CHAPTER 23

The Power of Story: Historical Narratives and the Construction of Civic Identity

Helen Haste and Angela Bermudez

We are historical creatures. The past is present in how we define ourselves, in how we understand our communities and our role in them, and in how we imagine possible futures. Our sense of the past informs the direction of social transformations we envision and in which we partake.

According to the concept of historical culture advanced in this handbook, the past is necessarily present in a wide variety of relationships and transactions constituent of our personal and collective identities. As Grever and Adriaansen as well as Liakos and Bilalis explain in their respective chapters, *historical culture* comprises public uses of history, such as preserving and visiting historical museums, producing and consuming historical literature and films, documenting the historical background of current debates, teaching history in schools or doing historical research. The related concept of *historical consciousness* further explains the social function of history that underlies the idea of historical culture. As conscious beings, humans strive to understand the past in order to orient themselves in the present and project their future (Rüsen, 2004; Seixas, 2004, 2017).

In this chapter, we build on these two concepts to examine the relationship between *history education* and *civic education*, particularly regarding the role of historical narratives in the construction of civic culture and identities that we understand in the framework of *New Civics*. In the last decade, a host of social, academic and pedagogical transformations have redefined civic education, expanding the concept of civic action beyond conventional participation in electoral politics. New Civics emphasizes that actual civic engagement takes

H. Haste (✉)
Harvard Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA

A. Bermudez
Center for Applied Ethics, University of Deusto, Bilbao, Spain

M. Carretero et al. (eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-52908-4_23

place in a variety of social scenarios, addressing multiple issues, and through a range of different means. Grounded in sociocultural psychology, both civic education and engagement are seen as processes situated in particular contexts in which participants establish social interactions and dialogue. The main contribution of a sociocultural psychological approach to historical culture is the consideration of an active subject, whether it be a student learning history or an engaged citizen embedded in historical cultural practices. Narratives in general, and historical narratives in particular, are prime cultural tools for these interactions.

Civic actors use narratives to understand their contexts and experiences (past and present), and their agency within them. Narratives carry and frame the cultural stories we draw upon to make sense, to create identity and to define boundaries and alliances. This is not surprising. History is interwoven with narrative. Facts don't exist in isolation; it is their context that gives them meaning. Threaded in narratives, historical events gain rhetorical power because they fit into a good story. A narrative implies explanations of causality and consequences that justify the dominant social system, social practices and social values—or suggest challenging or subversive alternatives.

The relationship between history and narrative has been the subject of heated controversies. In historiography, long-standing debates have confronted the merits and shortfalls of storied versus analytical forms in the examination, representation and explanation of the past (Cronon, 1992; Munslow, 2007; White, 1984). Is the task of historians to describe or to explain the past? Are both tasks equally interpretive? Do storied accounts and analytic explanation withstand equally well the rigors of a critical lens and methodological procedures? Dovetailing these questions, history education too has discussed the power of narrative to shape students' understanding of the past, and of our knowledge of it (Levesque, 2014; Shemilt, 2000).

The relationship between history and civics is equally controversial and the two disputes are not unrelated. If history writing and teaching respond to present social concerns, moral questions or identity matters, this may compromise academic rigor and open the door for a political or ideological manipulation of the past. Such concern is not unwarranted, but we cannot ease our worry by simply assuming that academic rigor makes historiography politically disinterested and ideologically neutral. Understanding history as a sociocultural practice, the concepts of historical culture and historical consciousness challenge a strict separation between academic and popular uses of history (Grever & Adriaansen, 2017; Liakos & Bilalis, 2017). This does not negate the differences between them, but rather underscores their common foundations and the many ways in which they interplay. Greater attention to the public dimensions of historical practice has led to an increasing recognition of what Seixas describes as the 'porousness between contemporary interests and our narrations of the past' (Seixas, 2017). This recognition compels us to manage the tension between rigor and relevance that is fundamental to establishing a good connection between history and civic education.

In turn, such connection brings us back to the narrative structure of historical consciousness (Ricoeur, 1999; Rüsen, 2004; Seixas & Morton, 2013). This narrative structure affords (a) the flow between accounts of the past, experiences in the present and imaginations of the future, (b) the emphasis on individual and collective agency within the complex mechanisms of historical causation and (c) the articulation of moral questions regarding the implications of past events and historical interpretations for our lives today. Historical consciousness makes little sense if it is not for the sense of flow, agency and ethical awareness that historical narratives provide. These affordances explain how historical narratives frame our civic engagement, as they provide reference points for justifying, interrogating, challenging or resisting current social arrangements and practices.

Reframing Civic Engagement: The Emergence of 'New Civics'

What do we need to know in order to understand civic identity and its antecedents? What are the processes involved in an individual becoming, and being, civically engaged or being disempowered or alienated? The rethinking of 'New Civics' expands the definition of civic participation not only beyond the narrow scope of voting-related behavior but also beyond the premise that the primary route to civic action is knowledge of political institutions (Carretero, Haste & Bermudez, 2016; Haste, 2004, 2010; Sherrod, Torney-Purta, & Flanagan, 2010).

Partisanship or voting occupies only a part of civic responsibility which for most people includes ongoing commitment to the community, to helping others and in some cases to making one's voice heard on social issues—local or national. Young people are considerably more motivated by single issues than by party politics and many are active in improving and sustaining their community for the benefit of the less privileged. The explosion of new technology has radically transformed what civic action is possible for young people and the less powerful of all ages (Allen & Light, 2015). Social movements, community engagement and unconventional action such as protest are increasingly included in the purview of civic participation. What unites all these components of civic participation is the capacity to feel, and take, responsibility for a public purpose with the goal of effecting positive change. The agenda of New Civics education is to empower young people to have a positive civic identity.

Civic engagement is about interpreting and evaluating a social or political situation, in the context of beliefs and values (e.g., about social justice, or social order) that stir moral concern. Further, it is about whom the individual perceives as effective agents or channels for exercising that responsibility. Does he or she have the skills, or connections, to take any action? Does he or she feel a personal responsibility to take action, or just a conviction that 'someone' should do something?

The implication of this perspective is that civic engagement is contextualized and cannot be explained solely as an individual process. It is a dynamic transaction between individuals making sense within their own cognitive space, negotiating and constructing meaning in face-to-face dialogue, and both these processes drawing on cultural and historical narratives, which provide both explanation and justification.

What are the context and origins of this redefinition of civic engagement? Where did it come from? The narrow research and policy focus on mainstream political activity in a stable society was profoundly challenged by the wave of unconventional protest activity in the 1960s; increasingly, scholars and politicians alike needed to take this as serious political activity. The massive geopolitical changes around 1990 also dented the idea of the universal nature of democracy, as emergent states redefined this in terms of their own identity and history rather than borrowing from Western European or US models. The following period of social upheaval engaged large numbers of citizens, especially the young, in constructing a new system and new or reconstructed cultural stories (Andrews, 2007; Haste, 2004). In parallel came challenges to the conventional Left-Right spectrum. As Anthony Giddens and others have argued, many recent social movements including environmentalism and feminism cross the traditional left and right boundaries and manifest different narratives of 'liberation' or 'emancipation' (Adam, Beck, & van Loon, 2000; Giddens, 1994). Putnam further pushed the conventional boundaries of the political by asserting that community involvement is both a source of social capital, maintaining civic society, and as a locus for the practice of civic engagement, it is an important route to deeper political commitment (Putnam, 2000).

The Roles of History Education in Civic Education

Historical narratives play an important role representing different aspects of civic engagement such as the role and agency of different individual and collective actors, the possibilities and obstacles to processes of social change, the origins and developments of public issues, and so on. But, how do some narratives promote active citizenship while others promote alienation and impotence? What enables people to feel that they can be effective agents in their particular settings and communities? The roles of history education in civic education are a complex matter.

Since its inception in school curricula in the late nineteenth century, history education was essential to the formation of new citizens (Carretero, 2011; Nakou & Barca, 2011). Carretero argues that a *Romantic tradition* has recurrently positioned school history as a tool to create and sustain cohesive national identities, establishing one account of the past that seeks to instill in future citizens a positive view of dominant groups and of the country's political evolution (Carretero, 2011; Carretero & Bermudez, 2012). In sup-

port of these goals, historical narratives prioritize content that emphasizes a common origin, focuses on the groups with which students should identify, provides historic models of civic virtue and glorifies the country's past (Barton & Levstik, 2008).

However, the elitist and biased representations of the past often contained in these romantic narratives have not gone uncontested, among other things because they alienate students who do not feel represented, and hamper their sense of agency (Barton, 2012; Den Heyer, 2003; Epstein, 2009; Harris & Reynolds, 2014). Many scholars and educators advocate for teaching historical accounts that are more inclusive, pluralist and critical representations of the past, preparing students for the multicultural, complex and rapidly changing societies in which most of them live (Nordgren & Johansson, 2015; Yogev, 2010). Carretero argues that this draws upon an *Enlightened tradition* in which history education is primarily concerned with helping students understand the complexities of their past (Carretero, 2011); critical understanding rather than patriotic love is what defines the good citizen.

Different conceptions of how history education fosters a critical understanding of the complexities of the past, and how such understanding prepares students for their civic lives in the present, have different implications for the role of historical narratives. Seixas (2016) claims that the historical consciousness brought about by modernity heightened 'the relativity of all values [and] the historicity of all traditions', leading to the conception that 'the past was radically different from the present, and the future would therefore be different from that which is currently known'. In these circumstances—he says—'the task of preparing the next generation was radically different from the task of a culture in which tradition is preserved unchanged from one generation to the next' (Seixas, 2016: ….).

As Carretero and Bermudez (2012) note, developing a rational understanding of the past was part of the progressive effort that since the first decades of the twentieth century strove to 'open the classroom to the pressing complexities of social life (industrialization, urbanization, and immigration at that time)' (p. 635). In the late 1950s and 1960s, different programs for the teaching of social studies and history in the United States echoed these ideas. Hunt and Metcalf (1955) outlined a curriculum for a 'rational inquiry on problematic areas of culture', and Massialas and Cox (1966) argued 'the conditions of the society made it imperative that the schools accept as its role the 'progressive reconstruction' of the culture' rather than affirm itself as 'a conserving agent of the past achievements of the culture' (p. 21).

Recent research on how schools in different countries teach about the violent past underscores the contribution of history education to helping students understand and deal with issues such as racism, inequality or violence. Historical narratives spark conflicting and troubling collective memories, but if carefully confronted, they open the possibility of learning about and from historical traumas (Barton & McCully, 2005; Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012;

Cole, 2007). The connection between history education and civic education is established through the content of what is taught and learned. Historical narratives foreground new issues and advance alternative explanations that interrogate social practices which have been taken for granted, shed new light on the roots of current problems, or give voice to individual and collective actors previously marginalized.

Another argument is that history education develops in students the capacity to engage in rigorous inquiry about the past, which in turn will serve 'for thinking about the human world in time' (Lee & Ashby, 2000: 216). Research on the development of historical thinking (Dickinson, Gordon, & Lee, 2001; Stearns, Seixas, & Wineburg, 2000; Shemilt, 1980) shows that students can learn to deal with the intricacies of historical evidence, the layered webs of historical multicausality, the multidimensional processes of change and continuity, and the contextual meaning of beliefs and practices that appear foreign today. Allegedly, these capacities for historical inquiry can translate to civic competence, fostering for instance the capacities to engage in reflective controversy, form independent positions based on reasoned considerations of evidence from multiple sources, trace the origins and evolution of current issues, consider the value dimensions of public issues, and consider and coordinate the differing perspectives of people (Barton & Levstik, 2008; Barton & McCully, 2007). In this case, the connection between history and civic education is not established through the content of historical narratives but rather through a set of tools derived from epistemological concepts and procedures of historical inquiry that serve the student (and the citizen) to critically examine and interrogate claims passed on to them, as well as to develop their own.

Three decades of constructivist research on the development of historical thinking provides ample psychological evidence to challenge the Romantic idea of a passive consumer of social narratives. Students can learn to use the tools of critical historical inquiry to interrogate cultural and historical narratives and develop a sophisticated understanding of them (Bermudez, 2015). In turn, scholarship informed by sociocultural theory (Wertsch, 1997, 2002) has redefined how to approach the role of identity, moral values and emotions in historical understanding, three elements that many regarded as the landmarks of the Romantic tradition. Carretero and Bermudez (2012) note that the current sociocultural perspective differs from the Romantic tradition in at least four important ways: (1) it portrays historical narratives as cultural artifacts rather than as essential distillation of national character, (2) because of that, it recognizes different and often contentious views of the past rather than positing the existence of one shared narrative, (3) it claims an active rather than a passive role for the individual in the process of consuming and constructing historical narratives, and locates this process in its sociocultural context and (4) because of that, it examines the interplay of rationality, values and emotions, rather than dismissing the importance of any of these elements.

A Sociocultural Framework

In a sociocultural vein, we now present an explanatory model that locates the individual within a cultural, social and dialogic context (Haste, 2014). We argue that this model provides a useful framework to understand the teaching and learning of history as a *transactional* and *dynamic* interaction between the individual (including the cognitive processes involved in understanding history), the immediate social and institutional environment (including interpersonal dialogue and classroom practice), and the wider social and cultural context and processes (including the production, circulation and consumption of historical narratives). The framework is also useful to organize what we have learned from the different strands of inquiry in history teaching and learning, and to orient further research that investigates these dynamic interactions as the basis for a fruitful collaboration between history and civic education.

This model (see Fig. 23.1) conceives the individual as an active agent, iteratively negotiating meaning, identity and relationships within many social contexts. This takes place in three domains: (a) the domain of available cultural, societal and historical discourses, narratives and explanations; (b) the domain of dialogic interaction through conversation, persuasion, argumentation and also scaffolding; and (c) the domain of individual cognitive processes, identities and subjectivity.

This model is not hierarchical nor are the domains nested; all three operate in concert and the relationship between each of the three points of the triangle is iterative and bidirectional. The individual derives meaning actively *from* dialogue and *from* cultural resources but also contributes through dialogue to the negotiation of meaning. The individual accesses culture directly through media, institutional practices and literature, through familiar narratives and metaphors that take for granted, and convey, normative explanations and assumptions (Billig, 1995; Haste & Abrahams, 2008). In dialogue with others, the individ-

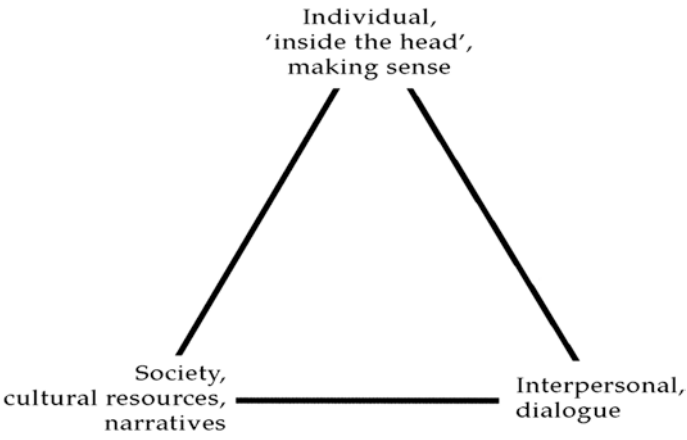

Fig. 23.1 Sociocultural model

ual simultaneously draws on his or her own constructs and alludes to presumed common cultural ground. The purpose of the dialogue may be finding consensus, acquiring new knowledge or understanding, or serving individual goals of persuading, defending or establishing one's authority, credibility and alliances. It is a constantly iterative process of managing feedback loops and being alert to alternative ways forward.

Each of these domains is important in nurturing and shaping civic engagement and historical understanding; we argue that it is the interaction between them that explains the strong ties between history and civic education. Each of them is addressed in more detail in the following.

The Domain of Available Cultural, Societal and Historical Discourses, Narratives and Explanations

Culture is not a static backdrop to thought and dialogue but is dynamically interwoven with every linguistic action and indeed with the frames within which cognition happens. The metaphor of *the human being as tool*-user helps to understand this dynamic conception of culture. This metaphor comes from the Vygotskian perspective that meaning derives from utilizing tools or symbols as mediators with the environment (Gillespie & Zittoun, 2010; Haste, 2014; Tappan, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). The tool-user draws upon culturally available and culturally legitimized tools and resources, including narratives, in order to make sense and to orient action. In the context of civic engagement, these 'tools' include narratives and discourses, as well as specific routes to action such as voting, petitioning or blogging (a new tool). These tools represent and shape our understanding of the workings of the political system, the mechanisms and possibilities of change, the sources of power and the nature of prevailing power relations.

For instance, a nation's schools often mirror the dominant narratives of civic structure. In the US, for example, school life and leadership rely heavily on popularity and gaining the trust of peers; arguably, this reflects many aspects of US populist democracy. In many contemporary Chinese schools, class monitors and a small committee of students serve as the class management body for minor organizational and disciplinary functions, paralleling local practices within the Chinese political system. The Western emphasis on the 'democratic classroom' as fostering civic awareness and civic skills reflects belief both in the power of practice and that a democratic school environment is a microcosm of a democratic society (Sherrod, Torney-Purta, & Flanagan, 2010).

Likewise, school history often mirrors dominant narratives about the past that lay the foundations of students' national identities. Ferro's pioneering study (1984; 2003) on how the past is taught to children around the world revealed that historical events are framed in different and often contradictory ways by the official narratives of the Nation-State and the counternarratives of minority, marginalized, alternative or foreign groups. Most national narra-

tives are organized around values and concepts such as progress and freedom, with important implications for the meaning of historical events and their civic relevance. For instance, current American history textbooks frame the forced migration of Indian Nations in the nineteenth century within narratives of nation building and the rise of mass democracy. Such framing renders the resistance of Native Americans as futile attempts to resist progress, and normalizes the violence inflicted on indigenous people as collateral damage, a sad but inevitable price to be paid in exchange for greater progress and improvements (Bermudez & Stoskopf, 2015).

Contrasting texts in history education have important implications for both the construction and understanding of civic culture and identity. This is evident, for instance, in how different Israeli and Palestinian narratives of history and of place play out in the construction of meaning and identity that are sustained in day-to-day dialogue (Adwan, Baron, & Naveh, 2011; Bartal, 2000; Hammack, 2011).

The Domain of Dialogic Interaction and Scaffolding

School texts reproduce cultural narratives. However, the proposed interactive model stresses that how we learn from cultural and historical narratives depends on how we engage with them, hence the importance of dialogic interactions. These dialogic interactions include practices essential to civic life such as ordinary conversation, persuasion, argumentation or scaffolding. Meaning making progresses through feedback and a series of iterative loops, for example, in the position *vis-à-vis* others in dialogue, and between several versions of speakers' own positions. Billig's work on ideologies, and especially on how people talk about the British royal family, demonstrates that people move easily, even in the same utterance, between different discourses. This may be deliberatively to counter others' contributions, drawing on arguments based on a variety of different premises. Or they may make explicit the coexisting positions within their internal dialogue: 'Maybe I think X, but also I can see that Y is a valid position' (Billig, 1995, 1998).

Dialogue is also the crucible for social and cultural change. Culture is sustained, normalized, reproduced and disseminated through ordinary conversation. In times of change, new discourses and narratives are generated through dialogue. Consider, for example, the recent transition in the cultural meaning, and valence, of homosexuality, from pathological deviance sustained by 'expert' discourse, through Gay Rights activism and an emerging discourse of sexual and lifestyle freedom of choice, to scientific evidence for genetics which supports a rights discourse based on diversity.

Social change happens when grassroots dialogue reframes power relationships and questions their legitimacy. Empowerment requires a challenge first to the 'expert' discourses that sustain norms and institutions. For example, feminist scholars 40 years ago explicitly attacked the 'scientific' explanations of differential ability that justified sex discrimination, so challenging the domi-

nant cultural stories of gender. The women's movement also, like other rights movements, saw the need for new cultural discourses to raise awareness of, and resist, tacit discrimination in everyday life (Haste, 1994; Henderson & Jeydel, 2010). In many social movements, such dialogic interactions, in 'cells' or 'consciousness-raising groups', serve as the fount of both reframed discourses and personal empowerment through redefining identity.

Another example is Green awareness. Barely 40 years ago, environmental concern was marginalized. Yet for two decades, care of the environment has been a major government platform and a central topic of social awareness education. How did this happen? The initial impetus, many argue, came from an individual's contribution to cultural narrative; Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* was published in 1962. This stimulated conversation and reframing among people already sensitive to ecological issues. A narrative developed of 'save the planet', of stewardship and therefore individual *moral* responsibility. Over the following years emerged, in parallel, pressure on governments to change energy policies, and exploration of how everyday practice could reduce energy use (Harré, Brockmeier, & Mühlhäusler, 1999). New cultural narratives of responsibility empowered recycling programs, first initiated by enthusiasts and then institutionalized through laws. The concrete images of degradation of the world's beauty and the loss of species made it easy to comprehend, and rapidly even young children could grasp both the consequences of the loss of rain forest and the connection with their parents' shopping habits. Citizens, even very small ones, *owned* their newfound narratives and were empowered by them.

Students engage actively with historical narratives. Adopting rhetorical stances of endorsement, resistance or challenge, they put what they are taught in school in dialogue with what they learn from family, community or interest groups. In some cases, they distort the past in order to preserve dogmatic and sectarian perspectives (Barton & McCully, 2005). In other cases, the cultural narratives brought to school empower minority students to resist or challenge values and explanations of the past that are taken for granted in dominant narratives. Bermudez' (2012) study of an online discussion about the causes of the 1992 Los Angeles race riots illustrates this. A group of Latino and African-American students invoked a 'narrative of continuity' to assert that the riots were a breaking point in a long process of racism and discrimination rooted in slavery. Thus, they challenge the dominant 'narrative of discontinuity' put forth by White-American students who contended that the riots were simply a matter of unruly behavior and that seeking causal connections with the past was an inappropriate strategy to justify violence. Through this discussion, students negotiated two very different types of identity. On one hand, a 'fluid identity' that blends the individual self (I) and the collective self (We), is primarily defined by collective categories such as race, and sees the past as an indelible heritage that lives on in persons. On the other hand, a 'discrete identity' that makes a sharp distinction between the individual self (I) and the collective self (We), is primarily defined by individual categories such as merit or effort, and sees the past as a burden of which you must let go.

Classroom practice and pedagogical scaffolding are dialogic. Teachers who facilitate controversial conversations that challenge students to interrogate their cultural narratives and listen to others can transform polarized debates into reflective dialogue (Barton & McCully, 2007; Hess, 2010; Hess & McAvoy, 2015). This is especially important considering the increased diversity of the student body globally, which makes issues of class, ethnicity or gender more salient in defining what and how different students learn in the history classrooms (Grever, Pelzer, & Haydn, 2011; Seixas, 2017).

The Domain of Individual Cognitive Processes, Identities and Subjectivity

To engage effectively with historical thinking, students need the capacity for disciplined inquiry, developing more sophisticated ideas about the epistemology of history (or how we construct and evaluate historical accounts) and skills to use them in learning about the past. Research focused on individual cognitive processes has generated progression models of how students develop an increasingly sophisticated capacity for the analysis of evidence, the reconstruction of causal relationships, the analysis of change and continuity, or the reconstruction of different perspectives in their own context. These concepts and procedures of historical inquiry provide a valuable tool kit to support reflective civic engagement, including the critical examination of contested historical narratives (Bermudez, 2015).

However, research on historical thinking does not typically consider how identity and context matter when learning about the past. Bermudez (2012) argues that this limitation derives from the tendency in research on historical understanding to treating students as individual thinkers, rather than as thinkers-in-relation-to-others. Her research shows that when students argue about contending historical narratives, they consciously or unconsciously select from among the capacities they have developed, serving intellectual purposes of advancing understanding as well as discursive purposes of negotiating identity and relationships. Carretero and Bermudez (2012) argue that a focus on learning concepts and procedures of historical inquiry separates the process of reasoning from the context in which the individual reasons, and in doing so, it overlooks the sociocultural dynamics of meaning-making. The model proposed in this chapter attempts to address this limitation.

The Core Processes of Meaning-Making and Civic Identity Construction

We asked earlier, what do we need to know in order to understand civic identity and its antecedents? What are the social and psychological processes involved in an individual becoming, and being, civically engaged or being disempowered or alienated? We identify four core processes involved in civic engage-

ment: *identity*, *narrative*, *positioning and efficacy* (Haste, 2004, 2010). In any specific situation, *all* are operating, in parallel and in concert. They are manifested in the interplay between the individual, dialogic and cultural domains just discussed.

Identity can be defined as a self-organizing open system, in which a 'self' that is distinct from the social context while in continual dialogue with it, is actively negotiated (Cresswell & Baerveldt, 2011; Haste, 2014; Hermans & Gieser, 2012). Identity includes personal agency and maintaining a sense of self-integrity, matching up one's self-image against perceived expectations and feedback. How one defines oneself includes a core sense of 'I am the kind of person who believes such and such'. We have a range of core beliefs, but they are differently salient in different contexts so there is fluidity in how they are forefronted in our deliberation and in dialogue. Subjective experience, and the values and beliefs that trigger affective responses are evoked in dialogue and argumentation. Core beliefs are in constant iterative dialogue and negotiation with others, whether face to face, remembered or imagined. Identity is therefore *group-dependent* though not *group-determined*; we negotiate relevant information about and from our salient groups, we choose which beliefs to invoke in argument or which in-group and out-group status we reference at any point.

Identity is not defined by a unitary set of beliefs and actions but by managing a portfolio of possible selves, according to the context. This takes place within the culturally available repertoire of narratives, explanations and discourses that inform what individuals perceive as civic responsibility, what values and beliefs they see as salient to their sense of self, what groups and categories of person they perceive as defining both their in-group and out-group, and the extent to which they feel that they personally have the abilities and skills to take any civic action.

Efficacy is the sense that one can pursue one's values and goals. Civic engagement requires empowerment, the belief that one can, or one's social group can, participate effectively in the civic process. Widening the scope of the civic domain broadens the potential for action and also the likely preconditions that foster empowerment, for these may differ for different kinds of engagement. Individual efficacy derives from the sense of having the necessary skills. However, empowerment (and its absence) also comes from identifying with social groups who are perceived to have (or to lack) power, who are part of the institutions of power or who are prevented institutionally from having power. One of the first steps in the enfranchisement and empowerment of disadvantaged groups is to change their self-perception through narrative and dialogue, and to provide them with avenues through which power becomes possible. Our sense of efficacy also depends on our understanding of the social system and how vulnerable or resistant it is to change. If this is represented as impenetrable or immovable, individuals may become pessimistic about the likelihood of being effective despite their own skills and responsibility.

As we have argued above, *narratives* are a cultural resource of information and explanations that may justify, legitimize or undermine current conditions. They give coherence: a causal relationship between past and present and a projection of possible futures that may either perpetuate or change those conditions. They support, or not, the empowerment of groups or categories of people so in times of social change, such narratives are powerful; they facilitate a new order and new entitlements. The narratives that sustain identity and efficacy valorize the qualities required of those who will be the future empowerers. Heroes model versions of past figures but are recast to meet the demands of the current world (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

Further, narratives frame what is credible; there is always more than one narrative about the past and the present, but how many are deemed legitimate? The dominant social group writes the authoritative histories which enter into the canon (Carretero, 2011). Subordinate groups have their own stories that retell past events and redescribe institutions, explain and legitimate changes (Adwan et al., 2011; Bartal, 2000; Hammack, 2011). Under periods of oppression, marginalized groups maintain a parallel and hidden narrative of their history (and of their future liberation) which is passed informally through generations and becomes salient when change is possible (Wertsch, 1998).

Narratives are a source of *positioning*. Positioning is a discursive process by which an individual manipulates power relations and entitlement between self and other, in direct dialogue or in reported speech (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & van Langenhove, 1991). For example, direct positioning may occur when A requests that B do something; in doing so, A is positioning herself in a relationship of power, or entitlement, *vis-a-vis* B. B, however, may resist the request and therefore the positioning, and in resisting, repositions A as not entitled to that power, or as bullying or insensitive.

Positioning also can be indirect and, for example, establish in-group and out-group parameters. B may give an account of the above incident to C, in which B is positioning himself as the righteous victim in the account, and A as the 'villain'. Telling this account positions C as presumed to share B's values; if C acquiesces to B's interpretation, this validates it as a shared or normative discourse. Cultural narratives and stereotypes provide the resources for positioning individuals and groups as insiders or outsiders, or having positive or negative attributes that define them as 'we' or 'they' (Hall, 1997). Locating 'we' and 'they' in the dialogue, positioning groups or belief systems as 'ours' or 'other,' legitimates or delegitimizes, and so affirms the identities of the interlocutors.

Civic Engagement as a Cultural Process: An Example

An extended example illustrates how the three proposed domains interact with each other in the processes involved in reconstructing cultural and historical narratives in a period of rapid social change, and how individual civic identity and efficacy are sustained by narratives, and positioning.

In 1994 at the time Mandela become South Africa's President, Salie Abrahams interviewed a number of young people in a township in South Africa who were voting for the first time (Abrahams, 1995; Haste & Abrahams, 2008). They were all, according to Apartheid criteria, 'black' or 'colored' and their families were disenfranchised prior to that point. The interviews are full of hope about their own futures and also of new-found civic efficacy. They expressed very similar versions of a new cultural narrative which echoed Mandela's message but which also translated into their own new identities. Here, extracts from the interview with JJ, an 18-year-old boy from a Sotho family, are discussed. First, we will consider the cultural narratives explaining the history behind Apartheid, the collective historical identity that he himself shares, the future agenda for his own group and the discourses around unity for the future. Then, we will consider how these extracts reflect two other civic identity processes, efficacy and positioning. JJ's interview shows how his identity was framed by historical narratives about apartheid and how the new cultural stories gave him a renewed sense of self with new moral responsibilities.

We divide the material into four extracts. First, we will consider the narratives evident in each extract:

> ***JJ 1:*** *Jan Van Riebeeck [founder of Cape Town] came here and took everything he could take, they had no respect for us. They wanted everything that he saw, the land, the diamonds, the rivers, the mountain and the sea. They were gluttons and wanted to (eat up) everything. They not only took everything but they broke us up into splinters and made us powerless, because if we had remained one, we would have defeated them ….*
>
> *They were extremely greedy but also extremely clever in a bad way. That is why they divided us up from the start, that was so … shrewd.*

Here, we see two narratives: one emphasizes the personal vices of the colonists and the other is a narrative of imperialist practice: divide and rule.

> ***JJ 2:*** *Apartheid was a big tragedy. We lost our land and lost our lives. We even lost our dignity and I even hated myself and my skin, why am I black, why did I have to suffer like this, why must I feel like a piece of dirt walking around here, we got nothing and they got everything. But, as I grew up, I learnt that I was somebody, I could be proud of myself. I am black and I know we will rule this land. That made me walk tall and feel proud.*

In this extract, we see the new narrative of pride defined by the contrast with the preexisting narrative of shared identity of oppression.

> ***JJ 3:*** *[White people did] nothing, and then a few of them would [say] sorry, but just a few of them. We don't want their sorry, we want justice….Why did they not stand up when we were hurting? We can do the same to the whites if we want to. We can also make them suffer. But no, we must show them that we are better and that we are just and we need unity and that we see them also as people, human beings and not*

like dogs, like the way they saw us. That is what we have to teach these whites, that we are all human beings, all equal.

***SA:** You must teach them?*

***JJ:** Yes, that is our duty.*

In this extract, there are four interwoven narratives. One reiterates past oppression. A second distinguishes those white people who did not endorse Apartheid but failed to stand up for the oppressed groups, so their moral failure is lack of courage. A third narrative is about unity and humanity, which transcends race and prescribes equality. A fourth is a significant new narrative, reflecting Mandela's influence, that empowers the former oppressed groups by positioning them as having the moral responsibility to educate the whites in humanity.

***SA:** You talk about whites…what do you see yourself as?*

***JJ 4:** The answer is South African! If I say I am black then the other person will say he is white and then we start racism again and all the divisions and then we have apartheid. That is why I say that I am a human being and a South African to stop that racism. Black and white was started by apartheid and that will keep us apart. But if we want to unite then we must get rid of that colored, white and black. …*

We are all human beings, all equal. We can't start that again, it will be too cruel for the blacks to do it, we have suffered too much to do that to someone else. I sometimes think we should oppress them, but that will not fix anything, we have had too much anger in South Africa.

This extract elaborates the narrative of humanity and unity through both the transcendence of race under the category 'human' and the argument that labeling *per se* is divisive and undermines this. It also elaborates the narrative of moral responsibility for reeducation.

The example shows multiple narratives in interaction. They connect representations of past experiences, present situation and challenges, and future possibilities. The different narratives are part of a cultural repertoire available to JJ. However, what narratives he invokes and the meaning he makes of them evidence that JJ is engaged in a dialogic construction of his personal identity and agency. That is, cultural narratives are appropriated into individual identity, and different courses of civic action follow from this appropriation. This is a clear example of the interplay between the understanding of history and the sense of self, moral responsibility and civic agency.

We will now consider how these extracts demonstrate positioning; we see several examples. First, JJ positions the founders of the Cape Colony as morally egregious and by so doing, he positions the nonwhite population as victims of an immoral tradition. This positioning is developed through arguing that in consequence the victims are deprived of dignity. However, this is presented as a counterpoint to the repositioning of identity through the recent social changes. In the third extract, JJ differentiates those whites who are pro-Apartheid from those who are apologetic, but then further positions these latter as lacking in commitment. He then engages in the interesting

argumentation, whether nonwhites should position whites now as victims, in retribution, or whether to position nonwhites as morally superior because they can take a comprehensively humanistic view. Finally in this extract he extends the positioning of moral superiority to moral *obligation*; nonwhites *must teach* the whites to be humanistic—elegantly positioning the whites not only as morally deficient but also as less powerful because they are placed in the role of students.

In the fourth extract, JJ repeats some of the argumentation about retribution, but also positions himself as a 'human being' and 'South African' explicitly to counter the positioning that he sees in Apartheid, which arose from the labels. These extracts are a quite transparent representation of the processes involved in reconstructing cultural narratives in a period of rapid social change, the appropriation of these into individual identity and developing the implications for action that follow from that appropriation.

Conclusion

The theoretical model we have presented is grounded in cultural psychology. It reflects a systemic picture of civic engagement that recognizes its dynamic and transactional nature which enables us to appreciate the synergy between New Civics and history education. New Civics focuses on preparing students for active civic engagement, which is conceptualized as the capacity to understand, feel and take responsibility for a public purpose with the goal of effecting positive change. Historical narratives provide accounts of how individual and collective actors engage in a variety of processes that generate more or less social transformation over time.

We consider that these intersections pose five sets of questions that may guide future research but also can be the foundations for critical civic and history education:

- *Historical narratives position some people as part of 'us' and some people as part of 'them'.* What do these boundaries (us/them, we/others) imply for the construction of the notion of 'public'? Who is recognized as part of the 'we' and what is defined as 'ours', must inform the sense of who is entitled to and responsible for the 'public' goods?
- *Historical narratives describe and explain processes of transformation and continuity.* So, how is 'social change' represented in them? Is it rare and marginal? Is it inevitable and unstoppable? Is it episodic, slowly incremental or revolutionary? Is it linear, multidirectional or cyclical? Is change always for the better (equivalent to progress)? Is it regressive?
- *Historical narratives tell stories about individual and collective agency.* The representation of agents and agency in historical explanations informs students' understanding and capacity for civic decision-making. How do historical narratives characterize the role of individual agency in social

change? What capacity do individuals and groups have to generate change? How do personal motivation, choice, commitment and organized action fare in relation to structural forces?

- *Historical narratives characterize individuals and groups and attribute identities to them*. What kind of people and what social groups are positioned as significant social actors of these change processes? Who is empowered, weak, dependent and leading? How homogeneous or diverse are the societies represented? How consensual or conflictive?
- *Historical narratives establish connections between past–present–future, as well as between individual-community*. How do these connections inform a sense of transcendence, purpose and responsibility of individual action (impact to others, consequences for the future). How do they explain the historicity of current civic issues?

The theoretical model of both sociocultural processes and civic identity elements has educational implications. Designing civic education needs to include students' access to the narratives and discourses around their own history and sociopolitical systems and how these compare with other nations (and periods). Most importantly, it should facilitate a critical perspective on all of these which enables them to recognize how and why narratives and discourses were constructed and the functions they serve in the present. Students need to understand how positioning can be the basis for inequality, both in interpersonal interaction and through justification by narratives, as well as be able to deliberatively alter their own and others' positioning behavior. They need to be critically aware of how repositioning can empower (or disempower) and recognize how this has been done historically in times of sociopolitical change; they need to know how to do this in the context of their own experience. Through this process, they also need to become aware that there are numerous possible, open-ended outcomes, not only one solution. In other words, they need support to escape from linear ways of thinking.

References

Abrahams, S. (1995). *Moral Reasoning in Context: The Construction of the Adolescent Moral World Under Apartheid*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Adam, B., Beck, U., & van Loon, J. (Eds.). (2000). *The Risk Society: Critical Issues for Social Theory*. London: Sage.

Adwan, S., Baron, D., & Naveh, E. (2011). *Side By Side: Parallel Histories of Israel-Palestine*. New York, NY: The New Press.

Allen, D., & Light, J. S. (Eds.). (2015). *From Voice to Influence: Understanding Citizenship in a Digital Age*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Andrews, M. (2007). *Shaping History: Narratives of Social Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bar-Tal, D. (2000). *Shared Beliefs in a Society*. London: Sage.
Barton, K. C. (2012). Agency, Choice and Historical Action: How History Teaching Can Help Students Think About Democratic Decision Making. *Citizenship Teaching and Learning, 7*, 131–142.
Barton, K. C., & McCully, A. W. (2005). History, Identity, and the School Curriculum in Northern Ireland: an Empirical Study of Secondary Students' Ideas and Perspectives. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 37*, 85–116.
Barton, K. C., & McCully, A. W. (2007). Teaching Controversial Issues … Where Controversial Issues Really Matter. *Teaching History, 127*, 13–19.
Barton, K. C., & Levstik, L. S. (2008). History. In J. Arthur, C. Hahn, & I. Davies (Eds.), *Handbook of Education for Citizenship and Democracy*. London: Sage.
Bekerman, Z., & Zembylas, M. (2012). *Teaching Contested Narratives: Identity, Memory, and Reconciliation in Peace Education and Beyond*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
Bermudez, A. (2012). The Discursive Negotiation of Cultural Narratives and Social Identities in Learning History. In M. Carretero, M. Rodriguez-Moneo, & M. Asensio (Eds.), *History Teaching and the Construction of National Identities. International Review of History Education* (Vol. 5) (pp. 203–219). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
Bermudez, A. (2015). Four Tools for Critical Inquiry in History, Social Studies and Civic Education. *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, *52*, 102–118.
Bermudez, A., & Stoskopf, A. (2015). Examining Textbook Representations and Teacher Understandings of Political Violence in National Histories: Interrogating the Trail of Tears. *Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association* (*AERA*), Chicago, April 16–20, 2015.
Billig, M. (1995). *Arguing and Thinking: A Rhetorical Approach to Social Psychology* (Revised ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Billig, M. (1998). *Talking of the Royal Family* (Second ed.). London: Routledge.
Carretero, M. (2011). *Constructing Patriotism. Teaching History and Memories in Global Worlds*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
Carretero, M., & Bermudez, A. (2012). Constructing Histories. In J. Valsiner (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Culture and Psychology* (pp. 625–646). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Carretero, M., Haste, H., & Bermudez, A. (2016). Civic Education. In L. Corno & E. M. Anderman (Eds.), *Handbook of Educational Psychology* (Third ed., pp. 295–308). London, UK: Routledge.
Carson, R. (1962). *Silent Spring*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.
Cole, E. (Ed.). (2007). *Teaching the Violent Past: History Education and Reconciliation*. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
Cresswell, J., & Baerveldt, C. (2011). Bakhtin's Realism and Embodiment: Towards a Revision of the Dialogical Self. *Culture & Psychology, 17*(*2*), 263–277.
Cronon, W. (1992). A Place for Stories. Nature, History, and Narrative. *The Journal of American History, March*, 1347–1376.
Davies, B., & Harré, R. (1990). Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior, 20*(*1*), 43–63.
Den Heyer, K. (2003). Between Every "Now" and "Then": A Role for the Study of Historical Agency in History and Citizenship Education. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 31*(4), 411–434.

Dickinson, A., Gordon, P., & Lee, P. (Eds.). (2001). *Raising Standards in History Education. International Review of History Education* (Vol. 3). London, UK: Woburn Press.

Epstein, T. (2009). *Interpreting National History: Race, Identity, and Pedagogy in Classrooms and Communities*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Ferro, M. (1984). *The Use and Abuse of History: Or How the Past is Taught to Children*. London, UK: Routledge (Revised version 2003).

Grever, M., Pelzer, B., & Haydn, T. (2011). High School Students' Views on History. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 43*, 207–229.

Grever, M., & Adriaansen, R. J. (2017). Historical Culture: A Concept Revisited. In M. Carretero, S. Berger, & M. Grever (Eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Historical Culture and Education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Giddens, A. (1994). *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Gillespie, A., & Zittoun, T. (2010). Using Resources: Conceptualizing the Mediation and Reflective Use of Tools and Signs. *Culture & Psychology, 16*(*1*), 37–62.

Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage.

Hammack, P. (2011). *Narrative and the Politics of Identity: The Cultural Psychology of Israeli and Palestinian Youth*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Harré, R., & van Langenhove, L. (1991). Varieties of Positioning. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior, 21*(*4*), 393–407.

Harré, R., Brockmeier, J., & Mühlhäusler, P. (1999). *Greenspeak: A Study of Environmental Discourse*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Harris, R., & Reynolds, R. (2014). The History Curriculum and Its Connection to Students from Minority Ethnic Backgrounds. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 46*(*4*), 464–486.

Haste, H. (1994). *The Sexual Metaphor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Haste, H. (2004). Constructing the Citizen. *Political Psychology, 25*(*3*), 413–440.

Haste, H. (2010). Citizenship Education: A Critical Look at a Contested Field. In L. Sherrod, J. Torney-Purta, & C. Flanagan (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement in Youth* (pp. 161–192). New York, NY: John Wiley.

Haste, H. (2014). Culture, Tools and Subjectivity: The (Re) Construction of Self. In T. Magioglou (Ed.), *Culture and Political Psychology* (pp. 27–48). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

Haste, H., & Abrahams, S. (2008). Morality, Culture and the Dialogic Self: Taking Cultural Pluralism Seriously. *Journal of Moral Education, 37*(*3*), 357–374.

Henderson, S., & Jeydel, A. (2010). *Women and Politics in a Global World* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Hermans, H., & Gieser, G. (Eds.). (2012). *Handbook of Dialogical Self Theory*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Hess, D. (2010). *Controversy in the Classroom: The Democratic Power of Discussion*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Hess, D., & McAvoy, P. (2015). *The Political Classroom: Evidence and Ethics in Democratic Education*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Hunt, M. P., & Metcalf, L. E. (1955). Rational Inquiry on Society's Closed Areas. In W. C. Parker (Ed.), *Educating the Democratic Mind* (pp. 145–170). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Lee, P., & Ashby, R. (2000). Progression in Historical Understanding Among Students Ages 7–14. In P. Stearns, P. Seixas, & S. Wineburg (Eds.), *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives* (pp. 199–222). New York, NY: New York University Press.

Levesque, S. (2014). Why tell stories? On the Importance of Teaching Narrative Thinking. *Canadian Issues, Fall*, 5–11.

Liakos, A., & Bilalis, M. (2016). The Jurassic Park of Historical Culture. In M. Carretero, S. Berger, & M. Grever (Eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Historical Culture and Education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Massialas, B. G., & Cox, C. B. (1966). *Inquiry in Social Studies*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Munslow, A. (2007). *Narrative and History*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nakou, I., & Barca, I. (Eds.). (2011). *Contemporary Public Debates Over History Education*, *International Review of History Education* (Vol. 6). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

Nordgren, K., & Johansson, M. (2015). Intercultural Historical Learning: A Conceptual Framework. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 47*(1), 1–25.

Ricoeur, P. (1999). Memory and Forgetting. In M. Dooley & R. Kearney (Eds.), *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Continental Philosophy* (pp. 5–12). London, UK: Routledge.

Rüsen, J. (2004). Historical Consciousness: Narrative Structure, Moral Function, and Ontogenetic Development. In P. Seixas (Ed.), *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* (pp. 63–85). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Reicher, S., & Hopkins, N. (2001). *Self and Nation: Categorization, Contestation and Mobilization*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Seixas, P. (Ed.). (2004). *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Seixas, P. (2016). Historical Consciousness and Historical Thinking. In M. Carretero, S. Berger, & M. Grever (Eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Historical Culture and Education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Seixas, P., & Morton, T. (2013). *The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts*. Toronto: Nelson Education.

Shemilt, D. (1980). *History 13–16 Evaluation Study*. Edinburgh, UK: Holmes McDougall.

Shemilt, D. (2000). The Caliph's Coin: The Currency of Narrative Frameworks in History Teaching. In P. Stearns, P. Seixas, & S. S. Wineburg (Eds.), *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives* (pp. 83–101). New York, NY: New York University Press.

Sherrod, L., Torney-Purta, J., & Flanagan, C. (Eds.). (2010). *Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement in Youth*. New York, NY: John Wiley.

Stearns, P., Seixas, P., & Wineburg, S. (Eds.). (2000). *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Tappan, M. (2006). Moral Functioning as Mediated Action. *Journal of Moral Education, 35*(*1*), 1–18.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wertsch, J. (1997). Narrative Tools of History and Identity. *Culture and Psychology, 3*(1), 5–20.
Wertsch, J. (1998). *Mind as Action*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Wertsch, J. (2002). *Voices of Collective Remembering*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
White, H. (1984). The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory. *History and Theory, 23*(*1*), *1–33.*
Yogev, E. (2010). A Crossroads: History Textbooks and Curricula in Israel. *Journal of Peace Education, 7*(1), 1–14.