



Historical Culture, Structure of Narratives, and the Use of history on the Construction of Historical Consciousness: An Empirical Study in Indonesian Contexts

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Abstract: *This paper reports an empirical investigation of the epistemological aspect of historical consciousness, particularly on the relationship between three manifestations of historical consciousness namely narrative, the uses of history, and historical culture on the construction of historical consciousness. The main question addressed in this paper is about to what extent historical cultures, as the representation of cultural achievement, shape an individual's historical consciousness, which represents the anthropological universal aspect. This research departs from the theoretical debate on historical consciousness as an anthropological universal versus historical consciousness as a cultural achievement of Western civilization. Based on Jorn Rusen's (2004) theoretical assumptions regarding the interrelation of historical narrative, the use of history, and historical culture, this study empirically demonstrates the connection between these three variables through comparisons and differences found in the research subjects. To answer this question, a qualitative research project based on a descriptive approach was used as a research method to observe students' narratives, uses of history, and historical culture in the History Study Program (HSP) and the History Education Study Program (HESP) at Sebelas Maret University in which those study programs have a different strand of the curriculum. The findings reveal differences in historical narratives and the use of history between students from the two study programs. This research shows the differences in narratives and uses of history between students from those two study programs. Students from the HSP tend to use critical standpoints to understand history. Meanwhile, students from the HESP, which stands on education and history, tend to understand history in a normative way. The differences prove that historical culture, which is represented by the Curriculum of the study programs, has constructed students' historical consciousness to be critical and normative. This also shows the encounter between cultural achievement and the anthropological aspect of humans in the construction of historical consciousness.*

Keywords: *Historical Consciousness, Structure of Narrative, Historical Culture*

Budaya Sejarah, Struktur Narasi, dan Penggunaan Sejarah dalam Konstruksi Kesadaran Sejarah : Studi Empiris dalam Konteks Indonesia

Abstrak: Artikel ini melaporkan investigasi empiris mengenai aspek epistemologis dari kesadaran sejarah, khususnya mengenai hubungan antara tiga manifestasi kesadaran Sejarah : narasi sejarah, penggunaan sejarah, dan budaya sejarah dalam konstruksi kesadaran sejarah. Pertanyaan utama dalam artikel ini adalah sejauh mana budaya sejarah, yang merepresentasikan prestasi kultural, membentuk kesadaran sejarah seseorang. Penelitian ini berangkat dari perdebatan teoritis mengenai kesadaran sejarah sebagai suatu kepemilikan antropologis dan kesadaran sejarah sebagai suatu keberhasilan kultural dari peradaban barat. Dengan berpijak pada asumsi teoritis Jorn Rusen (2004) mengenai keterkaitan narasi sejarah, penggunaan sejarah, dan budaya sejarah, penelitian ini secara empiris membuktikan keterkaitan ketiga variabel tersebut yang ditunjukkan dengan komparasi dan perbedaan temuan dari subyek penelitian. Untuk menjawab pertanyaan tersebut, penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan



deskriptif dilakukan untuk mengobservasi narasi, penggunaan sejarah, dan budaya sejarah mahasiswa di dua Program Studi Ilmu Sejarah dan Pendidikan Sejarah di Universitas Sebelas Maret yang memiliki dua fondasi kurikulum yang berbeda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan perbedaan dalam narasi dan penggunaan sejarah antara mahasiswa dari dua program studi tersebut. Mahasiswa dari program studi ilmu sejarah cenderung menggunakan pandangan kritis untuk memahami sejarah. Sementara itu, mahasiswa program studi pendidikan sejarah cenderung menggunakan pandangan normatif. Perbedaan tersebut pada tingkatan tertentu menunjukkan pengaruh budaya sejarah yang berbeda dalam pembentukan kesadaran sejarah mahasiswa. Hal ini juga menunjukkan adanya pertemuan antara kesadaran sejarah sebagai prestasi budaya dan kesadaran sejarah sebagai bawaan antropologis manusia.

Kata Kunci: Kesadaran Sejarah, Struktur Narasi, Budaya Sejarah

INTRODUCTION

Over four decades after Jeismann's (1979) conception, historical consciousness has been scientifically defined by scholars as a multi-chronological understanding of the three temporal dimensions: past, present, and future. According to this definition, scholars argue that the human ability to navigate temporal orientation is not solely about possessing knowledge of the past but also about understanding its relevance and application in the present and future—particularly in constructing identity (Clark, 2018) and morality (Ammert, Edling, Löfström, & Sharp, 2017; Edling, 2017). When individuals become aware of the past, they develop a deeper historical understanding of the present and gain foresight for the future, and vice versa (Najbert, 2012; Thompson & Dean, 2017).

According to Thorp (2014), historical consciousness manifests in three primary forms: narratives, uses of history, and historical culture. Narratives represent the cognitive structures of individuals, including their understanding of temporal dimensions (Rüsen, 2004). The use of history emerges within these narratives, while historical cultures encompass a collective aggregation of different uses of history, forming societal historical landscapes into which individuals are born and socialized. Carroll and Carr (1988) stated that historical culture influences how individuals interpret historical facts or events, suggesting that historical culture plays a significant role in shaping students' historical consciousness. Moreover, Rüsen (2012) highlighted the dynamic relationship between historical consciousness and historical culture, emphasizing that historical culture can both shape and be shaped by historical consciousness.

Rüsen (2012) proposed a framework for understanding how people use history in their social lives. The first conception is traditional narration, where history is employed to uphold societal traditions. Seixas (2004) noted that traditional narratives often lack critical engagement or attention to conflicting historical accounts. The second conception

is exemplary narration, where history is used to derive moral lessons or rules of conduct. Like the traditional type, exemplary historical consciousness tends to align with positivist perspectives on history (Seixas, 2012). However, it seeks to verify or falsify historical claims, albeit in a straightforward manner (Thorp, 2014). The third conception is critical narration, which uses history to critique societal and cultural norms. This type questions the possibility of historical truth, treating all accounts as equally valid or invalid, and often struggles to historicize the perspective of the meaning-making subject (Thorp, 2020). Lastly, the genetic narration focuses on understanding societal continuity and change across time, acknowledging the distinct “spirit” of each historical period and its influence on perspectives of history (Rüsen, 2004; Seixas, 2012). Thorp (2014) suggested that an individual’s capacity to engage with historical representations can indicate their level of historical consciousness. For example, individuals with traditional, exemplary, or critical types of historical consciousness typically perceive historical accounts as either true or false. In contrast, those with a genetic type of historical consciousness can distinguish between historical representations and historical facts, often adopting a meta-historical approach.

While academic discussions surrounding historical consciousness have grown significantly, certain philosophical issues remain unresolved. Dating back to Gadamer and Fantel’s (1975) and Lau and Michel’s (2019) arguments, debates on the epistemology of historical consciousness continue to be open to reinterpretation. Kölbl and Straub (2001) extended these debates by questioning whether historical consciousness operates as an anthropological universal or as a cultural achievement. Their research highlights that the concept of temporal dimensions can be articulated differently across societies, suggesting that historical consciousness cannot be universally defined but is instead shaped by how societies perceive and interact with their temporal realities.

Thorp (2014) summarized the growing body of research on historical consciousness and identified both ontological and epistemological issues. These include the complexities of multi-chronological connections and the construction of historical consciousness on an individual level. Addressing the epistemological challenges, Thorp outlined three levels of manifestation: narratives as representations of cognitive processes, the contextual use of historical knowledge, and historical cultures as the broader contexts of human life. These manifestations are interdependent, creating a dialectical process between human cognition and cultural contexts. Thorp further

highlighted the epistemological challenge of understanding how these manifestations contribute to the development of historical consciousness on both individual and societal levels.

Nordgren (2019) added another perspective by examining the foundational definition of historical consciousness as discussed today. Historical consciousness can be viewed as a modern cultural achievement emerging from the Enlightenment and modernity, which fostered a sense of history and historicity (Kölbl & Straub, 2001; Körber, 2016). Alternatively, it can be understood as a cognitive developmental process that enables humans to comprehend temporal dimensions (Nordgren, 2016). These differing perspectives influence how history is taught in classrooms today. The modern cultural achievement framework addresses contemporary moral and ethical questions in history education, whereas the anthropological perspective emphasizes the societal use of history in public life (Nordgren, 2019).

Building on the discussions by Kölbl and Straub (2001), Nordgren (2019), and Thorp (2014), this paper seeks to explore the extent to which historical cultures shape an individual's historical consciousness. The analysis focuses on the interplay between narratives, the uses of history, and historical cultures, and how this interplay structures historical rationality. To address this question, the author conducted qualitative research using an ethnographic approach within the History study program and the History Education study program at two universities in Indonesia. This study examines how different historical cultures influence students' historical consciousness.

In Indonesian higher education, two distinct faculties represent history learning: the History Study Program (HSP) and the History Education Study Program (HESP). These study programs reflect two differing historical cultures in Indonesia: critical history and normative history. Given these distinctions, these study programs provide an ideal context for examining the epistemological challenges of historical consciousness, particularly about historical culture, the use of history, and narratives. In the concluding section, the author extends the discussion to the practical implications of historical consciousness, focusing on its construction at a practical level.

This research employs Rüsen's typology (2004) to analyze students' historical consciousness and explore the interplay between curriculum, students' narratives, and their use of history. This research stems from the theoretical debate on historical consciousness as an anthropological possession versus historical consciousness as a

cultural achievement of Western civilization. Specifically, the study focuses on how students construct historical accounts, particularly through their narratives and applications of historical knowledge. The curricula of the two study programs studied—History and History Education—are treated as representations of their respective historical cultures, reflecting the spirit, norms, and values of their academic contexts. These curricula, shaped by historical inheritance, are assumed to influence students' understanding and use of history, thereby shaping their historical consciousness. Comparing students from both study programs provides insight into how distinct historical cultures and curricula influence the development of students' historical consciousness, revealing differences in their characteristics and perspectives.

RESEARCH METHODS

To examine the formation of students' historical consciousness, a qualitative research project employing a qualitative approach was conducted. The study took place in the History Study Program (HSP) and the History Education Study Program (HESP) at Sebelas Maret University in Indonesia. The research aimed to analyze the typology of historical cultures and the historical consciousness of students. By adopting an descriptive approach, the research allowed for an descriptive exploration of the values and norms—integral components of historical culture—actualized by both students and their institutions. The analysis centered on the relationship between study program curricula, students' narratives, and their uses of history. Both study programs have distinct curricula that reflect their respective historical cultures and inherited traditions.

The research subjects consisted of fifth-semester university students from the HSP and HESP at Sebelas Maret University, Surakarta. In total, 86 students participated, comprises of which 68 from the HESP and 48 from the HSP. The research subjects, aged 19 to 21 years, included 50 male students and 36 female students. Data collection methods included observation, document analysis, interviews, and open questionnaires. Document analysis was used to uncover the historical culture institutionalized within the study programs' curricula, while field observations were conducted to assess the manifestation of historical culture in practice. Additionally, interviews were conducted with students to explore their narratives and uses of history. The analysis of these narratives focused on how individuals comprehend and articulate historical accounts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the research reveal that the curricula of the History Study Program (HSP) and the History Education Study Program (HESP) are imbued with crystallized values and norms that shape the identity of each study program. In curricula documents, the vision of the HSP emphasizes the development of historical science grounded in national culture, particularly the noble values of Javanese culture. The study program focuses on teaching, research, and community service within the domain of cultural history. This vision and mission are reflected in its curriculum, which comprises 73 courses, including the history of Indonesia, regional history, introduction to history, philosophy of history, social theories, historical methodology, Indonesian cultures, archival studies, historical research, historiography, local history, and other elective courses. The curriculum is designed to produce skillful historians capable of reconstructing historical events into well-structured narratives. The curriculum of the HSP represents critical history where students are trained to be historians who can investigate and reconstruct the past. The curriculum of the HSP emphasizes history courses supported by hermeneutic and socio-cultural disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies. These courses provide theoretical frameworks for analyzing historical events and tracing historical facts, enabling students to construct well-organized historical narratives. This approach aligns with critical history, where students prioritize the pursuit of historical facts and the realities of past events.

On the other hand, the HESP has distinct objectives aimed at producing history educators. Its curriculum encompasses both history courses and educational sciences, providing a dual focus on history and pedagogy. The history courses include the history of Indonesia, regional history, local history and thematic history, while the educational courses cover topics such as teaching strategies for history, educational psychology, child psychology, theories of education and learning, evaluation methods, lesson planning, and social science education. This dual focus equips graduates with the skills needed to teach history effectively at the secondary education level. The curriculum of the HESP leans toward normative history, preparing students to become history teachers. The HESP's curriculum operates at the intersection of historical science and educational science. Its courses not only focus on analyzing historical events but also address the practical uses of history in the present and future. This curriculum fosters multi-chronological thinking, encouraging students to consider historical events across past, present, and future

contexts. The comparison of the curricula between HSP and HESP can be seen in Table 1 below:

Tabel 1: The comparison of the HSP and HESP Curricula

<i>No</i>	History Study Program (HSP)	History Education Study Program (HESP)
<i>1</i>	The aims of the curriculum is to generate skillful historians	The aims of the curriculum is to produce history teachers with pedagogical skills
<i>2</i>	Stands of critical history	Stands on normative and critical history
<i>3</i>	Curriculum contains history majors, social science, cultural studies	Curriculum contains history, educational science, and social science

Source: The Document of Curriculum of History Education Study Program (2019 and History Study Program (2019)

Structurally, the curricula inform the cognitive framework, spirit, vision, and mission of both lecturers and students. These curricula can be categorized as representations of historical culture within a cognitive landscape—an unobservable dimension that influences the cognitive processes of those engaged in the study programs. Based on the structure of courses, the body of knowledge of two study programmes can be depicted. These curricular differences generate distinct historical cultures, which, in turn, influence the construction of students’ historical consciousness. The curriculum of study programs are the part of mnemonic infrastructure underlying historical conceptions (Grever and Adriaansen, 2017: 78). The curriculums are crystallization of an inherited knowledge that shapes the way students narratives and determine how students use history. Based on those distinctions, the curriculums play an important role in determining students’ narrative and the uses of history. The curriculums act as a set of theoretical knowledge and framework of thinking that should be learned and mastered by students. In this research, the distinction of historical narratives and the use of history can be the evidence of these theoretical assumptions.

Students’ narratives and their uses of history are the manifestations of historical consciousness. Students from both study programs demonstrate the ability to identify significant historical events they deemed important, showcasing their multi-chronological understanding of the past, present, and future. While both groups share a similar temporal orientation, their narratives reveal distinct characteristics influenced by their respective curricula. As it stated in the interview, the majority of students from the HSP tended to construct analytical and critical narratives, reflecting a focus on

uncovering truth in history. Based on the interview, they often use words “facts”, “evidence”, and “truth” when narrating the past. They emphasized an understanding of repetitive patterns in historical events, believing these patterns could provide insights for navigating the future. These analytical approaches are manifested in their effort to reconstruct and analyze past events, often drawing analogies to anticipate future scenarios. Their engagement with history reflects a belief that historical structures often repeat, enabling them to envision a future where past mistakes are avoided. It can be highlighted that students from the HSP exhibited a critical perspective in their narratives, characterized by a deep analytical engagement with the past.

Students of the HESP produce narratives that were more normative and reflective, emphasizing the foundational role of history in nation-building. Students of HESP tend to have a sense to brough past in the present and future contexts. However, they obviously pursue historical facts. As it loosened the facts, students from HESP tend to comfortably use secondary and primary historical sources in referring historical facts. Their narratives present history as a source of inspiration and guidance for shaping societal values and promoting citizenship. When students are trained to be teachers-historians, students encourage normative and reflective storytelling. This reflective approach appeared to be influenced by the educational courses in their curriculum, which emphasized drawing lessons from history to guide future actions. The differentiation of students narratives and the uses of history of HSP and HESP students can be seen in Table 2:

Tabel 2: The differentiation of students narratives and the use of history

No	Students of History Study Program (HSP)	Students of History Education Study Program (HESP)
1	Analytical and critical narratives	Analytical and normative narratives
2	Highlighting primary sources as the evidence	Using secondary and tersier source as the part of narartive
3	Pursuing historical truth	Expanding the narrative into present and future

Source: Transcription of students interview and questionnaire

The findings show distinctions of students' narratives and the use of history between HSP and HESP students. The distinction may be subjectives but it can be an evidence on the prolongation of historical culture to the narratives of students and the uses of history. Based on the students' narratives and uses of history, it became evident that their historical consciousness varied by study program. History study program

students displayed a critical type of historical consciousness, evidenced by their efforts to pursue historical truth and understand past patterns. Meanwhile, History Education students leaned toward a normative and reflective historical consciousness, prioritizing history's role in fostering nation-building and societal values. The author concluded that these differing approaches to historical accounts were shaped by the curricula of the respective study programs. This serves as evidence of how historical culture influences the development of historical consciousness at the individual level.

From the above findings, it can be highlighted that the findings of this research demonstrate the interplay between curriculum, as a representation of historical culture, and students' narratives and uses of history as manifestations of historical consciousness. The differing curricula of the History study program and the History Education study program have led to distinct characteristics among students in their perception and application of history. Students from the History study program exhibit a critical approach to history, as evidenced by their tendency to question historical truths. In contrast, students from the History Education study program adopt a normative perspective, emphasizing the role of history in fostering nationalism and nation-building. Based on Rösen's (2012) framework, students in the History study program align with the exemplary type of historical consciousness, whereas students in the History Education study program lean towards a more traditionalistic type.

Although this study does not aim to create a definitive distinction, evidence from students' narratives and their perceptions of the uses of history highlights these differences. Students' narratives serve as a window into their cognitive processes, revealing two approaches to understanding history: critical and normative perspectives. According to Ahonen (2005) and Ammert et.al (2022), such cognitive processes reflect a person's multi-chronological ability to interpret the past, understand the present, and envision the future. This multi-chronological capacity significantly influences how individuals use history and derive moral lessons from it (Edling, et. al., 2020; Thorp, 2014).

This research also supports Carroll and Carr's (1988) and Levesque (2023) argument that historical culture significantly influences the development of historical consciousness. The relationship between curriculum, students' narratives, and their use of history demonstrates how historical culture shapes historical consciousness. Variations in curriculum structure result in differing narratives and applications of

history. Moreover, the findings reaffirm Thorp's (2014) assertion that historical consciousness involves distinct epistemic qualities shaped by the interaction of psychological and social dimensions. While collective memory and societal history are shared, social constructs and psychological processes ultimately shape the specific form of historical consciousness. This dialectical process, rather than an oppositional one, provides a nuanced understanding of Kölbl and Straub's (2001) epistemological question about historical consciousness as an anthropological universal or cultural achievement.

From these findings, it becomes evident that the curriculum plays a crucial role in shaping students' historical consciousness. This underscores the influence of cultural achievements alongside psychological factors in understanding the temporal dimension. Students are free to express their understanding of historical accounts, as evidenced by the diversity in their narratives and uses of history. On a practical level, the relationship between curricula and students' historical consciousness highlights the pivotal role of history education in fostering historical consciousness (Ahonen, 2005). History education should strive to build a more profound understanding of historical consciousness by emphasizing how the past informs the present and future. As Thorp (2020) suggests, curricula need to strengthen their epistemological stance on history, encouraging students to achieve a genetic type of historical consciousness. To reach this level, students must engage with historical accounts critically, consider ethical dimensions, and reflect on their implications. Moreover, Oldham (2020) and Bergman (2020) argue that historical thinking skills are integral to the development of historical consciousness. By enhancing historical thinking, students can adopt more nuanced perspectives on historical events, connecting them to broader ethical and temporal contexts.

Based on the above discussion, it is essential for curricula to provide opportunities for students to apply history meaningfully, as a reflection of their historical consciousness. A well-structured curriculum should empower students to critically engage with historical narratives, fostering a genetic type of historical consciousness that transcends mere knowledge and embraces deeper historical thinking and ethical understanding.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the relationship between the curriculum, students' narratives, and the use of history within the History study program and the History Education study program. It reveals notable differences in how students from these study programs construct their narratives and utilize history. Historical culture, as represented by the study program curricula, plays a crucial role in shaping students' historical consciousness, directing it toward either critical or normative orientations. The curriculum serves as a framework that influences the development of students' narratives and their approach to using history.

However, this study primarily focuses on the relationship between the manifestations of historical culture and its outcomes. It does not delve into the processes through which students internalize and objectify historical accounts, leading to the formation of diverse narratives and uses of history. Therefore, the authors recommend that future research should explore these underlying processes in greater depth. By investigating how students internalize and objectify historical knowledge, future studies could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how historical consciousness is constructed and represented.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Authors express their heartfelt gratitude to the late Dr. Umasih for her invaluable initial insights and contributions to this research.

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