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Communities of Memory: The Utah History Fair and the Utilization of History and Memory

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COMMUNITIES OF MEMORY:
THE UTAH HISTORY FAIR AND THE UTILIZATION OF HISTORY AND
MEMORY

by

Nicholas A. Demas

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

History

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2013

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ABSTRACT

Communities of Memory:

The Utah History Fair and the Utilization of History and Memory

by

Nicholas A. Demas, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2012

Major Professor: Dr. Norman Jones
Department: History

Examining the types of history espoused by students creating projects for the Utah History Fair allows for an enhanced understanding of how students interact with history. Such a study allows for a better comprehension of how students relate to the nation-state and within their communities.

To provide adequate context for this thesis, a general understanding of historiography of History and Memory as well as the history of the Utah History Fair is required.

(110 pages)

PUBLIC ABTRACT

Communities of Memory:

The Utah History Fair and the Utilization of History and Memory

Utah's students, grades 4-12, create projects for the Utah History Fair, Utah's National History Day affiliate program. As far as the rigors of youth academic prowess are concerned, National History Day and the Utah History Fair are amongst the top in the nation. Within the myriad of projects created by Utah's participating students is important information about what aspects of the past captures students' attention and why they choose to research their selected topics. Through a careful examination of student topics from 1981-1984 and 2009-2012, this project taps into what students comprehend about the past. Further inspection into why students choose their topics, in their own words, explains students' motives for selecting different historical events for research.

On a more immediate level, the information gathered and disseminated in this thesis can be used to create stronger Utah History Fair and National History Day projects. The evidence also provides additional assistance to those seeking future utilization of the past in the grade school classroom in regards to what students are interested in studying.

Nicholas A. Demas

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The past Utah History Fair staff deserves mention. Thank you for all of your hard work Errol Jones, Shannon Hoskins, Bob Parson, and Mike Johnson. Mike Johnson was both a good friend and mentor. I miss your camaraderie. I especially miss “getting sharp” after a day’s contest.

I would like to thank my parents, Mike and Sue, for all of your education support, and my siblings, Jamie and Kelli, for being fantastic, caring people. I would also like to express gratitude to Draden and Trevor for being extraordinary young men. You two have a bright future. Finally, a heaping dose of appreciation goes to Maria for being a joyful, supportive, and loving person. I could not ask for a better partner in life.

I dedicate this project to my Grandma Ida and my Grandma Glo. You are two of the greatest people I know.

Nicholas A. Demas

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sixth grade Tabiona Public School student Jenica Jenkins from the small mountain town of Tabiona, Utah entered the 2011 Utah History Fair with her documentary titled, “The Debate Over the Colorado River Compact.” When explaining why she chose her topic, Jenica wrote:

So one day I started talking to my dad and he started complaining about not getting his water on time to water his alfalfa. I really started to think after that because I didn't know one thing about how they split up the water or why it mattered to get it split up evenly. I got really interested in it and I started asking a lot of questions. I guess my dad got sick of it because he told me to do a history fair project on it. So I thought of different agreements or compacts that have to do (with) the (west's) water rights, and I discovered the Colorado River Compact of 1922.¹

For Jenica, her project allowed her to understand her present circumstances within her household and community as it related to her everyday life in order to create a project addressing the theme, “Debate and Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences.”

Jacob Bergquist, an eighth grader at Bryant Middle School in Salt Lake City, Utah examined the U.S. Constitution with his 2010 Junior Individual Documentary. The documentary, titled, “The Innovation of the World’s Most Perfect Document: The U.S. Constitution,” fit the theme, “Innovation in History: Impact and Change.” On why he selected the topic, Jacob stated:

Many Americans live in ignorance of the strife that our ancestors lived through to give us the rights that we enjoy every day. I believe that it is impossible to truly understand how fortunate we are to have these rights without having lived in a

¹ Jenica Jenkins, “The Debate Over the Colorado River Compact” Utah History Fair Process Papers 2011. Utah History Fair Files. Department of History. Utah State University. Hereafter known “UHFPP” then year.

country where liberty is suppressed and tyranny rampant. I chose my topic because I want to remind people of the privileges we own often because we are simply lucky enough to be born in America. We can merely study and try to put ourselves into the situation of those who fought for the liberties we enjoy in America today.²

The nation-state receives reification through Jacob's project and Jacob's motivation for creating the project.

Carson McFadden, a seventh grade student at Lava Ridge Intermediate School in Santa Clara, Utah, decided to research atomic bomb testing in Nevada and the affects it had on Utahns for his project titled, "Atomic Testing vs. The Downwinders: An Explosive Debate." The exhibit worked within the parameters of 2011's theme, "Debate and Diplomacy in History." About the project, Carson said, "Both of my great-grandmas, my grandmas, and my aunt are all Downwinders, so it shouldn't be hard to guess why I chose this topic." Carson approached his topic as a way to address a grievance with the nation-state as it related to the health, quite literally, of his family and community.³

These three projects are a tiny sampling of how students relate to and utilize the past in order to create Utah History Fair projects, and they are part of a much more complex discussion about the collusion of history and memory, and various facets of history and memory, in the academy. By researching the topics that students select in

² Jacob Bergquist, "The Innovation and Impact of the World's Most Perfect Document: The U.S. Constitution." UHFPP 2010.

³ Carson McFadden, "Atomic Testing vs. The Downwinders: An Explosive Debate." UHFPP 2011. I selected this project to represent Utah at the National Museum of American History during the 2011 Kenneth E. Behring National History Day Contest, Carson having beaten the other competition from Utah in the same category. I also spoke with Carson after the Southwest Region History Fair that year at his behest about ways to improve his project. Interestingly, Carson, through presenting a balanced approach to his project, concluded that the U.S. government operated in disregard of U.S. citizens. This contentious attitude toward the government created tension with his mother.

order to create projects for the Utah History, one can create an understanding of how students interact with the past, the various communities of memory at play in the creation of projects, and why students select what they ultimately choose to study. History and Memory provides a useful theoretical framework for the study of projects. Although many students, indeed most, study topics of the nation-state related to Big-man or Whig-ish history, a many students depart from those themes or argue against those theme. Students demonstrate the appeal and power of the nation-state. At other times, the nation-state becomes the object of criticism, and the past is the vehicle for that criticism or resistance. The nation-state does not always influence the topic at hand, as that topic signifies the community of the student.

The various motives for student selection of topics, whether or not taking a National History Day supplied theme into account, in the Utah History Fair are part of the overall argument. Topic selection demonstrates that students actually interact with history, despite the seemingly high amount of overwrought topics, for interesting and dynamic reasons. Students do select topics based on the suggestions of parents, siblings, family members, supplied lists, and teachers, as one would assume. But many students look at the past as a reflection of personal interest or to better engage the world around them.

Background

Since 1980, fourth through twelfth grade students in Utah have researched, prepared, and presented Utah History Fair (UHF) projects. Students create projects in hope of beating their peers at a school contest in order to continue to a regional, state,

and, ultimately, the national competition for the Utah History Fair and its national affiliate, National History Day (NHD). These young contenders in history create projects based on an annual theme supplied by NHD. Students must select topics that relate to the annual theme. They then research their selected topics, and, in the process form arguments based on their topics' significance in history.

To display their knowledge, participating Utah History Fair students write Historical Papers, script and act a historical Performance, develop an interactive and interpretive Web site, produce a Documentary, or design a museum-like Exhibit. Despite the perceptibly flashy presentation for topics, students must engage their subjects by researching primary and secondary sources, creating a thesis, supporting that thesis, providing historical context for the topic, and formulating a sound conclusion.

Students competing in National History Day and the Utah History Fair take history beyond the textbook and into museums, libraries, special collections and archives, and to online sources, ideally. The inquisitive and interpretive rigors of the process prepare students for post-secondary education and the workplace.

Historiography

Historians utilizing History and Memory cite Maurice Halbwachs as the godfather of the discipline, though historians and social scientists prior to Halbwachs used memory as part of their research. Likewise, History and Memory changed greatly in the intermediate years between Halbwachs' death, during World War II in the German Concentration Camp, and the 1980s when the field experienced resurgence. Halbwachs wrote, "Our confidence in the accuracy of our impression increase, of course, if it can be

supported by other's remembrances also. It is as if the very same experience were relived by several person instead of only one."⁴ The group remains the source of memory, according to Halbwachs, and is necessary for the individual to remember an event.⁵

Halbwachs separated history from memory. According to Halbwachs, "If the historical memory is understood as the sequence of events remembered in national history, then neither it nor its frameworks represent the essence of what I call collective memory."⁶ Despite that memory could be borrowed from books and other sources that, "In recalling them, I must rely entirely on the memory of others, a memory that comes, not as corroborator or completer of my own, but as the very source of what I wish to repeat."⁷ The sentiment is a good starting point for the discussion of History and Memory. The interaction of communities of memory within the framework of the Utah History Fair, a framework where two general communities of memory exist, results from Halbwach's humble beginnings.

History and Memory is by historians to create theory in order to understand how theory can be utilized, it is used to understand how the public relates to events, and it provides the basis for creating a relationship between the individual and the nation-states or shared events within the nation-state. Early in the 1980s as History and Memory gained prominence amongst historians, terms of use were not completely static. Various terms like public memory, popular memory, collective memory, etc. were thrown around by different scholars. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger are two scholars who did not

⁴ Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, Translated by Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter. *La Memiore Collective*. Introduction by Mary Douglas. (Presses Universitaires de France, 1950; New York: Harper Row, 1980), 22.

⁵ Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 23.

⁶ Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 77.

⁷ Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 51-52.

use any of the terms above. Instead of talking about memory, Hobsbawm and Ranger worked through tradition and “invented” tradition as a means of understanding how the nation-state controls the historical narrative and creates moments of commemoration that support its power.⁸ Hobsbawm defined “invented traditions” as, “It includes both ‘traditions’ actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner with a brief and dateable period—a matter of a few years perhaps—and establishing themselves with great rapidity.”⁹

Other scholars used History and Memory to understand the past. Scholars like Michael Kammen, John Bodnar, and David Lowenthal used History and Memory for some of their scholarship about how Americans relate to the past.¹⁰ Kammen examined how Americans related to the past through different epochs in U.S. History. Kammen believed that, “We arouse our memories to suit our psychic needs.”¹¹ Memory, therefore, serves a purpose, a self-soothing purpose, one that can be interpreted as influencing or providing impetus for personal histories. Kammen separated collective memory (dominant in civic culture) from popular memory (that of the ordinary folks).¹²

David Lowenthal looked at how the past helps and hinders humans, how people are aware of and understand the past, and how events and interpretations of those events

⁸ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; reprint Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁹ Hobsbawm and Ranger, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, 9.

¹⁰ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991); David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

¹¹ Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 9.

¹² Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 10.

amend the outcomes on society and individuals.¹³ John Bodnar looked at the “creation of public memory in commemorative activities celebrating America’s past. . . .”¹⁴ Kammen, Lowenthal, and Bodnar all provided histories that took a larger view of America’s past through their works.

Other authors use History and Memory to address specific events, whether contemporary or in the past. The utilization of memory in these circumstances is done in order to understand how the public relates to an event, whether that event is part of the nation-state, as it most commonly is here, or the community. Mike Wallace, Jay Winter, Peter Novick all used the interplay of history and memory to discuss their respective topics.¹⁵ Wallace examined events of the culture wars in the 1980 and 1990s, especially through the controversy over the Enola Gay in the Smithsonian, to talk about the interplay of history, memory, and the nation-state. Winter’s looked at how historical sites of the First World War came to garner significance. Novick examined how the Holocaust came to be remembered.

These scholars are not alone in developing the past through the perception of various groups. Journalist Howard Mansfield’s *The Same Ax, Twice* looks the reuse of antique or old material in modern culture. Alexander Stille disseminated the preservation

¹³ Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, xix.

¹⁴ Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 13.

¹⁵ Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory*, Critical Perspectives on the Past, ed. Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, Roy Rosenzweig (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996); Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999).

of historical sites in *The Future of the Past*.¹⁶ The use of memory and the interaction of the public in the past has proven valuable to scholars during the last thirty years. The information is also important to understand the various communities of memory at play in the Utah History Fair, as those communities often interact with different historical sites, religions, and land use.

Pierre Nora looked at the practical aspects and problems of memory. Nora argued, “An increasingly rapid slippage of the present into a historical past that is gone for good, a general perception that anything and everything may disappear—these indicate a rupture in equilibrium.”¹⁷ Thus illustrating that memory can and does change. However, the central importance of Nora, especially to this work, is that Nora proposed that there are “sites of memory” instead of “real environments of memory” because the real environments of memory no longer exist.¹⁸ Instead, Nora indicated that history rapidly takes the place of memory.¹⁹ Nora constructs memory in two forms, and that memory experiences a paradigm shift. For the two memories, Nora offered:

On the one hand, we find an integrated, dictatorial memory—unself-conscious, commanding, all-power, spontaneously actualizing, a memory without a past that ceaselessly reinvents tradition, linking the history of its ancestors to the undifferentiated time of heroes, origins, and myth—and on the hand, our memory, nothing more in fact than sifted and sorted historical traces.²⁰

Nora does not stop there. Nora took the collusion of memory and history one step further. “History,” according to Nora, “is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true

¹⁶ Howard Mansfield, *The Same Ax, Twice: Restoration and Renewal in A Throwaway Age* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000); Alexander Stille, *The Future of the Past* (New York: Picador, 2003).

¹⁷ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations* (Spring, 1989), 7.

¹⁸ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 7.

¹⁹ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 8.

²⁰ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 8.

mission is to suppress and destroy it . . . History's goal and ambition is not to exalt but to annihilate what has in reality taken place."²¹ Here Nora echoes Halbwachs in regards to history vs. memory. However, Nora makes further attempts to remove memory, writing, "What we call memory today is therefore not memory but already history."²² History replaces memory. Such warnings are important in a study regarding the collusion of history and memory, as it is the contention in this work that memory is created through history on by the nation-state and event so, though less organized, through the community.

Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka give credence to the concepts of different groups of memory, one of Halbwachs' ideas.²³ Assmann and Czaplicka differentiate between "everyday" or "communicative" memory and "cultural" memory. Communicative memory is a less formal form of memory resulting from interpersonal relationships. John Bodnar's different groups of memory, the vernacular and the official, are given additional relevance here.²⁴ Assmann and Czaplicka allowed communicative memory to be part of the household as well as part of the society with others. In describing others, Assmann and Czaplicka stated, "these 'others' . . . are not just any set of people, rather they are groups who conceive their unity and peculiarity through a common image of their past," from neighborhoods to the nation.²⁵ They allow for multiple communities to exist, "Every individual belongs to numerous such groups and

²¹ Nora, "Between Memory and History," 8.

²² Nora, "Between Memory and History," 13.

²³ Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique* 65 (Spring-Summer, 1995), 125-133, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/488538> (accessed 7 September 2012).

²⁴ Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 13. These two forms of memory support the emerging notion that more than one memory can exist at one time within an individual.

²⁵ Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 126-127.

therefore entertains numerous collective self-images and memories.”²⁶ Under Assmann and Czaplicka, communicative memory transitions to the nation, at times; the past also interacts with the present through the different forms and uses of memory.²⁷

The likes of Nora, Bodnar, and Assmann and Czaplicka add different groups of memory to the historiography. The multiple groups at play, whether vernacular or official, or communicative or national, give rise to the opportunity that multiple communities of memory at play can create an understanding of, and differentiation between, how Utah’s grade school students interact with the past. Rather than utilizing memory as a way of constructing different ideas of remembrance, this work uses memory to examine a public history program that does, indeed, interact quite extensively with the public. The public here happens to be school age children, a segment of society that is commonly overlooked despite the preponderance of education related material, tests, and textbooks directed to them. Adults, educators, and those in the academy tend to examine what students do not know rather than focusing on what they do know, to paraphrase Sam Wineburg.²⁸ But where Wineburg relied on small groups of students in order to conduct his research, this work depends on over 6,000 students from Utah representing four year bookends in the last thirty years.²⁹ Despite Wineburg’s important call for looking at the teaching of history to include the “subtexts” of a text, i.e., that information beneath the superficial writing, Wineburg ignores a population of students that, in many cases,

²⁶ Assmann and Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” 127.

²⁷ Assmann and Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” 129.

²⁸ Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past*. Critical Perspectives on the Past, ed. Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, Roy Rosenzweig (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

²⁹ Unlike some of Wineburg’s contentions about students

operates in exactly the fashion that Wineburg advocates, and had been doing so for over 25 years with *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts* was published.³⁰

This thesis is not without precedent. Michael Frisch, an oral historian, documented the historical knowledge, or at least known historical characters, of his incoming freshmen students at State University of New York-Buffalo in order to see who or what the students knew about history. The results after ten informal years proved to be remarkably similar for the top ten people on the list from year to year.³¹ Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen embarked on a National Endowment for the Humanities funded project that involved talking to the citizens of the United States about how said citizens related to the past.³² *Communities of Memory* attempts to add students, grades four through twelve, to Frisch, Thelen, and Rosenzweig's findings, and adding to the study a plausible use of history and memory via communities of memory: the various communities and the nation-state.

³⁰ Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*, 72-78.

³¹ Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* in SUNY Series on Oral and Public History, ed. Michael Frisch (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), 34-37.

³² Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY IN CRISIS: THE FOUNDING OF NATIONAL HISTORY DAY AND THE
UTAH HISTORY FAIR

Introduction

During the 1970s, historians perceived an attack on the field of history in public education. The Organization of American Historians and the American Historical Association worked together to assess the requirements history teachers must comply with in order to teach history. The commission began researching this in 1973. The Association of American Historian Secretary Robert S. Kirkendall's article, "The State of History in the Schools," highlighted some of the findings.³³ As stated by Kirkendall, "This report supports a generalization historians have assumed to be true for several years. It proves, if proof is necessary, that history is in crisis and that history's crisis is not merely a part of the large difficulties of academic life in the present time." Kirkendall continues, "The report demonstrates that the situation is nationwide, affecting both secondary schools and higher education in every part of the country."³⁴

"The Status of History in the Schools" depended upon the reporting of historians from every state in country. Forty-six states responded.³⁵ The views of those responding addressed concerns that changes in grade school curriculums challenged the hegemony of history education. Indeed, Kirkendall's report indicated that schools marginalized history

³³ Richard S. Kirkendall, "The Status of History in the Schools," *The Journal of American History* 62 (Sep. 1975): 557-570. See Richard S. Kirkendall, "Report of the Executive Secretary for the Year 1973-1974," *Journal of American History* 61 (Sep. 1974): 576-580 for more information about the creation of the committee. "The Status of History in the Schools" is widely cited in literature pertaining to National History Day.

³⁴ Kirkendall, "The Status of History in the Schools," 557.

³⁵ Kirkendall, "The Status of History in the Schools," 557-558.

education in favor of a more comprehensive approach in to social studies. In a section specific to Utah, Kirkendall writes:

Nearly all of the school districts in Utah indicate that they are moving toward a change in emphasis in their social studies contest, economics, current events, American problems, and sociology. The report from Utah concludes, “Although only thirteen districts felt that the place of history had already changed in their curriculum, twenty-four indicated they were moving toward a change with only one of those districts indicating that history would be given greater emphasis.”³⁶

Historians also feared the inadequacy of training for teachers. The committee expressed alarm over the amount of hours some states required for teacher training. Kirkendall stated, “The most common practice requires four to six three-hour history courses in order to qualify to teach history in the state’s secondary schools. Better than one third of the states fall into this category.”³⁷ The committee also distressed over the wide variation in requirements for history between states and institutions.

Kirkendall highlights a concern that affected most states, one that he called a “very dynamic situation.” Most members of the committee contended that states were moving away from history, “at least history as traditionally defined and taught. History is losing out to the other social sciences or the other humanities in a number of places.”³⁸ The committee acknowledged that the perception of history at the time came about partially due to “the assumption that it is not a practical subject.”³⁹ Not only was history seen as subject that could increasingly be marginalized, in some places, like Arizona, the inclusion of Mexican Americans became “self-congratulatory” while American Indians and African Americans were either insulted or ignored in the perception of some critics.

³⁶ Kirkendall, “The Status of History in the Schools,” 564.

³⁷ Kirkendall, “The Status of History in the Schools,” 558.

³⁸ Kirkendall, “The Status of History in the Schools,” 563.

³⁹ Kirkendall, “The Status of History in the Schools,” 564.

The same critics also believed that history was not commiserating with “life in an urban industrial society.”⁴⁰

The bleak outlook of the state of history remained intact in higher education in many places as well. Most states, Utah included, reported a decline in enrollment for history classes to the committee. Part of this decay occurred as a result students’ fears regarding employment after college.⁴¹ The *Public Historian*, first published during the Fall of 1978, addressed the trepidation bandied about regarding employing historians in the public sector throughout the initial years of publication. Articles also attempted to justify the position of public historians within the historical world at large. In the first issue, G. Wesley Johnson identified eight areas for public history: government, business, research organizations, media, historical preservation, historical interpretation, archives and the records management, and teaching of public history.⁴² Historians like John H. Trueman wondered about the future of history in his article, “Will The Future Have A Past?”⁴³ In the article, Trueman illustrated dynamic ways to approach history in the classroom to help reinvigorate the field. Part of his solution revolved around creating debates about historical topics amongst students.⁴⁴ But Trueman did wonder this about the influx of social studies, “how can we reasonably expect students in a few months to learn enough political science, economics, sociology, anthropology, or psychology to render sensible judgments?”⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Kirkendall, “The Status of History in the Schools,” 565.

⁴¹ Kirkendall, “The Status of History in the Schools,” 566-568.

⁴² G. Wesley Johnson, Jr., “Editor’s Preface,” *The Public Historian* 1 (Fall 1978): 6-7

⁴³ John H. Trueman, “Will The Future Have A Past?” *The History Teacher* 4 (May 1971): 5-13. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/492593> (accessed September 12, 2012).

⁴⁴ Trueman, “Will The Future Have A Past?” 6-8.

⁴⁵ Trueman, “Will The Future Have A Past?” 9.

National History Day

According to Kirkendall, Ohio reported one of the more precipitous declines in enrollment at the college and university levels. College enrollments in history courses fell after 1970-1971 between 25%-30% depending on the institution.⁴⁶ For history professors at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, these deteriorations signaled the need for change in how students approached history. In 1974, predating Kirkendall's conclusion that, "It seems unlikely that historians can destroy the influence of presentism, but they can reduce the anti-historical comparisons and the importance of a sense of time and of place" Case Western Reserve University history professors came up with the idea to create a history research-based contest that promoted historical analysis amongst grade school students.

Case Western Reserve University history professors approached area schools in Cleveland about creating history research-based projects to be displayed in a variety of ways. The professors wanted students to dig into sources and create argumentative projects. The first participating group of students addressed the theme, "Ohio and the Promise of the American Revolution."⁴⁷ The initial History Day format was based on the recently created International Science Fair; National History Day espoused a pattern of inquiry that mirrored the scientific model.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Kirkendall, "The Status of History in the Schools," 566-567.

⁴⁷ Chrystal Johnson, "Building Citizens or Building Nations? Alternative Visions for Learning History in Germany and the United States: The *Geschichtswettbewerb Des Bundespräsidenten* and National History Day, 1974-1984," (Master's thesis, Loyola University Chicago, 2010), 11-12, 24.

⁴⁸ Johnson, "Building Citizens or Building Nations?" 12.

Dr. David D. Van Tassel, history professor at Case Western Reserve University, is widely regarded as the founder of National History Day.⁴⁹ History Day influenced kids to create projects based on research of primary and secondary sources. The distinction of secondary sources, as well as modern judging's consideration of secondary sources, bears the marking of Dr. Van Tassel's interests. Dr. Van Tassel's scholarship indicated his interest in understanding the importance of secondary sources in the historical process. One of his works, *Recording America's Past: An Interpretation of the Development of Historical Studies in America 1607-1884*, presents a historiographical approach to history and history education.⁵⁰ Adding this work to the context of the creation of National History Day, and the longstanding importance of multiple secondary sources in addition to multiple primary sources, is important to the creation narrative of National History Day. Dr. Dan Van Tassel reflected on the success of National History Day by writing, "I experienced a sense of the past that I had never felt before, and I was determined as a teacher somehow to share this with others. History Day became the vehicle, for I discovered after twenty years of teaching that this experience could only be passed to students by allowing them to make discoveries for themselves. . . ."⁵¹

The disparate first year of National History Day was followed by a second year. Chrystal Johnson, in her 2010 master's thesis "Building Citizens or Building Nations? Alternative Visions for Learning History in Germany and the United States: The *Geschichtswettbewerb Des Bundespräsidenten* and National History Day, 1974-1984,"

⁴⁹ Cathy Gorn, "A Tribute to the Founding Father: David Van Tassel and National History Day," *The History Teacher* 34 (Feb, 2001), 229-234.

⁵⁰ David D. Van Tassel, *Recording America's Past: An Interpretation of the Development of Historical Studies in America 1607-1884* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960).

⁵¹ As quoted in Johnson, "Building Citizens or Building Nations?" 35.

described the first National History Day competition as such. About the projects in the contest, Johnson wrote, “Displays included dioramas, models, and collections of photographs as well as museum-style exhibits. Performances included readings from primary sources, demonstrations, music, as well as interpretive scripts.” Johnson posited, “Following the first few initial contests, program organizers would refine the program guidelines to encourage students to develop more analytical and interpretive presentations.”⁵²

In 1976, National History Day invited students from the entire State of Ohio to compete in the program. The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) noticed Case Western Reserve University’s efforts with National History Day. Other states did as well. Johnson claimed that, “From 1977 until 1981 . . . NEH funding allowed the program to expand from one to 29 states and the District of Columbia, fulfilling the promise of the name *National History Day*.”⁵³

Utah History Fair

Although Dr. Errol Jones, then professor in the History and Geography Department at Utah State University, did not state when he first came across the idea of student produced projects similar to National History Day or the Chicago Metro History Fair, he most likely began his inquiry into the creation of the Utah History Fair during 1979 by requesting program materials from the Chicago Metro History Fair.⁵⁴ Jones

⁵² Johnson, “Building Citizens or Building Nations?” 12.

⁵³ Johnson, “Building Citizens or Building Nations?” 26-27.

⁵⁴ Errol D. Jones to Mr. Arthur Anderson, The Chicago Metro History Fair, 21 October 1980. 14.6/5-1:17 Box 1, Folder 1 “A” Correspondence. College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Utah History Fair Files, Special Collections and Archives, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University, Logan, Utah hereafter USUSC. The purpose of the letter is a late “thank you” to Mr. Arthur Anderson for material

worked throughout 1980 to draft the outline for the program, raise funds, and bring the Utah History Fair to fruition.

In his proposal to the Utah Endowment for the Humanities (UEH), now the Utah Humanities Council (UHC), Utah's NEH organ, Jones described the need for an interpretive avenue for students to explore regarding history. Jones stated:

Social scientists generally agree that systems of values among young people are most often taught in the home or among their peers. An understanding and awareness of one's historical heritage is, in most cases, left up to society's institutional structure to teach. The responsibility, therefore, of bringing to our young people an understanding, love and appreciation for our cultural heritage is that of the schools, universities, historical societies, museums and their respective media channels.⁵⁵

Jones continued to establish the need for grade school students to understand the world around them by writing, "They are passive spectators of the things their ancestors built or the accomplishments they achieved."⁵⁶ Jones stressed that students, despite learning the past, "Seldom are they taught the basic principles of historical research and then given the encouragement to dig into their own background with a critical eye to understanding themselves instead of having the past depersonalized by lack of their own participation."⁵⁷ Jones' thesis regarding the creation of the Utah History Fair was, "The basic philosophy upon which this proposal is grounded is that through actual involvement

about the Chicago Metro History Fair. It also indicates the date, 9 January 1980, when Anderson replied to Jones with material. It is therefore likely Jones began working towards creating the Utah History Fair in 1979. Jones was a scholar of Latin American History.

⁵⁵ Errol Jones, "Proposal for the Creation of a Permanent State-Wide History Fair, 1980(?)," p. 1, Folder marked "Original UEH-Utah History Fair Proposal. Utah History Fair Office Files, Department of History. Utah State University. Logan, Utah. Hereafter UHF. The date is most likely 1980, but is not indicated on this files. This draft is one of a few that Jones wrote proposing the Utah History Fair. Jones did mention an upcoming event in May, 1980 regarding National History Day.

⁵⁶ Jones, "Proposal for the Creation of a Permanent State-Wide History Fair, 1980(?)," p.1. UHF.

⁵⁷ Jones, "Proposal for the Creation of a Permanent State-Wide History Fair, 1980(?)," p.1. UHF.

in some historical project about which a person feels very strongly that person will learn history, its values to him, its methodology, and its attraction.”⁵⁸

Jones sought to reverse the perception that students lackadaisically and passively approached the past. Moreover, Jones wanted to correct the idea that, “Somewhere in the educational process young people come to acquire a very strong distaste for history.” Therefore, “The principal goal of our project . . . is to change all this, to reverse this feeling among so many and to make the study of and appreciation for the past a vital thing, an integral and living aspect of a student’s educational training, which will be of importance to him long after he completes his formal education.”⁵⁹ Quite ambitiously, Jones wanted everything in place for Utahns to compete during the upcoming year.

Jones intended for the program to engage students as an extra-curricular activity within the existing framework of the school system in Utah. He sought to utilize teachers as agents for student project creation. He also hoped to include the historical community in the process through personnel in history departments, archives, libraries, and museums. Students from the ages of 10 to 18 were the target audience.⁶⁰

During 1980 Jones enlisted the help of Dr. F. Ross Peterson, then Chair of the Department of History and Geography at USU, along with Dr. William Lye, then Dean of the College of Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences at USU. With the assistance of those to eminent scholars, Jones sought funding from a variety of sources. Lye, in a letter of support for the Utah History Fair, wrote, “It appears to me a beneficial and worthwhile

⁵⁸ Jones, “Proposal for the Creation of a Permanent State-Wide History Fair, 1980(?),” p.1-2. UHF.

⁵⁹ Jones, “Proposal for the Creation of a Permanent State-Wide History Fair, 1980(?),” p.2. UHF.

⁶⁰ Errol Jones and Shannon R. Hoskins, “Utah History Fair Student Handbook: Prospecting for Utah’s Historical Gems” 1981. p.3. Unfiled. UHF. Interestingly, the handbook also contains a sample project.

program for study of history in the state of Utah and, as conceived, should help to stimulate awareness among the youth of their own heritage.”⁶¹ Lye’s notion of the Utah History Fair echoed that of Jones; the program challenged students to explore their own past. The Utah State Office of Education donated over \$20,554 to the Utah History Fair, and National History Day supplied \$14,000.⁶² However, the commitment of \$25,625 in October, 1980 by the UEH that provided the final dollars necessary to commence with the pilot year of the program.

Jones quickly implemented the Utah History Fair. The Utah History Fair hired Shannon Hoskins as a full-time assistant director and another person as a full-time secretary.⁶³ Jones and Hoskins scheduled numerous meetings with Curriculum Consultants and district superintendents in the Uintah Basin and along the Wasatch Front to recruit and provide workshops. In total, they attempted to reach 13 school districts in hopes of introducing the program and providing workshops to teachers. In the workshops, “Experts in family and local history, preservation, folklore, and archaeology were invited from Utah State University, the Utah State Historical Society and the LDS Church’s History Division to participate.”⁶⁴ During the first contest year, Jones and Hoskins presented to 1,500 students in 45 classes; 71 teachers, 14 school districts, and 31

⁶¹ William Lye, Logan, to Executive Committee, Utah Endowment for the Humanities, Salt Lake City, 26 June 1980. Fd. Utah Endowment for the Humanities, UHF.

⁶² Boone C. Cosgrove, Salt Lake City, to Ross Peterson, Logan, 7 August 1980, Folder 1980-08 Utah History Fair, Mss B 500, Box 9, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah. Hereafter USHS.

⁶³ Errol Jones, “Utah History Fair Program Evaluation for the Utah Endowment for the Humanities, March 2, 1981,” Folder 1980-08 Utah History Fair, Mss B 500, Box 9, USHS.

⁶⁴ Errol Jones, “Utah History Fair Program Evaluation for the Utah Endowment for the Humanities, March 2, 1981,” Folder 1980-08 Utah History Fair, Mss B 500, Box 9, USHS.

schools sent participants.⁶⁵ Jones and Hoskins estimated that 600 students competed in the four region events held during the first year.

Jones and Hoskins were industrious enough during this harried time to even put together a pamphlet titled, "Utah History Fair Student Handbook" following the first contests.⁶⁶ The pamphlet, in a very telling affirmation of Jones's original goal to get students involved in state, local, and community history, introduced the Utah History Fair to students on a personal level. Instead of arguing for greater meaning to the issues of the United States of America, Jones and Hoskins diverted the attention of history to a personal level through a series of questions that students may encounter in the world around them. In summing up the reasoning for understanding the world around them, Jones and Hoskins argued, "Each of us needs personal ties to the past. These links with our heritage are necessary to our lives, for they help us to understand the present, and enable us to deal more intelligently with the future." In addressing the purpose of the Utah History Fair to the students, Jones and Hoskins posited, "The Utah History Fair program has been created to help you discover our origins and traditions which, in turn, will enrich our life today and encourage future interest in the preservation of your heritage."⁶⁷ Another pamphlet targeted teachers.

The first four years of contest projects, at least those examples archived by the Utah State Historical Society from the years 1981-1984, demonstrate the influence of the association between Utah History Fair projects and personal heritage-based topics. Of

⁶⁵ Shannon Hoskins, "Utah Endowment for the Humanities Final Report, 23 May 1984," Fd. UEH Final Report 1983-1984, UHF. Errol Jones, "Proposal to UEH, 1981-1982" p.4, Fd Proposal to UEH 1981-1982, UHF.

⁶⁶ Errol Jones and Shannon R. Hoskins, "Utah History Fair Student Handbook" p.1. Unfiled, UHF.

⁶⁷ Jones and Hoskins, "Utah History Fair Student Handbook" p.1. UHF

the 324 projects on record, 203 pertain to Utah's history. Moreover, 54 projects contain students' family members as subjects of study, and an additional 28 are possibly related to students' families.⁶⁸

During the first contest season, participating students created projects related to the theme, "Work and Leisure in History." Students presented their work in four main categories, Historical Paper, Project (Exhibits), Performance, and Multi-Media. Historical Paper participants wrote essays. Project contestants constructed a "display, relief, pictorial essay, overlay map, reconstruction, chart, historic game or model. Performances included "demonstrations or any other form of presentation." Multi-Media projects included, "video-taped shows, slide presentations, films and audio-taped recordings."⁶⁹ Participants competed in three age divisions. Fourth and fifth grade students made up the Elementary Division, sixth through eighth grade students the Junior Division, ninth through twelfth the Senior Division.⁷⁰

About 600 students competed in the four regional fairs in 1981.⁷¹ Of those students, three participated in the National History Day contest against students from thirty other states.⁷² When summarizing the events of the year in a report to the UEH, Jones deduced that, "Students entering the Utah History Fair competition learned

⁶⁸ For Utah History Fair Contest information from 1981-1984 see Utah History Fair Contest Papers, Utah State Historical Society, Mss B 407 Box 1 FDS 4-37, 39-66, Box 2 FDS 1-61, Box 3 FDS 1-60, Box 4 FDS 1-60, Box 5 FDX 1-47, Box 6 FDS 1-23, 33-47. Box 6 FDS 21-27 have unknown authors are not included in the study. USHS.

⁶⁹ Jones and Hoskins, "Utah History Fair Student Handbook." P. 5-7, UHF. Although similar iterations of these categories exist, there are more parameters on current projects.

⁷⁰ Jones and Hoskins, "Utah History Fair Student Handbook." P. 5, UHF. Current age divisions are the same. The Elementary Division is now known as the Primary Age Division.

⁷¹ Shannon Hoskins, "Utah Endowment for the Humanities Final Report, 23 May 1984," Fd. UEH Final Report 1983-1984, UHF.

⁷² Jones and Hoskins, "Utah History Fair Student Handbook." P. 4, UHF.

valuable social studies research techniques, and visited libraries and archives where they had never ventured before.”⁷³ Moreover, “They (students) came in contact with humanists who gave their time and expertise to serve as resource people, judges and consultants.”⁷⁴ For some students, participating in the Utah History Fair marked the first time that they, “have become aware of the material culture in their own neighborhood. From this emerges a sense of self-esteem and a clearer understanding of things frequently ignored in the classroom.”⁷⁵ However, Jones felt that, “teacher cooperation was minimal for the amount of effort expended on them.”⁷⁶ The amount of “time-worn” topics also bothered him.⁷⁷ This is an interesting observation on Jones’ part as it detracted from the stated goals of getting students to look at personal history and not the overwrought concepts of the nation-state.

The success of the first year spurred action for a second year. However, effective January 1, 1982, Jones no longer directed the Utah History Fair as he had taken employment elsewhere. Shannon Hoskins became Utah History Fair director.⁷⁸ Hoskins capably led the Utah History Fair through the initial years. Under Hoskins’ direction, the Utah History Fair grew from the 600 regional fair participants in 1981 to 1,622 region

⁷³ Errol Jones, “Final UEH Project Information Form, June, 1981,” p.2. Fd. Utah Endowment for the Humanities Final Report 1980-1981, UHF.

⁷⁴ Errol Jones, “Final UEH Project Information Form, June, 1981,” p.2, Fd. Utah Endowment for the Humanities Final Report 1980-1981, UHF.

⁷⁵ Errol Jones, “Proposal to UEH, 1981-1982” p.6-7, Fd Proposal to UEH 1981-1982, UHF. Jones based this on comments made by students.

⁷⁶ Errol Jones, “Final UEH Project Information Form, June, 1981,” p.2, Fd. Utah Endowment for the Humanities Final Report 1980-1981, UHF.

⁷⁷ Errol Jones, “Final UEH Project Information Form, June, 1981,” p.2, Fd. Utah Endowment for the Humanities Final Report 1980-1981, UHF.

⁷⁸ Ad Hoc Committee Meeting Minutes from December 15, 1981. Fd 2, Box 1, 14.6/5-1:17. USUSC.

fair participants in 1982 to 2,561 regional fair participants in 1984.⁷⁹ During the same time, the amount of presentations to students increased greatly. In 1982, 3,400 students attended in-class presentations about the Utah History Fair. By 1983, 30 school districts had student representatives in the Utah History Fair.⁸⁰ But 1984 came with a hiccup. The Utah History Fair attempted to institute a fee for participation. This fee met derision from students, teachers, and parents, especially in smaller school districts.⁸¹

In 1985 the Utah History Fair moved to the Utah State Historical Society in hopes of creating stronger base of funding. Funding, from the inception of the Utah History Fair remained, and continues to be, one of the larger ongoing issues facing the program. The move in 1985 backfired as bureaucratic issues usurped UHF needs. Namely, the Director position, as an outside position, could not replace a position already in the Historical Society. Although the Utah History Fair received \$30,000 from the Utah State Legislature that year, the uncertainty over funding in 1986-1987 worried program staff.⁸²

Other problems materialized in 1985-1986 as well. Hoskins worried about the ability of Utah History Fair staff to manage the increasing numbers of students participating in the regional fairs. A total of 3,066 students competed in nine region events around the state. Hoskins' apprehension here relates to the numbers of students participating without first being vetted in a school fair, as per her supposition, when the

⁷⁹ Shannon Hoskins, "Utah Endowment for the Humanities Final Report, 23 May 1984," Fd. UEH Final Report 1983-1984, UHF.

⁸⁰ Shannon Hoskins, "Utah Endowment for the Humanities Final Report, 23 May 1984," Fd. UEH Final Report 1983-1984, UHF.

⁸¹ Shannon Hoskins, "Utah Endowment for the Humanities Final Report, 23 May 1984," p.12, Fd. UEH Final Report 1983-1984, UHF. That same year, Utah History Fair property burned in a fire in Old Main.

⁸² Shannon Hoskins, "UEH Final Report Form, 30 May 1986," p. 4-5, Fd. U.E.H. Final Report 1985-1986, UHF.

Utah History Fair staff consisted of two people. About the overall growth, however, Hoskins stated, “Numerically, we continued to show growth and were 300 percent larger than the more established Science Fair.”⁸³

Conclusion

The Utah History Fair moved back to Utah State University, under the newly formed Mountain West Center for Regional Studies, following a year at the Utah Division of State History. Robert Parson also took over the program around that time. By then the pattern of competition had largely been established and would continue through successive directors, including the late Mike Johnson and Nicholas Demas.

In terms of how students approached projects, the goals of Jones and Lye seemed to fall by the side. Although project evidence does not exist from 1985-2009, an updated teacher’s manual, written by Shannon Hoskins and John McCormick prior to the 1987 contests while both worked at the Utah Division of State History, indicates decreased impetus on pushing Utah History and heritage based history. Although the teachers’ manual pushes the importance of getting kids involved in researching and presenting history, it does not stress or even mention that students should be looking at their own history.⁸⁴

Perhaps the transition from a personal approach to a broader interpretation history constitutes a failure on the part of the program to abide by some of the original statements

⁸³ Shannon Hoskins, “UEH Final Report Form, 30 May 1986,” p. 2-3, Fd. U.E.H. Final Report 1985-1986, UHF. The numbers of presentations is astounding. UHF staff presented 19 Utah History Fair general orientations to 527 parents and teachers, 11 workshops (where they get into the details of the program) to 192 teachers, and visited 125 classrooms to speak with 5,175 students.

⁸⁴ Shannon Hoskins and John McCormick, “Utah History Fair: Teachers’ Manual,” 1986(?). Unfiled. UHF.

by Lye and Jones about history as a vehicle into one's own past. Right alongside the push for the past came the indication that the Utah History Fair needed to get students involved in understanding and researching history. The program did succeed in getting kids to interact with professionals, visit museums, go to historical sites, and creating projects. The metrics of success for the early years were not stated and can only be guessed now. It is probably adequate to say that the Utah History Fair successfully got students involved in creating history projects and conducting research. Given the evidence that students still do look at local and family history, presented in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, it might be unwise to deem the program a complete failure regarding Jones' and Lye's goals.

CHAPTER 3

THE UTAH HISTORY FAIR IN PRACTICE

Introduction

The study of student topics deserves a greater context about contest parameters in which students create the projects for the Utah History Fair and National History Day. Chapter 2 provides an overview of what students go through to create projects. This is necessary to establishing the importance of selecting a topic that will keep ones attention throughout the process. The parameters of each project category also influences the limitations of each topic—concisely stated, there is not a great deal of space to draw out an argument.

The Utah History Fair begins annually on the last day, a Thursday, of the Kenneth E. Behring National History Day Contest during the second week of June, at least for the students who wish to compete in the upcoming year, at the end of the awards ceremony that closes the contest year. National History Day (NHD) announces the theme for the upcoming year. Although the National History Day apparatus contains many moving part, the only interchangeable part is the theme. It is the theme and how students relate to the theme that will be the focus of this study in the upcoming chapters. Some determined students start their projects just days after the close of the Kenneth E. Behring National History Day Contest. Other students wait until the last minute.

Theme

The annual NHD theme is easily definable and comprehensive in scope; students should be able to select topics, hopefully based on personal interests that relate to the

theme.⁸⁵ The annual theme can be singular in approach, as was the case for 2005's and 1993's theme "Communication in History" or 2012's, 2000's, and 1983's "Turning Points in History." Other years' themes allow for two or more approaches to the theme. Themes like 1986's and 2008's "Conflict and Compromise" allowed students to look at either conflicts or compromises, or a combination of both, when researching and analyzing their topics.

While National History Day themes permit students to choose from a variety of topics, NHD themes provide focus on certain aspects of history. Themes like "Innovation in History," the theme for 2010, allowed for students to look at many iterations of innovations in the past whether those innovations were intellectual, artistic, technological, or other developments. The projects that came out of "Innovation in History," as Chapter 3 will demonstrate, tended to emphasize topics dealing with technology. Thomas Edison and Philo T. Farnsworth drew students' attention that year. Themes like "Communication in History" encouraged students to look at changes in communication over time within their topics.

Most NHD themes contained subtitles to help students focus their topics. Although students in 2011 chose topics related to "Debate and Diplomacy," those students also had to consider "successes, failures, consequences" within the context of debate and/or diplomacy for their projects. The additional information allows students to contextualize their topics. "Successes, Failures, Consequences" followed "Debate and Diplomacy" in order to provide intuitive guidelines for students to survey more than one

⁸⁵ National History Day, "Contest Rule Book: Revised 2010-2011," (privately printed, 2010), 6. Can be found online at <http://www.nhd.org/images/uploads/2010rulebook.pdf>

side of the issue as well as help in project analysis. The three words also insinuated that students should approach some of the short and long-term outcomes, called “historical perspective” by NHD, for topics. In 2012’s “Turning Points in History” the subtitle “people, ideas, events” is included. “Turning Points in History: People, Ideas, Events” indicates that students should explore the agents, moments, or actions that prompted change.

One role of Utah History Fair directors is to explain the theme to teachers and students via a newsletter, in-class presentations to students, and teacher orientations. The number of in-class presentations is heavily influenced by the budgetary constraints on the Utah History Fair. For instance, in 2011 zero money was available for student presentations. During years when money is available for presentations, the Utah History Fair typically visits at least 20 classrooms.

Age Divisions

National History Day has two age divisions for competing students, the Junior Age Division, grades six through eight, and the Senior Age Division, grades nine through twelve. Utah allows students in fourth and fifth grade to compete in a Primary Age Division, known previously as the Elementary Division. Primary Age Division students do not compete at the state or national level. Students will only compete against students in the same age division and category.

Project Creation

From the onset of the competition, whether students begin in June or January, participants need to decide whether or not to compete as individuals or in groups of two-

to-five. Contestants contending in groups must select other students from their own age division, although differences in grades within an age division do not matter.⁸⁶

Students approach their topics as they relate to the themes in various ways.⁸⁷

Students select topics based on personal interest, the availability of sources, through suggestions given by teachers and family members, after researching possible topics online or through sample topics provided by the Utah History Fair and National History Day, via the media, etc.⁸⁸ Once a topic is selected, students should work to narrow their topic into an easily definable opus; category restrictions on space and word use highlight this supposition. The Utah History Fair advocates that students create a working thesis, one that can and probably should be scrapped, as dictated, at times, by the growing body of research and evidence the proves or disproves a thesis.

Students must research their topics. Competitive students identify and utilize multiple primary and secondary sources.⁸⁹ The Utah History Fair asks that students critically analyze the validity of primary and secondary sources researched. Pupils must also adapt the research to their thesis statement within the confines of the topic. However, students need to provide a well-balanced approach to their topic; they need to look at both or all sides of the issue in question. The evidence in the sources should support differing perspectives. Student research should also include information about

⁸⁶ The Utah History Fair allows students from different age division to compete together if the students are siblings and they compete in the age division of the oldest student.

⁸⁷ Why students choose what they choose is discussed in Chapter 5.

⁸⁸ Go to <http://utahhistoryfair.weebly.com>, <http://nhd.org>, or <http://www.nhd.org/images/uploads/2013SampleTopics.pdf>

⁸⁹ Of course the number of primary and secondary sources is never stated, although students are urged to look at as many as possible to help the project and address the thesis.

the time or era in which the event occurred; providing “historical context” in the parlance of NHD and the Utah History Fair.⁹⁰

Conducting research of this depth should persuade students to search in libraries, archives, museums, and historical sites for their topics. The increasingly available online sources, both primary and secondary, influences projects that students are creating—for better and worse. Online sources make students party to information that otherwise would not be easily available to them physically. Web sites from such organizations as the Library of Congress and The National Archive provide access to primary sources that students use in their projects. Many colleges, universities, and state historical societies also include primary and secondary sources online with the consequences being the possible utilization of their sources by students.⁹¹ By contrast, students also use sources of questionable origin—blogs, general searches, Google searches, Wikipedia, have been cited as primary sources—as valid sources for their research.⁹² These projects seldom do well at regional competitions.

Categories of Competition

Once a student feels that the research and content of the topic are adequate to create a project, the student should then pick a category for presentation. Some students pick a category from the onset of project creation. The project categories that comprise NHD and the Utah History Fair are Documentary, Exhibit, Performance, Web site, and

⁹⁰ NHD “Rulebook,” 4. “Historical Perspective is defined as, “Understanding a topic’s development over time and its influence.”

⁹¹ This is an area that requires improvement on the part of students.

⁹² Anecdotal experience based on judging thousands of projects, including looking at the required annotated bibliographies.

Historical Paper. All categories except for the Historical Paper category allow for students to compete as individual participants or in a group of two-to-five students. Every category except the Historical Paper category requires a process paper.⁹³

Process papers address 1) how the student(s) chose the topic, 2) how the student(s) conducted research, 3) why the student(s) selected the category of presentation, and 4) how the project relates to the National History Day theme.⁹⁴ The process paper should have an annotated bibliography attached to it. Annotations describe the usefulness, or not, of each source to the project. The annotations range from one to six sentences. Bibliographies must be separated into primary and secondary sources in the Senior and Junior Age Divisions. Primary Age Division participants are asked to separate primary and secondary sources in their bibliography, but doing so is not required. All students are required to use MLA or Turabian as style guides.⁹⁵

Historical Papers vary in length from 1,500 to 2,500 words for the Junior and Senior Age Division participants. Primary Age Division students writing Historical Papers must provide at minimum of 750 words.⁹⁶ Students creating Historical Papers act in very much the same way as college students or professional historians since they are writing an essay based on a thesis. Students must cite their sources in this category by using in-text citations, endnotes, or footnotes. Historical Papers are judged prior to the

⁹³ I do not know the origin of this rule.

⁹⁴ NHD, "Contest Rule Book," 10.

⁹⁵ NHD, "Contest Rule Book," 11.

⁹⁶ This rule is unique to Utah.

regional, state, or national contest. Students have the option of writing historical fiction or an epic poem in addition to an essay.⁹⁷

The Web site category emerged in National History Day and the Utah History Fair in 2008 to help modernize the programs. The Web site category blends current technology with history making. Students producing Web sites are limited to 1,200 of their own words and 100 megabytes of total size. These projects do require citations, a process paper, and an annotated bibliography within the Webs site. Web sites are judged prior to the regional, state, and national competitions.

Competitive Web sites need to be interactive as well as presenting great history. An interactive Web site will include music, documentary, and/or film clips up to 45 seconds in length, throughout the Web site. The viewer of a Web site should be able to browse through the different pages quite easily. Web sites are now created on a Web editor hosted by Weebly through National History Day.⁹⁸

The Performance category challenges students to create a play, preferably, or some presentation on their subject. Students write scripts based on research. Some students chose to facilitate their dialogue or monologue with quotes from the sources. The Performance category is the only category that allows students to wear costumes to help affect the character or time period portrayed. Besides basing the project on sound research and great writing, the competitive projects require students to act, and act well,

⁹⁷ Go to <http://www.nhd.org/images/uploads/Sadlier%20Paper%202012.pdf> for 2012's 1st Place Senior Paper at NHD for 2012's, "Revolution, Reaction, Reform," theme.

⁹⁸ Web sites can be created through selecting the "website editor" link at <http://nhd.org/CategoryWebsite.htm>. Students are required to use the NHD Web editor to create projects. The NHD Web editor conforms to NHD rules regarding size and the types of videos that can be used—youtube videos are not allowed, partially due to concerns over copyrighted material and also because of the fear that students will rely too heavily on youtube for information.

for up to ten minutes. Students have the ability to showcase their artistic abilities in this category. Some students choose to play piano, sing, play violin, or even toot their fife as part of their performance. Performance category participants create their own background for visual affect.⁹⁹

The Documentary category is the second most popular category in the Utah History Fair. Originally dubbed the “media” category, early Documentary makers placed slides into a carousel, projected the pictures onto a screen, and regaled their audiences with the topic’s history. As technology developed, so did the presentation format. Media presentations transitioned into PowerPoint presentations.¹⁰⁰ Students creating self-transitioning PowerPoint for viewers became standard for Documentaries in the late 1990s. Documentary entries advanced through the first decade of the 21st Century to become respectable works of technology blended with history. Students now create Documentaries that are ten minute movie quality presentations based on their topic’s significance in history. Their productions contain music, movie clips, interviews, and pictures. Students must provide their own narration for Documentaries.¹⁰¹

The most popular Utah History Fair category is the Exhibit category. The Exhibit category allows students the chance to create a museum-like exhibit that discusses a topic’s importance in history. Exhibits can contain only 500 student produced words;

⁹⁹ Go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zh7UlegVBGQ> to watch Zara Zemmels’s 2008 1st Place Senior Individual Performance about music censorship. Zara, who moved out of state shortly after this contest, is one of my favorite former students, and the first student from the Utah History Fair to place first under my leadership. Zara’s family helped start Louisiana’s National History Day state affiliate program. Zara’s topic is based on the theme, “Conflict and Compromise.”

¹⁰⁰ Some teachers call Documentaries “slide shows.”

¹⁰¹ NHD, “Contest Rule Book,” 19. Visit <https://vimeo.com/38455531> for Olivia Baird’s 2012 Utah History Fair project on the Molly Maguires that placed 14th at 2012’s Kenneth E. Behring National History Day Contest. Placing 14th means that Olivia made it to the second, and final, round of competition. Olivia’s project is based on the theme, “Revolution, Reaction, Reform.”

students must think strategically to get their information across in so few words. The projects can be up to 6 feet tall, 40 inches wide, and 30 inches deep. Exhibits can also be a square or round.¹⁰² Exhibits, as a visual category, showcase a student's ability to thematically convey messages through color, creation, and content in the board.¹⁰³

Every category requires sound research, a great presentation of history, and respectable, critical writing to support the argument in the thesis. It is the teacher's role to facilitate the creation of student projects, guide students through the creation of thesis statements, help transition between the thesis statement and the analysis supporting the thesis statement, and to make sure that the student creates a conclusion. Teachers in the Language Arts and Social Studies typically use the Utah History Fair in their classrooms.

The amount of effort teachers spend in facilitating the Utah History Fair in the classroom is wide-ranging. Some teachers incorporate the Utah History Fair as part of the classroom curriculum. One northern Utah teacher has a class specifically for Utah History Fair students. Teacher and parent support generally translates into better projects. On the opposite end of the spectrum, some students create projects on their own with little or no teacher support. Many schools reside somewhere in the middle. Astute teachers develop students through Utah History Fair projects by breaking the process into manageable parts. The selection of a topic can be one day's assignment. Another day or days may be spent developing thesis statements. Research deserves more attention and time. Project writing should include multiple stages of revision. Teachers will teach the Utah History Fair project construction process throughout a term, month, or semester,

¹⁰² NHD, "Contest Rule Book," 15.

¹⁰³ Visit <http://www.nhd.org/StudentProjectExamples.htm> for pictures from the 1st Place Junior Individual Exhibit from 2012. The project related to the theme, "Revolution, Reaction, Reform."

depending on the school and teacher, along with the other course content. Utah History Fair teachers usually teach social studies or language arts classes.¹⁰⁴

Contests

After students complete their projects, they are ready to compete. Some schools host School Fairs in order to winnow down the numbers of participants going to the regional contests. Teachers are encouraged to register and send the top two or three projects per category to the regional competition.

The regional competitions start at the end of February or beginning of March and run through the end of March or the beginning of April. Utah hosts nine or ten region events depending on the number of students competing in regional competitions around the state. The Utah History Fair hosted nine regional competitions in 2012.

Competitions were held in Blanding, Price, Roosevelt, Santa Clara, Logan, Ogden, Midvale, Ephraim, and Provo.

At the regional contests students are judged on the merits of their projects. The Utah History Fair uses National History Day's judging forms for all categories. The judging form breaks the project down into three main parts: Historical Quality, 60%; Relation to Theme, 20%; and Clarity of Presentation, 20%. Under each heading is an area of judging worth ten percent that, when totaled, each the percentage of each category.

¹⁰⁴ While Social Studies is an intuitive fit for the Utah History Fair, especially the historical component of the program, Language Arts has requirements for inquisitive thinking and presentation. The new Common Core—or Utah Core—requires students to create a research-based project. Students in elementary schools are not entirely part of this differentiation.

Historical Quality is the most important facet of the project. As such, Historical Quality is broken into six subcategories: entry is historically accurate; shows analysis and interpretation; places topic in historical context; shows wide research; uses available primary sources; and research is balanced.¹⁰⁵

“Historical accuracy” indicates that student place the topic in the correct moment in history. Going into more depth, “historical accuracy” requires students to introduce details that help explain the story correctly. In essence, students must get the story straight. Although this seems like an intuitive circumstance for projects, some pupils fail to place the events in the right year—or century—while others, more commonly, miss the importance of the topic.

“Shows analysis and interpretation” specifies that student go beyond telling what happened. Students should explain why things happened, and why the topic is important to history. Although this area garners 10% of the process, it is one of the subcategories that makes a big difference in the outcome of judging. Students must provide sound analysis. In presenting this part of the project creation process to students, I urge students to simply ask “why” the topic is important or to explain “so what?”

“Places topic in historical context” requires students to view their topic against the events of the time. Essentially, students need to treat their topic as though it did not occur in a vacuum—which commonly happens. They must provide the setting for their topic. Personal experience shows that students have a hard time placing a topic in the proper historical context. For example, students will create projects about the

¹⁰⁵ Zara Zimmel’s project is a great example of a balanced approach to a topic.

Emancipation Proclamation without mentioning the Civil War, a bare minimum requirement to supply context for the Emancipation Proclamation.

“Shows wide research” insists that students should look at a variety of primary and secondary sources from multiple locations. Students should not rely on a few sources to create the project. Moreover, these sources should be documented in the project through citations, where possible—citations do not really work in the Performance category.

“Uses available primary sources” requires students to look at multiple primary sources, when available, to create the project. Part of the intention of showing multiple primary sources is to get students to analyze different perspectives in order to create a project and to come to a conclusion.

“Research is balanced” is one of the harder subcategories to judge, especially for novice judges. Students should not only look at multiple primary and secondary sources to create their projects, but they should also choose sources that reflect both or all sides of an issue. It is the hope of the Utah History Fair staff that students look at sources that are not normally used, namely books published by university presses and scholarly journals. Utah’s history is a great foil here. Students looking at LDS topics or history, especially in the 19th Century, should be looking at both LDS and non-LDS scholars on topics like the Mountain Meadow Massacre.

The “Relation to Theme” assessment focuses on two central ideas. First, the project “clearly relates topic to theme.” Like historical context, students cannot assume that events or topics occurred in a vacuum. Students must address how the topic relates to the theme. A deeper reading of this area of judging leads towards the conclusion that a

student should have a thesis statement. One of the easier ways to address this area of judging is to include words in the theme as part of the thesis statement.¹⁰⁶ Second, projects must “demonstrate significance of topic in history and draws conclusions.” Students need to address why a topic is important and why judges or observers should know about the topic.¹⁰⁷

“Clarity of Presentation” makes up the final portion of project judging. Clarity of Presentation differs between categories. In the Exhibit category, the two aspects of Clarity of Presentation are “Exhibit, written material is original, clear, appropriate and organized” as well as “Exhibit is organized, has visual impact, correctly uses maps, photos, etc.” In the Documentary category, Clarity of Presentation signifies “Presentation, written material is original, clear, appropriate, organized and articulate” first and “Entry is organized, visual impact is appropriate to topic” second. Basically, this is the section of judging that deals with how well a project is presented, how grammatically correct the sentences are, how effective maps, colors, etc. are to the project, and how neatly the project is ultimately put together.

All of these areas are rated from “Needs Improvement” to “Good” to “Excellent” to “Superior” on the judging form. Judges are asked to critique a project on its qualities based on the subcategories already mentioned. Judges write suggestions for improvements and acknowledge work well done as part of the process.

¹⁰⁶ This assertion is partially based on my presentations to students where I tell them to relate the topic to the theme through the thesis statement. I also urge students to consider using the various aspects of the theme’s subtitles as different sections in the project when the theme allows this to take place.

¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately I do not have examples of judges’ comments. Common problems with student projects is the inability of students to state the importance of the topic in history, assuming that events occur in the background, and conducting enough research to make the project viable. One of the funnier explanations I ran across came from a Primary Individual Exhibit that claimed Hitler became bad after he grew a Charlie Chaplin mustache.

The Utah History Fair stresses that projects be historically accurate first and “pretty” second. The judging forms also suggest this to be the case. However, projects going to the Kenneth E. Behring National History Day Contest should be both stunning and present sound historical analysis.

Students are judged in the above categories face-to-face with the exceptions of the Historical Paper and Web site categories while at school, regional, and state fair in Utah. Ideally, students are judged by college students working toward a degree in history, college graduates with a degree in history, and professionals and volunteers in the field. Judges are tasked with facilitating a dialogue with students about their projects. In doing so, students must articulate the merits of their project to the judges. Ultimately, however, a project must be able to outperform other projects in the same category in order move on to the next level based on the merits of the project, not the ability of the student to articulate the various aspects of the projects.¹⁰⁸

Participants can revise their work between the different levels of competition. Judges’ comments provide help here. Schools send the recommended two-to-three projects per category to the regional competition following the school contest—preferably—though more commonly, schools will send multiple projects in the Exhibit category beyond the recommended two or three. The revision process is an integral aspect of creating projects, and an important avenue for learning how to create history

¹⁰⁸ Ideally students will be able to engage in a dialogue with the judges about their topics. Having judges speak to students also allows judges to find out if parents created the projects for students, which does happen. This is usually determined when students do not know the answers to questions that relate directly to the project. Another clue of parental interference is the use of exclamation marks.

related research projects.¹⁰⁹ Students have the opportunity to revise their work between the different levels of competition. At times, projects have totally changed in appearance and scope between the regional and state competitions.

The top two projects from each category at the regional competitions are invited to the state contest, with the exception of the projects created by students in the Primary Age Division who do not compete beyond the regional level. The top two projects from each category in the state contest have the opportunity to attend the Kenneth E. Behring National History Day Contest at the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland. The contest typically takes place during the second week of June. The contest which runs from Sunday through Thursday and concludes with an awards ceremony that ends with an announcement by National History Day of the theme for the upcoming year.

The Utah History Fair is a successful program if success is measured by how well Utah students place at the Kenneth E. Behring National History Day Contest. Typical National History Day Contests feature over 2,500 students and about 100 projects per category. During the past six years at least two Utah projects place in the final round, the top 14, annually. But the real success of the program lies in the ability of students to learn how to research, write, and think critically about the world around them.

A study commissioned by National History Day showed that students who compete in National History Day programs, like the Utah History Fair, tend to outperform their peers in standardized testing, the ability to critically approach sources,

¹⁰⁹ Exhibit, Documentary, and Performance participants can improve their projects between levels of competition until the day of competition. Historical Paper and Web site participants must have projects handed in ahead of time. One of the changes I instituted in the Utah History Fair was to allow a one-to-two week revision period for Historical Paper and Web site categories.

and were generally more civically minded.¹¹⁰ I can attest that not every student “gets it.” But many other try, and do, create good projects and demonstrate independent thought.

Conclusion

The process of creating a project and competing in the Utah History Fair and National History Day requires a commitment on the part of students, as illustrated in Chapter 3, to select a topic that holds their interest for many months. Students need to select topics carefully and deliberately. Similarly, some students do not care about the subject of study. Still, whether a student care about their topic or not, the project subjects selected indicate, in a manner of speaking, what the past means to that student. As such, the commitment and theme indicate what students will be selecting. The information supplied through the theme selection process presents interesting information about what students relate to when they think of history, information that is examined in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

¹¹⁰ Saul Rockman and Kay Sloan, “National History Day Works: Findings from the National Program Evaluation” (privately printed, 2011). Visit online at http://www.nhd.org/images/uploads/NHDSReport_Final3.pdf

CHAPTER 4

WHAT ARE UTAH'S STUDENTS STUDYING?

Introduction

As part of the nation-state and different communities of memory, Utah's grade school students select topics for study to compete in the Utah History Fair. It turns out that, as the data will indicate, that students choose Whig-ish and Big-man type topics when picking topics for the Utah History Fair. The evidence in Chapter 3 appears to support and validate the power of the nation-state; the influence of the history classroom in schools is apparent, especially for the data from 2009-2012. Subjects selected often reflect the corresponding curriculum. However, students mostly select topics related to the United States of America. Utah History Fair students are not alone.

Michael Frisch surveyed students entering his class throughout the 1980s about what they knew about America's past prior to the Civil War. With every survey, few people emerged consistently every survey. The top of the top ten list included George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin.¹¹¹ Frisch remarked, "Perhaps the most culturally revealing characteristic of the lists is their near-exclusive political and military cast, focused on epochal events."¹¹²

Frisch and the students then would discuss what was missing from the list. Frisch wrote, ". . . we have frequently noted the kinds of people missing from the survey:

¹¹¹ Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*, SUNY Series in Oral and Public History, ed. Michael Frisch (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 34-37.

¹¹² Frisch, *A Shared Authority*, 37.

religious figures, for instance, or artists, philosophers, or scientists.”¹¹³ His students demonstrated the omnipresence of the nation-state on the actions and thoughts of the individuals. Frisch’s students reified the structure of the nation-state. Frisch said this of the study, “The dramatic uniformity from year to year, however, suggested something else—perhaps an unexpected level of indoctrination, or a deeper set of cultural structures at work on the collective imagination of students year after year.”¹¹⁴ Frisch also asserted that, “Indeed, what we see here is a broadening of that theme into an ongoing fixation on creation myths of origin and innovation.”¹¹⁵

Utah History Fair topics support Frisch’s findings that known history supports a level of “indoctrination” on behalf of the nation-state. This “indoctrination” backs the nation-state, through symbols, dogma, stories, and artifacts as invented traditions. I would argue that the indoctrination bestowed by the nation-state, is a facet of memory, since it is shared, creates a bond in language, and is somewhat universal amongst the students in Utah as well as generational. In some ways, the prevalence of these stories mirrors the use of myths and religion as outlined by Bronislaw Malinowski when he surmised, “The events of the mythological past play a leading part in moral conduct and social organization.”¹¹⁶

Frisch does not contend with history that may include the community at hand. The pre-Civil War parameters of his study does not allow for the continuation of memory through events within a community, or for the placement of community characters within

¹¹³ Frisch, *A Shared Authority*, 37.

¹¹⁴ Frisch, *A Shared Authority*, 37.

¹¹⁵ Frisch, *A Shared Authority*, 44.

¹¹⁶ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Malinowski and the Work of Myth*, ed. Ivan Strenski (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 119.

the framework of larger events. Utah History Fair students are not limited by time periods, with the exception that a historical topic should be something that occurred at least 25 years ago.¹¹⁷

Utah History Fair topics are influenced by the annual National History Day theme. The NHD theme, which usually hints at two-to-three directions in which a student can examine a topic in history, impacts student understanding and approach to the topics that they choose. Yet within the framework of the annual themes emerges student decisions, analyzed here for general trends that show how students interact with the past. Generally speaking, Utah History Fair projects support the contention that students examine the past in part to reify the nation-state while also looking towards their own community for topics in history.

Process of Examination

To examine what grade school students study in the Utah History Fair, records maintained by the Utah State Historical Society related to the first four years of the Utah History Fair, 1981-1984, as well as the registration records for the 2009-2012 contests, were examined.¹¹⁸ Topic information for the intermediate period, unfortunately do not

¹¹⁷ Unwritten Utah History Fair rule. At times students wish to research projects related to the recent past or events they know. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 are a sought after topic by students.

¹¹⁸ For Utah History Fair Contest information from 1981-1984 see Utah History Fair Contest Papers, Utah State Historical Society, Mss B 407 Box 1 FDS 4-37, 39-66, Box 2 FDS 1-61, Box 3 FDS 1-60, Box 4 FDS 1-60, Box 5 FDX 1-47, Box 6 FDS 1-23, 33-47. Box 6 FDS 21-27 have unknown authors are not included in the study. The exact years encompassed by the projects in Mss B 407 are not entirely accurate. Contest information from 2009-2012 is part of Utah History Fair registration records as part of the Department of History at Utah State University currently in the author's possession.

exist.¹¹⁹ Project titles provided the information for the content of the projects. Projects titles afforded two aspects of the study. First, projects were evaluated based on the geographical areas of history. Second, projects were divided by historical discipline. Each project received one point in the geographical area of history categories. Projects divided by discipline also received one point. This point could be divided in half in order to accommodate more than one category to create a more accurate portrayal of how students interact with the past.

A total of 4,403 projects created by 6,296 students, grades four through twelve, provided the basis for this study. Each project represents approximately 1.43 students. Most Utah History Fair students participate as individuals rather than in groups of two-to-five students. A majority of the projects, 4,079 to be exact, came from the 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012 Utah History Fair contests.

National History Day Themes

The National History Day themes for the years covered by the projects must be taken into account as the various themes influence the outcome of the projects. Every year National History Day issues a theme for students to relate their topics to during the contest year. National History Day themes can often be comprehensively defined. The themes provide more focus on one area over another. 2011's "Debate and Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, and Consequences" pushed students to look at diplomacy, a discipline not readily sought during other contest years. Students' perception of the themes exacerbates the outcomes. The 2010 theme "Innovation in History: Impact and

¹¹⁹ The records from 2002-2008 were lost with the Utah History Fair as a result of the program being briefly cancelled for the latter half of 2009.

Change” could be interpreted to include innovations in literature or art, but many students choose to focus on technological or medical innovations.

The themes encompassed in the project study are:

1. 1981: “Trade and Industry in History”
2. 1982: “Work and Leisure in History”
3. 1983: “Turning Points in History”
4. 1984: “Family and Community in History”
5. 2009: “The Individual in History: Actions and Legacies”
6. 2010: “Innovation in History: Impact and Change”
7. 2011: “Debate & Diplomacy: Successes, Failures, Consequences”
8. 2012: “Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History”

Geographical Areas of Study Process

To understand how students are interacting with the past, this study examined the areas of student scholarship by regional discipline. Looking at Utah History Fair projects in this vantage allows an understanding of what areas of history appeal to students. The influence of the classroom and the National History Day theme can also be determined.

Projects fell into six possible categories for geographical areas of study: “Utah,” “Utah & U.S.,” “U.S.,” “U.S. & World,” “World,” and “Unknown.” Topics specific to Utah’s past like the Blackhawk War, the founding of a city, like Ogden, within the state, Butch Cassidy, and/or Sinajine vs. The San Juan Board of Education constitutes the “Utah” category. Topics like the Transcontinental Railroad meeting at Promontory Summit, Brigham Young, Joe Hill, and/or Philo T. Farnsworth and the television make up the “Utah & U.S.” category; the topics include facets of Utah, with larger implications beyond Utah’s borders. “U.S.” topics run the gamut of U.S. history from Squanto to the Southwest to Prohibition to Rachel Carson to vacation destinations in Southern California. “U.S. & World” encompasses topics that relate to U.S. History, but occur

abroad or deal with other countries. The Cuban Missile Crisis, World War II, World War I, and even the Revolutionary War fall within the parameters of “U.S. & World.” Topics that exclude the United States comprise the “World” category. The “World” category could possibly contain topics like the creation of identity amongst indigenous Colombians in Cauca or the events in the Elizabethan Age. Finally, titles that did not provide enough information fell into the “Unknown” category.

Geographical Areas of Study

The students participating in the Utah History Fair represented by the years 2009-2012 are more concerned with the history of the United States than any other forms of history as demonstrated by Table 4.1 and Table 4.2. More than half the projects in the study strictly focused on U.S. History in the “U.S.” category. When the partial U.S. History categories are included in the U.S. History total, 2,995 projects, or 68.02% of the projects are related to U.S. History.

Table 4.1
Projects by Geographic Study

	Utah	Utah & U.S	U.S	U.S & World	World	Unknown	Total Year
1981-1984	163	40	69	12	11	29	324
2009	70	168	938	60	360	106	1702
2010	11	55	397	140	160	89	852
2011	58	43	372	113	78	68	732
2012	27	68	387	133	131	47	793
Total Area	329	374	2163	458	740	339	4403

Sources: 1981-1984 Data Utah History Fair Contest Papers, Utah State Historical Society, Mss B 407 Box 1 FDS 4-37, 39-66, Box 2 FDS 1-61, Box 3 FDS 1-60, Box 4 FDS 1060, Box 5 FDX 1-47, Box 6 FDS 1-23, 33-47. 2009-2012 Data Utah History Fair, Department of History, Utah State University.

Table 4.2
History Projects by Regional Discipline
Total Projects Per Year

	Utah	Utah and U.S	U.S	U.S & World	World	Unknown
1981-1984	50.31%	12.35%	21.3%	3.7%	3.4%	8.95%
2009	4.11%	9.87%	55.11%	3.53%	21.15%	6.23%
2010	1.29%	6.46%	46.6%	16.43%	18.78%	10.45%
2011	7.92%	5.87%	50.82%	15.44%	10.66%	9.29%
2012	3.4%	8.58%	48.8%	16.77%	16.52%	5.93%

Sources: 1981-1984 Data Utah History Fair Contest Papers, Utah State Historical Society, Mss B 407 Box 1 FDS 4-37, 39-66, Box 2 FDS 1-61, Box 3 FDS 1-60, Box 4 FDS 1-60, Box 5 FDX 1-47, Box 6 FDS 1-23, 33-47. 2009-2012 Data Utah History Fair, Department of History, Utah State University.

Of the projects pertaining to Utah’s past, as indicated by the “Utah” category, nearly half occurred during the 1981-1984 projects in the Utah History Fair.¹²⁰ This large number owes in part to the 1984 theme “Family and Community in History.” During this time Utah History Fair directors Dr. Errol Jones and Shannon Hoskins marketed the program as way of learning family and community history. As stated in the first Utah History Fair manual:

Perhaps the best way to help the student acquire a historical consciousness is to begin with the student as an individual, as a historical being that came from somewhere, under certain circumstances. Once the individual is perceived as a historical entity, then the attention can be focused upon the family and the community.¹²¹

Hoskins and Jones also slightly disparaged the teaching of U.S. History. They wrote, “The American past, as it is so often presented in classrooms around the country,

¹²⁰ Inaccuracies in labeling the years related to Mss B 407 made it difficult to separate 1981-1984 by year as well as allow for the study of “Family and Community in History” as an influential theme in the creation of topics related to Utah History.

¹²¹ Errol D. Jones and Shannon R. Hoskins, “Utah History Fair Teachers’ Manual: Prospecting Utah’s Historical Gems.” Logan: Utah, 1981. Utah State Historical Society, PAM 19275. 1.

often seems to bear no more relation to the American present experienced by students first hand than do stories about other countries or ancient history.”¹²²

The projects from 2009-2012 are much more consistently “U.S.” by category. In fact, a level of uniformity prevails throughout those contest years. “U.S.” projects fall within a ten percent range of each other. “World,” “Utah,” and “Utah & U.S.” occur within a few percentage points respectively. Two exceptions to this propinquity in projects, 1981-1984 excepted, are the “World” projects from 2011 and “U.S. & World” in 2009.

The theme for 2011, “Debate and Diplomacy: Successes, Failures, Consequences” lends itself to a study across borders. Students examined 78 topics that focused on debate and/or diplomacy between nations, individuals, or events in areas outside of the United States. In observing “The Individual in History: Actions and Legacies” not too many student projects, only 3.53% of projects, found individuals or actions by individuals that transcended the United States and at least one other country.

Geographical Study by Sex

The breakdown by sex for topics also presents an interesting portrait. Females consistently put together more projects than their male classmates. Although females more commonly put together *U.S.* category projects than their male counterparts, most numbers, as shown in Table 4.3, show consistency between the sexes. Males more commonly created topics in the “U.S. & World” category than females from 2009 through 2012.

¹²² Jones and Hoskins, 1.

Table 4.3
History Projects
By Regional Discipline
Projects by Sex

	Utah	Utah & U.S	U.S	U.S & World	World	Un-known	Year Total	Percent of Total
<i>1981-1984</i>								
Female	50.60%	12.50%	22.62%	1.79%	4.17%	8.33%	168	55.08%
Male	51.09%	11.68%	20.44%	6.57%	2.92%	7.30%	137	44.92%
<i>2009</i>								
Female	4.07%	9.12%	54.95%	2.64%	22.31%	6.92%	910	53.47%
Male	4.17%	10.73%	55.30%	4.55%	19.82%	5.43%	792	46.53%
<i>2010</i>								
Female	1.33%	5.75%	48.23%	13.94%	19.03%	11.73%	452	53.05%
Male	1.25%	7.25%	44.75%	19.25%	18.50%	9.00%	400	46.95%
<i>2011</i>								
Female	6.95%	5.76%	55.88%	10.07%	10.79%	10.55%	417	56.97%
Male	9.21%	6.03%	44.13%	22.54%	10.48%	7.62%	315	43.03%
<i>2012</i>								
Female	3.87%	10.54%	50.75%	12.69%	15.70%	6.45%	465	58.63%
Male	2.74%	5.79%	46.04%	22.56%	17.68%	5.18%	328	41.36%

Sources: 1981-1984 Data Utah History Fair Contest Papers, Utah State Historical Society, Mss B 407 Box 1 FDS 4-37, 39-66, Box 2 FDS 1-61, Box 3 FDS 1-60, Box 4 FDS 1-60, Box 5 FDX 1-47, Box 6 FDS 1-23, 33-47. 2009-2012 Data Utah History Fair, Department of History, Utah State University.

Geographical Study by Age Division

The Utah History Fair age divisions, Primary (4-5 Grades), Junior (6-8 Grades), and Senior (9-12) allow an inspection of how students relate to topics as they grow older (Table 4.4). As has previously been demonstrated, most students research topics pertaining to U.S. History. The perspectives of topics change over time. During 1981-1984 a majority of students in the Junior and Primary Age Divisions created projects related to Utah's past although the three projects that comprise the Primary Age Division do little in terms of creating a sound base for survey. Junior Age Division participants between 1981 and 1984 produced projects that related directly to "Utah" 59.86% of the

Table 4.4
Projects by Percentage
History by Regional Discipline
Projects by Age Division

	Utah	Utah & U.S	U.S	U.S & World	World	Un-known	Year Total	Percentage of Total
<i>Primary (4-5)</i>								
1981-1984	66.67%	33.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3	0.93%
2009	7.58%	12.50%	57.58%	3.48%	11.89%	6.97%	488	28.67%
2010	2.40%	6.59%	50.90%	11.98%	14.37%	13.77%	167	19.6%
2011	9.60%	6.40%	60.00%	10.40%	3.20%	10.40%	125	17.08%
2012	8.86%	13.29%	55.06%	10.13%	7.59%	5.06%	158	19.92%
<i>Junior (6-8)</i>								
1981-1984	59.86%	13.38%	19.01%	1.41%	2.82%	3.52%	142	43.83%
2009	3.00%	9.61%	53.41%	3.93%	24.28%	5.79%	968	56.87%
2010	0.92%	7.38%	43.73%	18.27%	21.22%	8.49%	542	63.62%
2011	6.76%	5.74%	48.77%	16.19%	13.11%	9.43%	488	66.67%
2012	1.41%	8.08%	48.89%	17.58%	18.38%	5.66%	495	62.42%
<i>Senior (9-12)</i>								
1981-1984	26.53%	6.12%	34.69%	8.16%	10.20%	14.29%	49	15.12%
2009	1.63%	5.69%	56.91%	2.03%	27.24%	6.50%	246	14.45%
2010	1.40%	2.80%	52.45%	14.69%	14.69%	13.99%	143	16.78%
2011	10.92%	5.88%	49.58%	17.65%	8.40%	7.56%	119	16.26%
2012	4.29%	5.00%	41.43%	21.43%	20.00%	7.86%	140	17.65%
<i>No Division</i>								
1981-1984	48.46%	13.08%	19.23%	4.62%	1.54%	13.08%	130	40.12%

Source: 1981-1984 Data Utah History Fair Contest Papers, Utah State Historical Society, Mss B 407 Box 1 FDS 4-37, 39-66, Box 2 FDS 1-61, Box 3 FDS 1-60, Box 4 FDS 1-60, Box 5 FDX 1-47, Box 6 FDS 1-23, 33-47. 2009-2012 Data Utah History Fair, Department of History, Utah State University.

time, and an additional 13.8% related to the “Utah & U.S.” bringing that area to third on the list. “U.S.” topics were the second most created in the Junior Age Division during the 81-84 years. “U.S. & World” and “World” barely registered.¹²³

The Senior Age Division students between 1981 and 1984 exhibited a more balanced approach to history in terms of project disbursement. Most Senior Age Division participants created “U.S.” projects, followed closely by “Utah.” “Utah & U.S.,” “U.S. &

¹²³ Many projects from The Utah History Fair Contest Papers, Mss B 407, could not be verified by age division do to a lack of information on the projects.

World,” and “World” ranged from 6.12%-10.2%. The “Unknown” projects resided just under 15% for the study.

The students represented by the topics from 2009-2012 generated “U.S.” topic projects ranging from 41.43% to 56.91% throughout the age divisions. Primary Age Division participants created more Utah topics than their counterparts. An exception to this occurred in 2011 when over 10% of the Senior Age Division. “Utah & U.S.” also seemed remarkably under-utilized by students except for 2012 Primary Age Division participants who created over 10% projects in that category. The least remarkable “Utah” year occurred in 2010 when students examined “Innovation in History.” Apparently grade school students do not see Utahns as particularly innovative.

“The Individual in History,” received little notice in the “U.S. & World” category which should not be a surprise considering the parameters of the category. Junior and Senior Age Division students allowed for more innovators in the “World” category than they did in any other year between 2009 and 2012. Senior Age Division pupils discussing “The Individual in History” did not favor Utah subjects as viable for analysis, however, the same age group did see a significant rise in topics related to *Utah* for 2011’s “Debate and Diplomacy.” It is also worth noting that students last study Utah History in 7th Grade; Senior Age Division Participants have long surpassed that class.

The topics in terms of Geographical study follow consistent directions from 2009-2012 in all categories with only slight variations separating one age division from another. Compared to the data from 1981-1984, projects created between 2009 and 2012 demonstrate less overall diversity between age divisions.

Geographical Study by Grade

The story for projects broken into grade levels is remarkable in that it does reflect, to a limited degree the course of study by Utah's students, grades four through twelve (Table 4.5). Data for projects from 1981-1984 did not make this part of the study as those projects did not include grade distinctions (Table 4.6). "U.S." topics remain the juggernaut amongst the students in nearly every circumstance, the exceptions being ninth graders in 2011 examining "Debate and Diplomacy," tenth graders in 2011 studying "Revolution, Reaction, Reform," and twelfth graders in 2010 researching "Innovations in History."

The relation between the area of study discussed and the grade as it correlates to the Social Studies Curriculum of Utah shows that students are willing to further investigate the contents of the curriculum for the given year. In some cases, not detailed or readily identified here, students also look at topics suggested by their teachers. In other cases, teachers dictate what sort of history a student should learn. The reasons behind why students investigate what they explore will be discussed in Chapter 5.

The overwhelming presence of the "U.S." category shows that students willingly think in terms beyond the curriculum in grades other than fifth and eighth when U.S. History is taught. Fourth and seventh grade students learn Utah History. World History is reserved for the sixth graders. Ninth grade students learn geography. Utah high school students typically take a European or World History class during tenth grade and U.S. History during eleventh grade. The schedules are much more flexible during those years, when compared to students from ninth grade down. High school students also have small variety of social studies classes to also choose from.

Table 4.5
History Projects by Regional Discipline
2009-2012 by Grade

	Utah	Utah & U.S	U.S	U.S & World	World	Un-known	Year Total	Percentage of Total
4th								
2009	11.89%	16.08%	53.85%	1.40%	10.49%	6.29%	143	8.4%
2010	6.25%	18.75%	43.75%	12.50%	6.25%	12.50%	32	3.76%
2011	14.29%	17.86%	46.43%	10.71%	0.00%	10.71%	28	3.83%
2012	13.33%	13.33%	46.67%	6.67%	6.67%	13.33%	30	3.78%
5th								
2009	3.78%	6.49%	63.78%	3.78%	12.97%	9.19%	185	10.87%
2010	1.11%	2.22%	53.33%	6.67%	22.22%	14.44%	90	10.56%
2011	6.67%	4.00%	66.67%	8.00%	4.00%	10.67%	75	10.25%
2012	7.23%	10.84%	62.65%	10.84%	6.02%	2.41%	83	10.47%
6th								
2009	3.11%	8.00%	58.22%	2.67%	19.11%	8.89%	225	13.22%
2010	0.00%	6.25%	51.56%	18.75%	20.31%	3.13%	64	7.51%
2011	13.29%	7.69%	37.76%	13.99%	12.59%	14.69%	143	19.53%
2012	3.41%	6.82%	53.41%	13.64%	17.05%	5.68%	88	11.1%
7th								
2009	6.22%	15.54%	47.67%	4.66%	20.73%	5.18%	193	11.34%
2010	2.68%	16.11%	39.60%	19.46%	13.42%	8.72%	149	17.49%
2011	4.46%	8.93%	45.54%	17.86%	15.18%	8.04%	112	15.3%
2012	2.80%	11.21%	53.27%	14.02%	16.82%	1.87%	107	13.49%
8th								
2009	2.35%	8.88%	53.52%	4.70%	24.80%	5.74%	383	22.5%
2010	0.00%	3.67%	51.38%	22.48%	15.60%	6.88%	218	25.59%
2011	4.46%	4.02%	54.02%	16.52%	13.84%	7.14%	224	30.6%
2012	0.38%	4.51%	44.36%	19.92%	19.92%	7.14%	266	33.54%
9th								
2009	0.00%	5.88%	62.75%	1.96%	23.53%	5.88%	51	3%
2010	0.00%	7.50%	50.00%	12.50%	5.00%	25.00%	40	4.69%
2011	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	50.00%	16.67%	0.00%	6	.82%
2012	3.80%	1.27%	44.30%	25.32%	15.19%	10.13%	79	9.96%
10th								
2009	2.27%	6.82%	59.09%	4.55%	25.00%	2.27%	44	2.58%
2010	14.29%	0.00%	28.57%	14.29%	14.29%	28.57%	7	.082%
2011	0.00%	0.00%	50.00%	20.00%	20.00%	10.00%	10	1.37%
2012	9.09%	9.09%	18.18%	36.36%	27.27%	0.00%	11	1.39%
11th								
2009	1.54%	9.23%	64.62%	3.08%	16.92%	4.62%	65	3.82%
2010	1.47%	0.00%	61.76%	16.18%	11.76%	8.82%	68	7.98%
2011	12.31%	6.15%	50.77%	20.00%	4.62%	6.15%	65	8.88%
2012	3.13%	6.25%	43.75%	9.38%	28.13%	9.38%	32	4.04%
12th								
2009	0.00%	0.00%	36.36%	0.00%	45.45%	18.18%	11	.65%
2010	0.00%	0.00%	45.45%	9.09%	45.45%	0.00%	11	1.29%
2011	0.00%	0.00%	66.67%	22.22%	11.11%	0.00%	9	1.23%
2012	7.69%	15.38%	30.77%	23.08%	23.08%	0.00%	13	1.64%

Source: Utah History Fair Contest Information, The Department of History, Utah State University.

The consistency between “U.S.” throughout the age divisions shows that students are capable of thinking beyond the context presented in the classroom. It also helps to indicate the presence of the nation-state within the memory of students, at least when taking a macroscopic vantage of the topics studied. An opposing perspective—that of the community memory colluding with the past—is hard to determine from the geographic areas of study. The vast numbers may also indicate that increasingly available primary sources for topics in the “U.S.” category influence the outcome of the projects. Blanket statements such as these must be reserved for further examination, as the study of a mass number of projects does not necessarily indicate the type of projects students are studying.

Student projects, despite being predominantly “U.S.” driven, show increases in categories relevant to the type of history taught in the classroom learning, at least through the ninth grade. Notice the increase in “Utah” and “Utah & U.S.” topics during grades four and seven on Table 4.5. The increase of “U.S. & World” and “World” topics during sixth grade shows the influence of World History on the students.

Table 4.6
Projects by Regional Discipline 2009-2012
No Grade Distinction

	Utah	Utah & U.S	U.S	U.S & World	World	Unknown	Year Total	Percentage of Total
2009	3.98%	9.70%	52.49%	3.23%	25.87%	4.73%	402	23.62%
2010	1.16%	4.62%	35.84%	12.72%	31.79%	13.87%	173	20.31%
2011	11.67%	1.67%	61.67%	11.67%	3.33%	10.00%	60	8.2%
2012	4.76%	10.71%	52.38%	14.29%	13.10%	4.76%	84	10.59%

Source: Utah History Fair Contest Information, The Department of History, Utah State University.

Project by Discipline Process

Examining where categories reside within a broader spectrum of historical disciplines becomes more complicated. Each project could receive a total of one point; that point could be divided into half in order to more create an accurate depiction of the areas of student study. The categories are “Military,” “Social,” “Political,” “Pop Culture,” “Diplomatic,” “Women’s,” “Ethnic,” “Native American,” “Gender,” “African American,” “Constitutional,” “Economic,” “Labor,” “Environmental,” “Ancient,” “Biographical,” “Religious,” “Technology / Science,” “Medical,” “Art,” “Folklore,” and “Unknown.”

“Military” projects examine aspects of the military and wars like World War II and some of the weaponry of war. A half-point in the “Military” category was given to topics like Pearl Harbor or George Washington which shared the distinction with “Political.” “Political” projects deal with the major thematic issues of the United States and the World. Oftentimes the projects relate to ideas of nation building. This category includes half-points for characters like Abraham Lincoln and Benjamin Franklin, while topics like The Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution receive full points. In most instances, the “Political” category includes “textbook” topics in American History. The category would be bloated if only one point were given per project.

“Social” topics often include mainstream areas of study in U.S. and World histories; the category focuses on topics that work toward social improvement or the loss of rights. It is also a category that receives many half-points. Helen Keller falls within the “Social” category as well as the “Women’s” category. Projects relating to the Orphan

Train Movement receive a full point in the “Social” category. This category does not include different ethnic or racial histories, nor does it include Women’s history.

“Pop Culture” projects often deal with popular movements in culture. Music of the 1960s falls within the purview of this category, as does Elvis Presley (who is quite popular as a Utah History Fair topic). This category also encompasses topics that often serve as “distractions” to other standards in history, at least in terms of this study. A character like Amelia Earhart receives a half-point in the “Pop Culture” category, the other half going to the “Women’s” category. Charles Lindbergh falls solely within the “Pop Culture” category, unless a student specifies some of the political implications of Lindbergh.

“Diplomatic” topics include topics that look at how nations or individuals within a nation relate. A common “Diplomatic” topic is the Cuban Missile Crisis. Certain projects about Pearl Harbor include a “Diplomatic” aspect as well.

“Women’s” topics usually received a half-point. “Women’s” topics required a female to be a player in the moment or era of history discussed. Topics like the Suffrage Movement or Seneca Falls constitute this category. Some distinction needs to be made for topics like Ruby Bridges or Rosa Parks who reside historically as African American, Political, and Women’s history topics, but only get points in the “African American and Women’s history categories here.

“Gender” areas of study include discussions of homosexuality or masculinity. Students competing in the Utah History Fair generally do not create projects that examine “Gender.”

“Ethnic” topics usually denote projects where the people involved were not white, were white marginally (Greek or Italian included) but defined as an ethnic group, or operated in an adverse atmosphere. The internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II is an “Ethnic” topic. Holocaust topics received partial “Ethnic” points. African American or Native American topics are not part of the “Ethnic” category for this study.

“Native American” projects center on Native Americans or legislation that affects Native Americans. Utah’s Blackhawk War is a “Native American” topic as are individuals in history like Geronimo and Squanto.

“African American” topics included African American issues like Civil Rights and slavery. The category, as examined by students, includes many African American individuals like Jackie Robinson, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Constitutional” denotes projects that discuss the U.S. Constitution. Unlike the history discipline of Constitutional History, the “Constitutional” category includes some of the amendments to the Constitution. The category could be a sub category for the “Political” category.

“Economic” topics discussed certain aspects of economic duress or modes of production. The Depression and Henry Ford’s assembly line are part of the “Economic” category.

“Labor” symbolizes projects related to labor movements, strikes, and working conditions. Topics like the Scofield Mine Disaster and the Molly Maguires make up the points in the “Labor” category.

“Environmental” signifies topics related to the environment. Individuals like Rachel Carson receive a half-point in the “Environmental” category. Topics related to the National Parks or wildlife also received points here.

“Ancient” relates directly to Ancient History. Some topics in the “Ancient” category also fell within “Military” category.

“Biographical” projects often dealt with individual outside of the “Political” realm where possible. Utah History Fair projects are often much more biographical in nature than what is warranted or accepted as a course of study for the projects. Some “Biographical” projects considered family history, others included religious figures. Philo T. Farnsworth receives a half-point in the category due to students’ propensity to examine the life rather than particular actions of Farnsworth.¹²⁴

“Religious” projects almost always encompassed topics related to Utah, or more specifically, Brigham Young and Joseph Smith. Projects related to both men garnered half-points in the “Religious” category. The Salem Witch Trials and Joan of Arc also received points here.

“Technology & Science” projects examined the innovations and inventions that come to us through time. The Manhattan Project and the “big” ideas of history, like Newton’s Laws, also comprise projects in this category.

“Medical” projects looked at the advances of medicine as well as some of the medical catastrophes over time. The hand-washing, vaccinations, and the artificial heart are examples of projects that are categorized in the “Medical” category.

¹²⁴ This assertion is based on my experience directing the Utah History Fair. Many participants look at the life of a person rather than a particular aspect of that person. Unfortunately doing so results in a project being less competitive. The “Biography” category could easily be bigger.

“Art” projects covered artists and artistic movements. Although “Art” projects and “Pop Culture” projects may appear similar, the “Art” category usually included 19th Century and prior projects with regards to paintings, photography, music, or literature. Modern dance and Ballet in the 20th Century did get credit in the “Art” category, while much of 20th Century music, including Jazz, did not.

“Folklore” as a field did not include many projects. For a project to be a “Folklore” topic, the student had to look at family recipes or some of the tall tales. Butch Cassidy received partial “Folklore” point, as did the Lost Rhoades Mines. “Folklore” projects commonly related to the “Utah” category.

Finally, projects that could not be categorized were marked as “Unknown.” Projects in the “Unknown” category often had incomplete titles, incorrect titles, such as TBA, or the titles could not be readily related to a topic.

Project by Discipline Results

The projects created by Utah History Fair students select political topics as indicated in the “Political” category (Tables 4.7 and 4.8). “Political” topics commonly bolstered the United States of America, as indicated by the overwhelming percentage of students looking at U.S. History topics in the prior tables. Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson were among the more discussed figures in the “Political” category. These discussions included information relating to events surrounding these people. Perhaps the most researched document was the Declaration of Independence. “Political” projects covered the majority of projects

Table 3.7
Projects by Discipline
Project Totals

	1981-1984	2009	2010	2011	2012	Totals	2009-2012 %	Total %
Military	16.5	119	80	59	97	355	8.70%	8.44%
Social	14.5	38.5	50.5	47	35.5	171.5	4.20%	4.22%
Political	44	304.5	88.5	130.5	181	704.5	17.27%	17.00%
Pop Culture	31.5	203.5	75	30.5	80	389	9.54%	9.55%
Diplomatic	2	5	3.5	91.5	17	117	2.87%	2.70%
Women's	16.5	211.5	17	63.5	33	325	7.97%	7.76%
Ethnic	4.5	19.5	1	12.5	14	47	1.15%	1.17%
Native America	17.5	36	4.5	41	17.5	99	2.43%	2.65%
Gender	0	0	0	0.5	1	1.5	0.04%	0.03%
African American	3.5	126.5	8.5	51.5	34	220.5	5.41%	5.09%
Constitutional	1	3.5	4	13	10	30.5	0.75%	0.72%
Economic	27	31	26.5	3.5	27.5	88.5	2.17%	2.62%
Labor	6.5	3.5	5	10.5	18.5	37.5	0.92%	1.00%
Environmental	12	5	8	34	14.5	61.5	1.51%	1.67%
Ancient	3.5	36	26	6	2.5	70.5	1.73%	1.68%
Biographical	55.5	160.5	27.5	15.5	20	223.5	5.48%	6.34%
Religious	8	60.5	3	13.5	24.5	101.5	2.49%	2.49%
Technology & Science	15.5	116	252.5	31	71	470.5	11.53%	11.04%
Medical	6.5	47	83.5	8.5	28	167	4.09%	3.94%
Art	1.5	45.5	13.5	0	15.5	74.5	1.83%	1.73%
Folklore	6.5	25.5	0	2	3	30.5	0.75%	0.84%
Unknown	30	104	74	67	48	293	7.18%	7.34%
Total Projects	324	1702	852	732	793	4403	4079	4403

Source: 1981-1984 Data Utah History Fair Contest Papers, Utah State Historical Society, Mss B 407 Box 1 FDS 4-37, 39-66, Box 2 FDS 1-61, Box 3 FDS 1-60, Box 4 FDS 1-60, Box 5 FDX 1-47, Box 6 FDS 1-23, 33-47. 2009-2012 Data Utah History Fair, Department of History, Utah State University.

created each year, with the exception of 2010 when “Innovation in History” resulted in more students examining “Technology & Science” category projects.

Expanding the “Political” category to include other ideas related to the nation-state narrative of the United States includes the “Constitutional” category, some of the figures in the “Biographical” category, some of the actions in the “Women’s” category, like the Suffrage Movement, “African American” topics that included actions related to Civil Rights and court rulings, like Brown vs. Board of Education. Those

Table 4.8
Projects by Discipline
Percent of Projects

	1981-1984	2009	2010	2011	2012
Military	5.09%	6.99%	9.39%	8.06%	12.23%
Social	4.48%	2.26%	5.93%	6.42%	4.48%
Political	13.58%	17.89%	10.39%	17.83%	22.82%
Pop Culture	9.72%	11.96%	8.80%	4.17%	10.09%
Diplomatic	0.62%	0.29%	0.41%	12.50%	2.14%
Women’s	5.09%	12.43%	2.00%	8.67%	4.16%
Ethnic	1.39%	1.15%	0.12%	1.71%	1.77%
Native America	5.40%	2.12%	0.53%	5.60%	2.21%
Gender	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.07%	0.13%
African American	1.08%	7.43%	1.00%	7.04%	4.29%
Constitutional	0.31%	0.21%	0.47%	1.78%	1.26%
Economic	8.33%	1.82%	3.11%	0.48%	3.47%
Labor	2.01%	0.21%	0.59%	1.43%	2.33%
Environmental	3.70%	0.29%	0.94%	4.64%	1.83%
Ancient	1.08%	2.12%	3.05%	0.82%	0.32%
Biographical	17.13%	9.43%	3.23%	2.12%	2.52%
Religious	2.47%	3.55%	0.35%	1.84%	3.09%
Technology / Science	4.78%	6.82%	29.64%	4.23%	8.95%
Medical	2.01%	2.76%	9.80%	1.16%	3.53%
Art	0.46%	2.67%	1.58%	0.00%	1.95%
Folklore	2.01%	1.50%	0.00%	0.27%	0.38%
Unknown	9.26%	6.11%	8.69%	9.15%	6.05%

Sources: 1981-1984 Data Utah History Fair Contest Papers, Utah State Historical Society, Mss B 407 Box 1 FDS 4-37, 39-66, Box 2 FDS 1-61, Box 3 FDS 1-60, Box 4 FDS 1-60, Box 5 FDX 1-47, Box 6 FDS 1-23, 33-47. 2009-2012 Data Utah History Fair, Department of History, Utah State University.

topics either received half points or were deemed appropriate to one category over the “Political” category.

The “Military” category included events in America’s history related to the wars of the country. Topics in the “Military” category could have been categorized as “Political” if “Military” did not exist. Male students created a majority of “Military” projects. A male created project in the Utah History Fair has an 8.39%-22.10% likelihood of being a “Military” topic (Table 4.9).

The “Pop Culture” category, a wide ranging category that included Amelia Earhart, the Beatles, Elvis Presley (a surprisingly high amount within the category), bands, and various sorts figures drew from a large 4.17% - 11.96% of the projects. Students liked the “great” stories related to the past, and they look to popular figures to get those stories. Incidentally, if discussing a topic is a proper indication of what students like, John Lennon is the favorite Beatle of Utah’s youth.

“Gender” topics were not prevalent throughout the years in the study. Gay rights emergence once, as did Harvey Milk. It is impressive that a couple of projects, both from Carbon County, scrutinized gender issues.

The “Social” category did not excite students too greatly as a singular category. As a singular category, student projects ticked the “Social” category with multiple projects about Helen Keller, who also scored in the “Women’s” category. The “Social” category drew nearly equal numbers between males and females as percentages within the sexes, although females prevailed by a slight margin in the category. However, topics that relate to the “Social” category, like some of the projects in the “Women’s,” “Native American,” “African-American,” and “Labor” categories bolster students’ overall

Table 4.9
Projects by Sex
Percent of Projects by Sex

	81-84 F	81-84 M	81-84 UK	2009 F	2009 M	2010 F	2010 M	2011 F	2011 M	2012 F	2012 M
Military	2.68%	8.39%	2.63%	4.07%	10.35%	2.10%	17.63%	5.04%	12.06%	5.27%	22.10%
Social	5.36%	3.28%	5.26%	3.13%	1.26%	7.41%	4.25%	6.83%	5.87%	4.73%	4.12%
Political	11.90%	15.69%	13.16%	15.71%	20.39%	10.07%	7.88%	18.11%	17.46%	23.55%	21.80%
Pop Culture	10.42%	8.39%	13.16%	11.48%	12.50%	9.85%	7.63%	3.96%	4.44%	11.51%	8.08%
Diplo- matic	0.60%	0.73%	0.00%	0.16%	0.44%	0.33%	0.50%	8.87%	17.30%	1.40%	3.20%
Wo- men's	7.14%	2.92%	2.63%	21.04%	2.53%	3.76%	0.00%	13.43%	2.38%	6.99%	0.15%
Ethnic	0.00%	2.92%	2.63%	1.87%	0.32%	0.22%	0.00%	1.80%	1.59%	1.61%	1.98%
Native											
Ameri- can	4.76%	5.47%	10.53%	2.47%	1.70%	0.55%	0.50%	4.56%	6.98%	2.37%	1.98%
Gender	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.12%	0.00%	0.00%	0.30%
African											
Ameri- can	2.08%	0.00%	0.00%	6.43%	8.59%	1.44%	0.50%	8.15%	5.56%	5.05%	3.20%
Consti- tutional	0.00%	0.73%	0.00%	0.16%	0.19%	0.44%	0.50%	1.68%	1.90%	1.18%	1.37%
Eco- nomic	7.44%	9.49%	7.89%	1.15%	2.59%	3.54%	2.63%	0.48%	0.48%	3.33%	3.66%
Labor	1.49%	2.92%	0.00%	0.33%	0.06%	0.77%	0.38%	1.20%	1.75%	2.37%	2.29%
Environ- mental	3.87%	3.65%	2.63%	0.49%	0.06%	0.77%	1.13%	4.44%	4.92%	2.26%	1.22%
Ancient	1.79%	0.36%	0.00%	1.26%	3.09%	3.32%	2.75%	1.20%	0.32%	0.22%	0.46%
Biogra- phical	18.15%	17.52%	5.26%	7.75%	11.36%	3.21%	3.25%	2.64%	1.43%	2.47%	2.59%
Reli- gious	3.87%	1.09%	0.00%	3.24%	3.98%	0.11%	0.63%	2.16%	1.43%	4.52%	1.07%
Tech- nology / Science	2.38%	7.30%	7.89%	4.18%	9.85%	28.21%	31.25%	3.24%	5.56%	7.20%	11.43%
Medical	2.68%	1.46%	0.00%	3.74%	1.64%	11.62%	7.75%	1.32%	0.95%	4.19%	2.59%
Art	0.89%	0.00%	0.00%	3.68%	1.52%	2.32%	0.75%	0.00%	0.00%	2.90%	0.61%
Folklore	2.38%	1.09%	5.26%	1.04%	2.02%	0.00%	0.00%	0.48%	0.00%	0.22%	0.61%
Un- known	10.12%	6.57%	21.05%	6.59%	5.56%	9.96%	7.25%	10.31%	7.62%	6.67%	5.18%

Sources: 1981-1984 Data Utah History Fair Contest Papers, Utah State Historical Society, Mss B 407 Box 1 FDS 4-37, 39-66, Box 2 FDS 1-61, Box 3 FDS 1-60, Box 4 FDS 1-60, Box 5 FDX 1-47, Box 6 FDS 1-23, 33-47. 2009-2012 Data Utah History Fair, Department of History, Utah State University.

understanding, or desire to understand, social or cultural topics (as modern fields of study within the history profession), represents a large portion of student projects.

Despite the dearth of people of color participating in the Utah History Fair, projects addressing African American individuals or issues ranged from 1.00% to 7.43% of projects from 1981-1984 and 2009-2012. The average of projects in the “African American” category was 5.09%. The low percentages showed up in 1981-1984 and 2010. African Americans are important as “Individuals in History,” represented by 2009’s 7.43% of total projects amongst students. Jackie Robinson’s story represents one of the more popular “African American” projects, as do Ruby Bridges and Rosa Parks, both of whom receive an equal share of point between the “African American” and “Women’s” categories. Female created projects related to “African American” topics outnumbered male created “African American” projects, when equalized (Table 4.10) by nearly double.

“Native American” topics drew the attention of students ranging from as little as .53% in 2010, “Innovation in History” to 5.6% during 2011’s “Debate and Diplomacy” contest season. Utah’s students, especially those in Sanpete County, like to study Utah’s Black Hawk War. Native American issues like Boarding Schools also captured students’ interests. During the contests, males and females alternated on the likelihood of creating “Native American” projects.

“Environmental” projects, usually under the guise of Rachel Carson and *Silent Spring*, appealed nearly equally to boys and girls. “Environmental” topics attracted most students during the “Debate and Diplomacy” contest year, drawing 4.44% of female and 4.92% of male created projects for an overall score of 4.64% for the contest year. Perhaps as part of modern environmental concerns and debates, students recognized the “Environmental” topics to be important.

Table 4.10
Projects by Sex
Percent Equalized

	2012 F	2012 M	2011 F	2011 M	2010 F	2010 M	2009 F	2009 M	81-84 F	81-84 M
Military	2.63%	11.05%	2.52%	6.03%	1.05%	8.81%	2.03%	5.18%	1.34%	4.20%
Social	2.37%	2.06%	3.42%	2.94%	3.71%	2.13%	1.57%	0.63%	2.68%	1.64%
Political	11.77%	10.90%	9.05%	8.73%	5.03%	3.94%	7.86%	10.20%	5.95%	7.85%
Pop Culture	5.75%	4.04%	1.98%	2.22%	4.92%	3.81%	5.74%	6.25%	5.21%	4.20%
Diplomatic	0.70%	1.60%	4.44%	8.65%	0.17%	0.25%	0.08%	0.22%	0.30%	0.36%
Women's	3.49%	0.08%	6.71%	1.19%	1.88%	0.00%	10.52%	1.26%	3.57%	1.46%
Ethnic	0.81%	0.99%	0.90%	0.79%	0.11%	0.00%	0.93%	0.16%	0.00%	1.46%
Native America	1.18%	0.99%	2.28%	3.49%	0.28%	0.25%	1.24%	0.85%	2.38%	2.74%
Gender	0.00%	0.15%	0.06%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
African American	2.53%	1.60%	4.08%	2.78%	0.72%	0.25%	3.21%	4.29%	1.04%	0.00%
Constitutional	0.59%	0.69%	0.84%	0.95%	0.22%	0.25%	0.08%	0.09%	0.00%	0.36%
Economic	1.67%	1.83%	0.24%	0.24%	1.77%	1.31%	0.58%	1.29%	3.72%	4.74%
Labor	1.18%	1.14%	0.60%	0.87%	0.39%	0.19%	0.16%	0.03%	0.74%	1.46%
Environmental	1.13%	0.61%	2.22%	2.46%	0.39%	0.56%	0.25%	0.03%	1.93%	1.82%
Ancient	0.11%	0.23%	0.60%	0.16%	1.66%	1.38%	0.63%	1.55%	0.89%	0.18%
Biographical	1.24%	1.30%	1.32%	0.71%	1.60%	1.63%	3.87%	5.68%	9.08%	8.76%
Religious	2.26%	0.53%	1.08%	0.71%	0.06%	0.31%	1.62%	1.99%	1.93%	0.55%
Technology & Science	3.60%	5.72%	1.62%	2.78%	14.10%	15.63%	2.09%	4.92%	1.19%	3.65%
Medical	2.10%	1.30%	0.66%	0.48%	5.81%	3.88%	1.87%	0.82%	1.34%	0.73%
Art	1.45%	0.30%	0.00%	0.00%	1.16%	0.38%	1.84%	0.76%	0.45%	0.00%
Folklore	0.11%	0.30%	0.24%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.52%	1.01%	1.19%	0.55%
Unknown	3.33%	2.59%	5.16%	3.81%	4.98%	3.63%	3.30%	2.78%	5.06%	3.28%

Sources: 1981-1984 Data Utah History Fair Contest Papers, Utah State Historical Society, Mss B 407 Box 1 FDS 4-37, 39-66, Box 2 FDS 1-61, Box 3 FDS 1-60, Box 4 FDS 1-60, Box 5 FDX 1-47, Box 6 FDS 1-23, 33-47. 2009-2012 Data Utah History Fair, Department of History, Utah State University.

“Diplomatic” topics barely registered on students’ topical radar during throughout all the contests, with the exception of 2011’s “Debate and Diplomacy.” Overall “Diplomacy” rose from a low of .29% in 2009 for “Individual in History” to 12.50% in 2011. The “Diplomacy” category is a good example of how the theme influences the type of topics students select as related to the National History Day theme.

The rest of the categories drew little remarkable data when looked at the through the gender perspective, with a few exceptions. The “Technology & Science” category drew favorable attention by males over females. Both males and females marked

“Technology & Science” topics during the 2010’s “Innovation in History,” the only year that topped “Political” topics as the main area of topic dissemination. “Medical” topics drew more females every year, with the strongest year, for both sexes, also being 2010’s “Innovation in History” discussion.

“Biographical” topics waned when comparing the 1981-1984 data with the 2009-2012 data. From 2009-2012 the most talked about “Biographical” or partially biographical entry was Philo T. Farnsworth.¹²⁵ The 1981-1984 data set includes the theme “Family and Community,” making a project about a family member viable. Unfortunately the data regarding the year of creation in the projects held by the Utah Historical Society “Utah History Fair Contest Papers” is often problematic or possibly incorrect. Given the Utah History Fair’s early push of family and local history, it makes the overwhelming number of projects related to family history completely reasonable in the context of this study and accounts for the strong number of projects in the “Biographical” category.

Projects by Age Division

Projects separated by Age Division show near equality, often the years are within a percentage point of each other when equalized, between categories overall in the study. As tables 4.11 and 4.12 demonstrate, there are some areas where one age group is more

¹²⁵ Experience through observation demonstrates that many projects based on an individual as a topic shows students regarding the topic as a biographical entry rather than looking at specific actions of the individual. Nowhere is this more apparent than the projects related to Philo T. Farnsworth. Part of the infatuation with Farnsworth begins follows his LDS upbringing, rural Utah and Idaho roots, and the fact that many students love television, and especially love learning about T.V.’s local influence.

Table 4.11
Projects by Discipline
Percentage by Age Division

	2012			2011			2010			2009			81-84	
	Primary	Junior	Senior	Primary	Junior	Senior	Primary	Junior	Senior	Primary	Junior	Senior	Junior	Senior
Military	11.39%	11.92%	14.29%	8.00%	8.30%	7.14%	5.39%	10.70%	9.09%	5.94%	7.02%	8.94%	3.17%	8.16%
Social	3.04%	4.34%	6.79%	2.80%	6.25%	10.92%	3.29%	6.73%	5.94%	1.84%	2.32%	2.85%	4.58%	6.12%
Political	22.78%	24.85%	15.71%	19.60%	18.03%	15.13%	10.48%	10.06%	11.54%	19.98%	16.12%	20.73%	15.49%	14.29%
Pop Culture	11.39%	8.38%	14.64%	4.40%	3.89%	5.04%	7.78%	8.86%	9.79%	10.35%	12.81%	11.79%	8.10%	9.18%
Diplomatic	0.63%	2.42%	2.86%	4.40%	14.55%	12.61%	0.00%	0.46%	0.70%	0.10%	0.41%	0.20%	0.70%	0.00%
Women's	6.01%	4.24%	1.79%	10.80%	7.68%	10.50%	1.50%	2.21%	1.75%	12.30%	12.50%	12.40%	8.10%	3.06%
Ethnic	1.58%	1.41%	3.21%	0.80%	2.05%	1.26%	0.00%	0.00%	0.70%	0.51%	1.50%	1.02%	0.35%	2.04%
Native America	3.80%	1.92%	1.43%	10.00%	4.92%	3.78%	0.90%	0.46%	0.35%	3.59%	1.81%	0.41%	6.34%	0.00%
Gender	0.00%	0.00%	0.71%	0.00%	0.00%	0.42%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
African American	5.38%	3.94%	4.29%	8.40%	6.45%	7.98%	1.50%	1.11%	0.00%	6.97%	7.13%	9.55%	0.70%	5.10%
Constitutional	1.27%	1.11%	1.79%	1.60%	1.95%	1.26%	0.00%	0.55%	0.70%	0.20%	0.26%	0.00%	0.70%	0.00%
Economic	2.22%	4.04%	2.86%	0.00%	0.51%	0.84%	3.29%	3.04%	3.15%	1.02%	2.27%	1.63%	8.80%	8.16%
Labor	0.95%	2.83%	2.14%	0.80%	1.74%	0.84%	0.00%	0.55%	1.40%	0.10%	0.10%	0.81%	2.11%	0.00%
Environmental	3.16%	1.41%	1.79%	4.80%	4.92%	3.36%	0.60%	1.20%	0.35%	0.31%	0.31%	0.20%	5.63%	3.06%
Ancient	0.00%	0.51%	0.00%	0.00%	0.82%	1.68%	0.00%	4.80%	0.00%	0.20%	3.36%	1.02%	0.70%	5.10%
Biographical	3.80%	2.53%	1.07%	8.00%	1.13%	0.00%	6.89%	2.31%	2.45%	11.78%	8.94%	6.71%	19.01%	7.14%
Religious	2.85%	2.83%	4.29%	1.20%	1.95%	2.10%	0.30%	0.46%	0.00%	4.20%	3.20%	3.66%	4.23%	1.02%
Technology / Science	11.08%	8.99%	6.43%	2.40%	4.82%	3.78%	39.82%	28.23%	23.08%	7.79%	6.35%	6.71%	4.58%	5.10%
Medical	1.90%	3.74%	4.64%	1.60%	1.23%	0.42%	6.89%	9.13%	15.73%	1.74%	3.25%	2.85%	2.11%	1.02%
Art	0.00%	2.73%	1.43%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.20%	1.57%	2.10%	1.64%	3.67%	0.81%	0.00%	2.04%
Folklore	1.90%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.68%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.46%	1.08%	1.22%	1.06%	1.02%
Unknown	5.06%	5.86%	7.86%	10.40%	8.81%	9.24%	10.18%	7.56%	11.19%	6.97%	5.58%	6.50%	3.52%	18.37%
Total Projects	158	495	140	125	488	119	167	542	143	488	968	246	142	49

Source: 1981-1984 Data Utah History Fair Contest Papers, Utah State Historical Society, Mss B 407 Box 1 FDS 4-37, 39-66, Box 2 FDS 1-61, Box 3 FDS 1-60, Box 4 FDS 1-60, Box 5 FDX 1-47, Box 6 FDS 1-23, 33-47. 2009-2012 Data Utah History Fair, Department of History, Utah State University.

Table 4.12
Projects by Discipline
Percentage by Age Division
Equalized

	2012			2011			2010			2009			81-84	
	Primary	Junior	Senior	Primary	Junior	Senior	Primary	Junior	Senior	Primary	Junior	Senior	Junior	Senior
Military	3.97%	3.80%	4.76%	2.67%	2.77%	2.38%	1.80%	3.57%	3.03%	1.98%	2.34%	2.98%	1.58%	4.08%
Social	1.45%	1.01%	2.26%	0.93%	2.08%	3.64%	1.10%	2.24%	1.98%	0.61%	0.77%	0.95%	2.29%	3.06%
Political	8.28%	7.59%	5.24%	6.53%	6.01%	5.04%	3.49%	3.35%	3.85%	6.66%	5.37%	6.91%	7.75%	7.14%
Pop Culture	2.79%	3.80%	4.88%	1.47%	1.30%	1.68%	2.59%	2.95%	3.26%	3.45%	4.27%	3.93%	4.05%	4.59%
Diplomatic	0.81%	0.21%	0.95%	1.47%	4.85%	4.20%	0.00%	0.15%	0.23%	0.03%	0.14%	0.07%	0.35%	0.00%
Women's	1.41%	2.00%	0.60%	3.60%	2.56%	3.50%	0.50%	0.74%	0.58%	4.10%	4.17%	4.13%	4.05%	1.53%
Ethnic	0.47%	0.53%	1.07%	0.27%	0.68%	0.42%	0.00%	0.00%	0.23%	0.17%	0.50%	0.34%	0.18%	1.02%
Native America	0.64%	1.27%	0.48%	3.33%	1.64%	1.26%	0.30%	0.15%	0.12%	1.20%	0.60%	0.14%	3.17%	0.00%
Gender	0.00%	0.00%	0.24%	0.00%	0.00%	0.14%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
African American	1.31%	1.79%	1.43%	2.80%	2.15%	2.66%	0.50%	0.37%	0.00%	2.32%	2.38%	3.18%	0.35%	2.55%
Constitutional	0.37%	0.42%	0.60%	0.53%	0.65%	0.42%	0.00%	0.18%	0.23%	0.07%	0.09%	0.00%	0.35%	0.00%
Economic	1.35%	0.74%	0.95%	0.00%	0.17%	0.28%	1.10%	1.01%	1.05%	0.34%	0.76%	0.54%	4.40%	4.08%
Labor	0.94%	0.32%	0.71%	0.27%	0.58%	0.28%	0.00%	0.18%	0.47%	0.03%	0.03%	0.27%	1.06%	0.00%
Environmental	0.47%	1.05%	0.60%	1.60%	1.64%	1.12%	0.20%	0.40%	0.12%	0.10%	0.10%	0.07%	2.82%	1.53%
Ancient	0.17%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.27%	0.56%	0.00%	1.60%	0.00%	0.07%	1.12%	0.34%	0.35%	2.55%
Biographical	0.84%	1.27%	0.36%	2.67%	0.38%	0.00%	2.30%	0.77%	0.82%	3.93%	2.98%	2.24%	9.51%	3.57%
Religious	0.94%	0.95%	1.43%	0.40%	0.65%	0.70%	0.10%	0.15%	0.00%	1.40%	1.07%	1.22%	2.11%	0.51%
Technology / Science	3.00%	3.69%	2.14%	0.80%	1.61%	1.26%	13.27%	9.41%	7.69%	2.60%	2.12%	2.24%	2.29%	2.55%
Medical	1.25%	0.63%	1.55%	0.53%	0.41%	0.14%	2.30%	3.04%	5.24%	0.58%	1.08%	0.95%	1.06%	0.51%
Art	0.91%	0.00%	0.48%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.40%	0.52%	0.70%	0.55%	1.22%	0.27%	0.00%	1.02%
Folklore	0.00%	0.63%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.56%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.82%	0.36%	0.41%	0.53%	0.51%
Unknown	1.95%	1.69%	2.62%	3.47%	2.94%	3.08%	3.39%	2.52%	3.73%	2.32%	1.86%	2.17%	1.76%	9.18%
Total Projects	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%	50.00%	50.00%

Source: 1981-1984 Data Utah History Fair Contest Papers, Utah State Historical Society, Mss B 407 Box 1 FDS 4-37, 39-66, Box 2 FDS 1-61, Box 3 FDS 1-60, Box 4 FDS 1-60, Box 5 FDX 1-47, Box 6 FDS 1-23, 33-47. 2009-2012 Data Utah History Fair, Department of History, Utah State University.

likely to participate than another age group.¹²⁶ In general, the Primary Age Division, fourth and fifth grade students, strayed from the “average” the most when compared to Junior, sixth through eighth grade, and Senior, ninth through twelfth grade, students.

Primary Age Division participants were less likely to create “Military” projects during most measurable years. Fourth and Fifth graders created more, as a percentage of total, “Biographical” projects than Junior and Senior Age Divisions, with the exception of 2012. Primary age division students created the most projects, 13.27% when adjusted, in the “Technology / Science” category, far surpassing their other projects. The following year, Primary age division students barely acknowledged the “Diplomatic” category, a weak category overall, while the Senior and Junior participants showed a dramatic rise in that category as it related to the theme.

Although Primary Age Division students were more likely to stray from the norm when examining “Native American” and “Women’s” topics, with the exception of 2012, they typically created fewer “Social” projects than the older students. Senior age division participants enjoyed more “Pop Culture” projects compared to their peers during most years, only falling behind in 2009 when examining the “Individual in History.” During 2009, Senior Age Division participants examined “Political” topics over any others. Overall, seniors did not expend as much effort in “Native American” topics.

Senior Age Division participants were less likely to look at “Technology / Science” than Junior and Primary Age Division participants, although at 7.69% equalized and 23.08% of total seniors, it made up the strongest percentage of any category that

¹²⁶ Since only three projects showed up in the Utah Historical Society’s files regarding Utah History Fair entries from 1981-1984 (Mss B 7), Primary age division projects were not included in tables 3.11 and 3.12 since they are numerically insignificant for the process, even when equalization does occur.

year. Compared to peers thirty years ago, Senior Age Division participants give “Women’s” topics a mixed amount of attention. Equalized topics in the “Women’s” category averaged 1.53% during 1981-1984. From 2009-2012, equalized “Women’s” topics in the Senior Age Division ranged from .58% to 4.13%. “Women’s” received 4.13% equalized when Senior Age Division participants looked at women as “Individuals in History.”

Junior Age Division projects often fell in between the wane and wax of Senior and Primary Age Division topics. The exceptions showed up mostly during 2012 and 1981-1984. Outside of a few examples and the major differences, the ages do not tend to delineate majorly between topics.

Conclusion

The macro-examination of Utah History Fair topics selected by Utah’s students, grades four through twelve, indicates that students are most interested in the history of the United States in terms of geographical study, at least in the case of students competing from 2009-2012. When examining what specifically those students study, the overall picture becomes more complex. Students interact with multiple facets of the past in order to create Utah History Fair projects. The most preponderant topics tend to be textbook, Big-man, and Whig-ish topics that assert the status of the nation-state. Given the data, it is not easy to differentiate between those topics that work for or against the nation-state. Doing so requires an examination of specific projects, thesis statements, and

sources analyzed.¹²⁷ Students competing during the inaugural years of the Utah History Fair devoted more time and effort to projects that examined their family and community; the community of memory favored the local vs. national memory. Even then, though, students still looked at the “worn” topics of American History.¹²⁸

The topics students select appear to “celebrate uniformity, progress, and conquest.”¹²⁹ When not looking at topics related to the major players, characters, and incidences of the United States’ past, students look into the history of their communities or families as they relate to the history and the various themes for the Utah History Fair. Students follow gender lines when approaching topics. Boys will look at military history while girls will look at women in history.

As a whole, the information presented in Chapter 4 is interesting in that it shows what students are bringing from the grade school classrooms into the university. But separated from the whole, the motives for selecting topics, the reasons *why* students choose to present during the regional and state competitions under the Utah History Fair and National History Day makes the information from Chapter 4 more complex. Instead of troves of students advocating national memory, we will see different motives for those competing in the Utah History Fair. Oftentimes students collude national memory with their communities of memory, or bypass the nation-state completely in order to present their findings.

¹²⁷ Experience suggests that most students remain “comfortable” when interpreting topics. Seldom do they look into histories that contradict the nation-state, although contradiction does occur.

¹²⁸ Errol Jones, Final UEH Project Information Form, June, 1981, p.2, Fd. Utah Endowment for the Humanities Final Report 1980-1981, UHF.

¹²⁹ Peter Charles Hoffer, *Past Imperfect: Facts, Fiction, Fraud—American History from Bancroft and Parkman to Ambrose, Bellesiles, Ellis, and Goodwin* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), 15.

CHAPTER 5

WHY DO UTAH'S STUDENTS SELECT THE TOPICS THAT THEY CHOOSE?

Introduction

Utah's students, grades four through twelve, choose topics every year in preparation to compete in the Utah History Fair and, hopefully, the Kenneth E. Behring National History Day Contest that demonstrate the power of the nation-state on the memory of students. This seems like an intuitive fit, especially when requirements in the Utah History Fair and National History Day require a meaning. The nation-state provides a meaning, as part of its function, and so does local memory. Students start thousands of projects annually, over ten thousand in the best years, for the Utah History Fair. Although many students fall out before the school contest, others are weeded out during a school contest, regional competition, and, finally, the state contest. All those students had to choose a topic in order to compete.

Student projects, when demonstrating why topics are selected, show the interplay of the communities of memory at the local and the nation-state levels.¹³⁰ Topics most often relate to the nation-state, as shown in Chapter 4, but the motives for selecting topics do not always affirm the nation-state. Instead, topics relate to the individuals or the clan or families' place within a community or the nation-state.¹³¹ Student religion is addressed through topic selection, as are activities of the student. For example, topics

¹³⁰ The words for the community can be interchangeable, reflecting the formal and the informal, etc.

¹³¹ I want to reiterate that supplying meaning or addressing "why" something is important can be difficult here.

based on music may form from the group of peers associated with the student, or the family of the student.

Topic Process

A requirement for all students competing in the Utah History Fair is the creation of a process paper, save the Historical Paper category. Process papers require students to discuss four pieces of information. Those are: 1) How the student(s) chose the topic, 2) How the student(s) conducted research, 3) Why the student(s) selected the category of presentation, and 4) How the project relates to the National History Day theme. Of the four areas required for the process paper, the first, or how the student(s) selected his, her, or their topic is of vital significance for this chapter.

Through the evaluation of 342 process papers, representing 546 students, from 2010-2012, a number that represents 14.39% of the total projects, the reasons for project selection become clear. Despite the propensity for students to select topics related to U.S. History (Chapter 4), students' projects give multiple reasons for why students choose the topics that they choose. Importantly, students commonly choose topics based on personal interests over family, teacher, Utah History Fair, or National History Day suggestions (Table 5.1).

The student project selection process presents ideas that both support the notion of a collective memory as well as more local, independent, and interdependent thought. Students rely on topics familiar to them to create projects, they choose topics based on preconceived interests, and, at times, students look to others for ideas. Students competing in the Utah History Fair choose topics based on interests, interests that, though reifying the nation-state at times, covers local, family, national, and international topics.

Table 5.1
Why Students Choose Topics
Categorical Breakdown

	Student Breakdown	Percent of Total
Sources	16.25	2.98%
Topic	121.75	22.30%
State	17.75	3.25%
Gender	8.75	1.60%
Personal Interest	137.75	25.23%
Family Suggestion	47.75	8.75%
Family Connection to Event	35.75	6.55%
Teacher Suggestion	23.50	4.30%
Community	12.50	2.29%
Current Event	11.75	2.15%
Part of Life	34.50	6.32%
Books	14.25	2.61%
TV Show	14.75	2.70%
Movie	16.00	2.93%
Vacation or Museum Visit	11.75	2.15%
NHD / UHF Lists	9.25	1.69%
Not Stated	12.00	2.20%

Sources: Utah History Fair Process Papers. Utah History Fair. Department of History. Utah State University

Regardless of the subject, students create topics based on what appeals to them, thereby exercising agency in the process of selecting topics.

Each of the 546 students represented by the 342 process papers received a point based on the category of project selection for which they qualified. That point could be broken down to $\frac{1}{4}$ of a point for any given category, and used in any configuration ($\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2}$ or 1) as long as the total equaled one. The categories for the student projects were based on the indications by the students. In total, student projects could fit into one, partitioned into combinations, of seventeen categories. Those categories are sources, topic, state history, gender, personal interest, family suggestion,

family connection to event, teacher suggestion, community, current events, part of life, books, TV shows, movies, vacations including museum visits, Utah History Fair or National History Day lists, or not stated.

Students receiving partial or whole points in the “sources” category selected topics based on the sources available. “Topic” students choose topics that related to the NHD theme through either brainstorming or looking through books, libraries, and/or the internet for topics that caught their attention. “State History” topics grew out of students’ desire to study Utah’s History, but those topics were not related to their community; “Community” projects covered that distinction.

Some students choose topics based on gender thus necessitating the “Gender” category. Some students used their own family history or influence for projects in the “Family Connection to Event” category, or they drew from their own experiences in the “Part of Life” category.

Students looked to different forms of media for information, denoted in the “Books,” “TV Show,” and “Movie” categories, while other looked strictly at the media, as part of the “Current Events” category. Some projects came about after the students visited the area or museum where an event occurred or where the artifacts were stored in the “Vacation” category.

Some students looked to others for ideas. Those students often looked towards teachers or family members or the Utah History Fair and National History Day possible topics lists for ideas, and landed in the “Family Suggestion,” “Teacher Suggestion,” and “UHF / NHD Lists” categories.

The largest numbers of students in this study choose topics that related to personal interests, demonstrating that some students exercise agency in project selection based on a prior knowledge of history in the creation of the “Personal Interest” category. Student interest is confirmed in the students’ process papers. In some cases “Personal Interest” included topics narrowed within a larger context of personal interest. For example, a student may settle on the Battle of Gettysburg after focusing on that specific event as part of an initial interest in the Civil War.

The Study

“Personal Interest” category topics made up the largest percentage of projects in the study. Over one quarter, 25.23% to be precise, of the reasons cited for the choice of topic reflected personal interest. “Personal Interest” topics came in a few forms. Some personal interest related to students’ desires for the future, some related to current interests in history, and others searched for answers. The students surveyed in the study showed dynamic reasons for interests in topics. Personal interest topics generally supported the nation-state, although a few came from the clan or family.

Some students choose topics related to “Personal Interest” based on what they would like to do in the future. McKinzie Robertson, a Junior Age Division participant, decided to create her project, “Women’s Nursing Innovations: Impact and Change” based on her interest in becoming a nurse. She wrote, “I chose Florence Nightingale and Clara Barton because when I grow up I want to be a special needs teacher just like them.”¹³²

¹³² McKinzie Robertson, “Women’s Nursing Innovations: Impact and Change.” Utah History Fair Process Papers, 2010, Utah History Fair, Department of History, Utah State University.

McKinzie seems to indicate a predilection for the nation-state with this project. The past provides a context for her future goals.

Others choose to create projects based on interests at the time. Emma Buckley, a Primary Age Division participant, chose to create a project based on Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart because she liked his music.¹³³ Junior Age Division contenders Adam King and Tristan Reeve centered their project on the camera. Both students liked using cameras and were interested in learning how the camera changed over time with their Group Web site in 2010.¹³⁴ Both students reaffirm the nation-state.

Jacob Bergquist sought to project his passion of the Constitution by creating a documentary titled, “The Innovation and Impact of the World’s Most Perfect Document: The U.S. Constitution.” In doing so, Jacob sought to use his personal interest to address a perceived lackadaisical approach to the Constitution by peers and elders in the present.

About the topic he wrote:

Many Americans live in ignorance of the strife that our ancestors lived through to give us the rights that we enjoy every day. I believe that it is impossible to truly understand how fortunate we are to have these rights without having lived in a country where liberty is suppressed and tyranny rampant. I chose my topic because I want to remind people of the privileges we own often because we are simply lucky enough to be born in America. We can merely study and try to put ourselves into the situation of those who fought for the liberties we enjoy in America today.¹³⁵

¹³³ Emma Buckley, “Mozart. How He Changed Music Forever.” UHFPP 2010

¹³⁴ Adam King and Tristan Reeve, “The Camera: Capturing a Moment.” UHFPP 2010

¹³⁵ Jacob Bergquist, “The Innovation and Impact of the World’s Most Perfect Document: The U.S. Constitution.” UHFPP 2010. This project also illustrates an empathy with the past, a trait that Wineburg believed was missing amongst grade school students, particularly the valedictorian in his study.

Jacob supports the nation-state through his topic. He demonstrates that the Constitution is part of his formal memory as it reflects the “privileges” he perceives from living in America.

Some students even translated the information from prior history classes into the current topics. Ashley Bluemel, Junior Age Division, learned about the Japanese Internment camps in Utah during her Utah History class. One year later she used the interest that the schooling had sparked to create her 2012 project, “Internment Camps and the Mass Relocation of Japanese-Americans: How America Reacted to Pearl Harbor.”¹³⁶ Janae Jayme and DaNell Rasmussen created their Senior Group Performance based on classroom information from the prior year. On selecting the topic for their project titled, “Elizabeth I vs. Mary Queen of Scots” the two wrote, “We became interested in the succession of British rulers last year in our history class, and decided to do our project on one of the many controversial points in the line of succession this year.”¹³⁷ Some of these topics can prove to be tricky, but most support the nation-state. The internment of Japanese Americans can potentially be a community related project.

One of the more interesting explanations of why a student choose the topic came from Senior Individual Documentary maker Jamie Jewkes who translated her experience with her family as Mountain Men re-enactors into a project about the Pony Express. Initially the cognitive link between Mountain Men and the Pony Express is not readily apparent, but it is there. During an annual Labor Day weekend rendezvous at Ft. Bridger in southwest Wyoming, Jamie watched, amongst the many events taking place, including

¹³⁶ Ashley Bluemel, “Internment Camps and the Mass Relocation of Japanese-Americans: How America Reacted to Pearl Harbor.” UHFPP 2012.

¹³⁷ Janae Jayme and DaNell Rasmussen, “Elizabeth I vs. Mary Queen of Scots.” UHFPP 2012.

spending the night at the fort, a Pony Express run, or relay, raced by random teammates. Jamie wrote, “While watching this for many years, I got to thinking about how mail transportation evolved over time.” Jamie’s documentary is an interesting combination of personal interest coupled with family vacations.¹³⁸ Jamie’s project shows the interrelation between memories as it relates to the community. Here, the nation-state is utilized to augment the community memory.

Finally, another group within the category picked topics based on things they were already familiar with. Sports related topics provide a reoccurring theme here. Students who enjoyed sports in the present, whether as fans or participants, expanded this interest to the past. Junior Age Division basketball aficionados Austin Gibson and Landon Lawrence created a project on sports, and consequentially integration, when they researched the Texas Western basketball squad that integrated Anglo and African American players.¹³⁹

Although a quarter of students chose topics based on interest, 22.30% of students approached the Utah History Fair annually without an idea of what they would study, as represented by the “Topic” category. This group illustrates that students can find great, mediocre, or horrible topics without understanding the context for the topic they choose. In researching a new topic, often under the guise of being unique, students found new areas of study. Although not every student states whether or not going in a new direction,

¹³⁸ Jamie Jewkes, “The Pony Express: An Idea, A Solution, An Evolution.” UHFPP 2010. The Pony Express was a popular topic during 2005’s “Communication in History” but has seldom been researched since then by students.

¹³⁹ Austin Gibson and Landon Lawrence, “Texas Western Reformed the NCAA by Integrating Basketball, Despite the Nation’s Reaction.” UHFPP 2012.

or even finding a topic, proved to be fruitful over the long run, some students did enjoy their foray into something new.

One of the better examples in the “Topic” category of someone finding something new belongs to Karsten Boettcher. Karsten created a Junior Web site in 2010 for teacher Kathryn Leany. Kathryn insists that her students create projects related to Utah History. Karsten initially thought of creating a project based on anything Utahn. He settled on creating a Junior Individual Website that ultimately placed at the State Contest that year on WordPerfect.¹⁴⁰ But, like the stories of progression, this story fits into the nation-state mold, unless one looks into the story behind WordPerfect’s founder, Bruce Bastion.¹⁴¹

Students like Jenny Gritton looked for topics that were unique to them. Jenny’s 2010 project dealt with peanut butter and how it influenced and changed agriculture.¹⁴² Other students simply looked for a topic that related to the theme. Phoebe Shephard and Natalie Hall created their Junior Group Exhibit, “Brown vs. Board of Education: The Debate that Ended Segregation” because it looked like the most interesting topic after searching online for Utah History Fair topics.¹⁴³ Sabrina Jex and Jadey Price searched online for topics at the library before settling on a topic dealing with child labor. They ultimately created a Junior Group Exhibit titled, “Child Labor: Debates that Protected Children at Work.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Karsten Boettcher, “Nearly Perfect.” UHFPP 2010.

¹⁴¹ I would argue that homosexual subjects are more community memory related, though parts of the communities’ memory is reshaping the nation-state narrative.

¹⁴² Jenny Gritton, “Peanut Butter: A Creamy Impact on the Future.” UHFPP 2010.

¹⁴³ Phoebe Shephard and Natalie Hall, “Brown vs. Board of Education: The Debate that Ended Segregation.” UHFPP 2011.

¹⁴⁴ Sabrina Jex and Jadey Price, “Child Labor: Debates that Protected Children at Work.” UHFPP 2011.

In at least one instance students messed up in understanding the historical context for their topic, a possible pitfall for any Utah History Fair project, but especially those for students in the “Topic” category. Two students used a nation-state story to create a Junior Group Performance titled, “America’s Hysterical Reaction to the Second Red Scare.” The students selected the topic after looking at various ideas. They wrote, “When we first started researching possible topic ideas, we came across the Industrial Revolution. This revolution was sparked by Marxism who invented the idea of Communism. Realizing that this topic needed to be narrowed down, we decided upon Communism in America which ultimately led to the Second Red Scare.”¹⁴⁵

One of the more descriptive combinations of “Topic” and “Personal Interest,” in this case justified because the student was interested in a broad swath of history, came from “The Reaction of the Peasants’ Revolt of 1391” by Madison Schaerr in her Junior Individual Performance. On choosing the topic she wrote:

The choice of my topic was fairly easy. I wanted something in Medieval England, perhaps around the time of the Black Death. I chose an event in this era because the atmosphere of it had a dark sort of appeal to hold my interest, and it seemed like a solid start to search for a topic that fit with the theme seeing that its lower class was treated so poorly. It’s the perfect setting for some form of revolution to take place.¹⁴⁶

Perhaps one of the more interesting and telling descriptions of why a student chose his project came from Senior Individual Documentary participant Shaun Smith. Shaun stated, “This is my third year participating in the Utah History Fair. I have come to find that I enjoy creating a project most when my topic is something that I know little

¹⁴⁵ Eli Bailey and Lydia Waterman, “America’s Hysterical Reaction to the Second Red Scare.” UHFPP 2012.

¹⁴⁶ Madison Schaerr, “The Reaction of the Peasants’ Revolt of 1391.” UHFPP 2012.

or nothing about.” Shaun turned his desire to learn about something new into a project about Upton Sinclair’s *Jungle* and the meatpacking industry.¹⁴⁷ The *Jungle* is an interesting topic as it is one that challenged the nation-state narrative prior to becoming part of the nation-state narrative.

Finding both primary and secondary sources is important to the creation of Utah History Fair projects. Students in all categories are judged partially on the use of primary and secondary sources. In total, 2.98% of students looked for topics with available and easily researchable sources.

Although some students picked their topic after randomly searching online, a few, 1.69% total, found their topic through suggested topics provided by National History Day and the Utah History Fair. Both organizations publish lists annually. The Utah History Fair supplies topics related to Utah’s history.

Teachers and Family members both provided ideas for student research, but only to a small degree, 4.30% and 8.75% respectively. Those low percentages, comprised of partial and full points scored, suggest that students take their parents, teachers, and other family members into consideration, but ultimately pick topics that suit their interests.

A small amount of students, 3.25%, decided to create projects based on Utah’s past as represented in the “State” category. An even smaller percentage, 2.29%, chose topics based on their community in the “Community” category. Not surprisingly some students, 6.55%, looked into their own family histories or “Family Connection to Event” for topics. This is not exceptional for the public as it relates to the past. David Glassberg

¹⁴⁷ Shaun Smith, “The Secrets of the *Jungle*” Upton Sinclair’s Impact and on a Nation’s Food.” UHFPP 2010.

found that 33% of people writing letters to Ken Burns regarding Burns' documentary *The Civil War* did so because they had family connections to the Civil War.¹⁴⁸ Some of the family connection topics had local appeal, others reached well beyond Utah's borders. Anh Cho "grew up with stories of the escapes of refugees," stories that influenced the creation of her Junior Group Documentary, "Reaction to Communism: Refugees in Vietnam." The stories comprising the project were personal as "These stories were her parents, grandparents, aunt, or uncles."¹⁴⁹ Jeremy Dawson used his brother who had served in Afghanistan as a source and a provider of sources for his Junior Individual Documentary, "A Revolution in Modern Warfare: The Apache Helicopter."¹⁵⁰ Both are excellent examples of larger events that include individuals related to the students. As such, these are two great examples of the community memory interacting with the nation-state.

Still others blended "Family Connection to Event" with "Current Events," 2.15% of total, to inspire topics. Brothers Johnathon and Corey Stock created one of many projects related to the atomic bomb. Their Senior Group Documentary, "Debating the Bomb: Diplomatic Success vs. Ethical Failure," critiqued the creation, testing, and use of the atomic bomb. In doing so the brothers utilized some of the current events surrounding the project. In selecting the topic they wrote:

We chose this topic because we felt that the use of the Atom Bomb is one of the great debates of the 20th Century and the debate goes on today. Here in Utah we have had a lot of terrible experiences with radiation clouds coming downwind

¹⁴⁸ David Glassberg, "Public History and the Study of Memory," *The Public Historian* 18 (Spring 1996), 17. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3377910> Accessed 9/4/2012.

¹⁴⁹ Anh Cao and Nick Santa Ana, "Reaction to Communism: Refugees in Vietnam." UHFPP 2012.

¹⁵⁰ Jeremy Dawson, "A Revolution in Modern Warfare: The Apache Helicopter." UHFPP 2012.

from the atomic testing in Nevada. Our mom is one of those affected with cancer because of this atomic testing. So the project is personal to us.¹⁵¹

The Stock brothers were not the only students to look at the adverse effects of the atomic bomb in their project. Carson McFadden's Junior Individual Exhibit titled, "Atomic Testing vs. The Downwinders: An Explosive Debate" looked at the pros and cons of atomic testing. Ultimately Carson took this project to the Kenneth E. Behring National History Day Contest in 2011. Carson also exhibited the project at the Smithsonian National Museum on American History while in D.C. during the national contest. As part of his process paper Carson said, "Both of my great grandmas, my grandmas, and my aunt are all Downwinders, so it shouldn't be hard to guess why I chose this topic."¹⁵² Both Downwinder projects are great examples of the interplay of family within the community. The community as at odds with nuclear testing, as a nation-state story of progress; the community memory shows the problem of progress within the nation-state.

Some students used Utah History Fair projects to explore their ethnicity as part of the "Family Connection to the Past Category" in an area where it blended with "Part of Life." "The reason I chose the Indian Removal Act to be my NHD project for 2011," wrote Bryce Hammonds, "is because I am a descendant of the Creek tribe on my mother's side of the family, and our family history is woven with stories about my Native

¹⁵¹ Johnathon and Corey Stock, "Debating the Bomb: Diplomatic Success vs. Ethical Failure," UHFPP 2011.

¹⁵² Carson McFadden, "Atomic Testing vs. The Downwinders: An Explosive Debate." UHFPP 2011. I selected Carson's project for display at the Smithsonian after judges chose his project as a winner during the 30th Annual Utah State History Fair Contest. I also spoke with Carson after the Southwest Region History Fair in 2011 at his behest about ways to improve his project. Interestingly, Carson, though presenting a balanced approach to his project, concluded that the U.S. government operated in disregard of citizens. This contentious attitude towards the government created tension with his mother.

American heritage.”¹⁵³ Another student, unnamed in the project, prompted the members of her group, they were all female, to create a documentary titled, “A New Kind of Orphan.” In the process paper, the student claims, “When I was thirteen I was adopted and have sense (sic) taken notice of the adoption systems in the U.S.”¹⁵⁴ Both show the community memory leading towards a larger historical understanding.

While some students explored their ethnicity and others explored their local or family histories, a few students selected projects because of gender necessitating the need for a “Gender” category. “Gender” only accounted for 1.6% of the projects, but it is essential to understand that gender is important to the decision of what facet of history to study. One of the more forthright decisions to base a project on gender came from Sara Davis with her Junior Individual Performance on Amelia Earhart. Her reasons for studying Earhart were simple. Sara explained, “I wanted a female, considering males are always hogging the history spotlight and ladies are really great at making an innovation in history.”¹⁵⁵ Others females were a little less blunt but equally effusive.

“The 19th Amendment: The Successful Result of 72 Years of Diplomacy and Debate to Gain the Vote for Women,” a Junior Individual Documentary by Katherine Luque, is an example of the “Gender” category agency in action. Katherine’s interest in women’s history seemed to have longstanding roots, at least as her process paper statement applies. Katherine expounded that “This topic has always been interesting to me because of how it affects my right to vote. I am very glad I chose this topic because I

¹⁵³ Bryce Hammonds, “The Indian Removal Act of 1830 and its Consequential Failures.” UHFPP 2011.

¹⁵⁴ Anika Feller, Brittney Walden, Sierra Edwards, and Sarah Novotne, “A New Kind of Orphan.” UHFPP 2011.

¹⁵⁵ Sara Davis, “Amelia Earhart: The One and Only.” UHFPP 2010.

have loved learning and becoming an expert on woman's vote." Katherine goes on to claim, "I have infinite respect for brave women, particularly Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton and everything they sacrificed to benefit the women today."¹⁵⁶ Another young woman, Junior Age Division participant Savannah Molloy generated a project titled, "The Path of Ladies' Rights: From the Impact of the Declaration of Sentiments to the Innovation of the 19th Century." Savannah's passion for the topic resulted in her writing, "I even wished I had reason to care about something and show the world like they did. I chose to do this topic, so that I can still show everyone around me just how amazing women can be, and that change really can make things better."¹⁵⁷ The "Gender" category generally shared points with personal interest.

These young women highlight some of the search for identity within the nation-state in how they use the past. Perhaps some community memory is at play here as well.

The "Part of Life" category indicates topic selections displaying that students create topics related to the world around them. Some students, 2.15%, used family vacations and visits to museums as reasons for examining a topic in further detail. Still other students used books, T.V. shows, and movies, 2.61%, 2.70%, and 2.93% respectively, for reasons to create topics. The movie about British abolition of slavery, *Amazing Grace*, graced some of the process papers, as did "documentaries" airing on the History Channel or documentaries on Public Television. One student even quipped that "It all started with a late night documentary watched by my insomniac mother" when it

¹⁵⁶ Katherine Luque, "The 19th Amendment: The Successful Result of 72 Years of Diplomacy and Debate to Gain the Vote for Women." UHFPP 2011.

¹⁵⁷ Savannah Molloy, "The Path of Ladies' Rights: From the Impact of the Declaration of Sentiments to the Innovation of the 19th Century." UHFPP 2011.

came to the selection of her topic.¹⁵⁸ The numbers are rather small individually, but taken together the numbers show a broader influence of everyday life, television, and movies on the student.

Conclusion

Students cited various reasons for choosing the topics that they choose in the Utah History Fair. Students choose topics that they related to, captured their interest, or was part of their everyday life more commonly than not. When categories that imply personal interest and personal connection to the topics (State, Gender, Personal Interest, Family Connection, Community, Current Event, Part of Life, Books, T.V. Shows, Movie, and Vacation and Museum) is added, 57.78% of students select topics related to those interests. On the other hand, projects that are settled upon through going through lists, conducting a small amount of research, or topics that are suggested by family and teachers (Topic, Family, Teacher, NHD/UHF Lists, and Sources) account for 40.12% of the students in the survey. Those students without stated reasons account for 2.18% of the survey. It is good to see students creating projects based on topics that are interesting to them.

Even the topics that demonstrate an outside influence or lack of prior knowledge is important. The 40.02% of students without prior interest indicates that students need help in determining what topics to choose. It is hard to believe that out of all the events presented in the classroom, nothing evokes the curiosity for further examination amongst 40.02% of students.

¹⁵⁸ Sala Farris, "People or Paintings? Rose Valand's Diplomatic Actions to Conserve Culture." UHFPP 2011.

Conversely, would the overall quality of projects increase if more students knew about different aspects of history? Although many projects examine family history or use personal connections to the past in order to facilitate the selection of a topic, many students are looking at topics that capture their attention. It is good for students to explore topics that capture their interests, but some of the topics are stale. As indicated in Chapter 4, projects on topics like the Salem Witch Trials, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Amelia Earhart, and so on. Interestingly, topics that are drilled into kids, like the Mayflower, Pilgrims, and Christopher Columbus, did not show up in the records.

When looking at Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 together, the emerging picture becomes more apparent. Students use the topics supplied by the nation-state. In many, if not most circumstance, students parrot the memory of the nation for their topics. This national memory does change over time as various groups assume power. Chapter 5 shows that even within that nation-state framework, many students relate to the past for personal or familial reasons. Students use history to help understand the world around them, as interaction within the memories of the community and the nation-state.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

During the 1990s historians Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen conducted a nationwide study of how adults utilized and related to the past. The National Endowment for the Humanities funded the study. Rosenzweig and Thelen published their findings in *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*.¹⁵⁹ The idea for the study emerged during a meeting in Indiana as historians tried to find ways to relate to people more effectively, and to find out what people knew about the past.¹⁶⁰ Unlike Michael Frisch's in-class surveys, Rosenzweig and Thelen found that most people experienced the past as it related to their own family or lives. It should be noted that Frisch asked his students about historical figure prior to the Civil War.¹⁶¹

The adults surveyed through Rosenzweig and Thelen's survey used the past to interact or understand their hobbies, establish a better picture of their medical history via their families' ailments, and to understand their own ethnicity. Interestingly, those polled looked to days of historical remembrance, holidays like Independence Day, to spend time with the family.¹⁶² Rather than being advocates of the nation-state, those surveyed seemed to remember the past through their various communities of memory. The authors wrote, "Our respondents did not share historians' assumption about the nation-state. When forced to say whether the past of their family or the past of the United States was

¹⁵⁹ Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen. *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

¹⁶⁰ Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 1-5.

¹⁶¹ Frisch, *A Shared Authority*, 34-37.

¹⁶² Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 42-46.

most important to them, American's chose family history more than three times as often as their country's history."¹⁶³ What Rosenzweig and Thelen did not discuss, however, is how comfortable the respondents were with the less than flattering events of nation-state. Despite this, the respondents did look at the uncomfortable aspects of history that related to their family's or their own past. Such issues included ethnic, racial, or sexual identities.¹⁶⁴

Criticism of the nation-state did show a little through the work of those surveyed by Rosenzweig and Thelen. The respondents felt that the history taught in the classrooms did not provide inspiration. Instead, in the words of the authors, "The source of alienation appeared to lie in the structure and content of the (history) classes."¹⁶⁵ Teachers were not the source of this derision.

Tackling and criticizing the content and/or textbooks for history coursework is not an unusual or even unique endeavor. James Loewen has proven effective in arguing on behalf of items left out of history textbooks. Sam Wineburg questioned the authoritative voice of textbooks. Peter Hoffer examined the differences between the work of historians and the work of popular historians.¹⁶⁶ The struggles of history across the battlefield of the 1990s in areas like the National Standards for History, between historians as well as historians and politicians, and the Smithsonian's Enola Gay Exhibit demonstrate the volatility of the past as it interacts with memory; memory here being that of the nation-state. The problems with history seem on-going and rooted in its own past. Even though

¹⁶³ Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 123-124.

¹⁶⁴ Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 115-123.

¹⁶⁵ Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 109.

¹⁶⁶ James Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* (New York: Touchstone, 1995. Reprint, New York, 2007); Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*; Peter Hoffer, *Past Imperfect*.

the creation of National History Day and the Utah History Fair came about in attempts to rectify the perceived loss of history during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, those programs did not curtail the continued historical difficulties of the 1990s.

The roots of personal relationships to history should not be overlooked. As Carl Becker surmised in his often cited presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1931, “Everyman His Own Historian,” the tools of the historical trade are somewhat innate, albeit rudimentary, amongst those without historical training. Becker’s protagonist for relaying the process of history uses his own records in order to track the purchase of coal. Despite this inherent ability for everyman or everyone to be a historian, Becker could not overlook the discord of history, a conflict that can only emerge in controversy or at least disappointment. Becker posited that, “Let us admit that there are two histories: the actual series of events that once occurred; and the ideal series that we affirm and hold in memory.”¹⁶⁷ Where did that “ideal series” come from? Why does it hold so much sway? The answer must reside in the changing dichotomy of the nation-state narrative. Historians may not be the victors in the struggle against the prevailing narrative; Rosenzweig and Thelen found this through their survey even though historians can act as agents for change. David Glassberg asserts, “Even a casual look at how a ‘collective’ historical representation is created reveals struggles between competing groups over the definition of the public and its history.”¹⁶⁸ Essentially hegemony over

¹⁶⁷ Carl Becker, “Everyman His Own Historian,” *American Historical Review* 37 (Jan. 1932), 221-236. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1838208> (accessed 11 August 2012).

¹⁶⁸ David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 2.

the narrative reflects the power of those who create the narrative. In many ways, historians are powerless in public.

One facet of being a professional historian constitutes ownership over the topic at hand. Historians delve into books related to their topics, scour primary sources, integrate theory as it relates to an understanding of the topic, and provide fresh takes on sometimes stale, other times original aspects of research. This ownership matriculates through the historiography given to subjects of the past, only to be reinterpreted, debated, and once again divulged for a new generation of scholars or in conversation with contemporary scholars. Everyday Americans do not engage in this sort of historical practice typically.

National History Day and Utah History Fair participants, by contrast, create projects within a finite amount of presentation space based on a selected topic.¹⁶⁹ The selection of a topic denotes a sense of ownership over the selected subject of the past. The various reasons for the topics selected, as highlighted in Chapter 4, lend its support of this argument for ownership amongst most Utah History Fair participants. Within this ownership of topics, as Chapter 3 indicates, most students will to create projects related to the past of the United State of America vs. all other areas combined. It is reasonable to state that student Utah History Fair projects reinforce the notion of the nation-state whether or not the student argues on behalf of the nation-state.

Students take ownership of the U.S. History that they learn in the classroom when they apply their knowledge through Utah History Fair projects. The motives for this do not denote blind obedience for the nation-state narrative; students do, after all, have

¹⁶⁹ Students have a limited amount of wording for presentation in the Exhibit, Website, and Historical Paper categories while those creating a Documentary or Performance must conform to a ten minute time limit.

agency to change the nation-state narrative. Instead, communities can interact with the nation-state. Students utilize these communities of memory to help address the world around them. The previous example of Jenica Jenkins from the Uintah Basin helps to illustrate this point. Jenica researched the Colorado River Compact for her Utah History Fair project based on questions related to irrigating her family's alfalfa crop. Even more removed from the nation-state are projects like Carson McFadden's examination of Downwinders, a consequence of nuclear testing. His research included the lives of family and community affected by the nuclear testing. Despite this, other students profess empathy for the past of the nation-state as Jason Bergquist did for his project on the Constitution.¹⁷⁰

The establishment of ownership on a topic does not mean a project will win in a Utah History Fair or National History Day competition. Students must be able to fulfill the requirements of judging to a judge's satisfaction. Most aspects of the judging process are straightforward and can easily translate to the grade school or university history classroom. One of the greater challenges remaining for Utah History Fair contestants is to provide sound historical context.¹⁷¹ In a very limited sense, historical context explains to a reviewer the events that preceded and influenced the event or events of the topic. Topics related to the nation-state are easier to provide a relatable historical context than topics based on local history.

¹⁷⁰ Sam Wineburg encourages people to display empathy towards the past, but laments that grade school students do not do so. Many Utah History Fair participants do, indeed, demonstrate empathy towards the past, or participants in events of the past. It is prominently displayed by girls when researching women who played significant roles in the creation of women's rights.

¹⁷¹ This assertion is based on personal observation of multiple regional, state, and national contests from 2005 through 2013. Kids nationwide need to improve the historical context for their projects.

The nation-states' history is examined nationwide; the history becomes the common memory and therefore the shared language of most citizens. This is not a universal equation of course; there are those who did not pay attention in history class. The local history topics becomes less relatable the farther one gets from the location of the event, as a generalization and excepting professional and amateur historians. Also excluded is the local history that becomes part of the nation-state narrative. Topics like the Transcontinental Railroad are applicable here. The challenge for local history, that shared by the community's memory, resides in the ability of the student to communicate the importance of the local topic applicable and germane to someone unfamiliar with a specific community's past. Incidentally, this communication is created by the use shared words and symbols from the nation-state through thematic ideas and/or analogous stories. Furthermore, comparisons can be made between local events and the nation-state. The nation-state is validated as a tool for communication across state lines.

The proclivity for students to create nation-state related topics makes the task of creating historical context less daunting and, presumably, more competitive than local history topics. The memory of a community seems to lose, at least through adolescence, to the nation-state. The memory espoused by the nation-state is pervasive as well. Students arguing against a popular topic in U.S. History must acknowledge the nation-state through historical context and through the event in order to debate about the events that transpired. Doing so affirms part of the status of the nation-state. Additionally, students discussing topics based in their community need to use the nation-state to make their topic more comprehensible where memories do not collude. Historical context and the memory of the nation-state are intertwined throughout the various communities, for

better or for worse, in terms of Utah History Fair projects. Students learn this context daily in the history classroom; the context gets a real application through their History Fair project.

Utah students have demonstrated a willingness to interact with the past through the Utah History Fair since 1980. Throughout the span of its short history, successive Utah History Fair directors have brought an additional means of interacting with the past to classrooms around Utah as an extra-curricular activity to augment the history coursework already being done. The program was partially created to assuage the disharmony perceived by historians to be taking place in the history classroom. Where textbooks and lectures failed to a sense of ownership for a historical topic, the Utah History Fair has successfully promoted a stronger understanding of the past through student selected topics.

Students look at topics for multiple reasons. Some topics are in affirmation of the nation-state, others against the nation-state, and still others are much more focused on the community. Students' interests vary from race to ethnicity to technology to political history and so on. Their knowledge extends beyond the classroom and into the home, family, community, media, and the world at large. These students need to continue to be pushed to find new topics and new resources, and to find ways to more successfully bring the memory of the community into the nation-state narrative. The Utah History Fair can continue to promote this change. The topics creating this change can be created, but the students can proceed to select those topics that they enjoy to research. The communities of memory will expand and contract, but they can continue to be relatable through the

common language of the nation-state, and the research of those willing to challenge the dominant narrative.

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