with the following criteria: first, the windows in buildings seldom change; second, the composition of the buildings (height) have not changed. After receiving the instructions, students were set free to analyze the photos and discover the past in plain sight. These grade two students were given a task that required them to look for evidence, reference criteria, and make judgments. They were engaged in a critical task.

Once students returned to the designated meeting place, they were asked to imagine. The educator described how Lethbridge would have looked in the 1880s. She pointed to the railroad, which is now the Lethbridge Regional Health Center, and described settlers from Ontario coming off the train, looking to find food and lodging. Using the archives of the Galt, she referenced some of the old buildings and told them stories about the people that stayed there. One story highlighted the influence of an important figure in the community:

The first 3-story building in Lethbridge was built by Harry Bentley, our 2nd mayor. When Bentley came to town in 1885, he borrowed money and started a

store in a tent. Soon he had a store in a wooden building and money invested in several other businesses. His interests kept growing until he became one of the wealthiest men in Lethbridge. Unfortunately, in the bust of 1913, Harry lost all of his money and left Lethbridge for a short time. The bust affected many people in Lethbridge as well as Calgary and across Canada. (Henrickson, 2019)

The stories the educator shared gave the buildings a lived context, a historical reality.

Students were learning about the community in which they live. This program met students with content that was relevant to them. It engaged them critically and imaginatively. It had the potential to change how they think about time and place. As a history lesson this experience had a lasting effect on students as they went home to explain what they learned to their parents.

History should challenge students to think about the past in light of the present. Sadly, history is often presented as a useless and boring class that students must endure. As a high school student in Ottawa I remember sitting in history classes, immersed in the narratives of Confederation, wondering when the bell would ring to free us from taking notes. As a secondary school educator in Alberta, I wondered why historical content seemed dry and uninformative to many of my students. One possibility is that I taught history as a component in the school subject of social studies. As an interdisciplinary course, social studies pursues contemporary issues through an inquiry lens. More often than not, social studies courses use history content (case studies) to illustrate a concept or issue, rather than a way of knowing itself (Sexais, 1994). A deeper look into the Alberta Social Studies Program of Studies challenges this use of history. Highlighted as a dimension of thought, historical thinking is:

a process whereby students are challenged to rethink assumptions about the past and to reimagine both the present and the future. It helps students become well-informed citizens who approach issues with an inquiring mind and exercise sound judgment when presented with new information or a perspective different from

their own. Historical thinking skills involve the sequencing of events, the analysis of patterns and the placement of events in context to assist in the construction of meaning and understanding, and can be applied to a variety of media, such as oral traditions, print, electronic text, art and music. (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 9)

If we take this direction seriously, historical thinking should facilitate student engagement with the complexities of historical accounts. Students should see the past as being essential to their conceptualization of the present. Students should re-examine their assumptions about the past based on multiple perspectives. Though history might only be one way of disciplinary thinking in the scope of social studies, surely fostering historical thinking is a better way to engage with the past. Therefore, why is history being conceptualized as the delivery of established narratives rather than a rich way of knowing? To approach this question, we need to consider how history is taught.

History has been an important part of western public education since the late 19th century (Heathorn, 2000; von Heyking, 2006). What has been in dispute is the way history has been taught. According to government documents, textbooks, and student readers, dating from the late 19th century to the present, the purpose of history education is to impress upon students the importance of nationalism and establish a sentiment of patriotism (Heathorn, 2000, p. viii; von Heyking, 2006, p. 11). Traditional pedagogical methods routinely focused on rote memorization (von Heyking, 2006, p. 12), trusting in nationalistic narratives to impress upon students the importance of social cohesion. Research has revealed the futility of this pedagogical approach. Wineburg (2005) argues that most students do not retain memorized narratives. In light of this disconnect cognitive psychologists propose, "that the problem with students is not that they don't know enough about history. The problem is that they don't know what history is in the first place" (Calder, 2006, p. 1363).

In the United Kingdom (UK) an approach to history education was implemented in the 1980s that focused on how history is constructed (Lee, 1984). Rather than memorizing facts, this approach took into account the skills historians employ in constructing historical narratives. In Canada, The Historical Thinking Project brought together researchers, theorists, and practitioners to clarify and implement a procedural approach to history education. This procedural approach seeks to enable students to “think about how historians transform the past into history and begin constructing history themselves” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 3).

While theoretical models of historical thinking argued the importance of procedural skills, proponents have not reached consensus on the purpose of history education. The development of historical thinking skills (Seixas & Morton, 2013) offer teachers a procedural structure to engage history as a way of knowing, but these considerations problematize the past and make a nationalistic grand narrative difficult to sustain. Further, research that investigates student understandings of history suggest that historical thinking skills are not changing student adherence to established collective narratives (Barton & McCully, 2005; Grever, Pelzer, & Hayden, 2011; Peck, 2011; Letourneau & Moisan, 2004). Therefore, a strict procedural approach to history education is having a limited impact student articulations of identity and citizenship. The social studies curriculum of Alberta clearly states that its purpose is to produce active and responsible citizens within a pluralistic democracy (Alberta Education, 2005). Yet the specific learning outcomes in the curriculum do not clarify the concept of citizenship. In provincial social studies and history curricula, vague statements about citizenship cannot inform pedagogical practice. Therefore, I am left with an unclear purpose for history

education and, by extension, an uncertainty of the way history should be taught. It is these fundamental problems that lead to the questions at the core of my research.

The purpose of this thesis will be to analyze and critique the current theories on historical education and pedagogy from the extant research and literature, particularly focusing on the Canadian context. Ultimately, I want to inquire if a humanist approach to history education is an appropriate model to address the structure of the academic discipline, the development of the students' historical consciousness and the mandate of citizenship education.

### **Key Concepts**

In any academic field, the careful articulation of how concepts are framed will allow for dialogue and debate. Although there is still considerable debate around how these concepts are conceptualized, I offer the following descriptions as the way I'm articulating these concepts within this thesis.

### **History**

History can be described as the stories we tell about the past (Seixas & Morton, 2013). The discipline of history incorporates the thinking processes of the historian in sculpting an understanding of the past. These thinking processes involve an inquiry process, abiding by norms of evidence, determining significance, and seeking causal relationships (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 2). This interpretation of the discipline is rooted in a North American perspective of objectivity was developed in the late 19th century. Novick (1988) described this professionalized approach to history as scientific and directly tied to the archives of the past (pp. 21-22). The ideal historian was seen as one who employed "rigor, assiduity in research, an infinite capacity for the most painstaking

and arduous pursuit of fact” (p. 23). This impression of history was dominant for much of the early 20th century. Through the work of social, gender, postcolonial, and postmodern historians, the presupposition of objectivity came under scrutiny. These historians began to question the composition of the archive itself and sought other forms of evidence. Subsequently history became broader, offering the experiences of the working class, feminist, and Indigenous narratives. What emerged in the 1960s and 1970s was an approach to history that recognized the inherent subjectivity of the historian in constructing a variety of narratives.

### **History Education**

History education is the application of substantive and procedural aspects of disciplinary history to an education context. History education has been intentionally incorporated into curriculum documents as a staple of public education. From the early 1900s, the substantive narratives of history have offered students examples of morality, industriousness, and patriotism (Heathorn, 2000; von Heyking, 2006). Student readers (among other educational resources) reflect historical biographies of national and/or Biblical heroes, key narratives of conflict, as well as key nation-building events. History is used in education as a way to build a sense of collective belonging. The creation of a common past allows students to see their participation in society as a continuation of that heritage. History has been used in education to present an uncritical transmission of information. Although historians themselves realize the judgments involved in creating a historical narrative, education systems have continued to represent history as fact.

The role of history education continues to be debated from various perspectives. On one hand, heritage groups (such as Historica) encourage curriculum writers to include



more Canadian history, in order to ground students in a nationalistic knowledge of the past. On the other hand, researchers such as Lee (1984), Wineburg (2005), and Seixas (2017) argue for a procedural approach to history education. Both of these perspectives share certain assumptions. History is an essential field of study to understand the past and its implications on the present. History needs to engage with evidence of the past to relay reliable information. History is instrumental for citizens of a nation-state. Yet the two perspectives differ with what they expect students to engage. Those that feel history education should convey an established national narrative think that a shared past is essential in nation building and social cohesion. Those that argue for a procedural approach consider that learning the skills needed to understand and construct narratives of the past provide students the abilities to interact with a changing world critically and productively. Needless to say, either extreme paints an incomplete picture of what history is and how it contributes to citizenship education.

### **Historical Thinking**

Historical thinking is an approach to history education that focuses on procedural concepts that are informed by the competencies that historians use to construct historical narratives. Research about historical reasoning dates back to the early 1900s, where American psychologists revealed that rote memorization was an ineffective way to teach history (Wineburg, 2005). Although numerous studies reinforced the conclusion that students were not remembering history, a traditional model of “information transmission” has remained as a prominent pedagogical method in history classrooms. The 1980s brought about a shift in history education. Researchers in England began to experiment with a procedural approach to history education. Lee (1984) proposed that students

should engage in the process of constructing historical narratives. This approach implied understanding the nature of primary documents and how to base historical arguments on available evidence.

In Canada, the historical thinking approach to history education developed through the collaboration of researchers, teachers, and curriculum writers. Out of this collaboration, Seixas and Morton (2013) published *The Big Six: Historical Thinking Concepts*, which outlined the key concepts that frame the historical thinking approach. These thinking concepts embrace an inquiry structure, abide by norms of evidence, determine significance, and seek causal relationships (p. 2). This constructivist approach focuses on the following concepts: historical significance, evidence, cause and consequence, continuity and change, historical perspectives, and the ethical dimension. Seixas and Morton (2013) attest that, “Our model of historical thinking—the six concepts—comes from the work of historians. It is rooted in how they tackle the difficult problems of understanding the past ... our goal is to enable students to begin to do the same” (p. 7). The six concepts facilitate student engagement with the judgments that inform the construction of history rather than the mere recitation of a narrative.

### **Historical Consciousness**

Historical consciousness is the emergent temporal orientation that develops through one’s thoughts and reflections about the past. Historical consciousness is an orientation that has a practical purpose, it “can guide action intentionally by the agency of historical memory” (Rüsen, 2004, p. 68). Historical memory is influenced by many forces in society. Family traditions, ethnic celebrations, and public commemoration all play a role in the development of one’s historical memory. It is this complexity that makes

historical consciousness difficult to define and measure. Consciousness also has a direct connection to the identity of an individual, therefore it can be inherently personal and resistant to modification. People have an inherent temporal orientation whether they are mindful of it or not. The past has an effect on the cognitive understanding of the present.

Historical consciousness is developed and deepened when people think historically, that is when people consciously think about the past. Seixas (2006) argues that by engaging in historical thinking, students will develop and deepen their temporal orientation. This position is based on the importance of disciplinary history's role in shaping how one approaches the past through procedural concepts. As students consider the nature of evidence or criteria for historical significance their understanding of history is enriched. If students are encouraged to think about their considerations, arguments, and judgments, then the reflective metacognitive process will have a direct influence on how they internalize the past within their own temporal perspectives. The link between cognition and consciousness is compelling if one assumes that consciousness emerges, primarily, from thinking. Yet it is reasonable to assert that historical consciousness also emerges from an emotional connection to the past. Thayer-Bacon (1998) notes that imagination and emotions are important sources of information that influence how inquiry can be approached and engaged. Therefore, thinking is more than a cognitive activity, it must strike a chord in the emotions of students to enhance the complexity of one's historical consciousness.

### **Humanism**

Humanism is an approach to education that seeks to appreciate the voice, creativity, and potential of humanity. Barton and Levstik (2004) explore the concept of

humanism through a few different lenses. In a classical sense, humanism embraces a philosophical approach that seeks to underscore human perfection. A romantic humanist looks to the inner world of the individual. A democratic humanist encourages the deliberation of social justice. These perspectives all hold in common an appreciation for the agency, integrity, and action of humanity. Nussbaum (1998) suggests that a humanist education encourages students to see agency and dignity in their own lives. Students are encouraged to live an examined life that stresses self-awareness, self-governance, and the capacity of respecting the humanity of fellow human beings (pp. 2-3). An essential aspect of humanism is one's encounter with other people. In an education setting, teachers can create opportunities to experience human beauty, agency, and voice. It is through the intentional display of multiple perspectives and actions that students can relate to the experiences and decisions of others. Multiple perspectives often raise a discussion about differences, but students should also address and value shared attributes that are necessary to develop attitudes of respect and concern (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 6). Barton and Levstik (2004) argue that humanism develops a passion and concern for the world that is essential not only for education, but for democracy as well.

### **Methodology**

This thesis analyzes the existing research on historical thinking. Theoretical constructs, research-based studies, government curricula, and authorized student textbooks will be the primary resources that I consulted. I account for the historical development of history education in order to understand the rationale behind the current historical thinking movement. An examination of key principles, assumptions, and limitations of historical thinking models allows for a balanced evaluation of current

literature. Throughout I compare the structures and principles of history education that are present among North American researchers, in particular the Canadian context. Further, I argue that the purpose of history education has been implied in the literature but additional clarification is necessary.

Recently, historical thinking constructs have been proposed to bridge the gap between theory and lived experience (Seixas, 2016a; Lévesque, 2016a). These models have referenced European models of historical consciousness in an attempt to articulate the role of history education in shaping the historical consciousness of students. As these contemporary theories are driving historical thinking, they warrant consideration. Through a synthesis of available research, the purpose of this thesis is to argue for a humanist construct of historical thinking that prioritizes disciplinary thinking, open-mindedness, and imaginative understanding. I hope this model can serve as a more holistic conceptualization of history education in provincial curriculum.

### **Thesis Outline**

The progression of the thesis is structured around an inquiry approach. Each chapter considers a question that has driven the investigation. I found this structure to be compelling because it allows each chapter to identify key concepts and considerations, while negotiating the diverse perspectives in the field.

#### **Chapter 1: Why contemplate the purpose and practice of history education?**

The chapter highlights the concepts encountered in the theoretical discourse and outline the purpose of the thesis. Attention is given to the structure of the thesis and the way the argument is constructed. This chapter raises the central inquiry: Can a humanist approach to history education facilitate citizenship education?

**Chapter 2: Has history education contributed to the education system’s goal of citizenship education?** This chapter examines the way history has been used in the context of public education from the late 19th century to the present. Particular attention is given to the analysis of why history was taught, how history was taught and its consequent efficacy. A key focus of this analysis is the Canadian context, in particular the province of Alberta. Reference to the current curricula will help to identify current problems and potential opportunities in articulating a greater focus on history education.

**Chapter 3: Has the shift toward a historical thinking pedagogy changed history education?** This chapter charts the philosophical and theoretical structures that inform the development of historical thinking models. It examines the contributions of researchers who frame history education as a procedural discipline that seeks to construct meaningful narratives from the evidence of the past. This approach to history is based on a shift from a behaviouristic understanding of learning to a cognitive and constructivist perspective. The philosophical structures of a positivist approach to history will be compared with contemporary understandings of history, in order to assess the foundational assumptions of historical thinking theory. The expressed purpose of historical thinking pedagogy is the development of historical consciousness, which lacks a uniform definition in the North American context. The chapter notes significant areas of consensus in the field of history education, while pointing to other areas that require clarification.

**Chapter 4: Does historical thinking facilitate the development of students’ historical consciousness?** This chapter analyzes the expressed purpose of the historical thinking pedagogy. To highlight the discord between the implied purpose of historical

thinking pedagogy and actual student interactions, preliminary research on student conceptualizations of history are analyzed. The key area of consideration is the exploration of the term ‘historical consciousness.’ Incorporating an analysis of Rösen’s concept of temporal awareness, this chapter proposes a synthesis with a model of humanist education.

**Chapter 5: How can a humanist approach to teaching history facilitate citizenship education?** The final chapter argues that a humanist construct of historical thinking leads students to develop an examined life (Nussbaum, 1998). The humanist model will be structured around the development of critical thinking, open-mindedness, and imaginative understanding. The chapter builds the case that a humanist approach to history education will engage students to develop the skills and attributes necessary to participate in a pluralistic democracy.

### **Conclusion**

There is consensus among history educators that historical thinking is an important aspect in history education. The concepts, as presented in *The Big Six: Historical Thinking Concepts* (Seixas & Morton, 2013), provide a framework to understand the role of the historian and the procedural considerations that inform the construction of an historical narrative. These tangible concepts, when used in education, help learners grasp an understanding of the past through a greater appreciation of the procedures that historians employ. The teaching and practical application of historical thinking concepts open opportunities for students to develop the necessary competencies to engage in historical inquiry, evaluation and, to some extent, narrative construction.

There are some key areas where the current research offers some diverging points of view around some fundamental questions. First, what defines the nature of history and the role of the historian? Second, is the teaching of historical thinking plausible and effective? Third, what is the central purpose of history education? These considerations make up the basis for redefining how history education is envisioned. Currently there are discussions among historical thinking theorists about constructed models that balance the disciplinary competencies with memory and life practice (Seixas, 2016a; Lévesque, 2016a). These discussions are fruitful, but continue to maintain the dichotomy between disciplinary history and life practice.

The central question of my inquiry is whether a humanist approach to history education can facilitate citizenship education? Throughout the thesis, I will argue that a humanist focus to history education will provide a necessary corrective to a strict procedural approach. Nussbaum's (1998; 2006) argument for an examined life, when adapted to history education, defines the purpose of history as an encounter with the voices, intentions, and experiences of people in the past. Students will be encouraged to critically engage with the voices and contexts of the past, while also questioning their own perspectives and biases. Students will cultivate an open-mind, as they interrogate perspectives that are different than their own. Additionally, understanding perspectives from the past will require students to cultivate an imaginative understanding that is rooted in a shared humanity. By embracing a humanist model of historical thinking, learners will engage with historical thinking skills that are applied to a relational context. As human interactions are prioritized, students will develop the skills that are necessary to engage in a pluralistic democracy.



## CHAPTER 2:

### Has History Education Contributed to the Education System's Goal of Citizenship Education?

#### Introduction

It was not too long ago that my aunt handed me all the historical research she had compiled about my 98-year-old grandmother. Those documents told the story of my grandmother and her family moving from England to find homes in Ontario and, eventually, the Canadian prairie. The loose narrative reflects the significance of world events on my family. The Great Depression was seen as a difficult time in which my grandparents met and fell in love. World War II was a period where my grandfather left a young family to serve his country. After the war my grandfather returned and worked on the railroad in rural Alberta. During their time in Alberta, my grandparents confronted hardships, raised a family, and invested in their community. In reading my grandmother's memoirs, I experienced an overwhelming sense of connection to time and place. Her stories highlight the courage and determination that allowed my family to grow and take root in rural Alberta. The people I know and love were shaped by these antecedents. As I reflect on the stories my father shared with me as a boy, Alberta was the backdrop for numerous family hijinks. Although I did not grow up in rural Alberta, experience the Great Depression, or fight in World War II, the memoirs humanize those experiences and help me understand people I know and love. Experiencing history revealed that my past is indelibly connected to my present.

The discipline of history has the ability to create a sense of connection and belonging. It has the effect of humanizing the roots of the present in order to give us a

deeper sense of the world in which we currently live in. Consequently, history can draw communities together and provide a basis for mutual understanding and the establishment of civil society. As an educator, I have taught history in the context of the social studies curriculum in Alberta for the past 12 years. Through these experiences I have seen students develop deep connections with their communities, recoil in horror at narratives of inhumanity, and be challenged by accounts of altruism. History elicits a personal and emotional response. Although the power of history in the lives of people is undeniable, one must ask what the role of history is in the scope of public education. Given that history is commemorated, displayed, and retold in many settings outside of the classroom, what is the rationale for its inclusion as a necessary aspect of education? I think the answer to this question is embodied in the role history plays in understanding the present (Lee, 1984b). The questions of disciplinary history reflect the questions of society seeking to understand itself. For example, even as I write, politicians, journalists, and historians are debating monuments of past “heroes” in light of present understandings of racism and morality. In Canada, communities are struggling with the legacy of our first Prime Minister, John A. MacDonalD. As a politician he played a significant role in uniting the country in 1867, but he was also a leading voice that advocated for the starvation and mistreatment of Indigenous peoples on the Prairies in the 1880s (Editorial, 2018). History can reveal diverse perspectives that make up the realities that we experience locally, provincially, nationally and globally. History can, and should, challenge perspectives and stimulate inquiry.

Traditionally, history has been a vehicle for citizenship education. Given that the very concept of democracy is based on understandings of freedom and equality that are

historical in nature, the study of history affords students an opportunity to interrogate the perspectives that have constructed our perceptions of contemporary society (Lee, 1984b). The purpose of this chapter is to explore the question: Has history education contributed to the education system's goal of citizenship education? In addressing this question we will examine three key considerations. First, we will consider the ways history education has been used in citizenship education. Second, we will explore how the discipline of history has evolved over time. Finally, we will evaluate whether social studies programs can effectively incorporate history for citizenship education. Ultimately, this chapter argues that history education transmits a grand narrative about the past that does not reflect an accurate understanding of the disciplinary history, nor facilitate students' engagement with the past. If history is to be relevant to citizenship education, educators must develop a pedagogical approach that invites students to relate the past to their present in meaningful ways.

### **Did the Study of History Contribute to Citizenship Education?**

History has been a consistent school subject of English education systems since the late 19th century. The purpose for history, as represented in early Canadian and British sources, was the propagation of national citizenship. The Canadian historian, Osborne (2000a), reveals that the mandatory inclusion of history from the 1890s to the 1960s was strongly supported: "most people accepted that the primary purpose of public schooling was the training of citizens, and that history was indispensable in this task" (p. 409). The concept of citizenship is present in both the stated and implied purposes of public education from the late 19th century into the present time. Early conceptualizations of citizenship prioritized the values of unity, loyalty and shared

religious beliefs (Axelrod, 2003; Heathorn, 2000). Later perspectives embraced the complexities of civic nationalism and developed a more sophisticated understanding of patriotism. Although it is apparent that the development of citizenship is a purpose of the public-school system, history education has played a significant role in facilitating that goal. Therefore, in order to clarify the role of history in public education, it is necessary to approach the concept of citizenship historically. An examination of English-speaking contexts reveals the clear priority of developing civic unity.

The use of history to unite society has been clearly demonstrated in early British sources. Quoting from the May 1887 publication of the *Education Times*, Heathorn (2000) notes that “history was often considered the ‘nursery of patriotism and public virtue’” (p. 41). Student readers of the early 20th century stressed historical narratives that exclusively supported English values of liberty and sacrifice (p. 47). As students read stories of English virtue, innovation, or courage, they could identify with the commonality of their shared roots and respond with a sense of the responsibility. The public-school system of the early 20th century saw the value of using history in the “process of secular ‘nation-building’ among the working classes” (p. ix). In Canada the themes of “loyalism, Christianity, volunteerism, gender and social class” (Axelrod, 2003, p. 22) were stressed as social priorities to build unity.

Early education systems were developed to respond to serious concerns about the stability of society. During the 1830s, rebellions in Lower Canada and Chartist uprisings in England were symptomatic of divisions in society. In response, education systems gradually emerged that focused on instilling loyalty in the divergent populations (Axelrod, 2003; Grigg, 2002). In the case of the Chartist uprisings, Grigg (2002), writing

about the rise of Ragged schools in Wales, notes that the government saw education as an key to calm the disgruntled working-class. Education, in this period, focused primarily on the outcomes of “orderliness, obedience, and literacy” (p. 231). If working-class children were going to school, they could be taught skills, learn the stories of their nation, and share the Christian beliefs and morality of society (p. 230). Unfortunately, until the Education Act of 1870, schools in England were unregulated and struggled to educate working-class children. Still, education was perceived as a tool to bring together diverse perspectives. Although the divisions of class, race, and gender continue to persist, 19th century reformers saw education as a conduit to develop democratic values in Canada.

Prominent ‘rebels’ such as William Lyon Mackenzie in Upper Canada and Louis-Joseph Papineau of Lower Canada, saw extended schooling as an important instrument of democratization. No longer should political authority or the opportunity for formal learning be the prerogative of the privileged. Ordinary citizens had the right to be educated and enlightened, and, as Mackenzie argued, society’s elites in church and government had no moral justification for continuing to ‘keep [the people] in darkness.’ Indeed, an educated populace would be better able to act in its own political interests. (Axelrod, 2003, p. 25)

The lofty ideals of Mackenzie and Papineau would not be fulfilled immediately, but the vision of unity, loyalty and duty persisted in education. Axelrod (2003), notes that education was the primary vehicle used to assimilate an emerging immigrant population into an understanding of the dominant society. By the dawn of the 20th century, the cornerstones of British-Canadian citizenship rested on Imperial patriotism, Protestantism, the English language, and personal cleanliness (p. 86). These were the aspects of society that would bring about a recognizable national citizenry, unified around shared ideals and national goals.

By the beginning of the 20th century citizenship was understood as loyalty to Christianity and the British Empire. Although one might argue that the religious aspects

of citizenship have been replaced through secularization, it is clear that loyalty to a civic nation persists as a key attribute of citizenship (von Heyking, 2006). What inevitably changes over time is how the educational goal of fostering citizenship is articulated and conceptualized. By tracing the concept of citizenship historically, one can see the various priorities of civil society. In Canada, provincial governments had (and have) the constitutional authority to make legislation regarding schooling. This means that understandings of the kind of citizen school systems were intended to develop vary (von Heyking, 2006). In Alberta, the perspectives of traditionalists and progressives presented competing ideologies of education from 1905 to 1980. These ideologies revealed differing perspectives of society, the importance of the individual, and the mandate of citizenship education.

In von Heyking's (2006) account, *Creating Citizens: History & Identity in Alberta's Schools, 1905-1980*, the various understandings of citizenship education in Alberta are revealed through an investigation of government commissions, records, curriculum documents, student readers, and newspaper archives. Holistically, she argues that there are distinct shifts in educational perspectives that are reflective of the socio-economic challenges of the time as well as various understandings of citizenship. It is these shifts that help us understand the priorities of history education generally and citizenship education specifically.

In 1901 the Department of Education in Alberta was established through the Schools Ordinance Act. The priority of this education system was an education that was academic in its nature and sought to produce students who exemplified "good character" (von Heyking, 2006, p. 13). Educational resources, such as student readers and textbooks,

reflected society as harmonious and orderly. The ideals of material and spiritual progress were beacons of hope, and students were seen as becoming citizens of ‘good character’ (p. 13). To encourage this ideal student readers embraced selected historical narratives that focused on the heroic exploits of “famous explorers, martyred missionaries, glorious warriors, and gifted statesmen” (p. 20). These narratives were intended to “serve as vehicles of moral education, offering salutary lessons in the consequences of virtue and wickedness” (Osborne, 2000a, p. 409). Many immigrant communities saw the benefit of this approach to education because it acquainted their children with “the English tradition” (von Heyking, 2006, p. 9). The explicit function of education in this period was, unapologetically, to create a sense of civic unity and responsibility to the British Empire (p. 21). Von Heyking quotes Louise McKinney, who stated, “The purpose of life is citizenship. What is citizenship? Citizenship is the service to the world in which we live” (p. 27).

Just prior to the First World War, national authorities raised concerns about the state of the nation’s workers. The concern about the work force was supported by the 1913 *Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education*, which recommended an approach to education that was child-centered and vocationally oriented (von Heyking, 2006, p. 8). This utilitarian shift in education came from two sources. The first source was growing public opinion that education “offered more varied programs and courses with vocational relevance for students” (p. 29). The desire for a practical education was reflected in an approach to history, which stressed “that history instruction should not emphasize the training of memory, but rather should give students the opportunity to practice “scientific” skills such as searching for data, categorizing

information and drawing conclusions” (p. 35). The second source was the educated elites. Theorists such as Selleck, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Galton, Burt, Hall, and Thorndike argued for the value of practical ethics “as fundamental to the task of uniting the public in a commitment to community service, social improvement, and nation building” (p. 34). The language of practicality and utility in economic terms was used to underscore traditional understandings of citizenship. In history readers, children read about the ‘progress’ of the human condition (p. 39) and importance of British patriotism (p. 41). By 1934 the government of Alberta revised its understanding of citizenship education asserting the “principles of equity, justice, mutual aid and social well being” (p. 53). This ideological shift placed contemporary concerns at the forefront of education and resulted in the elimination of history as a school subject. Progressive educationalists introduced program reforms that would “equip the schools to restructure society and address the problems facing Alberta” (p. 53). As a result, social studies was introduced as a school subject that had the flexibility to wrestle with current issues from a multi-disciplinary perspective, thus allowing students to embrace a problem-solving frame of reference.

During the difficulties of the Great Depression, the vision of progressive education took hold in the Department of Education in Alberta. With a new Social Credit government elected into power there emerged an opportunity for curriculum change. William Aberhart was elected Premier of the province and he, as a former educator, assumed the duties of Minister of Education. Under his leadership the importance of personality and character became a marker of citizenship. Progressives saw training for citizenship as preparing students to solve public issues, take political action and practice consumer skills (von Heyking, 2006, p. 86). The focus of citizenship education was most



apparent in the growth of the social studies program. This school subject was envisioned to relate “directly to the organization and development of human society and to man as a member of social groups” (p. 69). The study of history, as part of social studies, provided the necessary background information to solve current problems (p. 69). This period of educational reform embraced a vision of education that could be described as “‘activity’ programs, ‘child-centered’ education, ‘learning by doing,’ and ‘democratic education’” (p. 60). These education reforms conceptualized citizenship as embracing democratic attitudes and behavior, but there was “no reference to the personal attributes of good citizens” (p. 86). The priority of the progressive program emerged as a way to engage students with the societal issues of their time and encourage social reformation.

During the post war period of 1945 to 1980 the pendulum swing of educational priorities continued in Alberta. In the wake of the Second World War, a move towards a more traditional education was expressed. Classics professor W.G. Hardy argued that an education for democracy requires leaders who “are knowledgeable about the past and who are able to think constructively and critically about the future...leaders who have received a traditional liberal education” (von Heyking, 2006, p. 95). Despite the continuing debate between traditional and progressive views on education, there was a consensus that schools should produce modern workers with the aptitudes and abilities to benefit the economy (p. 100). Correspondingly, this period in the province saw an increase in vocational programs and options in composite high schools. Although vestiges of progressive education remained in the Enterprise approach to elementary education and the social studies program in the middle and high schools, the competing voice of utility was a driving force in educational policy. By the 1980s, the priority of

preparing students for the competitive world economy, took precedence over the loosely defined goals of citizenship (Osborne, 2003, p. 594).

Though the forces of utilitarianism were dominant in the 1980s and 1990s, there emerged during this period a neo-progressive check on industrial utilitarianism through a focus on self-actualization. The vision of these educationalists was that “schools could equip citizens to solve the problems of society...and provide all individuals an avenue for self-fulfillment that would last a lifetime” (von Heyking, 2006, p. 126). The social studies curriculum of that time reflects the priority of self-actualization through the endeavour to teach students the “concepts and generalizations central to the discipline” (p. 128). This preparation emphasized the goal of “doing history rather than the reading about history” (p. 128). What emerged was a social studies program that focused more intently on the development of students’ value systems. The intended goal was “to enable students to discover their own belief system through the process of value clarification” (p. 131). In doing so, the new social studies program was focused on enabling students to solve global problems from a values-based perspective.

It could be argued that individualistic priorities of self-actualization actually eroded the curricular focus on citizenship within the social studies curriculum in Alberta during the 1980s, yet it is apparent that citizenship has remained as an important focus. The current *Social Studies Program of Study* (Alberta Education, 2005) states:

Social studies provides opportunities for students to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge that will enable them to become engaged, active, informed and responsible citizens. Recognition and respect for individual and collective identity is essential in a pluralistic and democratic society. Social studies helps students develop their sense of self and community, encouraging them to affirm their place as citizens in an inclusive, democratic society. (p. 1)

The front matter of the Program of Studies (Alberta, Education, 2005) elaborates further by intentionally emphasizing the “importance of diversity and respect for differences as well as the need for social cohesion and the effective functioning of society” (p. 1). The individual is important by promoting “a sense of belonging and acceptance in students as they engage in active and responsible citizenship” (p. 1). These intentional connections between identity and citizenship are facilitated through the realization that factors such as “culture, language, environment, gender, ideology, religion, spirituality and philosophy” (p. 1) all play a role in shaping the society in which students belong. History, in this vision of citizenship, provides the necessary background for “Aboriginal heritage, bilingual nature, and multicultural realities” (p. 1).

History continues to have a prominent place in citizenship education. Yet, it is important to ask how history has been represented? In the student textbook, *Canada: History in the Making* (Bartlett & Galivan, 1986), the historical narratives are organized around a Eurocentric perspective as seen in the established grand narratives of conquest (pp. 225-250), struggle (pp. 257-270), Confederation (pp. 14-19, 21-256), the prominence of Canada in the world wars (pp. 411-423, 436-443), and the established Canada Act (pp. 20-28). In a 1996 publication, *Canada Today*, the grand narrative is used to inform a particular interpretation of identity:

Canada’s national identity is based on the cultures of its two founding peoples, the French and the English. This fact is clearly established in the nation’s early history; in the Quebec and Constitutional Acts; and in the agreement between Quebec and the other British North American colonies at the time of Confederation. (Smith, McDevitt, & Scully, 1996, p. 31)

History has often been presented as an established narrative that inspires civic belonging in school settings. Though there is documentary evidence (Alberta Education, 2005) to

suggest that students should engage in critical thought and use history to understand the pluralistic society in which they live, the pressure to adhere to a master narrative remains. This approach to history demonstrates a tendency to validate certain social structures and interpretations of national identity. Yet, this uncritical approach to history does not recognize the fundamental shifts that have occurred in the academic discipline itself over the past century. Disciplinary history is not static. It is deliberated, debated, and created.

### **Has the Disciplinary Structure of History Changed over Time?**

The subject of history has consistently been an essential component in public school curricula in the western world. Certain subject are included in education because they reflect disciplinary ways of knowing that curriculum writers think are important for an educated citizenry. Schiro (2008), in his review of curriculum ideologies, states that the academic disciplines “represent different areas of study found in most institutions of higher education and included the knowledge base associated with each area of study. It is the knowledge— “the information, attitudes, and assumptions”—of the academic disciplines that form the content of school curriculum” (p. 13). Although the merits of what Schiro calls the “scholar academic” ideology on curriculum development could be interrogated, it is clear that current approaches to curricula persist in organizing around subject areas. Therefore, it is important to explore the disciplinary roots of history to understand the school subject. By regarding “history” as a way of knowing, we will be able to better understand its inclusion in schools that are tasked with preparing “good citizens” (p. 13).

The school subject of history was initially shaped by two key ideas that 19th century historians held: progress and objectivity. These ideas are apparent in early

textbooks that students would have been required to read. In *A Canadian History for Boys and Girls*, Weaver (1919) notes:

Though Confederation was a most important step in the progress of our country, a glance at the map will show that the Dominion of Canada was small in 1867 compared to what it is in 1908. How the North-West, British Columbia, and Prince Edward Island became part of it remains to be told, and is of deep importance, for the control of the fertile and boundless West has increased immeasurably the possibilities that lie before the “the youngest of the nations.” (p. 295)

National progress is a guiding value for this narrative, as evidenced through reference to the expansion and enrichment of the Dominion. The planned construction of the narrative builds from humble beginnings to national triumph. In another account, Hughs (1951) grounds students’ exploration of the past in light of the shared realization that, “[t]oday’s world is a great world” (p. 1). This presentation of history underscores the greatness of the present. The epistemological approach assumes the inferiority of the past, thereby colouring the way history was approached. Within these two examples, the Whiggish theme of progress is clear as an underlying narrative in the construction of the historical narrative.

The other carryover from 19th century historians was the epistemological importance of objectivity. In approaching the question of how we know what we know, historians relied on a rational procedure based on evidence in order to arrive at historical truth. School readers took up this approach as indicated in Duncan’s (1916) preface: “The aim of this book is to tell the story of our country simply, yet without sacrificing historical content to simplicity” (p. v). This “simple telling” of the national history lists the significant events of the past without question or complexity. It takes a “biographical method” that celebrates the accomplishments of “men of strong personality” (p. v). What

is interesting in Duncan's preface is the defense of his methodology "[A]t no point has this method been allowed to interfere with the logical treatment of great movements" (p. v). In identifying great men and contextualizing the great movements, Duncan offers a history that is dispassionately communicated. History, according to student readers, involved knowing what has happened as objective fact. This treatment of the past is firmly rooted in the early frameworks of disciplinary history.

Objectivity and progress have historical antecedents themselves. To understand the current state of historical inquiry, we need to look at the professionalization of the discipline. In looking back to the mid-1800s, many of the influential historians were amateurs in the field. Consider the contributions of Lord Acton (1834-1902), who as a member of the British aristocracy, took to collecting historical artefacts. Upon his death his collection was extensive, though he had never constructed much original work from the research. In contrast to Acton, Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) was initially trained as a mathematician, who considered a life in the clergy but did not pursue it. As an internally conflicted individual, Carlyle took to writing and presented history that highlighted "divine drama" within society (Cockshut, n.d., para. 8). His most significant work was *The French Revolution* (1837), which highlighted the extent of God's judgment upon an unjust monarchy. Though there is a significant degree of subjective editorialization in the work, Carlyle's volumes on the Revolution were well received and popular. Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) and Karl Marx (1818-1883) are further examples of individuals who contributed significant theoretical perspectives to the study of the past, while they, themselves, were not professional historians. Though some criticize their

work, on the grounds of inaccuracies or biases, it is clear that they created an influential body of knowledge that continue to shape the way people think about the past.

The development of history as an academic discipline began in the 19th century. The ideological basis of this disciplinary approach was derived from an emerging scientific approach. The central quality that differentiated the work of amateurs from the professionals was the pursuit of objectivity. The method of achieving objectivity was seen most prominently in the historical work of German professors who exemplified the qualities of rigor, assiduity, and the pursuit of fact (Novick, 1988, p. 21). Novick, the University of Chicago historian, relates the concept of objectivity within the American historical tradition to the influence of Leopold von Ranke. Von Ranke's key contribution to the discipline was to:

apply to modern history those documentary and philological methods which had been developed for the study of antiquity. In assiduity and scrupulosity of research, in the critical treatment of a wide range of previously unused sources, in the volume of his productivity, and his development of the seminar for the training of scholars, Ranke was unprecedented and unsurpassed. (p. 26)

For Ranke and other German scholars of his time, the speculation and philosophical tradition of the Enlightenment had criticized the past in order to foster reform (Novick, 1988, p. 27). The German tradition grounded itself within the authority of the archives and represented the past as it occurred. Novick captures the certainty of the objective historian in the phrase, "Whatever the historical process had produced was not just to be accepted, but valued" (p. 27).

American historians, who received their training in German universities in the 19th century, came back to North America with a view of history that was perceived as an objective science (Novick, 1988, p. 31). The essence of the scientific approach was the

idea of “rigid self-elimination” (p. 32). Novick quotes the geologist Thomas Chamberlin, who stated:

Fact and rigorous induction from facts displace all preconceptions; all deductions from general principles, all favourite theories. The dearest doctrines, the most fascinating hypotheses, the most cherished creations of reason and the imagination are put in subjection to determinant facts. (p. 32)

The empirical approach followed an interpretation of the philosophies of Francis Bacon, John Locke, and to a lesser extent John Stuart Mill. Baconianism stressed the centrality of empirical observation as the key to discovery. The centrality of observation was predicated upon the elimination of a guiding hypothesis. The inclusion of the Lockian “blank-slate” psychology validated the necessity of self-elimination, while Mill argued that, “facts, appropriately arranged, would reveal their inner connections” (Novick, 1988, p. 34). In his exploration of the roots of academic history, Retz (2016) summarizes the dominance of logical positivism within the professionalization of the discipline of history:

In 19th century Germany, von Ranke’s historical school forged an identity for the new profession against the current of Hegel’s a priori construction of the meaning of history, stressing instead that history’s meaning is to be found in the countless and incommensurable individualities of which it is made, which to be grasped required intuitive understanding on the part of the historian. (p. 504)

Professionalized history, as represented in the emerging 20th century, was one that valued irrefutable factual evidence and the rigorous interrogation of evidence.

Green and Troup (1999) refer to this school as “the empiricists” in their edited collection titled *The Houses of History*. Though the desire of the empiricist for objective certainty is honourable, the nature of historical evidence is problematic and undermines the certainty that positivists tried to bring to the discipline. Green and Troup raise two difficulties regarding the reliability of evidence. First, evidence will never be complete;



therefore, conclusions need to be based on a narrow evidential perspective. Second, though evidence is destroyed over time, there is still too much that exists for one researcher to search. Furthermore, not all evidence is located in one convenient spot, nor has it all been discovered (p. 5). Burton (2005), questions the validity of positivism by interrogating the sacrosanct reverence historians place in the archives. In her introduction to the edited volume, *Archive Stories*, Burton argues that the archive itself is a construction that reflects, as Foucault held, “documents of exclusion” and “monuments of particular configurations of power” (p. 6). Therefore, the foundation of the positivist is inadvertently rooted in the ideologies of those that actively selected and preserved archival evidence. This realization underscores the fact that historical inquiry, purely focused on archival evidence, reflects the prejudices of the archive and eliminates voices that have not been preserved. These narratives reflect a narrow view of the past, thereby undermining the ‘certainty’ of the positivists.

The other presupposition of the positivistic approach to history is the illusion of objectivity. All theories, hypotheses, or agendas were to submit to the supremacy of observable, measurable, facts. It is the objective certainty that empowers a historian to have an authoritative voice to answer questions about the past. Burton (2005) addresses that presupposition head on by asserting that, at the very least, historical research involves the subjective aspects of “selection, interpretation, and even creative invention” (p. 8) as the historian experiences the collection of the archive. Contrary to the impression that the construction of history is an objective process, she argues that most historians regard their development of a historical narrative as “a highly interpretive work” (p. 8).

In the modern world, the value of truth and objectivity is important as people search for certainty. Yet, to deny the reality of subjectivity is to approach the past uncritically. In looking at important contributions to our understanding of the past, the ideologies and proclivities of individual historians are important to the development of a more complex historical narrative. Thompson's (1966) influential work, *The Making of the English Working Class*, is an example of a history crafted by an ideological historian. Thompson's analysis of the Industrial Revolution focuses on the histories of working-class people rather than the grand narrative of progress. Using the framework of a Marxist ideology, Thompson paints an accurate picture of exploitation and poverty. Given the transformations of industrial society, regular family roles were disrupted, sending children and parents to the factories to eke out a living (p. 334). The conditions in the factory were deplorable where workers worked long hours in dangerous, unsanitary conditions for low wages. Through an examination of people in the emerging working class, Thompson articulates that these inhuman conditions were apparent to those in government, but "class hatred and fear corrupted the human conscience" (p. 341). Referencing the plight of children, Thompson laments, "the exploitation of little children on this scale and with this intensity, was one of the most shameful events in our history" (p. 349). Reading *The Making of the English Working Class* is not an encounter with dispassionate objective history, rather it is a journey into the past with a passionate humanitarian Marxist. In looking at "history from below," Thompson gives an edited voice to those who did not have a platform to voice their own experiences. As Burton (2005) has stated, the objectivity of the historical profession is illusory and society would do well to critically consider many interpretations of the past. This recognition of

subjectivity allows for a range of approaches to historical inquiry, including autobiographical, memorial, and fictional works.

Given that the positivistic perspectives of the historian have been refuted and that the interpretive nature of narrative construction can be considered valid, it is necessary to look at the priorities that are present in the discipline today. Although it could be argued that the primary role of the historian is the construction of an accurate narrative, the process of doing so will invariably lead to the development of new questions, considerations, or perspectives that inform a robust understanding of the past (Osborne, 2003, p. 586). In practice, historians discuss the political, social, gender, ethnic and post-modern perspectives in order to construct a coherent narrative of the past that will stand the scrutiny of their peers. Ultimately, all aspects of history are up for debate. Historical claims need to stand the test of critical evaluation. Perspectives that are omitted should be brought to light and historical heroes may, consequently, become villains.

This variability of the historical narrative presents a problem for the public, who require a sense of the past to anchor the realities of the present. What complicates this relationship between the academy and the public is an inherent misunderstanding about what history is. History is not just the telling of simple stories about past events. The role of the historian is to be curious, to inquire, and seek to construct an understanding of the past. The historian uses critical tools to construct a more complex narrative that addresses the various perspectives and necessary considerations. An understanding of these disciplinary considerations would suggest a change in the role of the public from being uncritical consumers of history to inquiring researchers. Students of history should be

evaluating evidence, events and accounts that have an influence on their construction of identity and citizenship.

This section began with the references to early 20th century textbooks that reflected ideas of progress and objectivity. These ideas framed Canadian history in schools as an unproblematic national history. Although the discipline of history has since problematized objectivity and progress, the school-subject of history has maintained an adherence to a national story (Cutrara, 2018c). One reason for maintaining a “master narrative” could be the assumption that a singular, uniting narrative is necessary for citizenship education. History education is inherently political. Public officials are given the task of structuring provincial curriculum. Education is not a politically neutral endeavor, therefore it is imperative that educational experts, who frame the curriculum, not only provide a rationale for what historical content is included, but also what was omitted. As social history has become more prominent and social justice has become a key value in our societies, history can no longer be taught as a political narrative of the British Empire in Canada. Considerations of gender, social, ethnic, Indigenous and post-colonial histories provide a clear challenge to the hegemony of the ruling class.

Furthermore, the focus on the nation as the subject of educational history does not address the differences between the priorities of a nation and the individual experiences of people who “belong to” the nation. In her post-colonial commentary on British history, Burton (1997) questions the construct of ‘nation.’ She argues that the concept of ‘nation’ supports and serves certain individuals over others, and the propagation of this political perspective will necessarily bias the historical narrative (p. 234). It is clear that the complexity of the discipline of history allows for a robust understanding of the past that

embraces complexity and critical engagement. History has grown to become more inclusive and less definite about the narratives that are constructed. The difficulty for curriculum framers is how to structure citizenship education around a discipline that openly questions political motives, exploitation, and indoctrination.

I wish I could provide an easy answer to curriculum framers who struggle to balance the priorities of citizenship education with the critical nature of disciplinary history. This tension is indicative of expressed societal priorities of education and the nature of historical inquiry. Historically, curricular approaches have represented history education from static, positivistic, and nationalistic perspectives. Though there have been moves from traditional to progressive pedagogies, the centrality of a “nation-building” approach to history continues. The controversy around history education rests in the tension between approved content and a disciplinary pedagogical approach. On one hand, there are voices calling for a unifying Canadian narrative. However, the idea of a master narrative is problematic given that the discipline challenges the acceptance of an uncritical account of the past. On the other hand, a movement to a less historically explicit social studies program allows for citizenship education to escape the procedural understandings of the discipline and regard history as one perspective in an interdisciplinary approach to social issues.

### **Can a Social Studies Program Prioritize the Discipline of History to Strengthen Citizenship Education?**

Citizenship education encourages students to engage in social issues that are relevant to them. Although history was seen as a prominent discipline to develop a sense of civic belonging, the progressivism of the early 1900s facilitated a move away from

disciplinary history to a multidisciplinary focus on social studies, where history was seen as one discipline among “geography, ecology, economics, law, philosophy, political science and other social science disciplines” (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 1). Osborne (2003) notes that social studies came into Canada from educationalists in the United States (USA) during the 1930s. The discipline drew from the many social science disciplines and was perceived as a way to “study the local community and its use of ‘expanding horizons’ to spread outwards into the world at large” (p. 590). The National Council for the Social Studies (2016) affirms that social studies promotes the skills of democratic engagement: “(1) developing questions and planning inquiries; (2) applying disciplinary concepts and tools; (3) evaluating sources and using evidence; and (4) communicating conclusions and taking informed action” (p. 180). Although the issues-based focus of social studies offers students a way to critically engage in contemporary interests, the multi-disciplinary structure does not provide a coherent focus on disciplinary ways of knowing.

Within the *Alberta Social Studies Program of Study*, the discipline of history is seen as an important part of the school subject. Referencing the curriculum strand of “Time, Continuity and Change,” the front matter states: “Considering multiple perspectives on history, and contemporary issues within their historical context, enables students to understand and appreciate the social, cultural and political dimensions of the past, make meaning of the present and make decisions for the future” (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 6). This vision of history implies that students will engage in disciplinary thinking through the exploration of different perspectives about the past. In the grade level documents historical content is present in the specific learner outcomes (SLOs). For

example, in grade 12, students are expected to consider the historical foundations that contributed to classical liberalism. SLO 2.5 asks students to consider the role of John Locke, Montesquieu, Adam Smith, and John Stuart Mill in shaping liberal thought (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 21). The inclusion of the historical content is used to illustrate the key concepts of private property, self-interest and competition (p. 20). The curriculum document does not imply a robust investigation of the historical context around the lives of these philosophers, rather historical narrative is being used to deepen conceptual understanding.

Seixas (1994) argues that even a social studies program built upon a historical foundation cannot attempt to develop historical thinking: “it is simply not part of the prescribed curriculum” (p. 99). He articulates that history, as a way of knowing, is different than presenting historical content or developing generic higher order thinking skills. If a curriculum intends to make a historical understanding a key outcome for students, then historical thinking must be intentionally taught (p. 101). Seixas clearly asserts that it is worthwhile for students to recognize “history as an important way of constructing knowledge about our situation” so that they appreciate the power and complexity inherent in the past and its role to conceptualize the present (p. 105). Therefore, approaching history through a social studies lens reveals some clear complications. If history is one of many disciplines, it can be seen as merely a backdrop for broader issues to be encountered. If history is seen as content to illustrate conceptual understandings, it becomes a mere story or account, not a way of knowing in its own right. Finally, if disciplinary processes of history are not explicitly taught, then history loses its complexity and betrays our understanding of how we might even know the past.

One way to address the role of history within social studies has been to prioritize disciplinary history. Whelan (1992) argues that history is foundational for a multi-disciplinary and issues-based structure of social studies (p. 11).

The question, therefore, is not whether the study of social problems should be included in social studies education. Of course, it should; to do otherwise would be irresponsible. Rather, history advocates believe social problems studied within a history-centered curriculum present the most realistic and enlightening perspective, and such an approach, therefore, is most consistent with social studies' ultimate objective of citizenship education. (p. 12)

If Whelan's suggestions are to be taken to heart, the explicit inclusion of history in the social studies curriculum should build a foundation for understanding social issues and enhance the role students play in their contemporary communities. His argument rests on the assumption that disciplinary history is sufficiently multidisciplinary. The front matter of the Alberta Program of Studies states that students will engage in disciplinary history through "sequencing of events, the analysis of patterns and the placement of events in context to assist in the construction of meaning and understanding, and can be applied to a variety of media, such as oral traditions, print, electronic text, art and music" (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 9). Yet, upon examination of how history is included in each of the grade levels, it is clear that historical narratives are uncritically used as examples to build an understanding of essential concepts.

The arguments for history as the basis of social studies (Whelan, 1992) and historical thinking as an essential way of knowing (Seixas, 1994) provide a strong reasons for reconsidering the role of history in social studies education. Thornton and Barton (2010) argue that history education is best situated in the context of social studies. The authors note that history has relevance for learners beyond the priorities of the discipline's academy. They go so far as to suggest that, "students can only develop a



meaningful understanding of history if they study something *other* than history, for all historical content depends on concepts that are not themselves specifically historical” (p. 2484). Although Whelan notes the importance of the social sciences in the development of social history (1992, p. 11), Thornton and Barton (2010) contend that the concepts of other disciplines impart meaning to the study of history itself:

In an important sense, there is no conceptual content unique to history; the study of history consists entirely of concrete instances of concepts drawn from economics, sociology, geography, and so on, and if students are not given the opportunity to learn those concepts, much of the history they encounter will be unintelligible. (p. 2485)

Historical inquiry is used to answer the questions posed by contemporary society. Therefore, it is the role of the social studies teacher to bring forward issues and questions that demand a conceptual understandings from a variety of disciplines in order to make sense of society (p. 2486). In the words of Thornton and Barton, “Our argument, rather, is that regardless of the format of the curriculum, someone other than single-subject specialists must be minding the store” (p. 2487). Their rationale suggests that a singular history focus would consider conceptual understandings as secondary to the procedural concepts of historical thinking, while the social studies educator would see conceptual understanding as key to accessing the issue as a whole. Ultimately, the supporters of social studies argue that the multidisciplinary structure provides the pedagogical considerations to give history education relevance and meaning.

One issue that teachers encounter is the ambiguity of the multidisciplinary structure and how that relates to the identity and citizenship goals of social studies. If history is a disciplinary way of knowing, the same could be said of political science, economics, and geography. Although there are clear areas of overlap, such as including

geographical considerations in the study of trench warfare in World War I, there is neither time nor opportunity to engage students in developing diverse disciplinary competencies. As a result, disciplinary ways of knowing are misrepresented within social studies. Rather than simplify history as the transmission of historical content to be applied to a multidisciplinary issue, Osborne (2003) argues that provincial jurisdictions prioritize “history as a source of heritage and identity, a means of social integration, a vehicle for skills-development, a foundation for cultural literacy, a preparation for citizenship, or a humanistic discipline” (p. 594). Yet, one can see that curricula that is built primarily around identity formation may lack the necessary depth to promote social cohesion and responsibility. Rather than creating good citizens, schools merely promote good people (Osborne, 2004, p. 13). Laura Thompson, in her 2004 review of the Alberta social studies curriculum revision, notes that the ambiguity inherent in citizenship education is rooted in three structural realities that make coherent constructs of the concepts of identity and citizenship problematic.

First, the political nature and educational purpose of the teaching of 'national' citizenship is questionable. A clearly articulated definition of Canadian national identity does not currently exist; in fact, it remains unresolved. Second, the teaching of 'national' citizenship is problematic because it does not acknowledge difference, but rather creates a hegemonic vehicle by which national consciousness is disseminated regardless of class, culture, and gender (Osborne, 1997). Third, and finally, identity - as a subtopic of citizenship in the area of the social studies - becomes a problematic concept when defining what constitutes the social studies differs from one educational stakeholder to another. Thus, the complexity of citizenship and identity can mean different things to different groups of people. (Thompson, 2004, para. 12)

To further complicate the focus on citizenship, in provincial jurisdictions the place of history within social studies curricula is not explicit. Although the social studies program in Alberta embraces identity, heritage, and multiple perspectives as aspects of

citizenship, the explicit link to history as the medium to cultivate those values is only loosely implied (Osborne, 2003, p. 594). As a result, students are not explicitly engaged in understanding and analyzing historical narratives that influence their individual identities. An education that embraces an accurate view of disciplinary history engages students in the creation of historical narratives, which necessitates an understanding of how evidence is approached, the nature of historical claims, and the necessity of balanced perspectives. In order for students to construct a sense of identity and articulate their place in a pluralistic community, their engagement with disciplinary history is essential. Understanding that some historical perspectives have been silenced or overlooked is built through an appreciation of how and why historical narratives are created and utilized. These insights are crucial in approaching a pluralistic democracy. Unfortunately, unless curriculum framers explicitly make history a priority in the construction of social studies programs, the development of citizenship that is based upon a constructed sense of self and community will continue to be elusive.

The final obstacle that social studies programs face is that they set out to accomplish too much. There are too many outcomes to allow for the cultivation of a disciplinary approach to history. Within a multidisciplinary program, there is a lack of criteria to prioritize the inclusion of some aspects over others. For example, although the Alberta social studies program prioritizes skill development within the Program of Studies (Alberta Education, 2005), the focus on historical thinking is one aspect among many. Pedagogically, some teachers may incorporate critical and procedural skills of a historian to approach history. Yet even the best educators find that the congestion of the curriculum and the lack of specified training make the authentic uncovering of the past

unlikely. In 2015, the Alberta Teachers Association (ATA) undertook a survey of almost 500 social studies teachers within the province and asked them for feedback about teaching the existing social studies curriculum. The following perspectives are indicative of their responses:

I find I rush through interesting topics just so that I can cover everything. This forces my classes to be more teacher directed, leaving me less time to teach in an inquiry method. Also, many of the resources are print heavy, making differentiation difficult, again forcing a more teacher-directed model. (ATA, 2016, p. 40)

I would like to focus on a particular area that students will research and analyze themselves. I want to see students taking ownership of their learning. This semester, I have endeavoured to get my Social 20-1 students to look especially at primary sources and draw their own conclusions as opposed to me just telling them “what happened.” I also partnered with the university to have students learn about what a historian does and actually use their library to conduct their own research. I would like to do more of this but, as I feel that I have to cover all the knowledge and understanding outcomes, I have had to limit these opportunities. (ATA, 2016, p. 43)

Teachers engaged in the multi-disciplinary, issues-based, and content heavy social studies curriculum are struggling. The framers of social studies curricula have created an issues-based curriculum that does not clearly frame history as a way of knowing, limits the exploration a cohesive society in light of identity development, and provides little time for the development of necessary competencies. Although many creative teachers can overcome some of these challenges pedagogically, the current structure of social studies as a school discipline requires reconsideration.

## **Conclusion**

It is clear that history education has had a significant role in public education from the mid-1800s to the present day. That is not to say that the role has been clearly defined or without significant controversy, however the link between history education and

citizenship itself has been consistent. This means that history taught in school differs from the kind of history that is researched and written by academics. This point raises two significant challenges to the way history education is envisioned.

First, history that is taught in public school has an articulated purpose that extends beyond the craft of the historian. In the public-school system, the teaching of history has an intended societal impact, the development of “engaged, active, informed and responsible citizens” (Alberta Education, 2005). Although the concept of citizenship needs to be continually clarified, the educational turns of the past have endeavored to address what citizenship means within their specific historical contexts. The historian does not generally share this focus. The historian engages in historical inquiry that may contribute to civic virtue and responsibility, but that is not a necessity. A historian is bound by the dictates of professional inquiry. Alternatively, for history curriculum framers, the historical content selected reflects the values of society and the political aims of the education system.

Second, the nature of history itself is in a state of change, which challenges status-quo narratives of the past. In the profession of history, ‘nation-state’ narratives have come under significant scrutiny as post-colonial, social, ethnic, Indigenous, and gender histories have challenged the hegemony of the national narratives. Further, the realization that the positivistic reliability of historical ‘fact’ itself should be scrutinized. These turns in the academic discipline provide clear challenges for the teaching of history in public schools. Previous curricula used in schools had been designed to support a national narrative uncritically. The choice of content supported the societal vision of a pan-Canadian consciousness through a shared history. As the academy has broadened, other

histories became more prominent. The national narrative is now a point of critical engagement, potentially undermining the civic intentions of public education generally.

Therefore, has history education contributed to the education system's goal of citizenship education? Within the province of Alberta, the easy answer is a firm maybe. If citizenship education is interpreted as the transmission of a common nationalistic narrative, then there is evidence to suggest that the provincial curricula reflects that priority. Yet, if citizenship education is based on a critical engagement with the past and present, then the curriculum is not adequate. The role of history within citizenship education must change dramatically. The pluralistic nature of society cannot be understood with the uncritical acceptance of an authorized historical narrative. The ambiguity of citizenship goals and the priority of identity development can conflict, thereby undermining the deliberation of the common good. Further complicating this issue is the role of history within the social studies program. Though the issues-based approach allows for historical inquiry, the curriculum does not outline the processes of the historian nor explain how historical inquiry relates to citizenship. Ultimately, increasing diversity in society cannot be served by a static approach to citizenship education. If history is to be relevant to citizenship education, educators must consider how history education can be instrumental as a way of engaging a diverse and changing society.

## CHAPTER 3:

### **Has the Shift Toward a Historical Thinking Pedagogy Changed History Education?**

#### **Introduction**

My first job as a social studies teacher was a temporary posting for a maternity leave in a high school. As I received my course assignment, I had a little more than a week to conceptualize my courses, engage in instructional unit planning, and teach my first classes. During my preparation I remember looking over the curricula, scanning the textbooks, and evaluating a trove of resources lent to me by previous teachers. I was overwhelmed. In the busyness of that preparation, the minutia took over. “How do I make sure my students ‘know’ the content of the course?” This question was my key consideration. To be honest, my background as a student had solidified this approach. Learning was a process of remembering. In history classes, that meant learning the narratives of the past. I now confess that I cannot recollect in any detail the specific historical narratives I encountered in my public-school education. As soon as historical content was tested, it was forgotten. Please, do not get me wrong; I loved history as a student and I continue to love it as an adult. Through my experiences as a teacher and a student of history I have come to realize that the study of history needs to encompass more than the memorization of timelines, it must engage the learner in a meaningful way.

In the previous chapter I examined the relationship that exists between history education and the priority of citizenship education. What I discovered is a lack of clarity regarding what history is, how history should be taught, and what the discipline should accomplish. Although citizenship education is a compelling reason for studying history, it is not clear how history contributes to that purpose. Wineburg (2001) offers the following

consideration; “My claim in a nutshell is that history holds the potential, only partly realized, of humanizing us in ways offered by few other areas in the school curriculum” (p. 5). The laudable goal of history as a way to humanize is desirable, but the pedagogical methods used in history education can either support or complicate his vision. Further, one needs to question what ‘humanizing’ actually entails in an education setting. In looking at the current state of history education, this chapter will question whether the recent focus on historical thinking pedagogy has improved history education. This inquiry will explore what historical thinking is and examine the epistemological understandings that inform this pedagogy. The growth of the historical thinking movement in Canada will serve as a case study to evaluate the potential that a discipline-centric pedagogy offers to jurisdictions and students. Ultimately, I will make the case that historical thinking pedagogy has qualitatively improved history education through the exploration and conceptualization of procedural aspects of the discipline, while maintaining that the purpose of this approach requires further development.

### **What Pedagogical Shifts Brought Historical Thinking to Prominence?**

In Canada, the current pedagogical trend in history education is built upon students’ engagement with the procedural concepts of historical thinking in order to foster a historical understanding. In order to develop a robust understanding of historical thinking pedagogy, I will outline developments in the field of history education that highlight how this educational approach emerged. I propose to undertake this progression through an analysis of the psychological and philosophical justifications for historical thinking.



History, as stated earlier, is a discipline that has been present in school curricula since the mid-1800s. The discipline was grounded in positivistic assumptions, asserting that the past was knowable through an objective interrogation of sources in the archives. The inclusion of history in public education was prominent because it was effectively used to propagate nationalistic perspectives (Osborne, 2011, p. 55). It could be argued that the purpose of history, among other school subjects, was uncritical. Its inclusion was justified through the creation of a shared understanding of community and country. It was not until the 20th century that educationalists began to question the rationale of the discipline and its developmental appropriateness. Psychologists led the way in considering not only the way history could be learned, but also why it was important.

Wineberg (2005) describes the importance of early psychological theories regarding how history was learned and their profound effect on how history, as a school subject, was taught. He begins his analysis with the contribution of Edward Thorndike, who in 1912 considered that the best way for students to learn history was a backward approach. Thorndike reasoned that students needed a connection to the present in order to give relevance and meaning to the past (p. 188). A contemporary to Thorndike, G. Stanley Hall, considered that historical lessons were valuable in producing desirable attributes in students. Wineburg quotes Hall, stating that history inspired students “to the greatest degree ideals of social service and unselfishness” (p. 188). By 1915, Chicago psychologist, Charles Hubbard Judd asserted that the causal judgments necessary for learning and constructing history were very complex and difficult to understand. He further stated that history was challenging for students because of the danger of presentism that students would inevitably fall into (p. 189). Wineburg notes that, with the

exception of Judd, these early psychological perspectives on history education were largely based on the personal experiences of the psychologists and not informed by reliable research data (p. 188). Although many of the perspectives noted deserve merit for their insights into the relationship of the present to the past, the discourse highlights the realization that learning the discipline of history involved different considerations and had different outcomes than other disciplines.

History education was also a consideration of the work of J. Carlton Bell, a professor at the Brooklyn Training School for Teachers. Bell, according to Wineburg (2005), was driven by two central questions, “What is historic sense?” and “How can it be developed” (p. 189)? These questions led Bell, along with his associate McCollum to propose various aspects of historical understanding. They argued that understanding the present in light of the past, understanding the nature of various types of sources, the valuing of a narrative, the ability to interrogate historical situations, and accurate historical knowledge were all significant demonstrations of historical understanding (p. 190). Desiring to test historical understanding with students, Bell and McCollum chose to discover what historical facts students knew. The researchers conducted a survey of upper elementary, secondary, and post-secondary students to test their factual recall of common aspects of US history. The test was given to 1,500 students and the results were published in 1917. The test revealed that on average all age groups scored below 50 percent (p. 190). The report concluded that there was a deficiency in the education system. Although it is clear that Bell and McCollum focused on only one aspect of operationalized historical understanding, it was fitting for the time. Wineburg adds that the “fact-based image of historical knowledge was not an educational invention; it fit

soundly with the prevailing views of knowledge in the discipline of history” (p. 191). This reliance on factual knowledge allowed history to be seen as a discipline where chosen narratives were taught to students rather than critiqued or constructed. This view held sway until the late 1970s and early 1980s, when theorists in Great Britain began to shift from behaviourist models of psychology and began to adopt cognitive understandings of historical reasoning (p. 192).

Initially, Piaget’s stages of cognitive development provided a guiding structure to apply to understanding historical reasoning. Piaget held that children learned through processes that sought reconciliation of prior knowledge with new knowledge. In short, students would assimilate new knowledge into previous knowledge or they would modify prior knowledge in order to accommodate new knowledge.

Through these two ill-defined processes, along with the process of equilibration (Karmiloff-Smith, 1991), developmental change is seen as global knowledge restructuring or stages (Carey, 1985a; Vosniadou & Brewer, 1987); that is, knowledge restructuring constitutes a change in the structures or set of operations that influences how a child processes and acquires information in all *domains*. Consequently, in this view children in one of the stages of development (i.e., sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete-operational, or formal-operational) apply the same kinds of thinking processes in activities or tasks no matter what the domain or topic is. (Levstik & Pappas, 1992, pp. 370-371)

The application of Piagetian stages to historical reasoning drove researchers to define the developmental stages represented in the study of history. Levstik and Pappas reference the early work of English researchers (Peel, 1967; Hallam, 1972, 1974, 1975), who used Piaget’s theory to develop criteria for historical thinking (Levstik & Pappas, 1992, p. 370). What emerged from their research was recognizable stages (pre-operational, concrete operational, and formal operational), as well as an understanding that “important concepts related to understanding history, including ideas about chronology, the past, and

change over time, come later in cognitive development” (p. 370). This interest in cognitive theories of historical understanding gave way to new initiatives to explore history education in schools.

The influential shift in history education began in the UK, where the drive to apply Piagetian cognitive structures (Wineburg, 2005, p. 192) coincided with a public investment in higher education and the designation of colleges of education (Retz, 2016, p. 508). Embracing a cognitive theory of learning, theorists realized that students think about the past differently, through different stages of cognitive development. Rather than conducting a test and bemoaning the errors children made, British researchers noted that, “the best indication of historical reasoning was not children’s selection of a right answer, the mere repetition of learned facts, but the nature of a child’s reasoning. Of note to researchers was the students’ ability to connect ideas and the justifications they offered for their conclusions” (Wineburg, 2001, p. 40). In reference to Piaget’s operational levels, the formal operational stage of historical understanding was demonstrated in a student’s ability to respond to historical content and make judgments between alternatives (Levstik & Pappas, 1992, p. 370). Although initial studies in the UK did not offer encouraging results, very few students were achieving the highest formal operational levels (Retz, 2015, p. 508), thinking about historical reasoning through the lens of cognitive development was a significant shift.

Needless to say, the use of Piagetian stages of development implied limits to the way history education was to be approached. Retz (2015) recounts the recommendation of Roy Hallam who concluded that “exercises demanding inferential thought be avoided in place of ‘concrete topics’ of cause and effect relationships” (p. 508). As a result,

history was to be represented in a linear manner until later in a student's education. In response to the limits of Piagetian theory a number of critiques emerged. Levstik and Pappas (1992) argue that the emergence of a constructivist approach based on “*domain-specific* knowledge restructuring” (p. 371) offered a more accurate model of historical understanding. They elaborate on the theory by stating:

This kind of knowledge restructuring is seen as the product of the child's knowledge of a particular domain; that is, properties or concepts in particular domains affect the thinking processes, routines, strategies, and procedures that children apply in their experience. Consequently, unlike the global knowledge restructuring view, the topic or conceptual *domain* that the child is involved with or trying to figure out *does* matter, and is significant. (p. 371)

In the context of a domain-specific approach to cognition, students are to engage in the concepts, processes and skills that pertain to the study of history. Through engagement in the domain, students practice and refine historical thinking processes in order to construct more sophisticated understandings. It is the engagement with the process of constructing history that enables students to understand history. In response to Hallam's limitations on history education, Jerome Bruner is quoted as stating, “any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child and any stage of development” (Retz, 2015, p. 508). The underlying assumption is that disciplinary structures can be made accessible to students. Therefore, teachers needed to be equipped with the ability to represent disciplinary contexts appropriately in order for students to actively construct an understanding of history.

In the shadow of the shifting learning theories, from behaviourism to constructivism, the epistemological underpinnings of discipline of history were shifting as well. With the emergence to prominence of social and gender histories, the absolute objectivism of the early 1900s was beginning to fall into question. Historians chose to

critically analyze the legacies of colonialism and question the sacrosanct celebrations of ‘Empire’ by giving voice to the colonized. Additional sources of evidence became valuable as historians looked to geography, autobiography, and archaeology for traces of the past. What emerged was a diverse landscape, where historians debated previous perspectives in the light of recent discoveries. In short, rather than providing an objective narrative, derived from a specific thread of archival documents that supported a particular political or nationalistic perspective, history was interrogated not only for what it included but for what it omitted. This change in the discipline allowed for debate and deliberation about the role and purpose of the historian to society. Retz (2016) notes that in this disciplinary climate, “history had a role to play in honing a critical political consciousness, and for this it needed to define itself in inclusive rather than exclusive terms” (p. 510).

Rather than face the defeatism of some Piagetian scholars, who considered historical reasoning beyond the scope of secondary students (Wineburg, 2001, p. 40), a number of academics at the University of Leeds founded the Schools Council History 13-16 Project (SCHP) in 1973. This project was to bring researchers, teachers, and students together to explore history as a different way of ‘knowing’ (p. 40). Osborne (2011) notes that the project “rejected history as chronological narrative, whether of nation building or anything else, and instead introduced students to history as a form of evidenced-based inquiry” (p. 67). Wineburg (2001) attributes the vision of the project to the influence of British scholar Paul Hirst, who characterized disciplinary knowledge as exhibiting four key characteristics:

- a) a body of concepts and key ideas—a common vocabulary; b) distinctive ways of relating these concepts and ideas—a ‘syntax’ for this vocabulary; c)

characteristic ways of establishing warrant for truth claims, such as the psychologist's appeal to the laboratory, or the historian's to the documentary record; and d) distinctive forms of inquiry, such as the chemist's use of x-ray spectroscopy or the physicist's use of a linear accelerator. (p. 41)

Therefore, in the 1980s, the goal of history education was articulated as a shift from delivering an 'agreed upon' narrative to embracing a way of disciplinary knowing. The philosophy that supported this shift can be found in the work of Lee (1984b), a professor of history education in London, who wrote extensively about the project and its rationale. Lee held that the present is a product of the past; it follows that a deep understanding of the past is absolutely necessary to live in the present. In blunt terms, he equates historical disinterest with profound ignorance (p. 4). It is not sufficient to blindly accept narratives handed down by authorities. Students must understand that the narrative is derived from sources, and the sources themselves are interpreted by the historian and corroborated with other sources. Lee states that,

Learning to use historical evidence, and perhaps above all acquiring the 'logical passions'—concern for truth, objectivity and so on—are essential to the operation of historical procedures is both one of the major reasons for learning history, and the central part of what learning history actually entails. (p. 5)

This shift in the understanding of history education is significant. Although there had been progressive pedagogies being employed in education, specifically in Alberta (von Heyking, 2006), the systematic redefinition of the pedagogical imperatives represented in the SCHP made apparent the skills and processes necessary to construct the historical narrative. This skills-based pedagogy is structured on the realization that an understanding of the past requires students to think historically.

Further, history needs to be seen as a process of inquiry that seeks answers through the construction of a narrative that is based on evidence. It is the historical claims

of the narrative that shape the subsequent discussion, debate, and analysis. At first glance it would appear that such an approach would rip the life out of history. It would reduce narratives to a textual critique of source material. It would contribute to a paralyzing skepticism about what can actually be known about the past. These critiques are warranted and could take root within a classroom if educators see the processes of historical thinking as a practice of mere deconstruction. For Lee (1984b) and his colleagues, the goal of engaging students in the process of history was not to push history further into the ‘cold’ objectivism; rather it was to engage students with the lives of the people of the past:

The experience gained in history is vicarious: in an obvious way it is second-hand. People who read about (or even research) different modes of life do not thereby live them, and following the progress of diplomatic negotiations is not engaging in diplomacy. But in coming to understand why people did as they did, and why diplomacy proceeded in just that way, one can extend the range of situations one is equipped to recognize, and the range of possibilities one is prepared to meet. (p. 13)

The SCHP piloted a three-year history curriculum, built around a non-chronological approach that featured the “nature of historical evidence, the nature of reasoning from evidence, and problems of reconstruction from partial and mixed evidence” (Wineburg, 2001, p. 41). The curriculum was rooted in historical inquiry and had students conduct their own research through careful scaffolding and supported skill development. Initially working with 60 schools in the UK, the project was systematically evaluated. Researchers categorized student responses into four different levels. Each level represented an increase in the sophistication of the student’s historical reasoning. At the lowest level students represented a “just because” approach to history, without elaboration or justification. At the highest levels students displayed an appreciation for



the context-bound and context sensitive nature of their historical explanation (p. 42). The study highlighted that 68 percent of students in schools using the SChP curriculum performed at the upper levels of historical reasoning. Alternatively, schools that did not use the SChP curriculum reported only 29 percent of students scored in the higher levels (p. 42). Wineburg notes that this study revealed that adolescents could be taught to reason historically (p. 42). This finding challenged the Piagetian assumption that complex historical reasoning was beyond secondary students and therefore should be delayed until post-secondary education. In reflecting on the impact of changing learning theories on history education, Wineburg summarizes:

This work is carried out by researchers who conduct empirical studies into how students, teachers, and historians come to understand history. It asks questions about what people know and how they come to know it. In doing so, this approach wrests questions of epistemology from the clouds and turns them into objects of empirical inquiry. (p. 52)

### **How was Historical Thinking Conceptualized in North America?**

The findings of the SChP in the UK challenged and inspired educators in North America. By the early 1980s, history as a school subject had been overshadowed by other educational priorities. Self-actualization and social utility were being regarded as the driving forces within education at that time (von Heyking, 2006; Osborne, 2003). In Alberta, as well as the USA, the significance of history as a discipline had been diminished by the development of social studies. Seixas (1994) charitably notes that social studies can include historical content, but in an interdisciplinary framework, the skills of historical reasoning are not prominent. Therefore, critical thinking objectives in social studies, do not have a grounding in historical reasoning, which is necessary to engage in historical inquiry (p. 99). Needless to say, history education became a growing

concern in Canada among academic and government stakeholders in the 1990s, because of the conflict between those who supported a traditional view of propagating a nationalistic narrative and those who advocated the progressive view of developing students' historical thinking.

During the 1990s Canada experienced a national crisis. According to Osborne (2011), the failure of the Meech Lake Agreement, Charlottetown Accord, and continued separatist voices in Quebec suggested that there was a lack of national unity within the country. Joe Clark, the minister for constitutional affairs, is quoted by Osborne: "if we are serious about keeping and building a large Canada, we must encourage more schools to teach more facts about the history and nature of our country" (p. 69). Though many of the provinces were teaching a similar master narrative, Granatstein's 1998 publication, *Who Killed Canadian History?* questioned the structure and effectiveness of history education. His critique addressed the lack of a unifying national narrative being taught in schools. Seixas (2009), summarizing Granatstein's position states:

In it, he accused social and cultural historians of undoing coherence of the national narrative by 'professing trivia'; advocates of multiculturalism of fomenting a culture of complaint; and school boards, faculties of education and provincial bureaucrats of neglecting all that was important in Canadian history, wrecking the curriculum with social studies, current events and child-centered pedagogies. (p. 137)

Nearly a decade later, the Dominion Institute conducted a study that attempted to determine young Canadians' knowledge of significant events in Canadian history. In 2007, the Institute gave an exam of 30 questions on Canadian history to Canadians aged 14 to 18. The Institute was dismayed that 82 percent of the participants failed the exam (Dominion Institute, 2009, p. 2). As a consequence, the results of the test demanded a scapegoat. In a comprehensive investigation of provincial history and social studies

curriculum the Dominion Institute sought to document the nature and extent of Canadian history in the education systems. Through an evaluation of curriculum documents, the Institute assigned each province a 'report card grade.' The result of the review concluded that "we are failing our students when it comes to educating them about the story of Canada" (p. 2). The interesting revelation about this survey is that its findings unearthed a presupposition about the role of history education.

For citizens to function in a modern democracy they must develop an appreciation and understanding of the country's past. Quite simply, provinces and territories that fail to teach student about Canada's history are doing a poor job of preparing the next generation to be active and engaged citizens. We must connect students from coast to coast to coast with a common set of knowledge. We must ensure that students are using primary sources to enhance their understanding of the past mindful of the myriad of skills that can be developed through the study of history. (p. 2)

The consistent theme represented in the Dominion Institute's provincial curriculum review was the necessity of a defined version of Canadian history. In reading between the lines, it is clear that many advocates of history education continue to value the nationalistic goals of public education.

These history 'wars' encouraged the public to consider the role of education in Canada. In the midst of these public discussions, historians, educators, policy makers, and teachers contemplated how to make sense of the debate and, ultimately, how to respond. Significantly, researchers began to question how students learned history. Informed by the SCHP in the UK, the National History Standards in the US, and the development of a historical thinking model in Canada, researchers argued that "the central goal of history education should be the cultivation of historical thinking" (Osborne, 2011, p. 73). Indicative of this consensus, Seixas (1994) challenged the BC social studies curriculum by making the case that, "[t]here is no systematic attempt to

deal with a progression of historical thinking: it is simply not part of the prescribed curriculum” (p. 99). Although charitable to the role history plays in the development of context surrounding specific issues in social studies, Seixas argues that history is more than a narrative; it is a way of knowing. Students should understand that the veracity of a narrative (substantive elements) is not derived from the authority relaying it; rather it is derived by the rational construction (procedural elements) of the claims that support it. Consequently, this focus on process cannot be implied in curriculum construction because, “if thinking historically is the goal of the curriculum, it will need considerably more conscious attention than it has received to date—not only from individual classroom teachers, but also from curriculum planners and educational researchers” (Seixas, 1994, p. 101).

Out of this concern about the state of history education in Canada numerous studies, conferences, and symposiums were organized to rethink the role and pedagogy of the discipline. Clark (2013), an education professor and director of The History Education Network/ Histoire et éducation en réseau (THEN/HiER), recounts two shifts in the approach to history education that occurred in the late 1990s:

The “Lacoursière Report,” the findings of a task force on the teaching of history in Quebec, led to the development of a new history curriculum with an innovative inquiry-orientated approach. The other event was the publication of “Conceptualizing Growth in Historical Understanding,” a chapter written by Peter Seixas of the University of British Columbia... In it, Seixas laid out a framework for the field of history education based on six historical thinking concepts: significance, epistemology and evidence, continuity and change, progress and decline, empathy (perspective taking) and moral judgment, and agency. (p. 44)

These early shifts in history education brought on some significant partnerships that raised the profile of history education in Canada. Clark (2013) notes some of the movements that have allowed for greater collaboration in history education. In 2001

Seixas established the Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness at UBC. The Centre was established for “facilitating research on the understanding of teaching of history” (Center for the Study of Historical Consciousness, n.d.). In 2006, the Historical Thinking Project was initiated (Clark, 2013, p. 44). This project brought together history and history education academics, curriculum developers, school board administrators, and teachers at all levels to implement history teaching initiatives that would be relevant to students and facilitate an engagement with the past. The Association for Canadian Studies is another organization that exists to enrich history education in Canada (p. 44). Additionally, the Dominion Institute merged with Historica in 2009 to enhance student engagement in history and civics education. This organization hosts Encounters with Canada, which is a program that brings students from all over the country to Ottawa in order to engage in questions about history and identity from a national perspective (p. 44). Further, the CBC produced the television series entitled *Canada: A People’s History*, which was indicative of a wave of enthusiasm about history in the population. The popularity of the program was seen in its incorporation into classrooms around the country (p. 44). As a final note, Clark mentions the work of THEN/HiER, founded in 2005 as an organization designed to bring together all the stakeholders in the public and academic pursuit of understanding the past. The network placed a priority on stimulating research and supporting “pedagogically informed historical practice in various venues” (p. 45). With the growth of strong pillars of support in the public (museums and heritage organizations), academic and education spheres, it is clear that history education is not dead, rather it is alive and vibrant.

In Canada, the consensus that emerged in the early 2000s was that history education is important, maybe even essential to a public education. Osborne (2011) notes that during this time a shift in perspective also took place. “Today all but the most die-hard defenders of history-as-factual-narrative allow some place for the teaching of historical thinking, though they disagree over what that entails” (p. 74). Up to this point, I have described historical thinking as procedural concepts that are essential to the construction of a narrative of the past. In the interest of coherently analyzing current models of historical thinking, I’d like to examine the rationale, content, and potential implications of the dominant model of historical thinking that is influencing curriculum development in Canada.

### **What are the Key Concepts of Historical Thinking?**

Earlier in the chapter I noted the shift of cognitive psychologists, who came to understand that students learn by constructing their understanding of new information. Lévesque, a history education researcher, echoes this cognitive approach and defines historical thinking as understanding “how knowledge has been constructed and what it means” (Lévesque, 2009, p. 27). Inherent in a constructivist approach is the assumption that the complex demands of thinking historically will allow students to apply their cognitive constructs to unfamiliar situations and new problems (p. 28). Additionally, when students construct a substantive narrative employing the procedural skills of historical thinking, their comprehensions of the perspectives, contexts, and principle actors are deepened. Seixas (2009) presents the argument that a historical thinking pedagogy provides a logical response to the debates about what national content is necessary in public schools. Rather than arguing about what is, or subsequently is not

being taught in schools, the focus should center around “students’ understanding of how to handle the different and sometimes conflicting stories of the past” (p. 137). Provinces can continue to mandate different substantive narratives, but the pedagogical focus would be on the construction and critique of the narratives. These procedural processes subsequently have an influence on democratic citizenship. Lévesque (2009) notes that the complexity of historical thinking, encompassing the multi-disciplinary scope of historical investigation, “overlaps with the democratic knowledge that is necessary for active citizenship, and hence mastering the knowledge of history, and ultimately the practice of history itself, can allow students to more effectively engage in democratic society” (p. 28). Historical thinking, according to its proponents promises a systematic approach to understanding the past and living in the present.

In defining the historical thinking concepts, Seixas (2017) acknowledges the debt that the Canadian approach owes to the careful work done in the UK, Germany, and the USA (p. 597). Plainly put, his model of historical thinking has been the result of international communication, cooperation, and collaboration. In defining the historical thinking concepts, Seixas and Morton (2013) look to the “creative process that historians go through to interpret the evidence of the past and generate the stories of history” (p. 2). Lévesque (2011) elaborates on the method of historical reasoning as, “an inquiry process of turning the residues of the past into historical narratives” (p. 120). The method embraces historical inquiry through the framework of the historical thinking concepts which are communicated in the process of narrative construction. The concepts can be understood as inherent “problems” or “tensions” that “demand comprehension, negotiation and, ultimately, an accommodation that is never a complete solution” (Seixas,

2017, p. 597). Seixas identifies six historical thinking concepts: historical significance, evidence, continuity and change, cause and consequence, historical perspectives, and the ethical dimension (Seixas, 2017, pp. 598-603).

The first historical thinking concept that I'd like to examine is historical significance. Historical investigation is based upon finding significance in the questions and debates about the past. "Ranke's original principle of scientific history was grounded in the belief that historians had 'to show what actually happened.' Yet, this task would only be conceivable if historians first make a decision on what it is that they want to show" (Lévesque, 2009, p. 42). The past is immeasurably vast and history itself is a discipline of determining what questions need to be addressed. This is no small task given the dynamics that exists between the historian, the transient present, and the opaque past.

A major component of all of the problems lies in the relationship between the knower and the known, the historian and the past, and the fact that the historian (or student) is a temporal being immersed in time, investigating and writing at a particular historical juncture, with particular lenses, questions and methods. There is no stepping outside of history in order to do history. (Seixas, 2017, p. 598)

Therefore, it is important for the historian to recognize that the decisions they make about significance are bound within the present context. In the early 1900s the ideological dominance of nationalism determined that the historical narrative of nation building was seen as significant. In the present, historians are focused on questions about social equality and social justice. Lévesque (2009) calls on historical thinkers to consider their criteria in determining historical significance (p. 43). Ultimately the criteria that are used to establish significance are derived from the perspectives and interests of the historian (Seixas & Morton, 2013).



The second concept is evidence. Tracing the professionalized roots of historical investigation, we again find ourselves faced with the legacy of von Ranke. Novick (1988) summarized Ranke's passion for evidence, "In assiduity and scrupulosity of research, in the critical treatment of a wide range of previously unused sources, in the volume of his productivity, ... Ranke was unprecedented and unsurpassed" (p. 26). It was through the influence of Ranke, and his passion for the integrity of the archive, that the importance of evidence became a significant factor of historical thinking. Though one may critique the naïve positivism of Ranke's method, the reliance on evidence as the basis for constructing the narrative can hardly be faulted. It is the primary source evidence, the traces of the past that are the basis upon which historical claims are built. Seixas (2017) is quick to note that evidence does not exist outside of an interpretive context. The interpretation of the evidence is the essential skill that the historian needs to develop. Referencing Wineburg, Seixas notes that there are guidelines that can be used to approach primary source evidence which are: "sourcing, contextualization, corroboration, supplemented by 'close reading'" (p. 599). Sources need to be interrogated, compared with other accounts, analyzed for biases, and seen within their specific historical context. Further, the interpretation of sources is complicated as the historian must be aware of the trap of presentism. We read the past with our understandings of the present. Being aware of that tension can help facilitate a more honest understanding of the past. A final tension rests in the nature of primary evidence. They can be artifacts, diary entries, photographs, or shop records. The difficulty rests in the realization that each source needs to be approached on its own terms. Lévesque (2009), recognizing the complexity of the task, holds that sources must be questioned rigorously in order to ascertain their value.

Synthesizing the work of other academics, he offers the following heuristic. Evaluating source documents requires “four interrelated steps ... (1) identification; (2) attribution; (3) contextualization; and (4) corroboration” (p. 118). Through the interrogation of primary sources, historians develop the necessary support for the claims about the past that they make. This provides the foundation for the historical narrative.

Continuity and change is the third concept that Seixas identifies. “History is often defined as the story of change over time. But history is more complex: some things don’t change at all; some things change quickly and then slowly” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 5). The role of the historian is not merely to focus on the changes that occur, consider political revolutions or technological transformation, but also to consider the aspects that remain consistent. Often it is the continuities that help us understand the values of the people in the past. Inevitably this approach to history positions historians to make judgments about societal progress and/ or decline. Although it can be argued that value laden concepts like progress can be attributed to perceptual biases, the arguments for these concepts are important to the dialogue about the past. Identifying continuity and change in narratives allows the historian to make arguments about periodization, which provide a shapeless past with a degree of definition (p. 5). Although people living in the past may have noted the significance of changes brought about by events like World War I, they may not have perceived the changing social attitudes or political imperatives that precipitated those events. Historians see the past in light of the present. The historian can ascribe meaning to conceived beginnings and ends. This realization underscores the interpretive process of narrative construction.

Closely related to the concept of continuity and change is the analysis of cause and consequence. As the practice of history deliberates over the construction of a narrative about the past, it is essential that historians tie the causes to their intended and unintended consequences (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 6). “The conundrum of causation arises from the question of human freedom and agency. Change over time is shaped by a complex interplay of humans acting within and against the larger social organizations in which they find themselves” (Seixas, 2017, p. 599). It is not sufficient to just look at the human actors, Seixas elaborates, but the social context in which the change takes place (p. 600). This realization points to the balance that exists between human agency and the political, environmental, social, ideological and cultural forces that influence people in a particular time. For the historian, finding evidence of all these variables is a challenge. Yet, it is important to note that historians, as well as students in classrooms, sit on the shoulders of giants. There is existing historical research that has contributed to the contextual understanding of key periods, such as the Industrial Revolution. Secondary sources allow historians to fit cause and consequence into a broader framework. As a final consideration, investigation into cause and consequence is plausible because of the interrelated nature of the past to the present (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 6). The effects of a past event can be perceived by the structures of the present. Although making causal connections is challenging, especially when one speculates about unintended consequences, it opens up rich considerations about agency and the implications of historical inquiry.

One of the most challenging of the six concepts is assuming “historical perspectives.” This concept reveals a key tension that historians face in constructing

narratives of the past. As people we understand and evaluate the past in light of our present knowledge and experiences. We see expressions of presentism, an uncritical adherence to present values and norms, in lamentations of the racism of the past or the patriarchal decisions that undermine gender equality. Although one can comment on the morals and values of a past society, it is important that the past is not summarily dismissed because of present value judgments. Plainly put, the people of the past lived by different “social, cultural, intellectual, and even emotional contexts” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 6). In approaching these people and their actions, it is important that the historian endeavours to see them for what they were. “We can attempt to see through the eyes of people of the past by making evidenced-based inferences about what they thought and believed” (p. 6). Seixas (2017) notes that perspective-taking involves understanding and interrogating sources, addressing continuity and change, developing an appreciation for cause and consequence. The complexities of constructing historical perspectives require that historians embrace the interconnectedness of historical thinking concepts (pp. 601-602). He illustrates this theme by describing the way instruction that ignores this interconnectedness can undermine students’ historical thinking:

The analysis of primary source evidence begins with contextualizing it in the world views of its time, so perspective-taking is hardly an operation separate from reading sources at all. A common pedagogical error comes from divorcing them, and asking students to ‘write a letter’ from an enslaved African-American or a coal-miner’s daughter, with-out adequate primary source evidence. It thus becomes an imaginative imposition of students’ present-day sensibilities on an imaginary past. (p. 601)

The final concept of historical thinking is the ethical dimension. As historians inquire into the past, it is unavoidable that value judgments motivate the investigation itself. Thinking of my own high school students, accounts of genocide and discrimination

interested them because they were intrigued to understand the rationale behind inhumanity. Seixas (2017) articulates that the ethical dimension is apparent in three key considerations,

(1) the problem of judging actors and actions from the past, (2) dealing with the past crimes and injustices whose legacies—either benefits and deficits—we live with today, and (3) the memorial obligations that we in the present owe to victims, heroes, or other forebears who made sacrifices from which we benefit. (p. 602)

According to Ranke, the past can be only known on its “own terms” (Lévesque, 2009, p. 142), therefore making ethical distinctions about the past is inherently problematic. Yet it is naïve to argue that historians do not bring a set of values and dispositions that are rooted in the present to their investigation of the past. Racism and oppression are seen as morally wrong within a present society that embraces universal human rights. Although these perspectives are relevant and bring meaning to historical inquiry, Lévesque urges students and researchers to “consider and examine carefully their own belief systems” (p. 167).

Another aspect of judging the past depends on the development of context. Historical actors, as rational beings, can be judged within the context of their own time. Given the perspective of the historian, having an awareness of the ends of particular actions, historical actors can be subject to moral judgment based upon the motivations and subsequent outcomes of their decisions. Referencing Oldfield, Lévesque (2009) states: “if historians look at the past with the premise that predecessors acted logically, historical empathy requires that they establish the contextualized morality of predecessors’ actions, even if their actions or decisions were later proven to be wrong or immoral” (p. 167).

As final consideration, the concept of the ethical dimension relates the past to the present. When a historian or student seeks to understand the past on its own terms, invariably they are faced with the implications of history. “Remembrance of heroes’ sacrifices, memorials to history’s victims, reparations for mass crimes, and restitution for stolen goods and ruined lives are all attempts to come to terms with the past in the present” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 170). Historical thinking allows students to critically ponder the actions and actors of the past fairly and “judge what is an appropriate response in the present” (pp. 170-171). By embracing the ethical dimension of historical thinking, students begin to address the relationship of the past to the present. Through making judgments about commemoration or reconciliation, historical thinking can help shape the ethical dilemmas of the future (p. 171).

These six concepts define ways historians approach and inquire into the past. If students are to understand these concepts rather than memorize historical information, teachers need to teach differently. In short, teaching for historical thinking has pedagogical implications. Students engaging with a historical thinking pedagogy will be challenged to consider evidence, significance, and relevance within a mandate of historical inquiry. Adopting a disciplinary mindset allows students to temporally orient themselves through an evidentiary approach and construct an understanding of the past. In an education system that has embraced rote memorization of an “approved history” as a prevalent practice, a historical thinking pedagogy offers students an alternative that prioritizes critical engagement and facilitates an understanding that disciplinary history does not shy away from complexity.

## What Effect is the Model of Historical Thinking Having on History Education?

The six historical thinking concepts have implications for an instructional approach that can shape the way educators and curriculum framers foster disciplinary thinking. Prior to the 2013 publication of *The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts*, Seixas (1994) proposed, “the recognition of history as an important way of constructing knowledge about our situation, one that young people need to understand, engage, and use” (p. 105). Although the Historical Thinking Project was only active from 2006 to 2014, it had a far-reaching influence. By 2013 the Project had brought together academics, policy developers, school board representatives, publishers and teachers who actively supported the conceptual framework. Consequently, the six historical thinking concepts have been embedded into provincial curriculum, textbooks and resources used in teacher education. In Ontario, the 2018 social studies curriculum states the goal that students “develop the ability to use the ‘concepts of disciplinary thinking’ to investigate issues, events, and developments” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 6). In elaborating on what disciplinary thinking is, the curriculum states:

In social studies, history, and geography, it is crucial that students not simply learn various facts but that they acquire the ability to think and to process content in ways best suited to each subject. To that end, the curriculum focuses on developing students’ ability to apply *concepts of disciplinary thinking*, which are inherent in “doing” each subject. (p. 13)

Disciplinary thinking, which engages students with the procedural concepts of “historical significance, cause and consequence, continuity and change, and historical perspectives” (p. 13) has an implied mandate. The stated purpose of the history education, in Ontario, is to have students “appreciate Canadian heritage and identity, the diversity and complexity of Canadian society, and the challenges and responsibilities associated with Canada’s

position in the world” (p. 12). What is not clear in the curriculum document is how the pedagogical approach contributes to the broader citizenship goal.

In Manitoba, historical thinking concepts have been intentionally incorporated into the curriculum as well. The grade 11 course, entitled *The History of Canada*, states that the explicit goal of social studies is to enable “students to acquire the skills, knowledge, and values necessary to understand the world in which they live, to engage in active democratic citizenship, and to contribute to the betterment of society” (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2014, p. I-5). In accomplishing this goal, the document outlines that students will develop the skills of thinking historically (p. I-7). Whereas the Ontario curriculum implies the connection between historical thinking and citizenship goals, the Manitoba curriculum is explicit. In addressing the historical connections, the curriculum states that: “Students explore how people, events, and ideas of the past shape the present and influence the future” (p. I-22). Referencing Seixas and Morton’s historical thinking concepts, the document notes that students learn to think historically through a “disciplined investigation and interpretation of history” that reflects on “diverse perspectives, personal narratives, parallel accounts, and oral and social histories” (p. I-22). Through the selection of historical topics, that are relevant to contemporary society, students develop an appreciation that the past informs the present. This curriculum shows appropriate attention to disciplinary and pedagogical considerations, yet the mandated content supports a particular interpretation of Canadian society. In her commentary on the Manitoba curriculum, Cutrara (2018a) notes that the established historical content that students are engaging with reflects a traditional version of Canadian history.



These two jurisdictions provide evidence that the incorporation of historical thinking is becoming a key feature in curriculum revisions. Although the connection between disciplinary ways of knowing and the goals of citizen education is implied, there is a stated understanding, at least in Manitoba, that a temporal orientation helps students gain a critical perspective of their current society. The change in curriculum is having a significant effect on history education in Canada.

In 2015, Historica Canada, published a follow-up ‘report card’ for Canadian jurisdictions in order to re-evaluate the state of history education. In their conclusion the authors state:

Since the last Canadian History Report Card was released in 2009, significant changes have been made to social studies and history curricula. Most notably, provinces and territories have increasingly incorporated the Historical Thinking Concepts into their curricula. Where curriculum documents are outdated, some teachers have incorporated the Historical Thinking Concepts into classroom discussions and activities on their own. As a result, students are developing a historical consciousness and sharpening analytical skills that are valuable inside and outside of a history classroom. Another great advance is the increasing awareness and inclusion of minority perspectives, both historical and contemporary, in various curricula. All curriculum documents highlight diverse views in some regard, providing students with a complex and more representative understanding of Canadian history. (Historica Canada, 2015)

Although it is difficult to differentiate what metrics were used to measure the mandatory inclusion of Canadian content versus the inclusion of historical thinking, the report gives evidence that history education in Canada has become more prominent in Canadian schools. Historical thinking has been articulated as a way of knowing, thereby fostering engagement with the questions and problems of the discipline. In reflecting on the various jurisdictions, the report held that, “all provinces and territories demonstrate that the state of Canadian history education is in good standing” (Historica Canada, 2015).

Canada has seen a shift in how history is understood as a school subject. Although all jurisdictions have not adopted the historical thinking concepts as a framework within the curriculum, many teachers have been influenced by the conceptual and pedagogical shift. The practice of memorizing dates is being transformed into the construction of historical claims in response to historical inquiry. The success of this paradigm shift can be seen in the emerging prominence of history teaching in the practice of teachers. Although the Alberta curriculum does not intentionally include the historical thinking concepts, teachers hold a high regard for the importance of history teaching. In a survey of Alberta social studies teachers, 71 percent hold that history and geography are essential aspects of the program of studies (ATA, 2016, p. 18). One teacher's response is indicative of this perspective:

The values and attitudes are the most important part of the entire curriculum. Regardless of what students learn in the form of content and critical thinking, if they are able to recognize and appreciate how our history has helped shape who we are today and appreciate the value of others and what it takes to make a society that people want to live in, they will be in a much better position to help improve our world and make it a better place for all of us to live in. (ATA, 2016, p. 29)

With provincial jurisdictions undergoing curriculum revisions, history education continues to be articulated and debated. While prioritizing procedural concepts is a corrective to an uncritical nationalistic narrative, critics contend that history education should address considerations that go beyond the construction of the past. Cutrara articulates this point,

[W]hat I have seen from reviewing the history/social studies curricula from around the country is that a grand Canadian narrative is being replaced by a new narrative of inquiry, and it is not that I want to see a grand Canadian narrative returning to our classrooms, but I am wary of an approach to teaching and learning history that lacks space for understanding the very things that pull us close to informal curricula: power, politics, and affect (Cutrara, 2018b).

A historical thinking approach to history education highlights the problems and judgments that historians engage in to understand the past. Yet, as Cutrara contends, the study of history can and should examine key concepts that shape and define the present.

### **What are the Challenges to a Curriculum Framed Around Concepts of Historical Thinking?**

The goal of a procedural approach to historical thinking is to have students interact with the challenges inherent in the construction of history. If history is, according to Seixas and Morton (2013), “the stories we tell about the past,” then the creation of these stories is rooted in the “tension between the historian’s creativity and the fragmentary traces of the past that anchor it” (p. 2). Historical thinking is the “creative process that historians go through to interpret the evidence of the past and generate the stories of history” (p. 2). The historical narrative is a collection of historical claims in response to an inquiry. History is an interpretation of the past based on evidence. Therefore, history can be debated. Yet, within this assertion about the nature of history there are some appropriate questions that have been raised. First, in what way is a disciplinary way of knowing grounded upon certain ideological assumptions? Second, if ideological assumptions influence the questions and criteria of a procedural approach to history, how does that effect the histories that are constructed? These questions form the basis of a postmodern critique of the historical thinking framework.

Disciplinary knowledge itself is a cognitive construction, with particular historical antecedents (Novick, 1988; Segall, 2006; Seixas, 2000). In the professionalization of history in the early 19th century, a ‘scientific’ approach to the interrogation of the archives was considered essential to construct a narrative of the past. The investigation,

questioning, and contextualization of evidence was seen as a process that uncovered truth. Therefore, the current procedural concepts of the discipline perpetuate some of the same assumptions. First, is the assumption that the archives themselves, as collections of evidence, are constructed impartially and are sources of multiple perspectives. Second, is the assumption that the historian is an objective participant. In contending with the first assumption, postmodernists have called into question the construction and transmission of available evidence. Rather than being collections of objective perspectives and accounts of the past, Burton (2005) argues that archives “have dynamic relationships, not just with the past and the present, but with the fate of regimes, the physical environment, the serendipity of bureaucrats, and the care and neglect of the archivists as well” (p. 6). The archive itself is a human creation with its own “gaps and silences” (Seixas, 2000, p. 30). Further, postmodernists assert that historians are constrained by their own personal, political and temporal contexts that influence the “histories they end up writing—as well as those they do not” (Burton, 2005, p. 9). Historians themselves are “shaped by national identity, gender, race, and class as by professional training or credentials” (p. 9). Additionally, the historian is influenced by the consideration of their audience and the purpose to which the historical narrative is intended (p. 9). The illusion of objectivity and, by extension, certainty in the construction of history is apparent. Segall (2006) contends that history “is not *about* the past, but rather about our ways of creating meanings from and about it” (p. 129). Seixas (2000), anticipated the postmodern critique of historical ‘fact,’ and offered the following insight:

It is when the historian starts to make judgments about what all the facts add up to that the imposition of narrative forms becomes critical. And, without this imposition there is no meaningful history. In this account, historiography becomes more a literary or poetic act and less a social scientific act. (p. 27)

Pedagogically the loss of objectivity is problematic. A central “consensual tradition” of school history is elusive if historical ‘fact’ is muddled in competing perspectives, therefore Seixas (2000) advocates that the procedural approach is a practical fit: “Disciplinary history provides students with standards for inquiry, investigation, and debate” (p. 34). Through an engagement with procedural concepts, students are able to enter into historical problems with an awareness of how historical claims are generated. The prioritization of historical thinking focuses student attention on questions about the nature of evidence or historical significance, without asking deeper questions about the nature of the questions being asked or the implications of the answers. As important as engaging in the construction of the past is, the process of creating a clear narrative can unduly simplify complexity.

That disciplinary history sees the need to reduce and even eliminate the cacophony of perspectives, voices, and interpretations at the conclusion of one’s investigation is, among other things, because disciplinary history seeks to determine what is true (in the sense that it best approximates or corresponds to the actual past). (Segall, 2006, p. 138)

The intention of simplifying perspectives into a constructed narrative is necessary to gain an understanding of the past, but in doing so perspectives can be marginalized and misrepresented. As soon as a student seeks to generalize evidence of the past, the specific experience captured in the source becomes one of many perspectives to be weighed. Therefore, the richness of a primary source’s ‘voice,’ whether that be a letter or diary entry, is analyzed and categorized according to procedural criteria. The voice from the past is then generalized into a constructed narrative and the personal articulation of experience is lost.

Further, the criteria imposed through the procedural approach is, itself rooted in an ideological perspective. Segall (2006) summarizes the significance of our view of the

past through the allusion that “different lenses will necessarily produce different visions and interpretations of a similar past” (p. 133). The nature of a disciplinary approach encourages the exploration of multiple versions of the past in order to arrive at an interpretation of the past that best incorporates the evidence. By contrast, the postmodern approach seeks to appreciate the versions of the past according to their “political and social uses in the present” (p. 127). Although the postmodern critique challenges the veracity of truth claims, the content and implications of the substantive dimension is essential to the deliberation about the nature of the past and its implications for the present, as Cutrara (2009) aptly explains:

By privileging a set of criteria that is intended to “smooth over” the issues of diversity, students who are marginalized cannot connect to a narrative that sanitizes and shrugs off as “perspective” the racist policies that continue to haunt our existence here; nor can students with privilege recognize that they are implicated in these structural inequities unless we name white, patriarchal, capitalism supremacy for what it is. Disciplinary criteria does not challenge these categories of knowing because like “any other intellectual domain, [history] disciplines knowledge, knowers and ways of knowing, using specific theoretical and methodological frameworks (Segall, 2006, p. 134) that reinforces the world we already know. Instead of saying that we will become bonded as citizens because we now have disciplinary skills to bring our struggle for belonging together, we need to “shift our conceptual frameworks for citizenship education in ways that engage questions of identity and inequality, and that educate youth for social change (Abu El-Haj, 2007).” (pp. 99-100)

Seixas (2000) is aware of the challenges that postmodernism presents to the epistemological assumptions of his framework. He notes that a postmodern perspective “calls up the flaws and limitations of our own liberalism and objectivity, while resting on assumptions that destabilize the foundations of all knowledge” (p. 34). From a theoretical perspective, this critique is appropriate. From a pedagogical perspective, Seixas concludes that our methods of “establishing truth are no more than today’s methods” (p. 34). A recognition of this simple caveat allows the educator to teach students from a

disciplinary perspective as a concrete method for engaging in the debates and issues that arise when contextualizing the present with reference to the past. His argument is thus summarized:

And yet, that is not to say that we have no way of establishing a complex, multiperspectival historical truth for our time. To deny students an education in those methods [procedural historical concepts], then, is to exclude them from full participation in contemporary culture. (p. 35)

## Conclusion

I began this chapter asking the extent to which the shift toward a pedagogy that develops students' historical thinking has changed history education. In considering this question, I examined the psychological perspectives of the early 1900s, the rise of cognitive learning theories, and the development of the SCHP where philosophical perspectives about the nature of disciplinary history informed the development of a history curriculum. Yet, by the late 1990s, the prognosis for history education in Canada was bleak. Clark (1998) states, "I write this article amid a climate of grave concern over the fate of school history. While the demise of history has been predicted since at least the early 1970s (Eisenberg, 1971), of late an element of despair has crept into these predictions" (p. 45). As history education ebbed in relevance, North American researchers, inspired by the achievements in the UK, launched the Historical Thinking Project. Through its collaborative work among stakeholders, a model of historical thinking was popularized among ministries of education, schools, and educators. What the *Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts* brought to educators was a systematic way to engage in the problems and skills that comprise the development of a historical narrative. This contribution has been substantial. Though the historical thinking concepts have been challenged by postmodern theorists, alluding to the ambiguous nature of truth and the

ideological underpinnings of historical reasoning, the concrete nature of the pedagogical model offers a methodology to engage in multiperspectival discourse. So, to answer the guiding question I offer the following answer: historical thinking pedagogy has qualitatively improved history education through the exploration and conceptualization of the procedural aspects of the discipline, thereby facilitating student engagement in constructing an understanding of the past. Therefore, I will join Clark (2013) in asserting, “that the place of history in the school curriculum has become increasingly secure, following precarious times” (p. 42). In this chapter I articulated the value of history education as a way for students to understand that history is constructed, and should be deliberated. Yet, I have not considered why students should engage in the deliberation of the past. The next chapter will explore the concept of historical consciousness and the degree to which a historical thinking framework develops this disposition in students.



## CHAPTER 4:

### Does Historical Thinking Facilitate the Development of Students' Historical Consciousness?

#### Introduction

As a high school social studies teacher, I have experienced many positive interactions with young people over the course of my career. I have witnessed students who struggled connecting concepts like ‘continuity and change over time,’ realizing that the world they experience has very real antecedents. I have seen students stay in class during their lunch hour discussing how there was a regrettable lack of response to acts of genocide in Rwanda. Many students are passionate and show great insight when confronted with the implications of the past on the present. One day, early in my career, I was preparing my class to explore the legacies of the Industrial Revolution with my grade 12 social studies class. As we were getting started a young man walked in, somewhat agitated. He sat down in his desk and hung his head. As I outlined the objectives for the class, he looked straight at me and said, “What good is this class to me anyway? I’m going to be a mechanic and I really don’t need to consider all this ‘stuff’ to do a job!” With that statement he rose and walked right out of the class.

That interaction was pivotal for me. I teach social studies because I love it. As I share my enthusiasm about history with students, some of them tolerate my exuberance, while others sincerely appreciate it. Yet the question about why history is important was not something for which I had a prepared answer. According to the Alberta Education (2005) *Social Studies Kindergarten to Grade 12: Program Rationale and Philosophy*, social studies is about students becoming “engaged, active, informed and responsible

citizens” (p. 1). Yet, what is the role of history in that vision? As discussed earlier, the memorization and repetition of nationalistic narratives are irrelevant in a postmodern and increasingly globalized world. Lévesque (2016b) poses the question: “Why should historical thinking matter to students?” (p. 8). This is an important question. His reasoned answer is clear and compelling:

The simple answer is: because the 21st century world in which they live demands it. In an age in which ‘history’ is easily confused with ‘commemoration’ in the public space, today’s learners need the knowledge and competencies to deal with and use the experiences of past actualities for the purpose of their life orientation. (p. 8)

Lévesque argues that historical thinking is essential for young people to orient their lives through an understanding of the past, present and future. This temporal orientation is referred to as one’s historical consciousness (p. 6). Although Lévesque’s definition lacks a coherent construct, he argues that history education is important because of its role in shaping the present and the future. To explore this claim it is essential to consider the following question: Does historical thinking facilitate the development of students’ historical consciousness? In addressing this inquiry, I will raise the following related questions. What is historical consciousness? What is the relationship between historical thinking and the development of a historical consciousness? In what way does historical thinking pedagogy influence students’ historical consciousness? Does a focus on historical consciousness change an educator’s pedagogical approach? Through a theoretical analysis of the concept and a review of student narratives from a variety of studies, I argue that historical thinking does contribute to the complexity of students’ historical perspectives, but this procedural pedagogy does little to shift students’ temporal orientation.

## What is Historical Consciousness?

If historical consciousness is an expected outcome of historical thinking, then understanding how that concept has evolved will bring some necessary clarity. Ahonen (2005) begins her review of *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* (Seixas, 2004) by providing a brief exploration of the concept. She notes that 20 years ago, history educators in the English-speaking world were intent on fostering students' historical literacy and historical awareness. The 'product' of historical literacy, according to Ahonen (2005), was the development of the "mastery of the basic historical information, which enables historical reading and discussion" (p. 697). Students would know important narratives in order to situate themselves in the world in which they lived. In public education, this focus on the national narrative was regarded as an essential component of citizenship (Osborne, 2000a). In the UK, the focus on historical awareness stressed the ability of students to "link a specific piece of historical information to some well-known basic events and phenomena" (Ahonen, 2005, p. 697). The critical capacity of students to make sense of the traces of the past (evidence) was essential in their developing historical awareness (p. 698). Therefore, if the purpose of history education is to enhance both historical literacy and historical awareness, history instruction should facilitate student engagement framed by citizenship and cognitive goals. What was absent in these conceptual frameworks is a recognition of the person (or the thinker). How does engaging in history change one's stance to the present? How does knowledge of the past inform one's identity and uniqueness? How does encountering the past influence the moral and ethical perspectives of the thinker? The personal engagement with history is absent in the goals of historical literacy and awareness (p. 698).

The introduction of historical consciousness into models of historical thinking pedagogy offer theorists a purpose for history education that is transformative in nature because the personal connection to the past is explicit. In unpacking this concept, I'd like to address a few considerations. First, a person's historical consciousness influences their practical temporal orientation. Second, historical consciousness is influenced by various interactions with the past. Third, the concept of historical consciousness is distinct from collective memory.

In his earlier work, Seixas (2004) sought to understand "how ordinary people beyond the history profession understand the past" (p. 8). At the time he was working with the concept 'collective memory' to approach this consideration. Working from this initial inquiry, Seixas brought together international researchers and introduced the European perspective of historical consciousness to North American theorists (Seixas, 2016b, p. 429). The subsequent publication, *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, brought the concept into current models of historical thinking theory (Seixas, 2004). Historical consciousness, fundamentally, is the temporal orientation that shapes and influences the perspectives and actions of people. Lévesque and Zanazanian (2015) summarize the concept:

The underlying logic of historical consciousness is based on the principle that every person embodies — consciously or not — some beliefs, assumptions, and visions about the past that are used to make guiding decisions in life (Conrad et al., 2013). For Jörn Rüsen (2005), this consciousness makes it possible for individuals to understand and orient their life in reference to the course of time, and to establish relevant links between the past, the present, and the envisioned future in the form of a usable past. (p. 391)

Lévesque and Zanazanian, are not merely referring to a simplistic heuristic of 'learning from the lessons of history.' Rather, one's historical consciousness provides a temporal foundation to understand the complexities of life. Heelan (2009) argues that

consciousness is the ‘meaning maker’ that actively constructs “concepts, predictions, judgments, and practices” (p. 469) that are used to orient an individual’s identity. Rüsen (2004) asserts that an individual’s historical consciousness actively “transforms moral values into temporal wholes: traditions, timeless rules of conduct, concepts of development, or other forms of comprehension of time” (p. 68). The positioning of an individual in time orients their perspectives, ethics, and sense of belonging. In this construct, the past is a significant pillar in understanding the present and in constructing the future.

The recent celebration of Canada’s 150th year, exemplifies the importance of historical consciousness in the formation of identity. A Globe and Mail article notes that 2017 “revealed a lot about this country. For some Canadians, it has been a year of celebration—I’ve never seen so many ‘I (heart) Canada’ T-shirts. But for others, it was a bust” (Gray, 2017). Reminiscing about the centennial, Gray comments that many Canadians rooted their celebrations in 1967 on the impression that most citizens were of a shared European origin and that the country emerged strong and united through hardships. Their interpretation of the past contributed to a naïve nationalist account; the struggle for Confederation, the horrors of the world wars, and the international prestige of hosting the World’s fair (Montreal Expo ‘67) unified Canadians with a nostalgia that brought exuberance and excitement. Fast-forward to 2017 and there was a different impression of Canada. As Canadians reconceptualize the past, the previous Eurocentric vision has been challenged through an awareness and acceptance of multiple narratives of the past. Most notably, Indigenous people have asserted their historical perspective. Rather than a celebratory voice, Indigenous communities held that “Canada 150

represented a celebration not of nationhood but of colonization. The birth of Confederation was simply one more date on which their existence had been ignored and their rights trampled” (Grey, 2017). While some Canadians celebrated diversity and multiculturalism in 2017, others challenged the colonial structures still present and oppressive in contemporary society. The sesquicentennial revealed that the contemporary debates of the present are rooted in contending historical perspectives.

As an educator it is exciting to see people engage in these discussions about the past and the implications on the present. Sandwell (2006), underscores this public discussion:

For over the past few years, adults and children throughout Canadian society seem to be seeking answers to deeper questions of identity, meaning, community, and nation in their study of the past. Canadians are demonstrating a new interest in what scholars have termed ‘historical consciousness’ or ‘collective memory,’ and are expressing this in a wide range of cultural activities. (2006, p. 3)

It is apparent that there is a degree of confusion between the concepts of collective consciousness and historical consciousness. Cutrara (2009) notes that historical consciousness can be understood as “the collective consciousness of the national story” (p. 88). She attributes this interpretation to some of Seixas’ earlier work framing these ideas (Seixas 2004; 2006). Although there are logical connections between the two concepts, examining the development and use of collective consciousness is worthwhile. Although not responsible for the term ‘collective consciousness’ or ‘collective memory,’ which are often used synonymously, Durkheim is credited with exploring the concept of collective memory. Misztal (2003), summarizing Durkheim, explained that collective memory was important in “the revitalization of a group’s social heritage for the reaffirmation of its bonds and the reinforcement of its solidarity” (p. 123). For example, if we take an artifact of the past, such as the *Magna Carta*, we can see how the narrative

around the genesis of a constitutional monarchy shape how people relate and connect to society in the present (pp. 132-133). In their exploration of collective memory, Wertsch and Roediger III (2008) highlight the discord in the academic field regarding the concept. In seeking a common ground, they state: “Perhaps the only generally agreed-upon feature is that collective memory is a form of memory that transcends individuals and is shared by a group” (p. 318).

Highlighting how collective consciousness is socially reinforced, Trofanenko (2010) illustrates how a history museum can highlight unifying features in order to convey a shared past and sense of nationalism.

History, as presented in a museum, is often a unitary narrative of the past that outlines for the public how a nation has developed over time. Through the interplay between physical artifacts which serve as evidence a past existed, and narrative texts, public history museums present coherent versions of past events that distinguish one nation from any other and from which a collective consciousness of that nation is formed. (pp. 270-271)

The design and function of a collective consciousness is to build a sense of unity. Although Wertsch and Roediger III (2008) stress the complexity of that process and the subsequent negotiation and discord around how collective memory is formed and embraced, it is clear the structuring of collective consciousness can have some direct links to building a sense of community and national unity. Cutrara (2009), therefore, confuses the concepts of collective consciousness and historical consciousness in her explanation of the historical thinking approach: “teaching students how to construct history like historians, so that they will have the skills to ask questions about the role of history in our present and eventually develop a foundation for building a common historical understanding for the future” (p. 88). This equation misses one key differentiation, historical consciousness is shaped by collective memory but is not limited

to it. The development of a person's historical consciousness can (and probably should) challenge collective memory as it seeks to position the author of the narrative (student) within an individualized temporal orientation. Therefore, equating historical consciousness with collective consciousness is not accurate.

People are deeply interested in the past that intersects with their lived experiences and sense of identity. Seixas (2004) argues that history courses are not the most significant influence on a student's historical consciousness. People develop and define their historical consciousness in "the area in which collective memory, the writing of history and other modes of shaping images of the past in the public mind merge" (p. 10). It is important to recognize the significance of family traditions, community celebrations, and public monuments in shaping and expressing the historical consciousness of the individual and community. Seixas, referencing Rüsen's theory of historiography (Megill, 1994), notes that people have a conceptual schema that consigns one's experience of history (memory) to a practical level where it contributes to "identity formation and community building" (Seixas, 2016a). Therefore, educators need to realize that as students interact with history, the past is experienced through the lived present, which can affect the orientation, ethical perspectives, and subsequent actions of students.



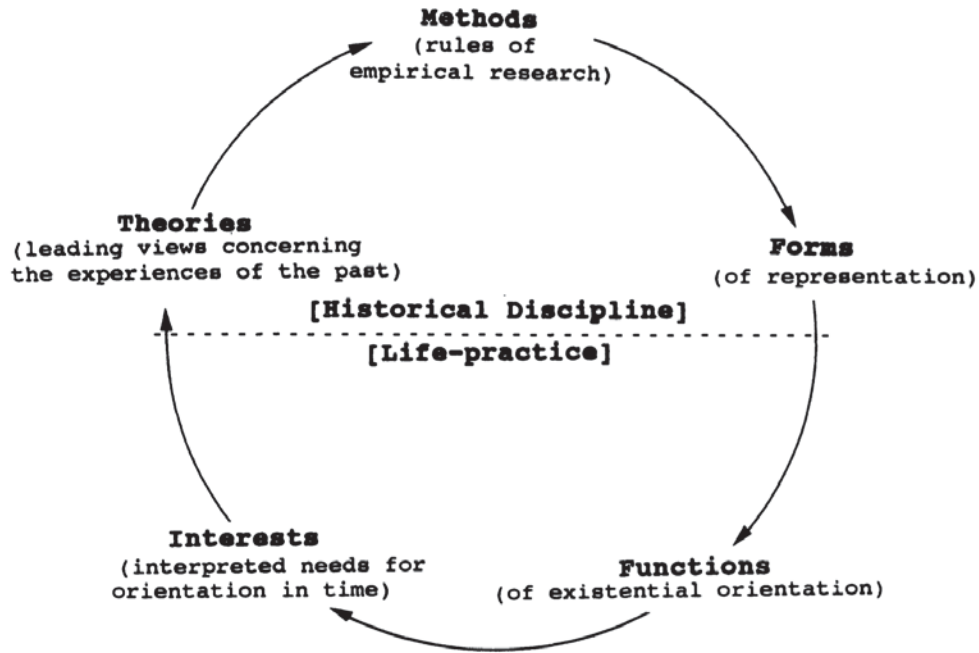


Figure 1. Rüsen’s disciplinary matrix demonstrates the competing influences of one’s historical consciousness. This model was translated and published by Megill (1994).

Rüsen’s concept of historical consciousness (Figure 1) provides the “so what?” for history education. Although Rüsen is not specifically addressing the potential of a procedural pedagogy, he does raise the interrelation of disciplinary considerations and life-practices. Seixas’ (2016) articulates historical consciousness as, “an achievement of cultures—or individuals—who comprehend the historicity of their own circumstances, the mutability of their identities and the contingency of their traditions” (p. 429).

Historical consciousness, therefore, is more than just a temporal orientation that cognitively situates students. Historical consciousness is inherently about identity construction. As individuals engage in historical thinking, an awareness of temporal positioning is revealed in an emerging historical consciousness. This awareness of historical antecedents, present perspectives and future possibilities contribute to an individualized employment within a narrative. Historical consciousness interacts with

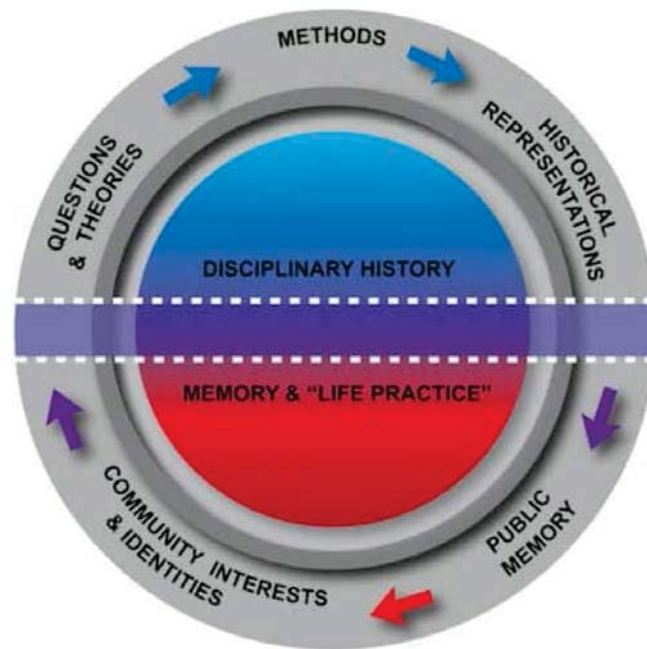
collective consciousness but is not limited to a linear, common, or narrow conception of the past. It is the development of one's historical consciousness that contributes to the growth and expression of values and morality, thereby having a definite effect on present and future sensibilities.

### **What is the Relationship Between Historical Thinking and the Development of a Historical Consciousness?**

Up to this juncture, I've conceptualized historical consciousness as an emerging temporal orientation that informs one's identity, relationship to the present and vision of the future. Now, I would like to attend to the role of the educator. It stands to reason that students possess a historical consciousness that is an influencing factor in their orientation, identity and perspectives of the world. This orientation is not necessarily held critically or reflectively. It is the role of history education to introduce, critique, and construct an understanding of the past that will enrich and deepen students' historical consciousness. Lee (2004) underscores this perspective, "it should be clear that insisting on the importance of developing students' understanding of history need not imply grandiose claims. What is at stake is not the training of mini-historians, but changing students' understanding of history" (p. 139).

At the heart of the historical thinking pedagogy is the shift from a strictly substantive approach to a critical procedural approach. Focusing on the ways a historical narrative is constructed is essential because of the complexity of "complementary, competing, or clashing stories" (Lee, 2004, p. 130) that challenge contemporary interpretations. Engaging in a critical historiographical process invites students into an investigation where the narrative is not established and the "inferential discipline of

history” (p. 135) allows for the exploration of evidence, perspectives, and evaluation of conclusions. Seixas (2016b) argues that historical inquiry can influence the memory and life practice of students, thereby deepening their historical consciousness. This is the realm of history education (situated between memory and life practice and disciplinary history, see Figure 2), where “skilled teachers have considerable autonomy to address the memorial culture of the students in their classes and where community memories—perhaps even divided memories—are subjected to and enlarged by critical, historical scrutiny, feeding back into public memory” (Seixas, 2016a).



*Figure 2.* Seixas (2016a) offers a model that seeks to position history education at the intersection between Disciplinary History and Memory and Life Practice.

At the intersection of a disciplinary methodology and the practical temporal orientation, students demonstrate their consciousness through the construction of a historical narrative that is a response to inquiry. History education must, therefore, be more than the analysis of primary documents (Lee, 2004, pp. 135 & 139). The

incorporation of procedural concepts must lead students to a place where they make sense of the past in an academic as well as a personal way. This process can be seen as inherently constructivist (Körber, 2016, p. 441). As students acquire competencies to “(1) experience time, (2) interpret the past in light of the temporal whole, and (3) utilize that interpretation for the practical purpose of orientation in life” (Rüsen, 2004, p. 81), historical consciousness emerges as a product of learning. This process can be best demonstrated through the development of narrative competence (p. 80). Lévesque (2016a) summarizes:

Rüsen (2005: 81) contends that the fundamental form within which historical consciousness realizes its function of orientation is that of the narrative. The purpose of narrative, in Rüsen’s view, is to transform the past into meaningful history by giving a direction, sense and coherence to otherwise disorganized past actions and events. (p. 229)

The construction of narrative, as a demonstration of knowledge and orientation, is valuable because it situates the author within the context of the past. It communicates a particular perspective of the past and relates that account to the present. The transformation of the past into a meaningful history is a task that is replete with professional and personal judgment. Ultimately, people construct narratives to make sense out of a particular problem or an issue (Cronon, 1992, p. 1349). It is not an objective retelling of the past. It is a construction based upon the historical competence and imagination of the historian. Cronon (1992), notes that the narrative of history is a creative extension of the author.

The exercise [the comparison of various stories about the Great Plains] persuaded me that plot and scene and character, beginnings and middles and ends, the rhetoric of storytelling, the different agendas of narrators and readers, all permeate our activities as historians. To deny the richness of this insight would be an evasion of self-knowledge, a willful refusal to recognize the power and the paradoxes that flow from our narrative discourse. (p. 1372)

The creation of a historical narrative demonstrates the historical consciousness of the historian or student, as it situates the account into a temporal discourse where significance and meaning are sought. Though I would be hard pressed to recognize a historical account as objective or complete, it is important to recognize that the construction of a historical narrative is predicated on the assumption that the narrative is based upon fact. The account needs to withstand the scrutiny of readers on the basis of its historical methodology. Cronon (1992) recognizes that the construction of the narrative requires a respect for two tensions that are interwoven in the process. He states, “My goal throughout has been to acknowledge the immense power of narrative while still defending the past (and nature) as real things to which our storytelling must somehow conform lest it cease being history altogether” (p. 1372). As Seixas, Lévesque, and Rösen would hold, the construction of the narrative is the product of a procedural approach to history that has been realized within the development of a practical temporal orientation. In short, the narrative is the vehicle by which one’s historical consciousness is made known and experienced by others.

Although the connection between disciplinary procedural understandings and temporal orientation seem to be logical, postmodernists raise an important critique. Segall (2006) argues that the conceptual constructs that are promoted limit what and how we know: “history does not simply elucidate the world but establish regimes of knowledge and truth that regulate (discipline) our relation to (and in) it” (p. 130). Further, critiquing the shift in historical thinking pedagogy from substantive knowledge to procedural knowledge, Cutrara argues that the power relationships in substantive narratives become unexplored as the pedagogical focus is placed on apparent ‘neutral’ processes. Therefore,

“[t]he discipline of history “regulates what kind of questions can and should be asked within historical inquiry” and these questions “are never neutral, never disinterested and consequently neither are the judgments derived from them” (Segall, 2006, pp. 134 & 138)” (Cutrara, 2009, p. 93). In approaching the process of narrative construction, Cutrara and Segall directly question metahistorical considerations that inform one’s temporal orientation.

A practical example of this can be seen in the exploration of historical significance. Seixas and Morton (2013) describe historical significance as addressing the question “How do we decide what is important to learn about the past?” (p. 12). In determining significance, they offer some criteria for deliberation. A historically significant event results in change and/ or is perceived as revealing (pp. 17-20). Considering events that have resulted in change, Seixas and Morton encourage students to consider the impact “of an event, person, or development” (p. 17). Although the exploration of the criteria opens up discussion, the very nature of ‘impact’ suggests a notion of non-cyclical change. Events, such as the daily activities of sustaining a hunter gatherer society are not seen as contributing to impacting change, therefore they are judged as less historically significant. Marker (2011), highlights this ideological fixity embedded within the procedural concepts:

From an indigenous perspective, the assumptions of “progress” that are inextricable from both modernity and hierarchical categories that emerged from colonialization are in collision with a circular cosmology that sees new shapes of reality as returning visions of both ancestors and ideas. (p. 101)

Although Seixas and Morton establish that historical significance is constructed and can change for different individuals and groups, the language used implies an understanding of progress that privileges certain considerations over others. Judgments of significance

are reflections of cultural constructs that societies have transmitted (Levstik, 2000, p. 284). These unexamined perspectives thereby influence the development of the historical consciousness of learners and reinforce a certain way of orienting to the past, present and future. Keeping these postmodern and postcolonial challenges in mind, it is essential to note that students are actively constructing temporal orientations. These orientations may not be inclusive nor sophisticated, but they do respond to contemporary perspectives individually and morally.

In highlighting the discourse surrounding historical consciousness, I'd like to raise one final thought. The goal of a historical thinking pedagogy is the growth of a more critical historical consciousness. History education offers disciplinary considerations that are necessary to reevaluate previous narratives and construct new ones (Seixas, 2016a). It is also important to stress that public commemoration, family traditions, museum exhibits and personal experiences shape an individual's practical orientation in time. These are the individualized life-practices that contribute to a sense of individual and collective identity. Both Seixas (2016a) and Lévesque (2016a) recognize the value of academic concepts and processes to enhance students' orientation, but Lévesque stresses that the binary between life-practice and disciplinary history is too simplistic (para. 4). There needs to be a consideration of the "practices and methods used to generate cultural and public narratives" (para., 4). Therefore, he introduces the broad concept of a "historical culture" (see Figure 3), which a community draws on to interpret and narrate the past. This addition clarifies the nature of public memory as a product of a multifaceted exchange of perspectives and purposes. It is easy to see parallels here to the previous discussion on collective memory. A historical culture builds a sense of contemporary

belonging to a community (Misztal, 2003) which may run counter to the methodology of the academic discipline. These structures (the academic discipline, memory and life-practice, and historical culture) continue to change and evolve around students, enriching the process of temporal orientation and identification.

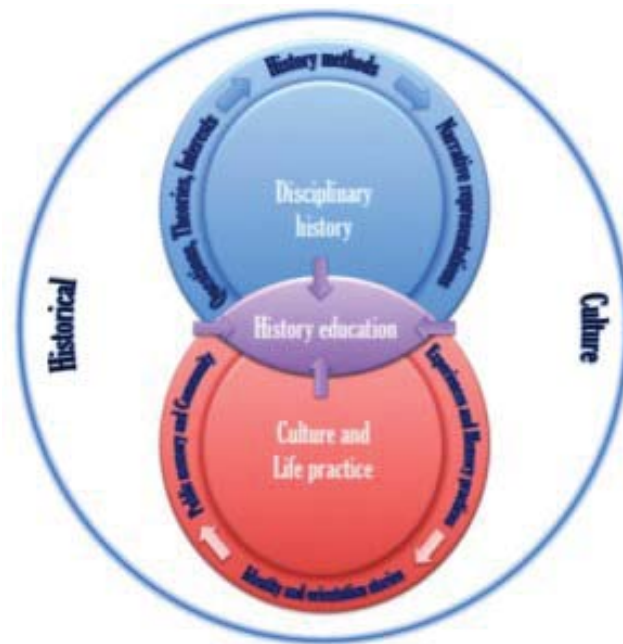


Figure 3. Lévesque (2016a) maintains the placement of History Education that Seixas (2016a) proposed. He adds the consideration of the Historical Culture to the model.

I began this section looking at the relationship between history education and development of students' historical consciousness. It seems simplistic to say that there is a direct relationship, but there is. History is an important school subject because of its role in shaping present and future society. Osborne (2000a), referencing a 1953 investigation, notes that history education played a dynamic role in shaping, not only nationalistic attitudes, but “the importance of the past for the present” (p. 411). He also notes that the content and delivery of history as a school subject mattered to the temporal perspectives that students develop. Quoting a 1919 edition of *The Grain Grower's Guide*, Osborne reports:



that history was ‘the most mistaught subject in our curriculum,’ consisting only of ‘a recital of facts in chronological order’ while ignoring social and economic realities, lacking a ‘social interpretation,’ saying nothing about the reasons and motives underlying events, and totally failing to fulfill ‘its proper functions of giving one a background for a better present and future citizenship.’ (p. 412)

These early accounts underscore the value of developing a historical consciousness. In the present, the procedural approach to history education (Seixas & Morton, 2013) offers students disciplinary considerations that allow them to engage with evidence, problems, and historical patterns that will help them make sense of a complex past. Although the postmodern critique correctly questions the ideological foundation of the procedural concepts, a historical thinking approach allows students to discuss and debate substantive narratives that should be critically revisited. Additionally, history education encourages students to construct historical narratives giving them an opportunity to contextualize the past in light of the present. Ultimately, historical thinking concepts reveal that history is a construction that is built by various historical claims, thereby enabling students to critically engage in commemoration and public history as thoughtful participants.

### **Does a Procedural Pedagogy Enhance Students’ Historical Consciousness?**

The development of a historical consciousness through a procedural approach is the goal of history education (Seixas, 2004; 2012; 2017; Lévesque, 2011; Körber, 2016; Ahonen, 2005; Barton & Levstik, 2004). Although researchers and theorists will describe historical learning with different terminology (historical literacy, historical awareness, collective memory, or historical consciousness), it is clear that a historical thinking pedagogy must go beyond the procedural competence and deepen students’ understanding and orientation to time. Referencing Wineburg’s notion that thinking historically is an ‘unnatural act’ (Wineburg, 2001), Retz (2016) captures the strangeness of this process for students:

[I]n the confrontation with difference in an alien past, history students are jolted out of their natural condition, transforming their assumptions and ways of thinking that serve them well in their everyday lives into barriers obstructing their efforts to understand those who thought differently from them. (p. 514)

Although the process of thinking historically involves ‘foreign’ considerations for the student, embracing complexity helps students understand that they play a significant role in constructing and conceptualizing the past. Practically, it stands to reason that if history education is engaging students, then one should be able to note change in their temporal orientation. To ascertain the value of this pedagogical approach it is necessary to turn to research that sought to identify the effects of a procedural approach upon the historical perspectives of students.

Student experiences in history education have changed significantly since the mid-1970s, with the introduction of the SCHP in the UK. Working with 13- to 16-year-old students, the project embraced a pedagogical shift from teaching uncritical substantive narratives to a procedural approach. Bain (2005) notes that this shift placed importance on a student’s ability to be able to explain “what they know, how they know it, and how confident or tentatively they are ‘entitled’ to hold their views” (p. 210). With the development and incorporation of a procedural approach to history education in numerous schools in the UK, Lee and Ashby (2000) conducted a study titled, *Concepts of History and Teaching Approaches 7-14* (CHATA). The goal of this study was to “map changes in students’ ideas about history” (p. 201). The research was conducted with 320 students using a combination of written responses and interviews. The study also incorporated a longitudinal study of 122 students to note any change or growth in student responses over time. In the study, students were presented with two accounts that presented different content around a single historical claim. Students were then asked to

explain those differences(p. 204). This task facilitated students' experience with causal relationships, in this example, historical factors that have contributed to the fall of the Roman Empire. Additionally, the task looked at how students rationalized the judgments they made about the nature of historical narratives.

The CHATA study reveals a couple important insights. In the initial findings, Lee and Ashby (2000) discovered that students' historical perspectives do not develop predictably. Some younger students understood evidence and the nature of accounts more clearly than older students. Some students showed "progression in ideas of causal structure but not in rational understanding, or vice versa" (p. 213). The study also suggests that certain concepts can arise at different times, "[t]he biggest gains on causal structure came in the fifth grade" (p. 213). Unsurprisingly, the study reveals that there was the least progression in schools "where history was not a clearly identifiable subject in the curriculum arrangements" (p. 213). When the researchers looked at the data from the longitudinal study (comparing responses of students over a two-year period) the data suggests that a focus on a procedural approach to history education enables growth in student competence.

Broad patterns of change were identifiable within the different concepts. For example, more than half the second-grade children made choices between claims without reference to the sources. By fourth-grade more than half the children were matching information in claims and sources to help them choose between claims... The greatest range of ideas occurred in rational understanding, where 12 children in the second grade had given explanations of action in personal terms, and six found the request for explanation baffling. By the fourth grade, two children remained baffled, but more than half had moved to or beyond explanations that appealed to agent's role. (p. 214)

Lee (2004) notes that thinking historically is difficult for students. Yet, "when they are taught with the aim of enabling them to make sense of history, as well as the past, there is evidence that they acquire powerful ideas" (p. 155). The results of the study suggest that

teaching the procedures of history produce in students an ability to embrace complexity. Although the study did not allude to a structured shift in historical consciousness, it does provide evidence that supports a history pedagogy that intentionally connects to the procedural aspects of the discipline.

Early research into the effect of history education on established narratives have raised insights into the influence of collective memory, the design of the curriculum, and the role of the teacher. In communities where there are distinctive narratives, the role of history education should be apparent in problematizing collective memory. In Canada, Quebec is a unique community linguistically and culturally. Létourneau and Moisan (2004) note that many francophone young people hold a nationalistic narrative about the history of Quebec that is “nostalgic and melancholic,” based around an understanding of the hardships that have befallen the French minority in Canada (p. 110). These representations of the past seem to be built around three narrative clusters: ‘what unfortunately befell a community,’ ‘what community might have become if only,’ ‘what that community might yet become if only’ all which point to an unhappy representation of Quebec’s place in the history of Canada (p. 110).

By the early 2000s Quebec had adopted a history curriculum and history teaching that did not support the foundations of the dominant narrative. Given this pedagogical shift, the researchers wanted to know why this collective memory continued to “persist in young people when the conditions have been in place for some time for it to fade away?” (Létourneau & Moisan, 2004, p. 110). To address the research question, a survey was given to 403 young people who were attending either secondary school, college or university. Students were given 45 minutes to address this task: “Present or narrate the

history of Quebec since its beginnings, as you perceive it, know about it, or remember it” (p. 125). Student responses demonstrated very little variance from the established francophone narrative (p. 110). This response was somewhat unexpected given that the substantive content in the textbooks do “not present francophones as either the unfortunate victims of the British or the dupes of Canadian endeavour” (p. 112). Further, the courses in secondary school and college support a disciplinary approach to the study of history, thereby providing a necessary backdrop to interrogate established narratives (p. 111).

Building from the premise of the previous study, Lévesque, Létourneau, and Gani (2012) returned to the collected students’ narratives. The intention of this study was to see “in what terms” do Quebec students “make sense of Quebec’s past?” (p. 55). Working from the data set collected by Létourneau and Moisan (2004), the researchers narrowed their scope to look at the grade 11 responses. In exploring the narratives, they employed the Social Identity Theory (SIT) to be able to determine how student narratives defined “us and them” groupings (p. 56). One assumption held by the researchers was that, “formal school history is supposed to replace intuitive ideas about the past, that people gradually acquire through life experiences, with more evidence-based ones” (p. 56). Like the previous study, the student narratives revealed “that that young Québécois do not bother making sharp distinction between ‘history’ as a form of critical inquiry and ‘historical memory’ - the usable past shaped by emotional and contemporary social processes” (p. 56). Most narrative constructs displayed a ‘narrative orientation,’ that represented stories of adversity or a justification in asserting nationalistic independence (pp. 57-58). This study confirmed the earlier assertion that students were

“unmoved by the current didactical approaches to national history,” and that students’ “useable history is very much shaped by forces outside the realm of formal education” (Lévesque, Létourneau, & Gani, 2013, p. 170).

The role of collective memory as an influencing factor in Quebec is not unique. In Northern Ireland, Barton and McCully (2005) designed a study to examine the “connections that students...make between history and identity” (p. 85). Given that collective memory is prone to spark disagreement and violence in Northern Ireland, the “curriculum emphasizes analysis and interpretation of evidence, along with consideration of historical viewpoints, rather than mastery of a national narrative” (Barton & McCully, 2010, p. 150). Within this context 253 students were interviewed and asked to complete a picture sorting task. These students were age 11 to 14 and were involved in the secondary history curriculum (Barton & McCully, 2005, p. 90). Of interest to the researchers was how students “connect history to their own identities,” how their perspectives change as they are “exposed to the national curriculum,” and how these changes might “vary among groups” (Barton & McCully, 2005, p. 89). What emerged from the interviews was that students “do not identify solely with a limited set of politicized historical themes” (p. 95). With that said, the researchers do highlight that the conflict in Northern Ireland is a “strong influence...on students’ perceptions of who they are and what is important to them” (p. 107). Another interesting point raised by the research is that there is a grade level progression in students’ identification with national history. In the earlier grades students identified with a broad range of images, such as “the *Titanic*, the World Wars, and castles” (p. 107). By the conclusion of the third year of the history curriculum, students were identifying with images that “related to their own national, religious, and

cultural backgrounds” (p. 108). Though the older students rationalized their choices with specific historical content and detail they learned at school, it was clear that the community conflict plays an influential role in “historical identification” (p. 108).

These studies point to the significance of the students’ sociocultural environment in navigating their historical orientation. Additional Canadian research supports this finding. In British Columbia, Peck (2011) sought to understand the “relationship between a student’s ethnic identity and his/ her ascription of significance to phenomena in Canada’s past” (p. 312). The research was conducted with grade 12 students who self-identified from a variety of ethnic perspectives. Students were asked to work collaboratively, select 10 out of 38 events in Canadian history that they deemed significant, and construct a timeline. After the collaborative work, interviews were conducted to allow students an opportunity to share why they made the selections that they did (p. 313). From the interviews, Peck asserts that the strength of a common societal past, a cultural narrative, or a family tradition has a significant influence in shaping historical understandings (p. 319). An interview of a student, who identified as Canadian Aboriginal, exemplifies the role of ethnicity in ascribing historical significance:

My perspective of Canadian history is different than everybody else’s...I think if I was born and raised on my reserve I’d try and find all Aboriginal [events] or something. But since I live in an urban setting I’ve tried to include all of them.” Ariana’s identity as a ‘multicultural Canadian Aboriginal’ influenced her ideas about historical significance to events that she felt were representative of her identity. (p. 314)

Peck (2011) summarizes that one’s cultural identification has a profound impact on how history is learned (p. 318). Although the research only engaged students with a task built around the concept of historical significance, it is clear that the ethnic identification informs historical judgments and perceptions.

Taken together, these studies from the UK, Quebec, Northern Ireland, and Canada suggest that a procedural approach to history education shows promise by enabling students to internalize and demonstrate an understanding of historical methods. This observation can validate the shifts in curriculum and practice that have been implemented through the Historical Thinking Project (Seixas, 2017, p. 603). Students, when engaged with historical thinking procedures think about the construction of the past with more complexity. The studies also support the influence of students' sociocultural context as a significant factor in how history education facilitates identity formation and narrative construction. What is not apparent through these studies is whether an approach to history teaching that stresses disciplinary thinking has the power to shift or deepen students' established narratives. This observation raises a couple of questions. Should studying history in school have a demonstrable effect on shaping students' historical consciousness? How can history education challenge students' established temporal orientations? Through more recent studies, I will endeavour to address these questions in order to explore the potential impacts of history education.

I'd like to take a moment to pause and consider whether history education should influence established narratives rooted in the community. If we refer back to Rösen's (2004) conceptualization of historical consciousness, it is interesting to note that the role of history education is not overt. Even within his theoretical model (Megill, 1994), the discipline of history is understood as one factor that influences one's historical consciousness, but not history education specifically. Therefore, it could be argued that history education may not play a significant role in the formation of one's historical consciousness. Through an examination of the research in Quebec, British Columbia, and



Northern Ireland it is apparent that the collective consciousness of the communities drive the narrative constructs of students. Yet, Seixas (2016a) and Lévesque (2016a) have adapted Rüsen's model to incorporate history education. In doing so, they make the case that a historical thinking pedagogy should influence the articulation and growth of a student's historical consciousness.

Recent research confirms earlier conclusions that students structure their narratives around a need to belong to a collective. The conclusion of Lévesque, Létourneau, and Gani's (2012) study reveals that young French Quebecois frame their stories purposefully to position "their ingroup (French Canadians) in opposition to a dominant imperialist outgroup, *les Anglais*" (p. 58), provides a baseline for subsequent studies. Lévesque (2017), in a study of francophone narratives in Ontario, notes that the narrative emplotment organized around the "concept of continuous French/ English struggle" make the "experiences of the collective past relevant for present day purposes" (p. 235). Zanzian's (2015) study of English speaking students in Quebec supports Lévesque, Létourneau, and Gani's findings. Although the study was not large enough to warrant generalizations, Zanzian concludes that linguistic minority students want to be included in "Quebec's collective We" (p. 131). His research found two key responses among the Anglophone students. One group uncritically embraced the Quebec nationalist storyline, while the other critiqued the narrative for its lack of diversity (p. 131). In the critical group, it is interesting to note that they did not offer a viable 'counter-narrative' to the master narrative (p. 130), rather they based their temporal orientation on a negation. In each of these studies students generally adhere to "simplified and naïve historical

accounts in light of the current state of history education programs” (Lévesque et al., 2012, p. 58).

The research in Quebec suggests that the structure of students’ historical narratives is determined by the convergence of their sense of identity (linguistically and culturally) and their community’s collective memory. Although the influence of history education does not seem significant, one can see that these narratives work for students as reflections of identities and values. In referring back to Rösen’s (2004) theory of historical consciousness, it becomes apparent that students seek to build a sense of temporal orientation that “transforms moral values into temporal wholes” (p. 68). History allows students to see and deliberate moral values in the form of “traditions, timeless rules of conduct, concepts of development, or other forms or comprehensions of time” (p. 68). Further, Rösen theoretically claims that the development of historical consciousness grounds moral reasoning within a temporal reality (historical narratives), thereby facilitating moral decision making in the present (p. 68). Narratives function as a way to ground societal norms. It should not be a surprise to see students constructing a historical narrative that reflects not only shared historical accounts, but preserves a sense of virtue. The intersection between historical thinking, collective memory and moral reasoning is murky, but these considerations highlight the complexity of the historical consciousness that students construct.

Whereas the Lévesque et al. (2012) study grounded students in an investigation of a specific narrative about Quebec, Duraisingh (2017) conducted an exploratory study of 187 16- to 18-year-olds in the USA who were asked to draw and explain diagrams that addressed how the past “helps explain who you are and the life you are living or hope to

live” (p. 174). Rather than a nationalist approach, this study invited an individualistic perspective. Through an analysis of the diagrams and 26 student interviews, Duraisingh notes that students constructed narratives that reflect, “the apparent diversity of ways in which young people think about themselves in relation to the past as well as the significance of epistemological understanding in the construction of individual historical consciousness” (p. 189). In reflecting on the implications of this study, Duraisingh notes that the demonstration of historical consciousness is multifaceted and individualistic. She suggests that teachers be wary of a ‘one size fits all’ approach to history education and, instead, offer “open-ended and potentially creative opportunities for them to reflect on the connections they perceive between themselves and the past” (p. 189). This study is significant in that it poses an open question about historical consciousness within an individualized task, rather than a reflection on established nationalistic narratives.

Students use narrative to situate themselves temporally. What is not evident from the research is the extent that history education impacts the historical consciousness of students. Goldberg, Schwarz and Porat (2011) offer a brief literature review that explains the stability of individual historical narratives.

Individuals value their narratives to a degree that any change to them may be felt as derogatory and disempowering (Cobb, 1993). The stability of historical narratives may also have something to do with their composite nature: They interweave factual details, cultural schemes, individual positioning, attitudes towards reality, and causal or moral claims. (p. 186)

Therefore, if history education is to play a role shifting these narrative constructs to be more complex and more inclusive of historical evidence, knowledge of this complexity is essential. Goldberg et al. (2011) offer the hypothesis that argumentation is an effective instructional strategy to engage students in embracing historical complexity. They define argumentation as the process where students are made aware of alternative perspectives

in order to “reach a reasoned resolution of controversy or refute others’ standpoints” (p. 188). The presentation of a problem or a controversy, pedagogically, makes the historical thinking methodology essential in the argumentative process (p. 188).

The research design sought to address two key considerations. First, does an “argumentative-disciplinary design” lead to “more narrative changes?” Second, how do “initial narratives and social identity...influence narrative change” (Goldberg et al., p. 190). The sample group was composed of 64 Grade 12 students within an urban setting. The students came from two distinct, self-identified, ethnic backgrounds (p. 191). Students were asked to complete two distinct tasks. The first was a writing task, where students were responding to the controversial ‘Melting Pot policy’ that was enacted in Israel (p. 192). The second task was a source evaluation task, where students were presented with sources from different perspectives that they were required to analyze (p. 193). In order to highlight the pedagogical considerations, one group was led through the process in a context that presented the controversy and stressed the necessity of reasoned augmentation. The other group was led through the study in a more traditional pedagogical approach that was familiar to students (pp. 193-196).

The results of the study suggest that a purposeful shift in one’s pedagogical approach can enhance the complexity of the narratives students create. Within the ‘historical argumentative’ group there was evidence of a “higher frequency of changes in narratives” (Goldberg et al., 2011, p. 209). This may be because the tasks were framed in an environment that included multiple perspectives and “critical group discussion” (p. 209). Additionally, the researchers found that the most significant shifts in narratives

occurred within an ethnic group that would benefit by re-employment (p. 211). Goldberg et al. summarize:

We may conclude that using argumentation to generate narrative change, or “the actively minded” challenge of dominant prior narratives, requires a strong motive. Such a motive appears to come from beyond the neutral rational goal of thinking critically. In this case, it seems that the motive was the protection of group and self-esteem. (p. 211)

In relating to Rösen’s (2004) theory of historical consciousness, it is reasonable to suggest that students will use history methodology and argumentation to modify a collective memory if there is a practical reason for doing so. In Zanazian’s (2015) study, he notes that although English speaking students struggled with aspects of the collective memory of Quebec’s past, they do not offer a comprehensive alternative. As their need to belong to the community is important, the students asked for a more inclusive narrative of Quebec rather than a different one.

At the beginning of this section I posed the question: Does a procedural pedagogy enhance students’ historical consciousness? Uncovering an answer to this question has raised a number of insights about historical consciousness. Historical consciousness is developed through the interactions between disciplinary history and memory and life-practice (Seixas, 2016a). It is constructed through a historical culture (Lévesque, 2016a) that is grounded in a community, and it is ultimately shaped in relation to the identity and purposes of the individual (Duraisingh, 2017; Goldberg et al., 2011). All of these facets are present within the classroom context and profoundly influence how students engage with the past, yet there is not much evidence to suggest that the promotion of a historical thinking approach to history education significantly alters the development of students’ historical consciousness in a measurable way. It is interesting to note, however, that in the Goldberg et al. (2011) study, as well as Duraisingh’s (2017) study, there are some

pedagogical strategies that may help to facilitate students' reflection and potential deepening of historical consciousness.

### **How Does a Focus on Historical Consciousness Change an Educator's Pedagogy?**

It is not difficult to see that young people are engaged in the task of actively generating a sense of connection between the past, present and future. Although history educators would hope that the substantive and procedural aspects of a disciplinary approach would contribute a more sophisticated historical consciousness of students, this connection is not readily apparent. What does emerge from the studies are a few pedagogical implications that could enhance students' development of a more complex historical consciousness. These I will attend to by exploring the role of the teacher, the intention of pedagogy, and finally the purpose of the discipline.

In Létourneau and Moisan's (2004) study, the researchers note that students perceive teachers as "intellectually honest and responsible" (p. 113). Moreover, the ability that teachers possess to structure their classes, engage students in inquiry, and provide information has a determinant effect on how information is experienced and understood. The researchers note that teachers, "while not their students' only source of information, are or do become their most authoritative reference" (p. 114). According to these observations, history teachers have a privileged opportunity to engage their students in meaningful explorations of the past, present and future. Unfortunately, Létourneau and Moisan suggest that one hinderance to Quebec students deepening their historical consciousness is the "limited competence in the area of factual knowledge and historiographic debate" that history teachers possess (p. 114). A further complication is the influence of teachers who represent their own historical perspective as "a socially

accepted and legitimized story line” of the Quebec historical experience (p. 114). As a result, although the curriculum and resources may challenge a nationalistic perspective, the teacher’s perspective is perceived as correct. Although a lack of teacher preparedness can limit student learning, this insight can also be seen as a call to professional development. Teachers can be seen as models and examples of historical thinking. They can engage their students in confronting established narratives and encourage the examination of multiple perspectives. This is the privilege and responsibility of the profession.

The age-old saying ‘if you aim at nothing, you’ll hit it every time,’ applies directly to the pedagogical intentions of educators. In the analysis of student responses in Quebec, Northern Ireland, British Columbia, and Ontario, researches sought to understand the historical consciousness of students through their constructed narratives. In these studies, researchers noticed that students were constructing their sense of temporal orientation absent of a recognizable disciplinary structure. The study conducted in Israel (Goldberg et al., 2011) assessed the impact of a specific pedagogical approach. As a result, they discovered that an argumentative pedagogical structure produced a significant shift in the narrative representations of students (p. 211). This finding is encouraging as more curriculum, textbooks, and teacher-training programs embrace a historical thinking pedagogy, more students should be confronted with developing competencies to address historical questions.

The inclusion of a historical thinking pedagogy has only recently become more prevalent in Canada. Curriculum framers should be looking at other jurisdictions to see how models of history education can foster more complex views of the past. For

example, since 1991, Northern Ireland has incorporated a history curriculum that “emphasizes analysis and interpretation of evidence, along with consideration of historical viewpoints” (Barton & McCully, 2010, p. 150). The curriculum “does not present an official narrative justifying current social or political arrangements” (p. 149). Students experience school history as a complement to collective memory. School is a place where “we learn the actual facts” (p. 166) one student is reported as saying, in reference to the function of school history in comparison to the community narratives. Although students were not willing to shift their allegiances in regard to collective memory, the study revealed that students were more willing to recognize the complexity in narrative positions that were not their own (p. 170). The implications of these findings suggest that an approach to history education, that “engages students in the historical process, introduces them to the concepts of evidence and perspective, and develops their critical skills,” (p. 173) can encourage students to interact with and embrace the challenges inherent in the composition of historical accounts. What this approach to historical thinking does not necessarily do is connect students’ understandings of the past to present realities. In contrast, Barton and McCully assert, “We believe that history education, in part, should contribute to students’ participation as reflective citizens of pluralist, democratic societies” (p. 173). By linking the study of history with citizenship education, the researchers imply a re-evaluation of the purpose of the school subject.

Barton and McCully (2010) elaborate:

For history teaching to fully meet students’ needs, the acquisition of appropriate knowledge and skills is not enough. Teachers should be conscious of fostering particular dispositions in students through which to frame their engagement with history, however complex and challenging it appears. This would involve making more direct connections between past and present. (p. 174)



In order to address this shift, the researchers suggest that history teachers will need to move away from a strictly cognitive approach and embrace the challenge of teaching history for the common good (Barton & Levstik, 2004).

## **Conclusion**

Why should historical thinking matter to students? On the one hand, historical thinking matters because it is the means by which people in the present make sense of the past. It used to be that history education was centered on memorizing content, but recent approaches to history education look behind the curtain and reveal to students the considerations, problems, and practices used in constructing a narrative. A historical thinking approach brings students into the role of the historian and the temporal challenges they encounter.

This problem can be seen in the *distance* between the present (which the historian exists) and the past (which no longer exists); in the *choices* the historian must make in order to draw coherence and meaning from an infinite and disorderly past; and in the *interpretive lenses* that the historian brings as a result of being who he or she is. (Lévesque, 2016b, p. 2)

At the center of the historian's experience is their own temporal orientation, their historical consciousness. As students experience procedural concepts necessary in constructing their own narratives, they glimpse their own temporal perspectives in the inferences they make.

In considering Lévesque's (2016b) assertion, "today's learners need the knowledge and competencies to deal with and use the experiences of past actualities for the purpose of their life orientation" (p. 8), I wanted to explore the degree to which a procedural approach to history education could facilitate growth and development of students' historical consciousness. The analysis of the theoretical discourse and student-based research has led me to a few conclusions. First, it is clear that students do have a

sense of historical consciousness. Students are self-identifying and own traditions and values (Rüsen, 2004) that facilitate their ethnic and collective identities (Létoineau & Moisan, 2004). What is not clear in the student responses is whether history education deepens their historical consciousness. Second, researchers (Lee, 2000; Létoineau & Moisan, 2004; Goldberg et al., 2011; Barton & McCully, 2010) suggest that students do develop various levels of procedural understandings and are made aware of multiple perspectives. In academic settings where there are trained teachers employing intentional strategies, and a procedurally focused curriculum, students deepen the complexity of their historical perspectives. The third insight is that the development of a historical consciousness has value for an individual student, but does not promote a commitment to seek the common good. Therefore, as a guide for history education, the growth and development of students' historical consciousness is a worthwhile purpose, but these individualized gains do not intentionally build a pluralistic sense of community or civic commitment. Therefore, there is a need to revisit the purpose of history education in order to situate the discipline within the broader purpose of citizenship education.

## CHAPTER 5:

### How Can a Humanist Approach to History Education Prepare Citizens?

#### Introduction

When I read the newspaper, I'm bombarded with stories of tragedy, heartbreak and malice. Very seldom are there articles that capture a sense of optimism and possibilities. On July 14, 2018, the *Globe and Mail* published an opinion piece that encouraged me to think about society in a different way. The article states that poverty is a significant problem, “[n]early five million Canadians live in poverty” and of those people “70 percent of Canadians beneath the poverty line have jobs—they just don't earn enough to meet cost of living” (Lowrey, 2018, p. O6). This issue has a profound effect on individuals and communities. Lower socio-economic status is linked to poorer health outcomes, increased stress levels on families and fewer choices for potential jobs. Although Lowrey notes that in Canada and the USA there are programs established to provide welfare and additional social service to those in need, there are significant problems with how those programs are enacted and the psychological implications of accessing those services. In response, the journalist raises the possibility of a Universal Basic Income (UBI), which is described as “a guaranteed income or an income guarantee or a citizen's income” (p. O1). In Ontario, a pilot program is underway which guarantees a basic income for four-thousand people. There are no established guidelines on how the money should be spent, nor any penalties accrued if people gain employment. The money can be used freely. Policy makers want to see how the income effects its “recipients' health, mental health, income, work effort and housing status, among other metrics”

(p. O1). Ultimately, the experiment of UBI in Ontario is being seen within ethical considerations. In the article the former premier, Kathleen Wynne, is quoted:

I believe we need to inject more respect into the system. We need to believe that people want to work and be part of society in a respectable way. They don't want to be looked down on and seen as not useful parts of society. (Lowrey, 2018, p. O6)

The response to the issue of poverty, from the perspective of this article, is a moral question for society. What is the right thing to do? This issue of poverty begs people to understand, empathize, and respond in a way that reflects a sense of a just society.

Deliberating the solution to poverty underscores the need for citizens to be engaged in a participatory democracy. Although poverty is a longstanding issue, it can be (and has been) socially dismissed by branding the poor as merely lazy. This response to societal inequality trivializes the issue and points to an inability of society to understand minority perspectives. Rather than dismiss social issues, responding as a society requires citizens to deliberate the historicity of the present, the potential of the future, and the complexities of human experience. Citizens need to be humanists.

The discipline of history has been regarded as a humanity in scholastic circles. The combination of literature, religion, philosophy, music, art, languages and history make up the humanities. In theory, the humanities should develop appreciation, understanding and empathy for the people we live among. They should facilitate a commitment to society that is rooted in an understanding of a collective 'we' in the midst of incredible diversity. In practice, many post-secondary humanities courses focus on disciplinary mastery rather than human appreciation. Consequently, history can be taught as a study of the rise and fall of civilizations, literature may focus on the principles of story construction, and philosophy might fixate on the logical structure of an argument.

For students experiencing the humanities, they cannot see ‘the forest for the trees.’ All of these disciplinary examples highlight important considerations, but the procedures are often perceived as an end in themselves (Cunningham, 2004, p. 6). The ‘human’ of the humanities can be lost.

In Canada, history education is increasingly based upon six historical thinking concepts.

They are ‘second order’ in that they are procedural: they are not, to paraphrase Peter Lee, what history is about. While they look like concepts, the reason that they are so generative is that they function, rather, as problems, tensions, or difficulties that demand comprehension, negotiation and, ultimately, an accommodation that is never a complete solution. History takes shape from efforts to work with these problems. Students’ abilities to think historically can be defined in terms of their competence in negotiating productive solutions to them. (Seixas, 2017, p. 597)

The pedagogical incorporation of these concepts invite students into the processes of the historian and facilitate the development of their temporal awareness (p. 598). As discussed in the previous chapter, temporal orientation is an aspect of historical consciousness, which should deepen as students engage in historical thinking. Retz (2016) notes that purpose of history education is “an exercise in orienting oneself in the framework of time” (p. 514). Unfortunately, a procedural pedagogy has not resulted in students significantly modifying their narrative orientation (Létoineau & Moisan, 2004). Researchers have found that collective memory (Lévesque et al., 2012) and ethnic perspectives (Peck, 2011) are powerful factors in shaping students’ historical consciousness. Furthermore, the focus on the procedural aspects of the discipline can take center stage and undermine the development of narratives that embody the pluralistic and complex composition of society.

This discussion about the importance of substantive content when using a procedural approach to history education is important. It is good that the field is struggling with how students construct an understanding of the past. Through a consideration of theoretical and practical research, I explore how a humanist approach to history education might address the structure of the academic discipline, the student's historical consciousness, and the mandate of citizenship education. This exploration considers how a humanist pedagogy might provide direction to the goal of "teaching history for the common good" (Barton & Levstik, 2004). To undertake this task, I consider how humanism can contribute to history education pedagogically, then I articulate the implications for citizenship education. This chapter argues that a humanist approach to history education prioritizes the attributes of critical thinking, open-mindedness, and imaginative understanding that are essential for citizenship.

### **What Does a Humanist Approach add to the Historical Thinking Framework?**

As a high school teacher in Alberta, I had been introduced to the historical thinking concepts early in my career and was incorporating them into my lessons and activities. I cannot say that I struggled with the value of teaching a disciplinary approach to history, as these procedures encouraged critical thought; rather, I struggled with why these processes were important to students, and ultimately, citizens. Barton and Levstik (2004) challenged me through their argument that "students will be best prepared for democratic citizenship if they receive a broadly humanist education" (p. 35). Prior to examining the implications of citizenship, we must first clarify the concept of humanism. Then I will examine how a humanist approach to history education prioritizes a focus on critical thinking, open-mindedness, and imagination.

Humanism is not a concept that has a single agreed-upon definition, therefore it can be explained in a number of different ways. Barton and Levstik (2004) acknowledge three specific understandings. A classical humanist education focuses on highlighting the “ideal of human perfection” as an example to guide human interactions (p. 35). A romantic humanist education focuses on the “inner world and unique self of each individual” (p. 35). A democratic humanist education “supports an education that encourages citizens to deliberate about justice as part of their political culture” (p. 36). These perspectives on humanism provide a starting point as they share an appreciation of humanity, though their educational implications are quite diverse.

Nussbaum (1998) argues for a philosophical understanding of humanism. Referencing the Roman philosopher Seneca, she asserts that humanism is embodied in a liberal education. Liberal, in this usage, connotes freedom. A humanist education frees students to “take charge of his or her thinking, leading to a Socratic, examined life, and becoming a reflective critic of traditional practices” (p. 2). Realizing that the examined life goes beyond individualistic self-examination, she expands:

Seneca goes on to argue that only liberal education will develop each person’s capacity to be fully human, by which he means self-aware, self-governing, and *capable of recognizing and respecting the humanity of our fellow human beings*, [emphasis added] no matter where they are born, no matter what social class they inhabit, no matter what their gender or ethnic origin. “Soon we shall breath our last,” he concludes in his related work, *On Anger*. “Meanwhile, while we live, while we are among human beings, let us cultivate our humanity.” (pp. 2-3)

An essential aspect of humanism is the encounter with other people, other perspectives, and other worldviews. The humanist seeks to understand, not only themselves, but others as well. In this description there is the assumption that, although people might live in different places, worship different gods, or hold different values, there is a shared humanness that binds people together in community. In weighing the value of the soul,

meaning the “faculties of thought and imagination that make us human and make our relationships rich human relationships” (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 6), Nussbaum argues that the recognition of shared attributes is essential to build a democracy that is built on “respect and concern” (p. 6). Too often the objectification of people in statistics, for example, sterilize democratic issues because the connection to humanity is lost. This, according to Nussbaum, is why the humanities are essential (p. 6).

In her book, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Nussbaum (2010) argues that the humanities are threatened. In a world that values profitability, the driving priorities of neoliberalism place economic growth as a key value of society. In education this means that the profitable disciplines, understood as science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) are prioritized, while “[t]he humanities and the arts are being cut away, in both primary/ secondary and college/ university education, in virtually every nation in the world” (p. 2). Although specific arguments against a humanist education could be considered systematically, it is not the intention of this chapter to address the controversies as others have (Hyslop-Margison & Richardson, 2005). Rather, I advocate for a vision of history education that functions, first and foremost, as a discipline to cultivate humanity (Nussbaum, 1998; 2006; 2010). Using Nussbaum’s concept of the examined life, I argue that history education needs to prioritize critical thinking, open-mindedness, and value the imagination (2006, pp. 388-392).

Teaching history as a humanity prioritizes critical thinking and introspection. In “Cultivating Humanity,” Nussbaum (1998) argues that students must develop the “capacity for critical examination of oneself and one’s own traditions” (p. 5). She refers to this capacity as the examined life. The examined life is based on the perspective that



tradition or authority need to conform to “reason’s demands for consistency and for justification” (2006, p. 388). It entails the development of critical thinking, a willingness to examine claims and beliefs according to rational criteria, and an engagement with others. Nussbaum (2006) states that “[t]raining this capacity requires developing the capacity to reason logically, to test what one reads or says for consistency of reasoning, correctness of fact, and accuracy of judgment” (p. 388). In essence, humanist thinking is critical thinking.

Critical thinking can be defined as reasoning through an issue in order to arrive at a reasoned judgment that can guide one’s decisions and dispositions. In *Learning to Think Things Through: A Guide to Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum*, Nosich (2012) explores four prominent features of critical thinking. First, critical thinking is reflective in that it involves metacognition. Critical thinkers consider their own perspectives, values, and biases when encountering issues. Second, critical thinking involves standards. This attribute demonstrates the role of accurate, relevant, and deep thinking in order to make judgments. Third, critical thinking is authentic, it is about real issues or problems. There is a concrete nature to critical thinking that intersects with the messy complexity of human experience. Fourth, critical thinking is reasonable. It involves the use of reason to weigh alternatives, self-correct, and find solutions (Nosich, 2012, pp. 3-5).

Just as critical thinking is necessary in personal introspection, it is essential to understanding the perspectives of others. In our contemporary world, individual perspectives are constructed through positions grounded in class, race, religion, and ethnic diversity. Although we have access to abundant sources of information and

instantaneous communication, people continue to misunderstand and misrepresent the perspectives of others. Understanding others requires a desire to listen, critically evaluate, clarify assumptions, and embrace tenuous judgments. In studying history we seek to understand the perspectives of people of the past. The past is an unknown place to modern sensibilities (Seixas & Morton, 2013). We do not know the culture, the morals, or the way of life. Therefore, trying to understand people of the past from the perspective of the present assumes an inherent complexity. Therefore, a critical thinking framework is necessary to approach complexity and ambiguity as one seeks to understand the past.

The implications of a critical thinking approach, interrogating historical claims and evidence of the past, fit very well with the current structure of historical thinking. Barton and Levstik (2004) claim, “[f]or the study of history to be humanistic, students must be involved in weighing alternatives, determining significance, and reaching conclusions” (p. 36). Students need to be engaged with the problems of history and arrive at reasoned, well supported judgments. The historical thinking concepts (Seixas & Morton, 2013) offer a comprehensive tools for students: “If the concepts reveal inherent problems, confronting those problems lead to competencies...How successfully students grapple with the tensions, complexities, and problems imbedded in historical thinking concepts is a basis for measuring the progress toward competency in historical thinking” (p. 4).

The rigor of critical thinking is essential for disciplinary history, which endeavours to construct narratives from a range of possibilities. Lee (2004) notes that history is a reconstruction based on evidence and inference (p. 134). There is not an assumption that the collective memories of the past are accurate reflections of historical

fact. Therefore, “evidence has to come in, and with it inference and judgment. So, the historical past, unlike the past in the everyday world of children, can never be treated as given, or as something ‘there’ against which historians can test their claims” (p. 135). When history is demonstrated as a fixed narrative, students are required to memorize the account. When history is taught as a reasoned perspective on the past, students “must reach their own conclusions about the causes of historical events, their consequences, and their significance” (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 37). The historical thinking concepts offer conceptual tools to help students explore the composition and complexity of historical accounts.

A central aspect in framing historical thinking as a humanity is the role of inquiry. One can think critically about a great many things but not all things are worth thinking about. In a procedural approach to history education, the concepts (or problems) can often become the focus. In focusing on the technical considerations of evidence, for example, students are encouraged to interrogate a source to explore the type of account, its author, its perspective, how it fits into the known context, and whether it can be corroborated with other evidence (Seixas & Morton, 2013, pp. 47-48). These considerations are appropriate in “turning a source into evidence” (p. 46), but pedagogically the development of the competency can become the central aspect (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 187). Teaching history as a humanity must embrace the problems of the historian within the context of authentic and relevant issues. In framing historical inquiry, Barton and Levstik reflect on Dewey’s notion of ‘reflective thought.’

He described the process as beginning with a problem—a “felt difficulty” or “some perplexity, confusion, or doubt.” This was followed by an attempt to define the problem clearly and to suggest a possible solution, hypothesis, or theory to resolve it—or better still, according to Dewey, a variety of alternate solutions.

The implications of each of these solutions or hypotheses would then be considered, and empirical observation or experimentation would take place to see which best matched the evidence. This process provided the basis for conclusions—beliefs grounded in evidence. (p. 187)

Although the scientific method is the basis for Dewey's model, it offers a rational basis for the deliberation of conclusions on the basis of evidence. The attraction of this model is that it embraces complexity. Ultimately, the quest to arrive at a defensible judgment is compelling.

Cultivating humanity through history education embraces a critical thinking framework that provides a structured approach to understand oneself and the past. Yet critical thinking is often misrepresented as a rational, calculating approach to the world. Nussbaum (2006) corrects this misconception by arguing that open-mindedness is necessary to the examined life. Bailin and Battersby (2010) note that critical thinking requires the cultivation of the related dispositions of open-mindedness and fair-mindedness (p. 15). Open-mindedness is a disposition that recognizes that people are fallible and hold biases that hinder them from considering other views. Fair-mindedness is demonstrated by a "willingness to not only consider opposing views but also to make unbiased and impartial judgments about these views" (Bailin & Battersby, 2010, p. 15). In the following discussion I use the concept of open-mindedness to include fair-mindedness as I argue that these dispositions are necessary in a humanist approach to history education.

Nussbaum (1998) states that citizens "who cultivate their humanity need a further ability to see themselves as citizens of some local, regional group—but also, and above all, as human beings by ties of recognition and concern" (p. 6). As noted in the previous chapter, students overwhelmingly identify along shared ethnic and collective identities

(Létourneau & Moisan, 2004; Lévesque et al., 2012; Peck, 2011). These identifications with ethnicity and/or community make sense as they are close and known. They also reflect an inherent closed-minded approach to understanding the complexity of the past. Yet humanity is broader than a region and more complex than nation. To foster humanism, students need to develop an open-minded disposition. Through an examination of the construction and use of narrative as well as the pedagogical opportunities of cosmopolitanism, I articulate how a humanist pedagogy fosters this attribute.

Students experience and create the substantive content of history through the medium of narrative. Narrative provides the necessary emplotment that communicates one's relationship to the past, through the context of the present (Lévesque, 2017). Narratives are important because they make sense of causal connections and support one's perspective about society (Barton & Levstik, 2004, pp. 146-147). In essence, the narrative is history—not necessarily as fact, but as orientation (Rüsen, 2004, 2012). Traditional approaches to history education have stressed the transmission of a nationalistic narrative as a method of building civic unity. This narrative is important for people because it underscores a tradition of identity. Rüsen (2012) notes that tradition “emphasizes origins and an unbroken continuity of the world order that was constituted at the time of origin. It shapes communication on the basis of agreement about nondisputable interpretations of humans and world” (p. 53). In Canada the importance of this priority was recently expressed by the Dominion Institute (2009): “For citizens to function in a modern democracy they must develop an appreciation and understanding of the country's past... We must connect students from coast to coast to coast with a

common set of knowledge” (p. 2). Narrative has a power to communicate ideals and belonging. It is equally important to note that a narrative cannot tell the whole story and necessarily omits certain perspectives. In his study of French speaking students in Ontario, Lévesque (2017) notes:

Because the narrative thinking process is not rendered transparent to students, they are thus unlikely to understand why stories of the nation are told in a particular way (the *contingency* of historical claims) and how they could be narrated in other justifiable ways (the *agency* of the narrator). For instance, this critical process would allow French Canadian students to understand that their narratives privilege some historical experiences at the expense of others. (p. 237)

A review of nationalistic narratives, used in various approaches to history education, reveal that interrelationships are structured in a pervasive colonial context. Marker (2011) argues that too often indigenous people are cast as “victims of progress and as unwilling to adapt to the social transformations of the 19th century” (p. 109). Postcolonial research is challenging the hegemonic narratives of nationhood and the dichotomy of ‘us and them’ that is supported in contemporary narrative construction (Cutrara, 2009, p. 93). Ideally, the role of history education should not enable the construction (and transmission) of narratives that maintain the status quo. A humanist approach demands that:

Emotional or unpredictable queries provoked through an introduction to the Other through history does not mean we need to shy away for aspects that may be uncomfortable, but rather it means that we have to think about how to explore these hidden dimensions of our collective stories safely, ethically, and collaboratively within history classrooms. (p. 100)

Nussbaum (2006) recognizes the power of tradition to shape and mold individualistic identities, but she proposes that a humanist education needs to help students understand the “differences that make understanding difficult between groups and nations and the shared human needs and interests that make understanding essential, if common problems

are to be solved” (p. 390). In her argument, Nussbaum notes that various perspectives can be articulated between nationalistic, religious, ethnic, social, and gender-based groups. A humanist education should create bridges of dialogue and understanding in a society that is diverse and pluralistic.

The unfamiliar should be encountered in history education, as demonstrated in Van Nieuwenhuysen’s (2017) critique of Eurocentrism. He argues that a singular narrative in history education reinforces a one-dimensional vision of the past and impedes a deep understanding of history as a discipline. History, in this context, is seen without complication or contention, reaffirming a Western bias that becomes endemic in the process of constructing narratives. In considering the pluralism of Canadian society, Lévesque (2016b) proposes that the implications of a Western bias allow history educators to miss an opportunity to address social justice issues.

Yet, the Western experiment in progress is currently under siege and needs to be (re-)examined seriously. As Canadians and members of other nations, including Australia and the USA, face issues of systemic racism, Aboriginal mistreatments and global pollution, how do students orient themselves in this period of apparent progress? How do they judge the past in reference to contemporary perspectives? (p. 7)

Van Nieuwenhuysen proposes that history should be taught within the context of multiperspectivity. Although curriculum documents, such as the *Social Studies Program of Studies* (Alberta Education, 2005), stress the inclusion of multiple perspectives; teaching for multiperspectivity involves an intentional inclusion of intercultural contact. The focus on intercultural contact allows students to explore a singular historical context and how it is experienced by different groups that are interacting with each other. “This framework focuses on the reciprocal influences in an encounter, and examines sources of the Western European ‘self’ and ‘the other.’ The central question is how the ‘self’ and

‘the other’ changed each other as a result of the contacts” (Van Nieuwenhuysse, 2017, para. 11). The goal of this approach is to arrive at a discussion of the distinctions of “us” and “them” and potentially arrive at a new “us.” This pedagogical theory intentionally contrasts diverse perspectives in history education as a way to explore a broad understanding of human action and intention.

The encounter of students with “the other” is significant because it has the power to move students from an individualized perspective of themselves, and by extension their group, to one that is disrupted by another narrative or perspective. Farley (2009) characterizes this process as the movement from illusion to disillusion: “historical knowledge means having to tolerate the loss of certainty in the very effort to know” (p. 543). The phase of coming face to face with evil, or understanding the voice of another, can unseat the perspectives and traditions students rely on for meaning and temporal orientation. Yet, Farley proposes that “re-illusion” occurs through the use of language to orient a new understanding. It is the disillusionment of the unknown that creates a context for something new, “re-illusion allows us to transform the psychological losses of being into narrative form where they can be described, interpreted, and, if all goes well, tolerated” (p. 544). Waghid (2007), reflecting on her experiences in post-apartheid South Africa, argues that educational practices need to embrace cosmopolitanism. In her classes she provokes her students “to reach beyond themselves, to wonder, to imagine and to pose their own questions” (p. 593). She instills freedom to engage in a diversity that is around them. History education provides an opportunity to engage with difference and disillusion. Historical narratives are not robust and often reflect one perspective of the past, the distance between then and now is vast. Learning



history introduces students to “the other,” and strives to appreciate how people experienced agency, compassion, creativity, and commitment. Humanism encourages students to be open-minded and explore the narratives of others. History education opens up the unfamiliar.

The final aspect is the intentional inclusion of imagination. Nussbaum (1998, 2006) argues that cultivating humanity in education relies on a multifaceted approach to knowledge, “citizens cannot think well on the basis of factual knowledge alone” (2006, p. 390). Although one can discuss what is implied by factual knowledge, especially within the discipline of history, it is apparent that the imagination plays a role in historical empathy and understanding. Segall (1999) argues that the discipline of history itself constructs narratives that embrace subjectivity to offer a perspective on the past.

Behind the façade of objectivity, truth, realism, and immediate correspondence one currently finds in many history classrooms lies a whole world of creativity, construction, invention, and selection. History—a process of inscription rather than description—the emerging literature in critical history has shown us, is active, not passive. Hence its study requires contestation, deconstruction, and action, not passivity, blind acceptance, and retention. The purpose of studying history, then is not “the reduction of the unknown to the known, but the estrangement of what seems so familiar (Ankersmit, 1994, p. 42), already well-known, recognized, comprehensible, coherent, and “readable.” It is not, adds Giroux (1996), “about constructing a linear narrative but about blasting history open, rupturing its silences, highlighting its detours, and organizing its limits” and possibilities (p. 51). (Segall, 1999, p. 371)

The challenge alluded to by Segall is echoed by others (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Seixas, 2012). The study of history is a journey to make sense of narratives, seek perspectives, challenge conclusions, and re-construct temporal orientations. To engage in this kind of thinking, the rational must be supported by the creative. This thinking can be demonstrated in theoretical work on historical empathy, which is conceptualized as

“imagining the thoughts and feelings of other people from their own perspective” (Barton & Levstik, 2004).

It is important at this juncture to note that perspective recognition, according to historical thinking theorists is essential and problematic (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Lévesque, 2009; Seixas, 2012; Seixas, 2017). On one hand, the historian is not in direct contact with the people of the past, they cannot “know for sure what they believed, thought, or intended to do” (Lévesque, 2009, p. 147). The historian, therefore, must “mentally recreate—to imagine—what it was like to be in their position” (p. 147). Historical thinking theorists will be quick to add that this imagination is not the mere writing of fiction, for the account must contextualize the actions of person in the past within a historical context. Barton and Levstik (2004) note that, “such recognition is necessarily grounded in evidence” (p. 208). The importance of evidence in history education is essential to recognize. As Cronon (1992) argues, the construction of the narrative needs to have some reference to evidence, or it may cease to become history.

If the central goal of history education is to simply employ procedural competencies in order to construct evidenced based narratives, then a focus on historical thinking concepts is an effective way to proceed. However, if the purpose of history education is to develop a humanist connection, then the role of the imagination is essential. Nussbaum (2006) notes that narrative imagination is the “ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person’s story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have” (pp. 390-391). This capacity, she notes, is often developed in the realm of the arts. While it is true that a rational approach to

understanding the past is an aspect of humanist education, one also needs to embrace the creative. Thayer-Bacon (1998), offers the following insight regarding critical thinking:

Reason and intuition do the invaluable jobs of generating and critiquing, but they rely on imagination and emotions to help them. If we forget about our imagination and emotions, we forget about what motivates and inspires us and helps us achieve beauty, goodness and truths. All inquiry begins with emotions and imagination. Maxine Greene argues in *Releasing the Imagination* that “imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible...imagination is the one (cognitive capacity) that permits us to give credence to alternative realities.” (p. 141)

Imagination is the source of wonder, connection, and desire. When we allow ourselves to identify with the experiences of others it becomes possible to perceive their hopes and dreams. We are driven to discovery.

Nussbaum (2006) alludes to literature as ways of fostering a humanist spirit.

Recent studies have connected the theoretical concept of agency to historical literature. Den Heyer and Fidyk (2007) support Collingwood’s perspectives that: “historical study offers students the opportunity to thoughtfully, actively, and imaginatively engage with the complexities of past motivations, choices, and actions so as to inform their own” (pp. 141-142). This insight directly relates to historical agency which is defined as “an imaginative capacity for shaping intentions, forming choices, and undertaking actions” (p. 145). The importance of encouraging students to deliberate about agency, is that it offers an opportunity to understand the humanity of people in the past as well as their own agency in the present. This link between the past and present helps students articulate their own historical consciousness and see themselves as agents in their temporal context (Rüsen, 2004). Den Heyer and Fidyk (2007) offer the strategy of using historical fiction as a way of helping students experience contextual agency. They note that historical fiction offers a researched context upon which an author weaves

“explorations of beauty, goodness, nobility, and their opposites” (p. 150). The story is built upon the intentions, problems and actions of the characters. As students read, they can appreciate the situational aspects of the context and the motives of the actors in order to develop an emotive and imaginative connection to the story. Although this research emphasizes the pedagogical value of historical fiction, similar connections can be made with well written pieces of non-fiction that seek to capture the thoughts and motivations of historical actors. History that represents the intentions of historical actors provides students with an opportunity to encounter a perspective of the past and appreciate the differences and similarities that they share.

As much as cultivating humanism in history education is engaging in empathetic perspective taking, students should also be encouraged to use their imagination to make sense of historical perspectives. In creative ventures, such as the visual arts or creative writing, students can explore and seek understanding. It is the arts, according to Nussbaum (2006), that generate joy in students. They inspire, motivate and communicate. In considering the role of the arts in history education, I'd like to consider how students can not only identify agency in accounts that they read, but use their imaginations to construct it. In this example, the use of creative writing helped students approach historical perspectives.

Cunningham (2004) consulted with a number of teachers about how empathy, an important aspect in historical perspective taking (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Seixas & Morton, 2013), can be fostered within history education. In most of the activities that teachers reflected on, students had an opportunity to creatively construct historical perspectives. The use of imagination was expected, but it was “imagination in a straight-

jacket” (Cunningham, 2004, p. 2). This was seen clearly from one teacher’s perspective who stated, “in a negative sense, empathy can be associated with a piece of fiction, pure narrative. Children like...writing stories, and so they’ll write very copiously and with great gusto—but it’s not very historical” (p. 2). Other teachers noted that students were “unmoored from their sources” or their “feelings about life that more closely resembled those of the year 2001 than 1201” (p. 2). The occurrences of presentism and fiction abounded in the classroom. For history teachers, the concepts of the discipline (evidence, context, significance) are important, but a humanist approach can facilitate different questions and progressions. One teacher in the study asked her students questions about their presentist perspectives and found that some “moved past the superficiality of their initial responses” to ones that reflected a deeper understanding of historicity (p. 4).

Creativity allows students to play with taking different historical perspectives and refine their conclusions. Empathizing can also allow students to identify with the issues in the past. Cunningham (2004) describes one teacher’s experience with empathy and historical perspectives. The class was engaged in a historical study of vagabonds, yet imagining the context of poverty in the past brought students into a discussion of modern homelessness (p. 5). Students recognized a present issue in a historical context. Through focused attempts to get students to empathize with the study of the past, one teacher reflected,

I think part of our role as a teacher is not just to teach them history but to turn them into responsible and caring individuals as well. I think that looking at the past can really help you do that...[through] an awareness of a conception of right and wrong in its largest sense, in that ‘Was it right for people to live in slum housing in the past? Didn’t working people deserve more?’ I think it is useful from an empathy point of view as well, in order for them to understand why things change [and] why people felt the way they did about changing things. (p. 6)

A humanist encounter with the past is invariably rooted in the informed imagination. It is this connection with human agency, fostered through creativity, that helps students relate to the past in a meaningful way.

Cultivating humanity is essential in a pluralistic democracy. Nussbaum's (1998; 2006; 2010) construct of humanist education, which embraces critical thinking, open-mindedness and values the imagination, has served as a structure to explore the extent to which history can be taught as a humanity. In considering this issue, I have noted that the disciplinary structures, historical thinking competencies, and the construction of historical narratives fit in a humanist model that necessitates critical thinking and self-examination. When one considers the value of alternate perspectives, history becomes an inexhaustible opportunity to explore the various times, places, religions, ethnicities, social structures that people live and act within. History education should introduce students to individuals, who may hold beliefs different than their own, and encourage an open-minded inquiry into who they are. Finally, I endeavoured to explore how history education can be seen as a rich ground for imagination and the emotions. History can be taught as a humanity by embracing these different attributes into one's pedagogical structures. The question that remains is: "to what end?" The second section of this chapter looks at the role that a humanist approach to history education plays in the development of citizenship.

### **Can Citizenship Education be Enhanced Through a Humanist Approach to History Education?**

Citizenship is a concept that is frequently used, but rarely understood. As a social studies educator in a faculty of education, I have asked pre-service teachers what

citizenship is? They often equate citizenship with voting and paying taxes. When asked about where they learned about citizenship, their responses are less uniform. Some students experienced citizenship education in their social studies classes, others explored citizenship in the political discussions with their families, while others could not offer a direct response. It is possible that the multitude of responses has something to do with the tendency of educational institutions to de-emphasize citizenship education and focus on “international competitiveness and entrepreneurialism” (Osborne, 2000b, p. 10). This pedagogical shift is articulated by Nussbaum (2010), who holds that STEM priorities are driving educational choices, thereby minimizing other considerations. The focus on utilitarian and measurable outcomes in education has created a culture of accountability that demands progress. Consequently, school boards measure educational improvement through the results of standardized test scores. A utilitarian vision of education prepares students to compete in a neoliberal society but does it prepare students to cooperate in society? Osborne suggests that citizenship education raises considerations of “identity, loyalty, tradition, heritage, and community that run counter to the corporate forces that are seeking to reshape the global economy” (2000b, p. 10). Therefore, prior to articulating the relationship between a humanist education and citizenship education, it is important to look at what citizenship education is and why it is important.

It is clear that citizenship has political implications. Osborne (2000b) notes that different political parties have held different perspectives about what citizenship is and does in a society. From a conservative perspective, citizenship is seen as “loyalty, duty, respect, tradition, and of accepting change slowly” (p. 11). A liberal perspective is seen as one that values “civil liberties and individual freedoms” (p. 12). A socialist perspective

is one that sees citizenship in terms of “social justice, equity, community and the redistribution of wealth and power” (p. 12). These perspectives are only a few examples that illustrate the potential discord that emerges among ideological lines. Osborne offers a generalization:

In other words, citizenship is not only an essentially contested concept, it is also fundamentally political in the broad sense of being inextricably connected with questions of governance and social living, of identity, of equity and justice, especially in any society which aspires to be democratic, where citizens have a voice in deciding the shape of their society and how they are governed, where, ideally, they govern themselves. (p. 12)

Attempts have been made to capture what democratic citizenship is and what education for citizenship entails. In Alberta Education’s (2005) *Social Studies Program of Study*, citizenship is outlined by the attributes citizens should possess. Students should be taught the knowledge, skills and attributes to be “engaged, active, informed and responsible citizens” (p. 1). The implication is that citizens are not passive recipients or mere loyal patriots, rather they are interested and engaged with their community. Further, citizens are part of a heterogeneous community, therefore “recognition and respect for individual and collective identity is essential” (p. 1). Citizens are part of a pluralistic society that is cosmopolitan by nature. Seeking to understand others and themselves is essential in an inclusive democracy. Barton and Levstik (2004) argue that citizenship involves “a willingness to be responsible for the state and to engage at all levels in the decisions that chart its course” (p. 30). The consensus emerges that citizens should be participating in the communities, countries, and world in which they live.

The idealized vision of an active, engaged, responsible citizen is compelling in theory, but in practice the agency of students is moderated. Westheimer (2015) asserts that school programs around citizenship are designed to foster “volunteerism, charity, and



obedience” rather than democracy (p. 37). Current approaches to citizenship education promote “listening to authority figures, dressing neatly, being nice to neighbours, and helping out at the soup kitchen—not grappling with the kinds of social policy decisions that every citizen in a democratic society needs to learn how to do” (p. 37). In a recent study of grade 12 students in Alberta and the Maritimes, researchers found that students felt a profound sense of voicelessness and powerlessness to effect change in their schools and, by extension, their society (Sears, Peck, & Herriot, 2014, p. 7). This powerlessness is not necessarily a result of an inadequate civics curriculum, rather the researchers propose that the lack of influence students have in their schools sends a powerful message: “We’re here to teach about democracy, not practice it” (p. 2). Whether it is a distrust of student input or the logistics of many diverse perspectives, the researchers suggest that schools are not fostering holistic democratic environments. As a result, students can feel like democracy is something “done to them,” rather than something they participate in.

Osborne (2000b) argues that citizenship education has largely been abandoned since the 1980s in many North American schools. Although teachers may still stress aspects of citizenship education, the task has largely fallen to the shoulders of “social studies and history teachers and tends to be equated with civics” (p. 10). Therefore, if history teachers have a mandate to address citizenship education, how can that be accomplished? Seixas (2006) asserts that history is essential to citizenship. Although the problem of which narratives should be taught needs to be raised, it is clear that a connection to the past informs perspectives of the present. As discussed last chapter, this temporal orientation is described as historical consciousness (p. 13). Friedrich (2014)

proposes that, “the role of historical consciousness in linking past, present, and future within a single narrative within which the subject finds a guideline for her/ his thought and action” (p. 37), is essential to a sense of collective belonging and identity. Historical consciousness is a window of insight into how students relate to the present, structure their traditions, and understand morality (Rüsen, 2004). History education provides students an opportunity, as demonstrated in the research of Goldberg et al. (2011), to acknowledge their own temporal orientation and present opportunities to consider “internal contradictions in their own narratives and to explore the narratives of others” (Sears, 2011, p. 351). Encouraging students to embrace complexity in their historical consciousness allows them to reconsider their belonging in society and their agency within it. Seixas (2006) notes the role of history education in the development of citizens:

The challenge for history education is to devise ways to introduce young people to these same historical tools, processes, and ways of thinking, not in order to make them mini-historians, or to give them an early start on academic careers; rather, to help them make sense of who they are, where they stand, and what they can do—as individuals, as members of multiple intersecting groups, and as citizens with roles and responsibilities in relation to nations and states in a complex, conflict-ridden, and rapidly changing world. (p. 28)

A humanist approach to history education establishes an expectation that students will be engaged and involved in the development of the skills that are essential for citizenship. Hyslop-Margison and Richardson (2005) recognize that although democracy implies the engagement of all citizens, in practice people “may not process the participatory dispositions and sense of political empowerment to exercise that franchise in an engaged, critical, and continuous fashion” (p. 7). Education should be a training ground for the “transformation of subjects into citizens” (Friedrich, 2014, p. 32).

Although citizenship is often expressed in political terms, thereby limiting people to one area of involvement, a humanist education can foster a sense of connection and active

engagement in a democracy. Although many contemporary approaches to history education involve rote memorization, Barton and Levstik (2004) argue: “[f]or the study of history to be humanistic, students must be involved in weighing alternatives, determining significance, and reaching conclusions” (p. 36). Students must participate in the deliberation of historical significance. The engagement of students is not a new concept. Nussbaum (2010) stresses that the child-centered tradition “argues that education is not just about the passive assimilation of facts and cultural traditions, but about challenging the mind to become active, competent, and thoughtfully critical in a complex world” (p. 18). Students not only need to learn critical thinking skills, but are expected to use those skills to engage in perspectives and problems around them. Advocates for progressive education, note that a democratic education should “foster the psychological dispositions to create engaged, interested, collaborative and politically active learners” (Hyslop-Margison & Richardson, 2005, p. 8).

The procedural approach to history education can provide a conceptual framework for critical engagement and present the problems of narrative construction, thereby encouraging students to construct an understanding of the past based on the challenges historians face (Seixas & Morton, 2013). This is an active and engaging process, but it may not contribute to democratic citizenship. A focus on the concept of historical significance, for example, will engage students in weighing evidence based on criteria to judge the impact of a historical event (pp. 17-19), but it may not clarify student perspectives about the past or present. Engaging students in the deliberation of issues that confront collective memory can challenge established historical perspectives, lead to debate, and result in a new constructed understanding.

Sears (2011) notes that many nationalistic perspectives are based upon “mythstories,” a reconceptualization of the past to establish a nationalistic connection. Canada recently celebrated the centenary of the World War I battle of Vimy Ridge. For Canadians, this story has been recounted as the “birth of a nation.” On April 19, 2017, the *Ottawa Citizen* challenged this perspective citing the work of a prominent military historian, “Cook, however, characterizes the ‘birth of a nation’ theory as a ‘myth’ created by the deliberate massaging of public opinion over the decades. He does not even see Vimy as necessarily our most important battle of the First World War” (Gessell, 2017, para. 4). This discord offers an opportunity for history educators to explore public memory, examine evidence, and deliberate about significance. Sears, quoting MacMillan, summarizes this opportunity, “The proper role for historians...is to challenge and even explode national myths” (p. 356). The issue at hand is not the incorporation of the procedural aspects of history education, it is the intentional problematization of an understanding of the past as it relates to the perspectives of the present. Engaging students in a history that matters is essential for a humanist approach to citizenship education.

History education is instrumental in the task of educating citizens. Therefore, I’d like to consider how a humanist approach to history education can build the social cohesion necessary for a pluralistic and deliberative democracy. Democracy, as we know, does not happen in a vacuum. It occurs in the messy realities of a lived experience. It occurs when people come together to wrestle over community issues. It occurs when tragedy strikes and people pull together. Within the *Social Studies Program of Study* (Alberta Education, 2005), the model citizen understands and demonstrates: “Recognition

and respect for individual and collective identity” that is perceived as “essential in a pluralistic and democratic society” (p. 1). This curriculum demonstrates an awareness that is reflected in the Citizen’s Commission, which identified core Canadian values as, “equality and fairness; respect for minorities; consultation and dialogue; accommodation and tolerance; compassion and generosity; respect for Canada’s natural beauty; and respect for Canada’s world image of peace, freedom and non-violent change” (Osborne, 2000b, p. 20).

Diversity is a reality that is widely recognized and respected among Canadians. Summarizing the perspective of political theorists, Osborne identifies the democratic virtues as, “reliance on reason; reciprocity in dealing with other people; receptivity to diverse opinions and viewpoints; respect for human rights; mutuality; flexibility and open-mindedness; commitment and responsibility; cooperativeness and a concern for community” (p. 20). It is clear that the pluralistic nature of the nation is firmly rooted in multiperspectivity. Yet, it is difficult to see the values demonstrated in public forums. Politically, the Canadian government’s response to the Syrian refugee crisis was to admit 25,000 people who had escaped a war zone. This decision challenged Canadian communities and brought forward waves of opposition. Additionally, Canada continues to struggle with a comprehensive plan to address Indigenous issues. Our nation is slow to make just decisions, demonstrated in the numerous land claims disputes, abject poverty on reservations, and a lack of a response to the many missing and murdered Indigenous women. Although diversity is an aspect in Canadian society, it is an uncomfortable one. A humanist approach to history education can act as a corrective by addressing difference

in society and giving voice to silent perspectives that must be heard in a pluralistic democracy.

Nussbaum (1998) notes that an appreciation of difference is a key value in cultivating humanism and by extension, citizenship. Referencing Socrates' examined life, she notes that rational thinkers transform society as they "take responsibility for one's own reasoning and exchange ideas with others in an atmosphere of mutual respect for reason" (p. 6). Implied in a pluralistic society is the recognition that people must "cultivate an understanding of the way common needs and aims are differently realized in highly different circumstances" (p. 7). Unfortunately, people do not often see outside of their own perspectives or cognitive schema. History education, as it is currently practiced, does not necessarily modify the nationalistic narrative, rather it perpetuates "binary notions of insiders and outsiders" (Anderson, 2017, p. 5). Anderson elaborates on the current historical thinking concepts, noting that they "are not enough in themselves to allow for full engagement with the silenced histories and urgent identity questions—ethnic, transnational, diasporic, and Indigenous—that permeate and shape contemporary Canadian society" (p. 6). Rather, she argues that curriculum should be: "exposing students to, and critically deconstructing, a country's master national narrative templates and those that rebuke and contest them" (p. 14). The intentionality of the curricular redesign offers merit and builds awareness, but generalized narratives may not get to the core of the issue. People resist other perspectives because they are generalized and, at times, sanitized. Understanding, in a humanist perspective, is connected intimately with human voice and human experience.

A humanist approach to history education recognizes that students possess a historical consciousness that is resistant to change (Anderson, 2017; Sears, 2011). Therefore, educators “must take the cognitive schema of students into account and operate to create the cognitive dissonance necessary to foster the reframing of those schema” (Sears, 2011, p. 349). Historical accounts provide educators with many perspectives that are dissimilar, and sometimes downright weird, to challenge contemporary sensibilities. Further, rather than focus on generalized narratives of Indigenous peoples, for example, consider an personal account detailing her/ his experience with residential school. Narrative accounts that are deeply personal give a perspective feeling, relevance, and passion. Encountering the people of the past develops in students the openness, communication skills, and considerations necessary to engage in a pluralistic democracy.

Zinn and Rodgers (2012) propose that a humanizing pedagogy is one that will “re-center and restore voice as a key characteristic of what it means to be human” (p. 77). Their argument centers on the realization that dehumanization occurs when a society perpetuates exclusionary practices (p. 77). In their research, participants were asked to provide stories, that provided recollections of “humanizing and dehumanizing learning experiences” (p. 78). These stories came from people living in South Africa, reflecting on the political and racial tensions therein (p. 81). I want to share an account to demonstrate the power that story can have as a window to humanizing history, this woman is known as Thandi.

My story happened at the age of 14. I grew up with my granny and my parents were working here and had no time to look after us. My granny was very poor; we were poor. I was at a village school and every student at standard 6 had to pay 50 cents for examination in November. I had to pay this to write exams and my

granny did not have it. I went to school that day depressed because I knew it was the last day for this five shillings (50 cents). Teachers were not in classes. They were all in one room compiling alphabetically the names of students that were going to write the exam. All the children in class were excited because they were going to write the exam in November. And they were talking about their future, what they were going to learn at secondary school, and all those things. And I left the class because I was depressed. I went to a corner in the schoolyard. There was a big tree and I ended up lying under this tree, and I ended up sleeping because I was depressed and I was afraid of a future without education. In my sleep I was shocked by the children running to me and shouting [in isiXhosa] ‘Simfumene! Simfumene’!, (‘We’ve got her, we’ve got her!’). They dragged me to the teacher. The teacher had arrived in the class and asked where I was and they found me, and the teacher could see I was very depressed. He made me sit down and tell him my story. I told him that ... I was not going to write. He listened and listened and took me out of the class to a big room where lady teachers were compiling this alphabetical list. When he entered with me, they said, ‘Don’t tell us that B. is going to be in this list’. My surname ... starts with B and they were in the J’s and H’s and they did not want to start the list from the beginning. And one of the lady teachers came to me and ‘klapped’ [smacked] me and I fell, dizzy. And then the teacher paid my 50 cents and he told me to go back to class. I went to class and I was so depressed and disappointed and embarrassed, but I told myself that I am going to learn. The teacher has given me an opportunity and I grabbed it with both hands. At secondary he followed me and checked my work all the time, and I did not want to disappoint him. To me, humanizing pedagogy is one in which academics are aware and they address this social economic background of the students in class. If it were not for that teacher I wouldn’t be here now. And that is why every time in my classrooms I always make sure I am aware of what my students bring to class—their backgrounds and everything they bring to class so that I could address it. That is my story. (as quoted in Zinn & Rodgers, 2012, pp. 81-82)

The story highlights the theme of dehumanization, as poverty separates the author from her peers and reduces her dreams of the future. The story also captures the healing that can be experienced through the relationship between the student and teacher. The deep humanness that Zinn and Rodgers note is in her “determination to learn” (p. 82).

Although the researchers saw rich data about a humanizing pedagogy in Thandi’s account, I see the beauty of the account as a way to remove generalizations about poverty and engage in a human experience.



A perspective like this may resound with students in developing sympathy, but it might also raise questions. Why was Thandi poor? Why did schools need students to pay? How much was 50 cents to a student/ family? What other options may Thandi have had? An inquiry into a personal narrative can reveal complexities that relate to society, politics and economics. Historical autobiography, micro-history, or personal letters are rich resources that can produce dissonance and guide students to think about difference and diversity with human eyes. Although historical thinking concepts guide students to develop historical context, the intentional inclusion of human voices allow for connections on an empathetic level. An engagement with difference makes history more human and builds competencies for appreciating difference in society.

A humanist approach to history education has been demonstrated to build critical thinking skills and cultivate dispositions that will enable people to engage in an inclusive, participatory democracy. The final aspect to consider is: does a humanist approach to history education encourage people to deliberate about the ‘common good?’ This consideration was raised by Barton and Levstik (2004) and challenges educators to contemplate why history is taught. In an ideal world, the authors hold that democratic institutions should “provide a means by which citizens develop shared interests and engage in joint decision making about the issues that affect their future” (p. 32). The implication is that society develops a sense of ‘being in it together’ regardless of differences. It is from a commitment to a shared experience that the concept of the common good becomes plausible (p. 34). Therefore, it is the role of a humanist education to build mutuality and shared values (p. 35). This has been the focus of this chapter. If history is taught as a humanity, what are the implications for society? This consideration

will frame the exploration of whether social cohesion around a common good is plausible.

The common good can be seen as an emergent purpose in history education in somewhat non-traditional ways. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Canadian national narrative was perceived as establishing a common understanding of the past, that communicated values into the present. It was (and in some ways still is) a shared understanding of a nationalistic story that established democracy and rights for all Canadians. Although the narrative obscured perspectives and rewrote histories of others, it provided a shared experience that was enhanced by collective memory and public commemoration. During the mid-20th century historians started to question the perspectives of underrepresented groups, thereby giving rise to social and postcolonial history. These questions challenged the nationalistic narrative, recognizing silenced voices and questioning the veracity of history as taught in school. Osborne (2000b), referencing Kymlicka, argues that the role of history education is to critique the traditional narrative, because “it defines the shared context and framework within which we debate our differing values and priorities...It becomes the implicit background for our thinking, providing the symbols, precedents, and reference points by which we make sense of issues” (p. 21). History education becomes the safe space to deliberate difference and articulate shared perspectives. Sears (2011) adds that current education policy promotes the “activist conception of citizenship” that challenges other passive constructs of citizenship. He elaborates by stating “It is important to note that what citizens are being included in, then, is not citizenship in the ethnic or sociological sense of belonging to a community; rather, they are being included in the community of those who

participate, who join in a process” (p. 353). A humanist impression of citizenship is not the collective assimilation under a nationalistic flag, rather it is an active deliberation to build a community of people from different perspectives, backgrounds, ethnicities, and socio-economic means. The humanist concept of citizenship rests in the understanding that “we are all in this together.”

The concept of the common good is one that can be misconstrued, therefore it is important to explore what that means. I have already noted that an appreciation for the stories of individuals can reveal shared human traits that people can relate to in the study of the past and participation of the present. I’ve also alluded to a sense of being together, a collective sense of community in diversity. These aspects point to the commonalities of experience and place that can contribute to a sense of commitment to a common good. In addition to these understandings, it is essential to consider an ethical argument for a participatory democracy. Friedrich’s (2014) concept of historical consciousness argues that one’s sense of the past and its connection to present perspectives and future possibilities is a constructed orientation of the modern world (p. 41). Considering the horrors of civilization, such as the Holocaust or the military dictatorship in Argentina, he argues that, “The formation of a historical consciousness becomes, thus, the guarantor of a democratic, peaceful future as it is inscribed as a strategy in the education of the citizenry, and thus as a moral project” (p. 41). Historical consciousness, according Friedrich, is more than a counter cultural narrative, it carries the moral and ethical reasoning of civic life. It is the developing of the historical consciousness that instils “sets of values and desired behaviours” (p. 42). Students who have an awareness of the historicity of the present “would tend to be closer to the ideal of the citizen than one that

is not” (p. 42). Clearly, this approach to history education does not reflect the cool objectivity that one equates with the clinical consideration of evidence or the rote memorization of facts. What this approach does is intrench students into a consideration of the human experience, deliberation about right and wrong, and how those judgments about the past have implications for the future.

A humanist approach to history education can have a significant influence in society. Waghid (2007), reflecting on personal experiences of racial discrimination in South Africa, offers the following prediction, “The possibility that inhumane and unjust acts against humanity can be reduced is highly likely, if people are educated to be democratic citizens” (p. 585). By democratic, he is referring to a society that embraces the capacity to be free and equal in a “democratic polity,” that conducts deliberation about the “demands of justice for all individuals” (p. 585). These values seem common place in democratic language, but are only fostered in a humanist education. Equality and justice are abstract concepts, until they are deliberated in the context of human experience. Once the concepts have “flesh” they guide decisions about the common good. History education provides an opportunity for students to experience these values. One practical way to engage students in the deliberation of the common good is through the exploration of evil (den Heyer & van Kessel, 2015). Although evil can be conceptualized and operationalized in very different ways, young people do have a sense of evil that they can articulate (van Kessel & den Heyer, 2014). Citizenship becomes a response to the conceptualization of evil, or social discord, in an effort to confront it. “This sense of future possibilities, then, shapes the extent to which those in society believe that they can prevent or combat systematic violence” (den Heyer & van Kessel, 2015, p. 2).

Pedagogically, powerful narratives about right and wrong, good and evil can influence students in how they conceptualize the present society and the future. Den Heyer and van Kessel (2015) offer an example to illustrate practical implications of this strategy. Engaging Canadian students with the intentions, actualities and implications of residential schools is an appropriate way to conceptualize evil as a product of routine policy. Rather than stressing evil as an ontological concept (as in Kantian conceptualizations), students are confronted with the realization that prejudiced policy has done significant social harm. By making this distinction students can conceptualize residential schools as “terror and disaster” instead of dismissing the prejudice and racism as “otherworldly” or a mere attitude of the past. This distinction “implicates us all in the quest for reconciliation to think well” (p. 15). Thus, when history is studied with a humanistic approach, the agency and intentions of people are essential considerations. Deliberations about social justice are rooted in the contemplation of human action and intention. Therefore, as history education embraces individual stories, it provides the opportunity to encounter society in a way that reflects past injustice and future redress. History can deliberate the common good.

### **Conclusion**

I began this chapter by asking how a humanist approach to history education could contribute to citizenship education. Through an analysis of theoretical perspectives on humanist education and citizenship education, it is clear that a humanist approach to history education does develop attributes that are important for citizens. As students embrace an “examined life” (Nussbaum, 2010), they develop their critical thinking skills, a desire to understand multiple perspectives, and an ability of creatively relate to others.

A humanist encounter enhances students' historical consciousness through the process of identification (empathy) and contextualization which, in turn, provide the skills and attitudes necessary for their orientation as citizens.

Considering the implications of a shift towards humanist pedagogy, it is important to note that I do not think a humanist approach to history is a checklist of things to do, rather it is an intentional orientation of the discipline and the content. In developing learning activities, making content selections, or challenging collective memories, the guiding intention should be: "how can this interaction in the classroom introduce my students to a broad understanding of humanity?" This is a disposition that teachers model. The potential results of teaching history as a humanity rest in the expanded value placed on multiple perspectives, the commitment to deliberation, and an orientation that seeks the common good.

In concluding, I'd like to return to the issue of UBI that was raised at the beginning of the chapter. Detractors of a UBI often assert that social welfare programs are put into place to help the lazy and undeserving in society. Modern media is inundated with pejorative terms such "bums," "welfare cases," people receiving "hand-outs," or people who are "using the system." All these terms determine the worth of a person based on what they do not have. Issues are often approached through generalizations that unintentionally frame individual actors within a collective. Pedagogically, students need to encounter the voices of people in difficult and diverse circumstances.

In one of my high school classes we were studying the Industrial Revolution. Rather than provide students with a generalized description of factory conditions, I wanted my students to hear the voices of the workers themselves. I provided my students

with the *Sadler Report: Report from the Committee on the Bill to Regulate the Labour of Children in the Mills and Factories of the UK* (1832), where numerous interviews of factory workers were collected. In reading sections of the report, my class engaged in the experiences of the working class. This is a short excerpt of an interview of 22-year-old Matthew Crabtree:

State the condition of the children toward the latter part of the day, who have thus to keep up with the machinery. - *It is as much as they do when they are not very much fatigued to keep up with their work, and toward the close of the day, when they come to be more fatigued, they cannot keep up with it very well, and the consequence is that they are beaten to spur them on.*

Were you beaten under those circumstances? - *Yes. Frequently? - Very frequently. And principally at the latter end of the day? - Yes.*

And is it your belief that if you had not been so beaten, you should not have got through the work? - *I should not if I had not been kept up to it by some means.*

Does beating then principally occur at the latter end of the day, when the children are exceedingly fatigued? - *It does at the latter end of the day, and in the morning sometimes, when they are very drowsy, and have not got rid of the fatigue of the day before.*

What were you beaten with principally? - *A strap.*

Anything else? - *Yes, a stick sometimes; and there is a kind of roller which runs on the top of the machine called a billy, perhaps two or three yards in length, and perhaps an inch and a half or more in diameter; the circumference would be four or five inches; I cannot speak exactly.*

Were you beaten with that instrument? - *Yes.*

Have you yourself been beaten, and have you seen other children struck severely with that roller? - *I have been struck very severely with it myself, so much so as to knock me down, and I have seen other children have their heads broken with it* (Sadler Report, 1832).

Using primary sources, my students reflected on the priorities of the factories and how this context might have been justified. They considered the implications for family structure, the placement of children in this society, and the shifting role of gender.

Although one can generalize the experiences of factory workers, the generalizations often are presented as a list of institutionalized issues. My students experienced the voices of people. This aspect alone made the factories conditions real to students and highlighted

the agency of historical actors to seek change. In a similar way, poverty in society presents another issue that is generalized by media and policy makers. Generalizations allow for issues of social difference to be mitigated in light of fiscal policies. A humanist approach to history education looks at the past, present, and future through the lenses of human perspectives and experiences. It sees the common good as more than the expressed perspective of a majority, it is the expression of social justice. History education has an opportunity to be a conduit through which people connect with humanity and social injustice is addressed.



## Epilogue

This thesis began as a way to explore an uncomfortable tension I had as an educator. If history is so important, why do so many students feel disengaged and bored in their history classes? As with most research projects, this initial inquiry led me down a number of significant rabbit holes. Why is history important? How has history been taught? How does the study of history change the way students think? How can history shape society? Through historical, theoretical, and practical considerations, I narrowed my inquiry into the following question: Can a humanist approach to teaching history facilitate citizenship education? Through my journey I have come to realize that a humanist approach to history education enhances disciplinary thinking through use of historical narrative. The intentional inclusion of individualistic narratives in history education fosters critical thinking (disciplinary thinking), open-mindedness and imaginative understanding, which are necessary qualities for citizens in a pluralistic democracy.

Essential to this inquiry was establishing the point that history is an important subject in education. Traditionally, education was perceived by society as a way of training citizens and history has been essential in that task (Osborne, 2000). History classes have taught established narratives of national and moral heroes to instill social values and patriotism. The goal of history education had been to offer a common narrative to foster national unity (von Heyking, 2006). Although there is still ample evidence that the nationalistic narrative is regarded as an essential component of history education (Dominion Institute, 2009; Seixas, 2009; Bartlett & Galivan, 1986; Smith et al., 1996), current theories of historical consciousness (Lévesque, 2016a; Rüsen, 2004;

Seixas, 2016a) have highlighted the importance of the individual's interaction with the past. Heelan (2009) argues that consciousness emerges from thoughtful engagement in inquiry. It is through this engagement that consciousness becomes the 'meaning maker,' which encompasses the "making of concepts, predictions, judgments, and practices" (p. 469). Informed by European models of historical consciousness, Seixas (2006) articulates that the study of history informs our understanding of the present and helps us envision what the future could hold. History education provides students with the disciplinary tools,

to help them make sense of who they are, where they stand, and what they can do—as individuals, as members of multiple intersecting groups, and as citizens with roles and responsibilities in relation to nations and states in a complex, conflict-ridden, and rapidly changing world. (p. 28)

The goal of learning history is not to ensure that history does not repeat itself. History education allows us to construct an understanding of the events and people of the past in order to help us structure the present we live in and the future we shape (Rüsen, 2004). History continues to be an essential component of citizenship education.

The divide between theory and practice can be deep. In wanting to explore how history education engages students, I needed to consider how history is being taught and why these strategies are employed. An examination of pedagogical approaches revealed two distinct methods. The first is what I will refer to as a traditional approach while the second is a procedural approach.

Traditional approaches to history education can be summarized as a transmission model. Established historical narratives are presented to students. Students are required to learn those narratives and remember them. The value of this approach to history education was the importance of teaching accurate historical content (Wineburg, 2005).

Therefore, students who know the ‘correct’ past will be considered knowledgeable citizens (Osborne, 2000; Axelrod, 2003). There are two key objections that can be raised to a traditional model of history education. First, the assumption of a ‘correct’ past is problematic. The propagation of a true narrative suggests a positivistic understanding of history that is built upon the objective work of historians. This view of history does not reflect current views of historiography (Novick, 1988; Burton, 2005). Additionally, the transmission of an uncritical nationalist narrative does not recognize the diverse conceptualizations of nation in current scholarship (Burton, 1997).

Second, there is little evidence to suggest that students retain historical knowledge through a transmission method. Wineburg, (2005) referencing a 1917 editorial of J. Carleton Bell, noted that when 1,500 students were tested on their “ability to answer factual questions about historical personalities and events,” on average all age groups scored below 50 percent (p. 190). In Canada, the Dominion Institute (2009) conducted a similar survey in 2007, noting that 82 percent of participants failed the exam. A traditional approach to history education does not necessarily engage students nor represent an accurate understanding of history as a discipline.

The procedural approach to history education developed as a response to traditional models. Lévesque (2011) argues that being exposed to history is not the same as historical thinking. Students think historically when they encounter the “problems” or “tensions” that “demand comprehension” (Seixas, 2017, p 597). These problems are resolved through the construction of a historical narrative that functions as a reasoned argument about the past. Seixas and Morton (2013), through their investigation of international models of historical thinking, identified six historical thinking concepts that

educators could use to engage their students. The procedural approach to historical education allows students to experience the complexity of historical accounts. These concepts have been received enthusiastically and have been incorporated into provincial curriculum in a number of provinces (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2014; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2018).

Although there is much to say about the procedural approach to history education that is positive, there are a couple of critiques that need to be raised. The first critique is that the procedural approach is derived from an understanding of history education that maintains assumptions of objectivity and rational positivism (Lee, 1984b). Segall (2006) and Cutrara (2009) challenge this assumption, arguing that the narratives of the past are construction derived from ideological perspectives to create meaning. As a result historical accounts are not objective nor representative of diverse historical perspectives. Seixas (2000), recognizing that a postmodern denial of objective truth raises a valid point about historical accounts, argues that history education should deliberate historical claims that are built around procedural concepts. In a world where history is debated, Seixas holds that: “To deny students an education in those methods [procedural historical concepts], then, is to exclude them from full participating in contemporary culture” (p. 35).

The second critique that can be raised about a procedural approach is that there is little evidence to support the assumption that thinking historically enhances the historical consciousness of students. Both Seixas (2016a) and Lévesque (2016a) propose that history education plays a role in influencing the historical consciousness of students. Research into student experiences with historical thinking reveal some interesting

insights. Results from the CHATA study noted that over time students do develop a more sophisticated understandings of history. Students showed growth in their understanding of the nature of evidence and the “causal structure” of historical accounts (Lee & Ashby, 2000). Lee (2004) argues that when student are taught to “make sense of history,” there is evidence that “they acquire powerful ideas” (p. 155). Yet, when researchers look into how history education influences students’ conceptualizations of the past, there is little data to support the assumption that a procedural approach is having much effect. In Quebec, researchers have noted that students are “unmoved by the current didactical approaches to national history,” and that students’ “useable history is very much shaped by forces outside the realm of formal education” (Lévesque et al., 2013, p. 170). Barton and McCully (2005), argue that student perceptions of history and identity are profoundly affected by the political climate in Northern Ireland. Peck (2011) notes that ethnic identity had a definite effect on how history is learned and understood. These studies highlight the importance of students’ “life-practice” in shaping and structuring their own narratives of the past (Seixas, 2016a).

Although historical thinking has the potential to shift temporal orientations, it is clear that a pedagogical focus on disciplinary structures has had a minimal impact on the historical perspectives of students. History education has the potential to influence how students make meaning for themselves and their society. However, memorization of historical narratives are not influencing student perceptions. Procedural approaches to history education may highlight the complexities of narrative construction, but are not shifting how students construct temporal meaning. Knowing that ethnicity, cultural belonging, and collective memory all contribute significantly to historical consciousness,

it stands to reason that a humanist approach to history education has the potential to influence one's temporal orientation.

A humanist approach to history education enhances a historical thinking pedagogy through the intentional incorporation of narrative. Narrative accounts of the past allow students to encounter human perspectives. This approach to history education differs from a strict procedural approach because it begins with the student rather than the disciplinary focus (see Appendix section: *The Critical Historical Thinker and Historical Consciousness*, p. 189). Students possess egocentric and sociocentric perspectives that they bring to the study of history. The influences of collective memory, family traditions, and ethnic identities all shape how students will engage with the past. Further, student engagement with the past should not be limited to a strict rational approach. Thayer-Bacon (1998) asserts that students bring their intuitions, emotions and imaginations into critical thinking. Embracing a humanist approach to history education will facilitate a rational, emotional, and imaginative interaction with people of the past (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012).

A humanist approach to history education can be structured through Nussbaum's (1998) concept of the examined life. Students are encouraged to live an examined life that stresses self-awareness, self-governance, and the capacity of respecting the humanity of fellow human beings (p. 2-3). Pedagogically, the vision can be facilitated through an approach to history education that is built around critical engagement, multiple perspectives, and imaginative understanding (Nussbaum, 2006).

Nussbaum (1998) argues that education needs to cultivate a "capacity for critical examination" (p. 5). Although her intention is to primarily have students examine their

own perspectives and biases (see Appendix section: *The Critical Historical Thinker and Historical Consciousness*, p. 189), it is also important to develop the rational capacity to think within a disciplinary structure. It is through structured thought that students can develop a willingness to examine claims and beliefs according to rational criteria (Nussbaum, 2006). Historical thinking concepts offer a disciplinary frame to introspection and critical engagement with narratives of the past (see Appendix section: *Historical Thinking Concepts*, p. 191). As students engage with procedural concepts, they understand the nature of historical claims, debate interpretations of evidence, and identify perspectives that may be absent or misrepresented. A humanist structure embraces the opportunity to inquire, research, and generate reasoned narratives of the past (see Appendix sections: *Facets of Historical Thinking*, p. 191; *Skills – What do Students Need to do to Think Historically?*, p. 195).

A humanist approach to history education seeks to understand others. Nussbaum (1998) states that citizens “who cultivate their humanity need a further ability to see themselves as citizens of some local, regional group—but also, and above all, as human beings by ties of recognition and concern” (p. 6). It is the recognition of being connected to others who think differently, that should drive a desire to understand (see Appendix section: *Attitudes – What do Students Need to Bring to Historical Thinking?*, p. 197). Nussbaum (2006) argues that students need to cultivate their imagination to understand the perspectives of others. Historians actively employ creative thinking in the construction of narratives of the past (Segall, 1999). Van Nieuwenhuysse (2017) urges history educators to develop opportunities to incorporate multiple perspectives, to allow for a discussion between the “us” and “other” that facilitates mutual understanding. It is

the encounter with specific narratives that potentially creates a disillusion in students that allows for a more inclusive re-illusion of the past and present (Farley, 2009). It is this process of re-illusion that represents an opportunity to deepen one's historical consciousness. A humanist encounter with difference allows for students to think about the past and present with greater complexity.

A humanist approach to history education can engage students rationally, imaginatively, and emotionally. By intentionally employing perspectives of the past that represent human agency (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012; den Heyer, 2003; den Heyer & Fidyk, 2007; van Kessel & den Heyer, 2014), students can be challenged to understand them emotionally and rationally. Rather than engaging with generalized narratives, an individualized perspective invites a conversation that spans the past and present.

I witnessed an encounter with a historical narrative recently. I was reading the picture book, *Meet Viola Desmond* (MacLeod, 2018), to my sons. The book begins with a brief description of Viola, a young black girl, in Nova Scotia. As Viola grows, she lives through the discriminatory attitudes of Canada in the 1930s. The story paints a picture of her determination and perseverance. At the climax of the story Viola enters a movie theatre in November 1946 and is forcibly removed for sitting in the wrong section. This injustice is represented as institutionalized racism. As my sons listened to this story they were outraged. As two white boys, they did not understand why people of colour would be treated differently. They asked: Why people were allowed to treat other people that way? What was different about the 1940s ? What happened to Viola later in her life? They were invested in Ms. Desmond's experiences. This story introduced them to the



concepts of race and social justice. The discrimination Viola experiences challenged my boys to think about how society should treat people.

In an education setting, teachers can create opportunities to experience human beauty, agency, and voice. Introducing multiple perspectives will raise discussions about differences, but students should also value shared attributes that are necessary to develop attitudes of respect and concern (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 6). Barton and Levstik (2004) argue that humanism develops a passion and concern for the world that is essential not only for education, but for democracy as well.

Without care, we could not possibly engage them in humanist study: students will not bother making reasoned judgments, expanding their views of humanity or deliberating over the common good if they don't care about those things. All our concerns – whether as historians, teachers or students – must originate in the present, because that's all we have; anything we know or believe about history derives from the questions we ask in our own lives today. (p. 229)

Society is living with others. A pluralistic democracy necessitates an ability to respect and seek out the perspectives of those who hold diverse views. A humanistic approach to history education prioritizes encounters with historical narratives that are inquisitive, critical and open-minded. Out of these encounters a more inclusive historical consciousness can emerge. Consequently, history education plays a significant role in developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to contemplate the 'common good.'

I'd like to conclude by describing one writer's unintended journey. As an author and English professor, Carpenter (Merasty & Carpenter, 2017) received an invitation to help a "old fellow up north requesting some help with his memoir" (p. ix). Over a number of years Merasty and Carpenter exchanged pieces of crumpled up paper, visited together, and created a narrative that became: *The Education of Augie Merasty: A Residential*

*School Memoir*. This autobiography is a collection of memoirs from a Cree man about his experiences at the St. Therese Residential School in Saskatchewan. In the account, Merasty expresses his thoughts, feelings, and experiences going to school. His descriptions are complicated as he represents some nuns as “very kind and loving” (Merasty & Carpenter, 2017, p. 5), while others “really enjoyed causing pain” (p. 12). The narrative winds through numerous accounts that demonstrate the recollections of an older man looking back on his life. Carpenter, through the process of compiling the memoir, became acquainted with Merasty. In him he saw how the past had shaped a man. On one hand, Merasty could be seen as “an old rogue, wretched father, and a drunk” (p. 76), while on the other hand, Augie is “a hero for me, a fighter of a worthy cause, a man of unusual courage, determination, and resilience” (p. 77). Merasty’s story reflects the tenacity and sorrow of human experience. Carpenter reflects on his encounter:

This brings me to the ultimate reward of writing and re-reading Augie’s story: I’ve discovered that it’s not just a narrative about victims and victimization, not just a tale of woe in which Euro-whites attempted to force their will on Indigenous people, not just a story that highlights the differences between “us” and “them.” This book is also about the things that bring people together. When you strip away the outside appearances, you are left with the common humanity of people locked in a classic struggle to save their children from the evils of coercion, abuse, and cultural extinction. Sometimes I am dogged by questions about how reconciliation might work in a permanent and meaningful way in our country, and when I do, I think about Augie’s people, who are always willing and able to show me the way. (p. 80)

A humanist encounter is one that allow us to empathize with the stories of others. It allows us to see experiences and time through another set of eyes. Ultimately, encounters with people (past and present) allow us to envision a more inclusive, more just future. I am convinced that a humanist approach to history education can equip students to be engaged citizens in a pluralistic democracy. As we prioritize historical

narratives, students can be engaged in developing disciplinary thinking, open-mindedness and imaginative understanding. The goal of a humanist approach is to appreciate difference and cherish a shared humanity. History education becomes a humanist encounter when people meet.

## References

- Ahonen, S. (2005). Historical consciousness: A viable paradigm for history education? [Review of the book *Theorizing historical consciousness*, by P. Seixas (Ed.)]. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 37(6), 697-707. doi:10.1080/00220270500158681
- Alberta Education (2005). *Social studies kindergarten to grade 12: Program rationale and philosophy*. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/media/159594/program-of-studies-k-3.pdf>
- Alberta Education (2007). *Social studies kindergarten to grade 12: Programs of study 10-12 inclusive*. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/media/3273006/social-studies-10-12-program-of-studies.pdf>
- Alberta Teachers Association (2016). *The future of social studies – The voices of Alberta teachers*. Retrived from <https://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Research/COOR-101-11%20The%20Future%20of%20Social%20Studies.pdf>
- Anderson, S. (2017). The stories nations tell: Sites of pedagogy, historical consciousness, and national narratives. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 40(1), 1-38. Retrieved from <http://journals.sfu.ca/cje/index.php/cje-rce/article/view/2143>
- Axelrod, P. (2003). *The promise of schooling: Education in Canada, 1800-1914* (4th ed.). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press
- Bailin, S. & Battersby, M. (2010). *Reason in the balance*. Vancouver, BC: McGraw-Hill Ryerson

- Bain, R. B. (2005). They thought the world was flat?: Applying the principles of how people learn in teaching high school history. In J. Bransford and S. Donovan (Eds.), *How students learn: History in the classroom* (pp. 179-213). Washington: The National Academies Press.
- Bartlett, G., & Galivan, J. (Eds.). (1986). *Canada: History in the making*. Toronto, ON: John Wiley & Sons Canada Limited.
- Barton, K. (2006). History, humanist education, and participatory democracy. In R.W. Sandwell (Ed.), *To the past: History education, public memory and citizenship in Canada* (pp. 50-69). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Barton, K. C., & McCully, A. W. (2005). History, identity and the school curriculum in Northern Ireland: An empirical study of secondary students' ideas and perspectives. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 37(1), 85-116.  
doi:10.1080/0022027032000266070
- Barton, K. C., & McCully, A. W. (2010). "You can form you own point of view:" Internally persuasive discourse in Northern Ireland students' encounters with history. *Teachers College Record*, 112(1), 142-181. Retrieved from <http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=15801>
- Barton, K., & Levstik, L. (2004). *Teaching history for the common good*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Burton, A. (1997). Who needs the nation? Interrogating 'British' history. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 10(3), 227-248. doi:10.1111/1467-6443.00039
- Burton, A. (2005). Introduction. In A. Burton (Ed.), *Archive stories: Facts, fictions, and the writing of history* (pp. 1-24). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Calder, L. (2006). Uncoverage: Toward a signature pedagogy for the history survey. *The Journal of American History*, 92(4), 1358-1370. doi:10.2307/4485896
- Center for the Study of Historical Consciousness. (n.d.). *About*. Retrieved from University of British Columbia website: <http://www.cshc.ubc.ca/about/>
- Clark, P. (1998). Clio in the curriculum: The jury is out. *Canadian Social Studies*, 32(2), 45-48. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/213199521?accountid=12063>
- Clark, P. (2013). Clio in the curriculum: Vindicated at last. *Canadian Issues*, 2013(3), 42-46. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/openview/9a3389ed37d08d9670a752c5ed48b130/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=43874>
- Cockshut, A. O. J. (n.d.). Thomas Carlyle: British essayist and historian. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-Carlyle>
- Cronon, W. (1992). A place for stories: Nature, history, and narrative. *Journal of American History*, 78(4), 1347-1376. doi:10.2307/2079346
- Cunningham, D. L. (2004). Empathy without illusions. *Teaching History*, (114), 24-29. Retrieved from [www.jstor.org/stable/43259070](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43259070)
- Cutrara, S. (2009). To placate or provoke? A critical review of the disciplines approach to history curriculum. *Journal of the Canadian Association of Curriculum Studies*, 7(2), 86-109. Retrieved from <https://jcacs.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/jcacs/article/view/22717>

- Cutrara, S. (2018a, April 11). Manitoba: Student-centric history curriculum? [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://activehistory.ca/2018/04/manitoba-student-centric-history-curriculum/>
- Cutrara, S. (2018b, June 27). Thinking about history curriculum in Canada (while also recognizing the informal curricula we carry) [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://activehistory.ca/2018/06/thinking-about-history-curriculum-in-canada-while-also-recognizing-the-informal-curricula-we-carry/>
- Cutrara, S. A. (2018c). The settler grammar of Canadian history curriculum: Why historical thinking is unable to respond to the TRC's calls to action. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 41(1), 250-275. Retrieved from <http://cje-rce.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/04/5.-3156-Cutrara-April-3-250-275.pdf>
- den Heyer, K. (2003). Between every "now" and "then": A role for the study of historical agency in history and citizenship education. *Theory & Research in Social Education*. 31(4), 411-434. doi:10.1080/00933104.2003.10473232
- den Heyer, K., & Fidyk, A. (2007). Configuring historical facts through historical fiction: Agency, art-in-fact, and imagination as stepping stones between then and now. *Educational Theory*, 57(2), 141-157. doi:10.1111/j.1741-5446.2007.00249.x
- den Heyer, K., & van Kessel, C. (2015). Evil, agency, and citizenship education. *McGill Journal of Education*, 50(1), 1-18. doi:10.7202/1036107ar
- Dominion Institute (2009). *The Canadian history report card: Curriculum analysis for high schools in Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.dominion.ca/release15062009.pdf>

- Duncan, D. M. (1916). *The story of the Canadian people*. Toronto, ON: The Macmillan Co. of Canada Limited.
- Duraisingh, E. D. (2017) Making narrative connections? Exploring how late teens relate their own lives to the historically significant past. *London Review of Education*, 15(2), 174-193. doi:10.18546/LRE.15.2.04
- Editorial: Grappling with John A. Macdonald's legacy. [Editorial] (2018). *Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/editorials/article-globe-editorial-grappling-with-john-a-macdonalds-legacy/>
- Eliasson, P., Alven, F., Yngvens, C. A., & Rosenlund, D. (2015). Historical consciousness and historical thinking reflected in large-scale assessment in Sweden. In K. Erikan & P. Seixas (Eds.), *New directions in assessing historical thinking* (pp. 171-182). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Farley, L. (2009). Radical hope: Or, the problem of uncertainty in history education. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 39(4), 537-554. doi:10.1111/j.1467-873X.2009.00456.x
- Friedrich, D. S. (2014). *Democratic education as a curricular problem: Historical consciousness and the moralizing limits of the present*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gessell, P. (2017, April 19). The battle of Vimy Ridge was not a nation builder, historian Tim Cook writes. *Ottawa Citizen*. Retrieved from <https://ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/books/the-battle-of-vimy-ridge-was-not-a-nation-builder-historian-tim-cook-writes>
- Goldberg, T., Schwarz, B., & Porat, D. (2011). "Could they do it differently?": Narrative and argumentative changes in students' writing following discussions of "hot"



historical issues. *Cognition and Instruction*, 29(2), 185-217.

doi:10.1080/07370008.2011.556832

Green, A., & Troup, K. (1999). *The houses of history: A critical reader in 20th-century history and theory*. New York: NY: New York University Press.

Grever, M., Pelzer, B., & Hayden, T. (2011). High school students' views on history. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 43(2): 207-229.

doi:10.1080/00220272.2010.542832

Grey, C. (2017, December 30). Canada 150, doomed from the start, now ends with a whimper. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/why-canada-150-was-doomed-from-the-start/article37441978/>

Grigg, R. (2002). The origins and growth of ragged schools in Wales, 1847-c. 1900. *History of Education*, 31(3), 227-243. doi:10.1080/00467600210122603

Hallam, R. N. (1972). Thinking and learning in history. *Teaching History*, (2), 337-346.

Hallam, R. N. (1974). Piaget and thinking in history. In M. Ballard (Ed.), *New movements in the study of history* (pp. 162-178). Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press.

Hallam, R. N. (1975). *A study of the effect of teaching method on the growth of logical thought with special reference to the teaching of history*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Leeds University, Leeds.

Heathorn, S. (2000). *For home, country, and race: Constructing gender, class, and englishness in the elementary school, 1880-1914*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

- Heelan, P. A. (2009). The role of consciousness as meaning maker in science, culture and religion. *Zygon: Journal of Religion & Science*, 44(2), 467-486.  
doi:10.1111/j.1467-9744.2009.01009.x
- Henrickson, A. (2018). *Downtown Lethbridge treasure hunt*. Retrieved from <https://www.galtmuseum.com/ed-programs/downtown-lethbridge-treasure-hunt>
- Henrickson, A. (2019, May). *Downtown Lethbridge treasure hunt*. Presentation of Galt Museum Education program, Lethbridge, AB.
- Historica Canada (2015). *The Canadian history report card*. Retrieved from [https://www.historicacanada.ca/sites/default/files/PDF/English\\_ShortVersion\\_Jan\\_22\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.historicacanada.ca/sites/default/files/PDF/English_ShortVersion_Jan_22_FINAL.pdf)
- Hughes, R. O. (1951). *The making of today's world*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Hyslop-Margison, E., & Richardson, T. (2005). Rethinking progressivism and the crisis of liberal humanism: Historical and contemporary perspectives on education for democratic citizenship. *International Journal of Progressive Education*, 1(2), 49-58. Retrieved from <http://www.inased.org/ijpepi.htm>
- Körber, A. (2016). Translation and its discontents II: A German perspective. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 48(4), 440-456. doi:10.1080/00220272.2016.1171401
- Körber, A., & Meyer-Hamme, J. (2015). Historical thinking competencies and their measurement. In K. Erikan & P. Seixas (Eds.), *New directions in assessing historical thinking* (pp. 89-101). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lee, M. (2013). Promoting historical thinking using the explicit reasoning text. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, 37(1), 33-45. doi:10.1016/j.jssr.2012.12.003

- Lee, P. J. (1984a). Historical imagination. In A. Dickinson, P. Lee, & P. Rogers (Eds.), *Learning history* (pp. 85-116). London, UK: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.
- Lee, P. J. (1984b). Why learn history? In A. Dickinson, P. Lee, & P. Rogers (Eds.), *Learning history* (pp. 1-19). London: UK, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.
- Lee, P. J. (2004). Understanding history. In P. Seixas (Ed.), *Theorizing historical consciousness* (pp. 129-164). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Lee, P. J. (2005). Putting principles into practice: Understanding history. In M. Donovan & J. Bransford (Eds.), *How students learn: History in the classroom* (pp. 31-78). Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
- Lee, P. J., & Ashby, R. (2000). Progression in historical understanding among students ages 7-14. In P. Stearns, P. Seixas & S. Wineburg (Eds.), *Knowing, teaching & learning history: National and international perspectives* (pp. 199-222). New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Létourneau, J., & Moisan, S. (2004). Young people's assimilation of a collective historical memory: A case study of Quebecers of French-Canadian heritage. In P. Seixas (Ed.), *Theorizing historical consciousness* (pp. 109-128). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Lévesque, S. (2005). In search of a purpose for school history. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 37(3), 349-358.
- Lévesque, S. (2009) *Thinking historically: Educating students for the 21st century* (2nd ed.). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

- Lévesque, S. (2011). What it means to think historically. In P. Clark (Ed.), *New possibilities for the past: Shaping history education in Canada* (pp. 115-138). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Lévesque, S. (2016a, April 7). Going beyond “narratives” vs. “competencies”: A model of history education [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://public-history-weekly.oldenbourg-verlag.de/4-2016-12/going-beyond-narratives-vs-competencies-model-understanding-history-education/>
- Lévesque, S. (2016b). Why should historical thinking matter to students? *Agora*, 51(2), 4-8. Retrieved from <https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary?dn=101510871640270;res=ielhss>
- Lévesque, S. (2017). History as “GPS”: On the uses of historical narrative for French Canadian students’ life orientation and identity. *London Review of Education*, 15(2), 227-242. doi:10.18546/LRE.15.2.07
- Lévesque, S., & Zanzanian, P. (2015). Developing historical consciousness and a community of history practitioners: A survey of prospective history teachers across Canada. *McGill Journal of Education*, 50(2), 389-412. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.uleth.ca/docview/1788300805?accountid=12063>
- Lévesque, S., Létourneau, J., & Gani, R. (2012). Québec students’ historical consciousness of the nation. *Canadian Issues*, 2012(2), 55-60. Retrieved from <http://fg2fy8yh7d.scholar.serialssolutions.com/?sid=google&aunit=S&aunit=Lévesque&atitle=QUÉBEC+STUDENTS%27HISTORICAL+CONSCIOUSNESS+>

[OF+THE+NATION&title=Canadian+issues+\(Association+for+Canadian+Studies  
+:+1999\)&date=2012&spage=55&issn=0318-8442](#)

Lévesque, S., Létourneau, J., & Gani, R. (2013). A giant with clay feet: Quebec students and their historical consciousness of the nation. *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching, and Research*, 11(2), 156-172.

Levstik, L. S. (2000). Articulating the silences: Teachers' and adolescents' conceptions of historical significance. In P. Stearns, P. Seixas & S. Wineburg (Eds.), *Knowing, teaching & learning history: National and international perspectives* (pp. 284-305). New York, NY: New York University Press.

Levstik, L., & Barton, K. (2008). *Doing history: Investigating with children in elementary and middle schools* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Levstik, L. S., & Pappas, C. C. (1992). New directions for studying historical understanding. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 20(4), 369-385, doi:10.1080/00933104.1992.10505679

Lowrey, A. (2018, July 14). Smart money: Why the world should embrace universal basic income. *The Globe and Mail*, pp. O1, O6-7.

Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning. (2014). *Grade 11 history of Canada* [Program of studies]. Retrieved from [https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/history\\_gr11/document.pdf](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/history_gr11/document.pdf)

MacLeod, E. (2018). *Meet Viola Desmond*. Toronto, ON: Scholastic Canada Ltd.

Marker, M. (2011). Teaching history from an indigenous perspective: Four winding paths up the mountain. In P. Clark (Ed.), *New possibilities for the past: Shaping history education in Canada* (pp. 97-112). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

- Megill, A. (1994). Jorn Rusen's theory of historiography between modernism and rhetoric of inquiry. *History and Theory*, 33(1), 39-60. doi:10.2307/2505651
- Merasty, J. A., & Carpenter, D. (2017). *The education of Augie Merasty: A residential school memoir* (2nd ed.). Regina, SK: University of Regina Press.
- Misztal, B. A. (2003). Durkheim on collective memory. *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 3(2), 123-143. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1468795X030032002>
- National Council for the Social Studies. (2016). A vision of powerful teaching and learning in the social studies. *Social Education*, 80(3), 180-182. Retrieved from <https://www.socialstudies.org/publications/socialeducation/may-june2016/vision-of-powerful-teaching-and-learning-in-social-studies>
- Nosich, G. M. (2012). *Learning to think things through: A guide to critical thinking across the curriculum*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Novick, P. (1988) *That noble dream: The 'objectivity question' and the American historical profession*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (1998). Cultivating humanity. *Liberal Education*, 84(2), 38. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.uleth.ca/docview/209821285?accountid=12063>
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2006). Education and democratic citizenship: Capabilities and quality education. *Journal of Human Development*, 7(3), 385-395.  
doi:10.1080/14649880600815974

- Nussbaum, M. C. (2009). Education for profit, education for freedom. *Liberal Education*, 95(3), 6-13. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.uleth.ca/docview/209814778?accountid=12063>
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2010). *Not for profit: Why democracy needs the humanities*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Obenchain, K. M., Orr, A., & Davis, S. H. (2011). The past as a puzzle: How essential questions can piece together a meaningful investigation of history. *The Social Studies*, 102(5), 190-199. doi:10.1080/00377996.2010.543193
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2018). *The Ontario curriculum: Social studies, grades 1 to 6: History and geography, grades 7 and 8*. [Program of studies]. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/social-studies-history-geography-2018.pdf>
- Osborne, K. (2000a). 'Our history syllabus has us gasping:' History in Canadian schools: Past, present, and future. *The Canadian Historical Review*, 81(3), 404-435. doi:10.3138/chr.81.3.403
- Osborne, K. (2000b) Public schooling and citizenship education in Canada. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 32(3), 8-37. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1293160290?accountid=12063>
- Osborne, K. (2003). Teaching history in schools: A Canadian debate. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 35(5), 585-626. doi:10.1080/0022027032000063544
- Osborne, K. (2004). Political education and citizenship: Teaching for civic engagement. *Education Canada*, 45(1), 13-16. Retrieved from <http://www.ceaa-cea.ca/home.cfm>

- Osborne, K. (2006). 'To the past': Why we need to teach and study history. In R. Sandwell (Ed.), *To the past: History education, public memory, and citizenship in Canada* (pp. 103-131). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Osborne, K. (2011). Teaching Canadian history: A century of debate. In P. Clark (Ed.), *New possibilities for the past: Shaping history education in Canada* (pp. 55-80). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Papastephanou, M., & Angeli, C. (2007). Critical thinking beyond skill. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 39(6). doi:10.1111/j.1469-5812.2007.00311.x
- Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2007). *Consequential validity: Using assessment to drive instruction*. Retrieved from <http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/consequential-validity-using-assessment-to-drive-instruction/790>
- Paul, R. & Elder, L. (2008). *The miniature guide to critical thinking* (5th ed.). Dillon Beach, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking Press.
- Peck, C. (2011). Ethnicity and students' historical understandings. In P. Clark (Ed.), *New possibilities for the past: Shaping history education in Canada* (pp. 305-324). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Peck, C., & Seixas, P. (2008). Benchmarks of historical thinking. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 31(4), 1015-1039. doi:10.2307/20466737
- Peel, E. A. (1967). Some problems in the psychology of history teaching. In W. H. Burston & O. Thompson (Eds.), *Studies in the nature and teaching of history* (pp. 159-190). New York, NY: Humanities Press.
- Plamondon, B. (2018, February 19). To vilify Sir John A. Macdonald is to wrongly seek a singles scapegoat for Canada's mistreatment of Indigenous people. *The Globe*



*and Mail*. Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/to-vilify-sir-john-a-macdonald-is-to-wrongly-see-a-single-scapegoat-for-canadas-mistreatment-of-indigenous-people/article38017335/>

- Radinsky, J., Goldman, S., & Pellegrino, J. (2015). Historical thinking: In search of conceptual and practical guidance for the design and use of assessments of student competence. In K. Erikan & P. Seixas (Eds.), *New directions in assessing historical thinking* (pp. 132-142). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Retz, T. (2016). At the interface: Academic history, school history and the philosophy of history. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 48(4), 503-517.  
doi:10.1080/00220272.2015.1114151
- Rogers, P. J. (1984). Why teach history? In A. Dickinson, P. Lee, & P. Rogers (Eds.), *Learning history* (pp. 20-38). London, UK: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.
- Rudd, R. D. (2007). Defining critical thinking. *Techniques*, 82(7), pp. 46-49.
- Rüsen, J. (1989). The development of narrative competence in historical learning: An ontogenetic hypothesis concerning moral consciousness. *History and Memory*, 1(2), 35-59. doi:10.2307/25618580
- Rüsen, J. (2004). Historical consciousness: Narrative structure, moral function, and ontogenetic development. In P. Seixas (Ed.), *Theorizing historical consciousness* (pp. 63-85). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Rüsen, J. (2012). Tradition: A principle of historical sense-generation and its logic and effect in historical culture. *History and Theory*, 51(4), 45-59. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2303.2012.00646.x

- Sadler, M. (1832). *The Sadler commission: Report on child labour*. Retrieved from [https://www.cteonline.org/cabinet/file/71f9aa5a-9bdd-43fe-aebe-293d53865a2f/Sadler\\_Document\\_Assignment.pdf](https://www.cteonline.org/cabinet/file/71f9aa5a-9bdd-43fe-aebe-293d53865a2f/Sadler_Document_Assignment.pdf)
- Sandwell, R. W. (2006). Introduction: history education, public memory, and citizenship in Canada. In R. W. Sandwell (Ed.), *To the past: History education, public memory, & citizenship in Canada* (pp. 3-10). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Schiro, M. S. (2008). *Curriculum theory: Conflicting visions and enduring concerns*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Sears, A. (2011). Historical thinking and citizenship education. In P. Clark (Ed.), *New possibilities for the past: Shaping history education in Canada* (pp. 344-364). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Sears, A., Peck, C. L., & Herriot, L. (2014). We're here to teach about democracy not practice it. The missed potential of schools as democratic spaces. *One World in Dialogue*, 3(1). Retrieved from [https://ssc.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollection/Documents/OneWorldInDialogue/OneWorldinDialogue\\_2014Vol3No1/Sears,Peck,Herriot%20Article\\_OneWorld%20inDialogue2014Vol3No1.pdf](https://ssc.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollection/Documents/OneWorldInDialogue/OneWorldinDialogue_2014Vol3No1/Sears,Peck,Herriot%20Article_OneWorld%20inDialogue2014Vol3No1.pdf)
- Segall, A. (1999). Critical history: Implications for history/social studies education. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 27(3), 358-374.  
doi:10.1080/00933104.1999.10505885
- Segall, A. (2006). What's the purpose of teaching a discipline, anyway? The case of history. In A. Segall, E. Heilman, & C. Cherryholmes (Eds.), *Social studies: The next generation* (p. 125-139). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

- Seixas, P. (1994). A discipline adrift in an "integrated" curriculum: History in British Columbia schools. *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue Canadienne De L'éducation*, 19(1), 99-107. doi:10.2307/1495310
- Seixas, P. (2000). Schweigen! Die kinder! or, Does postmodern history have a place in the schools? In P. Stearns, P. Seixas & S. Wineburg (Eds.), *Knowing, teaching & learning history: National and international perspectives* (pp. 19-37). New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Seixas, P. (2004). Introduction. In P. Seixas (Ed.), *Theorizing historical consciousness* (pp. 3-20). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Seixas, P. (2006). What is historical consciousness? In R. W. Sandwell (Ed.), *To the past: History education, public memory, & citizenship in Canada* (pp. 11-22). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Seixas, P. (2009). A modest proposal for change in Canadian history education. *Teaching History*, (137), 26-30. Retrieved from [www.jstor.org/stable/43259415](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43259415)
- Seixas, P. (2011). Assessment of historical thinking. In P. Clark (Ed.), *New possibilities for the past: Shaping history education in Canada* (pp. 139-153). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Seixas, P. (2012). Progress, presence and historical consciousness: Confronting past, present and future in postmodern time. *Paedagogica Historica*, 48(6), 859-872. doi:10.1080/00309230.2012.709524
- Seixas, P. (2016a, February 25). *A history/ memory matrix for history education* [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://public-history-weekly.olderbourg-verlag.de/4-2016-6/a-historymemory-matrix-for-history-education/>

- Seixas, P. (2016b). Translation and its discontents: Key concepts in English and German history education. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 48(4), 427-439.  
doi:10.1080/00220272.2015.1101618
- Seixas, P. (2017). A model of historical thinking. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 49(6), 593-605. doi:10.1080/00131857.2015.1101363
- Seixas, P., & Morton, T. (2013). *The big six: Historical thinking concepts*. Toronto, ON: Nelson Education Ltd.
- Shemilt, D. (1984). Beauty and the philosopher: Empathy in history and the classroom. In A. Dickinson, P. Lee, & P. Rogers (Eds.), *Learning history* (pp. 39-84). London, UK: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.
- Smith, C. F., McDevitt, D., & Scully, A. L. (Eds.). (1996). *Canada today*. Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc.
- Thayer-Bacon, B. (1998). Transforming and redescribing critical thinking: Constructive thinking. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 17(2-3), 123-148.  
doi:10.1023/A:1005166416808
- Thompson, E. P. (1966). *The making of the English working class* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Thompson, L. A. (2004). Identity and the forthcoming Alberta social studies Curriculum: A postcolonial reading. *Canadian Social Studies*, 38(3). Retrieved from [http://www.educ.ualberta.ca/css/Css\\_38\\_3/ARthompson\\_postcolonial\\_reading.htm](http://www.educ.ualberta.ca/css/Css_38_3/ARthompson_postcolonial_reading.htm)

- Thornton, S., & Barton, K. C. (2010). Can history stand alone? Drawbacks and blind spots of a “disciplinary” curriculum. *Teachers College Record*, 112(9), 2471-2495. <http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=16009>
- Trofanenko, B. M. (2010). The educational promise of public history museum exhibits, *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 38(2), 270-288, doi:10.1080/00933104.2010.10473425
- van Kessel, C. A., & den Heyer, K. (2014). Youth conceptualizations of evil and implications for social studies education. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 60(1), 213-215. Retrieved from <https://jmss.org/index.php/ajer/article/viewFile/55854/42677>
- Van Nieuwenhuyse, K. (2017, March 9). Using multiplicity to break through Eurocentrism [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://public-history-weekly.degruyter.com/5-2017-9/using-multiperspectivity-to-break-through-eurocentrism/>
- Van Sledright, B. (2015). Assessing for learning in the history classroom. In K. Ercikan & P. Seixas (Eds.), *New directions in assessing historical thinking* (pp. 75-88). New York, NY: Routledge.
- von Heyking, A. (2006). *Creating citizens: History & identity in Alberta schools, 1905 to 1980*. Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press.
- von Heyking, A. (2011). Proud to call themselves Englishmen: Representation of Britishness in 20th century English-Canadian schools. In C. McGlynn, A. Mycock, & J.W. McAuley (Eds.), *Britishness, identity and citizenship: The view*

*from abroad* (pp. 191-211). Bern, Switzerland: International Academic Publishers.

Waghid, Y. (2007). Education for democratic citizenship and cosmopolitanism. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 21(5), 584-595. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.uleth.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ehh&AN=32080477&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Weaver, E. P. (1919). *A Canadian history for boys and girls*. Toronto, ON: S. W. Fallis and The Copp Clark Company Limited.

Wertsch, J. V., & Roediger III, H. L., (2008). Collective memory: Conceptual foundations and theoretical approaches, *Memory*, 16(3), 318-326, doi:10.1080/09658210701801434

Westheimer, J. (2015). *What kind of citizen? Educating our children for the common good*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Whelan, M. (1992). History and the social studies: A response to the critics. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 20(1), 2-16. doi:10.1080/00933104.1992.10505656

Wineburg, S. (1999). Historical thinking and other unnatural acts. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 80(7), 488-499.

Wineburg, S. (2001). *Historical thinking and other unnatural acts: Charting the future of teaching the past*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Wineburg, S. (2005). The psychological study of historical consciousness. In J. Straub (Ed.), *Narration, identity, and historical consciousness* (pp. 187-210). New York, NY: Berghahn Books.

Wineburg, S. (2007). Unnatural and essential. *Teaching History*, (126), 6-11.

Wineburg, S. (2013). Crazy for History. *Journal of American History*, 90(4), 1401-1414.

doi:10.2307/3660360

Zanazanian, P. (2015). Historical consciousness and being Quebecois: exploring young English-speaking students' interactions with Quebec's master historical narrative.

*Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 42(2), 113-135.

Zinn, D., & Rodgers, C. (2012). A humanizing pedagogy: Getting beneath the rhetoric.

*Perspectives in Education*, 30(4), 76-87. Retrieved from

<https://journals.co.za/content/persed/30/4/EJC128202>

## Appendix:

### Historical Thinking Construct: A Proposal for Curriculum Development

#### Overview and Purpose

The purpose of social studies is to enable students to embrace their role in society as active, informed and responsible citizens (Alberta Education, 2005). Although the social studies program has a long-standing presence in North America, the complexity of a multidisciplinary, issues-based approach to citizenship education does not have the necessary disciplinary focus to effectively achieve citizenship objectives (Seixas, 1994). In order to engage with the complexities of contemporary society, students will need to develop critical thinking skills that are used to deepen and enhance their temporal orientation. This temporal orientation is conceptualized as one's historical consciousness (Rüsen, 2004; Seixas, 2006). History education is necessary for students to develop a historical consciousness that provides them with a sense of belonging and influence in society. Therefore history is essential in the K-12 education system. Osborne (2003) elaborates:

Issues of identity, heritage, and citizenship, all rooted in competing conceptions of the past, have become the stuff of politics (Wright 1985, Hewison 1987, Lowenthal 1996). Orwell's (1954: 31) well-known maxim that those who control the present control the past, and thereby shape the future, seems more relevant today than ever. (p. 585)

It is important for curriculum designers to think twice about how history education is conceptualized. Though some would advocate that history can be the foundation of a social studies program (Whelan, 1992), current pedagogical practices use historical content as "case-studies" that illustrate broader concepts. Rather than deliberating the construction and ideological purpose of historical narratives, historical content is understood as delivered fact to be memorized in order to support a unified past (Osborne, 2003). This approach to history education does not challenge students to question, engage, or construct a temporal understanding of their own. It merely supports an approach that promotes the status quo. Alternatively, a historical thinking approach that develops one's historical consciousness, can facilitate student engagement with questions about the nature of society and the importance of humanity.

Thinking historically opens up an opportunity to think critically about society. Collective memory, commemoration, family traditions all have a role in shaping the stories and values that undergird a community (Seixas, 2016a; Rüsen, 2004). Many of these narratives are accepted uncritically as accurate representations of the past that inform the present. Embracing the procedural aspects of disciplinary thinking enables students to understand how and why historical accounts are constructed the way they are (Seixas & Morton, 2013). By interrogating socially accepted narratives, students can be exploring and critiquing dominant political and sociological presuppositions (Segall, 2006).



Historical thinking allows students to engage with the people of the past. In considering how education for democracy can be effective, Nussbaum (2009) argues:

An education for human development as responsible global citizenship has a twofold purpose. First, it must promote the human development of students. Second, it must promote in students an understanding of the goals of human development for all - as goals inherent in the very idea of a decent, minimally just society - and it must do this in such a way that when they are empowered to make political choices, they will foster these capabilities for all, not only for themselves. Such an education will begin from the idea of equal respect for all human beings and equal entitlement of all to a range of central human opportunities—not just in one's own nation, but everywhere in the world. (p. 8)

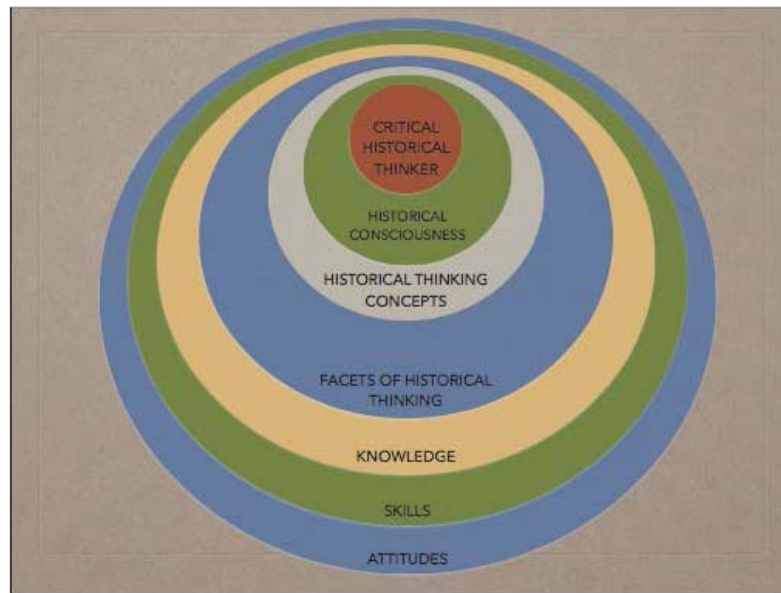
Students need to engage with the perspectives of people in order to develop a humanist appreciation for society. Through the study of history, students encounter people who are different than themselves, live in a different context, and embrace different societal norms. Historical thinking encourages students to contemplate continuity and change over time (Seixas & Morton, 2013), thereby realizing that the people of the past have very real connections to the present society in which we live. Through an engagement with historical sources that reveal personal perspectives, students begin to consider the importance of human agency. An analysis of human agency can help students to reflect on their own actions in a temporal context (den Heyer, 2003). Further, as students relate to personal narratives of the past, they come face to face with contexts that raise moral and ethical problems (Rüsen, 2004). One teacher commented:

I think part of our role as a teacher is not just to teach them history but to turn them into responsible and caring individuals as well. I think that looking at the past can really help you do that...[through] an awareness of a conception of right and wrong in the largest sense, in that 'Was it right for people to live in slum housing in the past? Didn't working people deserve more?' I think it is useful from an empathy point of view as well, in order for them to understand the experiences of the past but also understand why things change [and] why people felt the way they did about changing things. (Cunningham, 2004, p. 29)

An appreciation for historical narratives, the lives and experiences of people of the past, and the agency of human beings contribute to a student's understanding of their own temporal orientation. Therefore, when history is taught as a humanity the similitudes of human experience cannot be dismissed as a mere story. The diversity of the past can directly challenge students' attitudes about diversity in the present. Barton and Levstik (2004) report that when students encounter history they consistently make judgment about fairness or justice. Therefore, "history educators should use deliberation to promote judgments that are reasonable and publicly justifiable, and they should help students understand how to make and defend those judgments in the context of a pluralist democracy" (p. 39). History education provides the disciplinary tools to engage the past, the humanist focus to connect to the present, and the potential to shape future decisions about society. History education provides the context for the deliberation of the common

good (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Barton, 2006). In the following appendix I offer a model of historical thinking that places the thinker/ student at the center of the construct. I have broken the construct down into areas of focus to help communicate the various components. Please note that the intention is to teach and experience historical thinking holistically, which means that many of these facets blend into each other intentionally.

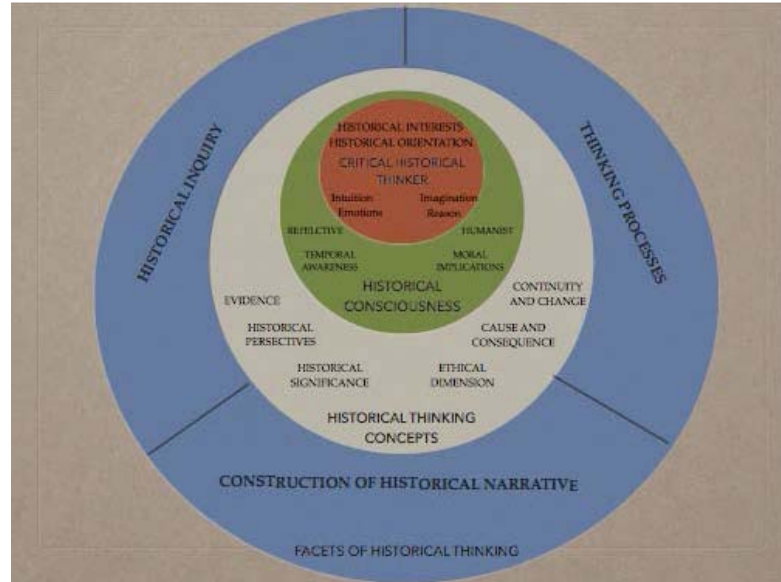
### Definition of Historical Thinking



Historical thinking is a conceptual approach to history education. It is based upon the rational interaction of the critical thinker with the past, present and future. Historical thinking consists of constructing historical narratives that are informed by an inquiry that incorporates disciplinary thinking processes. The process of historical thinking informs and structures the orientation of the thinker to their moral and temporal understandings.

In order to engage in meaningful thinking, disciplinary concepts are essential to develop critical based judgments (Papastephanou & Angeli, 2007). Through the discipline of history, the use of procedural concepts (Seixas & Morton, 2013) provide key considerations that allow students to contemplate the construction of historical narratives. It is the process of critiquing and creating historical narratives that contribute to the development of a students' historical consciousness, which informs the construction of historical narratives as well as the temporal orientation of the student. (Rüsen, 2004). Rather than history education being a recounting of nationalistic narratives (Osborne, 2003) or a process of ideological informed analysis (Cutrara, 2018c), this construct situates historical thinking firmly in the experiences of the thinker and their subsequent orientation as a citizen.

## Facets of Historical Thinking



### The Critical Historical Thinker and Historical Consciousness

At the center of the construct is the thinker. Individual thinkers embody essential attributes such as self-motivation, self-direction, self-discipline, and self-correction. These attributes are essential to effective thinking (Paul & Elder, 2007). It is important to note that thinking is not a purely rational exercise. Students bring into the thinking process their intuitions, emotions, and imagination (Thayer-Bacon, 1998).

Students come to the study of history with their own understandings and presuppositions. History is experienced all around them in traditions, commemorations, and collective memory. These aspects have a profound influence in how students engage with the past and orient themselves in the present (Létourneau & Moisan, 2004; Lévesque, Létourneau, & Gani, 2013). Needless to say, students have a historical consciousness that is formed through many encounters with history prior to their experiences in school (Rüsen, 2004; Seixas, 2004; Seixas, 2016a; Lévesque, 2017). Historical consciousness is one's temporal orientation that informs how one makes sense of the past, present, and future (Seixas, 2011). It both is shaped and informs the moral considerations of an individual as historical narratives are constructed, thereby making morality visible (Rüsen, 2004). History education is where students can reflect on their historical consciousness and encounter the past through a humanist lens. In order to engage students in historical thinking, two considerations are essential. First, disciplinary thinking identifies key considerations and historical issues to explore. Second, incorporating historical voices allows for history to be experienced as a humanity.

A historical thinking approach begins with the realization that students are bound by ego-centric and socio-centric perspectives that inform their ideas about history, society and significance. Students bring with them a bias that is rooted in their conception of the present. This is not surprising as students have developed a historical consciousness that

reflects their temporal orientation (Rüsen, 2004). This orientation is shaped as people in the present encounter the past and allow their understanding of the present to shape their future. A disciplinary approach to historical thinking can allow students to engage with the past while limiting the influence of presentism. Presentism is “imposing the thoughts, beliefs, and values of today on historical actors” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 139). Students who engage with the past naïvely might adopt perspectives that include caricatures of historical actors that are used as stable tropes for modern narratives. An example of this can be seen in settler perspectives that represent the heroic work of men taming the land and establishing ‘civilization’ (Duncan, 1916). Considerations about the nature of evidence, historical context, and documentary corroboration allow for initial impressions about historical perspectives to be evaluated according to disciplinary criteria. In this way, students can develop historical perspectives that are based on the evidence, context, and actors in the past (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 139). The use of disciplinary thinking invites students into an encounter with the past that is evolving. History is not a static past, it is dynamic and responds to new evidence and considerations.

A historical thinking approach is aware that students need to connect with history that matters to them. Early psychological theories understood that learning the past was pertinent if those investigations had something to do with the present (Wineburg, 2005). Many students recount experiences with history education that are built around a knowledge based pedagogical approach. In a traditional approach to history education, students are required to know narratives about the nation and be able to recount them on some form of evaluation. The memorization and regurgitation approach to history education has had an unsuccessful history (Wineburg, 2005), leaving students to wonder what history is really for (Barton & Levstik, 2004). The difficulty with making history relevant to students is that the people and the context of the past is unfamiliar (Seixas & Morton, 2013). Nussbaum (2010) argues that a humanist approach provides the common feature of humanity as the basis for community. She describes a humanist education as one that promotes critical thinking, introspection, and an interest in multiple perspectives (Nussbaum, 1998; 2006). In relating humanism to history education, she argues that: “A humanist approach to history education embraces disciplinary structures for the purpose of enhancing for critical thinking, world citizenship, and imaginative understanding” (Nussbaum, 2006). Instead of boiling down historical perspectives to generalized narratives, historical thinking should engage students’ imagination and sense of relevance through the use of personalized narratives that highlight the thoughts and experiences of historical actors. By choosing to highlight human experiences, voices and perspectives, a historical thinking approach welcomes students into a personal and ethical encounter (Seixas, 2017). Therefore, as students living in the present interact with the human voices of the past, there is a realization of shared attributes that are essential for a democracy built upon “respect and concern” (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 6).

History education must start with the student (the thinker). Although the disciplinary structures are important and provide criteria and rational structure, the thinker is the one who will seek answers to questions, weigh information, and construct historical claims. The thinker will see evidence, historical patterns and concepts through

an ego-centric and socio-centric lens. The thinker will be captured by their emotions and imagination as they encounter stories of hardship and triumph (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012). Although the academic discipline of history may ask different questions, history education must be relevant to the lives students are living (Barton & Levstik, 2004). It is the experience of students with history that will take the past, relate it to the present and inform the future. Historical thinking provides the criterial structure, the procedural concepts, and the educational context to inform students' historical consciousness.

## **Historical Thinking Concepts**

History, as taught in schools, has often been regarded as a collection of factual tales that are told to students in order to build national unity (Axelrod, 2003). The epistemological presupposition of this approach to history education facilitated a knowledge-based discipline that had little room for critical thought. In response to this limited view of history, the historical thinking concepts were developed to be built around the considerations that historians employ when constructing narratives of the past (Seixas, 2017). Through the identification of these concepts, students can conceptualize history as a collection of historical arguments to be thoughtfully and critically engaged with. Further, as students work with the various concepts they should be able to develop historical narratives of their own. Historical thinking concepts provide a language through which students can see how historical claims can be justified and how certain perspectives are neglected from the historical record. The six historical thinking concepts are: evidence, historical significance, continuity and change, cause and consequence, historical perspectives and the ethical dimension (Seixas, 2017).

## **Facets of Historical Thinking**

### **Historical Inquiry**

All thinking must have a beginning point—it must have a purpose. Although “knowing the history of Canada” sounds like a compelling purpose, it is impossible to know the history of Canada; additionally, one needs to ask “which history of Canada”? The “transmission” model of learning, “which assumes knowledge goes directly from one source (whether a teacher or textbook) to another (the student)” does not help students understand history (Levstik & Barton, 2008, p. 19). To learn, students need to seek answers to meaningful problems (Nosich, 2012; McTigh & Wiggins, 2013; Barton, 2006). Inquiry provides an approach that allows teachers and students to focus on relevant questions that direct learning. It is the beginning point of investigation in a disciplinary sense. Levstik and Barton (2008) define inquiry as “the process of asking meaningful questions finding information, drawing conclusions, and reflecting on solutions” (p. 19). It is the nature of historical inquiry to seek answers to perceived problems. Barton and Levstik (2004), relying on the work of Dewey, hold that reflective inquiry is a process that begins:

with a problem—a felt difficulty or “some perplexity, confusion or doubt.” This is followed by an attempt to define the problem clearly and to suggest possible



solutions, hypothesis, or theory to resolve it—or better still, according to Dewey, a variety of alternative solutions. (p. 187)

What differs in this inquiry model from the scientific method is that a historical thinking approach poses questions that are rooted in the temporal orientation of the historian (student) and are designed to make sense of one's relationship to the past (Rüsen, 2004; 2012). Further, the inquiry process seeks evidence that is valued in a disciplinary context (Levstik & Barton, 2008). Historians (students) must find and evaluate evidence in order to construct an understanding of the historical issue that their inquiry has raised (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Bain, 2005). Whereas scientific inquiry is based upon the ability to reproduce an experiment, the past cannot be reproduced (though it can be reinterpreted). Wineburg (2007) asserts that disciplinary history is a form of inquiry that is suspicious, secular, public, verifiable, tangible, qualified, falsifiable, requires evidence, and is open to scrutiny (p. 7).

Inquiry is more than a process of asking initial questions. Inquiry is also a spirit that informs the process of constructing historical claims. Inquiry raises a central issue, assesses the issue and clarifies the issue (Bailin & Battersby, 2010). The reflective act of clarification is present throughout the inquiry process. As evidence is encountered, new problems and considerations can arise. This level of engagement allows for students to revisit their initial questions and deepen their initial impressions. Finally, inquiry allows students to scrutinize their goals or conclusions (Papastephanou & Angeli, 2007). Embracing the spirit of inquiry allows for students to hold constructed historical narratives with a degree of fallibilism. New evidence or considerations can shift established perspectives (Bailin & Battersby, 2010).

### Thinking Processes

Critical thinking bases reasoning in standards and criteria (Paul & Elder, 2007). Therefore, the conclusions a thinker reaches should be based in those standards. The thinking process should be based on a reasoning structure that examines an issue from many different angles. The “elements of reasoning” provide some important considerations to inform thinking, these are: point of view, purpose, question at issue, assumptions, implications and consequences, information, concepts, and conclusions/interpretations (Nosich, 2012). At the heart of the thinking process is an understanding that conclusions are deduced from the analysis of information (Rudd, 2007) which has been subject to disciplinary criteria (Paul & Elder, 2007).

In historical thinking the standards, the criteria and concepts are rooted in the procedural considerations of the discipline. Although substantive knowledge is important, the construction of that content into meaningful narratives is what historical thinking endeavours to produce. The construction of narrative is informed by the disciplinary concepts, or problems that historians (students) encounter. These concepts have been popularized in the publication of *The Big Six: Historical Thinking Concepts* (Seixas & Morton, 2013). This resource notes the key disciplinary considerations that guide historians: historical significance, evidence, continuity and change, cause and

consequence, historical perspectives, and the ethical dimension. The use of procedural concepts allows students to base their historical claims in evidence. Students need to find evidence, critically appraise it, determine its significance, corroborate it, and use evidence to qualify judgments (Wineburg, 1999; 2007; Lévesque, 2011, Seixas, 2006; 2009; Seixas & Morton, 2013; Radinsky, Goldman & Pellegrino, 2015). Through the use of a disciplinary framework, students engage in a process of turning the residues of the past into historical narratives that will shape the construction of their historical understanding (Lévesque, 2011).

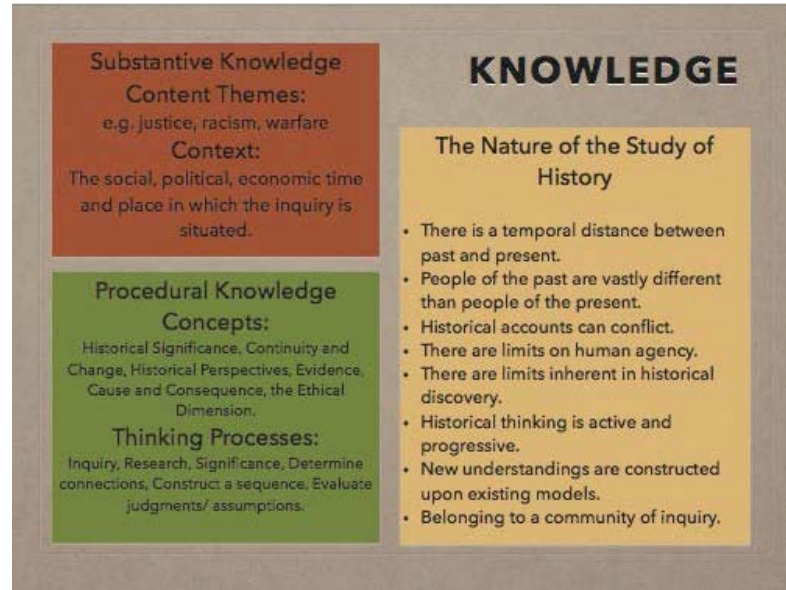
### **Construction of a Historical Narrative**

History is the disciplined approach to constructing the past (Obenchain, Orr & Davis, 2011). Therefore, the construction of historical narratives is the goal of historical thinking (Lévesques, 2008; 2011). A constructed narrative is one that is informed by a disciplinary criterion that ensures that standards are applied to conclusions (Nosich, 2012). When students engage in historical thinking, their experience with historical content is reflected in the form and purpose of their narrative interpretation (Eliasson, Alven, Yngvens & Rosenlund, 2015). The structure of a narrative ultimately reflects the student's engagement with the rational, moral, and temporal presuppositions that they hold (Rüsen, 2004). The narrative itself becomes an expression of a student's historical judgment while simultaneously shaping their historical consciousness. Although it is clear that students are reluctant to shift their historical consciousness (Létourneau & Moisan, 2004; Lévesque, Létourneau & Gani, 2012), it is important to note that the construction of historical narratives draw students into an encounter with the people from the past (Wineburg, 1999; Barton & Levstik, 2004). Through the interaction with primary sources, which reflect human experiences, students are encouraged to develop an empathy for the past and a shared sense of humanity. Narrative construction, therefore, can facilitate a sense of human interaction and connection that is more personal than nationalistic narratives.

Understanding that narratives are constructed will help students appreciate that the relationship between past and present is articulated with a purpose. Some narratives support certain structures in the present. An important principle in critical thinking is that conclusions, whether narratives or arguments, should be reasonable and tentatively held (Papastephanou & Angeli, 2007). History education should facilitate the critique of existing narratives. Students should question the assumptions they hold and the judgments that they are actively making (Seixas, 2000; Segall, 2006). As it is important to critique how evidence has been understood, corroborated, and constructed into narratives; just as it is important to consider voices that are misrepresented or forgotten (Thompson, 2004). As students engage with constructing and critiquing narratives of the past, they are put into a place where the multiple perspectives of the past collide with the present. This tension can result in a deeper understanding of how the present is constructed. Barton (2006) argues that history education must contribute to an educated citizenry that understands the structures of democratic society as well as a deep appreciation for humanity. Engaging with the past in a way that is critical and constructivist allows for engaged debate that is pluralistic, deliberative and participatory

(Barton & Levstik, 2004). As students construct and critique historical narratives, their voices are contributing to how a contemporary society perceives the past.

### Knowledge: What do Students Need to Know for Historical Thinking?



Historical thinking involves an understanding that students develop as they engage with the creation of historical narratives through a procedural method. As a starting point, they should be aware of the distinction between procedural knowledge and substantive knowledge. Substantive knowledge is ‘what history is about’ (Lévesque, 2011). It is both the prerequisite and the product of historical thinking (Körber & Meyer-Hamme, 2015). These are the key themes and contexts that are essential to engage in the historical thinking process. Substantive knowledge, on one hand, can give students a place to start in the inquiry process. For example, students may be interested in young activists during the Troubles in Northern Ireland. By choosing a theme, inquiry is directed into a certain area of interest. Understanding the role of theme and context helps direct inquiry. Substantive knowledge is also the content, narratives, family stories and oral histories that people have and cherish (Lévesque, 2011, Seixas, 2016a, Rüsen, 2004; Létourneau & Moisan, 2004). Finally, substantive knowledge is the product of a procedural process. It is the development of a historical narrative that is constructed (Lévesque, 2016b).

Procedural knowledge represents the thinking processes and the concepts that guide disciplinary thinking. Ultimately, the procedural methodology is embraced because there is a belief that investigating the past is important for society (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Rüsen, 2004; Lévesque, 2009). Procedural concepts highlight the tensions inherent in the discipline and establish the necessary criteria to engage in historical thinking (Seixas & Morton, 2013). For example, the nature of evidence presents historians (students) with a number of issues that need to be encountered. When students are presented with a letter from a soldier in WWI, they cannot just accept that letter as



definitive piece of evidence—it must be interrogated. Student must question a primary source for meaning, significance, relevance, and contextualization. A trace from the past can only become evidence if it is understood within its historical context. A procedural thinking processes requires students to uncovered and scrutinized the past rather than accept ‘delivered’ narrative (Lévesque, 2009). Additionally, a procedural process recognizes that historical thinking and historical conclusions change over time (Rüsen, 2012). This approach to history education consistently questions and constructs narratives of the past from the vantage point of the present. Therefore, past ‘heroes’ should be visited with new lenses.

Substantive and procedural knowledge are essential understandings that need to be built into a historical thinking pedagogy. Substantive understandings provide a basis for historical thinking, while the procedural knowledge can create or modify existing perspectives. In the discipline of history it is important to recognize that the past is very different from the present (Rüsen, 2012). Yet, the construction of the past (as a narrative) is a reflection of the present and future (Rüsen, 2004). If students are going to contribute to contemporary issues in society, it is important for them to have the ability to engage in discussions about the nature and composition of historical narratives that validate contemporary understandings.

### Skills: What do Students Need to do to Think Historically?

SKILLS				
Problematize	Analyze	Synthesize	Evaluate	Construct
Questioning the narrative/ sources.	Gather relevant information.	Interrogate multiple perspective.	Evaluate authorial intent.	Interpret evidence to propose narrative.
Identify key issue(s).	Assessing perspectives.	Explore implications.	Evaluate inferential connections within accounts.	Create a sequence of events.
Clarifying relevant concepts.	Identify gaps in information.	Reconcile context.	Evaluate divergent accounts.	Evaluate process and conclusions according to standards.
Pose an inquiry.	Identify type of source.	Corroborate sources.	Evaluate presentism.	Metacognition/ Reflection.
	Assume a historical perspective.	Assess solutions.		

Through a historical thinking process there are a number of skills that are identified and developed. This construct reflects five key skill areas that are essential, though the order of these skills is in no way linear. For examples, one cannot problematize a primary source without evaluating the validity of that source to the issue at hand. Skill development is complex and involves many diverse considerations. Even though the categories in the construct are not firm divisions, each area will be highlighted individually.

The first skill highlighted is a student's ability to problematize an issue. Being able to articulate a problem or a question is an initial step into inquiry. For thinking to occur, one must think about something. Identifying key issues and relevant concepts is an important step in being able to narrow a theme into an issue for investigation (Nosich, 2012). As one develops a sense of the key issues and questions it is important to be able to pose an inquiry that will direct the nature of the narrative (Barton, 2006; Wineburg, 2007). As primary and secondary sources are located, that speak to the inquiry, then students will need to question the sources/ narratives and problematize those accounts (Seixas, 2006; Wineburg, 2007). For historical thinking to be deep and broad, sources and perspective should be treated with a healthy measure of skepticism that requires corroboration.

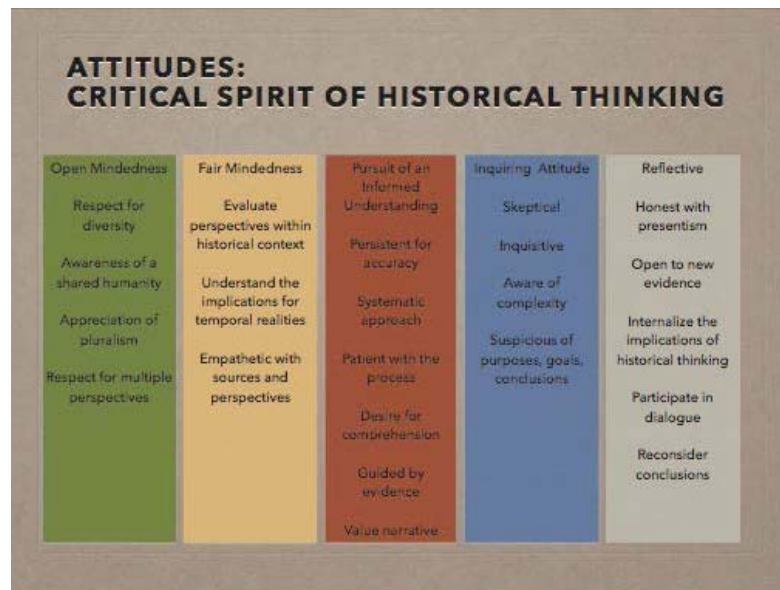
The second skill is the process of analysis. Being guided by an inquiry process, students are directed to identify relevant sources that are necessary to explore the historical issue (Barton, 2006). When reading sources, students should read critically, seeking to understand the context of the source and how it fits with other sources (Seixas & Morton, 2013). Historical sources need to be approached within the context of time. Further, sources should be seen as one perspective among many different varied perspectives (Seixas & Morton, 2013). It is not uncommon for competing sources to be present around a historical question or issue. Being able to understand why a perspective is present in the historical record is worthwhile consideration. It is equally important to consider voices or perspectives that are not present (Létourneau & Moisan, 2004).

The third skill the synthesis of perspectives and competing accounts. If at all possible, raising discord in primary source perspectives allow students to struggle with diverse perspectives. This creates a dilemma that begs to be resolved. Interrogating and seeking to corroborating multiple perspectives is an important step to identify commonalities and conflicts in the historical record (Van Sledright, 2015; Seixas, 2006; Wineburg, 2007). When possible, students should be encouraged to reconcile conflicts. This means that students will begin to generate solutions about which voices are more reliable, speak to the issue, or are corroborated.

The fourth skill is evaluating the perspectives and data that has been collected. One central aspect is to seek the authorial intent that is present in the documents (Seixas, 2006; Peck & Seixas, 2008). If possible, students may find primary source documents that are divergent and challenge the initial accounts. Finding a historical debate allows students to see how disagreement might misrepresent the facts (Wineburg, 2007). Within the historical accounts, students should seek to evaluate any inferential connections that are present. Are positions being established by what is inferred rather than what is explicitly presented? This evaluation process is challenging because students often will hold the past to standards of the present. Though this reflects a student's historical consciousness, it is important to note that developing the historical context around primary sources is an essential aspect of historical thinking. Within the evaluation process, students should be aware of the dangers of presentism (Wineburg, 2007; Seixas & Morton, 2013).

The fifth and final skill is the construction of the narrative. Through the development of historical inquiry, the identification and evaluation of sources, and the contextualization of perspectives, students will begin to structure their own reasoned judgment in the form of a narrative. The narrative will sequence events into a recognizable structure that seeks to impart order and meaning. History is frequently represented as a story to connect people, and in this medium students can connect with the concept of human agency and change over time. The narrative should seek to address the evidence and perspectives fairly (Barton, 2006; Létourneau & Moisan, 2004; Lévesque, 2006), while relying on criteria and standards to support conclusions (Nosich, 2012). As noted earlier, students should hold their conclusions reflectively and tentatively, as additional information or considerations may challenge or change their narratives dramatically.

### Attitudes: What do Students Need to Bring to Historical Thinking?



Attitudes are essential to historical thinking, especially if the outcome of a humanist connection to society is the intended goal. Each of these attitudes can be developed in the context of working with primary sources that represent human perspectives. As students are encountering perspectives from the past with open and fair-minded attitudes, they should be better positioned to encounter perspectives that are not their own with a similar perspective.

The first attitude is open-mindedness. In encountering the past, it is apparent that perspectives of the past will be different than those of the present. Although different economic, social and ethnic realities existed in the past, history is the study of people in the past, therefore students should recognize a shared humanity (Barton, 2006; Seixas, 2006). An open-minded attitude facilitates an engagement with the foreign as well as the familiar. Through an understanding of a commonality, students should see differences in a charitable light. An essential aspect in historical thinking is a healthy respect for diversity (Barton, 2006). Though it is challenging to understand racist or patriarchal

perspectives, it is important to realize that people in the past may have held those perspectives openly and honestly. It is important to not only investigate what beliefs informed actions, but also why those beliefs were held. The challenging aspect of historical inquiry is that consensus is often elusive, yet consensus might not be desirable. As students engage with diversity through their experience with the voices of the past, it is likely that they will recognize pluralism in the present (Barton, 2006; Seixas, 2006). Open-mindedness is a key value of a democratic citizen.

The second attitude is fair-mindedness. When students approach perspectives of the past it is important that they seek to understand the historical context of the source prior to making judgments. This is an aspect of historical thinking that Wineburg (1999; 2001) argued is an unnatural act. Rösen (2012) notes that temporal realities have implications. The distance between the present and the past is significant. The narratives students construct are an attempt to make sense of the implications of the past on the present. Finally, students should seek to empathize with sources and perspectives (Barton, 2006; Seixas, 2006; Lévesques, 2009). This does not mean that one assumes a perspective from the past uncritically, rather it is about constructing perspectives that are charitably based on the context and available evidence. The need for fair-mindedness can be seen within the contemporary debate about John A. Macdonald. Rising concerns over the role Macdonald played in starving Indigenous people on the prairies and the institution of residential schools are challenging the previous commemorations of his character and achievements. Plamondon (2018) encourages contemporaries to consider the context of racism that Macdonald lived in. He makes the case that the assimilation policies of the Canadian government were more civil than the extermination policies that existed south of the border, therefore the actions of the first Prime Minister show an attitude of restraint. Although there are a number of considerations in the debate, Plamondon's point is worth considering, Macdonald needs to be evaluated morally according to the dictates of his time. To be fair-minded is to take into consideration the historical context.

The third attitude is the pursuit of an informed understanding. As inquiry provides the basis for historical thinking, adopting a systematic approach to addressing inquiry becomes important (Lévesque, 2009). In addition, students should realize that the process is not linear. In discovering historical perspectives and contexts there will be conflicting and dissenting perspectives. These are to be expected and students should be patient with the process. In pursuing an informed understanding, students should seek accuracy (Barton, 2006; Lévesque, 2011) and have a desire for comprehension (Wineburg, 2007) that is rooted in the narratives they are engaging with (Eliasson et al., 2015). Ultimately, students should be guided by the evidence in developing their own historical claims that support their constructed narratives (Seixas & Morton, 2013).

The fourth attitude is an inquiring attitude. Whereas open-mindedness and fair-mindedness encourage students to read and think broadly, an inquiring attitude seeks to uncover understandings and insights that may not be apparent. Students should seek inferences, assumptions and implications of the sources they encounter (Nosich, 2012). This attitude can be demonstrated through an inquisitive skepticism that interrogates

sources openly and honestly (Wineburg, 1999, Létourneau & Moisan, 2004). An inquiring attitude is aware of complexity (Wineburg, 2007) and suspicious of purposes, goals, and conclusions that are reflected in evidence. Through an inquiring attitude, students should be encouraged to ask why a piece of evidence was preserved, and why are there few traces of other perspectives. Inquiry opens up creative considerations and the construction of different conclusions.

Finally, the attitude of reflection is important. Students need to come to historical thinking with an understanding that they are also bound in time (Rüsen, 2004), as a result the past is perceived through a distorted lens. In response to this problem, students must consistently check their conclusions be honest with their own presentist inclinations (Wineburg, 1999; Seixas & Morton, 2013). Further, given the historical consciousness that they bring to historical thinking, that is based on a collective consciousness, students should be encouraged to encounter new evidence and multiple perspectives (Lévesque, 2009). A historical thinking must recognize that certain narratives have been preferred over others for social and political reasons, consequently the past is constructed to support the present. A reflective student will perceive that historical thinking has implications on society. Therefore, the care and consideration students take in constructing narratives of the past has a direct effect on the decisions they make in the present. Finally, reflective students actively participate in the complicated dialogue of historical reasoning (Eliasson et al., 2015) and potentially reconsider their conclusions (Lévesque, 2008). Historical thinking is a reflective practice. When done correctly, engagement with historical thinking complicates simplistic narratives by revealing multiple perspectives seeking the common good. The attitude of reflective listening and engagement allows for students to participate in a deliberative context that actively embraces pluralism. These are the attitudes that shape good citizens.