Chapter 2

History Education Research and Practice: An International Perspective

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Abstract: This chapter examines history education research and practice in selected European and Asian countries. We draw on research literature from European (United Kingdom, Germany, and Scandinavia) and Asian countries (China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore) to develop broad themes across contexts. The chapter examines the ways history education is shaped and constrained in particular Asian contexts; the international influence of research from the United Kingdom focused on second-order historical concepts and progressions of understanding; and literature on historical consciousness in European contexts. We synthesize current scholarship and theoretical work found in the literature as well as implications for curriculum and classroom practice and point to future areas of development for comparative history education research.

Keywords: comparative education research; historical understanding, historical consciousness, textbook controversies
This chapter examines history education research on curriculum and practices in selected European and Asian countries. Rather than develop case studies of specific countries, we develop broad overviews of regional examples and themes of research. We draw on literature from selected European (United Kingdom, Germany, and Sweden) and Asian countries (China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore) to develop broad themes across cases and contexts. The chapter examines the ways history education is shaped and constrained in particular Asian contexts, the research tradition in the United Kingdom focused on second-order historical concepts and progressions of understanding that has influenced research in several other countries, and literature on historical consciousness in European contexts. We synthesize current scholarship and theoretical work found in the literature as well as discuss implications for curriculum and classroom practice and point to future areas of development for comparative international history education research.

We begin by developing three themes that make history education in East and Southeast Asia distinctive when compared to history education in Western contexts. We examine how particular traditions and historical experiences in Asia have generated certain conceptions of history and history education, which is especially evident in the production of textbooks in different countries.

**History Education and History Textbook Controversies in Selected Asian Contexts**

There has been substantial scholarship examining how history curricula and textbooks produce national narratives and official knowledge that shape national identity, collective memory, and the ways people think about the present and the future. Much of this work has examined history curriculum and textbook controversies in Asian contexts (e.g., Baildon, Loh, Lim, Inanç, & Jaffar, 2014; Foster & Crawford, 2006; Shin & Sneider, 2011; Suh, Yurita, Lin, &
Metzger, 2013; Vickers & Jones, 2005). As Foster and Crawford (2006) have argued, textbooks serve as “powerful artifacts in introducing young people to a specific historical, cultural, and socioeconomic order” (p. 20). Saito, Alviar-Martin, and Khong (2014) have also noted that textbooks are important curricular devices that have “an intrinsic grammar of pedagogic discourse” (p. 75). School history provides selected resources for learning about the past and developing historically grounded identities (Barton, 2012).

In this section, we examine factors that have shaped history education and textbook controversies in selected Asian contexts. We highlight the ways particular historical traditions, World War II, occupation, colonialism, Western imperialism, and the emergence of developmental states integrated into the global knowledge economy have shaped history education in East and Southeast Asia. We find that history education in these regions is unique in a few ways. First, there is greater emphasis on values (often classified as “Asian” or “Confucian”), which means history education serves a more explicit moralizing function in the development of national identity. Second, we find that governments tend to more directly control history education curriculum and textbook production for nation-building purposes and to promote economic growth in the global economy. Third, history education and textbooks in these countries often give greater prominence to national traumas and offer narratives of historical grievance, national humiliation, and victimization that have complicated international relations in the region (Suh et al., 2013; Wang, 2008). These narratives are especially significant in shaping historical memory and national identity within each nation, but they also “chronicle relations with others” (Hein & Selden, 2000). According to Wang (2008), “The stories chosen or invented about the national past are invariably prescriptive, instructing people how to think and act as national subjects and how to view their relations with outsiders” (p. 787). Historical
grievances are utilized by national elites for political mobilization and legitimacy and have become political battlefields between nations in East Asia (Sneider, 2011).

The education systems of China, Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore are relatively centralized (Jones, 2011; Su, 2007, Suh et al., 2013). These societies have also been influenced by Confucianism (Tu, 1996). In Confucian societies, virtue and morality are central features of historiography and historical thinking (Huang, 2007). Official state history has been treated as a “depository of moral exemplars from the past,” and there was an emphasis on imperial examinations that made history “the religion of the state” (Vickers, 2005, pp. 14-15). In dynastic China, the moralizing approach to the past served as a guide to strong and effective governance (Vickers, 2003). The “lessons” of history played a role in developing moral imperial subjects.

Keeping historical records has always been a function of the state in Confucian societies, and this led to the “deeply ingrained expectation that the state has a role in supplying a ‘correct’ version of the past and an assumption that this will be enshrined in the history curriculum for schools” (Vickers, 2006, p. 31). This tradition of state-sponsored history has also meant “the function of school history as a school subject in China has always been to moralize” (Vickers, 2006, p. 31). Tohmatsu (2011) has similarly argued that “Chinese and Korean textbooks share the tradition of the Confucian historical narrative…[in which] history is not an academic subject but a moral discipline that trains people to become righteous” (p. 132). Lincicome (2009) has also commented on the role of Confucianism in Japan and the particular role that history education played in cultivating national morality. While all historical identification has ethical components, textbooks in Confucian societies are likely to make this a more explicit function of historical narratives and history education.
Research in civic and social education in Asia has also found similar emphases on transmission of content, examination performance, and inculcation of values. Scholars (e.g., Alviar-Martin & Baildon, 2016; Kennedy & Fairbrother, 2004; Lee, 2006) have highlighted the ways school curriculum in East and Southeast Asia is depoliticized, emphasizes the cultivation of virtue and ethical behavior in students, and favors collective welfare over individual rights. Chia (2012) has argued that history education, moral education, and citizenship education should be viewed as intertwined in many Asian contexts. Similarly, Jones (2011) found that the highly centralized education systems of South Korea, Taiwan, and China have exerted a high degree of control over curriculum, teacher education, and textbooks to ensure that history education fostered values desired by the state. According to Jones, history education in the three settings had been “explicitly co-opted to reinforce the more overtly political companion subjects of ‘citizenship,’ ‘ethics,’ and ‘moral education’” (p. 209).

History education also has been co-opted to serve particular economic and ideological purposes in the rise of some Asian developmental states. Confucian values and ethics were considered central to the economic success of Japan and the Four “Asian Tigers” (newly industrialized economies) of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore after World War II (Chia, 2012). Strong central governments, in many cases authoritarian, also characterized the developmental states’ ability to gain and maintain political legitimacy by promoting and sustaining economic development (Castells, 1996). As Gopinathan (2007) has explained, these states were fragile and their sovereignty was under threat after World War II, but through strong state management they were “able to ‘govern the market’ and not be subservient to it” (p. 57, emphasis in original). A key strategy in their development was a centralized education system that implemented policies designed to develop human capital and ensure social cohesion. History
education in the region has served both purposes. History education reforms in South Korea, Taiwan, and China have been consistent with general educational reforms to cultivate human capital and the critical thinking and soft skills supposedly needed in the global knowledge economy (Jones, 2011). Crawford and Foster (2007) have similarly found that Chinese curriculum guidelines included both historical knowledge and skills central to historical thinking, along with greater emphasis on creativity, independent study, and collaboration skills to benefit national economic development.

Vickers (2006) has demonstrated how history textbooks can serve the different purposes of providing moral lessons, promoting national identity, and fostering critical thinking necessary to prosper in the global knowledge economy. In his study of Mainland China’s textbooks and how histories of Tibet, Mongolia, Taiwan, and Hong Kong were represented, he found that the language of nationalism and the “One China Principle” was all-pervasive. For Vickers, history education was used to promote a singular, clear-cut, homogenizing narrative that served both moral and political purposes by presenting a celebratory, primordialist, and immemorial nationalist narrative. However, Vickers also found that Chinese history education had been influenced by recent international developments in teaching history to promote critical thinking and creativity in order to support China’s rise in the global knowledge economy. Vickers (2006) has noted the tension this created with “reconciling the traditional moralizing aims of history education with new aspirations to turn the subject into a vehicle for fostering skills of analytical reasoning and critical thinking” (p. 35).

Policy makers and educators in the region are likely to experience these tensions as new history curriculum strives for some combination of preparing students for the global economy and global society while instilling a particular national identity (often around an “uncomplicated
uniform national narrative”) with greater emphasis on historical reasoning skills and understanding of disciplinary concepts (Symcox & Wilschut, 2009). While desires to create particular kinds of identities or citizens might be able to co-exist with the disciplinary purposes of history education, as Loh, Baildon, Lim, Inanç, and Jaffar (2014) have argued, the effort to promulgate collective memory and create a national identity often trumps teaching historical thinking as a disciplinary or critical practice. History curriculum and the teaching of history inevitably entail entanglements among issues related to the formation of identities, social memory, emotions, and the politics, norms and needs of the nation-state (Zembylas & Kambani, 2012). When it comes to history education, this is why so much is considered at stake by political leaders and education officials. (p. 4)

Traditions of social deference to authority and the history of political authoritarianism in many Asian nations after World War II generally created contexts unfavorable to critical or alternative historical accounts (Loh et al., 2014). Histories that challenged the efforts of political elites to unite nations after World War II were marginalized and silenced, making it especially difficult to interrogate the founding myths and national narratives in the region (Bayly & Harper, 2008; Loh et al., 2014). In highly centralized education systems, sanctions can be administered by officials to minimize educational practice perceived to challenge or divert the national interests and agendas of policymakers. In Singapore, for example, this has led to an absence of substantive debate about history education curriculum (Afandi & Baildon, 2010). Instead, the “Singapore Story,” an officially sanctioned history of the nation, has emphasized domestic fault lines, national “traumas,” and persistent vulnerabilities, such as extremist ideologies, racial riots, and the influence of Western values and individualism (Baildon & Afandi, 2017; Loh, 1998). In response, social values variously called “Asian,” “Confucian,” and “communitarian” have been
referenced as means to build a sense of national community and thwart perceived dangers (Chua, 1995; Loh, 1998). This national narrative is a story of vulnerability and national survival due to good governance and the successful management of social conflict (Afandi & Baildon, 2010). Wang (2008) has noted that nation-states undergoing transition, such as many East Asian states did after World War II through periods of decolonization, nation-building, and rapid economic development, placed great emphasis on a national history education to serve political purposes and develop national cohesion.

Another unique feature of East Asian history education is the role that the lingering “wounds” of World War II play in the collective memory of the region. Crawford and Foster (2007) have mentioned how the magnitude, intensity, and cost in human life continue to be keenly felt by people and often dominate the politics of the region. In their review of the ways history textbooks in Japan, China, and South Korea treated World War II, Suh et al. (2013) found that each country represented itself or its people as victims of the war. The authors found that Korean and Chinese textbooks provided narratives of national identity through their struggles against Japanese aggression. The atrocities of the Nanjing Massacre, germ and chemical warfare, Japanese colonialism, forced labor, and enslavement of comfort women highlight the brutality and suffering people experienced during the war. Tohmatsu’s (2011) analysis of history textbooks in China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan found that Japanese textbooks read more like chronological lists of events, lacking a clear message about Japan’s wartime past, with Korean and Chinese textbooks more “politicized” in terms of casting “moral judgments on important historical issues in which they feel their interests were violated or their national pride hurt” (p. 132). As a point of contrast, he noted that Taiwanese textbooks, while critical of Japan’s
wartime exploitation of Taiwan, provided a favorable view of economic and social development under Japanese occupation.

Suh et al. (2013) found that Japanese history textbooks also situated “the Japanese people primarily as passive victims of war and of the military that dominated the nation-state” (p. 43). They noted that for Japan the war ended in humiliating defeat and immense suffering, which represents a nationally shared experience. They concluded that all textbooks they reviewed failed to open up school history “as an interpretive space that would invite students to do authentic historical inquiry” (p. 49). In their analysis of several Chinese history textbooks focusing on the war, Crawford and Foster (2007) similarly found narratives that “require of students no standards of judgment…. The Japanese are variously described as aggressive and warlike; the strategies they use in war are irrational, uncivilized, and barbaric as they pursue expansionist and imperialistic policies” (pp. 96-97). Efforts to create national identity and collective memory trump teaching history as an interpretive or disciplinary practice.

Wang (2008) has highlighted how China’s history curriculum and textbooks shifted from an official Maoist “victor narrative” over capitalist Kuomintang forces to a new “victimization narrative” that blamed the West and Japan for China’s suffering. Undoubtedly, part of China’s history has been its pride of victories over colonialism and imperialism (Shin, 2011). However, history education in China has also emphasized victimization under foreign forces. He (2003) noted that “the ‘fundamental fissure’ defining Chinese national identity now shifted to the conflict between the Chinese nation and those foreign nations that had invaded and humiliated China in the past, the most ferocious one being Japan” (p. 30). The Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), the Opium Wars (1839-1842 and 1856-1860), and international conflict between China,
the West, and Japan were given greater attention in revised history textbooks, according to Wang (2008).

Victimization narratives and the corresponding ethical intensity of historical grievances have resulted in textbook controversies being especially fraught with political, emotional, and international implications. Textbook controversies in the region have become a central part of public disputes between nations and have provoked opposition to more accommodative foreign relations (He, 2003; Sneider, 2011). These controversies demonstrate how history is not just used to form identities, it is part of broader articulations in cultures about the past, and it is also used to exert influence in contemporary politics (Nordgren, 2016). Wang (2008) has discussed how the narrative of humiliation in textbooks is a central feature of historical consciousness in Chinese identity formation and political discourse, and how it resonates with other aspects of historical culture:

The national humiliation discourse certainly is propaganda in today’s China, however, it has a large and sympathetic audience…. People learn these sad stories not only from history textbooks or patriotic education activities, but also from their parents and grandparents. Without comprehension of the primordialist background of Chinese nationalism, we would not be able to fully understand why this elite-led top-down propaganda campaign could have realized its objectives of enhancing the regime’s political legitimacy and improving social solidarity. (p. 800)

History textbooks, while being products of a particular historical culture, also provide “feedback loops” that stimulate nationalism, a sense of moral righteousness, and particular kinds of national identities, which then provides “a bigger market for nationalistic narratives” (Wang, 2008, p. 801). Textbooks are only one resource for developing identities, learning about the past,
and thinking about the present and future, but they can be significant in their influence. The case of history education and textbook controversies in these Asian contexts points to the vital importance of expanding rather than constricting the range of identity resources available to students (Barton, 2012).

Second-Order Concepts and Progressions around the World

The political imperatives that shape policy decisions around history education in several Asian countries provide further evidence of the ways school history is used to build national identity and serve national purposes. Even if the role is to preserve or institutionalize collective national memory and morality, government-authorized history textbooks in these countries are often written to offer students a privileged interpretation of the country’s past. The tradition of school history in the UK, however, offers a counter-example (Barton, 2009). Amidst changes in the political landscapes and the frequent public debates over aims, purposes, and content, history education in England has largely eschewed the use of the subject as an overt tool for citizenship education or for the inculcation of patriotic values seen by some as vital to national identity formation (e.g., Lee, 1992; Shemilt, 2009). Instead, there is a strong tradition in Britain to view history first and foremost as a public form of knowledge with its own disciplinary criteria and standards of practice. More than simply a vehicle for the cultivation of citizenship or patriotic values, history education inducts students into a metacognitive tradition that can potentially transform the way they look at the world around them (Lee, 2011).

Much of the scholarly work related to aspects of history education in the UK, which also has influence in many parts of the world, is captured in the International Review of History Education (IRHE) series, edited by Peter Lee, Ros Ashby, and Stuart Foster. IRHE marked its 20th anniversary in 2015 and has produced eight volumes, each highlighting developments in
empirical research and theory related to the disciplinary foundations of history education. The first, for example, examined trends in national history education policy and curriculum across several national contexts. Its editors (Dickinson, Gordon, Lee, & Slater, 1995) noted a marked departure from history education designed to support national goals by arguing that “history education is too important to be left to politicians, or indeed educational authorities, or any one country or tradition” (p. 2). The editors went on to make a case for developing shared understandings of what history education could be and for open discussion that wasn’t bound to any national tradition. Subsequent volumes signified evolving interests and research agendas in international history education that have included cognitive and sociocultural perspectives on historical reasoning, understanding students’ ideas and reasoning about the past, debates about history education, and the place of history education in an increasingly global age. As the editors of the most recent volume noted, although IRHE has been international in scope, much of the work has been significantly shaped by scholarship from the UK (Chapman & Wilschut, 2015).

There is a tradition of scholarly work in the UK that emphasizes the centrality of conceptual understanding in history. These developments were borne out of the debates about history education in the early 1970s and continued throughout subsequent contests over the National History Curriculum in the 1980s and the 1990s. A consistent issue during this period was the need for urgent reform—against traditional curricula and pedagogies—if the subject was to survive as a lively and relevant discipline in schools (Bage, 2000). Moving beyond the conventional focus on chronology and historical knowledge, “new history” was called for to emphasize history’s position as a distinct body of knowledge that could be understood only through the cultivation of specific skills and conceptual understandings (Phillips, 1998). In England this emphasis on understanding the disciplinary basis of the subject was embodied in
curricular innovations, such as the Schools Council History Project (SCHP), launched in the early 1970s. The SCHP became the focus of empirical work on children’s ideas about disciplinary concepts in history by a group of U.K. history education researchers that led to what Wineburg (2001) described as “the most in-depth look at adolescent historical reasoning to date” (p. 43).

Drawing heavily on Hirst’s (1974) theory of academic disciplines as “forms of knowledge” which constitute different ways of knowing and Bruner’s (1960) “structure of the disciplines,” SCHP founders argued that students were capable of achieving higher levels of historical understanding if history was conceived as a distinctive form of knowledge and as a way of reasoning using second-order concepts in history, such as change and continuity, causation, significance, accounts, and evidence (Symcox & Wilschut, 2009). Research from Project CHATA (Concepts of History and Teaching Approaches) found that some students demonstrated sophisticated and inclusive knowledge about accounts in history (Lee & Ashby, 2000), were able to offer plausible (if simple) reasons to explain people’s actions in the past (Lee, Dickinson, & Ashby, 1997), and had the capacity to develop empathetic understanding of the past (Lee & Ashby, 2001).

One consistent conclusion reached by the CHATA team was that some children at a relatively young age already operate with highly sophisticated ideas making it possible to develop proper frameworks of history through systematic teaching that builds on prior understandings (Lee & Ashby, 2000). CHATA researchers advocated the view of learning history as “coming to grips with a discipline, with its own procedures and standards designed to make true statements and valid claims about the past” (Lee & Ashby, 2000, p. 200). As Lee (1991) argued,
[It is] absurd...to say that schoolchildren know any history if they have no understanding of how historical knowledge is attained, its relationship to evidence, and the way in which historians arbitrate between competing or contradictory claims. The ability to recall accounts without any understanding of the problems involved in constructing them or the criteria involved in evaluating them has nothing historical about it. Without an understanding of what makes an account historical, there is nothing to distinguish such an ability from the ability to recite sagas, legends, myths or poems. (pp. 48-49)

A core idea from this body of work is that students must understand the disciplinary basis of the subject and understand how knowledge about the past is constructed, adjudicated, and arbitrated. Most importantly, it placed the focus of history education directly on the ideas that students have about the past. The acquisition or development of students’ knowledge depended on their understanding and being able to apply key concepts. It required history educators and scholars of history education to pay attention to students’ ideas and understandings about the past and history as a discipline.

Research in the area of progression was underscored by the conviction that growth in historical understanding can be assessed and tracked by the ways students’ ideas about history changed and developed. Progression in historical understanding required looking at children’s understandings in terms of tacit ideas that enabled or inhibited students’ cognitive development (Lee, Ashby, & Dickinson, 1996). Progression models recognized the importance of uncovering students’ prior conceptions about history and provided a tool for making sense of and responding to their pre-existing ideas. As Lee and Shemilt (2003) argued, understanding such prior conceptions is essential if teaching is to correct misconceptions; ignorance of preconceptions runs the risk of students merely assimilating new knowledge to pre-existing ideas. Such
progression models, conceptualized in a developmental manner, could assist researchers and practitioners to predict the range of ideas they are likely to encounter and the kind of changes they might see as students’ ideas develop (Lee & Shemilt, 2003).

CHATA research found that some students understood accounts as being constructed and not simply a conjunction of facts (Lee & Ashby, 2000). Some students were able to attribute differences in accounts to the ways historians worked—from seeing historians as relatively passive storytellers, dispensing ready-made stories or compiling and collating information, to thinking of historians as actively producing their stories, whether by distorting them for their own ends or by legitimate selection in response to the historical problems being investigated (Lee, 1998). Significantly, some students were able to recognize that historical accounts can never be complete, and that different accounts were created to answer different questions (Lee, 1996, 1998).

In designing a progression model that served as a “framework of knowledge” to inform educators about students’ understanding regarding the nature of historical accounts, the CHATA team constructed an ordinal scale running from less to more sophisticated ideas (Lee, 1996, 1998; Lee & Ashby, 2000; Lee & Shemilt, 2004). This schema provided educators with a useful map of key points that students are likely to pass through on their way to acquiring deeper understandings about the nature of historical accounts. CHATA’s progression model suggested that movement from one point to the next could be fluid, given adequate guidance and instruction.

This seminal work around second-order concepts and progressions has influenced international research on history education in many countries, including the US, Canada, Brazil, Greece, Portugal, Spain, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore. There has been a range of studies
on students’ ideas related to specific second-order concepts, such as evidence (e.g., Ashby, 2011; Barton, 1997), empathy (e.g., Foster & Yeager, 1998; Lee & Ashby, 2001), chronology (e.g., Barton, 2002; Carretero, Asensio, & Pozo, 1991), causation (e.g., Lee & Ashby, 2000; Lee & Shemilt, 2009), significance (e.g., Barton & Levstik, 1998; Cercadillo, 2001; Seixas, 1997), and accounts (e.g., Afandi, 2012; Chapman, 2009; Hsiao, 2008; Park, 2008). Many of these studies highlighted progressions in other national contexts.

Research into students’ understandings about historical accounts carried out in England, Taiwan, Singapore, and Portugal pointed to similarities in the way students were likely to view and make sense of accounts in history. In her study of secondary school Taiwanese students’ understandings of different textbook accounts about the Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s, Hsiao (2005) found that students had authoritative views of textbooks and did not understand the role of evidence in evaluating different historical accounts. Generally, they lacked any evaluative or methodological criteria to help them assess different textbook accounts. She also found in a later study that patterns of Taiwanese students’ understandings about accounts and their relation to the past were based on prior conceptions about history textbooks (Hsiao, 2008). She proposed eight categories of response and remarked that many of the students’ ideas about historical knowledge were consistent with those found in CHATA and studies in other cultural contexts.

In Singapore, Afandi’s (2012) study on students’ ideas about historical accounts revealed similar patterns of ideas in students’ thinking about why accounts differed. The response categories appeared to mirror (in slightly different ways) CHATA’s progression models. The students in his study held a range of preconceptions and were predisposed to employ different evaluative strategies when deciding between competing historical accounts. He identified three broad categories of students’ ideas in terms of complexity and sophistication: from viewing
historical accounts in a factual manner as copies of a fixed and objective past; to viewing accounts as multiple versions of a past that is complex and multi-faceted; to viewing accounts as selective interpretations of past events that could be evaluated based on criteria. This factual-multiple-criterial continuum also described students’ implicit view of historical knowledge: from conceiving historical knowledge as fixed or given representations of a singular (factual) reality; to conceiving historical knowledge as productions of human minds and (multiple) individual dispositions and viewpoints; to conceiving historical knowledge as reconstructions that are based on interpretation and therefore open to critical (criterial) questioning. Progression signaled students’ ideas from low-level, simplistic conceptions about the nature of historical knowledge to more powerful ideas based on understandings of history as a defensible form of knowledge.

Similar studies have been carried out in Portugal. Barca (2005) examined how Portuguese students evaluated different historical explanations, but focused on the justifications they used for deciding whether one explanation was better than others. She found that 46.2% of 270 participating students believed there could be better explanations, while 33.6% did not think it possible to determine whether some explanations could be better than others. For some students an explanation was better if it was “more concrete” or conveyed “more data,” while others rejected possibilities for better explanations on relativist grounds (as just point of view). Some students demonstrated an “objectivist view” that the sum of all versions would provide the best explanation. Barca (2005) concluded that, similar to CHATA findings, many students see history as “ready-made stories or as more or less biased accounts of the past,” but the “idea of point of view as an historical feature appear[ed] to emerge at earlier ages in Britain than in Portugal” (p. 80). Barca noted that Cercadillo (2001) similarly found this to be the case in students’ ideas about significance and suggested this may be due to differences in history
curricula, since students start learning history from age 5-7 in the UK compared to age 10 in Portugal.

Gago (2005) examined 52 Portuguese students’ responses to a questionnaire designed to elicit their ideas as to why two historical accounts about the same event differed. She found similar categories of response to the way British students made sense of different historical accounts in the CHATA study. Students’ ideas and understanding of different historical accounts progressed through five stages. She noted that while the quality of explanation appeared to become more sophisticated with age, students from similar age groups were also able to present conceptions at different levels of progression (as was the case among British students). She concluded that young students in Portugal were capable of explaining differences between accounts in sophisticated terms and encouraged history teachers to include different accounts of the same event in their classroom to foster criticisms of perspectives within a carefully designed pedagogy that supported historical inquiry.

Comparisons of the CHATA findings with studies conducted in international settings suggest some common patterns of ideas among students notwithstanding their different cultural backgrounds, language, and institutional contexts. Even as these internationally diverse researchers raised caution about the conclusions that could be made from a comparison of findings, they generally agreed that students hold a range of preconceptions about historical accounts that were common across cultural contexts and that vary in levels of sophistication. Nonetheless, while there has been some consistency in findings across different contexts, there has also been some variability. For example, earlier findings by U.K. researchers indicated that students displayed a strong tendency to think in terms of an inferior past (Ashby & Lee, 1987; Lee & Ashby, 2001). Research in Greece and Italy, however, may suggest an opposite view.
Apostolidou (2007), for example, pointed to Greek students’ views of a past that was glorious or superior to the present.

Interest in second-order historical concepts and progression in history learning have been central concerns for the past three decades in the UK. A growing body of international studies has further extended this knowledge base. These studies raise important implications for the teaching and learning of history: (a) history educators must pay greater attention to students’ ideas about the past and history as a discipline; (b) students are capable of more sophisticated levels of thinking than typically recognized by teachers; (c) a carefully designed history curriculum and pedagogy can help students better evaluate and adjudicate diverse accounts; and (d) students need methodological criteria to help them reasonably evaluate historical accounts, check their ideas, and elaborate their reasoning. In suggesting that greater attention be given to helping students evaluate historical interpretations, Chapman (2011) has offered evaluative criteria and questions (e.g., Do they accurately draw on evidence? How comprehensively is relevant evidence explained? How consistent are the claims?) that can be used to evaluate competing interpretations or accounts of the past.

Follow-up research in different international contexts needs to investigate the extent to which this initial research on second-order concepts and progressions has influenced further research as well as curriculum and pedagogy. For example, to what extent is greater attention being given to the role of second-order concepts and students’ ideas in history curriculum and pedagogy in Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea, which have strong centralized systems that have used history education to promote national agendas? More research in contexts outside of the UK is also needed to examine teachers’ ideas and practice related to teaching second-order concepts and history as a discipline. Research across contexts is needed to better understand the
role of context in shaping teachers’ and students’ ideas about history as well as in shaping classroom practice that aims to develop conceptual understanding in history.

**Global Scholarship on Historical Consciousness and School Curriculum**

Recent work in the UK suggests that school history does not provide a “usable” coherent framework for understanding the past (Haydn, 2011; Lee & Howson, 2009; Shemilt, 2009). These scholars have called for the development of “big picture” frameworks that students can draw on to orient themselves in time (Lee, 2011) and a “conspetual framework of human history that enables them to articulate elements of the past with each other and with the present” in a meaningful fashion (Shemilt, 2000, p. 93). Lee (2011) has argued for a broader notion of historical literacy to cultivate an “active historical consciousness” that would enable students to “make sense of the never stationary past-and-present” (p. 68). This notion of cultivating active historical consciousness suggests a more integrated view of the elements of history education that have been the central concerns of contemporary scholarship (e.g., the contexts of history education, textbook accounts and narrative structures that shape historical understanding, students’ understandings of second-order concepts, the development of historical reasoning competencies, the ability to contextualize, etc.).

Historical consciousness is an open concept that can embrace many elements of historicity, such as historical literacy, narratology, historical competencies, historical reasoning, historical culture, and historical understanding (Körber, 2015). The open and multidisciplinary nature of the concept, however, has also caused problems. There has been a high degree of terminological diversity and a general lack of conceptual clarity regarding key ideas in the field (Kansteiner, 2002), making the concept imprecise (Körber, 2015). Insights about historical consciousness have emerged from the fields of memory studies, public history, cultural studies,
identity politics, heritage studies, and media studies to include discussions about national memory, public memory, counter-memory, official memory, cultural memory, and collective memory (e.g., Aronsson, 2015; Confino, 1997; Crane, 1997; Halbwachs, 1992; Kansteiner, 2002; Nora, 1989; Sturgen, 2008). For Aronsson (2010), the multidisciplinary nature of the field has resulted in a high degree of fragmentation, with each field attending to different facets of historical consciousness and historical culture.

Nevertheless, historical consciousness has assumed a central role in history education scholarship and influenced curriculum in several contexts. For Körber (2015), the concept of historical consciousness was an innovation that shifted history education from a focus on national agendas for social and political cohesion to viewing history more broadly and as a tool that enabled people to think historically and reflect on the historically situated nature of their experience. It also helped history educators be more aware of the variety of ways in which history is communicated and learned—to more fully consider the “variety of voices in which the echo of the past is heard” (Gadamer, 2006, p. 285). School history is one of many voices in the development of historical consciousness and most likely “forms only a small part of our consciousness of the past” (van Alphen & Asensio, 2012, p. 347).

History education competes with and interacts in complex ways with multiple other sources of historical consciousness. There are numerous points of reference to the past: family histories, political discourses, museums, memorials and other heritage sites, popular culture and media, etc. School history is one of many reference points while “the media, their structure, and the rituals of consumption they underwrite might represent the most important shared component of peoples’ historical consciousness, although this non-confrontational, semi-conscious, non-referential, and decentralized process is extremely difficult to reconstruct after the fact”
(Kansteiner, 2002, p. 195). This statement points to the challenges of researching historical consciousness, since it is continuously produced and reproduced through a confluence of different media and institutions.

Historical narratives provide a useful framework for analyzing historical consciousness (Wertsch, 2004). Historical narratives, which give meaning to time by “telling [people] who they are and what the temporal change of themselves and their world is about” (Rüsen, 2005, p. 2), have also been a research focus. Several history education researchers have investigated the role of narrative structures and the ways they function as socio-cultural tools for understanding the past (e.g., Barton, 2012; Carretero, López, González, & Rodríguez-Moneo, 2012; Peck, 2010; Wang, 2008; Wertsch, 1998, 2008). This work finds a range of narrative templates in national contexts as varied as the US, Northern Ireland, New Zealand, Spain, the Netherlands, Canada, China, and countries of the former Soviet Union. Typically, these narratives are “organized around a continuous and a temporal protagonist, the nation, which is at once the origin and final destination of the narrative…[and] create a positive emotional evaluation—frequently uncritical of the nation’s history” (Carretero et al., 2012, p. 154). In their analysis of history textbooks of different nations (mostly Latin American), Carretero et al. (2012) argued that there are six common features of historical master narratives:

1. Exclusion-inclusion features that designate a positive “we” and negative “others”;
2. Cognitive and affective anchorings of identity;
3. Frequent presence of mythic characters and narratives;
4. Search of freedom or territory;
5. Basic moral orientations that justify political decisions and various violent acts; and
6. Romantic and essentialist concepts of both the nation and its citizens. (p. 157)
Besides the analysis of historical narrative, the construct *use-of-history* has been elaborated as a way to link the concepts of historical consciousness and historical culture (Nordgren, 2016). It has been employed as an educational concept in history curricula in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark “to open classrooms to public historical cultures as a field of study” (Nordgren, 2016, p. 480). Use-of-history points to the ways history is used to communicate meanings about identity (both individual and collective) and past, present, and future (Aronsson, 2015). Nordgren (2016) has argued there are three main reasons for using history: to explain the world; to form identities; and to influence others. History is used to explain the world through different historical references, analogies, metaphors, descriptions, narrative accounts, and comparisons (in both disciplinary and public forms). Since one’s identity and experience are situated in time, history is also employed to relate identity to time, in terms of origins and through the construction of narratives that give meaning to identity over time (Thorp, 2015). History is also used to present different kinds of arguments and is central to discourses of power and counter-power, according to Nordgren (2016). Use-of-history provides a useful analytical concept for examining the many ways history is used as part of historical culture and the ways historical consciousness is communicated or performed (Nordgren, 2016). It provides a useful educational concept by helping teachers and students think about the ways history is used for different purposes in different societies, whether in political rhetoric, through memorials and commemorations, or in developing national identities.

The theoretical tradition of historical consciousness is now well established in Europe and has been enacted in several educational settings, especially in Germany and Sweden. Kölbl and Konrad (2015) have argued that historical consciousness is now the “key concept” in history education in Germany. Körber and Meyer-Hamme (2015) describe the FUER-model, based on
Rüsen’s work and developed by Hasberg and Körber (2003). It features four dimensions of historical competence:

1. Competence in devising historical questions, including questions about historical phenomena in everyday life;
2. Methodological competence to both “re-construct” historical explanations from information sources and analytically “de-construct” and evaluate historical statements (accounts, explanations, interpretations, narratives, etc.);
3. Orientation competence to relate others’ judgements and conclusions about the past to one’s own life and to society; and
4. Competence with historical knowledge to understand substantive concepts as well as understand and use second-order historical concepts. (Körber & Meyer-Hamme, 2015, p. 93-94)

These dimensions have made historical consciousness explicit in curriculum by focusing on the conceptual and methodological tools necessary for the study of history as well as the narrative competence to analyze and reflect upon the role of history to understand past and present and anticipate the future. As Kölbl and Konrad (2015) have argued, historical consciousness in Germany’s curriculum provides a “cognitive apparatus to analyze history in a methodologically reflective way” (p. 23). These dimensions help history educators consider the ways students can use history and its cognitive processes to orient themselves in time, construct and critically analyze historical narratives, and draw on history to make sense of their own experience and present conditions. For Körber (2015), this curriculum innovation has operationalized historical consciousness as a set of competencies and capabilities, rather than a state of mind or theoretical orientation. In terms of assessment, it signaled a shift from content to performance standards.
Sweden’s history curriculum aims to develop students’ historical consciousness. According to Eliasson, Alvén, Yngvéus, and Rosenlund (2015), the curriculum objectives include students being able “to use a historical frame of reference,” “critically examine, interpret, and evaluate sources as a basis for creating historical knowledge,” “reflect upon their own and others’ use of history,” and use historical concepts “to analyze how historical knowledge is organized, created, and used” (pp. 171-172): As in the German curriculum, there is emphasis on self-reflective history learning that enables students “to reflect upon their own and other people’s uses of history” (p. 172). These uses of history are similar to those elaborated by Nordgren (2016) and include helping students understand how historical narratives orient people and society in time—and that people use history to influence ideas about the past, understandings of the present, and future orientations. Sweden’s national assessments focus on historical consciousness and related competencies and are part of the Swedish strategy to influence the teaching and learning of history in classrooms (Seixas & Ercikan, 2015).

**Conclusions and New Directions in Research**

History curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment in Germany and Sweden provide cases in which the constructs of historical consciousness, use-of-history, and second-order historical concepts are being implemented in classrooms. These constructs provide useful frameworks to better understand the role of narrative structures in different contexts and the ways they are used in history education curriculum and textbooks for national, ideological, moral, and economic purposes. This supports comparative work to identify the influence of historical culture and different approaches to historiography as an important line of scholarly work internationally. The work of Carretero et al. (2012) and Barton (2012) to identify different types of narratives across
national contexts provides models to systematically compare historiographies, narrative templates, history curriculum, and textbooks within particular regions as well as globally.

Since many countries have also introduced history education reforms emphasizing some aspects of disciplinary history, such as second-order concepts, comparative research across contexts is needed to consider the many different ways learning history as a discipline interacts with, and is perhaps constrained by, efforts to develop national citizens, moral subjects, and productive workers across national contexts. There is a need for more work that looks at the ways different contextual factors—historical, historiographic, national, neoliberal, cultural, political, economic, etc.—interact to shape history education across national contexts and the teaching of history as a disciplinary practice.

Conceptual and empirical work drawing on use-of-history can be especially important to provide frameworks for investigating each of the areas noted above—textbook and narrative accounts, efforts related to disciplinary history and developing historical understanding, and the different contexts that shape, enable, and constrain history education. For example, use-of-history can be used as an analytical concept to critically analyze textbooks by situating them in broader historical culture. Use-of-history can help teachers and students focus on the ways textbooks communicate meaning, try to explain the world (from official perspectives), produce (mainly nationalist) identities, and exert influence in terms of moral orientations, inclusions, and exclusions, and privileged perspectives. Use-of-history also can help open classrooms to the study of historical culture using disciplinary methods and concepts. This would enable students to be more aware of the ways their historical consciousness (and ideation) is shaped by different aspects of culture. Paying greater attention to students’ ideas in classrooms, in ways suggested by the U.K. research tradition, also supports this move toward making historical consciousness,
historical culture, second-order concepts, and use-of-history central focal points in classroom practice.

History education does not have to be exclusively about national identity formation, as efforts in the UK suggest. As Barton (2008) found in his research, unlike U.S. students who tended to link their identities to narratives of national development, students in Northern Ireland “saw history as a way of learning about the lifestyles of people different than themselves” (p. 296). As part of this study, Barton (2008) noted that he never understood the narrowness of his own views about history education until he started researching students’ ideas about history in Northern Ireland. This led him to understand how young people’s historical thinking developed in relationship to different contexts and curricula. Comparative research has the potential to challenge previous ways of thinking and yield new insights (Barton, 2008; Hahn, 2006).

International history education research must more fully investigate the ways all kinds of difference shape understandings of history and the development of historical consciousness. This is especially important in the increasingly heterogeneous, diverse, and pluralistic societies of the 21st century. A good starting point in this endeavor might be to ask if disciplinary history, second-order concepts, and the concept of historical consciousness are mainly Western constructs and whether they apply to particular Asian cultural contexts, for example. Seixas (2017) has argued that multicultural and aboriginal forms of historical knowing may challenge conceptions of historical consciousness developed in Europe. This may also be the case with Asian conceptions of history and its uses. As Mignolo (2012) reminds us, histories are located in spatial dimensions too: “Western civilization managed to have the epistemic privilege of narrating its own local history and projecting it onto universal history” (p. ix). He goes on to argue that over the past 500 years, “one local history, that of Western civilization, built itself as
the point of arrival and owner of human history. Ownership was expressed by building a system of knowledge as if it were the sum and guardian of all knowledges, past and present” (p. x).

Comparative history education research offers the opportunity to better understand the nature of disciplinary history and historical understanding, different narrative templates, and historical consciousness across different contexts.
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