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# THE ROLE OF HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN SHAPING COLLECTIVE SOCIAL THINKING: A YOUTH-CENTERED APPROACH

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## Abstract

This study examines the role of historical consciousness in shaping collective social thinking, with a particular focus on youth as a dynamic and transformative social group. The research conceptualizes historical consciousness as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, axiological, and reflective components that influence how individuals interpret the past and relate it to present and future societal processes. Using an interdisciplinary methodological framework, the study analyzes the interaction between historical consciousness and collective social thinking within educational and socio-cultural contexts. The findings indicate that the development of historical consciousness among youth significantly contributes to the formation of critical thinking, social responsibility, and value-oriented perspectives. The paper argues that modern pedagogical strategies, including interactive learning and digital tools, are essential for fostering a deeper and more analytical form of historical understanding. The study concludes that strengthening historical consciousness is a key factor in ensuring sustainable intellectual and social development in contemporary societies.

**Keywords:** Historical consciousness, collective thinking, youth, social cognition, education, memory, identity, critical thinking.

## Introduction

In contemporary society, characterized by globalization, digitalization, and the rapid circulation of information, the structure of collective social thinking is undergoing significant transformation. The reinterpretation of historical narratives, the pluralization of memory, and the increasing influence of digital



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media have reshaped how individuals and groups construct meaning and social reality.

Within this context, historical consciousness emerges as a fundamental epistemological and social category. According to Jörn Rüsen, historical consciousness is a specific form of human consciousness that enables individuals to orient themselves in time by interpreting the past in relation to the present and future. Similarly, Jan Assmann conceptualizes historical consciousness within the broader framework of cultural memory, emphasizing its role in preserving and transmitting collective identity across generations.

The sociological dimension of this concept is further developed by Maurice Halbwachs, who argues that memory is inherently social and constructed within collective frameworks. This perspective highlights the interdependence between individual cognition and social structures, suggesting that historical consciousness is not formed in isolation but within a network of cultural, educational, and communicative processes.

Youth represent a particularly significant group in this context. As active participants in social transformation, they are both consumers and producers of historical narratives. However, the digital information environment exposes them to fragmented, decontextualized, and sometimes manipulated historical content. This creates a paradox: while access to historical knowledge has expanded, the depth and coherence of historical understanding may be compromised.

Therefore, this study aims to provide a comprehensive theoretical analysis of historical consciousness and its role in shaping collective social thinking among youth. The research seeks to bridge gaps between historical theory, social cognition, and educational practice.

## **Methods**

The research adopts an interdisciplinary methodological framework integrating concepts from social philosophy, sociology, and educational sciences. The primary methodological approach is conceptual analysis, which allows for a systematic reconstruction of the theoretical relationship between historical consciousness and collective social thinking.



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A structural-functional approach is applied to identify the internal components of historical consciousness. This approach is grounded in the theoretical contributions of Anthony Giddens, particularly his theory of structuration, which emphasizes the dynamic interaction between individual agency and social structures.

Comparative analysis is employed to examine different models of historical education, including traditional narrative-based teaching and contemporary approaches such as inquiry-based learning and digital pedagogy. The pedagogical dimension is informed by the educational philosophy of John Dewey, who emphasizes experiential learning as a basis for meaningful knowledge construction.

Additionally, elements of discourse analysis are used to examine how historical narratives are constructed in media and educational contexts. This approach enables the identification of ideological biases and narrative simplifications. The interdisciplinary nature of the methodology ensures a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subject.

## **Results**

The results demonstrate that historical consciousness functions as a key determinant of collective social thinking through multiple interconnected dimensions.

First, the cognitive dimension provides structured historical knowledge, enabling individuals to understand temporal sequences and causal relationships. However, following Hayden White, historical knowledge is not purely objective but is shaped by narrative structures and interpretative frameworks.

Second, the axiological dimension contributes to value formation. Historical narratives serve as sources of moral evaluation and cultural orientation, influencing how individuals perceive justice, responsibility, and social norms.

Third, the reflective-narrative dimension, emphasized by Jörn Rüsen, allows individuals to critically engage with history, question dominant narratives, and construct alternative interpretations.

The study finds that youth with a developed historical consciousness exhibit:

- higher levels of critical thinking;



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- stronger civic identity and social responsibility;
  - greater ability to analyze complex social issues.

At the same time, the influence of digital technologies introduces new dynamics. While digital platforms democratize access to historical information, they also facilitate the spread of misinformation and fragmented narratives. This duality necessitates a more structured educational approach.

### **Discussion**

The findings confirm that historical consciousness is both a product and a driver of collective social thinking. It mediates between past experience and present interpretation, shaping how societies understand themselves and their trajectories. A critical issue identified is the inadequacy of traditional pedagogical models that prioritize memorization over interpretation. Such approaches fail to develop the analytical and reflective capacities necessary for meaningful historical understanding.

Drawing on Lev Vygotsky, the study emphasizes the importance of social interaction and guided learning in the development of higher cognitive functions, including historical thinking. This suggests that historical consciousness should be cultivated through dialogical and collaborative learning environments.

The discussion also highlights the role of cultural memory and identity. Historical consciousness is deeply embedded in collective memory structures, which are shaped by social institutions, political discourse, and educational systems. Moreover, the rise of digital media necessitates a reconsideration of epistemological frameworks. Without critical digital literacy, youth may become vulnerable to historical manipulation and ideological narratives.

### **Conclusion**

This study establishes that historical consciousness is a fundamental factor in shaping collective social thinking, particularly among youth. It integrates cognitive, axiological, and reflective dimensions, forming a comprehensive framework for understanding social reality.



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The research leads to several key conclusions:

- Historical consciousness functions as a bridge between collective memory and social cognition.
- The development of historical consciousness enhances critical thinking, identity formation, and civic engagement.
- Educational systems play a decisive role in shaping historical understanding.
- Digital environments require new pedagogical strategies to ensure epistemological reliability.

From a practical perspective, the study recommends:

1. Integrating inquiry-based and problem-oriented approaches in history education.
2. Developing students' critical and analytical skills through source-based learning.
3. Utilizing digital tools in a structured and pedagogically guided manner.
4. Promoting interdisciplinary approaches to historical education.

Ultimately, strengthening historical consciousness among youth contributes to the formation of a more reflective, responsible, and intellectually resilient society.

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