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Representing World History in the 21st Century

The Impact of 9/11, the Iraq War, and the Nation-State on Dynamics of Collective Remembering

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Following open-ended methodology used in an earlier research by Liu et al., social representations of world history were assessed among university student samples in 12 countries: China, India, Russia, Brazil, Indonesia, East Timor, Turkey, Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, Spain, and Portugal. Findings confirmed that across cultures, transcending boundaries of political ideology, civilization age, or youthful statehood. (a) World history is represented as a story about politics and warfare, with World War II the most important event in history and Hitler its most

influential individual. (b) Recency effects are pervasive in young adults' collective remembering, with events and figures from the past 100 years accounting for 72% and 78% of nominations on average. (c) Representations were primarily Eurocentric, with events and figures in Western societies accounting for 40% of nominations overall, but this is tempered by nationalism, especially in the prevalence of local heroes instrumental to the founding of the current state. The representational hegemony of the victorious Western powers of World War II is being challenged by negative evaluations of the American presidency following 9/11 (September 9) and the Iraq War, with George Bush Jr. perceived as more negative than Hitler in four out of six samples where they were both nominated as important. Results are interpreted within a theoretical framework of history and identity, where collective remembering of the past is dynamically interlinked to political issues of the present.

Recently, Liu and Hilton (2005) have asserted that social representations of history are crucial to public beliefs about the legitimacy of political systems and central to justifications for political action. History is recognized across the social sciences and by politicians as an important symbolic resource to be mobilized in arguments for and against political regimes and their agendas (e.g., Gillis, 1994; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Olick, 2003; Pennebaker, Paez, & Rime, 1997; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Southgate, 2005; Wertsch, 2002). A central element in most forms of nationalism is to assert the immortality of the group through time, establishing its origins in such as way as to justify its continued existence and rights and obligations today (Smith, 1998). Hence, psychologists have begun to examine how people use history to understand why the world is the way that it is, and how tradition and past experience can be used to justify political agendas (e.g., Huang, Liu, & Chang, 2004; Liu & Atsumi, 2008; Liu, Lawrence, Ward, & Abraham, 2002; Liu, Wilson, McClure, & Higgins, 1999; Pennebaker et al., 1997; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Sen & Wagner, 2005).

As a vivid illustration of this principle, the Munich and Vietnam analogies have never been far from public dialogue regarding American involvement in Iraq. Was Saddam Hussein a dangerous dictator like Hitler who had to be deposed, or is/was the invasion of Iraq another quagmire of moral degradation and waste of life like Vietnam? As the 21st century unfolds, new historical events such as 9/11 and new figures as Osama bin Laden are entering into the present through a dynamic relationship with the past. Going beyond a static view of historical representations, we update the findings of Liu, et al. (2005) with 21st century data from 12 new countries in developing a theoretical account of universality and change in representing world history.

Using open-ended nomination data from six Asian and six Western samples, Liu et al. (2005) identified three general characteristics of the representation of world history whose universality is revisited: (a) politics and war were overwhelming considered as the subject of world history, with Hitler and World War II (WWII) nominated most frequently across cultures; (b) there was a huge recency effect, with more than two thirds of events and people nominated being active within the past 100 years; and (c) Eurocentrism was the dominant pattern, qualified by nation-level ethnocentrism for figures especially. Regionalism

was prevalent only among Europeans, and almost absent among Asians, who only acknowledged their own national heroes. Westerners virtually ignored all non-Western history.

These findings provide a representational basis for the victorious powers of WWII to take political action in international affairs in a way that cannot be justified for other countries. Phrases such as "defender of the free world" can used to describe and justify the United States but not Germany, Iran, or Japan. But how universal are these findings? Will they apply to the oldest continuous civilizations in the world? How about brand new states, and Muslim countries? Given the focus in contemporary psychology on the universality of *process* but not *content*, most cross-cultural psychologists might be surprised by the substantial universality in the content of representations of world history. This provides an opportunity for the current research to pursue the limitations and understand the causes of this surprising similarity of the content of knowledge and beliefs across cultures.

Liu and Hilton (2005) also proposed a dynamic interplay between the past and present that was not addressed by Liu et al.'s (2005) cross-sectional survey data. Following Hayden White (1987), they argued that history is best thought of not as an objective repository of facts, but as a narrative, with facts put in the service of narrative templates (see Wertsch, 2002) selectively employed by different agents for different agendas, such as legitimizing present-day political actions by politicians (Schwartz, 1996), or establishing fact as determined by professional historians (see Liu & László, 2007). The death of Jewish zealots at Masada resisting Roman occupation was no less a fact a thousand years ago as it is now, but its importance as a representation for Jewish people today is a function of its status as a symbol to the state of Israel (Zerubavel, 1994). When historian James Belich (1996) refers to British colonial era settlers coming to New Zealand as arriving in "waka" (the Maori word for canoe), and Michael King (2003) structures his bestselling *Penguin History of New Zealand* following a pattern of one chapter about Pakeha (European settlers) followed by one chapter about Maori (Polynesian people who arrived about 600-800 years before the first Europeans), they are producing a contemporary "bicultural narrative" for New Zealand nationhood that contrasts with an "enlightenment narrative" of the progress of civilization popular in the colonial era (Liu, 2005).

Representations of history are always in the process of becoming, as new events and new political challenges come to the fore. Nor is history a homogenous narrative, fitting seamlessly into neat categories and coherent stories. Paez et al (2008) found that at the between-nations level it was the specific remembrance of WWII, not a general recollection of war that predicted willingness to fight in current conflicts. Hence, new events are most typically "anchored" (Moscovici, 1988) within particular existing representations, amplifying or refreshing established narratives (see Schuman & Rodgers, 2004). But on rare occasions, stunningly new events occur that cannot be easily accommodated within existing knowledge structures. In time, their management in public discourse serves to change or overlay established narratives with a new "cognitive narrative template" (Wertsch, 2002), or a new story schema that may restructure our understanding of both history and current events (Liu & László, 2007; Schwartz, 1996).

WWII was surely such an event. But it may be that the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack against the World Trade Center in New York and the subsequent invasions of Middle Eastern countries by the United States and its allies are similarly singular and rich in meaning. How does the WWII representation of the United States as "defender of the free world"

square with its September 11 role as victim of terrorist attack, and its Middle Eastern role as "invader" (or "liberator") of Afghanistan and Iraq? The tumultuous events of the opening of the 21st century have enabled us to compare and contrast results from the 1990s with post–September 11 data from new countries.

Such a cross-time comparison relies on the pervasiveness and strength of recency effects (or salience) identified by Liu et al. (2005) and also Pennebaker et al. (2006). It enables certain explanations to be ruled out as the cause of the content of representations of world history. First, we anticipated that September 11, the Iraq War, George W. Bush, and Osama bin Laden would all appear among the most frequently nominated events and figures in world history. If this prediction is confirmed, it would eliminate official education as the only or even primary causal factor in the recency effect for historical nominations. Rather, mass media and word of mouth would be the only plausible explanations for the nomination of events that occurred too recently to appear in school textbooks within our sampling frame. Furthermore, comparing the representational status of 9/11 and the Iraq war versus a similarly salient nonwar event such as the Asian tsunami provides information as to whether there is something special about war in collective representations of world history, or whether saturation media coverage is enough. Cross-time comparison provides new data showing how the content of collectively realized systems of knowledge and belief are created and shared across cultures (Hilton & Liu, 2008).

We report on not only the frequency of nominations across cultures but also on their evaluation. These evaluations provide a useful indicator about how these events are being interpreted around the world, and whether the United States' preeminent position as "defender of the free world" has been compromised by negative reactions to its invasion of Iraq as suggested by numerous polls conducted by the Pew Research Center (Pew Global Attitude Project, 2006). These new data allow us to examine in greater detail the representational status of the USA and particularly its wartime President, through lenses provided by lay representations of world history.

Several countries were sampled to provide boundary conditions testing the generality of the universals proposed as characterizing lay representations of world history. East Timor (established 2002) is one of the most recently established states on the planet. To the extent that our pattern replicates in East Timor, then we can eliminate official education as the causal factor responsible for these effects. Although our Timorese sample is of university age, their formal education was severely compromised by recurring oppression and civil war during their formative years, and official histories were tainted by their association with Indonesia. What should the relative lack of formal and consensual education on history do to patterns of recency, Eurocentrism, and emphasis on politics and war found in other populations? A state-building perspective (Olick, 2003) predicts more ethnocentrism, constructed around justifying the existence of a Timorese state and national identity separate from Indonesia.

At the other end of the spectrum, in the current article, data have been obtained from India and China, the two oldest continuous civilizations on earth. Would the recency effect in the recall of historical events and people apply to these proud and ancient civilizations, many of whose greatest accomplishments were millennia ago? In particular, Hofstede (2001) has identified long-term orientation as an important value differentiating "Sinic" societies from others. Hence, if the perception of history is a product of civilizations and their long-term value orientations, then we should expect less recency in nominations from

China (and perhaps from India). But if it is a product of statehood, then India and China are very young, dating their current statehood to post WWII.

The "clash of civilizations" hypothesized by Huntington (1996) offers another boundary condition, that of a civilization-based identity for empirical generalizations about representations of world history. Moscovici (1988) argues that social representations can be either hegemonic (widely shared and undisputed) or polemical (conflicting), and polemical representations often serve as markers for salient group boundaries. Liu et al. (2005) noted that the pattern of results for Malaysia, the sole predominantly Muslim country in their sample, was relatively distinct, and generally less Eurocentric than any other sample. There was a greater emphasis on events relevant to the "clash of civilizations" between Islam and Christianity, suggesting an alternative narrative frame to the widely accepted Eurocentric story of world history as emanating from the West. We report data from Turkey and Indonesia, two of the most populous predominantly Muslim countries to examine this thesis.

Finally, data have been obtained from former Soviet bloc countries, including Russia. Among these countries, Ukraine provides an interesting comparison with both Russia (its former master/mother) and with East Timor (as a new state) in that it is also a recent state (established 1991) but with more than a decade behind it for young adults to absorb the implications of statehood. A Marxist reading of history privileges economics and class struggle (particularly the centrality of various modes of production) more than war (see Feuerwerker, 1968), so we might expect a greater preponderance of economics in former Eastern block countries. Furthermore, the 1917 Leninist revolution that launched the Soviet Union is central to a Communist interpretation of history. However, given that the prestige of Marxism has declined precipitously with the fall of the Soviet block, this is a weak hypothesis; it might appear in Russia, but is hardly likely in countries such as Hungary, Poland, or Ukraine that see themselves as happily escaping Soviet influence.

We also report data collected in Brazil and in Southern Europe, generally expecting to replicate results from Liu et al. (2005).

In summary, we used Liu et al.'s (2005) method of open-ended nominations to ascertain the most salient events and figures in world history among a strategic sample of new countries: East Timor, China, India, Indonesia, Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, Spain, Portugal, and Brazil. In all, the 12 countries surveyed previously and the 12 surveyed here represent (but are certainly not representative of) two thirds of the population of the world, including all the Great Powers (i.e., the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and the five largest economies in the world), some of the smallest and newest countries in the world, and samples from every populated continent except Africa. If we replicate the major findings reported previously in this new sample of countries, this would provide proof of the robustness of the findings. Alternatively, these data will identify boundary conditions for the prominence of politics and war, recency, and Eurocentrism in representations of world history.

Equally important, given the momentous nature of events in world politics post-9/11, cross-time comparison of data collected here compared with those collected at the end of the 20th century may be used to advance an understanding of the role of salience within a theory of identity and history that moves beyond static description into a dynamic relationship between past and present. As the collective remembering of WWII fades from living memory into cultural memory (Assman, 1992) with the passing of time and the generations

who experienced the war, it is possible that it will diminish in importance from its current status as the pivot around which narratives of world history revolve. To the extent that September 11 and the Iraq War provide an alternative representational frame to understand history and current events, this may diminish the advantage in legitimate power currently held by the victorious WWII allies.

Method

The methods used were identical to those reported in Liu et al. (2005). University students were recruited from 12 locations; they are ideal for the study of the genesis of social representations of world history as they reflect a strong institutional component to their learning. For this investigation, we were less interested in the idiosyncrasies of personal experience that might be more evident in mature samples.[1]

Sample Characteristics

Locations and number of participants were as follows: Brazil (Univille University, Tiradentes University, Federal University of Sergipe, Catholic University of Goias, $N = 367$; 295 women, 70 men)[2]; China (Sun Yat-Sen University, Guangzhou, $N = 115$; 62 women, 53 men); East Timor (National University of Timor, Dili, $N = 98$; 46 women, 52 men); Hungary (University of Pécs, $N = 65$; 35 women, 30 men); India (University of Mumbai, $N = 100$; 55 women, 45 men); Indonesia (University of Indonesia, Jakarta, $N = 104$, 54 women, 50 men); Poland (Warsaw University, $N = 102$; 72 women, 30 men); Portugal (University of Minho, $N = 118$; 70 women, 48 men); Russia (State University of Tula, $N = 60$; 48 women, 12 men), Spain (University of Basque Country, $N = 142$; 95 women, 47 men); Turkey (Baskent University, $N = 227$; 112 women, 115 men); Ukraine (Luck University, $N = 84$; 59 women, 25 men). The mean age of the student samples ranged from 19.7 to 26.3. Students completed surveys in the standard language of instruction used at the tertiary institution where the data were collected; if necessary questionnaires were translated and back-translated prior to administration. The first of the samples was collected in October 2003, and the last of them in 2006. Results from some of the smaller samples such as Russia and Hungary may be less reliable and robust than those from the larger samples.

Materials

All participants completed a two-page survey. The first section contained demographic questions. The second section contained open-ended items to assess representations of history. The first question asked respondents to,

> Write down the names of the 5 people born in the last 1,000 years whom you consider to have had the most impact, good or bad, on World History. When you are done, circle a number from 1-7 to indicate how much you admire each of them.

The scale endpoints ranged from *don't admire at all* to *admire greatly*. A 1,000-year period was chosen to avoid an overreliance on religious figures. Then participants were then asked,

Imagine that you were giving a seminar on world history. What 7 events would you teach as the most important in World History? How positively or negatively do you regard each event?" (using 7-point scales ranging from Very Negative to Very Positive).

The questionnaires took 20 to 25 minutes to complete.

Lists of the 10 most frequently nominated events in world history and 10 most frequently nominated figures in world history were tallied for each of the 12 samples. Any participant who did not enter any figures or events was deleted from the analysis. The average number of figures named was between 4.32 (Turkey) and 4.96 (Poland) in the 12 samples (out of a maximum of 5). The average number of events named was between 4.76 (East Timor) and 6.89 (Ukraine; out of a maximum of 7).

Coding Scheme

A list of the most important events in world history and the most important individuals in world history in the past 1,000 years was constructed based on previous research. With each new sample collected, new events and individuals were added to the list. Both individuals and events were coded for "when," "where," and "why" using various historical textbooks and timetables. Some minor miscellaneous events and figures were not coded however.

Events were coded as having occurred and persons coded as having accomplished their most important deeds during the following periods: (a) prehistoric times (before 10,000 BCE), (b) ancient history (10,000-1,000 BCE), (c) classical period Part I (1000 BCE to AD 500), (d) classical period Part II (AD 500-1000), (e) second millennium (AD 1000-1600 AD), (f) 17th century (1600s), (g) 18th century (1700s), (h) 19th century (1800s), (i) 20th century (1900s), (j) 2000s, or (k) no time period classifiable.

Events were also coded for where they occurred, and persons for where they were from according to the following system: (a) Europe (including Russia), (b) North America (United States and Canada), (c) Latin America (including Mexico, Central and South America), (d) Africa (including Egypt), (e) Australasia (Australia and New Zealand), (f) The South Pacific (including Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines), (g) The Middle East (including Israel and Turkey), (h) The Indian subcontinent (including Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Bangladesh), (i) The Far East (including Vietnam and Thailand), and (j) no specific region classifiable or more than one region.

Events were coded into one of the following categories: (a) war and collective violence; (b) political events other than war; (c) scientific and technological achievements; (d) culture, including eras; (e) disasters; (f) discovery, exploration, and colonization; (g) economic issues; (h) births, deaths, and lives of individuals; (i) religion; and (j) miscellaneous.

Individuals were coded into up to two of the following categories: (a) wartime achievements; (a) political leadership not primarily about war; (a) scientific and technological achievements; (a) arts, literature, music, philosophy, and other theoretical advances; (a) discoveries, exploration, colonization; (a) humanitarian work; (a) spiritual leadership; (a) athletics, dance, and physical beauty; and (a) miscellaneous.

More than 160 events and 180 individuals were compiled on the master list and more events and individuals were coded as relevant to specific samples; computer programs

automatically generated codes for events and figures on the master list for the later samples. History books were consulted on the rare occasions where there were questions about the content of the codes, usually for specific figures. All coders referred to the master list in coding data, and a few questions were settled under the direction of the first author. Detailed tables of coding results can be obtained on request from the first author.

Results and Discussion

Most Important Events in World History

The most obvious feature of Table 1 is the status of WWII as the most frequently nominated event in world history across cultures, replicating Liu et al. (2005). World War I (WWI) follows as the second most nominated event in world history, albeit rated more highly in Europe and areas more closely linked to Europe. Not only WWI and WWII, but the two wars together were prominent nominations. Russians distinguished between WWII and the Great Patriotic War, which is their name for that phase of WWII after Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Turkish people, who saw the end of the Ottoman Empire, and the birth to a new Turkish Republic as a consequence of WWI (and were neutral in WWII), nominated WWI more frequently than WWII alone among the 24 societies examined. The case of East Timor is even more special as we shall discuss presently. In addition to the preeminence of the World Wars in almost all samples, other events involving warfare and collective violence were also prominent: the recent cluster of events surrounding conflict in the Middle East, including the Iraq War and the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict, and the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York on September 11 and terrorism in general, all received attention. The atomic bomb and atomic bombings continued to receive cross-cultural consensus as important, but some of the lesser wars from the 1990s data such as Vietnam and the Gulf War lost prominence. The Crusades were often mentioned in Indonesia, but not Turkey, among our two predominantly Muslim samples.[3]

Country-specific events involving warfare and collective violence, such as the Sino–Japanese and Opium War in China, India–Pakistan Wars in India, the Bali bombing and Timorese massacre in East Timor, the Turkish War of Independence, the Conquest of Hungary, and the Spanish Civil War were important features of national lists. Almost the entire top 10 in Russia was devoted to warfare, not economics/class struggle as a Marxist reading of history might suggest. Overall, between 35% and 58% of events (48% on average) nominated across cultures concerned warfare and collective violence. Detailed appendices of the results of coding are available on request from the first author.

The second most frequently nominated category of events was political (on average 27% of events named). Most prominent among these was the break up of the Soviet Union and Global Communism, not surprisingly nominated in most of the former and current Communist countries. Similar to Schuman and Rodgers' (2004) American data, we found the related Cold War to have receded in prominence, appearing in only 1 top 10 compared with 3 in the 2005 article. Similarly, the French Revolution was prominent in only 3 samples in the current data compared with 8 samples in 2005. Even the Industrial Revolution appeared in only 6 of the current 12 samples compared with 8 in 2005. It should be noted that many of the events coded as political also involved collective violence or its threat

Table 1
Most Important Events in World History

Rank	China (N = 115)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	India (N = 100)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	East Timor (N = 98)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	Indonesia (N = 104)	Percentage	Eval (Std)
1	WWII	81	2.0 (1.7)	WWII	61	2.8 (1.7)	Iraq War	56	2.1 (1.6)	WWII	79	2.8 (1.9)
2	Found P. R. China	48	5.3 (1.1)	9/11 WTC	49	3.1 (2.3)	WWII	39	1.5 (1.3)	9/11 WTC	60	2.6 (1.8)
3	WWI	40	2.2 (1.1)	Indian independence	42	6.3 (1.1)	9/11 WTC	36	1.4 (1.0)	Asian tsunami	43	2.4 (1.7)
4	Industrial Revolution	36	5.2 (1.0)	WWI	37	2.8 (1.9)	Terrorism	28	1.3 (1.0)	WWI	24	2.5 (1.9)
5	Technological development	33	5.5 (0.8)	Cold War	20	4.0 (2.1)	Bali bombing	20	1.4 (0.68)	Iraq War	32	1.9 (1.5)
6	Fall of Communism	24	3.2 (1.3)	India–Pakistan War	18	3.7 (2.5)	Dili massacre	19	1.4 (0.99)	Crusades	24	3.8 (1.9)
7	Man on the moon	20	5.5 (0.95)	Both World Wars	15	2.5 (1.9)	Timorese independence	15	7.0 (0.0)	Industrial Revolution	22	4.9 (1.5)
8	Colonization	20	4.3 (1.2)	Partition India–Pakistan	15	2.6 (1.7)	Israel–Palestine conflict	12	2.7 (1.8)	Bali bombing	21	1.5 (0.80)
9	Sino-Japanese War	17	4.2 (2.3)	Iraq War	14	2.7 (2.0)	Timor invasion by Indonesia	88	1.5 (2.1)	Israel–Palestine conflict	21	3.0 (1.7)
10	Atomic bomb	16	3.0 (1.5)	Asian tsunami	14	2.4 (1.9)	HIV	8	1.7 (2.1)	Atomic bomb	20	2.8 (2.1)
10=	Opium War	16	2.2 (1.3)	Human Rights Declaration	8	6.6 (1.1)						

(continued)

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Table 1 (continued)

Rank	Russia (N = 60)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	Ukraine (N = 84)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	Poland (N = 102)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	Turkey (N = 227)	Percentage	Eval (Std)
1	WWII	57	4.0 (2.5)	WWII	100	1.4 (0.2)	WWII	73	1.3 (0.34)	WWI	44	3.2 (2.0)
2	WWI	46	4.1 (2.0)	WWI	71	1.8 (0.87)	WWI	54	1.4 (0.75)	Turkish War of Independence	42	6.7 (0.7)
3	Great Patriotic War	45	4.1 (1.9)	Chernobyl meltdown	69	1.6 (1.3)	9/11 WTC	29	1.3 (1.2)	WWII	41	3.2 (2.1)
4	Christianization of Russia	33	4.2 (2.1)	Orange Revolution	52	5.6 (1.6)	Fall of Communism	26	6.3 (0.5)	Conquest of Istanbul	35	6.5 (1.0)
5	Chechnya War	32	3.7 (2.3)	Great Hunger 1932-1933	47	1.1 (0.3)	Discovery of the Americas	21	5.8 (1.4)	9/11 WTC	26	2.5 (1.8)
6	Kulikovo Battle	28	4.2 (2.0)	Iraq War	33	2.4 (1.0)	Polish Pope	14	7.0 (0.0)	French Revolution	22	5.5 (1.3)
7	Fall of Soviet Union	27	4.4 (2.1)	Fall of Soviet Union	33	6.7 (0.8)	Creation of European Union	14	5.5 (1.1)	Found. Turkish Republic	19	6.8 (0.5)
8	Russian Revolution	23	4.0 (2.2)	Atomic bombing	31	2.1 (0.59)	Death of Polish Pope	12	4.2 (0.41)	Iraq War	20	2.0 (2.1)
9	Atomic bomb	18	2.7 (2.4)	Ukraine inde-pendence	23	6.3 (0.2)	Beginning of communism	12	2.2 (1.7)	Discovery of the Americas	13	4.8 (1.9)
10	Afghanistan War	18	4.0 (2.3)	9/11 WTC	22	1.8 (1.1)	Birth of Christ	12	6.6 (0.43)	Industrial Revolution	12	6.1 (1.1)

(continued)

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Table 1 (continued)

Rank	Hungary (N = 57)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	Brazil (N = 367)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	Portugal (N = 118)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	Spain (N = 142)	Percentage	Eval (Std)
1	WWII	88	2.0 (1.4)	WWII	40	2.0 (1.6)	WWII	72	1.6 (1.1)	WWII	45	1.5 (0.2)
2	WWI	75	2.1 (1.4)	WWI	32	2.1 (1.7)	WWI	51	1.6 (1.1)	WWI	34	1.5 (0.5)
3	Discovery of America	52	5.3 (1.4)	German Reunification	22	6.0 (0.7)	9/11 WTC	30	1.1 (0.3)	9/11 WTC	30	2.0 (0.7)
4	Conquest of Hungary	24	6.5 (0.97)	Industrial Revolution	20	5.5 (1.6)	Portuguese discoverers	26	6.2 (1.1)	Discovery of the Americas	25	5.3 (2.4)
5	Hungarian regime change	23	5.2 (1.4)	9/11 WTC	19	2.0 (1.8)	Carnation Revolution	25	6.3 (1.0)	Spanish Civil War	23	1.3 (0.1)
6	French revolution	23	4.9 (1.5)	French Revolution	17	5.0 (1.5)	Industrial Revolution	20	6.0 (1.1)	March 11 train bomb	23	1.3 (0.2)
7	Industrial Revolution	23	4.9 (1.2)	Both World Wars	14	2.5 (1.8)	Man on the Moon	18	6.4 (0.8)	Iraq War	20	1.3 (0.3)
8	Man on the Moon	16	6.1 (0.84)	Abolition of slavery	11	6.7 (0.64)	Atomic bomb	12	1.7 (1.7)	Both World Wars	18	1.7 (1.1)
9	1956 Hungarian Revolution	16	5.4 (0.88)	Iraq War	11	1.3 (0.91)	Iraq War	12	1.6 (0.8)	Democracy	18	6.0 (0.8)
10	1848 Hungarian Revolution	12	6.0 (1.1)	Atomic bomb	11	1.5 (1.3)	Fall of Berlin Wall	11	5.9 (1.5)	Vaccinations	17	7.0 (0.0)
10=	Cold War	12	2.1 (1.2)									
10=	Holocaust	12	1.7 (1.9)									

Note: WW1 = World War I; WWII = World War II; 9/11 WTC = September 11, 2001 attacks of the World Trade Center.

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(e.g., the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the partition of India–Pakistan, the Hungarian Revolutions of 1956 and 1848, etc.). Another major subset of political events was the founding of nations (and the United Nations), which historically have often been preceded by (e.g., China, East Timor, United Nations) or accompanied (e.g., India) huge amounts of collective violence. Even the most important nonviolent cluster of political events, the Fall of Communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union were notable not only in their own right, but because of the remarkable restraint from violence exercised by Communist regimes at the time. The Carnation Revolution in Portugal was similarly peaceful and led to the end of dictatorship and the establishment of the current political regime.

Because of the prominence of warfare, the lists in Table 1 are biased toward negative events (78 of the 123 events named, or more than 60% were below the Midpoint 4, see third, sixth, and ninth columns).[4] Among the 12 countries, only China and Hungary nominated a top 10 consisting of predominantly positive events, China by focusing on technological progress and events related to the founding of the People's Republic of China, and Hungary by focusing on political events related to Hungarian independence and sovereignty rather than its long history of subjugation. The Russian evaluation of historical events was unique in that they listed no unambiguously positive events. Rather, Russians provided a list saturated in warfare, but uniquely rated these wars (except for Chechnya) as only slightly negative. Otherwise, across 11 other societies only the Sino–Japanese War, which ultimately led to the defeat of Japan and the end of the colonization in China, and the Turkish War of Independence in Turkey were rated as neutral or positive events. In the main, war is perceived as negatively, whereas the events leading up to and including national independence are perceived positively, along with technological and institutional progress (e.g., the rise of democracy as indexed by the French revolution, the fall of communism, the establishment of the United Nations). If there is a lay narrative of history, it might be that out of suffering come great things: the foundation of states and other major institutions such as the United Nations and democracy.

These data confirm that history to educated young people is a story about politics and war. Together, these two categories of events accounted for an average of 75% of the events across cultures. Other important events unrelated to politics and war were the aforementioned Industrial Revolution, the only economic event to receive much attention in the current sample, Technological Developments (such as the digital age) and the Man on the Moon, the only scientific events of importance, and the Discovery of the Americas and Colonization (exploration).

The impact of politics and war appears to be very much related to the second most salient feature of the current data, a focus on recent events. Overall, 62% (Russia) to 96% (East Timor) of events nominated occurred in the 20th or 21st centuries (72% on average). Another 7% were from the 19th century. Together, the past 200 years accounted for almost 80% of events nominated across cultures on average. Recency effects were particularly insightful for 21st century events because these were unlikely to have entered into popular imagination through official high school textbooks, but rather were more a function of mass media influences and word of mouth.

In the 1990s data, the French and Industrial Revolutions received the most cross-cultural nominations after the World Wars (eight). In the 2000s data here, the 2001 terror bombing of the World Trade Center received the most cross-cultural nominations (nine), followed by

the Iraq War (eight) as the events with the most cross-cultural consensus after the world wars. This is a significant change in how world history is represented, and opens up the possibility that the World Trade Center bombing is becoming a "new anchor" for world opinion. The French Revolution was in the top 10 of only 3 lists, whereas the Industrial Revolution made it to 6 lists. The Asian tsunami, which is probably the 21st century event to have received the most global mass media attention after the Iraq War and World Trade Center bombing, appeared in only two top 10s, both in countries directly affected by the disaster (India and Indonesia).

The consequence of these changes is to make the 2000s' century data even more focused on recent events than the 1990s' century data, which at least acknowledged the two major forces of the enlightenment, democracy (French Revolution, American Independence) and industry (Industrial Revolution). In the "New World Order" of history, it appears that the World Trade Center bombing and the Iraq War have superseded them, at least temporarily, in importance. These results underscore the impact of salience on the open-ended nomination method used here.

Another factor behind the recency effect is that data show it is the founding of the state, not the civilization that is nominated as important in world history. India and China, the two greatest continuous civilizations from ancient times, had between them only three events prior to the 20th century in their lists. The sample from the Republic of India, inheritors of Vedic traditions and numerous powerful empires, did not name a single event before Indian Independence; their entire narrative was focused around the creation of the present state of India and its struggles with Pakistan. The sample from China named three events prior to the 20th century (the Industrial Revolution, Colonization, and the Opium War) that can all be related to a contemporary state-mandated focus on modernization and the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

An even more exaggerated pattern of recency effects can be found for the newest state in the sample, East Timor. Alone among the 24 societies surveyed, the East Timorese did not name WWII as the top event, and WWI was not even among their top 10. Rather, a strongly ethnocentric list was observed where every event they nominated was in the 20th or 21st century, and almost all could either be related to a narrative about the emergence of East Timor as a sovereign state, or was very recent and could be related to worldwide struggles against forces associated with Islamic fundamentalism. The Timorese sample is perhaps instructive of the effects of education or lack thereof; although nominally a university sample, the course of their education in school had been frequently interrupted by civil and military disturbances, and much of it (under Indonesian auspices) would have been discredited. So the results here could be more strongly attributed to word of mouth and mass media and less to formal education than for our standard university educated participants.

Recency effects are associated with nationalism, as most of the states currently on the planet have been established within the past 200 years, even if the civilizations and peoples forming them may be millennia old. In the current sample, richly represented by newly independent states from the former Soviet bloc and developing world, Eurocentrism was slightly less generic than observed previously, and nationalism was more pronounced.

For example, Ukraine shared a similarly nationalistic and recent representation of world history to East Timor, with three events associated directly with the foundation of their new state, and several more events of local importance such as the Chernobyl Nuclear Reactor

Meltdown and the Great Hunger of 1932. Poland was more unusual: The recent passing away of the popular Polish Pope John Paul II occupied the prominent position usually filled by purely nationalistic events. The tie between religion and nationalism appeared unique to Poland among European nations, where the Catholic Church's contributions to Polish nationalism/political independence should not be underestimated. The concurrent nomination of the Birth of Christ among the most important events for Poland underscores the importance of religion for this country. According to both Ukrainians and Poles, virtually nothing of importance occurred in world history outside of Europe.

Hungary provided another variation on the theme, where the struggle for national sovereignty has spanned a millennium, beginning with the naming of the conquest of the Carpathian Basin by the Magyars. Interestingly, Hungarians do not nominate the Battle of Mohacs in 1526 that caused Hungary to lose its independence for more than 400 years among the most important events in world history, but do recall the failed but briefly spectacular Hungarian revolutions of 1848 (against the Austrians) and 1956 (against the Soviets) together with the successful revolution in 1990. The Hungarian narrative is otherwise prototypical of a Eurocentric perspective, with key events in Western civilization such as the Discovery of the Americas, the French and Industrial Revolutions, the Cold War, and the Man on the Moon standing side-by-side with the aforementioned events of national importance. Alone among all the societies surveyed, Hungary showed signs of a longer-term civilization-based narrative versus a narrative focused on the current state.

Brazil provides a Eurocentric perspective. The list of events nominated here, including German Reunification, the French and Industrial Revolutions, and the World Wars is not readily identifiable with any nation, although the Abolition of Slavery had a particularly strong impact on Brazil. Portugal provided a similarly Eurocentric and nonnationalistic list of events whose most interesting feature is a highly positive evaluation (6.2 out of 7) of the age of discovery, which Portuguese maintain is distinct from colonization. The Spanish, in contrast, surprisingly did not rate their own colonial history as important, but rather nominated the more recent Spanish Civil War and the March 11 Madrid train bombings instead.

There was little evidence of a pan-Islamic civilization-based representation of history in the events provided by Turkey and Indonesia. Turkey's list was strongly nationalist and highly secular, with three events related to the foundation of the current state and just one relating to the Ottoman Turkish Empire. It included the French Revolution and the Discovery of the Americas but not the Crusades. This suggests both nationalistic and Western influences on the educational experiences and worldview of our elite university-educated sample, compared with a more religious point of view we might have found among less educated groups. Indonesia's list contained both the Crusades and the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict, which is more suggestive of Huntington's (1996) "clash of civilizations" thesis, but also contained the Industrial Revolution, which relates to Western rather than Islamic achievements.

Overall, the combination of focus on recent collective violence and ethnocentric events related to the foundation of their own state resulted in somewhat less Eurocentrism among non-Western nations than reported by Liu et al. (2005). Whereas Western countries still reported very few events outside of their region, other countries produced more ethnocentric accounts of world history strongly shaped by the events related to the creation of their own state, and some countries focused more on recent collective violence in the Middle

East. We should note, however, that the rise in the importance of the Middle East is due to conflict involving Western powers.

Most Important Figures in World History in the Past 1,000 Years

Although similar in some respects to the list of events, nominations for figures in world history in the past millennium were rated much more positively than events, with 72 of the 123 nominations above the midpoint of 4 (almost 60% positive, see Table 2). Although the politics of warfare was the most prominent single reason for historical fame, the lists reflected significant strands of diversity, recognizing humanitarian and spiritual leadership, political leadership outside of war, and scientific achievement.[5] These lists are not characterized by as a high degree of consensus across cultures as events.

One feature remained consensual: Hitler was the most frequently nominated person across cultures in the world history in the past 1,000 years, coming at the top of 8 of the 12 lists (see Table 2). Even so, Hitler did not appear in the idiosyncratic East Timorese list at all, and he received fewer nominations than Mao in China, Gandhi in India, and Kemal Ataturk in Turkey. Besides Hitler, a plethora of figures associated with the politics of war appeared: the aforementioned Mao and Ataturk, Hitler's partner in crime and adversary Stalin (five countries, four of them from Eastern Europe), and Francisco Franco in Spain. Nineteenth century figure Napoleon appeared in four samples. American wartime Presidents Washington and Lincoln appeared once each. Che Guevara made an appearance in four samples as an icon of revolutionary war and anticapitalist/anti-imperialist developing world politics.

George Bush Jr. (seven samples) and his adversaries Osama bin Laden (four samples) and Saddam Hussein (three samples) appeared as contemporary wartime/political leaders. Bush was the second most nominated person in world history after Osama bin Laden and Hitler in East Timor and Indonesia, respectively. It is worth noting that Bush's evaluation was significantly lower than Hitler's in Brazil, Indonesia, India, and Turkey. He received an almost perfectly negative evaluation with Hitler and Franco in Spain. In India, he was less popular than Osama bin Laden. In Portugal, he did rate as more positive than Hitler and Osama bin Laden, and in East Timor, alone among all the nations surveyed, he was actually perceived as better than neutral (4.6). Although the extreme nature of these results can be attributed to the callow perceptions of youth, we can also see how seriously an unpopular war can damage the international prestige of a political leader. Cross-culturally, in this sample of 12 nations, George Bush Jr. was the second most consensually nominated person in world history after Hitler, and as a whole he was rated less positively than Hitler.

A total of 60% of figures were nominated for warfare, and 74% for politics (including the politics of warfare). These two were strongly overlapping categories, with most wartime figures being political leaders rather than just generals with the exception of Mikhail Kutuzov in Russia.

There were a plethora of political figures nominated by a particular sample that had a hand in the establishment of the current state or political regime and did not appear on any other country's list. This replicated previous results, where there was considerably greater nationalism and in-group bias in nominations of people versus events. Each people ethnocentrically consider their own national heroes important to the world, but the rest of the

Table 2

Most Important World Figures in the Past 1,000 Years

Rank	China (N = 115)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	India (N = 100)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	East Timor (N = 98)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	Indonesia (N = 104)	Percentage	Eval (Std)
1	Mao	64	4.7 (1.0)	Gandhi	75	4.9 (1.9)	Osama bin Laden	64	1.5 (1.2)	Hitler	58	2.8 (1.8)
2	Hitler	58	3.0 (1.5)	Hitler	61	3.6 (1.9)	George Bush Jr.	51	4.6 (2.0)	George Bush Jr.	30	1.9 (1.5)
3	Einstein	42	5.5 (0.81)	Osama bin Laden	25	2.5 (1.9)	Xanana Gusmao	36	6.8 (0.44)	Sukarno	30	4.8 (1.7)
4	Marx	40	4.7 (1.2)	Mother Teresa	22	5.6 (1.8)	Kofi Annan	34	6.5 (1.2)	Mohammed	28	6.6 (0.78)
5	Deng Xiaoping	36	5.6 (0.7)	Bhagat Singh	19	5.8 (1.6)	Saddam Hussein	30	1.9 (1.3)	Einstein	23	5.4 (0.95)
6	Napoleon	28	4.6 (1.0)	Shivaji Bhonsle	18	5.8 (1.2)	Nelson Mandela	21	6.4 (1.5)	Mother Teresa	20	6.0 (0.97)
7	Zhou Enlai	21	5.8 (0.51)	Einstein	16	5.8 (1.4)	Ximenes Belo	19	6.9 (0.22)	Gandhi	18	5.8 (1.1)
8	Newton	16	4.9 (1.1)	Subhas C. Bose	11	6.8 (0.4)	Suharto	19	1.7 (1.1)	Princess Diana	16	6.1 (0.88)
9	Sun Yat-sen	10	5.3 (0.78)	Lincoln	16	5.5 (1.0)	Che Guevara	17	6.4 (0.91)	Thomas Edison	14	6.2 (0.83)
10	Confucius	10	5.0 (1.1)	George Bush Jr.	11	2.0 (1.3)	Pope John Paul II	17	6.9 (0.24)	Marx	12	3.7 (1.4)

(continued)

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Table 2 (continued)

Rank	Russia (N = 60)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	Ukraine (N = 84)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	Poland (N = 102)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	Turkey (N = 227)	Percentage	Eval (Std)
1	Hitler	57	2.0 (1.5)	Hitler	62	2.3 (0.62)	Hitler	86	1.3 (0.83)	Kemal Ataturk	94	6.8 (0.50)
2	Stalin	56	3.6 (1.7)	Viktor Yushchenko	48	6.3 (1.0)	Stalin	38	1.3 (0.79)	Hitler	60	3.0 (2.1)
3	Lenin	55	3.9 (1.6)	Gandhi	38	5.3 (0.59)	Pope John Paul II	48	6.7 (1.0)	Sultan Mehmed II	29	6.3 (0.79)
4	Napoleon	52	3.4 (1.7)	Stalin	33	1.4 (1.3)	Napoleon	29	4.5 (1.4)	Einstein	25	5.8 (1.3)
5	Vladimir Putin	35	6.0 (1.0)	Taras Shevchenko	19	4.5 (1.4)	Lech Walesa	19	4.5 (1.1)	George Bush Jr.	24	1.2 (0.90)
6	Peter the Great	33	6.0 (0.97)	Julia Timoshenko	18	6.2 (0.91)	Einstein	14	6.2 (0.97)	Bill Gates	10	5.9 (1.0)
7	Gorbachev	20	3.3 (2.1)	Pope John Paul II	15	5.4 (1.1)	Joseph Pilsudski	13	5.0 (1.3)	Ismet Inonu	8	5.5 (1.3)
8	Boris Yeltsin	13	3.3 (1.6)	Michael Grushevski	14	6.6 (1.6)	Mother Teresa	11	6.6 (0.65)	Thomas Edison	7	5.9 (0.90)
9	Mikhail Kutuzov	13	6.0 (0.97)	Leonid Brezhnev	13	2.3 (1.3)	Columbus	10	5.4 (1.1)	Turgut Ozal	7	5.5 (1.4)
10	Czar Ivan IV	13	4.5 (1.6)	Lenin	13	2.4 (0.4)	Copernicus	8	6.0 (1.3)	Che Guevara	6	4.7 (1.7)

(continued)

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Table 2 (continued)

Rank	Hungary (N = 57)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	Brazil (N = 367)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	Portugal (N = 118)	Percentage	Eval (Std)	Spain (N = 142)	Percentage	Eval (Std)
1	Hitler	94	1.5 (1.4)	Hitler	43	2.0 (1.5)	Hitler	77	1.2 (0.56)	Hitler	64	1.2 (0.1)
2	Stalin	45	1.9 (1.5)	George Bush Jr.	35	1.5 (1.1)	Pope John Paul II	26	6.5 (0.72)	Francisco Franco	44	1.0 (0.0)
3	Napoleon	40	4.3 (1.3)	Osama bin Laden	23	1.5 (1.2)	Antonio Salazar	25	2.4 (1.4)	Gandhi	31	6.5 (0.2)
4	Columbus	37	5.7 (1.4)	Lula da Silva	22	4.5 (1.8)	Einstein	23	6.2 (0.85)	George Bush Jr.	30	1.1 (0.1)
5	Stephen I	28	6.1 (0.95)	Gandhi	16	6.5 (0.7)	Mother Teresa	18	6.7 (0.56)	Mother Teresa	25	6.0 (0.52)
6	Churchill	14	5.1 (1.2)	Freud	14	6.5 (0.62)	Martin Luther King	17	6.5 (0.69)	Columbus	15	4.4 (1.3)
7	King Matthias	12	6.7 (0.58)	Saddam Hussein	14	1.6 (0.93)	Osama bin Laden	16	1.1 (0.31)	Che Guevara	12	6.1 (0.90)
8	Kennedy	9	5.2 (1.3)	Ayrton Senna	13	6.5 (1.1)	George Bush Jr.	16	3.0 (1.4)	Martin Luther	12	6.1 (0.7)
9	G. Washington	7	4.75 (1.7)	Che Guevara	13	6.0 (1.5)	Saddam Hussein	14	1.4 (0.49)	Einstein	11	6.6 (0.23)
10	Mussolini	7	2.0 (1.4)	Mother Teresa	11	6.8 (0.52)	Stalin	10	1.5 (0.90)	Pope John Paul II	11	4.8 (0.53)
10=	Gandhi	7	5.2 (1.3)	Vasco da Gama	10	6.8 (0.45)						

world is not aware of them. Hence, whereas there is a universal villain (Hitler), national heroes associated with the founding of a particular country or people were largely restricted in importance to that people. This "Hero of a Thousand Faces" (Campbell, 1949) is particular to each nation in name, but not in the quality of services performed: They were saviors of the nation and/or enablers of independence. Rather than enumerate all of them and their accomplishments, we merely note that the considerable nationalism seen in the pattern of nominations in Table 2 accounts for the predominantly positive evaluations given to figures. Single sample out-group villains such as Suharto in East Timor (rating: 1.7 for his invasion of East Timor in 1975) were rare, though a few national in-group figures important as transitional figures to the foundation of the current regime but now unpopular included Franco (1.0 in Spain), Brezhnev (2.3 in Ukraine), and António de Oliveira Salazar (2.4 in Portugal).

Along with Bush and after Hitler, it is the great scientist and humanitarian Albert Einstein who received the most nominations cross-culturally (seven samples). Following Einstein, it was three great humanitarians, Indian Independence activist and peacemaker Mahatma Gandhi, spiritual advocate for the poor Mother Teresa (six samples each), and Catholic religious leader Pope John Paul II (five samples) who received the most cross-cultural consensus and were universally admired. Other figures nominated in more than one sample included the explorer Columbus, political theorist and leader Vladimir Lenin (three samples each), social scientist Karl Marx, inventor and businessman Thomas Edison, and religious dissident Martin Luther (two samples each). Hence, although there were no universal heroes, we had many admirable role models celebrated for their services to humanity.

It is a bit sad to note that Mother Teresa is the only woman besides Princess Diana among the 123 nominations across 12 societies seen in Table 2, and this from educated samples consisting of more women than men.

Some figures nominated in a single country were also nominated in the data reported by Liu et al. (2005): Humanitarians among these included Nelson Mandela, Princess Diana, and Martin Luther King. Political leaders included John F. Kennedy and Sun Yat-sen. Scientists included Freud and Copernicus. The two culture heroes who were nominated despite the 1,000-year limit were Mohammed for Islamic civilization and Confucius for Sinic.

The pattern of recency so characteristic of events was also characteristic of figures. Between 3.5% and 44.5% of figures across cultures were from the 21st century, 10% and 80.5% from the 20th century, and 4% and 29% from the 19th century, with sample averages of 16% (21st century), 62% (20th century), and 9%(19th century), respectively. Overall, this means that about 87% of nominations were for figures in the past 200 or so years, a highly extreme form of recency.

However, a few ancient culture heroes associated with a people but not the current state still received some attention, such as King Matthias and King Stephen in Hungary, Confucius in China, Sultan Mehmed II in Turkey, Peter the Great, Czar Ivan IV in Russia, and Mohammed in Indonesia.

Finally, there were still significant amounts of Eurocentrism in the nominations, despite their nationalistic character. European countries rarely nominated anyone outside of Europe and North American (15% on average): only three "non-Westerners," Gandhi, Mother Teresa (who was from Albania, but is known for her work in India), and Che Guevara appeared among the 63 nominations from the 6 Eastern and Western European countries in

the current sample. In comparison, non-Western countries nominated plenty of Westerners (28% to 85% of total nominations, 53% on average) in addition to their own national heroes, and almost never nominated anyone from neighboring countries.

General Discussion

Samples from 12 new countries confirmed the major findings reported in Liu et al. (2005): (a) world history is a story about politics and war, (b) representations of world history are focused on the present, and (c) characterized by Eurocentrism tempered by nationalism. The World Wars, especially the WWII and Hitler continued to be considered across cultures as the most important events and figure in world history. On average, when coded as mutually exclusive events, warfare and collective violence accounted for 48% of events nominated, and politics accounted for another 27% (total = 75%). On average, 45% of figures named were known for their roles in warfare or other forms of collective violence. As figures were coded into two categories when appropriate, wartime figures formed a subset of the 73% of people whose accomplishments were political in nature. Concurrently, the 20th and 21st centuries dominated nominations of both events and figures, with 79% of events and 87% of figures appearing in the past 200 or so years. This focus on politics and warfare steeped in the present was prevalent in countries as disparate as China, India, East Timor, Russia, and Ukraine, and nominations were tied to the rise of the current state. The findings were even more pronounced than reported by Liu et al. (2005), because a new cluster of events and figures surrounding 9/11 and the Iraq War displaced the clusters of events and figures related to the Cold War and to the Enlightenment (industrialization and the rise of democracy) as the second most significant cluster of events and people in world history.

These results support the theory put forward by Liu and Hilton (2005) and Hilton and Liu (in press) that not only does the past weigh on the present, but the present weighs on the past (see Olick & Robbins, 1998 for the sociological literature). Events and figures from the past become salient as they are selectively mobilized for their relevance to current political agendas (Sen & Wagner, 2005). Conversely, as the bipolarity of Communism versus Capitalism becomes increasingly irrelevant to a world dominated by market forces and globalization, events related to the Cold War appear to have become less salient and less important to mass publics (see Schuman & Rodgers, 2004). Even the historical rise of democracy as indexed by the importance of the French and American Revolutions appears to have lost some of its glow as socialism and fascism have faded as rival ideologies in the present. History's status as a source of legitimacy for political regimes appears to have the consequence that its representation is dynamically linked to present-day concerns (see Schwartz, 1996). It is present-day issues and present-day suffering that mobilizes lay representations of world history: The distant past is largely forgotten except for events and people that are remembered more for their contributions to the present than the suffering that they undoubtedly were associated with in their day (e.g., the French Revolution was rated positively, but was the source of immense consternation to Europeans in the 19th century).

Although WWII continues to serve as the primary fulcrum through which lay people across cultures understand how their world has come to be, the "New World Order" that has

emerged following 9/11 and the advent of the Iraq war is one where the prestige and influence of the American presidency has diminished. For many of the young adults that answered our surveys, these events may become the signal political events of their youth/adolescence, and are likely to be remembered by them throughout their lifespan following the so-called "reminiscence bump" (Conway, Wang, Hanyu, & Haque, 2005) or generational effects in collective remembering (Schuman & Scott, 1989). According to the reminiscence bump, mature adults are more likely to remember events of importance that occurred during their late adolescence and early adulthood than at most other periods during their lifespan. Hence, many years from now, it is likely that the Iraq War and 9/11 will still be remembered by today's young adults as "signs of their times." Depending on how these remembrances are narrated (Liu & László, 2007), it is possible that these events will form part of a watershed interpretive moment where world opinion moves away from a post-WWII bipolar structure of Communism versus Capitalism into a multipolar world where the United States is no longer viewed as benevolently as "defender of the free world."

Although it is difficult for mature scholars to conceive of George Bush Jr. as more negative than Adolf Hitler, the importance of this empirical finding lies not in the hyperbole of young adults' perceptions or their relative ignorance of historical facts, but that 9/11 and the Iraq War may anchor a new reading of world history wherein the actions of the United States are viewed with suspicion as the actions of an aggressor. The Pew Reports (2006) suggest that American "soft power" (Nye, 2004), its ability to attract and influence other nations without using reward or punishment is at a low ebb post WWII. If historians recount these events as unfavourably as the young people in our surveys, then the United States may not be able to gloss over its actions in invading Iraq, and maintain its legitimate power internationally the way it was able to do for its war in Vietnam (Hein & Selden, 2000). There might be a lesson from history worth learning about the dangers of imperial overreach for a democratic state (Mann, 2003).

At present, however, cross-cultural consensus suggests the existence of a collective memory of dominant and hegemonic shared beliefs about the world history. Around the world, important events were mainly related to Europe and North America (a little less than 40% of the total, but many events coded for other regions involved Western powers at war on foreign soil or in global conflict). World events were related to Europe (New World "Discovery") or to Europe and North America (World Wars, Euro-Asian, Euro-Middle-Eastern Wars). Dominant social representations of history appear to be the representations of dominant nations and cultures, that is, Western nations. Our participants appear to have reproduced in their representations the current state of world power relations, but as mentioned above, these contain within them seeds of change.

We conclude with some observations about the psychological mechanisms that underlie the findings reported there. First, the dominance of collective violence and politics in historical representations could be explained *psychologically* not just from the perspective of power relations, but because wars and wartime leaders are more narratively salient as "causes of events" than more impersonal, long-term, and continuous processes, such as demographics, economics, technology, or social change. Wars, revolutions, political villains, and heroes are grist for the mill of historical narratives (László, Vincze, & Kőváriné Somogyvári, 2003), and their utility in constructing narratives of identity may help to explain why they are so heavily represented in lay accounts of history (Liu & László,

2007). In contrast, the daily practice of economics—so important to everyday living—seems to be severely underestimated in lay representations of history. For instance, the neoliberal "Washington consensus" between Reagan and Thatcher in the 1980s (Hertz, 2001) that helped dismantle Keynesian economics and accelerated economic globalization was a signal economic event of recent years, but our participants ignored it. There were more nominations for events such as the invention of the Internet or the digital computer. Given the diffuseness of economic progress, this could reflect a sort of "collective attributional bias," where assigning causality to particular events or people is ambiguous for economic progress, but easy for warfare and the founding of nations.

In terms of the recency bias, Assman (1992) suggests that people share communicative memories for 80 to 100 years, three to four generations. This may help explain why participants mention a majority of events related to the past century: They are anchored in oral communication with parents or grandparents who communicate vivid and personal information about these events. They are also more likely to be the subject of mass media attention. Vivid events are more important than distant historical facts learned in an abstract manner, an important lesson for historians trying to impart lessons of the past to present generations. Economic issues are perhaps too subtle and pervasive to communicate vividly. This effect is likely to be exacerbated by the open-ended methods used here, heavily influenced by momentary salience. Indeed, we might entertain the possibility that asking about figures first reminded participants about Hitler, and this increased the collective remembering of WWII subsequently. Future research should examine the robustness of the recency and war phenomena using closed-ended methods.

Results supported a limited sociocentric bias where participants emphasize national events as world events together with a deference to power gradients. Besides the consensus around the World Wars and 9/11 and the Iraq War, there were striking cultural differences in participants' definitions of historically significant events. In China, India, East Timor, Russia, Ukraine, Hungary, Portugal, and Turkey the foundation of the local State or regime was listed as one of the most important events in the world history. The data with respect to figures were even more ethnocentric, with names such as Bhagat Singh, Xanana Gusmão, Sukarno, Mikhail Kutuzov, Taras Shevchenko, Joseph Pilsudski, Ismet Inonu, King Matthias, Lula da Silva, and Antonio de Oliveira Salazar being unfamiliar to many readers; but they all filled important roles in the story of making of their respective nations. Heroes are more sociocentric than events, suggesting that historical representations are made vivid in the collective imagination through personalization.

Most of the historical events that people listed before the 20th century reflected long-term growth and positive change. For instance, "America's Discovery," the Industrial Revolution, and the French Revolution were all evaluated positively, with people "forgetting" the negative social effects of these events, such as the demographic catastrophe for Native Americans as a consequence of "discovery," or the costs of urbanization so vividly illustrated by Dickens, or the Terror, and Napoleonic Wars. Studies that compare young people's autobiographical memories with their elders, or within-subject comparisons between recent and more distant events, confirm a nostalgic bias: increased age or longer periods of recalling are associated with more positive appraisals of events (Laurens, 2002). These and others studies suggest a tendency for people to remember a higher proportion of positive events than of negative events in the long term—and to reinterpret negative events

to be at least neutral or even positive (Taylor, 1991). A similar positivistic bias appears prevalent in long-term collective memory.

Future research needs to confirm the generality of the findings reported here through more extensive samples, particularly examining intergenerational effects to see whether some of the findings may be attributed to the relatively youthful nature of the current samples. Following Schuman and Scott (1989), we expect that the Cold War would be more important among mature adults, as it was salient to them during their formative years. Class may also be important, as most of the current sample probably come from relatively affluent and urban families.

Finally, no evidence was found for a long-term orientation on the part of the Chinese sample as proposed by Hofstede (2001), or an Islamic civilization account uniting Turkey and Indonesia, or a Marxist historical narrative privileging economics and class struggle in the former Soviet Block countries or Russia. In Russia, positive evaluations for feudal era rulers such as Peter the Great and Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible) show just how little currency Marxist readings of history have left among lay people. Economics and technological development was completely underrepresented by lay peoples in every country except China. Social representations of history appear to be more related to state construction and to psychological tendencies and educational practices associated with nationalism than more deeply rooted cultural values (Hilton & Liu, in press).

In conclusion, data presented here confirm an apparently universal structure in the representation of world history, characterized by a focus on politics and war, sociocentrically projected from the present to the past and anchored by the World Wars and 9/11 and the Iraq War. The dominant view is Eurocentric, tempered by nationalistic biases in favour of events and figures influencing the development of one's own state. But change may be on the horizon with the negative appraisal of Bush and the Iraq War perhaps giving rise to greater multipolarity in perceptions. Future research should examine these findings with greater precision by using closed-ended measures to define the interplay between universal and culture-specific tendencies, both of which were highly in evidence here. Use of closed-ended measures could reduce the effects of recency and memory salience that is so characteristic of the open-ended measures used here. Future research using such measures could help us to understand whether the extreme recency effects reported here are characteristic of the youthful samples, or a function of salience effects on open-ended measures. Assessing the empirical linkages between the representational processes outlined here and the political processes of international legitimization and justification is a major task ahead for advancing a more comprehensive theory of identity, history, and collective remembering.

Notes

1. Liu et al. (2005) found little difference between university students and a general sample in Taiwan, however.

2. Additional analyses found similar historical representations for men and women in Brazil, our largest sample.

3. Many Turkish people think of the Crusades as a war between Christians and Arabs, not Turks or Muslims in general.

4. This negativity effect is even more extreme if total nominations are considered, because the most consensual events have to do with warfare.

5. Following the coding conventions established by Liu et al. (2005) each figure was coded for either one or two areas of achievement as deemed appropriate.

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