HASHTAG HISTORY:

HISTORICAL THINKING & SOCIAL MEDIA IN AN

UNDERGRADUATE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Hashtag History:

Historical Thinking & Social Media in an Undergraduate Classroom

Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation

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Sociocultural influences such as family, nation, and personal identity impact undergraduates students' approaches to history in the classroom. In the digital age, social media is an equally powerful force shaping students' perceptions and understandings of history. Social media frames students' reactions to historical content, guides what they pay attention to, and provides a vocabulary for expressing connections between past and present. The habits fostered online impact students' practice of historical thinking, but thus far historical thinking research has not fully addressed the role of social media in undergraduate students' articulations of history.

In an effort to fill this gap, I investigate a dataset of 11,454 tweets and 74 blog posts publicly produced by the 150 undergraduate students enrolled in my Spring 2017 World Civilizations course offered by the University at Buffalo, Singapore Institute of Management (UB-SIM) program. I use students' tweets and blog posts to explore the role of three social media trends on two historical thinking skills. Affective response, the attention economy, and visual media cultures common on the web conditioned students' practice of historical empathy

and historical significance. I view these social media habits as both beneficial and detrimental to students' historical thinking. Like all technologies, social media offers affordances and constraints. When educators and historians focus on only one aspect of social media's influence, we fail to fully recognize the complex webs of understanding our students bring to their study of history.

In "Hashtag History," I employ digital methods and tools as well as traditional close-reading methods to make sense of students' approaches to history. I collected all data for the project using web scraping and then cleaned, compiled, and analyzed the data using R packages, mainly tidyverse and tidy text. Data analysis methods included sentiment analysis and word frequency studies as well as coding and close reading. The full version of this project is presented as a digital dissertation available at dissertation.heatherlbennett.com.

Introduction

"As students from different majors, how can we apply/relate what we'll be learning in this class to our individual majors?" (World History Student, Singapore, 2019)

I teach a required, undergraduate world history course as an instructor for the University at Buffalo, Singapore Institute of Management (UB-SIM) program in Singapore. My students are from Singapore and other Southeast Asian nations, none of them are history majors, and most have not taken history since they were fourteen years old. They would like to know why this mandated history class is worth their time. Why is a subject focused on the past relevant to the present? Why is a world history course worth money and time if it does not directly build skills that will contribute to a successful career? Their queries aren't meant to be combative. They really would like to understand whether history is valuable to their lives.

I usually answer: **Studying history is worthwhile because historical thinking prepares us to live well and interact with one another in a diverse but divided world.** Encountering unfamiliar past people and places with care and understanding (historical empathy) cultivates the skills necessary for dealing with difference, controversy, and hate in the present. Students themselves value empathy skills and express a desire to facilitate safer and more considerate interactions online.[1] Learning to determine what is significant about the past

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[1] See Affect & Historical Empathy: Conclusion for discussion of students' desire to see the growth of empathy online on dissertation.heatherlbennett.com.

(historical significance) develops students' ability to discern what is important in our age of information abundance. The digital age requires not memorization skills, but the ability to know where to find information and quickly discern the quality of information, as George Siemens, Michael Wesch, and Mike Caulfield have eloquently argued.[2] Taken together, the skills engendered by historical thinking grant undergraduate students greater power and agency in their online lives.

For historians and educators to help students grow these skills, we must understand the complex personal webs of understanding students bring to their study of history. Earlier scholars of historical thinking mapped the roles of sociocultural influences on students' approaches to history. Family, nation, and identity all shape students' perceptions and articulations of history. In "Hashtag History," I argue that social media constitutes an equally important part of students' webs of understanding.

Social media habits frame students' reactions to historical content, guide what they pay attention to, and provide a visual and textual vocabulary for expressing connections between past and present. The habits fostered online impact students' practice of historical empathy and historical significance. In the content chapters that follow, I view social media habits as both beneficial and detrimental to students' approaches to history.

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[2] George Siemens, "Connectivism: A Learning Theory for the Digital Age," elearnspace: everything elearning, Dec 12, 2004, http://www.elearnspace.org/Articles/connectivism.htm; Michael Wesch, "For Knowledgable to Knowledge-able" in Daniel J. Cohen and Tom Scheinfeldt, eds., *Hacking the Academy: New Approaches to Scholarship and Teaching from Digital Humanities* (University of Michigan Press, 2013), https://doi.org/10.3998/dh.12172434.0001.001; Mike Caulfield, *Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers*, Simple Book Production, accessed February 11, 2019, https://webliteracy.pressbooks.com/.

When educators and historians focus on only one aspect of social media's influence, we miss the opportunity to fully recognize what our students bring to their study of history.

The **Literature Review** provides an extended introduction to the project by summarizing existing scholarship in the field of historical thinking. Although this project draws on research related to social media research, digital media and learning, and visual cultures, historical thinking is the foundation of this dissertation. The Literature Review offers an overview of definitions of historical thinking, sociocultural influences on students' approaches to history, historical thinking in Singapore, and the impact of the digital age.

Chapter 1: Methodology details the motivations for presenting "Hashtag History" as a digital dissertation, the methods used to collect, compile, and analyze data, and the contexts that shaped the creation of the core dataset for this dissertation. While digital methods such as text-mining are commonly used to conduct social media research, the historical discipline remains wary of digital work.[3] Digital work is more novel still in the study of history education. "Hashtag History" therefore contributes to the fields of history and history education by modeling the use of hybrid methods and frameworks to better understand undergraduate students' practices and perceptions in a history course. The remaining chapters of the dissertation draw conclusions from the compiled dataset, comprised of 11,454 tweets and 74 blog posts (plus attending

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[3] Sharon Leon, "Getting Tenure in Digital and Public History, as a Non-Man," [Bracket]: Images, Teaching, Technology… (blog), Apr 11, 2019, https://web.archive.org/web/20190415044420/http://www.6floors.org/bracket/2019/04/11/getting-tenure-in-digital-and-public-history-as-a-non-man/.

comments) created by the 150 students enrolled in the world history course I instructed in Spring 2017.[4]

Chapter 2: The Attention Economy & Historical Significance
considers the role of the attention economy in students' perceptions of historical significance. A history class is not a space uniquely prone to distraction from technology, but rather part and parcel of the attention economy fostered by social media. Students' perceptions of what is historically important often depend more on what captures their attention than any intentionally formed conception of significance in history. To make sense of this trend, I engage viral media research from Buzzfeed and YouTube. I use close reading and coding to identify the presence of attention patterns proposed by these media giants in students' tweets.

Despite the influence of the attention economy in the classroom, instructors do not need to compete with technology for students' attention. Instead, knowing what topics, methods, and media capture their attention is useful for leading students toward more nuanced definitions of historical significance. These more nuanced definitions of historical significance can contribute to the growth of students' abilities to make meaning out of their college education as well as the abundant information that saturates their lives. Drawing on the work of Cathy Davidson and Michael Wesch, I argue that viewing the classroom as an attention economy invites educators and historians to examine

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[4] For more on the collection and analysis of this data, see Data Collection and Data Analysis in the Methodology section on dissertation.heatherlbennett.com.

whether and how we make explicit the connections between students' college courses and their day-to-day lives.

Chapter 3: Affect & Historical Empathy examines the impact of social media's privileging of affective response on students' practice of historical empathy. As Keith Barton and Linda Levstik argue, students, like historians, bring immense care (a key aspect of historical empathy) to their study of past peoples. This care manifests as affective response, defined by Alexander Cho as "a force or intensity that exists somewhere in between an embodied, sensorial experience and the name of an emotion."

I use sentiment analysis to identify affect in students' tweets and track the impact of intense emotion on students' understanding of and care for past peoples. While affective response can pose a barrier to students' understanding of past beliefs and actions, affect also drives curiosity and deeper consideration of context. The combination of curiosity and care is productive for historical empathy and can be leveraged to help students make the jump from historical empathy to practicing empathy in their daily lives on- and off-line.

Chapter 4: GIFs from a History Class reflects on visual media, especially GIFs, as both a potent pedagogical tool and a significant challenge to students' development of historical empathy and historical significance. GIFs cultivate a sense of pleasure and give students room to play in a subject they frequently find boring. As T. Mills Kelly and Kevin Kee have shown, playful historical thinking can be creative, engaging, and immensely productive.

However, the decontextualized nature of GIFs (highlighted by GIF researchers, including Miltner and Highfield and Jiang, et al.) compromises students' practice of historical significance and historical empathy. GIFs encourage context collapse and sometimes perpetuate historical injustices, particularly racism and ableism. In order to tap into the full potential of GIFs in the history classroom, instructors must exercise awareness and intentionality. This chapter uses close reading, coding, and sentiment analysis to illuminate the affordances and constraints of GIFs in a history course in order to increase educators' awareness of visual media's impact on the history classroom.

Literature Review

Introduction

"Hashtag History" continues conversations from the thematic fields of historical thinking and digital media and learning. Like scholars of historical thinking, I am interested in what it means to "do history." What principles and processes drive the work of historians? How can we help students develop similar practices for making sense of the past? Alongside digital media and learning researchers, I am also concerned with specific impacts of the digital age on students' learning. How are technology and the habits encouraged by technology reshaping teaching and learning practices? Together, the two fields form the foundation for investigating the key question of this project: How do social media habits influence students' approaches to history?

The sections that follow provide an overview and definitions of historical thinking and consider the influence of sociocultural factors on students' approaches to history. Previous scholarship in the field of historical thinking posits that students' historical perspectives are shaped by family values, national narratives, popular media, and identity factors. Students bring these influences, as well as their academic experiences, to history classrooms at all levels of their education. In Singapore specifically, the influence of politics and centralized education are especially influential on students' perceptions of history.

The final segment of the Literature Review takes up the digital age as a powerful sociocultural influence, especially for undergraduate students like the participants in this study.[5] Ubiquitous mobile phones, perpetual access to abundant information, and networked relationships present new challenges and possibilities that scholars from myriad fields are still grappling with.

Most of the studies included in the Literature Review took place in primary and secondary school settings in English-dominant countries. Only a handful of studies address historical thinking in higher education or in Singapore. "Hashtag History" adds to these small bodies of research but does so in dialogue with the existing research focused on younger students in other national contexts.

Defining Historical Thinking

Historical thinking is an epistemology, a way of knowing and making sense of the world. Virtually every writer concerned with historical thinking, from

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[5] See Methodology: Participants for full information.

1946 to 2019, agrees this epistemology requires more than the acquisition of specific facts. Historical thinking instead is the set of practices and principles writers of history use to craft accurate, engaging, relevant accounts of the past. Scholars in this field typically define the practices associated with historical thinking by observing how professional historians approach their discipline. However, the field is equally interested in students' starting points during their initial forays into historical thinking.[6]

What is Historical Thinking?

The exact characteristics of historical thinking differ from writer to writer, but a few core ideas are common across the literature:

1. History is made, not found.
2. Historical interpretation is based on careful examination of evidence.
3. Historical thinking requires accounting for change over time, continuity, causality, contingency, and complexity.
4. The past is both foreign and familiar.
5. Historical thinking is unnatural, but learnable.

When historians like R.G. Collingwood, E.H. Carr, and G.R. Elton examined their own practices in the 1940s and 1960s, they observed that historians did not simply write a chronicle of facts but rather shaped and molded facts into a cohesive, meaningful narrative. History, they argued, is made, not found. Collingwood believed this practice required the use of intuition and

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[6] Louis O. Mink, "The Autonomy of Historical Understanding," History and Theory 5, no. 1 (1966): 24–47, https://doi.org/10.2307/2504434. Mink was among the first encourage historians to examine their own practices in order to determine the boundaries of the discipline: "Astute analysis can reveal to historians that their habits of work and processes of inference are more complex than they realize" (29-30).

imagination while Carr noted that historians' perspectives were always involved in the telling.[7] "The facts of history," he wrote, "cannot be purely objective, since they become facts of history only in virtue of the significance attached to them by the historian."[8]

More recent writers likewise emphasize interpretation as an essential characteristic of historical study and writing.[9] Linda Levstik and Keith Barton argue that narrative is precisely what distinguishes history from a chronicle of the past.[10] A chronicle is merely a list of things that happened or people that existed. Doing history requires deciding which events, people, or ideas are worth including or excluding, explaining how these phenomena relate to one another, and articulating the impact, significance, or present relevance of aspects of the past.[11] The narrative crafted from a writer's decisions, explanations, and arguments is inherently selective and subjective. Bruce VanSledright writes:

> "Thinkers—novice, expert, or somewhere in between—are never able to stand entirely outside their cultural assumptions in order to get a God's-eye view of the past, to distinguish the ultimately important from the banal. Cultural assumptions saturate the interpretations of the historical thinker."[12]

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[7] R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, Kindle (London: Clarendon Press, Endeavour Press Ltd, 1946), loc. 4587-4589.

[8] Edward Hallet Carr, *What Is History?*, 1 edition (Princeton, N.J.: Vintage, 1967), 120.

[9] Daisy A. Martin, "Teaching for Historical Thinking: Teacher Conceptions, Practices, and Constraints" (Ph.D., Stanford University, 2005), https://search.proquest.com/docview/305442266/abstract/5465CA84E1F3449FPQ/1, 15.

[10] Linda S. Levstik and Keith C. Barton, *Doing History: Investigating with Children in Elementary and Middle School*, 4. ed (London: Routledge, 2011), 5.

[11] Levstik & Barton, *Doing History*, 6.

[12] Bruce VanSledright, "On the Importance of Historical Positionality to Thinking about and Teaching History," *International Journal of Social Education* 12, no. 2 (October 15, 1997): 1–18.

The subjective nature of historical narrative does not mean interpretation is purely imaginative, however. Instead, historical interpretation is based on careful attention to evidence.[13] Historians and students of history work with the "raw materials of history" (primary source documents and artifacts) to construct historical narratives.[14] Mature writers of history do not read the evidence just for the sake of comprehending it. In his foundational work *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*, Sam Wineburg found that practiced historians interrogated historical texts by sourcing, contextualizing, and corroborating the evidence available to them.[15]

To source, the historians he interviewed attended to who wrote the document, when it was written, and the purpose of the text. Contextualization occurred as historians queried the meanings of unfamiliar words and the motivations driving a document. They asked, "What is happening around this document to make it what it is?" Corroboration involved cross-referencing. How did one piece of evidence compare to another? Historians use the similarities and differences between evidence to determine an accurate picture of the past as well as the motivations that drive people to give accounts in specific ways.

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[13] Evidence is a core standard for Bruce VanSledright, "On the Importance of Historical Positionality to Thinking about and Teaching History," *International Journal of Social Education* 12, no. 2 (October 15, 1997): 1–18; Stéphane Lévesque, *Thinking Historically: Educating Students for the Twenty-First Century*, Reprinted in paperback (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2009); Lendol Calder and Tracy Steffes, "Measuring College Learning in History," in *Improving Quality in American Higher Education: Learning Outcomes and Assessments for the 21st Century*, ed. Richard Arum, Josipa Roksa, and Amanda Cook (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 37–86; Peter Seixas and Tom Morton, *The Big Six: Historical Thinking Concepts* (Nelson Education, 2013).

[14] Thomas C. Holt and Dennie Wolf, *Thinking Historically: Narrative, Imagination, and Understanding*, The Thinking Series (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1990), 12.

[15] This is in fact Martin's very helpful summary of Wineburg. See Martin, "Teaching for Historical Thinking," 5.

Interrogating the evidence can produce a wide variety of interpretations, but historians are usually attentive to five key themes in the past. The third core piece of historical thinking is the ability to take account of change over time, continuity, causality, contingency, and complexity.[16] Change over time and continuity refer to attention to what is different and what stays the same in a place or over a period of time. Historians and students look for causality to explain why events occurred or what motivated a person's actions or the development of an idea. Contingency refers to the notion that nothing in the past was fated. If things had happened differently, we'd be studying a different past. Finally, complexity runs through the other four themes. Change, continuity, causality, and contingency rarely have singular explanations. Instead, history is the study of the multitude of influences and factors that lead to events, shape a person's life and motivations, or shape an idea.

The complexity of the past can lead students especially to experience the past as "a foreign country."[17] Yet for history to be relevant to the present, and enjoyable to study for students, the past must be understood as both foreign and familiar. Scholars concerned with this fourth core principle of historical thinking

[16] The "Five C's" listed here come from Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke, "What Does It Mean to Think Historically?," Perspectives 45, no. 1 (January 2007), http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2007/what-does-it-mean-to-think-historically. Other works that reiterate some or all of these themes include Peter Stearns, "Thinking Historically in the Classroom: Peter Stearns," *Perspectives* 33, no. 7 (October 1995), http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/october-1995/thinking-historically-in-the-classroom-peter-stearns; Donald A. Yerxa and Historical Society (Boston, Mass.), eds., *Recent Themes in Historical Thinking: Historians in Conversation*, Historians in Conversation (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008); Stéphane Lévesque, *Thinking Historically: Educating Students for the Twenty-First Century*, Reprinted in paperback (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2009); Peter Seixas and Tom Morton, *The Big Six: Historical Thinking Concepts* (Nelson Education, 2013).
[17] David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge Cambridgeshire ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

assert it is essential to both recognize the strangeness and difference of the past

and find connection or resonance with the past.

Comprehending the strangeness of the past depends on the use of

context and evidence and is an important component of navigating the "ethical

dimension" of historical study.[18] To understand the actions of people in the past,

historians and students of history must take them on their own terms. This

requires recognizing the differences between present and past as well as

honoring the differences by withholding judgment about past actions, at least

initially.[19]

The latter is an especially tricky move for students who may find

themselves either judging past actors based on present values or excusing past

actions with the explanation, "We can't judge them by our own standards."

Ideally, developing a deep understanding of a particular time period or place

gives students the tools necessary to account for why terrible things happened in

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[18] The language of an "ethical dimension" or "ethical component" comes from Seixas and Morton, *The Big Six*, and Peter Seixas, "A Model of Historical Thinking," *Educational Philosophy & Theory* 49, no. 6 (June 2017): 593–605, https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2015.1101363. Levstik and Barton's inclusion of care in the practice of historical empathy is similar. See Keith C. Barton and Linda S. Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good*, Kindle Edition (Mahwah, N.J: Routledge, 2004).

[19] Tyson Retz, "The Structure of Historical Inquiry," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 49, no. 6 (May 12, 2017): 606–17, https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2015.1101365, 612. Retz includes discernment of historical distance as a key component of historical thinking. He argues that it is crucial to recognize differences between past and present because "the ways of thinking that serve us well for understanding the present world around us fare much worse for understanding ways of thinking in the past." Sam Wineburg agrees, arguing that "judging past actors by present standards wrests them from their own context and subjects them to ways of thinking that we, not they, have developed." Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past*, Kindle Edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), loc.1322.

the past, the legacy of those events today, and what is owed to people who have suffered injustices, however distant.[20]

For John Tosh, recognizing the foreignness of the past is a prerequisite to connecting the past and present: "Historical awareness means respecting the autonomy of the past, and attempting to reconstruct it in all its strangeness before applying its insights to the present."[21] Jumping too quickly to contemporary relevance can lead to presentism, an ahistorical view of the past. However, Wineburg points out[22] that it is equally unhelpful to simply take the past "on its own terms" (as Elton originally advocated).[23] We study history in part to understand the present and so it is insufficient to focus on the past's foreignness alone.

The final key principle of historical thinking is that historical thinking is unnatural, but learnable. The skills and habits of mind detailed above are not innate talents of historians nor do they come easily to students. Instead, historical thinking skills are acquired through long training and practice. Much of the literature therefore focuses on the effectiveness of specific pedagogies and activities in increasing students' capacity for historical thinking.

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[20] Keith C. Barton and Linda S. Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good*, Kindle Edition (Mahwah, N.J: Routledge, 2004), 229. The authors emphasize the importance of care for victims over oppressors rather than dispassionate tellings of history: "We care a lot more about the victims of the Trail of Tears than about Andrew Jackson's thought processes."

[21] John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History : Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of History*, 6th ed. (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2015), 11.

[22] Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past*, Kindle Edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), loc. 163.

[23] G. R. Elton, *Practice of History* (London: Fontana/ Collin, 1987), 65.

Researchers advocate the use of primary sources to engage students and build their ability to leverage evidence to support interpretations.[24] They recommend reading multiple primary and secondary sources so students can become more familiar with how to spot arguments and make their own. Discussions help students interrogate the perspectives of people in the past and develop their abilities to recognize, but not immediately judge, differences between past and present. Change, continuity, causality, contingency, and complexity can be taught in myriad ways, from lectures to global online games.[25] Thinking historically is not be an easy mode of thought, but neither is it impossible to learn.

Sociocultural Influences on Historical Thinking

Historical thinking is learnable, but not every student learns the same way. Much of the scholarship of historical thinking is dedicated to the particularities of how students learn historical thinking skills. Students' beginning points are of

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[24] Lendol Calder and Tracy Steffes, "Measuring College Learning in History," in *Improving Quality in American Higher Education: Learning Outcomes and Assessments for the 21st Century*, ed. Richard Arum, Josipa Roksa, and Amanda Cook (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 63; A. Diaz et al., "The History Learning Project: A Department 'Decodes' Its Students," *Journal of American History* 94, no. 4 (March 1, 2008), https://doi.org/10.2307/25095328, 1215; Roy Rosenzweig, *Clio Wired: The Future of the Past in the Digital Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 96; Peter Seixas, "A Model of Historical Thinking," *Educational Philosophy & Theory* 49, no. 6 (June 2017): 593–605, https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2015.1101363; Peter Stearns, "Thinking Historically in the Classroom: Peter Stearns," *Perspectives* 33, no. 7 (October 1995), http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/october-1995/thinking-historically-in-the-classroom-peter-stearns; Bruce VanSledright, "On the Importance of Historical Positionality to Thinking about and Teaching History," *International Journal of Social Education* 12, no. 2 (October 15, 1997): 6; Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past*, Kindle Edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), loc. 1136.

[25] Kevin B. Kee, ed., *Pastplay: Teaching and Learning History with Technology*, Digital Humanities (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014).

special interest to researchers because their initial approaches to history provide a baseline for evaluating the effectiveness of pedagogical strategies. If educators and researchers know what students bring to historical study when they first enter the classroom, it's easier to see how specific interventions succeed or fail to grow students' historical thinking skills.

While some research focuses on students' practices and processes within the history classroom, a rich strand of the literature explores how socioculltural forces impact students' study of history. In his 1994 dissertation, Keith Barton captured the essence of this strand of historical thinking, writing: "Understanding historical thinking means examining the social contexts in which that thinking takes place."[26] Barton and many other researchers detail the public, familial, and national roots of students' approaches to history.

Encountering History Outside the Classroom

Experiences of history outside the classroom impact students' expectations of history education. Roy Rosenzweig and his colleague David Thelen found the American adults they surveyed took immense pleasure in learning family histories, visiting museums, and watching documentaries about history. By contrast, survey participants experienced history in the classroom as

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[26] Keith C. Barton, "Historical Understanding among Elementary Children" (D.Ed., University of Kentucky, 1994), https://search.proquest.com/docview/304128747/abstract/5794124B34F6494BPQ/1, 4.

almost universally boring.[27] Their encounters with history in day-to-day life were enjoyable and purposeful, and they expected history in the classroom to be the same.

Family Stories & Collective Memory

Family stories and collective memory can be especially powerful influences on students' perceptions of the meaning and worth of history in a school setting. Sam Wineburg showed the myriad ways fifteen high school students crafted meaning about the events of the Vietnam War. Presented with archival photos from the war, students rarely reached for information provided by their teachers to explain what was happening in the pictures. Instead, parents' stories, popular films like Forrest Gump, and visits to historical sites such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. proved more influential on students' dominant narrative of unwilling and misunderstood veterans abroad and protests at home.[28] This narrative made it more difficult for students to adapt to more nuanced interpretations of the 1960s and 1970s, but Wineburg et. al. nonetheless concluded that knowing the narratives students bring to the classroom ultimately benefits educators:

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[27] Roy Rosenzweig, *Clio Wired: The Future of the Past in the Digital Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 94.

[28] Students did not always internalize their parents' stories. Wineburg frequently observed disconnects between students' and parents' perceptions of and emotional reactions to archival images from the Vietnam War.

"Once educators become acquainted with the shape and influences on the narratives students bring to class, they are better equipped to engage these stories, to stretch them or call them into question when necessary."[29]

Identity Markers

In addition to family stories and values, students' identity markers exert a powerful pull on their perceptions of specific historical content. Because history is often used to mark out a collective identity, historical narratives create in-groups and out-groups.[30] Students who do not fall within the "we" of a given historical narrative connect with history very differently than those who do. Terrie Epstein notes the impact of racial identities especially.[31] The African-American and European-American high school students who participated in her 1994 study selected vastly different examples when asked to choose significant events and people in American history.

Their choices of historical figures largely aligned with their race; their explanations for significant events differed (equality for African-Americans versus "nation-building" for European-Americans). Students' interpretations of everything from the Bill of Rights to the causes of slavery diverged along racial identities.[32]

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[29] Sam Wineburg et al., "Common Belief and the Cultural Curriculum: An Intergenerational Study of Historical Consciousness," *American Educational Research Journal* 44, no. 1 (March 1, 2007): 40–76, https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831206298677.

[30] Linda Levstik, "Articulating the Silences: Teacher' and Adolescents' Conceptions of Historical Significance" in Peter N. Stearns, Peter C. Seixas, and Sam Wineburg, *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives* (NYU Press, 2000), 287.

[31] Terrie Epstein, "Deconstructing Differences in African-American and European-American Adolescents' Perspectives on U. S. History," *Curriculum Inquiry* 28, no. 4 (1998): 397–423.

[32] When asked to select significant people events in American history, 75% of the people selected by African-American participants in the study were themselves African-Americans while 82% of the figures chosen by European-Americans were European-Americans too. Explanations for significance diverged between the two populations as well. European-Americans typically chose events they perceived as contributing to "nation-building;" African-American students

Racial identity even influenced which sources students perceived as most credible.[33] Access to the same sources and the same teachers did not produce a unified narrative within the student body. Instead, identity markers molded students' historical perspectives.

National Narratives

In both Wineburg and Epstein's work, disparate influences and haphazard communication of stories formed the foundations of collective memory and identities. This is common in the United States where a large population and decentralized education contributes to the formation of a multitude of historical lenses in any given classroom. In other national contexts, the government's needs, values, and fears play a stronger role in shaping students' approaches to history.

In Ghana, Linda Levstik and Laura Groth found Ghanaian high-school students' accounts of history toggled closely with the national curriculum.[34] Regardless of their ethnic identity, students emphasized struggle and sacrifice, the importance of unity, and pride in both their national and ethnic identities. Levstik and Groth praise the inclusivity of the Ghanaian history curriculum, noting that "the emerging 'official' history includes rather than excludes vernacular histories."[35] Still, the inclusivity of the story has not produced diverse historical

chose events related to African-American equality. Epstein, "Deconstructing Differences in African-American and European-American Adolescents' Perspectives on U. S. History," 403-404.
[33] ibid., 407.
[34] Linda S. Levstik and Jeanette Groth, "'Ruled by Our Own People': Ghanaian Adolescents' Conceptions of Citizenship," *Teachers College Record*, 107, no. 4 (April 1, 2005): 574-578.
[35] ibid., 581.

interpretations. Instead, students internalized the singular historical narrative crafted by educators and political officials.

Singapore: Politics, Education & Historical Thinking

Levstik and Groth's study in Ghana is geographically unique. The majority of sociocultural studies took place in English-dominant countries, namely the U.S., Canada, New Zealand, and England.[36] In two studies, Keith Barton tracks differences between national narratives in the United States and Northern Ireland[37] while Stéphane Lévesque compares Francophone and Anglophone students' development of historical thinking skills in Canada.[38] Epstein and Levstik's respective work in New Zealand explores the impact of the nation's remote geographical location and struggle to include indigenous history as key factors in the national curriculums.[39] Richard Harris and Rosemary Reynolds

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[36] Exceptions are few and far between. James V. Wertsch, ""Is it possible to teach beliefs as well as knowledge about history?" in Stearns, Seixas, and Wineburg, *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History* is set in Estonia. Lis Cercadillo's "Significance in History: Students' Ideas in England and Spain," in *Raising Standards in History Education*, ed. Alaric Dickinson, Peter Gordon, and Peter Lee (London; Portland, OR: Woburn Press, 2001), 116–45, was conducted in Spain and England. Historiographer Jörn Rüsen works on historical consciousness in Germany and has co-authored a book on Chinese historical thinking with Chun-chieh Huang. See Chun-chieh Huang and Jörn Rüsen, *Chinese Historical Thinking*, vol. Volume 4, Global East Asia, Volume 4 (V&R unipress, 2015), https://doi.org/10.14220/9783737004978. But neither Rüsen's individual or co-authored works address pedagogy or classroom settings.

[37] Keith C. Barton, "'You'd Be Wanting to Know About the Past': Social Contexts of Children's Historical Understanding" (Paper, 1998), https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED426042.pdf; Keith C. Barton, "'Best Not to Forget Them': Secondary Students' Judgments of Historical Significance in Northern Ireland," Theory and Research in Social Education 33 (January 1, 2005): 9–44, https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2005.10473270.

[38] Stéphane Lévesque, "Teaching Second-Order Concepts in Canadian History: The Importance of 'Historical Significance,'" *Canadian Social Studies* 39, no. 2 (2005), http://www.educ.ualberta.ca/css/Css_39_2/ARLevesque_second-order_concepts.htm.

[39] Levstik, "Articulating the Silences" in Stearns, Seixas, and Wineburg, *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History* (2000); Terrie Epstein, "Sociocultural Approaches to Young People's Historical Understanding," *Social Education* 61, no. 1 (January 1997): 28–31.

explore official curriculums and identity formation among white students and ethnic minority students in southern England.[40]

Despite the prominence of studies from the U.S. and Europe, there is a vibrant body of research examining the influence of national narratives on Singaporean students' historical perspectives. Singaporean researchers Goh and Gopinathan, Han, Hong and Huang, Afandi, Baildon, Ho, Foo, and Yeo analyze the impact of a highly centralized education system subject to political pressures on history education in Singapore.[41] The authors generally agree that historical narratives are a powerful political tool in Singapore. Singapore's single political party, the People's Action Party (PAP), exerts immense influence over the Ministry of Education (MOE), the government branch responsible for creating and

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[40] Richard Harris and Rosemary Reynolds, "The History Curriculum and Its Personal Connection to Students from Minority Ethnic Backgrounds," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 46, no. 4 (July 2014): 464–86, https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2014.881925. The influential work of Peter Lee and Rosalyn Ashby likewise focuses on England.

[41] Suhaimi Afandi and Mark Baildon, "History Education in Singapore," in *Contemporary Public Debates over History Education*, ed. Irene Nakou and Isabel Barca, International Review of History Education (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc., 2010), 223–42; Suhaimi Mohamed Afandi, "Conceptions about the Nature of Accounts in History: An Exploratory Study of Students' Ideas and Teachers' Assumptions about Students' Understandings in Singapore" (Ph.D., University of London Institute of Education, 2012), http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/10020665/; Delia Wen Xian Foo, "Students' Understanding of Historical Significance – a Singapore Case Study" (University of British Columbia, 2014), https://doi.org/10.14288/1.0165901; Chor Boon Goh and Saravanan Gopinathan, "History Education and the Construction of National Identity in Singapore, 1945–2000," in *History Education and National Identity in East Asia*, ed. Edward Vickers and Alisa Jones (Florence, UNITED KINGDOM: Routledge, 2005), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/buffalo/detail.action?docID=1396925; Christine Han, "History Education and 'Asian' Values for an 'Asian' Democracy: The Case of Singapore," *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education* 37, no. 3 (June 2007): 383–98, https://doi.org/10.1080/03057920701330271; Li-Ching Ho, "'Don't Worry, I'm Not Going to Report You': Education for Citizenship in Singapore," *Theory & Research in Social Education* 38, no. 2 (April 2010): 217–47, https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2010.10473423; Lysa Hong and Jianli Huang, *Scripting of A National History: Singapore and Its Pasts* (Hong Kong, HONG KONG: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/buffalo/detail.action?docID=677281; Angeline Jude Enk Sung Yeo, "Students' Judgments of Historical Significance in Singapore Schools: Positionalities and Narratives" (Ph.D., University of Washington, 2015),http://search.proquest.com/docview/1760975263/abstract/DEB3605EE9C5413EPQ/1.

overseeing all primary, secondary, and pre-university curricula. Consequently, the MOE-produced history curriculums toggle with the government's goals of promoting national pride, "Asian" values, and the core ideals of meritocracy and social harmony.

History Education in Singapore: 1965-1995

Goh and Gopinathan divide Singapore's history into three phases: the survival-driven phase (1965-1978), the efficiency-driven phase (1978-1995), and the ability-driven phase (1996-present).[42] In each phase of Singapore's history, they argue, history education served the needs of the government. During the survival-driven phase immediately following Singapore's independence in 1965, the newly elected PAP led by Lee Kuan Yew centralized education and focused on building skills in mathematics and literacy among school-age residents. History was included at the primary school level but did not address national history. Government leaders feared that studying migrations to Singapore or the recent occupation by the Japanese could trigger racial tensions.[43]

The efficiency-driven stage took place in a more secure economic and political environment. History education more clearly became a vehicle for communicating nationalism and national values.[44] The MOE concentrated curriculum development under their auspices and began writing and approving

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[42] Goh and Gopinathan, "History Education and the Construction of National Identity in Singapore, 1945–2000," 211.
[43] Goh and Gopinathan, "History Education and the Construction of National Identity in Singapore," 210.
[44] ibid., 211.

textbooks for use in schools. The history curriculum shifted from a global history course covering material from 500 BCE to a national history of Singapore.[45]

Significantly, the first textbook on Singapore's history, released in 1984, placed the origin of Singapore's history in 1819 with the arrival of British naval officer Sir Stamford Raffles. The textbook could have placed Singapore's origin in 1299, when the Srivijayan prince Sang Nila Utama renamed the city from Temasek to Singapura. The choice to locate Singapore's origin in 1819 instead reflected Singapore's desire to renew ties to Europe in order to strengthen the nation's reputation as a global hub of trade.[46]

The Singapore Story & National Education

By the 1990s, Singapore enjoyed full employment, a rapidly growing economy, and decades of relative peace. The new fear wasn't an underprepared, unemployable workforce or the possibility of race riots. Instead, politicians worried the new generation was too comfortable. Young people did not experience the struggle of the early years and the older generation feared they were liable to forget the difficulties of Singapore's early development.

In response, the government launched National Education in 1997. In his speech introducing National Education (NE), then Deputy Prime Minister (now Prime Minister) Lee Hsien Loong stated four goals for the curriculum:[47]

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[45] Hong and Huang, *Scripting of A National History: Singapore and Its Pasts*, 5.
[46] ibid.
[47] Hsien Loong Lee, "Speech by DPM Lee Hsien Loong at the Launch of National Education" (May 1997), http://web.archive.org/web/20190415035629/http://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/data/pdfdoc/1997051607/lhl19970517s.pdf, 4-6.

1. "First, we must foster in our young a sense of identity, pride and self-respect as Singaporeans.

2. Second, our young must know the Singapore Story — how Singapore succeeded against the odds to become a nation.

3. Thirdly, our young must understand Singapore's unique challenges, constraints and vulnerabilities, which make us different from other countries.

4. Finally, we must instill in our young the core values of our way of life, and the will to prevail, that ensure our continued success and well-being."

The goal of National Education was to communicate a singular historical narrative ("the Singapore Story") and, in doing so, promote values deemed essential to Singapore's identity and progress. The Singapore Story is the quasi-official narrative of Singapore's national history.[48] It begins with the arrival of British officer Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819, addresses the trauma of the Japanese occupation of Singapore from 1942 to 1945, and emphasizes the struggle and sacrifice of the nation's founding generation from independence in 1965 to the present. The title, in fact, invokes the memory of Lee Kwan Yew, the first prime minister of Singapore (and father of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong). Yet far from viewing the Singapore Story as a crafted and politically advantageous account, the narrative has long been held as pure fact. In his 1997 speech launching National Education, DPM Lee stated:

"The Singapore Story is based on historical facts. We are not talking about an idealised legendary account or a founding myth, but of an accurate

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[48] Hong and Huang quote a graduate student researcher who observed, "'a Martian with only the official script would think that there is only one political movement—the PAP; two important personalities in Singapore—Stamford Raffles and Lee Kwan Yew; and three dates—1819, 1942 and 1965—that are worth remembering.'" Hong and Huang, Scripting of A National History: Singapore and Its Pasts, 15.

understanding of what happened in the past and what this history means for us today. It is an objective history, seen from a Singaporean standpoint."[49]

Lee acknowledged the story might not be complete due to historians' lack of access to archives during Singapore's first decades. However, he did not exhibit any sense that the addition of new "facts" might change the meaning of the story. The core meaning of the Singapore Story — triumph after a period of struggle and survival — would remain unchanged.

Historical Thinking to Combat Complacency

While the Singapore Story endures as a powerful national narrative, the MOE has increasingly moved history education away from simply communicating national values. The fear that new generations of Singaporeans will forget the struggles of the founding generation has receded. If anything, educators now worry that students know the Singapore Story too well and have come to see the narrative as mere propaganda.[50]

The MOE has slowly introduced history curriculums at the primary and secondary levels that weave together disciplinary concepts ("second-order concepts") and global content.[51] Students regularly read and answer questions

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[49] Lee Hsien Loong, "Speech by DPM Lee Hsien Loong at the Launch of National Education" (May 1997), https://web.archive.org/web/20190419062040/http://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/data/pdfdoc/1997051607/lhl19970517s.pdf.

[50] "National Education in Schools to Be Refreshed: Janil Puthucheary," Channel NewsAsia, accessed June 22, 2018, http://web.archive.org/web/20190415035740/https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/national-education-in-schools-to-be-refreshed-janil-puthucheary-10014546.

[51] "2014 History (Lower Secondary) Syllabus," accessed August 8, 2018, https://web.archive.org/web/20190415035933/https://www.moe.gov.sg/docs/default-source/document/education/syllabuses/humanities/files/2017-history-(lower-secondary)-syllabus.pdf; "2017 History Upper-Secondary Syllabus.Pdf," accessed August 8, 2018,

about primary sources, engage in exercises aimed at teaching them to weigh evidence, and are explicitly taught that historical narratives are selective, constructed accounts subject to the biases of authors. There is evidence that the "Singapore Story" is expanding and becoming more complex as well. In 2019, Singapore celebrates its national bicentennial. Although the timing of the event still centers on Raffles's arrival as the origin of the country, the official bicentennial website suggests a longer history.[52] The homepage of the site includes a timeline of important events in Singapore's history, beginning with Sang Nila Utama's annexing of the island in 1299 and continuing through the centuries before Raffles's arrival in Singapore.

The bicentennial narrative, though, is still explicitly political and value-centered. The events on the timeline are tailored to express Singapore's national values. All four Singaporean racial categories (Chinese, Malay, Indian, Other – including Eurasians) are represented in the events and many of the events portray Singapore as racially harmonious, militarily prepared, and economically prosperous. While it's hard to say what impact this new Singapore story will have on Singaporean students and citizens more generally, history in Singapore likely will remain a product of government goals and idealized civic values.

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https://web.archive.org/web/20190415040006/https://www.moe.gov.sg/docs/default-source/document/education/syllabuses/humanities/files/2017-history-(upper-secondary)-syllabus.pdf.

[52] "The Singapore Bicentennial Official Site," accessed February 11, 2019, https://www.bicentennial.sg/. View saved version of Bicentennial Official Site on the Internet Archive.

Historical Thinking in the Digital Age

"The new education must prepare our students to thrive in a world of flux, to be ready no matter what comes next. It must empower them to be leaders of innovation and to be able not only to adapt to a changing world but also to change the world. That is the core requirement of the new education. All the rest is merely elective."[53]

Over the past thirty years, educators and academics have considered the role of the internet and digital technologies in education.[54] In response to the highly interactive qualities of content on the web and the perceived expectations of Millennial and Gen Z students, writers in the thematic field of digital media and learning appraise the perils and possibilities of integrating the web, visual media, and gaming into the classroom.[55] Scholars of historical thinking have not queried the impact of the digital age as consistently as education scholars,

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[53] Cathy N. Davidson, *The New Education: How to Revolutionize the University to Prepare Students for a World in Flux*, Kindle Edition (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 254.

[54] José Antonio Bowen, *Teaching Naked: How Moving Technology out of Your College Classroom Will Improve Student Learning*, First edition, The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, a Wiley imprint, 2012); Tara Brabazon, *Digital Dialogues and Community 2.0 after Avatars, Trolls and Puppets* (Oxford, U.K.: Chandos Pub., 2012), http://proquestcombo.safaribooksonline.com/9781843346951; Daniel J. Cohen and Tom Scheinfeldt, eds., *Hacking the Academy: New Approaches to Scholarship and Teaching from Digital Humanities* (University of Michigan Press, 2013), https://doi.org/10.3998/dh.12172434.0001.001; Cathy N. Davidson and David Theo Goldberg, *The Future of Thinking: Learning Institutions in a Digital Age* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2010); Roger McHaney, *The New Digital Shoreline: How Web 2.0 and Millennials Are Revolutionizing Higher Education*, First edition (Sterling, Va: Stylus Pub, 2011); Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, Paperback first published (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011).

[55] Mike Caulfield, *Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers* (Simple Book Production) accessed Feb 11, 2019, https://webliteracy.pressbooks.com/; Aaron Alan Delwiche and Jennifer Jacobs Henderson, eds., *The Participatory Cultures Handbook* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Henry Jenkins, *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Reports on Digital Media and Learning (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009); Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*, Postmillennial Pop (New York ; London: New York University Press, 2013); George Siemens, "Connectivism: A Learning Theory for the Digital Age," elearnspace: everything elearning, Dec 12, 2004, http://www.elearnspace.org/Articles/connectivism.htm.

anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists, and data scientists, but their analysis

of the sociocultural influences that shape historical thinking aligns closely with the

concerns of their peers in other fields.[56] Like family stories, collective memory,

identity, and nationalized curriculums, the internet, social media, and digital

media are vital strands of students' webs of understanding.

Participatory Culture Research

> "A participatory culture is a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic
> expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing
> creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby experienced
> participants pass along knowledge to novices."[57]

On the World Wide Web in 2019, almost everything is open to comment,

sharing content across platforms is easy, and finding like-minded people only

requires a quick Google search or click on a hashtag. On its 30th anniversary,

the world wide web is characterized by instantaneous access to information, an

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[56] Such as those outlined in Sociocultural Influences and Singapore on
dissertation.heatherlbennett.com. For historical thinking scholars who deal explicitly with the
digital age, see: James Goulding, "Historical Thinking and Social Media," *Agora* 46, no. 3 (2011):
11–19; Kevin B. Kee, ed., *Pastplay: Teaching and Learning History with Technology, Digital
Humanities* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014); T. Mills Kelly, *Teaching History in
the Digital Age*, 2013, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.12146032.0001.001; Roy Rosenzweig, *Clio
Wired: The Future of the Past in the Digital Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011);
Robert B. Townsend, "Assimilation of New Media into History Teaching: Some Snapshots from
the Edge," *Perspectives* 48, no. 9 (December 2010): 24; William J. Turkel, "Intervention: Hacking
History, from Analogue to Digital and Back Again," *Rethinking History* 15, no. 2 (June 2011): 287–
96, https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2011.564840; Toni Weller, ed., *History in the Digital Age*
(London ; New York: Routledge, 2013).

[57] Henry Jenkins, *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education
for the 21st Century*, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Reports on Digital
Media and Learning (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009), xi.

ever-expanding array of social media platforms, and an increasingly blurry line between consumers and producers.[58]

Henry Jenkins defines the web in the 2000s and 2010s as a "participatory culture," but notes that participation remains uneven. Not everyone possesses the technology necessary to access the web[59] and for those who do, not everyone is guaranteed the same levels of safety and respect.[60] Aaron Delwiche and Jennifer Henderson sum up these imbalances as a matter of power: "Participation is about power, and, no matter how 'open' a platform is, participation will reach a limit circumscribing power and its distribution."[61]

Despite the unevenness of participation, the participatory nature of the web has altered the creation and distribution of media, social relationships, and expectations of education. Media is meant to be shareable and spreadable. Jenkins, Ford, and Green note the rise of embed codes and short links that make content easy to share via websites, messaging apps, and social media.[62] Creators also seek to make media "sticky;" the primary goal of many games,

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[58] John Herrman, "How TikTok is Rewriting the World," New York Times, Mar 13, 2019, https://web.archive.org/web/20190415040421/https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/10/style/what-is-tik-tok.html.

[59] The United Nations currently estimates that less than half of the world population has access to the internet. "United Nations Press Release," accessed Feb 11, 2019, https://web.archive.org/web/20190415040512/https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/Pages/2018-PR01.aspx.

[60] Robinson Meyer, "Twitter's Famous Racist Problem," The Atlantic, July 21, 2016, https://web.archive.org/web/20190415040602/https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2016/07/twitter-swings-the-mighty-ban-hammer/492209/.

[61] Aaron Alan Delwiche and Jennifer Jacobs Henderson, eds., The Participatory Cultures Handbook (New York: Routledge, 2013), 29.

[62] Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture, Postmillennial Pop (New York ; London: New York University Press, 2013), 6.

listicles, and polls is to capture and keep users attention in a single for as long as possible.[63]

Sherri Turkle and danah boyd consider the impacts of media's shareability and stickiness on interpersonal relationships. Turkle critiques the increasingly widespread expectation of constant connection via social media in *Alone Together*. While networked communication promises "to give us more control over human relationships," Turkle wonders whether the opposite is actually the case. She writes: "Our networked life allows us to hide from each other, even as we are tethered to each other."[64]

In *It's Complicated*, boyd likewise probes the internet's influence on social relationships, but unlike Turkle and Jenkins, sees the best and worst of social media behaviors as an amplification of existing social norms rather than something entirely new.[65] "The internet," she argues, "mirrors, magnifies, and makes more visible the good, bad, and ugly of everyday life." Everything from our expectations for connection and participation to the ugliest forms of cyberbullying is an extension of social relationships in real life rather than a product of entirely new forms of communication.[66]

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[63] ibid.

[64] Sherry Turkle, Alone Together: *Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other,* Kindle Edition (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011), loc. 361.

[65] danah boyd, *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 24.

[66] A recently published volume, *Friending the Past*, adds depth and history to boyd's ideas by exploring how past societies navigated their own technological and communication revolutions. See Alan Liu, *Friending the Past* (University of Chicago Press, 2018), https://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/F/bo26152780.html.

The Goals of Education in the Digital Age

Education scholars, like participatory culture researchers, question the impact of participatory cultures and social media on education. Writers concerned with education in the digital age query whether and to what extent new technologies and media necessitate changes in teaching and learning strategies. In general, education scholars call undergraduate instructors in all disciplines to focus on both content and digital literacies. They propose educators attend especially to fostering students' abilities to find information, discern the credibility of information, and create significant connections between the content of their education and their day-to-day lives.

George Siemens's article, "Connectivism," and Mike Caulfield's *Web Literacies for Student Fact-Checkers* represent two influential arguments for shifts in educators' perspectives.[67] Rather than focusing on content communication, Siemens and Caulfield suggest educators develop students' "know-where" skills.[68] Millennial and Gen Z students might be comfortable with technology, but the idea that they are "digital natives" who innately know how to navigate the internet's abundance is a myth.[69] Digital literacies, like all literacies, are learned. Educators must help foster students' abilities to find and quickly

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[67] George Siemens, "Connectivism: A Learning Theory for the Digital Age," elearnspace: everything elearning, December 12, 2004, http://www.elearnspace.org/Articles/connectivism.htm; Mike Caulfield, Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers, Simple Book Production, accessed Feb 11, 2019, https://webliteracy.pressbooks.com/.

[68] The language of "know-where" is Siemens's.

[69] John G. Palfrey and Urs Gasser, *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives* (New York: Basic Books, 2008). Palfrey and Gasser are largely responsible for the idea of "digital natives," but the term has been roundly criticized by educators who note that students might be comfortable using mobile phones and apps, but aren't necessarily fluent in navigating quality of information, privacy rights, or social relationships on the web.

evaluate information is more valuable than memorization skills.[70] While Siemens

work is largely theoretical, Caulfield offers practical exercises for educators and

students to grow their "know-where" skills in an age of "alternative facts,"

photoshop, and faux-academic journals.[71]

Contributors to David Cohen and Thomas Scheinfeldt's edited volume

Hacking the Academy and Cathy Davidson, in *The New Education*, likewise

argue for major changes to higher education.[72] In both volumes, the authors tie

new educational needs to existing educational concerns. Contributors to *Hacking*

the Academy and Davidson argue that seemingly new issues, like distractions

from mobile phones, are indicative not of decreased attention spans, but of

educators' failure to engage students.[73] Students will not stay tuned into a class

when that class does not offer them opportunities to participate in their education

in creative and meaningful ways.[74] When the significance of their education is

opaque, students turn instead to technologies and media that are more obviously

connected to their interests and sense of self.

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[70] Siemens, "Connectivism."

[71] Caulfield, "Why this book?," *Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers*

[72] Daniel J. Cohen and Tom Scheinfeldt, eds., *Hacking the Academy: New Approaches to Scholarship and Teaching from Digital Humanities* (University of Michigan Press, 2013), https://doi.org/10.3998/dh.12172434.0001.001; Cathy N. Davidson, *The New Education: How to Revolutionize the University to Prepare Students for a World In Flux*, Kindle Edition (Basic Books, 2017).

[73] Michael Wesch, "From Knowledgeable to Knowledge-able" in Cohen and Scheinfeldt, eds., *Hacking the Academy*.

[74] Davidson, *The New Education*, 253-254.

Historical Thinking to Foster Digital Literacies

Cohen, Scheinfeldt, and Davidson caution against the impulse to include more technology to compete with technological distractions. Instead, they call for collaborative pedagogies and purposeful learning:

"New modes of engaging students in the classroom with digital media are, at heart, less about the flashiness of technology and more about the need to move past the stagnation of the lecture into deeper, more collaborative—and ultimately, more effective—pedagogy."[75]

Rather than including social and digital media in the classroom out of a hazy desire to engage so-called "digital natives," history educators should use the participatory capacities of the web to build students' historical skills. Unlike earlier studies of historical thinking, however, the goal of historical thinking is no longer to help students "think like historians." Instead, social and digital media serve as a venue for teaching students historical skills that will help them develop the digital and social literacies championed by Siemens, Caulfield, Davidson, and the authors of *Hacking the Academy*.

The first step toward using historical thinking skills to promote digital literacies is to navigate the sometimes misaligned priorities of social media and the historical discipline. James Goulding notes that social media environments favor "brevity, centrality, and affiliation" while traditional historical research involves lengthy investigations across multiple archives and no innate promise of

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[75] "Introduction," Daniel J. Cohen and Tom Scheinfeldt, eds., *Hacking the Academy: New Approaches to Scholarship and Teaching from Digital Humanities* (University of Michigan Press, 2013), https://doi.org/10.3998/dh.12172434.0001.001.

personal relevance.[76] T. Mills Kelly likewise observes that historians' approaches to research are vastly different from those of undergraduate students when they begin studying history. To demonstrate the differences, Kelly provides a list of fifteen processes historians use to think historically, including the "5 C's" (change, continuity, causality, contingency, complexity) noted in the definitions of historical thinking.[77] By contrast, he attributes just five questions to students' initial forays into historical thinking:[78]

1. What happened?
2. When did it happen?
3. Why did it happen?
4. Who was responsible?
5. And a corollary question: Will that be on the exam?

Kelly attributes students' "instrumental" perspective to the high-pressure, standardized tests frequently used as a measure of historical knowledge. (He cites the United States as an example, but the same could be said of Singapore.) In order to align students' thinking and processes with the goals of historical thinking, Kelly encourages educators to create innovative, web-based projects that engage students' talent for writing for a public audience.[79] Public writing projects, he suggests, help students develop the skills necessary to source, interrogate, and present historical narratives.

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[76] James Goulding, "Historical Thinking and Social Media," *Agora* 46, no. 3 (2011): 17.
[77] Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke, "What Does It Mean to Think Historically?," *Perspectives* 45, no. 1 (January 2007), http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2007/what-does-it-mean-to-think-historically.
[78] T. Mills Kelly, *Teaching History in the Digital Age*, 2013, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.12146032.0001.001, loc. 49-50.
[79] Kelly isn't the only one to advocate for public writing projects. Cathy Davison cites Andrea Lunsford's observation that "this generation is unusually adept at kairos, a rhetorical term meaning the ability to assess your audience and shape your style, tone, language, and technique for that audience." See *The New Education*, 92.

By way of example, Kelly describes the hoax-history project he and his students completed on Wikipedia. To create the Wikipedia article, Kelly's students created false primary sources, a fake researcher, and YouTube videos to support the existence of Edward Owens, "the last American pirate."[80] While some critiqued the project as unethical, Kelly and his students defended it as a worthwhile endeavor that demonstrated both digital literacies and historical thinking. The project addressed the social life of information, credibility issues on the web, the nature of historical evidence, the expertise of historians, and how to tell a compelling historical narrative.

Like Kelly, other historians see digital technologies as a boon to history education. William Turkel muses about the possibility of creating multi-sensory historical experiences on the web;[81] Mark Sandle views online forums, social media platforms, and wikis as enhancing students' awareness of how to credit the ideas and works of others.[82] Perhaps most creatively, Kevin Kee and the contributors to *Pastplay: Teaching and Learning History with Technology* suggest the benefits of gamifying history.[83] In "Tecumseh Lies Here," for example, Timothy Compeau and Robert MacDougall describe their use of web-based primary sources and Twitter to create a global game.[84] Compeau and

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[80] Kelly, "Making DIY History," *Teaching History in the Digital Age*, 2013.

[81] William J. Turkel, "Intervention: Hacking History, from Analogue to Digital and Back Again," Rethinking History 15, no. 2 (June 2011): 287–96, https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2011.564840.

[82] Mark Sandle, "Studying the past in the digital age: from tourist to explorer" in Toni Weller, ed., *History in the Digital Age* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2013).

[83] Kevin B. Kee, ed., *Pastplay: Teaching and Learning History with Technology*, Digital Humanities (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014).

[84] Timothy Compeau and Robert MacDougall, "Tecumseh Lies Here: Goals and Challenges for a Pervasive History Game in Progress" in Kee, ed., *Pastplay*.

MacDougall presented students with a mystery, occasionally misled them using false witnesses and documents, and seeded Twitter accounts with helpful hints about where to find more information.

Compeau and MacDougall argue the game effectively helped students grow critical historical thinking skills and some of the savviness required to navigate information on the internet. The game did not explicitly teach participants to use evidence wisely or attend to differences between past and present. Instead, it developed these skills by engaging players' interest in a mystery and delivering pleasure as each layer of the game was uncovered. They concluded:

> "Playful historical thinking is, or can be, critical and engaged. It recognizes limits on our ability to fully know other peoples and times, yet makes the effort to know them just the same. It wears its certainties lightly and takes pleasure in the whimsy, mystery, and strangeness of the past."[85]

Ultimately, scholars of historical thinking in the digital age echo the concerns and hopes of researchers of participatory cultures and education in the 21st century. They view historical thinking as a valuable skill set that fosters students' abilities to find, evaluate, and synthesize information. The web and social media are sociocultural influences on students' learning, but these technologies also can be tools to develop students' skills. Using social and digital media in the history class meets students where they are, allows scholars to discern students' starting points, and offers a dynamic environment for developing historical and digital literacies.

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[85] ibid., 90.

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