

# BOOK REVIEW

**Karina V. Korostelina**

**History Education in the Formation of Social Identity: Toward a Culture of Peace**

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, ISBN 978 1 137 38078 4, 235p.

Karina Korostelina's book which evaluates history education makes an important contribution to the existing literature by recognising the specific aspects of history curricula that either facilitate or hinder intercultural understanding. Rich in historical analysis from multiple regions, this work's main value lies in its analytical framework. The framework connects the disciplines of social identity and history education to depict their potential to promote a culture of violence or a culture of peace. The book focuses on how history education can be leveraged to form a culture of peace, while also exploring the opposite possibility.

The first chapter explains how identity is formed through 'social identity theory' and introduces a conceptual framework, entitled 'the model of impact of history education on social identity', which is explained and elaborated on throughout the rest of the book. The framework presents various forms and modes of identity that represent how ingroup members – those who belong to the dominant culture – understand and reflect on the meaning of identity. Even though emphasis is placed on the potential of history education to cultivate a culture of peace, much of the book illustrates ways in which it has served to strengthen the negative perceptions of outgroups (those considered as 'others') while increasing loyalty towards the ingroup, or the dominant culture. The framework allows for the exploration of the main factors that foster a culture of violence, namely the connotations of ingroup identity and justifications of social hierarchies and power structures.

The second chapter elaborates on the different forms of social identity and explains how members belonging to an ingroup understand and reflect on the meaning of identity. Korostelina introduces the concept that there are cultural, mobilized, and reflected forms of identity. The cultural form of national identity is created through cultural traditions and historic developments and is evident in ideas about historical roots, narratives, values, beliefs, and attitudes. The reflected form includes learning about the position of the outgroups and reflecting upon context and therefore has the potential to contribute to a culture of peace. The antithesis of the reflected form of identity is the mobilized form which is based on fear, often of outgroups, and threat theories that focus on maintaining the power and status of ingroups. In this chapter, Korostelina explores how Taiwan and Singapore promote inclusive or reflective identities, while Romania, North Korea, China, Spain, and Ukraine display elements of nationalism in mobilized identity forms.

Chapter three introduces a further range of concepts into this discussion, and Korostelina's further subdivision of identity's meanings and modes into ideological, relative, historic, and

depictive identity categories is excessive. The concepts of ideological and historic identity are self-explanatory; the relative mode focuses on ingroup victimisation and promotes negative outgroup images, thus contributing to a culture of violence; meanwhile, a depictive mode promotes comparative representations which accommodate ideological differences and contribute to a culture of peace. Korostelina illustrates her discussion with examples from Russia, Armenia, China, Spain, Ukraine, North Korea, and Austria, and draws particular attention to the culture of peace promoted by France and Germany. France's history curricula avoid the glorification of conquerors and warriors, and instead, emphasise the consequences of the actions of national heroes; meanwhile, German curricula emphasise the roles played by resistance activists, democrats, and post-war democratic constitution and eschew an emphasis on military leaders.

The book's fourth chapter explains how inclusive or divisive social borders are formed. Divisive borders are created by denying a common culture with outgroups; omitting positive historical interaction from educational texts; and representing the outgroup as dangerous due to their divergent values. While Korostelina finds evidence that a culture of violence is being fostered in the history curricula of Serbia, Croatia, Georgia, Abkhazia, Macedonia, Greece, and Ukraine, Australia is depicted as creating a culture of peace through boundary redefinition because it includes positive examples of several nationalities within its history education.

The concept of collective axiology is introduced in the fifth chapter and, in her discussion of the common moral value system for offering moral guidance, Korostelina introduces the arguably superfluous concepts of 'axiological balance' and 'collective generality', as well as the polarities of 'high generality' and 'low generality'. Axiological balance relates to the virtues and vices attributed to groups, and so a balanced axiology, which contributes to a culture of peace, can be achieved when one accepts the wrongdoings of one's own ingroup, and reduces or eradicates the portrayal of specific outgroups as enemies. The concept of *collective generality* relates to resistance to change and to the long-term stability of beliefs. Curricula that are worded in an inflexible, biased manner contribute to a culture of violence through *high generality*, and examples of this at work are chosen here from China, North Korea, Azerbaijan, and Greece. France and Germany are discussed again in this chapter as nations which transformed their axiology to a level of *low generality*. The essence of this chapter might have been conveyed much more succinctly if Korostelina had summarised these points to argue that flexibility promotes a culture of peace while resistance to change promotes a culture of violence.

The sixth chapter focuses on the effects that national identity formation has on inter-group relations. Korostelina introduces the categorisations of ethnic, multicultural, and civic identity, and argues that the ethnic concept of national identity is connected with the dominance of one ethnic identity and the denial of available alternatives. The multicultural concept is connected with the acknowledgement and promotion of ethnic diversity, and the civic concept of national identity is connected with collective civic responsibility and coexistence. Ethnic categorisations in history curricula are identified as being in use in China, Taiwan, Honk Kong, pre-World-War-Two Austria, Serbia, Croatia, and Moldova-Romania; Singapore, Canada, and Germany instead promote multiculturalism by emphasising the



values and benefits that diverse cultures contribute to the community as a whole. According to Korostelina, the civic curricula in France and Northern Ireland place emphasis on the idea that everyone is a citizen of the nation, irrespective of their ethnic origin.

This book provides a rich variety of global comparisons to illustrate and strengthen the various tiers of the analytical framework Korostelina employs. It also contributes towards a comparative analysis of history curricula, and gives direction to attempts to mobilise history education as a tool for peace education. In terms of its presentation, it would have been extremely helpful for a comparative analysis if the book had included a table summarising the positions of each country over time. Also, while the book is targeted towards an academic audience and does not seek directly to inform policy-making, it would have been helpful for the author to have excluded the superfluous categorisations within the analytical framework she uses; this would have improved the fluency and effectiveness of the book's argument.

The book places importance on the need to generate a culture of peace for normative reasons at a micro-level, instead of acknowledging the macro-level political and diplomatic repercussions of fostering a culture of violence. While the purpose of the book logically follows a normative argument, the diplomatic reasons for changing the discourse of history books should not be ignored. The author's research on textbooks from Ukraine resonates – and might helpfully have been linked – with its current conflict regarding national boundaries and identity. The global diplomatic power held by Russia might also have been more openly discussed. One of the reasons among many that Russia continues to hold diplomatic power (regardless of its controversial past and repressive regime) is due to the monopoly the country holds over gas supplies. If antipathy towards Russia were to be promulgated throughout Europe (through a culture of violence in education or in the media), it is likely that most of Europe would freeze during the winter months. Also, in the long-term, it is evident that the promotion of a culture of peace would help individual nations (especially the economically weaker states within the European Union) to gain access to social and economic benefits during a financial or an environmental crisis.

Within the area of education, it would have been valuable if the author had mentioned the multiplicity of educational terminologies that are used to promote the same arguments. For example, Korostelina's argument that boundary redefinition leads to a culture of peace is reminiscent of Nussbaum's idea of world citizenship,<sup>1</sup> which makes the case that diverse groups of people (within a nation or between nations) contribute significantly to the process of fostering a cohesive global society. Therefore, the normative values behind an inclusive history education curriculum cannot be separated from the discourses within peace education, intercultural education, and citizenship education. While Korostelina's book succeeds in answering the question it poses through a comprehensive analytical framework, an exploration of the diplomatic implications of forming an inclusive discourse through history curricula would strengthen her argument and extend its reach beyond the boundaries of social identity and history education.

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<sup>1</sup>Nussbaum, M. (1997) *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defence of Reform in Liberal Education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.