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RUNNING HEAD: TEACHING HISTORY WITH A NEW PARADIGM

Bringing All the Baggage Together....Teaching History With A New Paradigm

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Abstract

This article proposes a new paradigm for the implementation of historical thought and historical inquiry into classroom teaching. Where most of the teaching in advanced level classes centers upon teaching content at the historical macrostructure level, the authors suggest that much is to be gained from exploring the discipline of history at the levels of the historical microstructure and individual consciousness. Each of these cultural levels is defined and an example of its use in the classroom is provided with a concluding discussion of the implications of this paradigm and the potential it holds. This paper served as a foundational paper for future research and serves the purpose of a “white paper” in the field of history education.

Bringing All the Baggage Together....Teaching History With A New Paradigm

The initial question of “what history is and what it should cover?” reverts back to the relatively recent epistemological development of history (Novick, 1988). This development leads to the question of the intellectual development of how the discipline should be taught to students (Husbands, 1996). Carl Becker, the critic of the objectivity movement of the early twentieth century described history as “the memory of all things said and done” which can quickly be extrapolated into another of his maxims that “everyman is an historian” (Becker, 1971). This implies the discipline is accessible to all with appropriate understanding of historical logic and indeed it is. Wineburg (2001) and VanSledright (2002) have both demonstrated that the utilization of historical thought, method, and investigation can be done within the classroom with students of late elementary age. Even though promising for the teaching of history, the question becomes does this ensure the depth of historical study, or is it but superficial, shallow, and but a regurgitation of the ideas presented by historians and parroted by the teachers at the front of the room?

The depth of cognitive use by the students is truly what should be desired in the study of history (Husbands, 1996). This idea while desired by many teachers, seems to elude them due to the difficulty of the planning, the level of research required, and in fact the challenge of developing meaningful investigations for students. Especially in this age of testing and accountability, teachers are hesitant to

stray from a sterile curriculum that does not specifically avoid the facts of a high-stakes test or in younger grade levels to even teach history at all (Fox, 2004). Yet the discipline of history is a rich and vibrant area of inquiry, critical thinking, and rich intellectual engagement. In fact, this intellectual challenge is why the discipline is such a vital element to student study. As noted by Charles Rosenberg, “there is an aesthetic of complexity in history; in history, at least, less in not more, but less” (1997, xx).

In looking at how individuals teach upper-level secondary history, a common practice is to follow the PERSIA model of knowledge (Fitzgerald, 2008). In order to adequately prepare students for the high-stakes test provided through Advanced Placements courses, teachers take students through an intense course, which uses a compressed curriculum in intense study. Many of the teachers provide direct instruction and experiences that focus on Document Based Questions designed to provide students with the opportunity of deeper understandings and in preparation for questions that they will experience during the high-stakes test at the conclusion of the class. PERSIA is an acronym detailing the content that should be explored when exploring different eras and cultures. The acronym is described below:

Political

Economic

Religious

Social

Intellectual

Artistic or Aesthetic

These areas provide teachers with a framework to explore aspects of historical phenomenon in the compressed format required to prepare students for the year-end test. Table 1 provides the reader with an example of topics a teacher would cover teaching two units of class in European history.

Table 1. Sample AP European History Course Topics (Mercado & Young, 2007)

First Three Units of Course

Unit 1. The End of Feudalism and the Renaissance

- Generic attributes of feudalism: agriculture, guilds, kings versus nobles, kings versus popes.
- Compare and contrast the Renaissance in the south versus the Renaissance in the north
- Individualism and humanism
- Why did the Renaissance happen in Italy first?
- Burckhardt thesis
- Kelly thesis
- Heavy hitters in art, architecture, literature, and science

- In what ways was the Renaissance “new” and in what ways was it a retrieval of old ideas?

Unit 2. The Reformation and New Monarchies

- Compare and contrast the New Monarchies in England, France, and Spain
- Foreign and domestic policy in England, France, and Spain
- Causes of the Reformation (especially political and religious causes)
- Political and religious consequences of the Reformation
- The English Reformation
- Political and religious consequences of the English Reformation
- Doctrines of Luther and Calvin compared to the Roman Catholic Church
- The Catholic Reformation and the Council of Trent
- Impact of the Reformation on women
- Peace of Augsburg

In analyzing the list of topics they can be easily grouped into the categories of the PERSIA model. These topics cover a large breadth of information at a very high level of cognitive understanding. The problem that goes with this is the lack of depth involved with the study of the topic. This answer goes into the issue of what exactly the study of history should involve and how deep the study should go? The development of the alternative paradigm presented at the beginning of the article provides a meaningful answer to explore.

The structures referred to in the remainder of this article stem from a theoretical framework proposed by Carroll Smith-Rosenberg (1975). This seminal work in feminist studies summarizes the change in the discipline of history due to the revolution of postmodernism spawned at the beginning of the second-half of the twentieth century. In the article, Smith-Rosenberg explores first the errant assertion of Elizabeth Janeway who claimed “Scholarly historians who deride the idea of a special history of women are quite correct” (Smith-Rosenberg, 1975). As the wave of postmodernism swept over the world of academia, Janeway recanted this assertion and as detailed in Novick (1988), history became a richer and more diverse discipline that eventually survived a major epistemological crisis. Smith-Rosenberg used this issue of epistemological challenge to explain this new paradigm, which holds great promise for student study and detailed understanding of material. The crux of Smith-Rosenberg’s position was that the study of women’s history via the traditional means of study is a woefully deficient model. As noted by Burenheide (2007), the traditional curriculum tends to focus on the recitation of facts of events involving “dead White males and wars.”

The curriculum and focus of historical study can thusly be developed into three specific structures: the macrostructure, the microstructure, and individual consciousness. By framing study into the three frameworks, it is possible to find content that should appeal to interests of all students. When this content is combined to appropriate pedagogical strategies appealing to students specific learning styles and

interests (Gardner, 1983; Dunn & Dunn, 1993; Sousa, 2001), extremely powerful learning can take place in the realm of historical study (Beal, Bolick, & Martorella, 2009). To explain Smith-Rosenberg's structure, it is necessary to first define the three components of this paradigm, then looking how these can be incorporated into the paradigm.

The concept of the macrostructure refers to the traditional subject matter of history. When looking at an historical culture, society, or phenomena as a whole, the historian analyzes this through the lens of a general summation of the large constructs of these examples. Topics studied in the macrostructure involve the development of societal components such as governance, intellectual achievements, aesthetic accomplishments, and religious developments. The identifying component of study in the macrostructure is a big picture description of what is being studied and involves the large-scale generalization of some of the topics named above or in the traditional PERSIA model described previously.

The microstructure presents a new realm for exploration within the context of historical study within the secondary level classroom. As Smith-Rosenberg wrote when describing the 'New Social History', "its frequent neglect of the dynamics of change" is the great error with keeping historical study at the level of the macrostructure (Smith-Rosenberg, 1975, p. 189). By providing exploration in the level of the microstructure, the student can explore the contrast to "the static orientation of a good deal of contemporary American social history" (Smith-

Rosenberg, 1975, p. 189). The question becomes how will this exploration of the microstructure take place? By using sources of demographic data, statistical analyses can take place that provides a multitude of information for students to infer, discuss, discover, and hypothesize about the lives of families, women, and the common people of the time period being studied. The exploration of the microstructures of society has coincided with the advent of large amounts of data from social history and should enable students to better understand these components of society, which will be extremely important in the extremely diverse world that is growing (Novick, 1988).

But beyond looking at the social constructs within the macrostructure and microstructure, the individual consciousness exists as a fertile ground for exploring and understanding human nature beyond the world of ‘dead, White, males’ typically covered in classrooms as discussed prior. By looking at the individual within the context of the historical phenomena, the opportunities exist for both differentiating instruction towards a student’s interests. The datasets exist and are becoming more and more accessible for student exploration to make interpretations and generalizations about the lives of individuals within historical study. This will also lead to an intimate relationship with the material of historical study.

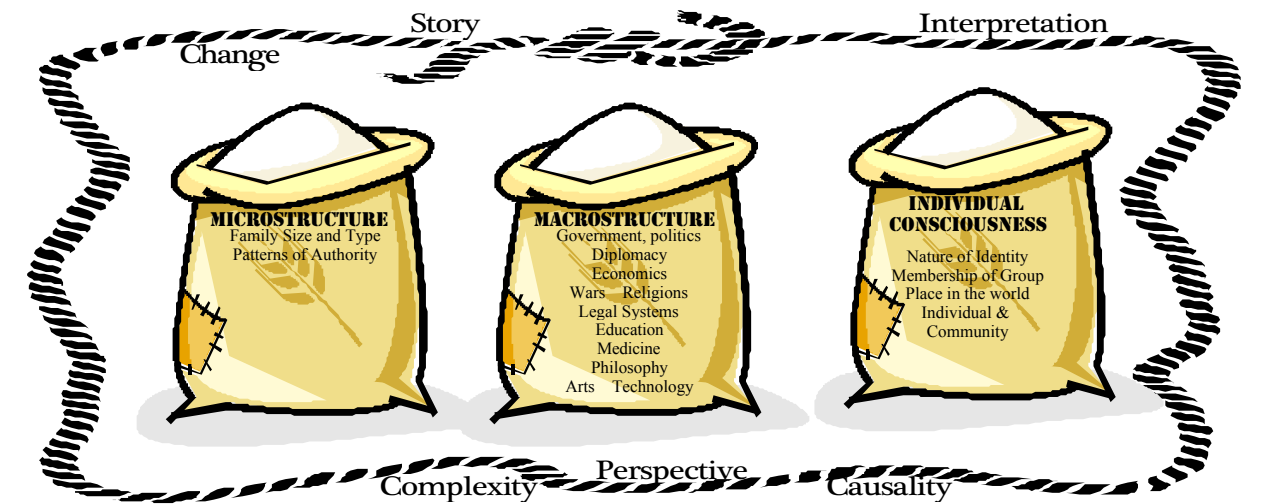
The key for students to reach these alternative paradigms of historical thought includes the utilization of key concepts of history. By framing historical inquiry in the principles of sound historical study and having students explore a historical phenomenon through the lenses of causality, complexity, change, story, interpretation,

and perspective, these structures provide students with the tools necessary for success in understanding how historical study takes place and should promote the understanding of disciplinary history. The key to executing this successfully is the reminder that classroom history does not have the same regulations and restrictions that professional historians have (Husbands, 1996). By using sound pedagogical strategies and the understandings of history discussed above, students are enabled to both make personal connections and intense discoveries in classrooms.

The visual presentation of this concept is found in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Visual Representation of the Three Structures

A Framework for History Study Getting Your Students To Complete the Voyage



How would some of the content framed in this type of paradigm of historical study look like? The following table provides a good example of topics that could be explored in study through this paradigm:

Table 2. Sample List of Concepts and Topics Framed in The Proposed Paradigm

Topics:	American Civil War	Renaissance
Macrostructure	Comparison of Political Systems	Political Systems of Europe
	Chronology of War	Key Intellectual Advances
	Key Figures of War	*Key Aesthetic Achievements
		European Economic Developments
Microstructure	Life on the Home Front	The Class Structures of Italy
	Effect Upon Different Classes	Changes of Social Roles
Individual Consciousness	*Study of Sources of Individuals (Francis C. Barlow, Mary Chestnut, Sam Watkins, Frederick Douglas, Collections of slave stories)	*Study of excerpts of <i>The Courtier</i> , <i>The Prince</i> , <i>Gargantua and the</i> <i>Pantagruel</i> , <i>The Cheese and the</i> <i>Worms</i>

*--denotes a topic for in-depth primary source study by secondary level students

Is this paradigm necessary? Absolutely, Zhao and Hoge (2005) identified perceptions of elementary students towards social studies decrying the boredom of studying, including the belief that it is nothing more than “reading the textbook,” that it is “boring and useless,” and that “it doesn’t apply.” Here is where the new paradigm can play a significant role. As proposed by Stoskopf (2001), the solution to the ennui and malaise that has covered the study of history is the development of more focused curriculum with opportunities for students to explore areas that may hold interest for them. As advocated by the author, it is necessary to “teach less better” to promote historical study (Burenheide, 2007). While this is a conjecture sure to provoke controversy, much as Ronald Evans’ book about the larger aspects of the curricula of the social studies (2004), it is time for the conversation to take place, especially at a time where education is beginning to look at “21st Century Skills,” additionally accountability through assessments, and No Child Left Behind. If our goal is to create students interested in learning throughout their life, able to adapt to different modalities of thought, and be culturally literate citizens, as many school mission statements indicate, then it is a time for a serious discussion to take place regarding how the future of history should look in the classroom.

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