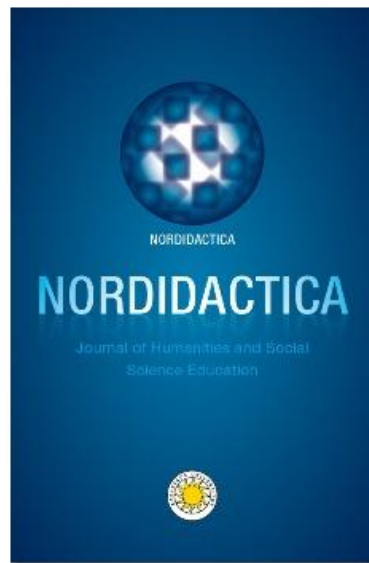


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Rethinking Historical Relevance in the 21st Century: An Exploration of Historical Consciousness Among High School Students in Norway

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Abstract: This paper delves into the history culture and historical consciousness among high school students in Western Norway, drawing on a survey of 274 participants. It examines their perceptions of history and interests in the subject, employing both quantitative analysis of scaled questions and qualitative exploration of open-ended responses. Through pattern-matching, the study identifies key themes and perspectives in students' answers, highlighting the significant influence of both epistemological and phenomenological aspects of history education in the expression of interests and relevance. Specifically, the research uncovers how students justify their interest or disinterest in history through four distinct chronotopes: actualisation, distanciation, anticipation and disconnection. The study advocates for history educators to cultivate a model of critical historical consciousness by encouraging social, cultural and political engagement and integrating metacognitive teaching activities that emphasize the question of historical relevance.

KEYWORDS: HISTORY CULTURE, HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS, HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, HISTORY EDUCATION, MIXED-METHOD, STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT, HISTORICAL RELEVANCE.

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1. Introduction

Historian Eric Hobsbawm highlighted that history, and its interpretations can serve as fodder for nationalistic or extremist ideologies, “as poppies are the raw material for opium addiction” (1998, p. 6). One may assume in contrast that a more analytical and reflective approach to history and to representations of the past can promote critical thinking and democratic values by enhancing our understanding of the complex social and cultural realities we inhabit (Ricoeur, 2004). The potential misuses and misunderstandings of the representations of the past have led scholars across the humanities and social sciences to examine the roles that history and memory education play in for instance shaping identities, attitudes, senses of belonging, and societal structures. A recent work by sociologists Gensburger and LeFranc (2020) highlights the many challenges schools, museums, and memory politics face in effectively countering extreme ideologies. This struggle seems to have intensified with the rise of social media platforms, which can create echo chambers, deepen societal polarization, and further accelerate processes of radicalisation.

In this context, a project was launched in 2023 at the University of Stavanger, Norway, aimed at exploring the history culture and consciousness of high school students aged 17-18. The primary goal of the project was to gain deeper insights into how students engage with history and history teaching, and to help shape the future of history education. A survey consisting of twenty main questions (92 including sub-questions) was administered to 274 students (n=274). The questions, which included a mix of open-ended and scaled formats, addressed five key areas: (1) perceptions of history as a general topic, (2) interests in history as a general topic, (3) perceptions of history teaching, (4) engagement in historical activities both inside and outside of school, and (5) sentiments toward the past, present, and future. Because of the significant amount of data and the number of themes addressed in this survey, our paper emphasizes results from the initial two themes as central elements of students’ history culture and historical consciousness, leaving the remaining for complementary exploration in future publications.

This project relies on the fact that the development of a critical historical consciousness depends on the way people relate to their own history culture: “Historical consciousness is not just an individual mental process but is also understood as a mode of relating to the past that is characteristic for a particular historical culture” (Grever and Adriaansen, 2019, p. 817). History culture can be understood then as encompassing the diverse ways in which people actively understand, interpret, negotiate, and engage with the past. It involves not only historical narratives and representations but also the diverse cultural meanings and interpretations attached to them. In essence, history culture deals with the dynamic interplay between past events, its interpretations, and the socio-cultural contexts in which they are both produced and consumed (Grever and Adriaansen, 2017; Dessingué, 2020; Dessingué and Knutsen, 2021).

2. Theoretical framework

In his seminal work *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004), Paul Ricoeur emphasizes the importance of studying what he calls “the representations of the past” through a dual lens that combines both an epistemological approach to history with a phenomenological approach to memory. (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 81) Ricoeur cautions against the risk of creating a systematic divide between these two approaches, emphasizing that such a separation could hinder a deeper understanding of past representations. He underscores the importance of viewing the study of the past not only as a distinct source and method of knowledge production, requiring the mastery of specific disciplinary skills (as epistemology), but also as a reflection of lived experiences accumulated over time (as phenomenology).

Counteracting the risk highlighted by Ricoeur has been a central focus in history education research over the past few decades. (Ahonon, 2005; Carretero, Berger and Grever, 2017; Dessingué, 2017, 2020; Dessingué and Knutsen, 2021; Körber, 2015) History education clearly emphasizes history both as epistemology where students need to critically engage with the past using relevant methods, strategies and skills (Lesh, 2011; Sandwell, 2006; Seixas and Morton, 2013; Seixas, 2017; Wineburg, Martin and Monte-Sano, 2013; Wineburg, 2001) but also as a phenomenology where the exploration of connections between past, present, and future at both an individual and collective level are central. (Aron, 1961/2011; Gadamer, 1975; Ricoeur, 1984; Rüsen, 2005) Such combined perspectives have also been propelled by educational reforms such as the recent curriculum reform (LK20) in Norway emphasizing the need to integrate historical consciousness, historical and critical thinking as essential components in understanding how our interpretation of the past influences both the present and future societal contexts. (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2018a; Utdanningsdirektoratet 2018b)

Nevertheless, several research studies have shown that students often struggle to find history teaching and history education relevant because students’ history culture often diverge significantly from the historical narratives and representations prescribed by curriculum or used in the classroom (Angvik and Von Borries, 1997; Conrad et al., 2013; Letourneau, 2014; Llewelyn and NG-A-Fook, 2017). Other studies have also identified a disconnect between what students find relevant in history and curricular perspectives or official programmes, suggesting a misalignment that needs addressing to make history education more engaging and relevant to students’ lives, especially for the students with cultural minority backgrounds (Grever, Haydn and Ribbens, 2008; Grever, Pelzer and Haydn, 2011; Harris and Reynolds, 2014). Lastly, the work by Van Straaten, Wilschut, and Oostdam (2016) on connecting the past, present, and future in history education highlights the potential for making history more relevant to students. The authors found that many students struggle to see the relevance of history when it is taught as a subject focused solely on the past (as epistemology). Their findings suggest that when history lessons explicitly connect historical events to current and future implications (as phenomenology), students find the subject matter more engaging and meaningful. The research also highlights the need for curriculum development and

teaching strategies that explicitly connect historical knowledge with contemporary and future contexts. This approach has been further supported by studies like those of Diego Miguel-Revilla (2022), which analyse how different educational groups perceive the relevance of history, advocating for educational strategies that resonate more closely with students' lives and future aspirations.

Recent research in the field, focusing on the relevance of history and student interests, clearly highlights that purely epistemological approaches dominate history education, while phenomenological approaches - emphasizing connections between past, present, and future - are often undervalued. This imbalance appears to be a significant source of student disinterest in history education. However, research also indicates that this disinterest is not solely due to a lack of connection in times but also stems from a disconnect with the lived, spatial, and cultural dimensions of students' experiences. In this way, the issues of relevance and interest in history education appear to be deeply intertwined with the Bakhtinian notion of the chronotope, which highlights the "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships" (Bakhtin, 1981). The concept of the chronotope may be particularly important in this context since it can provide an insightful theoretical and analytical framework for understanding to what extent students perceive and engage with history as a way of connecting with different times and spaces, considering history not just as a series of disconnected events but as a dynamic interplay between different times and spaces, including their own.

3. Methodology

In contemporary Norway, there is still limited empirical knowledge about how youth engage with the past through various means, especially concerning high school students. By using a mixed-method design, our study combines both quantitative and qualitative data gathered through a survey. (Hitchcock and Onwuegbuzie, 2019) The survey has been designed as a randomised and web-based study using the software SurveyXact,¹ including a combination of scaled (numeric rating scale 1-6) and open-ended questions.

The theme related to perception (Q1) is broken down into three sub-questions (Table 1), while the theme of interest (Q2) is addressed through four sub-questions (Table 2).

¹ This project has followed the ethical standards set by SIKT– the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research by maintaining anonymity and refraining from collecting personal data information.

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TABLE 1

Organisation of Q1 and sub-questions Q1.1, Q1.2 and Q1.3.

Q1.1	What do you associate with the word "history"? Write 4-5 keywords	Open-ended format
Q1.2	<p>What does history mean to you? To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements:</p> <p>D1: Just a school subject and nothing more D2: An opportunity to learn from others' mistakes and successes D3: A series of examples of what is right or wrong, good or bad D4: Something exciting and fascinating that makes me reflect D5: Something dead and gone, which holds no significance for me today D6: Something important to understand the world today D7: A collection of atrocities and disasters D8: Something that can help me navigate and master my life D9: A lot of facts and details one must learn</p>	Scaled format 6=totally agree – 1= totally disagree
Q1.3	<p>Why do we study history? To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements:</p> <p>P1: To learn more about the past P2: To better understand society and the world today P3: To be able to handle and plan for the future</p>	Scaled format 6=totally agree – 1= totally disagree

*D: Definition

**P: Purpose

TABLE 2

Organisation of Q2 and questions Q2.1, Q2.2, Q2.3 and Q2.4.

Q2.1	How interested are you in history as a general topic?	Scaled format 6=very interested – 1= not interested at all
Q2.2	<p>To what extent are you interested in the following historical topics?</p> <p>Antiquity Middle Ages Viking period Renaissance Enlightenment American Revolution French Revolution Industrial Revolution WW1 WW2 Holocaust Cold War 11.09.2001 22.07.2011 Indigenous history European history History of the world (non-western) History of my religion Norwegian history</p>	Scaled format 6=very interested – 1= not interested at all
Q2.3	How would you evaluate your knowledge of these historical topics?	Scaled format 6=very good – 1= very bad
Q2.4	Can you explain why you find the topic of history interesting/not interesting at all?	Open-ended format

This study employs a mixed-method approach, integrating scaled and open-ended questions to explore students' perceptions and interests in history among a large respondent group (n=274). Scaled questions are analyzed using frequency tables and diagrams, with correlation analyses (Pearson's r) performed to examine co-variation of variables within and across Q1 and Q2, utilizing IBM SPSS Statistics software. Open-ended questions provide qualitative insights, allowing for comparison between theory-based categories and emerging themes from students' responses. The qualitative data are analyzed using a content analytical method known as "pattern-matching" (Yin, 2006), with Nvivo software assisting in categorizing text material. This approach enables researchers to determine whether qualitative data align with quantitative findings or offer new insights that challenge existing frameworks.

The Q1 sub-questions aim to deepen understanding of students' perceptions of history. Q1.1 seeks to identify the concepts, events, or ideas students naturally associate with the term "history," shedding light on their initial perceptions. Q1.2 examines how students perceive history's role, ranging from a school subject to its importance in understanding present and future issues, while exploring their personal connections to history. Q1.3 investigates students' views on the purpose of studying history, specifically whether they see it as a tool for learning about the past, understanding current societal dynamics, or preparing for future challenges.

The sub-questions for Q2 focus on assessing students' interests in history. Q2.1 measures the general interest level in history, while Q2.2 identifies specific historical periods, events, or themes that resonate with students. Q2.3 evaluates students' self-perceived knowledge of various historical topics, revealing areas where they feel confident or less informed. Q2.4 explores personal motivations or the lack thereof behind students' interest in history, providing qualitative data on the factors influencing their engagement or disengagement with the subject.

The primary objective of this study is to explore potential connections between students' perceptions of history and their interest levels. The second objective is to uncover patterns in how students justify their interest and engagement in history. The study aims to provide deeper insights into how history education can be more effectively aligned with students' interests, ultimately enhancing their engagement with the subject.

Participants in this study come from diverse educational programs, including Science, Social Studies, Language, Economics, and Sports Science, reflecting a wide range of interests. This research adopts a case-study methodology, with limitations due to data being collected from a single high school in Western Norway. Admission to this high school requires above-average grades, meaning the sample may not represent the broader high school population in Norway.

Within the Norwegian curriculum, history is taught as an independent, compulsory subject in the final two years of high school (grades 12-13). Prior to this, history education is integrated into a broader Social Sciences discipline that includes Geography and Social Knowledge. At the time of the survey, students had only been attending their upper secondary history classes for a few weeks, indicating their understanding of "history" is influenced by this educational context. These limitations will be carefully considered in the data analysis and discussion.

Despite these constraints, the case study offers valuable insights and lays the groundwork for further qualitative and quantitative research involving different student groups. This is particularly important given the scarcity of empirical data on this topic in the Norwegian context. Future research could build on these findings by examining different student populations and other educational settings.

4. Findings

In this section of the article, we will analyse both how students perceive history (4.1) and explore their interests in history, including how they justify these interests (4.2).

4.1. How do students perceive history? (Q1)

Q1 relate to three sub-questions in the survey, incorporating responses from both open-ended and scaled formats (See Table 1).

4.1.1. What do students associate with the word “history”? (Q1.1)

Studying the number of occurrences and word frequency (wf) derived from Q1.1 gives the opportunity to get a deeper insight into the associations students make with the word “history”. Students were to note 4-5 keywords, and the total number of suggested words amounted to 1287, averaging 4.7 words per student. Since the questions were open-ended, it is common to observe in students’ answers some phrasing attempting to clarify the chosen terms.

A first category comprising three words (“past”, “war(s)/conflict(s)” and “event(s)”) exhibits a relatively high word frequency ($wf \geq 107$), significantly distant from the subsequent sets of words (Table 2). Next series of words appear to have a moderate word frequency ($wf \geq 47$) including terms like “historical people/character”, “happened/done”, “evolution/progression”, “old”, “revolution”, “present” and “influence/consequence/change”. Finally, a last series of words have a relative low word frequency ($wf \geq 9$) including words like “future” ($wf = 30$), “important/useful” ($wf = 29$) or “time/time periods” ($wf = 21$).

Upon initial examination, we see that the terms employed by the respondents exhibit a significant level of homogeneity. Out of a total of 1287 occurrences, the 20 most used words account for over 75% of the full set of terms (Table 3).

Examining the complete list of words supplied by the respondents (a total of 83 words) delineates various qualitative categories connected to the concept of history (Table 4). These categories are established around delimited lexical fields which refer to a set or group of words that are related by their meaning, topic, or theme, using a “pattern-matching methodology” (see section 3). These categories are specific semantic or conceptual categories.

When taking a closer look at the first category “Different perceptions of time”, 48% of the words establish a connection between history and different time dimensions (Table 4). Past dimensions predominate, with many students referencing explicitly to terms like “the past” and/or “happened/done” ($wf = 246$, Table 3). Moreover, a moderate

number of students (18%) associate history with a relative “distant” past associating time perspectives to the word “old” (wf= 50, Table 3). However, considerations of present and future perspectives, although to a much lesser extent, are not entirely absent from the associations the students make with the word history. Around 17% of the students establish a relation between history and the present time, whereas 11% of them associate history and future expectations (Table 3). Additionally, a large number of respondents (39%) considers history in relation to the generic concept of “events” and approximately the same number of students (37%) associate history with changes and continuity through second-order concepts like “evolution/progress” (wf= 55, Table 3), “change/consequence/influence” (wf= 47, Table 3).

Although this last observation might suggest a clear-cut opposition between a perception of history as a series of isolated events in the past versus an evolutionary and dynamic process, it is not completely the case. Upon closer examination of each student’s responses, one realises a rather common association between the word “event” and second-order concepts like for example, “change”, “consequence” or “influence”. Half of the students who associate the word “history” with “event” also mention a concept that demonstrates an understanding of history as a changing and dynamic process:

Student 9: Past, historical events (events that have influenced the world/society to a greater or lesser extent), royal characters

Student 22: Past, revolution, historical events (and its impacts in present), consequences

Student 45: Historical events in the past that have shaped the world as it is today

The second category “Specific historical events and periods” (wf= 270, Table 4) reveals that students also associate the word “history” with first-order concepts like specific historical events, showcasing a large diversity. Yet, specific events or categories of events hold more significance than others, evident from their higher word frequency. This is notably observed with terms like “world wars”, “wars”, “world conflicts”, “conflicts” or even “revolution” (Table 3). Words like “Middle Ages” (wf= 9), “Prehistory” (wf= 8), “Egypt/pyramids” (wf= 7) appear to have comparatively much lower significance for this specific group of students. This thematic association related to well-defined historical content is nonetheless interesting as it provides insight into the imaginary and cultural memory of these students and their relation to the past (Anderson, 2006; Assmann 2011). It clearly suggests that their collective imaginary widely associates history with a realm of conflictual representations and even brutal/radical events. Indisputably, the cultural memory of the WW2 holds a privileged position in students’ history culture in this particular case study.

In the category “historical characters and social structures” (wf= 118), the most common words are rather generic like “historical characters” (wf= 61), “society” (wf= 16), “religion” (wf= 13), “kings, queens, emperors” (wf= 11), “power/political systems” (wf= 8). The students confer a fairly central role to historical figures and give a relatively moderate priority to societal, religious, and power-related perspectives when

they think about the word “history”. The question of historical actors (history is the “story of great men and women”) seems to be a crucial aspect for the students in their associations with the word “history”.

The following two categories are linked both to the characterization of history through a distinct qualifier (by using a specific adjective) and are also associated with a particular activity (Table 4). Thus, it is interesting to note that positive adjectives such as “interesting”, “exciting”, “useful”, “important” (wf= 39; 14% of the respondents) are much more represented than negative connotations such as “boring” or “bad” (wf= 4; 1.5% of the respondents). When students associate the word history with specific activities, they are primarily connected to educational practices, with references to words such as “learning”, “school”, “subject” and “knowledge” (wf= 31). To a much lesser extent, history is also associated with activities related to fundamental academic skills such as “reading” and “telling” (wf= 10).

The last category, with a rather low word frequency (wf= 27; 10% of the respondents) is nonetheless interesting as it associates history with the perspective of both individual and cultural heritage. Using terms like “culture”, “traditions”, “heritage” (wf= 11), “memory” (wf= 8), “family”, “origins” (wf= 8) tends to indicate an association among some of the students between history and notions connected to heritage.

TABLE 3

Word frequency, students’ associations with the word “history”.

Words	Word frequency*	Word frequency (%)**	Frequency (%) among respondents***
1. Past	186	14,4%	68%
2. Wars, conflicts	145	11,2%	53%
3. Event	107	8,3%	39%
4. People, character	61	4,7%	22%
5. Happened, done	60	4,6%	22%
6. Evolution, progress	55	4,3%	20%
7. Old	50	3,9%	18%
8. Revolution	48	3,7%	17%
9. Present	47	3,6%	17%
10. Influence, consequence, change	47	3,6%	17%
11. Future	30	2,3%	11%
12. Important, useful	29	2,2%	11%
13. Time and time periods	21	1,6%	8%
14. Viking	17	1,3%	6%
15. Society	16	1,2%	6%
16. Learning	15	1,1%	5%
17. Religion	13	1%	5%
18. Well-known	13	1%	5%
19. Kings, queens, emperors	11	0,8%	4%
20. Middle Ages	9	0,7%	3%
Total	976	75,50%	

*Number of occurrences

**Calculation in percent relative to the total number of occurrences (n= 1287)

*** Calculation in percent relative to the total number of respondents (n= 274)

TABLE 4

Conceptual categories associated with the word “history”.

Categories	Word frequency*	Word frequency (%)**
Different perceptions of time	615	48%
Specific historical events and periods	270	21%
Historical characters and social structures	118	9%
Qualitative aspects of history	43	3%
Specific activities	38	2%
Heritage	27	2%
Total	1111	85%

*Number of occurrences

**Calculation in percent relative to the total number of occurrences (n= 1287)

4.1.2. What does history mean to students? (Q1.2)

Illustration 1 shows varying perceptions of history among students, measured on a scale from 1 (“totally disagree”) to 6 (“totally agree”). Several interesting trends are to observe in the responses to Q1.2.

Starting with perceptions that received lower agreement, the statement “Something dead and gone, which holds no significance” (D5, $\mu= 2.45$), indicate that most students do not consider history as irrelevant or insignificant. Similarly, the idea that history is “Just a school subject, nothing more” (D1, $\mu= 3.08$), suggest that many believe history’s importance extends beyond the confines of an academic study. These perspectives confirm the trend observed in Q1.1 where students have a rather positive perception of history and predominantly and qualitatively associate history with relevant issues.

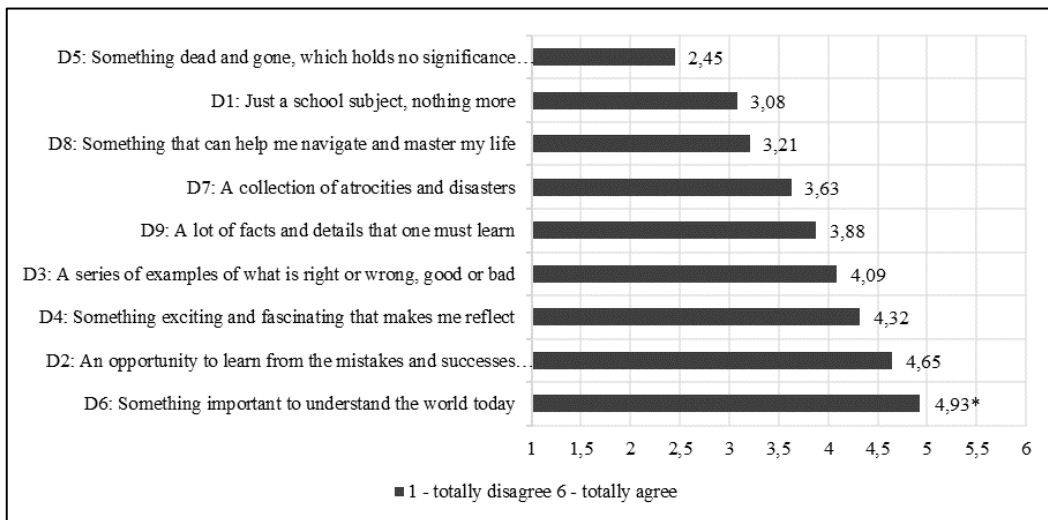
Moderate scores were observed for D7 and D9. The statement “Something that can help me navigate and master my life” ($\mu= 3,21$) shows moderate agreement that history can be applied to personal life management. “A collection of atrocities and disasters” scored slightly higher ($\mu= 3,63$), reflecting a noticeable perception of history among students as a record of negative events.

Higher scores were noted for statements emphasizing the educational and reflective nature of history. “A lot of facts and details that one must learn” ($\mu= 3.88$), indicating recognition of history’s factual density. The view of history as “A series of examples of what is right or wrong, good or bad” ($\mu= 4.09$), suggests general agreement that history offers moral or ethical guidance.

The most agreed-upon views highlight history’s engaging and instructive qualities. “Something exciting and fascinating that makes me reflect” ($\mu= 4.32$), underscores history’s capacity to engage and provoke thought. Near the top, “An opportunity to learn from the mistakes and successes” ($\mu= 4.65$), emphasizes strong agreement that history provides valuable lessons from past actions. The highest score ($\mu= 4.93$) for “Something important to understand the world today” reflects a very strong consensus among students that grasping historical contexts is essential for comprehending our current global situation.

The nuances of interpretation offered by these responses are interesting as they clearly confirm, on the one hand, the fact that a large portion of students get a perception

of history in direct connection with contemporary society and present issues. On the other hand, it emphasizes once again that history is perceived by many students as an interesting subject that allows personal and individual reflection. Overall, these results suggest that while history is generally perceived as a rich and reflective subject crucial for understanding the contemporary world and learning from past experiences, its direct applicability to personal life management is perceived with lesser intensity.



*Mean (μ)

ILLUSTRATION 1:

Definitions of history.

4.1.3. Why do we study history? (Q1.3)

By combining the number of students who highly agree (scores 5 and 6) with each of the three purposes, a notable consistency emerges in students' answers (Table 5). While 72.6% of the students agree with the assertion "to learn more about the past" (P1), an even higher percentage (86.1%) associates the study of history with the purpose "to better understand society and the world today" (P2). In contrast, the statement "To be able to handle and plan for the future" (P3) is less emphasized, with 66.4% of students agreeing with this purpose for studying history.

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TABLE 5

Why do we study history?

	(P1) To learn more about the past			(P2) To better understand the society and the world today			(P3) To be able to handle and plan for the future		
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
Totally agree 6	106	38.7	38.7	133	48.5	48.5	94	34.3	34.3
5	93	33.9	72.6	103	37.6	86.1	88	32.1	66.4
4	63	23.0	95.6	32	11.7	97.8	62	22.6	89
3	9	3.3	98.9	5	1.8	99.6	18	6.6	95.6
2	3	1.1	100	1	0.4	100	10	3.6	99.2
Totally disagree 1	0	0		0	0		2	0.7	100
Total	274	100		274	100		274	100	

This part of the analyses both clarifies and nuances the perspectives highlighted in Q1.1 and Q1.2. It can therefore be inferred that even if students view history primarily as the study of the past, as shown under Q1.1, the connections between past and present seem to be more subtle and play a significant role among many students' understanding of history. This trend is largely confirmed by analyses of correlation between definitions of history (Q1.2) and purposes of history (Q1.3).

On one side, correlations analyses of definitions and purposes reveal a significant and relatively strong relation between D6 ("Something important for understanding the world today") and P2 ("To better understand society and the world today") (Table 6). It indicates that students' understanding of history is rather coherent and that history's relation to present time seems to be a strong and determinant factor for many respondents in their perception of history.

TABLE 6

Correlations (r) between D6 and P2.

		P2: To better understand society and the world today
D6: Something important for understanding the world today	Pearson correlation	0.47
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< 0,001
	N	274

On the other side, the correlation between D5 ("Something dead and gone, which holds no significance to me") and D1 ("Just a school subject, nothing more") also underscores a strong association between these two perspectives (Table 6). Consequently, this suggests that students who perceive history solely as a school subject are also the ones who do not perceive much interest in history. This observation is further supported, to a certain extent, by the negative correlation observed between D5 and P2. Although this correlation is relatively weak ($r = -0.24$), it remains statistically

significant ($p \leq 0.01$) warranting further exploration in the subsequent question Q2 about interests.

TABLE 7

Correlations (r) between D1, D5 and P2.

		D5: Something dead and gone, which holds no significance to me
D1: Just a school subject, nothing more	Pearson correlation	0.56
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< 0,001
	N	274
P2: To better understand society and the world today	Pearson correlation	-0.24
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< 0,001
	N	274

4.1.4. Main insights from Q1: summary

The analysis of Q1 reveals that students' views on history are shaped by second-order concepts (e.g., change, continuity) and a strong focus on conflicts, especially WW2. Most respondents view history positively, associating it with reflection, knowledge, and a desire to understand current issues through the past. They see history as vital for understanding today's society, as evidenced by the correlation between perceiving history's importance for the present (D6) and understanding society (P2). However, there is less emphasis on history's role in future planning, suggesting students mainly view it as a way to connect past events with current realities. Students with negative perceptions tend not to link history to present-day issues, often viewing it as uninteresting or irrelevant. This reflects a disconnect for those who see history solely as a school subject. These findings align with past research, showing that students who find history relevant are also those who connect it to contemporary issues. (Van Straaten, Wilschut and Oostdam, 2016; Miguel-Revilla, 2022)

4.2. What is the extent of students' interest in history and how do they justify it? (Q2)

Q2 relates to 4 sub-questions in the survey, incorporating responses from both open-ended and scaled formats (Table 2).

4.2.1. Level and nature of students' interest in history (Q2.1-Q2.3)

The distribution of interest levels among the students appears to be positively skewed, with more students reporting higher interest levels (51.5%, scores 5-6) compared to lower interest levels (3.3%, scores 1-2) aligning with findings from Q1 about rather positive perception of history as a general topic (Table 8). The observed mean interest level ($\mu = 4.44$) indicates that, on average in our case-study, the students' interest in history leans clearly towards the higher end of the scale (Table 9).

Taking a closer look at the various topics suggested in the survey provides insightful indications regarding the nature of the students' interests in different historical topics

and periods.² There is a striking variety in student interest levels between highly scored topics and those with lower scores. Topics with higher mean scores, such as WW2 ($\mu=5.28$), Holocaust ($\mu=4.97$), July 22, 2011 ($\mu=4.93$), WW1 ($\mu=4.89$), and September 11, 2001 ($\mu=4.85$), show a markedly higher level of interest compared to topics with lower mean scores, such as Indigenous history ($\mu=3.04$), Renaissance ($\mu=3.06$), Antiquity ($\mu=3.24$), and History of my religion/philosophy ($\mu=3.36$). This trend in the data is noteworthy, as it highlights the varying levels of student interest with different historical periods or events. Despite the overall high average interest in history ($\mu=4.44$), the students' interest for history seems in this case largely driven by a limited number of specific historical themes or periods.

An initial possible observation is that, apart from the Viking period ($\mu=4.33$), student interest in historical topics appears to diminish significantly as the time period becomes more distant. Themes like the Renaissance, Antiquity, the Enlightenment, and the Middle Ages generate relatively low levels of interest. It seems that a closer connection to more recent events and periods plays a key role in shaping students' interest in history.

However, a closer examination of the results reveals that broader topics, such as Indigenous history, Norwegian history, European history, the history of my city/region, and the history of my religion/philosophy - none of which are tied to specific time periods - also fail to generate interest above the theoretical ($\mu=4$) or observed mean ($\mu=4.44$). For example, despite the growing relevance of Sámi history and culture in the Norwegian public discourse the last years, particularly with the report in 2023 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Indigenous history still does not spark significant interest among our respondents. This raises questions about the role of time-specific relevance in shaping respondents' interests and suggests that their sense of relevance is shaped by additional factors as well.

In this context, the expression of interest above the theoretical mean (≥ 4) for the three topics (Industrial Revolution, French Revolution, and Viking Period) highlights a noteworthy aspect. Given that these topics are commonly taught in lower secondary schools in Norway, this observation suggests that the school curriculum and history teaching may also play a significant role in shaping respondents' answers about interest in history.

² It should also be noted that an additional open-ended question was asked to the students in the survey regarding any other historical periods or events that might interest them, and their responses do not challenge the "historical canon" represented in the Table 9.

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TABLE 8

Students' interest in history as a general theme (Q2.1)

How interested are you in history as a theme?			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
Very interested 6	26	9.5	9.5
5	114	41.6	51.1
4	100	36.5	87.6
3	25	9.1	96.7
2	7	2.6	99.3
Not interested at all 1	2	0.7	100
Total	274	100	

TABLE 9

Students' interest in history related to specific historical topics. (Q2.2)

To what extent are you interested in the following historical topics?*			
	Mean	N	
Mean interest level	4.44	274	
Indigenous history	3.04	274	
Renaissance	3.06	274	
Antiquity	3.24	274	
History of my religion/philosophy	3.36	270	
Enlightenment	3.42	274	
Middle Ages	3.59	273	
History of the world (non-western)	3.65	273	
History of my city/region	3.73	273	
American revolution	3.76	266	
European history	3.79	273	
Norwegian history	3.81	274	
Industrial revolution	4.01	274	Topics above
French revolution	4.07	269	theoretical mean
Viking period	4.33	274	interest level (≥ 4)
Cold War	4.51	273	Topics above
11.09.2001	4.85	270	observed mean
WW1	4.89	274	interest level (\geq
22.07.2011	4.93	274	4.44)
Holocaust	4.97	274	
WW2	5.28	274	

*Mean (μ) Scaled format question 6= very interested - 1= not interested at all

Another element that seems to corroborate our last observation relates to students' self-evaluation of their historical knowledge analysed in Q2.3. (Table 10)³ Students

³ It's important to emphasize that the survey question regarding students' self-assessment of knowledge reflects their perceived competence and understanding of specific historical themes.

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generally rate their overall knowledge in history slightly below the theoretical mean ($\mu = 3.67$). Specifically, they assess their knowledge in 8 topics as below average (≤ 3.67), in 5 topics as approximately average ($3.58 \leq \mu \leq 3.89$), and in 6 topics as clearly above average (≥ 4). Notably, the topics where students rate their knowledge highest (Table 10) correspond to those that comparatively generated the most interest (Table 9). Illustration 2 below suggests then a notable link between variation in levels of interest and self-evaluation of historical knowledge. Correlations analysis also corroborate the fact that there is a significant connection ($p \leq 0.01$) between level of interests and self-evaluation of historical knowledge.⁴

TABLE 10

Students' self-evaluation of historical knowledge related to specific historical topics (Q2.3)

How would you evaluate your knowledge of these historical topics and periods?*			
	Mean	N	
Mean historical knowledge	3.67	272	
Antiquity	2.62	263	Below average
Renaissance	2.62	263	
Enlightenment	2.76	267	
History of the world (non-western)	2.76	273	
Middle Ages	2.96	272	
European history	3.26	273	
American revolution	3.34	270	
History of my city/region	3.45	273	
Viking period	3.58	274	Approximately average
French revolution	3.62	274	
History of my religion	3.69	269	
Norwegian history	3.76	274	
Industrial revolution	3.89	274	
WW1	4.22	273	Above average
Cold War	4.32	274	
9.11.2001	4.33	273	
Holocaust	4.67	273	
WW2	4.88	274	
22.07.2011	4.93	274	

*Mean (μ) Scaled format question 6= very good - 1= very bad

⁴ The correlations range from high-moderate ($r > 0.30$) for topics like 22.07.2011 ($r= 0.356$), History of the world ($r= 0.394$), History of my religion ($r= 0.451$), 11.09.2001 ($r= 0.453$), and Holocaust ($r= 0.484$), to strong ($r > 0.50$) for the remaining subjects. The only exception is for the period "Renaissance", where the correlation cannot be considered as statistically significant.

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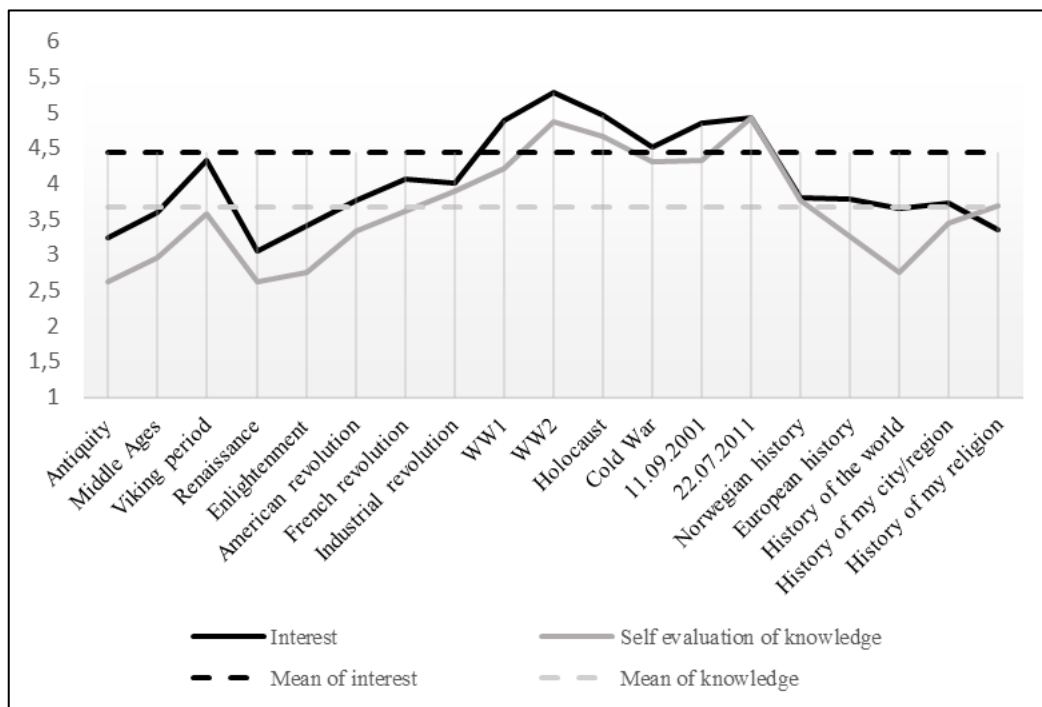


ILLUSTRATION 2

Relation between interests in history and self-evaluation of historical knowledge

The analysis of respondents' expressed interest in history and their self-assessed knowledge (Q2.1-Q2.3) reveals a complex picture, making it challenging to pinpoint the primary factors influencing their reported interests. On one hand, the data suggests that time-specific relevance plays an important role, with more recent historical events, such as the WW, the Holocaust, and the terrorist attacks of September 11th and July 22nd, garnering the highest levels of interest. This trend could indicate that students are naturally more drawn to events that feel closer to their own time and experience, making these periods more relatable and engaging.

However, this interpretation should be nuanced by the observed connection between students' expression of interest in topics commonly taught in Norwegian school as well as the strong correlations we found between self-evaluated knowledge and expression of interest. These findings suggest that both the school curriculum and students' self-assessment of their knowledge - partly shaping a sense of familiarity, confidence, or proximity with certain topics which are not necessarily "recent" - are also factors which play a crucial role in shaping students' historical interests and, potentially, their engagement in or with history.

The analysis of Q2.2 and Q2.3 suggests that students' expression of interest in history is multifaceted, influenced by both a combination of phenomenological factors like time-specific relevance and epistemological factors like curriculum-driven emphasis, and their self-perception of knowledge and learning. In the next section, as we delve into students' own justifications for their historical interests, it will be

intriguing to continue to explore how these different factors possibly interact and whether more discernible patterns emerge in the motives students provide for their expressed interests in history.

4.2.2. Justification of students' interests or disinterests in history (Q2.4)

The responses provided by students to the open-ended question "Can you explain why you find the topic of history interesting/not interesting at all?" bring forth interesting nuances and clarifications which complement the findings derived from former questions Q2.1-Q2.3. What we observe is that respondents predominantly articulate their interest in history by making connections of chronotopic relevance (see section 2 in this paper).

The primary motivation driving respondents' interest in history (45% of them) stems from the opportunity historical topics provide to establish a meaningful connection between the past and present and to facilitate a deeper insight into their own identity and the world around them. The students justify then their interests in historical studies through what could be called a chronotope of actualisation:

Student 4: I think history as a theme is interesting because it explains a lot about a person, culture, etc. It helps us understand why things are as they are and what has led to what exists now.

Student 7: I find it very exciting and interesting to learn how and why we are who we are today.

Student 12: Interesting to know about things that have happened and why we are where we are today, and how I became the person I am today, both as individual and as a part of the society.

Student 72: I find it very interesting because it has something to do with understanding why I am who I am.

Student 112: I have always grown up with many stories, such as when my grandmother went around telling stories from WW2 and when my great-grandfather was alive.

Student 161: I find it interesting because it has a kind of influence on me personally and it has shaped the society I live in.

Student 189: I like watching movies and documentaries about historical events. I want to understand why the world is the way it is today.

Student 203: I find it exciting to learn about the past and what has led us to the society we live in today.

Student 213: I care about family histories and things that are about me and my family and things that I have a relationship with or know something about, but I care very little about things that happened several thousand years ago and things that are not relevant to me.

Student 234: It can be exciting, if it's family history, but when it's a school subject it gets a bit boring.

These students' responses suggest that their interest in history is deeply connected to their desire to understand their personal identity, cultural heritage, and the broader societal context in which they live. Many of them find history compelling because it helps explain why things are the way they are today, both on an individual and societal level. As illustrated by these examples, some students highlight particularly the relevance of history to their personal lives, using it as a tool to better understand their own identities (students 7, 12, 72, 161, 213). In other words, history captures their interest because it helps them gain insight into themselves and their families. In this case, the chronotope of actualisation is linked to ontological matters, it is connected to the nature of their being and existence.

But for these students, history is also compelling because it plays a crucial role in unravelling how social structures and dynamics have evolved over time and how they continue to shape contemporary society (students 4, 12, 161, 189, 203). In this case, the chronotope of actualisation is rather socio-structural, suggesting that history holds significance because it helps understanding the socio-structural aspects of the world they live in. Finally, a third motive in relation with the chronotope of actualisation is linked to the "bond" they have established with history as part of their own cultural realm. History is viewed as interesting and relevant because it is intertwined with their cultural intimacy and personal experiences (students 112, 161, 189, 213, 234). This perspective is for instance expressed in students' engagement with historical films and documentaries (5%) and their interest in family history (6%).

The second chronotopic relevance students mention (29% of them) when discussing their interest in history revolves around their desire to gain a deeper understanding of the past. History is not solely valued for its utility in comprehending the self and the contemporary world; it is also crucial to study history and the past because it gives the opportunity to explore distant chronotopic "realities". In this case, students' interest in history is motivated by what can be called a chronotope of distanciation. In other words, students are drawn to studying history because they are interested in understanding and engaging with events, cultures, and societies which they experience as removed from their own experiences and contemporary context:

Student 12: I find history as a topic interesting because it's exciting to discover what has happened in the past and to understand how things were before I lived.

Student 56: It's interesting because you learn about the history over many thousands of years. It's cool to be able to learn about what people did a thousand years ago, how differently they lived from how we live today.

Student 74: I think history is very interesting because it allows us to hear about things that happened in the past and why it happened, and from this, we can learn.

Student 123: You gain insight into a reality that feels somewhat surreal. It's fascinating how the world changes so much over both short and longer periods of time.

Student 217: *I like having knowledge about the past, about what has happened and why it has happened; that way, one can avoid repeating past mistakes or learn from them in a way.*

Student 250: *It's very exciting to see how the world was before and to see how differently people before us lived. It's fun to piece together different archaeological traces to figure out what it was like before.*

From these students' responses, it is evident that their interest is driven by a fascination with understanding how the past differs from the present. They express curiosity about the lives and experiences of people from previous eras, finding it intriguing to learn about the dramatic changes over time. The idea of gaining insight into a "surreal" reality or piecing together the past like a puzzle adds an element of motivation for these students. Additionally, they value history for the lessons it offers, enabling them to understand why certain events occurred and how to avoid repeating past mistakes. We find then in this chronotope of distancing a double justification expressed by students. The first one is an epistemological curiosity in getting more and deeper knowledge about the past, or as Hartley wrote "the past is a foreign country; they do things differently there" (1953). In this context, students' interest in engaging with history is thus linked to their fascination of the temporal and spatial distance with the past events or individuals they study or read about and relates to a process of knowledge acquisition (student 12, 56, 123, 250). The second motivation among students is rooted in the fact that "learning more about the past" also encompasses the possibility of learning *from* the past (student 74, 217) to manage better current and future issues. This epistemological and phenomenological justification expressed by students is then also justified by a process of knowledge production. The "learning about history" leads to the "learning from history" which necessarily implies a passage from cognitive skills to metacognitive skills (a capacity to interpret and use the actual acquired historical knowledge in another context).

The last chronotopic relevance offered by students regarding positive justification of interest in history, in a much lesser extent, is connected to the possibility to better understand and plan better the future (3,7% of them):

Student 64: *It's interesting to learn about events that have happened. One can also learn about what is going to happen later based on what has already happened.*

Student 104: *I generally find it exciting to learn about things that have happened in the past, and then draw connections from the past to the future.*

Student 68: *I think the topic is interesting because everything that has happened in the past has influenced our society up to this day. Plus, this also contributes to shape the future.*

Student 272: *History provides you with context about something from the past that you can use for your future. See how it was before and how it can affect us in the future.*

From these responses, we can infer that students view history phenomenologically as a valuable tool for understanding both the present and the future. They express an

interest in learning about past events not only for their intrinsic historical value but also for the insights these events provide into future developments. These respondents recognize the influence of historical events on contemporary society and believe that understanding history can help anticipate or shape future outcomes. This perspective highlights their appreciation of history as a continuous and relevant process, where the past informs future possibilities. This interest is connected to what could be called a chronotope of anticipation and is used as a justification by a limited number of respondents.

Nevertheless, in respondents' justifications, we also find the expression of disinterest that clearly indicate a lack of relevance and the manifestation of a chronotope of disconnection (13% of the respondents). It has to be noted that this proportion of students who express a lack of interest or relevance in history issued from the open-ended question and the qualitative analysis aligns quite well with the quantitative data presented previously (12.4%, scores 1-3, Table 8). The arguments used by the students are again of various nature:

Student 1: *I don't see the point in being so invested in history and knowing what has happened in the past.*

Student 7: *I don't think much about what has happened before, but rather about what will happen in the future.*

Student 74: *Uninteresting: too many details, too many dates.*

Student 92: *I don't find the subject of history very interesting because I think it is boring since it deals with things that are so far back in time that it feels really irrelevant to me.*

Student 156: *I find it quite uninteresting because it doesn't have a direct impact on how I live, and I associate history with a subject that involves a lot of reading.*

Student 157: *I don't find the subject of history very interesting because I think history is very massive and difficult to see the connection to today's society.*

Student 245: *It's very "heavy", and it's not so interesting when you're just memorizing dates of when things happened.*

Student 271: *I don't feel the subject is exciting enough, and we learn about things that don't really matter. Memorizing dates and knowing when specific things happened feels useless to me.*

These responses reveal a general disinterest in history, often stemming from a perception that the subject is either irrelevant to students' lives or overly focused on details that feel tedious and disconnected from the present. Several respondents express frustration with the emphasis on memorizing dates and events, which they see as unengaging and meaningless. For them, history feels distant and unrelated to their current lives or future concerns, making it difficult to find relevance in the subject.

Others view history as burdensome or overwhelming, associating it with a large amount of reading and information that feels too far removed from today's world to be meaningful. The sentiment of not seeing a direct impact of historical knowledge on their daily lives contributes to their lack of interest. Overall, these respondents struggle to

connect with history in a way that feels relevant or exciting, leading to a sense of disengagement from the subject.

What is particularly intriguing about this chronotope of disconnection is that one of the primary reasons for students' lack of interest in history appears to be rooted in their previous experiences with history teaching. This observation is supported by the justifications students provided for their disinterest or perception of history as irrelevant, which, to some extent, validates the strong correlation observed in our study between D5 - "[History as] Something dead and gone which holds no significance to me" - and D1 - "[History as] just a school subject, nothing more" (Table 7). This correlation suggests that the lack of relevance and interest in history is directly linked to the absence of a perceived connection between history and actual societal issues, students' present lives, or their personal concerns.

4.2.3. Main insights from Q2: summary

The analysis of Q2.1-Q2.4 shows that students' interest in history is influenced by factors such as their perception of the relevance of historical events, the emphasis of certain topics in the curriculum, and their self-assessed knowledge. Students are particularly interested in recent events, but familiarity with topics, reinforced through teaching and curriculum, also plays a significant role.

Students' responses reveal four distinct chronotopes in their connection to history:

1. Chronotope of Actualisation (45%): Links past and present, enhancing understanding of identities, cultural heritage, and societal structures.
2. Chronotope of Distanciation (29%): Driven by curiosity about distant times and cultures.
3. Chronotope of Anticipation (3.7%): Focuses on history's role in shaping the future.
4. Chronotope of Disconnection (13%): Shows a lack of interest due to perceived irrelevance or disengaging content.

These chronotopes illustrate the varied ways students relate to history, from deep engagement to disinterest.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into how high school students in Norway perceive and engage with history, contributing to the broader discourse about the question of relevance in history education. These results align with and extend the work of Van Straaten et al. (2016) and Miguel-Revilla (2022), who emphasize the importance of making history education relevant to students by connecting past, present, and future in meaningful ways.

While our study offers valuable insights into the ways high school students engage with history, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations that may affect the

generalizability of our findings. One significant limitation is the relatively homogeneous cultural composition of our sample. The respondents come from a largely culturally uniform background, which may limit the applicability of our findings to more diverse student populations. This homogeneity means that our study may not fully capture the range of cultural perspectives that could influence how students relate to history, particularly in contexts where students come from varied cultural backgrounds.

Another limitation is that our respondents have above-average academic performance based on their results from lower secondary education. This sample's characteristic could mean that the findings are more reflective of students who are generally more academically inclined and may have different attitudes towards history compared to those who may struggle academically. However, it is important to note that these limitations are more likely to impact the quantitative aspects of our study - specifically, how many students fall into each chronotopic category - rather than the qualitative emergence of the chronotopes themselves. The four chronotopes identified in our study are likely to be relevant across different student populations, but the distribution and prominence of these could vary with a more diverse and representative sample. To address these limitations and strengthen the validity of our findings, future research should aim to broaden the study to include a more statistically representative sample. This would involve surveying a larger and more diverse group of students, encompassing a wider range of cultural backgrounds and varying levels of academic achievement. Such an approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how different student populations relate to history and would help in refining the applicability of the chronotopic model in history education.

Nevertheless, our study contributes to a deeper understanding of how students justify their interest in history, offering new insights that build upon and extend previous research. While earlier studies have emphasized the importance of making history education relevant by connecting past, present, and future perspectives, our research adds a more nuanced perspective by exploring the specific chronotopes that students use to articulate their interests connecting both epistemological and phenomenological aspects. Our study goes further than previous studies by identifying and categorizing the specific motivations behind students' engagement or disengagement with the subject. This may represent a significant step forward in history education research, providing educators with a more refined understanding of how to engage students with the past in ways that are meaningful and relevant to their lives. By considering how students connect with different temporal and spatial dimensions of history (or chronotopes), educators can better tailor their teaching strategies to meet the varied interests and motivations of their students. This study suggests that history education in Norway, and likely in other contexts, could benefit from a more balanced approach that integrates both epistemological and phenomenological perspectives.

As we conclude this study, it is important to synthesize our findings by revisiting the concept of chronotopes, which has emerged as a central framework for analysing students' engagement with history. Illustration 3 presented here encapsulates the three primary chronotopes identified in our research - Distanciation, Actualisation, and Anticipation - and outlines their potential educational significance.

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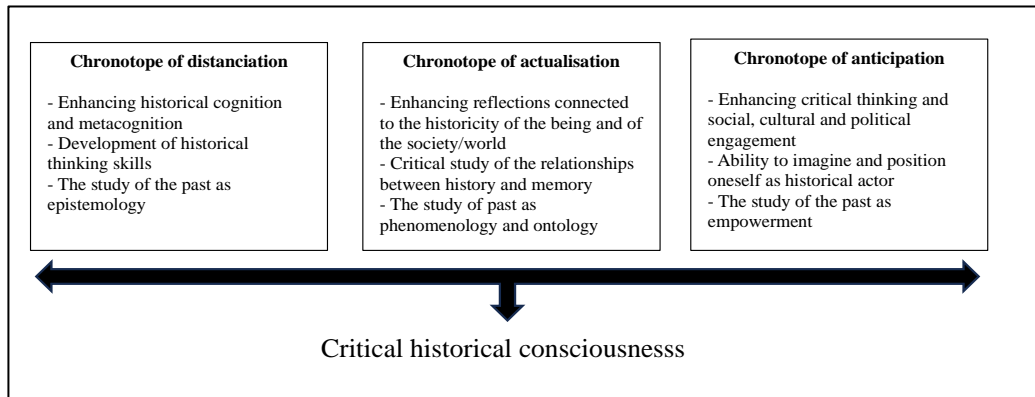


ILLUSTRATION 3

Connecting chronotopes of historical relevance with the development of critical historical consciousness.

This figure illustrates the dynamic interplay between these chronotopes, showing how each offers a unique pathway for students to engage with history. By understanding these chronotopes, educators can better tailor history education to meet the diverse needs and interests of students, fostering a more holistic and engaging approach to learning history. This model not only supports the integration of epistemological and phenomenological approaches, as advocated by previous research, but it also introduces a nuanced way to view how students' relationships with the past can inform their present actions and future aspirations. As our study shows, acknowledging and addressing these chronotopes can significantly enhance the relevance and impact of history education, making it a more powerful tool for personal and societal development.

The chronotope of distanciation is associated with students' interest in understanding the past as something distant from their own experience. In this specific case, it is the knowledge of the past in itself that, for some students, seems to carry historical relevance. Indeed, some students clearly express the notion that "the past is a foreign country" worth exploring because it allows them to distance themselves from their own chronotope and to "get to know" characters, phenomena, or events quite distant from their own sphere of existence. The driving forces of interest and relevance have been identified as mainly epistemological and should directly be connected to the mastering of disciplinary cognitive and metacognitive skills, ie. historical thinking skills (Lesh, 2011; Sandwell, 2006; Seixas and Morton, 2013; Wineburg, 2001). The objective here is to analyse past events within their original contexts, aiming to better comprehend the motivations and dynamics behind why historical events unfolded as they did and to enhance historical cognition. This also entails reflecting on the nature and the limitations of historical knowledge, that is, what the study of the past can tell us, or not tell us, and through this also enhancing historical metacognition. In this metacognitive process, it is then particularly important to consider the interconnectedness of the

chronotope of distanciation with the chronotope of actualisation, since to critically understand the influence of the past on the present, implies to avoid any risk of presentism (Hartog, 2003).

The chronotope of actualisation, which appears to be the most evident among respondents, is deeply linked to the connections that the students manage to establish or not between past events and their own socio-cultural context. One can assume that this chronotope of actualisation, when critically embraced, allows for establishing connections, or for evaluating or questioning the strength of connections between past and present. Therefore, in this chronotope of actualisation, there is the presence of central perspectives that can contribute to the development of a critical historical consciousness related to the comprehension of the notion of the historicity of the being, of communities and of societies (Arendt, 1958; Ricoeur, 1984, 2004). For instance, the intertwined role of memory and history in the construction of “narratives”, “myths”, or “traditions” that have survived the test of time, as well as the questioning about the absence or the silence of certain narratives in a given culture could be central perspectives to investigate through this chronotope of actualisation. (Dessingué and Winter, 2016; Dessingué and Knutsen, 2021) These perspectives may thus underscore phenomenological aspects of history and memory, emphasizing the construction or deconstruction of narratives that either bolster or undermine the development of essentialist narratives, discourses or cultural identities. (Ricoeur, 1984; Dessingué, 2017)

The chronotope of anticipation is the last means used by students to justify their interests in studying history. This third chronotope is much less discussed and addressed by students and appears to be much less prioritized, which is an interesting finding. This perspective is directly connected to the relationship between knowledge of the past and its various interpretations, along with the ability to imagine and even position oneself as an historical actor or agent. A better understanding of the past that combines the chronotopes of distanciation and actualisation may also lead to a critical stance and engagement with the context to which one belongs (the history I am a part of), a form of empowerment highlighted by this chronotope of anticipation. This idea is widely connected to the work of Raymond Aron, who considers “historical consciousness as engagement” to be a crucial factor for a critical historical consciousness and empowerment (Aron, 2011, p. 105). It has to be noted that in Aron’s writings, historical consciousness is distinctly linked to a specific historical context (the 1950s and 1960s), influenced by the aftermath of both World Wars, of totalitarian regimes, the use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and ongoing decolonization processes. It is through these historical experiences and processes of remembrance that historical consciousness naturally leads to an active engagement with history and society. In our contemporary world, the development of totalitarian regimes and new alliances, the proliferation of regional and international conflicts, and the resurgence of fundamentalist ideologies define a “new” context, which explicitly demands a reevaluation of history education as a clear promoter of both critical thinking *and* social, cultural, and political engagement.

This study has demonstrated that our respondents largely favour the chronotope of actualisation and to a lesser extent the chronotope of distancing within their own history culture and historical consciousness, while the chronotope of anticipation is largely overlooked by a significant portion of students. This paper encourages then history teachers and educators to promote the work with history culture and critical historical consciousness as outcomes of the interplay between three distinct but still necessary and complementary chronotopes of historical relevance. (Illustration 3) It advocates for the cultivation of a critical historical consciousness within education, emphasizing the necessity of student interest and engagement in their own history culture, a process which depends on “the understanding of the representation of the past as a selective, non-neutral and incomplete construction; (...) a deeper understanding of how the past is mediated in the present and for the future and how it potentially affects our individual and collective memories or ways of remembering”. (Dessingué, 2020, p. 12) The development of such a critical historical consciousness necessitates to increase the role of history education and history teaching as a place of epistemic dialogism (Bronner, 2022, p. 25) where insights from the past enrich comprehension of the present and leveraging a deeper comprehension of the world to encourage social, political, and cultural understanding and engagement among students in their daily lives.

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