Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION
Understanding of history, both as an academic discipline and as a social phenomenon is a complex process, about which not much is known. The psychology of historical understanding and its development is a significant area of study with social and educational implications. It has been observed (Dixit & Mohanty, 2009) that historical understanding is not a unitary process; rather it is a cluster of various mental processes which follow somewhat divergent patterns of development. In the past decades researchers in this area have focused on finding out improved methods of teaching history to enhance its understanding (Paxton, 1997; Rouet, Britt, Manson & Prfetti, 1996; Wiley & Voss, 1999; Wineburg, 1991). Such an endeavor has yielded a good amount of data about the correlates of HU. However, as it will be shown later, a vast territory of HU still remains unexplored.

This study was an attempt to explore the HU of two sub-cultural groups- Santali (Tribal) and another Non-tribal group. In order to explore the HU in detail two studies were undertaken. Study I aimed at tracing the developmental pattern of the Historical understanding in children between 9- to 14- years of age, and comparing the same for the children of Santali and non-tribal community. A second study was undertaken to understand HU of Santali adults. Thus, in order to study the understanding of history and its cultural roots; the HU of children of two sub-cultural groups and the Santali adults' HU was explored. Since the present work deals with the psychological processes involved in understanding of history, it is necessary to understand the nature of history.
1.1 What Is History

History studies issues about human actions, events and societies in past. In simple terms history is the study of human action done in the past. Based on the area of human endeavor it deals with various conceptions and subsections of history; history of science, history of arts, and history of music etc. Apart from dealing with various sections of human life, there are various ways in which history of any sub-section can be approached. History can be described in form of a simple story or it may include serious speculation about events and human actions. It ranges from telling a simple story to answering a complex array of questions about human experiences and endeavors. There are many schools of thoughts and philosophies regarding the subject matter and methodology of history. Each of the philosophies and subsections of history has its own rules, objectives and vocabularies. Any attempt to introduce the whole debate on the content of history or to provide any conclusion for such debates is out of scope for the present discussion. Rather, the attempt here is to give a brief introduction to history as a school subject and an academic discipline. In doing so it has been a consideration to bring out those features of history which are crucial at school level, and operationalisable or assessable at the same time.

History of any society is described in many forms such as, chronicles, annals, discourse or narratives. To determine the idea or content of history, it is important to consider the various forms and determine the form in which it is accepted in this study. Chronicles and annals are collection of facts about when, what and where, of historical events. Discourse is a form of history in which events of history are discussed, without any attempt to
connect the events in sequential and chronological order; while a narrative form of
text of history does so with a proper sequence and order in the events. These two are the most
accepted forms of history. And eventually there are disagreements among the scholars
about the form in which to accept the subject matter of history.

1.1.1. History as Narrative or Discourse:
A narrative form of history presents its events in a story like outline with a beginning,
middle and end structure. Historical works of mostly all kinds involve, or presume a
narrative which provides base for other forms of history. One can not write a discourse
about history without assuming a story like outline of it. However, many scholars do not
agree with this view on history. They argue that there are many haphazard events and
elements, side by side that if one imposes a structure upon it, one is likely to miss many
facts and factors. One may end up not being able to give proper representation of all the
events or dimensions. Many historians disagree with the stand that life events exhibit a
story like structure like (Braudel, 1980; Mink, 1978; White, 1981).
Certainly human actions do form a meaningless sequence. Life often portrays random
events which do not have any connection or sequence. However, there are still forms of
sequence and structures portrayed in life and its events. It does not mean that history
takes a form of story, if narrated in that manner as some of the scholars assert. The level
of freedom which a writer enjoys in writing a fictious story is not the same as enjoyed by
a historian. All historical propositions must manifest a base of evidence, i.e. it must deal
with events that can be shown to have actually happened at roughly assignable dates and
places. Thus, history presented in a narrative form will not necessarily associate with a story or fiction.

Moreover, history deals with content that is the irreversible time structure, to make it comprehensible it needs to be presented in a continuous manner, the manner in which time itself moves. Narrative seems to be the device which reflects time structure, Mink (1978), though he does not approve the narrative structure of history, assumes that it is a "mode of comprehension" and a "cognitive instrument" (p.145). The advantage with the narrative form of history is that it makes history more followable, by showing its interconnectedness with other relevant historical evidences and results. In an attempt to show the usefulness of narratives in HU VanSledgright & Brophy (1992) did a study with class 5th children and suggested that teaching of history is helped by narrative or story like format (discussed in detail on page 36). It should be well connected with the broader historical context. History's narrative structure accords with children's story telling experiences. Thus, though it is not the only accepted form of history, it seems legitimate to follow the narrative form at the elementary level in schools. Moreover, this is the form of history that is already presented in our history text books. Thus, for the present study narrative form of history is the accepted structure of History.

Following are the major features of History:

1.1.2. History as study of past:

All historical studies deal with the time past. Any sort of historical enquiry requires determining the time period to be studied; choosing and excluding the events according
to their time periods. A strict adherence to chronology differentiates history from fantasy and story as well as other social sciences, specially sociology and anthropology.

The time lengths chosen for a historical study can vary to the choice of historian. For example, one may choose a long or a short time span to study, but it does not follow that one can skip the alternative time spans. In other words, historical events are interwoven with each other in a continuous series. Choosing a particular time duration does not mean that the succeeding and preceding events from the particular time length are to be ignored. Every unit of time is crucial for the study of history, as Braudel (1980) puts it; “The only error would be to choose one of these histories to the exclusion of others” (p.34). Study of time is an integral part of studying history. The study of time can be said to be defining features of history. Therefore, when one starts pondering over the subject matter of history the time dimension of it is first to be acknowledged.

1.1.3. History as a study of social dynamics:

History is a study of society; its events and their characteristics. It is concerned with human actions, events and their causes. These events in any society are characterized by their complex patterns and their interconnected sequence. While analyzing a society, historians try to explore the manner in which longstanding interest, disinterests and needs of various groups have contributed in the eventual incidence. As Kumar (2001) says, “It deals with society... it also deals with succession of events which both marked and caused changes in the way people lived and behaved then” (p. 24). There are many antecedents, causes and related factors which lead to an eventual action or event. Therefore, its analysis requires investigation of nearly all the aspects of human and social
life. Any incident, which takes place, is not just consequence of its immediate antecedents, rather many distant and implicit factors collaborate to lead to the eventual incidence. Some factors may be more directly related while others are indirectly related to an event. For example a war between two states is not a result of sudden disagreement over some issue, rather it may be an outcome of their previous bilateral relation, their enduring interests or disinterest, their complexes and/or prejudices against each other. Therefore, investigation and imagination of various possible causes and explanations of past events is one of the main aspects of history.

1.1.4. Patterns in the events of history:

Historians often explain what happened or what was done as a characteristic of a time period, society, or an institution. Although a particular incidence involving a particular time, place and people will never occur again; however it is possible to use generalizations like war, peace, state crowd etc., for such happenings and phenomena. Though, the scope of such explanations is limited in time and space but one brings things under generalizations by observing the sequence and patterns of events and drawing the general communality and characteristic similarity among the events.

A historian studies the series of actions in order to trace out the way they are connected and which show a pattern of continuity, and/or change. One has to draw information from the sources; knit the web of ideas about the phenomena under study and draw connections out of it to find the patterns of continuations and changes over time. Historians have to find out common or distinct elements of events at different times in order to find out the elements that have changed and that have continued during that
period. For example, if one is looking into the social structure of a society, one has to find out 'how' and 'what' was the structure of that particular society at different points of time. To find out the changes over a period of time one will locate the elements of the social structure which have lasted all through and the one which have diminished. One may also locate the characteristics of a society that have changed its forms but have survived through the time. Thus there are various possibilities in locating the patterns in the events of a society.

It is often said that 'history repeats itself'. This saying does not mean that the same event will occur again; rather it means that some events or phenomena happen together. On the basis of study of such patterns and regularities, historians can speculate over the preset and future events also. This is what makes historical study relevant for present that events that have occurred in past in a particular socio-cultural and economical situation; given the similar conditions, the situations and the events may take more or less the same form again.

1.1.5. History as involving various methods of investigations:

There are various methods by which historians get informed about historical events and situations. The approaches taken by historians for the analysis of the historical affairs differs, somewhat, from other social sciences. While analyzing history, they may have to use primary or secondary resources and /or imagine the situations of past to gather information about past. The following are the various sources of information and analysis about historical events:
A) The empirical sources of historical analysis: While reconstructing the past, historians use various sources to inform their study. They are roughly of two types of sources of information about history, primary and secondary resources. Primary sources include artifacts, objects and monuments etc. which are directly linked with the event or person under study. They may give accurate information regarding the event or the person. However, primary sources are very often not complete regarding the information they provide. They require to work upon them and to infer information about the event or issue under investigation. Moreover, it is also important to know what others have thought and analyzed about these primary resources (if it has been previously investigated). In doing so, secondary resources can be a great help. Secondary resources include books, periodicals, diaries and any other second hand information which deals with the subject of study.

Both of these sources have their own advantages and disadvantages. Overuse of any of these sources may distort the historical analysis. If one uses only primary resources, s/he may end up giving an idiosyncratic picture of past which no one else may agree with. On the other hand with the overuse of secondary resources, one may be caught in the subjective biases or prejudices of the other authors. Therefore, historians have to keep a balance between these two sources. While reconstructing history they have to recognize the significances of these methods and give them proper representation at due places.

B) Imagination in historical analysis: Imagination is one of the main tools by which historians reconstruct, narrate and understand past. As discussed above, most of the time historians get primary resources unexplained. They have to compile and organize
facts. Since facts and artifacts are not complete in themselves, they require imagining the time situation and the whole setting of the past. Historical facts also require interpretation of their causes and their interrelationships. In doing so, historians have to envisage the conditions and possibilities of the happenings in past. There are many other situations in historical analysis where historians need to take help of imagination; for example, for drawing inferences, for understanding the mental frame of the people in past and for understanding the values and ethos of the societies in past, and so on. To analyze and appreciate historical situations effectively, historians as well as the readers of history take help of imagination. Historians imagine about the people and events in the past, while the readers envisage the minds of historian as well as the narration. As Carr (1961) presents that “past is dead but it is still alive in the minds of historian. He must reenact the thought that might have gone in the minds of people in past, and reader in turn must reenact what goes in the mind of historian” (p. 23).

While analyzing any past situation historians have to engage in the past time. They have to traverse the time between them and the past. At the same time, they have to consider the differences between present time against the historical time and the layers of changes that have covered the issue since that time and now. While keeping all these in mind historians have to describe and analyze the historical issues in the context of their own time.

However, it is not possible to reenact the exact thought of a person whom we have not seen or met. Even if we are told to reenact our own thoughts, of 15-20 years back it would be difficult. The best one can do is to remember some of the behaviors at that
point of time in one's life and some of the feelings which were prominent at that time. But it is not easy to repeat the exact feelings in one's mind. It should be even tougher to do so for a person in distant past. However, it is possible and desirable for a fair analysis of any action to guess the mindsets of the people by inferring their thoughts and keeping oneself at their position. Imagination helps in doing these exercises. It enables a person to imagine the past setting and mental frameworks of people in past.

There are many situations in historical analysis in which imagination is the main tool to be used. As discussed above, imagination is a part and parcel of the historical investigation not only because the primary sources are to be explained by that but also for envisaging all the happenings, their causes and the minds of people.

C) Perspective Taking: Reading or rewriting history many times involves making judgments regarding the actions or values of a person/society. Historical explanations in this way are susceptible to personal inclinations of the historians. The values and ideals of a society are rooted in the historical conditions of that place and time. The readers or writers of history have to recognize these condition and values, while making judgments and analysis. In such times, historians have to refrain themselves from imposing their own judgments or standards in judging the thoughts of a person or a group. At the same time they have not to be biased by looking at only one sided view about the event under study. To get a detailed idea of the past, one has to enter into the time frame yet one has to keep himself detached from the whole analysis. This is a dual task which historians engage in. It is a practice in which the readers/writers have to imagine the situation and
not get entrapped in it, so that they can view the various sides of a story and consider them together.

**1.1.6. Historical Facts and the Historian:**

As Barthes (1997) says, “A historian is not so much a collector of facts... he organizes them with the purpose of establishing positive meaning and filling the vacuum in a pure, meaningless series” (p. 121). Historical events and evidences, which have gaps in them, need to be explained. Very often, it requires narrators and the readers to take into account the minds, expectation and motive of the agent (the person who initiated the historical event) as well the people around the agent. All this is done with the historians’ judgment, analysis, and choice. Thus, while analysis such an action historians may impose their idiosyncratic judgment on them. In this way, reconstruction of past is an outcome of empirical evidence together with historian’s mind. As Carr (1961) suggests; “Study the historian before you begin to study his facts” (pp.23). The selection of evidences as well as interpretation depends upon historians. At the same time what interpretation historians are going to give depends upon evidences that are available. Historical facts when they come to us are processed by the historian beforehand. As has been suggested history is what the historian experiences (Collingwood, 1945). One needs to consider the socio-cultural background of the historian. Historical reconstruction is not only influenced by the time period it deals in but also the needs and the pressures of the historian’s own time.

This is a brief account of what a historical enquiry consists of. It is a study of past events, actions and societies. In a historical enquiry, historians try to explain events by seeking
their causes and aftereffects. Sometimes they would seek for the regularities in the events or behaviors, in order to establish some generalizations regarding them. Historians use various methods, approaches and sources in analyzing historical situations. Historians have a job of imagining, describing and analyzing the past situation while taking the perspective of the society and people of that time. While doing so they also have to refrain themselves from being swayed by different views of the people in the past and have to understand it in the present context. There are number of definitions of history. In the present discussion, the attempt has been to bring out those aspects of history which are relevant for children at school level. So far as the current discussion goes it may be concluded that, 'History is a study of issues related to human life and society, in past. Besides locating events in time a historian tries to seek explanations, causes and connections of events/action by following certain methods like direct investigation of facts / evidences, imagination and analysis.' 

This is a tentative definition of history which is guided by the so called 'mainstream and academicians' writings on history. Acknowledging this definition does not mean exclusion of any other notion of history. Since the present study was an attempt towards assessing the notions of history and the way its understanding is shaped in different cultures, it is open to any other form of history which might be present in the folk knowledge system. However, 'history' has certain characteristic features to be called so. It must be a process of enquiry into past events related to human life and society, which incorporates appreciation of matters, related to human life and society.
1.2. Knowledge of History versus Understanding of History

Understanding of history is appreciation of all the elements of history and processes through which it is reconstructed. In order to explain the meaning of historical understanding it is required to differentiate between historical understanding and historical knowledge.

Knowledge of history would refer to the access and ability to reproduce whatever is there in the memory, i.e. historical dates, fact and ideas etc. while understanding would refer to the cognitive ability to process and make use of conveyed knowledge / information.

For example, if a child is referred to the term 'war', s/he should understand what it means, what sort of a situation is called a war. S/he should be able to provide the other instances of war and use the term war to label such a situation. It refers to the child's ability to understand the instances where s/he can put the acquired knowledge to use. It means that a child has learned, in general, the meaning, examples and consequences of a war and s/he is able to use that learning in predicting the consequences of war, in some other time and place.

Historical Understanding is an ability of a child to appreciate historical information or situation independent of his/her previous knowledge or exposure to information related to history. In this way the level of historical understanding would be the extent to which a child can appreciate different aspects of history discussed above or can apply the cognitive practices used by the historians.

It is important to point out here that these elements are not necessarily related to what a child has learned; rather these are the psychological processes which, if the child
demonstrates, can be said to have historical understanding. While processing a historical information a person engages in these general mental processes. For example, a child who is able to memories the jobs done by kings in a particular era, and he/she reproduces the information on being asked about the same, that is his/her information about the history. It is a result of his schooling and historical information provided in his/her class room. If, on the other hand, by reading about the jobs done by the emperors, the child comes to understand that emperors in that particular time used to do some particular kinds of job then, that can be called his/her historical understanding. HU can be said to be related to its knowledge, to the extent to which cognitive abilities are related to environmental exposure. Apart from that it simply refers to what and how much a student can make out of a given historical material and whether or not the child can apply the cognitive processes, for processing historical information.

The HU of any person can be a product of many factors apart from the classroom experiences. History being a subject which is about our society, it is represented in the society outside the classrooms. This representation and transmission of historical knowledge has much to do with the historical understanding of the members of a society. The processing of historical information or historical understanding is not solely a domain specific cognitive ability; rather it is a product of the wider experience of a child as a member of a society and as a student.
1.3. Dimensions of Historical Understanding

Four dimensions of historical understanding have been worked out. In the process of zeroing upon the dimensions of HU the attempt was to focus upon those elements which would be required by a child to appreciate history at school. In doing so, an analysis of the existing literature about the nature of history, existing literature on children's understanding of history, and discussion with three educationist historians have been the main source. At the same time it has been a concern to take those aspects of history which are operationalisable and assessable. The four dimensions and their sub dimensions are given below in Table 1, followed by a detail description of each.

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A) Temporality</th>
<th>B) Causality</th>
<th>C) Methodology</th>
<th>D) Understanding the historian's job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Awareness of the difference between present and past</td>
<td>1) Relating social forces to an event</td>
<td>1) Imagination</td>
<td>1) Understanding and analyzing primary resource.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Linking history to chronology</td>
<td>2) Critical and comparative analysis</td>
<td>2) Perspective taking</td>
<td>2) Understanding history as an interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3) Search for patterns and regularities</td>
<td>between historian and his/her facts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4) Drawing abstract concepts and information from concrete objects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.3.1. Temporality:

Awareness of time is one of the most important elements of historical understanding. "The content of one's knowledge of past must be accompanied by the awareness of time, in order to qualify as historical knowledge" (Kumar, 2001, p. 23). There are few abilities, related to temporal aspect, which a child requires for comprehending historical time:

1) **Awareness of difference between present and past:** - Before gaining any understanding of past a child should be able to understand that past is a body of time that can be rationally measured and organized. At the most basic level, it is understanding a difference between 'older' and 'newer' dimensions of any object. A child showing such a notion means that s/he is aware of the past dimension of our lives. For example, in terms of past aspect of an object, it is an understanding that the object was not as old as today. It is also awareness that past can be further divided into different sections of time. It requires a child to be able to differentiate between objects in terms of their oldness. This would reveal his/her understanding that they are not just old but some of them are relatively older than the others.

2) **Linking history to chronology:** To understand any sort of information about past, it is required that a child locates and understands the meaning of time and durations. It refers to the understanding of the things like 'How long', 'how long before', 'and how long after' etc. It is an understanding which would, enable a child/person to estimate the duration and distances between different time periods. It would mean, an ability to locate events in a time series, to estimate time durations and distances.
1.3. 2. Causality:

Historical understanding requires appreciation of the social phenomena and its dynamics. Seeking causation about the events of past is an important part of historical analysis. Causality is concerned with 'what' and 'how' mode of thinking about the causes of events/ actions in history. In the present analysis, causality can be seen at the following levels:

1) Relating social forces to an Event: - A student of history is required to understand the relationship between an event and its cause/s. In other words, it is justifying an event or situation as being responsible (more or less) in causing the subsequent event/s.

There can be more than one cause for an event; although, the events function independently but they influence in a collaborative way. Understanding of causality requires appreciating the fact that in any social event there may be one direct cause but, many other factors influence it. For example, in a factory lockout, the workers' unrest may be the cause which is directly linked to the lockout, but many other factors such as, working conditions, poor salary structure as lack of incentives can also be held responsible for it. It is also possible that some of the union leaders might be trying to make their own political ways by organizing this event. Therefore, to understand this sort of relationships a student needs to appreciate the connection between a cause/s and its effect/s. So for the analysis of social historical situations one needs to have an insight into the factor/factors responsible for an event so that their relative role in the can be judged.
2) Critical and comparative analysis: - Historical analysis requires thinking critically about the various dimensions of an event and its various causes. This practice is also a part of seeking causality of events. There are many situations in historical enquiry which require critical and comparative analysis:

A historical study requires comparing and contrasting different societies and times on the basis of phenomena and evidences selected for the study. In such cases of comparisons one requires to think in divergent ways about the event, phenomena or the society under study. It refers to an ability to think in multiple ways about the issues under study, and to draw ideas about the ways in which two issues are similar or dissimilar.

Many times historians have to determine the cause/causes in terms of the extent to which they have contributed in the eventual incidence. History requires analyzing various causes in terms of their relative contribution. A child should understand the hierarchy of causes, rational and explanation for it. This ability is different from the one discussed above (Relating Social Forces to an Event). The first one is related to justification of cause at the level of single or multiple causes. But this ability is moving beyond the first step and assorting them in accordance with their relative role in the eventual event.

Thus, a critical and comparative analysis would mean an ability to think in divergent ways about an event or phenomena and to be able to deduce inferences from the given facts about their relative importance in causing any event by applying the critical investigation.
1.3.3 Methodology:

This dimension of historical understanding is related to the ways in which a reader or a writer of history engages him/herself in the process of analyzing or reading history. The analysis has revealed five mental practices required for appreciating history:

1) Imagination: - To have a clear picture of happenings in past, one has to imagine it. A detailed description or understanding of past situation is possible only through getting into (by imagining) the life of that time. Study of history requires to have a mental picture which can help in feeling the ethos of past. Imaginative ability here refers to an ability to envisage (form a mental picture of) remote things. Imagination is also a tool which serves various functions for the readers as well as writers of history. One of such situations is Critical and comparative analysis. Since this sort of imagination is not free from realities, it can be termed as ‘critical imagination’. It is applied to analyze the situation in past and to think in divergent ways about it. It has to be bound to realities and to the actual life- incidences of past.

The other role of imagination is in empathizing with people in past. In order to acquire a fair analysis about the motives and actions of people in past, historians need to consider their mindset and surroundings also. Therefore one needs to transform himself/herself to the whole physical, cultural and environmental setting. So that s/he can have an idea of how it might have been back then.

Thus, there are many situations which require separate abilities but all the practices require imagination to be used together with them.
Chapter 1

Introduction

2) **Perspective taking**: - Reading or narrating history calls for some judgment regarding values and ideals of society. The readers or writers have to recognize the conditions and values of society before attempting any analysis about them. S/he need not impose his/her own personal standards in judging the thoughts of people in the past. At the same time, one need not be swayed by one sided opinion about any issue. To remain objective in the judgment besides considering other surrounding factors, one needs to take into account the differing views also. The person has to judge an event/action/thought from the multiple viewpoints and in accordance with the prevalent norms and perspectives in a particular time in any society. This dimension requires a child to raise above his/her personal dispositions and consider the different views together.

3) **Search for patterns and regularities**: - Historians have to find out patterns in series of events. They have to watch out for the times and situations where the sequence of events have been, more or less, same. They have to study the events through time and have to trace out changes, growths or developments in the societies and people. Hence, this dimension refers to an ability to find out common or discreet elements in a series of events. By having this ability students will be able to perceive the events which constantly appear in a society, individual or a group under study, over a period of time. At the same time s/he will be able to perceive the ways in which changes have occurred.

4) **Drawing abstract concepts and information from concrete objects**: - This aspect of historical understanding deals with the ability to draw information and ideas from objects such as, artifacts, buildings, jewelry and photographs etc. Apart from drawing information a child should be able to draw upon then as concepts and cues to
understand past. This is an ability to think in diversified and innovative ways about the objects or evidences. The skill is based on immediately observable features, but on the basis of such practices the child can infer ideas about the time period and the person or society to which the objects belong to. It is the ability to deduce concepts from given cues. It includes moving outwards from the facts to draw a new synthesis of the information provided by the objects.

1.3.4. Understanding the historian’s Job

Understanding history requires the ways in which it has been worked out. The reconstruction as well as the interpretation of historical facts is influenced, to a large extent, on the mental framework of the person who is analyzing it. On one hand the selection of the sources and the value added to it, on other hand availability of the resources, both determine the reconstruction of history. So it is crucial to understand the relativity of historical explanation.

1) Understanding and analyzing primary resources:

Historians use mainly two types of sources to inform their study; Primary sources and Secondary sources. Primary sources are the first hand information about past, for example artifacts, pictures, documents of the time which is being investigated, historical sites or any other source of information about the past. The secondary sources are analysis and narration of history by other scholars; they are second hand information about the past. These two types of sources vary in terms of their relevance; primary sources are important because they are the direct and reliable while secondary sources
are important because they inform us about the view of others who have analyzed the issue.

A child is required to understand the information reflected by the evidences. In this regard the student is required to understand the relevance of and distinguish between primary and secondary resources. The child requires an ability to understand that, which source would be better informing. S/he needs to understand what the resources inform. An ability to understand the difference between, primary and secondary evidences, is thus related to ones ability to examine the sources of historical information and attach relevance to them.

2) **Understanding history as an interaction between Historian and his/her facts:**

A child is required to appreciate that the availability, selection and interpretation of the facts may vary from one author to other and from one time/place to other. It requires an understanding that that reconstruction is influenced, not only by the piece of time it deals with but also by the time and society in which it is dealt. The needs and pressures of historian’s own time and surroundings affect it. It is an understanding that people may vary regarding their opinion about various issues, which in turn may influence the way they interpret things around them.

**In short, it can be said that, historical understanding is ability to receive, comprehend, analyse and apply historical information, by using various cognitive abilities.** For example, it requires inferring information about the antecedents, consequences and the various aspects of an events/ actions by drawing upon imagination and critical thinking. Historical enquiry is not a single ability; rather it is a conglomeration of multiple skills.
1.4. Theoretical propositions regarding the development of HU in children

Understanding develops by maturation of cognitive capabilities of a child and by acquisition of knowledge over a long period of time. The development of understanding occurs in a predictable way as proposed by many cognitive theorists. Therefore, there should be a predictable pattern of development of HU also; however there is no formal theorization proposed for it. Nevertheless, the existing theories of cognitive development can be linked to development to HU.

Some of the earlier studies in the area of HU have compared historical understanding with Piaget's theory of cognitive development (Hallam, 1970, 1967, 1966; Jurd, 1973) and have concluded that developmental sequence of mental abilities remains the same for historical material but these stages appear later in age. These researchers have used Piagiatian criterion to classify responses of participants on historical items. (The details of these studies are provided later, in section, Development of historical understanding). Piaget's theory is based on the idea that a developing child builds cognitive structures for understanding and responding to physical experiences within his or her environment. Piaget asserted that a child's cognitive structure increases in sophistication with development, moving from a few innate reflexes, such as, crying and sucking to highly complex mental activities. This way, the child develops more and more adequate cognitive structures. Piaget outlined several principles for building these cognitive structures. He suggested that children progress through four stages of cognitive development and a child's cognitive structure increases in sophistication with development, moving from a few innate reflexes, such as, crying and sucking to highly
complex mental activities. This way, the child develops more and more adequate cognitive structures. Piaget proposed that development of child's intellectual capabilities progress through different stages. A baby responds interacts with his environment by innate reflex activity. Gradually the behaviors of the child become organized into distinct patterns of behaviors. The baby learns to emanate certain behaviors to generate different types of response from his/her surrounding. For example, crying grasping and sucking. These organized behaviors are called "schemata" (mental maps). All the schemata are result of actions that are done as an attempt to cope with the environment. Once a schema is developed it becomes the pattern of behavior for that particular situation in which it is learned. When the actions in the schemata are replaced by the symbols (letters, words etc), this it is called "representational schemata." And the child is said to have "internalized" these experiences when s/he can use symbolic language to represent his/her experiences. The internalization of actions leads to construction of thoughts. Therefore the origin of cognitive development, according to Piaget is action. The symbolic language helps in logical thinking. Carrying out activities in ones imagination is called as mental operation. These mental operations are indicator of ones intellectual maturity.

Piaget's theory identifies four developmental stages and the processes by which children progress through. He believed that all children invariably pass through these stages, although different children pass through the stages at somewhat different rates. In Sensori-motor stage (approximate age birth to 2 years) intelligence is demonstrated through motor activity without the use of symbols. Babies explore their world by using
their senses and their motor skills. Towards the end of sensori-motor stage, some symbolic (language) abilities are developed. In the Preo-perational stage (approximate age 2 to 7 years) egocentric thinking predominates. A child in intuitive stage fixates his/her perception on only one dimension of a situation or problem and misses other dimensions. This, Piaget calls *centering*. Due to this a child in this stage is not able to show *Conservation*; an ability that enables higher mental operations, especially mathematical operations. Next stage is Concrete operational Stage (approximate age 7 to 11 years). A major progress from the pre-operational stage to concrete operational stage is that the child in previous stage responds to perceived appearances while a child in later stage responds to inferred realities. A concrete operational child has no longer difficulty with conservation and s/he has learned the concept of reversibility. The thoughts of a child at this stage are much advance than a pre operational child; still they are very much rooted in the concrete aspects of situations and have difficulty with abstract thought. The last stage is formal Operational Stage (beginning at around 11). By this point, the child’s cognitive structures start taking shapes like those of an adult and include conceptual reasoning. In this stage intelligence is demonstrated through the logical use of symbols related to abstract concepts without any material assistance. The child at this stage can set hypothesis and try out its possible solutions. This is known as “hypothetico-deductive” reasoning. In formal operational stage the cognitive structures that makes human thoughts are formed. The foundations for new structures and schemas are laid down for a life long learning process.
Thus, Piaget's theory is vast enough to catch most aspects of cognitive development of children. Consequently many early works on the development of HU have been based on Piaget's theorization.

Following piaget's four stage model researchers like Hallam (1970, 1967, 1966) and Jurd (1973) have compared HU with formal operational stage. They have further postulated that this stage appears later concerning historical information. However, just like other theorists Piaget has not been without criticism. He propounds that as the child matures he/she passes through four stages of cognitive development and that these stages are relatively fixed; the concepts typical of a particular stage can not be taught earlier. But the researches have shown that the stages do not strictly follow the ages propounded by Piaget. The researchers have proposed that the conceptual development is greatly influenced by the teacher and the curriculum (Child, 1973). The same argument can be given for stages in historical understanding also. It is not necessary that there is a stage model that appears in case of HU.

Another major theoretical framework for cognitive development is Vygotsky's theory for cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, people are products of their social and cultural worlds and that to understand children's thinking, one must understand the social and cultural contexts in which children develop. Culture is tool for cognitive development in the sense that it teaches children both what to think and how to think. Language is a primary form of interaction through which adults transmit to the child the rich body of knowledge that exists in the culture. Vygotsky postulated that human mental activity is a product of cultural learning; mediated by social signs. These social signs are
cultural tools such as, language, number and art etc, through which a culture organizes and transmits the knowledge, and in turn, thinking. Hence, Vygotsky believed that our thinking is a result of the cultural. The major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. All new knowledge and newly introduced skills are greatly influenced by each student's culture, especially their family environment. Vygotsky maintained that language plays a central role in cognitive development. It is particularly critical for creating meaning and linking new ideas to past experiences and prior knowledge.

Though none of the studies have taken this approach for studying historical understanding, however our study (Dixit & Mohanty 2009) as well as others studies supporting the idea of early development of historical understanding, reveal that this theory can be helpful in explaining historical understanding. In our study on the historical understanding of children (Dixit & Mohanty 2009,) it was observed that children could perform better when the historical situations were simplified and were re-explained to them. In items where the students could not understand the task or the responses, they were explained and elaborated. It was seen that children could comprehend and respond in a better way when such help was provided by an adult.

The studies suggesting earlier development of historical understanding have used interactive methods which required active participation of children and adults. For example, Blyth (1978) involved students in various amusing activities, such as reading stories, reading pictures, making life lines on the charts, evaluating old objects and visiting to the museums. He found that such interactive experiences helped children to
understand various aspects of past. In the same way Barton and Levstik (1996) showed some photographs to children and asked them to place the pictures according to their time periods. They found that children exhibited an understanding of differences between periods of time. Clearly these studies made students spend interactive sessions with the researchers and historical material. In their results they found some level of historical understanding on the part of younger children.

Vygotsky's theory proposes that much of what a child learns, come from the culture around him/her and much of the child's problem solving is mediated through an adult's help. This phenomenon is clearly seen in studies supporting early development of HU. History is a subject which needs to be introduced or told to a child. It is past and a child can by no means know history unless it is told verbally or through texts. So it is possible for the child to be affected by the way history has been mediated by adults. The attitude and view of the significant elder's may affect the way child constructs his/her understanding of past. The influence of social situations and surroundings may be an important aspect of historical understanding which has not been studied much.

Hence, there is no apparent theoretical assumption taken or proposed for the development of historical understanding. Few researchers have definitely tried to compare it with Piaget's theory of cognitive development however; their assumptions can not be taken as concluding due to other contrary results also. Amongst other theories of cognitive development Vygotsky's theory seems to be promising in explaining development of historical understanding but there are not enough evidences to conclude
anything about it as well. Therefore, for any substantial idea about historical understanding one needs to wait until some new researchers come up.

1.5 Developmental Pattern of Historical understanding

The studies dealing with developmental pattern of HU can be categorized in two groups. In one group there are studies which have substantiated that the students at the age of 7-8, sometimes even six year of age have been able to show at least some form of historical understanding (Barton & Levstik, 1996; Blyth, 1978; Culpin, 1984; Hall, 1980). Most of these studies are not very exhaustive; rather, it has been the attempt of few educationists to develop some concrete methods by which a young student can be approached. This has led to the investigation of various elements of historical understanding with this perspective. In the other group there are the studies which assume that understanding of history develops later at adolescent age (Booth, 1966; Hallam, 1966, 1967, 1970, 1997; Jahoda 1963; Stuart & Oakden, 1922). These responses on the above described three dimensions support the earlier studies which substantiate late development of HU (Booth, 1966; Hallam, 1966, 1967, 1970, 1997; Jahoda 1963; Stuart & Oakden, 1922). Many of these studies equate historical thinking with formal operation level of Piaget’s theory, reason being that appreciation of history requires higher order mental processes. Therefore, it is not easy for a child below the age of 15-16 to appreciate such concepts. These researchers propose that adequate understanding of historical material develops later as compared to the development of thinking in other subject areas. Further they suggest that, though the studies have suggested that the developmental sequence of historical understanding remains the same as Piaget has
suggested, but it appears later in chronological sequence than the understanding of other fields. The logic behind such propositions is that the abstraction of the historical material stops students from gaining its full appreciation at early age.

1.5.1. Development of Historical Understanding at Younger Age:

The studies supporting early development of HU assume that though, young children think in concrete terms they can still exhibit some understanding of history provided they are enriched by concrete historical information. These studies assume that history requires an exercise in which the children have to learn about far remote events and people. There is a gap between the material to be learned and the students. If the gap is filled by concrete experiences, children can gain an appreciation of these objects. These studies have shown that if the historical information is accompanied by concrete experiences such as, excursions, pictures, movies and dramas, children show an improvement in their understanding of history. These studies have shown that even 6-7 year old children could make temporal distinctions and have some knowledge of how things were different in the past (Barton & Levstik, 1996; Blyth, 1978; Culpin, 1984; Hall, 1980; VanSledright & Brophy, 1992).

Blyth (1978) conducted a study with 6-year-old children to find out how children understand the past in relation to them and outside world. The aim of his study was to determine the extent to which the children understood the concepts of comparison, sequence, time, classification, duration and relationship. These were assessed by involving students in various entertaining activities such as, reading stories, reading pictures, making life lines on the charts, evaluating old objects and visiting to the
museums. Artifacts like large visual aids of charts, diagrams and maps were used for each child to complete it with words, numbers and pictures. Each child built up a ‘my book of past’ with drawings, sentence charts and diagrams. Children were also asked to make life lines or time lines, in which they had to plot their own life line (with dates) and that of their families on the chart, such as ‘when was I born, ‘started going to school’, ‘my sibling was born’ etc. It was found that the children were able to demonstrate the comprehension of time by plotting the life lines on chart. Furthermore, children were asked to find out two or three objects from their homes as old as possible. The students were also shown some old objects with some cues (such as names and the dates written on them) about their oldness or owner. The children were able to derive information about the objects by observing them.

Blyth (1978) concluded that processes involved in understanding past such as, concept formation and reasoning are enhanced by practical experiences. He assessed abilities like reasoning, classification and comparison and found that though the children did not show a high degree of any of these abilities but they demonstrated the presence of such concepts in them. These findings are supported by many other studies (Ames, 1946; Barton & Levstik, 1996; Friedmem, 1944; McAulay, 1961) which show that children between 6-7 years age begin to appreciate historical time and the same become more sophisticated with increasing age.

Barton and Levstik (1996) conducted a study on children of Kindergarten through 6 grades. They explored children’s understanding of time and demonstrated that even a kindergarten child made some distinction between present and past. They showed some
photographs to the children and asked them to place the pictures according to their time periods. The photographs belonged to different time periods of American history. In their responses children made temporal distinction in terms of arranging these pictures in chronological order. The youngest children (i.e. kindergarten) through grade 2 were able to categorize photographs in terms of 'long time ago' and 'close to now'. The elder (grade 3 and 4) children were able to make at least three temporal distinctions. And by grade 5 and 6 children started using specific historical information to compare pictures like historical periods and dates such as, 'where did the picture belong from?', 'what period was the picture from?' The findings indicate that even very young children could make temporal distinctions and have some knowledge of how things were different in past.

Similarly, McAulay (1961) sought to find out the understanding of time relationship in the grade 2 children. In his study 165 children between 6 – 8- years participated. The aim was to explore the children's understanding about the past social reality and to find out whether or not they were capable of relating the present time with past. The questions asked to the children were divided into three categories: 1) Questions concerning time concepts associated with self (Who lived longer your mother or grand mother). 2) Time concepts associated with the immediate environment (Which will come first; Christmas or Easter), and 3) Time concepts associated with historical events. The study indicated that second grade children had clear understanding of past time and present concepts and they seemed to be capable of understanding periods of time. The study showed that the time sense related to past develops before the time sense of present. McAulay's findings that children's time sense related to close experiences develops later, is
contrasted with other studies, such as Friedman's (1944), which show that, children start understanding close objects first.

In a study involving 697 students from Kindergarten through grade 6 Friedman (1944) asked variety of question related to conventional time system (such as, age, years, etc) and the indefinite time concepts (historical time, time period of one’s life and chronological sequences etc). The study revealed that children better understand near time than the remote time. By grade six, children showed a satisfactory comprehension of the conventional time system although there was a lack of sufficient comprehension even by grade 6 on the test of the meaning of time, words, dates and ability to place familiar events in chronological order. Ames (1946) has also given some-what similar conclusions regarding the sense of time in young children. He involved 180 children from 24 months through 8 years. The study was based on observation of the verbalizations involving time expression and asking various questions concerning concept of time. The questions were regarding days, weeks, morning, afternoon, winter, etc. It was found that some children have better temporal orientation than others, and the time concepts come into use by children at a relatively uniform sequence in all children. Ames concluded that maturational factors are accountable for the development of readiness to acquire time concepts. In Ames's study it was also found that children first learn words indicating present; then words indicating future, and finally those indicating past. With regard to division of time he observed that, by five years the child learns, time of the day and what day is it and by seven year s/he learns what month and season is it. By eight years the child can name days of month and know what year is it.
Similarly, Hall (1980) experimented with 8-9 year old children to find out whether children at primary level are capable of seeing significance of objects from history. Are they able to use the objects and draw information out of that about past events, people or their ways of living? He found that they could. He showed a number of old household things including photographs, postcards, and coins etc, all of which belonged to a specific time period. The children were asked to look at them carefully and tell something about their owner. Because most of the things were dated and named they could form a life sketch about the person whom the things belonged to. In yet another interesting study, Culpin (1984) made an effort to bridge the gap between present and past for young children. He showed a drama to 11-year-old children. The aim was to direct the pupils to the conscious human element, which is common between present and past. After showing them the drama the students were asked to investigate and report the feelings and attitude of people involved in drama. They were given questions like; can you tell how the factory workers might be feeling. In this study he was able to show that children could report the empathetic feeling in them. He tried to involve students in many a hypothetical condition by showing them plays, and found that the students could report the feelings and views about the situations and the problems and could empathies with the characters in the drama.

In order to enhance the human feeling and lively experience in historical studies Freeman and Levstik (1988), proposed use of historical fiction in teaching social studies and history. They argued that through the use of fictions, children can be made to imaginatively enter into past and can feel the experiences of people in the past. They can
find themselves as an extension of past. Barton and levstik argue that through historical fictions students can discover the beginning, end, causes and consequences of human endeavors. They suggest that the historical fiction also helps in achieving various academic goals. Citing Jarolimek (1977) they say that students can learn about the people in the world, different cultures and history. They can also learn to assess the sources about authentication of information and to reconciling differing information. Freeman and levstik further suggested that the historical fiction should be carefully chosen for children. The fiction should have plenty of opportunities for discussion and reflection. Along with that, students should be provided with time and resource for further enquiry and the teacher should be willing to help them analyze it. They conclude that although fiction cannot be a sole source of HU, it can definitely stimulate interest in children for historical contents.

In a study on 10 Grade 5\textsuperscript{th} children (average age 10 years) VanSledgright and Brophy (1992) showed that children at this age are capable of grasping history, provided it is presented in a form comprehensible to them. VanSledgright and Brophy's work was based on the premise that students lack an experiential background to develop historical constructs and its understanding. Most of the children's understanding comes from direct contact with physical world while historical knowledge can not be experienced directly. Therefore, he argues that the probability of misconceptions related to historical knowledge is higher in children. Guided by such speculations VanSledgright and Brophy designed the study to establish a structure for historical thinking prior to teaching history. He chose grade 5\textsuperscript{th} because that where his participants were supposed to start systematic
history course. He contacted the students just after passing grade 4 and before starting grade 5. They constructed 23 questions to assess children's knowledge of history and their potential misunderstandings. The questions were of both types: open and closed ended. The interview was accompanied by probes and follow up questions. The purpose was to elicit detailed thinking and knowledge of the students about the identified key concepts namely, primary and secondary sources, artifacts, the work of historians, timelines and chronological order, students' personal histories, and United States History. The interview results showed that 8 out of 10 children were aware that the study of history involved things that happened in past. They were unfamiliar with the work of historian and could not make sense of the questions about it. They were little aware with some episodes of American history from their exposure in earlier grades. Many students typically adopted story like patterns in their answers. VanSledgright and Brophy concluded that elementary school children are interested in history and capable of learning and appreciating it. They suggest that teaching of history is although helped by narrative or story like format, it entails many problems. It may take fanciful imaginary stories which are more appealing to children. Therefore, they suggest that care should be taken while narrating history to students. It should be well connected with the broader historical context. Also teaching history should succeed a broad organizing framework to contextualize children's historical knowledge.

In a similar attempt to trace the development of historical understanding, we (Dixit & Mohanty, 2009) tried to deal with some of the above problems in the area of historical understanding. In the study conducted on the children between 9- to -14 years of the
developmental sequence of historical understanding was sought after. A test of historical understanding was constructed on the basis of analyzing literature on the nature of history and historical understanding. Four broad dimensions of HU were selected. The items of the test were constructed in a manner to resemble historical situations; it consisted of pictures of old houses, and other objects and people, and hypothetical situations or short stories. No real historical episodes were taken; so as to avoid any effect of prior knowledge on the test performance. The test was administered on 15 children from grades 4, 6 and 8. Following the test administration, an in-depth interviewing was undertaken with children, in order to investigate children's idea of history and past.

The findings revealed that understanding history requires various skills and abilities, which exhibit different patterns of development. Most of the important skills required in appreciating history such as the difference of past and history, chronology, imagination have been found to be developing early by the age of 9 - 10 (grade 4) and becoming refined with age and grade. The analysis has revealed that some of the abilities such as awareness of present and past, imagination, drawing concrete information about the objects and chronology develop early by the age of 9-10. While some of the abilities like complex causal analysis, drawing abstract information, and finding pattern and regularities in a series of events, develop later by the age of 13-14. Some aspects like Critical and comparative analysis is not very pronounced by the age of 13-14.

Hence, it can be inferred that the studies reporting early development of historical understanding have used methods which are approachable for children and requires
children to take active part in the assessment. This sort of an approach contributes to a better understanding of history at an early age because children at this age think in concrete terms. The time concepts, social dynamics and human interactions are not intelligible for young children. Therefore, they require narrative elaborations and concrete experiences to understand history. These studies have shown that primary and sometimes even nursery children are capable of understanding some form of history and past, provided they are given practical experiences related to history.

Problems with the studies showing early development of historical understanding:

Studies supporting the continuity view of development of historical understanding do provide some insight about the nature of historical understanding. However, their usefulness is limited by methodological constraints: The first constrain is that they have dealt with only one or two components of historical understanding at a time; Barton and Levstik (1996) have dealt with ‘time’; Hall (1988) with ‘object exploration’ and Blyth (1978), with the oldness of the objects. They have not investigated history as encompassing multiple abilities which is actually the case. The relative development of different abilities involved in historical understanding can be known, only when one sees all the dimensions of HU together. The second problem is the inadequate reporting of these studies. Some researches provide only minimal description of their procedures and the conceptualization of the constructs and make it difficult for a reader to know exactly what has been done. There are some studies like that of Blyth (1970) and Hall (1980); one has not reported the number of subjects taken and the other has taken only six subjects.
Given such problems with the reporting and methodology such investigations remain suggestive at best.

1.5.2. Development of Historical Understanding at later adolescent age:

The earliest studies in the area of historical understanding are based on the assumption that appreciation of history requires higher order mental processes. Therefore, it is not easy for a child below the age of 15-16 to appreciate such concepts. Most of these studies equate historical understanding with formal operational thinking. One of the widely known works in the area of the development of children’s thinking in history is that of Hallam’s (1966, 1967, 1970). In his investigation into child’s thinking regarding history he has demonstrated that a child must attain an age of 16 before s/he can engage in formal operational reasoning regarding historical materials. In his study, Hallam (1970) assessed the answers of 100 children between eleven to sixteen years of age. He made them read three actual historical passages, and asked 10 questions regarding every passage from the students. Each child answered 10 questions about each passage. Thus, every child answered 30 questions. For selecting the passage, he did a pilot study and selected passages which gave possibility of a wide range of responses. Children’s thinking was classified on the basis of what kind of thinking they reflected in their answers regarding the historical passages.

Since Hallam (1966) was using Piaget’s criteria to judge children’s thinking he classified the verbal responses of the students into three main operational stages. For example, if a child was not relating the question to the information provided; there was ‘isolated centering on one feature’ only and s/he was moving from one element to another
without considering all the factors involved then the child was categorized into pre-operational thinking. Likewise if a child showed an ability to give an organized answer, but limited to what was immediately apparent in the text, then s/he was classified as having a concrete operational thinking. And if a child was able to realize a multiplicity of possible links, envisage all possible explanations and find explanations through logical analysis, then it was categorized as formal operation thinking. Hallam's results showed that the type of responses which Piaget had shown with the younger children could also be found in older children's answers to questions on history. Secondly, he reported that children exhibited concrete operational level in their 12th year and formal operational level at the age of 16 years, in the responses to historical material.

The result that formal thinking develops later in the study of history is confirmed by many of the other investigators also. Medley (1980) conducted an enquiry into children's concept of causality. He particularly looked into how students deal with multiple causes of a historical event. Medley took 111 students of 13 to 18 years of age. He made the students read a narrative about the causes of Russian revolution (1917), and then gave them a list of causes of Russian revolution. The students were to write down 2-3 causes which they thought were important in leading the revolution. The students were also asked to give reasons for their answers. These answers were taken as indicators of their level of thinking.

Medley (1980) had worked out 4 levels of responses, according to which the answers of the students were classified. These levels were as follows: Level one: 'Certain causes are described as being important without any attempt being made to compare their relative
importance in leading to the event in question.’ The assumption here is that the students classify some causes not by really weighing them in term of the role played by them in the event rather the reasons are self evident, they are the ‘obvious’ causes of the event.

Level two: ‘One is compared with another by means of describing a single consequence of the absence of a particular causal factor’. This kind of causation is more like a generalized view about the consequences or the absence of one of the causal factors. These are rather learned principles, which the child have acquired in the course of socialization as to, if something is there the other thing will certainly follow; for example ‘you would not have a revolution if everyone was happy!’ Level three: ‘A number of causes are weighted against each other by means of following through, in argument, the consequences of certain causal factors being altered or take away’. This is a more refined mode of argument which shows the awareness of interdependence of different causal factors. At this level there is an awareness of the relative importance of causes. The child is aware of the interdependence of the causes; s/he can weigh causes in a mode such as ‘what would have happened if this particular factor would not have been there. The student understand the difference between a cause which leads to something happening and a cause which makes something happened at that particular time. It means to say that in any social event there are various causes which lead to an event, some of them are long term causes and others are short term causes. However when the actual event takes place it is not necessary that a cross section of that event only will depict all the cause of that event. May be the most important factor is out of the scene at that time when the event took place. So at this level the student is aware of such sophisticated
issues also. Level four: 'causes are weighted against each other by reference to an actual historical comparison situation'. At this level students try to find out other historical situation, the causes their consequences and takes the decision on the basis of the comparison between such situations. The student at this level moves beyond just the list of causes and tries to think about other historical situations in comparison to the one in the question so that he is better able to determine the role of causes.

In the results Medley found that out of the students between 13 to 18 years of age, hardly any of them were able to give a level four response, which required the students to compare the situation with other similar situations, to clarify the situation as well as the importance of any particular or causes. He concluded that the students of 13-14 years can be taught to deal with contra factual and historical situation although it is only at the later stage that the students are fully able to understand the interrelationship of different causes in historical event; however the study also showed that there is great individual variation regarding the age at which the students demonstrate these skills.

Similarly, Booth (1978) has done an inquiry into inductive and deductive mode of thought, in history. Booth refers to the studies, like that of Hallam (1967) which has shown that history is concerned with deductive mode thought i.e. to form a hypothesis and deduce a conclusion using abstract thought. Such a practice is concerned with synthesizing the information and providing a conclusive statement. Booth argues that deductive reasoning is not the only mode of thought in history. He says that such studies have judged the child's ability to reason, pose a hypothesis and derive conclusions, using logical thinking. Booth further argues that most of the time history requires moving out
from the facts, to envisage the situation in the direction of possibilities, other than given facts. A historian has to envisage the surroundings, causes, and linkages to the event under study. S/he has to think in divergent ways about a phenomenon and to arrive at a new synthesis. Booth says that such kind of open ended inductive thought is a synthesizing activity which involves the creation of personal constructs.

With the above logic, Booth's conducted his study. He aimed at exploring the process by which the inductive thought is practiced by the students of history. In his study the students were shown twelve untitled photographs of different people, events and twelve short quotations (each on separate cards) from the history. The students were expected to group these separate categories and provide explanation for the grouping. The grouping was done within category; such as there were groups to be made within the category of people, types of quotations and so on. The aim was to observe that on what basis the students form these categories. Booth assumed that these activities require thinking in divergent ways about the objects provided; and form a concept in which the student would judge all the instances of the category. Thus the students were put in an open ended situation in which the inductive thought of the student could be stimulated. The intention was to assess the extent to which the student could apply constructive imagination and divergent thinking to the material provided. The participants showed an ability to comprehend and analysis the material by forming the sets of the photographs quotations and events. He classified the inductive responses of the students into two categories: abstract inductive conceptual thought and concrete inductive conceptual thought. Abstract inductive concept was that, which was based on inferred qualities or
ideas from the material. It was to go beyond the observable features of facts and to perceive its latent meaning. On the other hand concrete concepts were based on immediately observable features in the pictures or quotations. For examples, in case of picture such responses appeared as forming sets on the basis of visible similarities on the basis of features like objects and people shown in the pictures. For the texts, it appeared commonly as grouping sets on the basis of keywords appearing in the text. Booth concluded that students attain open ended inductive thought at an abstract level by the end of 15 years of age, specially when the students are provided with an open ended learning situation like the one which he used in his study.

Another early but interesting study by Stuart & Oakden (1922, cited in Hallam, 1970), has showed that since historical time is an abstract concept a child will have difficulty in understanding it. They suggest that it is not until 11 years of age that child start appreciating past as different periods of time. It is only after this age that past becomes differentiated into various historical periods. Further they postulated that a full understanding of chronology may not develop until sixteen years of age. There have been subsequent studies and replication of Stuart and Oakden's study in various countries, which have confirmed their main findings that the historical understanding develops later at age as compared to the other subject areas (Jahoda, 1963, cited in Hallam, 1970). These studies have asserted that the later development of historical understanding should not be a surprise because actions of history are far removed from the children's experience. They involve such inference and dilemmas which can perplex even an adult, such a complex exercise should not be expected from the children.
Jurd (1973) has also applied Piagetian criteria for logical thinking to assess the responses of the student on the historical situations. He took 350 subjects ages ranging from 11 to 17 year. In his test he used three series of hypothetical historical events such might have happened in different countries at the same time. Thus, one series of events represented one country and a parallel series of events was given for other countries. He formulated three types of questions, first was a vocabulary test to ensure that inadequate vocabulary was not the reason of failing to answer the later questions. In the second section questions were designed to test the ability to reason, (i.e. to understand causality), to make evaluative judgment, and the ordering of events in sequence. And the third section required the students to give intensive and extensive definition of the concepts related to history. The intensive definition was judged by the ability to give example of any item out of a series of events and intensive definition was judged by the statement of similarities between groups of events. Thus, except the first category of vocabulary testing the later questions were designed to measure six components of historical understanding – 1) cause of events: It involved recognition of causes, awareness of alternate causes, recognition of more than one cause, and interdependence of causes. 2) Making evaluative judgment: It involved the recognition of conflicting evidences, moving beyond data and making choices. Such an exercise is related to the situations in which the student has to make an evaluative judgment in which a consideration has been given to all the concerning factors. 3) Ordering of events into sequence: Required ordering in time and space. 4) 'The situation being what it was' asked the questions like what might have happened if? By thinking in this way students would be able to understand that if factor changes the situation would be changed. 5)
Balance of forces in history: it required the students to appreciate the reciprocal relationship of causes and effects. It means that many a times the causes are not in isolation, there are interrelationships which govern the effects of these causes. 6) Intensive and extensive definition measured the understanding of historical concepts.

The students answer to the questions in these areas revealed that answering these questions, adequately involved formal operational thought and that explicit expression of such answers did not occur before 17 years of age. Jurd (1973) showed that nature and sequence of the cognitive development remains the same, as Piaget's theorization, with regard to historical material. He suggests that the establishment of later concrete operational level appears at 15 to 17 years, which is considerable later than that suggested for science and mathematics at 9 to 11 years. He explains that the reason for this displacement of whole operational level is the abstract nature of historical material.

Peel (1967) agrees with the ideas of later development of historical thought. He says that history calls for judgment of man's actions and utterances which requires psychological insight. Appreciation of historical institutions and time requires maturity which is not attained until the mid adolescent age. Historical data are far from the student's current experience and it requires maturity of judgment. Peel suggests that the mid adolescent age is formative and crucial in regard to the development and comprehension of historical data. It is only after 15 years of age that one can expect an adequate historical awareness from the students. According to peel a major problem with the secondary school children is that the study of history involves complex human actions and intensions, which calls for appreciation of complex motives and ambitions of adults. Such
human data are complex enough for the students if provided even in the current context. And history requires much more than that; study of complex human deeds centuries ago. Such an exercise constitutes a barrier to students understanding.

It can be seen in the above discussion that studies have repeatedly suggested that adequate understanding of historical material develops later as compared to the development of thinking in other subject areas.

Problems with the studies showing later development of historical understanding: All of the above mentioned studies have conceptualized history as consisting of abstract phenomena and concepts, and consequently the tools and tests they have devised reflect that position. Most of them have used the test items from the actual historical situations (Booth, 1966; Hallam, 1966, 1967, 1970, 1997; Jahoda 1963), which can not be answered without the knowledge of the historical stances. These researchers have confounded historical knowledge with historical understanding (Booth 1978; Hallam, 1967; Medley 1978). For example in the Medley's (1988) study, though he has not used real historical episodes but the highest level of responses in his questions requires respondents to compare the given historical with a real historical episode and reach some conclusion. Medley has categorized four levels of responses to judge students' responses. Among these levels he claims that, hardly any student was able to answer at level 4, which required to compare a given situation with any actual historical situation, and to draw a conclusion on the basis of comparing these two situations. He ends up declaring that such an understanding develops not before 17-18 years of age. The kind of response required can not be given if the student can not draw a comparison between the given
situation and any other historical situation. Hence the student's failing to give an answer might be a result of not knowing any other situation, or inadequate teaching method or it is also possible that the student is not trained to think that way. Hence Medley's test can not be labeled as knowledge free test of causality in history.

Moreover, in Piaget's theorization, the child's level of thinking is assumed to be progressing through stages. This theory suggests the non-continuity view of knowledge development by suggesting that the children's thinking ability transform from one stage to another. However it is not the case always. In fact knowledge development is a gradual and continuous process. There are studies (mentioned above) which can be seen supporting the continuity view. These studies have shown that it is not necessary for a child to reach a formal operational level before s/he can appreciate historical concepts (Barton & Levstik, 1996; Blyth, 1978; Hall, 1988).

1.6. Facilitators and/or Correlates of Historical Understanding

There are many other studies that have been designed to assess historical understanding but they have not dealt with the issue of developmental sequence of historical understanding (Paxton, 1997; Rouet, Britt, Manson & Prfetti, 1996; Wineburg, 1991). In a study on high school children Paxton (1997) have shown that the reception of a historical material by students can be enhanced, if the author of text is more active or visible in the text. He premised his work on the assumptions that, First, it is easy to strike a relationship with a visible author. Second, A visible author may make the text more interesting by 'spicing it up' with 'personal anecdotes, opinions and idiosyncratic' texts. In his experiment, he gave 6 students (age between 15-16- years) two types of text to read;
one an “anonymous author” and other a “visible author”. The participants were asked to think aloud the responses that came into their minds while reading the text. Before reading the text they were interviewed about their opinion about history and after this practice they were asked questions about the text they read and to compare both the texts. The results showed that the text where author was not visible, elicited lesser ‘think-aloud comments.’ Paxton characterized these responses as ‘passive and boredom’. On the other hand the visible author text elicited more active responses. Students were six times more referring to the author and 10 times more likely to give personal thoughts to the historical thoughts presented in the text. He concluded that since the practice of engaging in a mental conversation leads to a greater engagement with the information provided in the text, it leads to the better understanding and learning of historical material.

Wineburg (1991) have tried to demonstrate that there is a difference in the approach taken by the historians and the students of history. He did his study with eight students (age 16-17 years) and eight historians. He made them study historical passages and think aloud about it while reading them. He also gave them three historical paintings and asked them to observe which of the paintings depicted “Lexington Green” a place in America where American Revolution started. He found that historians and students used different cognitive exercises. The students showed more ready acceptance for the information provided, while historians showed more questioning attitude for descriptions of events. He concluded that although the difference between the cognitive activities of students and historians are visible in their academic exercises, their roots are not the same. They
Chapter I

Introduction

are not two stages on a same continuum. In other words the two samples are not from the same population. He suggested that instead of teaching them simple facts, students should be taught to deal with contrafactual and complex historical situations. They should also be taught the cognitive strategies used by historians.

There are other studies which have explored the facilitators in understanding of history. Rouet et al. (1996) investigated the effect of multiple documentary sources on reasoning about history. They involved 24 college students, age between 17 and 31 years. Divided into two groups, the students received a controversial historical text to read. By controversy they meant “a description of an event over which historical accounts disagree. The students however, received text consisting only chronological details facts with no controversies. They received a list of facts and dates related to the historical event. Along with this text the students were given additional documents about two controversies. The students received two sets of documents which talked about the two controversies related to the historical event. Each set of documents consisted following four types of texts- a) Historian’s essay: These were the comments on the events, written by historians or politicians who did not participate in the event. They argued against the controversies citing other documents in their support. b) Participants account: These were the writings of the people who were directly involved in the event. c) textbook-like excerpts: theses were excerpts from the college text books which gave clear and brief description of the event. d) Primary documents: these were the documents written before or during the events, which did not contain any comments related to the controversy. Both the groups received two historian’s essays, two participants accounts.
and a textbook excerpt. One group (the primary group) however received two primary documents and the other group (secondary group) received two additional historians' accounts instead of the primary excerpts. This manipulation was done in order to see the effect of primary documents on historical reasoning. On the basis of the documents that they had read, the students were asked to rank order the documents sources in terms of their trustworthiness, and also to write essays about the controversies.

Rouet et al (1996) found that the students in primary group, ones who received the primary documents rated it most trustworthy and the students in the secondary group, ones who did not receive the primary documents, rated textbook excerpts most trustworthy. The primary group also rated the textbook excerpts second most important. In their essay writing parts, the students from both the groups referred to different sources to support their arguments. The primary group was more likely to refer to primary sources. Even some students in the secondary group cited primary sources mentioned primary sources, which they accessed from the other documents. The researchers concluded that college students could gather different sources of information and could integrate them in a coherent essay. They were also able to assess different sources and give due importance to them, by using them at appropriate places. Rouet et al concluded that using multiple resources along with the documents, enhanced the historical understanding of college students.

In a similar attempt Wiley and Voss (1999) demonstrated, the effect of multiple sources and argumentative writing on understanding of history. They did experiment with 64
Chapter 1

Introduction

undergraduates. The participants were divided in two groups; one half received information about Ireland from 1800 to 1850 through different sources such as, map, biographical accounts, brief description of Historical act, famine and statistical data. The other group received information about the same historical time, Ireland between 1800 to 1850, but presents as a text-book like chapter. After reading these in formations students in both groups were four different writing tasks. In other words four groups received instruction to write either, a narrative, a summary, an explanation or an argument. Thus there were four sub groups in each group. They analysed the writings in terms of- a) number of sentences in an essay, b) Origin of sentences; whether it was a borrowed, transformed or added sentence. Sentences were considered transformed when they were formed combining some presented and some new information. Borrowed sentences were exact replication of the text presented. And the added sentences were the ones which added completely new information which was not provide in the text. D) there were various types of connection identified, namely, inferences, correlations, simple conjunctions and causal connections. In the results they found that narrative and summary writing conditions promoted similar essays, irrespective of the format of information provided; text book or documents. Argument and explanations were also similar when they were written from web sources. However, students who were asked to write arguments wrote more transformed integrated and causal essays when they wrote it from web sources.

In same another experiment of the same study, Wiley and Voss (1999) gave the same historical information to students. The 24 students were divided in two groups and read
the information either from the web or as a new paper article. They were further divided in two groups and were given instruction, either to write an argument or a narrative. In this 2x4 design, it was found that the argumentative writing produced more causal and transformed essays as compared with narratives even when they have received the information from the same source. They concluded that students writing arguments gained a better understanding of the subject matter. Such students wrote more number of sentences and their text was more transformed, integrated and causal.

De La Paz (2005) made an attempt to help school children enhance their HU and argumentative writing skills. In her study seventy Grade 8 students received training for historical writings and essay composition skills. The eighty students included, 11 learning disable, 1 hearing disable, 39 average academic achievers and 17 talented writers. A team of teachers consisting teachers from different subject backgrounds namely, mathematics, science, language, art and social studies- taught children how to read and reconcile sets of primary and secondary about a historical episode. A pre- test material was devised on the basis of teachers' review about the content. She made an effort to keep the pre test and post test material equivalent in terms of difficulty and interest level. After given them a pre test the students were exposed to trainings related to writing and organizing essays. In the experimental group the students received instructions about general writing skills and Historical writing strategies. In general writing instructions they were taught about developing, evaluating and organizing before writing an essay. In historical writing strategies they learned how to plan and compose argumentative essays about the consequences of the events. They were taught strategies
to interpret primary and secondary source information and to understand complex
historical situations. There were two components in historical strategy-a) Checking the
documents integrity, checking its integrity and the purpose of writing the document. B)
Comparing the document details with other sources and documents. The students were
 taught argumentative writings in their language-art class for 10 days.

After the training, the students were given six documents sets. Each document set
consisted, a historical episode adopted from a history text book and two other primary
sources about the event which reflected contradictory information about the event.
They were, then, asked to reconcile different sources of information and to write an
argumentative essay about the six episodes. A control group was randomly assigned an
essay to read one document set and write a single essay. The results show that after the
instruction, students wrote lengthy and argumentative essays. Interestingly the length
and arguments written by LD children, after the instruction, were comparable to the pre
instruction writings of talented writers. All the three types of experimental group
students showed more sophisticated understanding of history after the instructions.

The preceding studies (Paxton, 1997; Rouet, Britt, Manson & Prfetti, 1996) have sought
for the factors enhancing historical understanding. These researchers have examined the
facilitators that can enhance historical writing reasoning and/or Understanding. Although
none of them have dealt with younger children, they can guide in dealing with historical
material and test construction. Studies like this provide an insight into the facilitators that
can increase the performance of history which can be helpful in the textbook writing and
classroom practices.
Chapter I

Introduction

Most of the studies which have shown early development of HU can also be considered as seeking the facilitators enhancing HU. Since these studies are already described in the section on Studies showing early development of HU, they will be touched upon very briefly here. These studies provide a great deal of implications about how to make younger children better understand historical material. Blyth (1978) involved 6-year-old children in various entertaining activities such as, reading stories, reading pictures, making life lines on the charts, evaluating old objects and visiting to the museums. He found that apart from enjoying this new approach to learning history, concepts and skills needed to understand past were enhanced by practical experiences. Similarly, Barton and Levstik (1996) showed photographs from American History, to the children and asked them to place the pictures according to their time periods. The findings indicate that even very young children could make temporal distinctions and have some knowledge of how things were different in past (The details of the study are given above). Hall (1980) made children exhibit understanding of past by letting them explore a number of old household things including photographs, postcards, and coins etc, (all of which belonged to a specific time period) to 8-9-year-old children. He found that children were able to use the objects and draw information out of that about past events, people or their way of living. In yet another interesting effort Culpin (1984) made children watch a historical event recreated as a drama. After showing them the drama he found that children could empathize with the characters in the drama.

Thus we see that a number of studies propose using child friendly and concrete methods in teaching history to young children. In order to enhance the human feeling and lively
experience in historical studies Freeman and Levstik (1988), proposed use of historical fiction in teaching social studies and history. They argue that through the use of fictions, children can be made to imaginatively enter past and can feel the experiences of the people in past. They concluded that although, fictions cannot be sole source of HU, they are a helpful resource for eliciting interest for historical contents in children's of kindergarten through grade 10th.

Hence, we see that preceding studies have used methods which are approachable for children and requires children to take active part in the assessment. This sort of an approach contributes to a better understanding of history at an early age. Studies have shown that primary and sometimes even nursery children are capable of understanding some form of history and past.

The foregoing studies are considerably suggestive about the ways in which classroom history should be approached. Apart from being determined by the course and teaching strategies, understanding of history is mediated by cultural factors also. Therefore, it is imperative to assess how far the notion of history is affected by such forces.
Chapter 1

Introduction

1.7. Role of Socio-cultural factors in Historical Understanding

Most of the scholars today recognize the role of socio-cultural factors in shaping one’s cognition and understanding. And history is no exception. Rather, history being a subject which is not available for our first hand experience, it is more prone to the contextual factors which mediate its understanding. In order to understand the role of culture in the cognition of historical information, it is first imperative to understand the complex way in which culture and cognition are related.

1.7.1. Culture and Understanding

**Culture:** In general Culture is referred to as a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of society use to interact with their world and with one another. It is a combination of thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, and behavior patterns that are shared by racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups of people. Culture refers not only to those that we are born into (racial or ethnic groups), but also those that we choose to belong to, such as religious or social groups. It consists of concepts and assumptions about life that guide behavior. The knowledge and practice of these cultural behaviors are transmitted generation to generation without any explicit instruction by parents or elders.

This general outline of culture can not be said to incorporate all the aspect of culture and what it consists of. There have been number of attempts to define and categorize culture. The scope and purpose here does not allow mentioning all of them. Reviewing the various ways in which culture has been described by the people, Goodnow (2009) figures out four major ways in which the cultural context has been described. Out of these four approaches...
three emphasize on the content of culture, as what are those aspects of human life which constitute culture; while the fourth approach emphasizes on its form. She proposes that the first way to describe culture is to describe it in terms of its ideologies, normative assumptions and values. It assumes that each culture is marked by its own worldview and these worldviews are then reflected in people’s actions and interpretations of other actions. The second way to approach culture, according to Goonow is to describe culture in terms of the day to day activities. It is the way people behave and engage in their usual activities that mark them separate from people of the other culture. The third way to approach culture is to locate the prescribed paths and routes for achieving short terms or long term goals. Every culture has some set expectations about the stages of life, play activities about daily routines etc. These set paths also have certain assumptions about the outcomes and opportunities that may precede theses paths. For example societies may have their ways of proceeding from childhood to adulthood, to workplace. Related to theses set paths is the expectation about the results and opportunities that people beget through these paths. The approach that describe cultures in these terms seeks to describe a culture in terms of the paths and opportunities that the culture provides to its members. The fourth way of defining cultures does not focus on the content of a culture, rather on its form. This perspective cuts across above mentioned three types of approaches to culture (namely, patterns and activities, norms and values, and paths and opportunities). Analyzing all or some of the above given contents of culture this approach seeks to understand whether a culture is heterogeneous or homogenous on these traits. It does assume a certain level of heterogeneity in culture, however making that heterogeneity a starting
point it tries to seek what form does that heterogeneity takes. In other words, what is the
dominant form of the culture? Do all the various views and values dominate or only one of
them dominate? Thus, this approach to culture describes cultures in terms of general
cooperation/ contest or heterogeneity or homogeneity among its people (Goodnow, 2009).
This overview of four approaches to conceptualize cultures should not entail that these are
the exclusive ways of approaching cultures. An analysis of culture may subscribe to more
than one ways or it can go beyond these four ways of approaching culture.
For the purpose of present study, it is imperative to have a clear and comprehensive
understanding of the concept of culture for understanding the key variables in this study.
Ratner (2000) has offered an encompassing and coherent description of concept of culture.
Although, his conception of culture lays more emphasis on social activities, nevertheless it
includes more or less, all the four ways of describing culture as outlined by Goodnow
(2009). He has identified five main components of culture which he believes are mutually
exclusive but interdependent. Drawing upon the Vaygotsky's activity theory, he
enumerated the following main features of culture:

1. The artifacts, meanings and metaphors in any culture are collectively created. They
   are not result of any conscious effort by its members or any subgroups, however
   the dominant groups generally influence the ways cultural phenomena are
   created.

2. Cultural phenomena can be divided into five sub categories
   - Cultural activities. These are the general ways in which people behave
     in different situations and with different people.
Chapter 1

Introduction

• **Cultural values, schemas, meanings and concepts.** There are different meanings attached to things, roles and ideational concepts. Every culture has its own value system, its gender roles normative structure etc.

• **Physical Artifacts.** These are the physical accomplishments of a society that are expressed in forms of tools, clothes and other objects which are instrumental in everyday activities of people.

• **Psychological phenomena.** The basic psychological aspects of human behavior such as emotion, motivation, memory and thinking are all mediated and distributed by culture.

• **Agency.** The members of a society are not just passive recipients of the cultural influences, rather they continuously construct and reconstruct all the above given cultural phenomena.

3. The above given five aspects of culture are mutually exclusive as well as intricately related to reach other. They all originate and reflect in each other. Also activity is the key around which all these aspects of culture revolve. The social organization of activities is the key to psychological functioning and they are maintained through cultural concepts, artifacts, psychology, and agency.

4. Biology provides potential to the psychological phenomena but does not determine its character. The nature and character of the psychological phenomena is determined by the cultural process.
In essence Ratner proposes that culture has many facets all of which are interrelated and find their implication in each other. He further proposes that in the axis of all these facets of culture is the social activity. All the dimensions of culture operate and are learned through cultural activities. The cultural assumptions and patterns are embedded in the social activities that are collectively organized and executed.

**Culture and Cognition:** The above given description of culture elucidates how important the role of culture can be in designing our thinking patterns. In all societies around the world children grow up learning some basic concepts and mental structures which are constituent elements of cognition and its development. These conceptual constructions are the basic tools with which people process the information received from the environment.

Thus in Berry's terms "Cognition is a culture-specific domain of psychological functioning" (2002 pp. 115). There are different theoretical positions regarding the origin and development of cognitive processes, one thing however is unanimously accepted now that culture plays a constitutive role in the formation, development and maintenance of cognitive processes. These Cultural elements pervade even most basic behaviors and cognitions. A vast number of researches in the different subfields of psychology and anthropology have shown that cultural practices and cognitive processes are deeply intertwined (Miller 1997, Misra, 2003). Social and cultural practices support and maintain certain types of psychological processes and on the other hand obstruct certain other phenomena. Therefore it can be said that "Culture, in its broadest sense...provides tool for understanding, and sets the limits of the range of possible knowledge." (Mishra, 2003, p. 42).
How does culture affect cognition?; By and large all the cognitive developmental psychologist would agree that culture has a detrimental effect on cognition. The question however arises, what is the mechanism through which culture puts forth its influence on psychological functioning. Gauvain (1998), in her review of the researches on cognitive development in socio-cultural context, identified three dimensions of cultural influence on cognitive development. She proposed that culture affect different levels of psychological functioning. According to her the three dimensions of culture namely, Activity, goals and values of culture, Material and symbolic tool, and Higher level structures and practices, have potential for explaining social and cultural character of intellectual development.

The first level, Activity goals and values of the culture refers to Activity theory. Activities and goals that guide the learning of any mental strategy are the expression of culture. At this level, the activities designed and defined by the community lead to learning of corresponding thought patterns in children. In other words, our psychological and motor functioning is attuned to the set pattern of activities in a given culture. Consequently, one can perform well on the tasks that are familiar to that person. Researches on everyday cognition in areas of Memory, Logical reasoning, Motor skills and Everyday mathematics also show that our everyday cognition is inextricably bound to our socio-cultural context and they can not be studied in isolation (Schliemann, Carraher & Ceci 1996).

At the second level, culture influences through the Material and symbolic tools. These thinking tools are socio-historically organized means of transmitting thinking and knowledge to the members. These symbolic and material tools accelerates thinking, designs our understanding, and assist performing day to day activities in any given culture.
Chapter I

Introduction

Children come to learn these tools through interaction with elders and other community members.

The third and the broadest level of cultural influence, according to Gauvain (1998) are *Higher level structures and practices*. At this level, culture penetrates, influences and shapes individual through maintenance and transfer of organized knowledge structure. The notions of knowledge and understanding are reflected in the cultural practices which includes expression and transferring of knowledge. Thus, by maintaining and transferring a particular kind of knowledge the cultures shape individual knowledge system and thinking. Gauvain has thus, explained cognitive development along the above given three dimensions which range from the human activity (the most specific level) to the higher social structure (the broadest level). These three levels comprehensively explain the contextualized intellectual development. However, it can also be proposed that at all these levels culture interacts with biology to give a unique shape to each individual. Therefore, the genetic factors are always to be given their due place in the analysis of cultural influence on behavior. This factor has received a greater attention in the analysis offered by Cole and Cagigas (2009).

In an attempt to elucidate the role of culture in human cognitive development, Cole and Cagigas (2009) suggest that culture and biology together with the long social history of an individual shapes his/her cognitive development. Quoting Li (2006), they describe the role of culture as "bio-cultural constructivism". Commenting on the universal features of human development, they propose that there is a three sided process through which cultures employs its role; the biological Context, the cognitive styles of larger population, and
different cultural practices. The biological preparation and the phylogeny of an individual prepare him/her to acquire certain kinds of knowledge system than others. On the other hand individuals do have capability to choose their cognitive pattern through choosing the activity they choose to engage into. By choosing some activities over others and repeated practice of these cultural activities, individuals can achieve cognitive competency in that particular cognitive domain, however the time and practice required for different types of activities may vary. Some activities may be accomplished more easily than others by the members of a given cultural community.

At the second level, culture shapes the behavioral patterns of people by the set pattern of thoughts through shaping people in the similar way. A large number of studies in the area of cross cultural psychology have supported the belief that there are culturally patterned ways of performing cognitive tasks (Cole & Cagigas, 2009). The basic assumption of this level of analysis of cultural influence is that the cognitive patterns of a particular society gives shape to its social institutions which in turn shapes the experiences of newborns and children. This results in the learning of the same cognitive styles by the children as adopted by their predecessors. At the third level, in Cole and Cagigas's analysis the differing cultural practices endow children with the relevant cognitive and behavioral competency that is necessary for the survival of both, the cultural practices and the individual. These cultural processes help children to become a competent member of its society and have a complete independence within the domain of the cultural norms and values. The Cultural resources enable children to learn and practice the historically accumulated knowledge system and lifestyle.
Chapter I Introduction

Thus, Cole and Cagigas (2009) provide an analysis of cultural influence on behavior at three levels; its influence on individuals as biological entities, as a member of a geopolitical society and through culture-specific activities organized to achieve some common cultural goals. They start with universal cultural influences that act upon human beings as biological species. These influences are more or less same for people across different cultures in terms of its affect on individuals. It is assumed that physiological and cultural influences on the human development can not be separated. At the second level where cultural influences differentiate between the thinking patterns of people of one culture from the people of another culture. At this level, role of culture lies in patterning its members in its own ways. Theses unique cultural ways of shaping people is a product of phylogenetic and socio-historical coevolution of the culture and its members. The third level refers to the differences within a cultural group regarding the different practices and options that a culture provides to its members. These three levels, however are not separate from each other. They are interlinked with each other and operate at all levels of human functioning. Each culture has more specific practices which are embedded in broader socio-historical situations. Such socio-historical foundations of behavior are universal in terms of their influence on human psyche. This interdependence of culture and cognition has been substantiated by the studies in the area of neuroscience and mental mapping. It has been documented that people from two different cultures are very likely to have different brain organization and functioning (Cole & Cagigas 2009).

Given above is description of culture and the way it influences the cognitive structuring of a child. Gauvain (1998) has taken a socio-cultural approach and affirms that the socio-
cultural practices and the different material and symbolic tools have their major role in development of psychological functioning of a child. She overlooks the contribution of biological factors in shaping the cognitive processes. However, Cole and Cagigas (2009) offer an analysis of a phylogenetic and historical co-evolution of people and cultures. Cole (1996) gives much emphasis upon the historical rootedness of human activity and thought. He argues that the psychological functioning is mediated by various abstract and material tools which are designed by the larger community and have changed historically. Therefore, cognition is can be said to evolve from an interaction between biology and cultural-historical context.

The description above outlines the major tools, mediums and the levels through which culture penetrates human psychological function. The social historical context, biology, various symbolic and material artifacts, cultural tools, and human agency—all these do not function in isolation. This is accorded by researchers (Berry et al, 1992; Cole & Cagigas 2009; Gauvain 1998; Ratner, 2000;) that these factors interact in a complex way to produce the human thought process. However by just saying that these variables affect in a complex way will not explain the contextualized nature of human psychology. One also has to understand the mechanism through which these different variables relate to each other and act upon each other. Berry et al (1992) has offered a comprehensive framework to explain the mechanism through which the culture acts at different levels of human cognition in wide range of situations.

The Eco-cultural Framework: A large number of psychologists dealing with culture has used the eco-cultural model to explain their studies. This framework can offer an
explanations about the mechanism through which culture, ethnicity, ecology and behavior interact. As asserted by Berry et al. (1992) this framework is a general model rather than a theory. It offers a scheme for different kinds of variables and their role in explaining the human behavior and psychological functioning across different cultures. The framework offers a probabilistic relationship between ecological & political context biology and behavior. The model differentiates between two levels of variables- socio-cultural and political level variables and individual level variables (Figure 1). It proposes that there is close dynamics between these different parts and altering one part may result in alteration in all the other parts of this dynamics. The population level variables are conceived of as influencing individual level variables. However the individual level variables also provide feedback to the population level variables. It is assumed that individuals are not mere passive recipients. They are, rather, active participants in the construction of wider cultural context and metaphors.

Figure 1: The Eco-cultural framework, Source: Berry et al. (2002)
Figure 1 shows the conceptual lay out of the eco-cultural model proposed by Berry et al. (1992). The variables on the left side are seen to be influencing the variables on the right side. It refers to the population level variables influencing the individual level variables; however, there are two arrows seen from right to left also. The assumption is that individual agency also creates and re-creates the population level variables. Ideally the individual level variable, should have various arrows indicating influence on all the other variables, however only two arrows (Figure 1) have been used in this figure for the ease of understanding (p 11). At each level of analysis culture plays a vital role in eco-cultural model. This is not to underestimate the role of biological factors in cultural adaptation. In fact individual behavior can best be understood only with the interaction of biology and culture. Also the role of culture varies with different levels and types of behavior “...all the relationship between the two major background variables and psychological outcomes are mediated by biological and cultural adaptations. Some influences are direct and rather immediate, such as environmental learning...we also accept that individuals can recognize, screen, appraise, and alter all these influences (whether direct or mediated) and as a result there are likely to be wide individual differences in the psychological outcomes”(ibid pp. 11). Thus culture can serve as an independent or as a moderator variable at both, population and individual level.

Thus the eco-cultural framework offers a comprehensive conceptualization of cultural variable in psychological research. It assumes that although, all humans are biological entities and have certain degree of uniformity in their anatomical and physiological
construction, these constructions and dispositions are expressed in an ecological framework.

Thus, it is concluded that culture has detrimental role in any human psychological functioning. According to Cole and Cagigas (2009) “Culture is then seen as the species-specific medium of human development that organizes and configures the human nervous system for interaction with the world” (P 128). Culture is, then, the vital factor for the biological development of an individual. Therefore, we can not distinguish between a cultural and a biological behavior. It implies that no human behavior is devoid of cultural influence. And so is the case with cognition and understanding.

1.7.1. Historical Understanding and Socio-cultural factors:

The above discussion makes it evident that just like any other body of knowledge the notions of history are largely shaped by the context in which they evolve. Reviewing the research in this area Barton (2001) argued that scarcity of the researches on the HU of different cultural groups limits our understanding about the role of cultural context in learning of history. In order to establish the extent to which socio cultural factors contribute to the notions of past, he conducted an enquiry into children’s notion of past, in two cultural groups; Netherland and USA. His investigation was based on the observation about the difference in the cultures of two countries will provide ample avenue to compare the cultural tools used in their notions of history. He sought to find out specifically, the students explanation about how and why life has changed over time. In his study, he involved 121 children, ages 6-12 years. He interviewed students in pairs. He showed them pictures from past and asked them to tell the time period from which the pictures
belonged. The pictures showed people in different time periods. Subsequently they were asked what aspects of life has changes over time, why and how people know how life was different in past, why history is important and where students have learned about past.

In the results, the students (even the youngest ones) showed the awareness that life in past was different. Although the explanations of students from Northern Ireland and USA overlapped sometimes, they also differed considerably. Barton found that since children in Northern Ireland learn history from various sources including schools; they provide more complete and balanced understanding of history. Students are more likely to identify societal context of changes and more likely to recognize multiple factors portraying any time period. On the other hand the students in USA learn history dominantly from the 'narrative of national progress. This leads them to miss many important aspects of life in past, although this has given them a feeling of common identity (Barton, 2001). He concluded that cultural effects on historical thinking can both facilitate and hinder HU. The role of educationists and teacher, however is to make up for these limitations by equipping students with various tools to do history.

The above discussion throws light upon substantial studies that have dealt with enhancement of historical writing and understanding among students of all age groups; from kindergarten to college levels. The studies provide a great deal of insight into the teaching-learning practices of history. The classroom practices can definitely be enriched by various supportive documents, fictions and also teaching children how to use these resources judiciously. The historical representation in particular society exerts a great influence on children's historical thinking. The cultural tools in a particular culture facilitate
some and hinder other aspects of HU (Barton, 2001). Such tools can also enable teachers and students to overcome the restraining effects of cultural forces which exert a lot of influence on historical thinking of children. However there is a lack of studies specifically dealing with cultural influence on HU (ibid).

1.8. Assessment of Historical Understanding

The studies in historical understanding have arrived at varying conclusions depending upon the method and theoretical perspective that they have used for assessing historical understanding. Although most of the studies done in this area are innovative and crucial for understanding the process of understanding history, most of them cannot be counted upon for their assessment part. Often the studies are haphazardly reported, leaving the reader unable to know the procedure and assumptions adopted for assessments. One group of researchers assumes that understanding of history develops later at adolescent age (Booth, 1966; Hallam, 1966, 1967, 1970, 1997; Jahoda 1963; Stuart & Oakden, 1922). The procedure of assessment done by this group of researchers has emphasized on assessment of understanding of the complex mechanisms of thoughts which involves complex historical situations. Mostly researchers in this group have used real historical stances (Booth, 1966; Hallam, 1966, 1967, 1970, 1997; Jahoda 1963). Among those supporting later development of historical understanding is Jurd (1973), who at the same time have used a little liberal approach than other researchers. He gave his participants hypothetical historical situations to read. He asked questions which assessed characteristics such as dealing with multiplicity of causes, making evaluative judgment, envisaging alternative possibilities, and understanding meanings and connotations of
historical concepts. The students answer to the questions in these areas revealed that answering these questions, adequately involved formal operational thought and that explicit expression of such answers did not occur before 17 years of age. But again if we consider the questions that he asked; it seems that Jurd's idea of history was also not very different from his other counterparts. The characteristics such as "making evaluative judgments", "envisaging alternate possibilities", and "understanding connotations of historical concepts" are all characteristic of formal operational thought. Jurd has actually assessed only those characteristics and in such a way that has yielded such kind of results.

There are other researchers who have substantiated that the children at the age of 7-8, sometimes even at six year of age have at least some form of historical understanding (Barton & Levstik, 1996; Blyth, 1978; Culpin, 1984; Hall, 1980). These studies have taken a more liberal approach to the assessment of historical understanding. They assume that we need to present history in such a manner that makes it more concrete and more accessible to younger children. With such a view, these researchers have assessed history in various innovative and child friendly way. For example Blyth's (1978) study (described above) involved students in various amusing activities such as; reading stories, reading pictures, making life lines on the charts, evaluating old objects and visiting to the museums. The children were able to demonstrate the understanding of comparison, sequence, time, classification, duration and relationship. In another interesting attempt Culpin (1984) showed a drama to the students in order to direct students to the conscious human element. After showing them the drama the students were asked to
investigate and report the feelings and attitude of people involved in drama. They were given questions like; can you tell how the factory workers might be feeling. In this study with around eleven year old children, he was able to show that children could report the empathetic feeling in them. He tried to involve students in many a hypothetical conditions by showing them plays, and found that the students could report the feelings and views about the situations and the problems. The students could also empathies with the characters in the drama. In the same way Barton and Levstik (1996) showed some photographs to the children and asked them to place the pictures according to their time periods. The photographs belonged to different time periods of American history. In their responses children made temporal distinction in terms of arranging these pictures in chronological order. The findings indicated that children had some understanding as to how past be different from present.

The assessment approach of the above mentioned studies has been more liberal. They do present a good example of how an approach to historical understanding should be like. However these studies have not taken a broader approach for the conceptualization of history. They have dealt with one or the other aspects of history but none of them have attempted an over all assessment of historical understanding.

There have been some other attempts which do not go much into the questions of the conceptualizations and characteristics of history rather they have just been interested in observing, the facilitators of historical understanding. For assessing the historical understanding most of them have selected historical passages from the curriculum and just observed whatever they wanted, using these paragraphs; such as writing skills in
history, argumentative reasoning and the ways of looking at the evidences. These studies are done either on higher schools or on college going students, therefore most of the time the testing material have been real historical passages with the complex historical situations. For example Wineburg (1991) gave some historical passages to some students and teachers and asked them to think aloud as they read those paragraphs. He found that students and teachers use different cognitive strategies while reading those passages. Rouet et al. (1996) found multiple sources along with the discussion of the issue or event enhance the understanding of history. In their study they provided students with the multiple resources as an evidence for the events of history and made the students to discuss the events and their evidences. A glimpse of theses studies reveals that they do add to the assessment approaches to HU.

With the above discussion it is apparent that there is no single established approach or test for historical understanding. Whatever studies have been done have taken their own devised approach, and methodology. Taken together, these studies have added to our insight and skill to approach HU. However there is still a vast vacuum in this area to be filled by further researches.
Chapter I

Introduction

1.9. Research on Historical Understanding: Issues and Problems

The above described studies provide us with a helpful insight into Historical understanding of children. Together they help us in designing and furthering research into this area. They help us through their findings as well as through their loopholes and omissions. Most of the studies have their limitations which are attributable to their conceptualization, theorization and methodology.

A) Conceptual constrains:

At conceptual level the questions arises that what is the nature of historical understanding which these studies talk about. Studies which have confirmed later development of historical understanding in children, have conceptualized history in a much abstract fashion which has led them to ask more abstract questions and thus, made it difficult for children to answered those questions. They have confounded historical knowledge with historical understanding (Booth 1978; Hallam, 1967; Medley 1978). Most of them have used the test items from the actual historical situations which cannot be answers without the knowledge of the historical stances. Though they acknowledge that students need certain abilities like, relating things in time, reasoning, imagining, however the questions/items they have used to judge historical understanding have been taken from real historical episodes, which can not be independent of its knowledge.

History is undoubtedly concerned with complex social concepts. This very abstraction of the subject becomes important in testing and understanding of history. The kind of questions/items asked to the students influences the results and its interpretations. If one asks totally abstract and knowledge based questions, it will obviously demand an
analagous of mental processing and memory or learning. This proposition seems likely, when we look at another body of research which have substantiated that given a proper method of teaching and explaining the students at 7-8- years sometimes even at six years of age have been able to demonstrate at least some form of historical understanding. These studies assume that since children, at their young age, think in concrete terms; if their understanding is facilitated by concrete situation and tangible physical experience it will enhance their understanding of history and of historical material.

B) Theoretical constrains:

The second difficulty is with all the studies which used Piaget’s criteria of developmental stages, to compare it with the development of historical thinking. In Piaget’s theorisation; the child’s level of thinking is assumed to be progressing through stages. Only after one level is consolidated and developed the child can move on to next stage. The child has to demonstrate certain characteristic of thinking to be kept in any stage, and if the answers and responses of the children do not match with the criteria of one stage they must fall into other stage. This theory suggests the non-continuity view of knowledge development, by suggesting that the children’s thinking ability transform from one stage to another. However it is not always the case. In fact, knowledge development is a gradual and continuous process. There are studies (mentioned above) which can be seen supporting the continuity view. These studies have shown that it is not necessary for a child to reach a formal operational level before s/he can appreciate historical concepts (Barton & Leivstik, 1996; Blyth, 1978; Hall, 1988).
C) Methodological constrains:

Studies which support the continuity view of development of historical understanding can be suggestive about the nature of historical understanding. However, its usefulness is limited by methodological constrains: The first constrain is that they have dealt with only one or two components of historical understanding at a time; for example, Barton and Levstik (1996) have dealt with 'time'; Hall (1988) with 'object exploration' and Blyth (1978), with the oldness of the objects. They have not investigated history as encompassing many abilities which is actually the case. By doing so only, the relative development of different abilities involved in historical understanding can be known. The second problem is their reporting of the study. Some researches provide only minimal description of their procedures and the conceptualization of the constructs, and make it difficult for a reader to know exactly what has been done. There are some studies like that of Blyth (1970) and Hall (1980); one has not reported the number of subjects taken and the other has taken only six subjects. Given such problems with the reporting and methodology, these investigations remain suggestive at best.

D) Facilitators and/or Correlates of Historical Understanding:

There may be various factors which are related to the development of notion of history in a person. These studies are based on a broader premise that historical understanding is different from other cognitive practices; it should be explored with a broader perspective if not necessarily a new perspective. In other words, cognitive processes involved in processing history are not the same as processing mathematics, science, or geography. Therefore, while teaching history to children there are many unconventional approaches
that can enhance its thinking and writing. There have been many studies which cite use of primary and supportive documents (Rouet, Britt, Manson & Prfetti, 1996; Wiley & Voss, 1999), teaching children to argue about historical information (Susan De La Paz (2005), use of fictions and storytelling approach (Freeman & Levstik, 1988) and many other artifacts and techniques (Blyth, 1978; Culpin, 1984; Hall, 1980; Paxton, 1997). These studies have successfully demonstrated how students thinking and argumentative ability about history can be enhanced.

E) Lack of knowledge about Socio-cultural Factors in shaping Historical Understanding:

It has been argued earlier in this chapter that cognition and understanding are mediated by the socio-cultural context in which they arise. Some scholars have also validated that these different cultural settings facilitate different kinds of historical thoughts (Barton, 2001; Wineburg, 1991). Apart from the school the child learns about history from various societal sources. It can be argued culture plays a crucial role in the development of the notion about history. This area nevertheless, lacks substantial studies to guide our understanding about the same. There is, therefore a need for more studies situated in different cultures to explore the differences in children’s notion of history across various cultures.

1.10. Summing Up

The above discussion reveals that there are various aspects to studying historical understanding the most important of which is the theoretical background available for explaining historical understanding. Lack of theories makes it tougher to further analyse this area. Though some of the researchers have depended upon Piagetian approach to
explain it, but that have been contrasted by the findings of many other researchers. Apart from these researchers, who have clearly used Piaget’s criteria to trace the development of historical understanding (Hallam, 1970, 1967, 1966; Jurd, 1973) there are no other evidences of any theoretical proposition being used to explain historical understanding of children. The results of some researchers (Blyth, 1978; Culpin, 1984; Hall, 1980), signify that Vygotsky’s theory can be helpful in explaining development of historical understanding; however that also needs to be substantiated with empirical studies. Hence dearth of theoretical framework is one key issue, that surface from the above discussion.

The other major issue in the area of historical understanding, as the review of literature suggests, is that there are contradictory conclusions regarding the patterns of development of historical understanding. Some of the researchers have advocated later development of historical understanding i.e. after reaching adolescent age. The other groups of researchers have suggested that the ability to understand history and past develops at early age i.e. in primary and sometimes even nursery children. In the other words there is one group of researchers which assume that it is only after a child acquires a certain level of maturity that children can appreciate history; while the other group suggest that the process of historical understanding starts early and it can be observed advancing through the adolescent age.

Related to the issue of ‘contradictory findings’, is the problem of the assessment of historical understanding. It is clear that there is also a lack of proper assessment tool for historical understanding. In fact the differences are mainly due to variation in the
assessment procedures and the assumptions regarding the tests and the concept of historical understanding. The studies have either used much abstract meaning of history or historical understanding (Hallam, 1970; Medley, 1980; Booth 1978; Jurd, 1973) or if not so then they have not considered various aspects of historical understanding. The studies that have used abstract meaning of historical understanding have all confounded historical understanding with historical knowledge. Their tests required some form of knowledge of history on the part of students; which, as it has been said above, can not be necessarily be called historical understanding. Due to such a constricted definition of historical understanding in their tests, their assessment can not be completely relied upon. The other researchers who have attempted to assess the ability to understand history have resolved some of the drawbacks of the earlier studies, for example they have tries to assess historical understanding not historical knowledge. However, they have not taken a wider approach to conceptualize the various dimensions of historical understanding. They have dealt with only one or the other aspect of historical understanding, such as time; chronology or causality etc. Such an assessment does not provide an over all idea of historical understanding and its correlates. Moreover the assessments that these people have done are not formally published to be used by others. Therefore, it becomes crucial to devise a comprehensive tool for assessing historical understanding.

The discussion on the facilitators of HU highlights a number of studies that have dealt with the facilitators that can help the students and teachers of history. Given the fact that these tools are helpful to teaching and learning practices, the fact remains that HU
also mediated by various cultural tools. These cultural tools facilitate and hinder various aspects of historical thinking. While using the tools to enhance the HU one has to take into account the cultural tools. In other words the use of learning tools ought to be informed by the prevalent representation of history in the broader setting in which it is practiced. Unfortunately there is not much researchers done in these areas, which specifically deal with differences in children's HU across different cultures (Barton, 2001). Hence it is essential to conduct studies, in ways which can overcome the limitations and drawbacks of the previous studies in this area.