

Baron’s Modification of Wineburg’s Historical Thinking Heuristics for Use with Historic Places⁷

Wineburg’s Heuristics	Baron’s Proposed Modifications/Addition	Rationale For Modifications/Expansion
Corroboration: the act of comparing documents with one another.	Correspondence: checking the architectural features and the procedural workings of a given building (such as an historic church) with prior understanding of the form, functions, duties, or rituals of other churches or historic buildings encountered.	Wineburg states that the purpose of corroboration is so that historians can check “important details” of a document to see if they are “plausible” or “likely.” However, with buildings, the “details” of a building simply are. They exist. Plausibility is irrelevant. Further, the inability to make side-by-side comparisons with other buildings of similar type requires individuals to compare information in relation to similar buildings they have previously encountered (correspondence) in the attempt to understand what is distinct about the new building presented.
Contextualization: the act of situating a document in a concrete temporal and spatial context	Contextualization: sorting through the layers of evidence available and placing the individuals, events, or building elements within the layer most appropriate to further the discussion; sifting and relegating anachronistic elements to their appropriate time period or place.	As the “where” of Wineburg’s contextualization is resolved by virtue of being in a physical space, the contextualization of an historic place requires being able to see that ‘where’ in the multiple time periods, however muddled the visual record. As distinct from situating a document in a single time or place, the historians sift through the strata of time evident within a single place to locate individuals, events, or building elements within their proper context.
Sourcing: the act of looking first to the source of the document before reading the body of the text.	Origination: understanding the multiple factors involved in a building’s origins, rather than singular documentary authorship.	Similar to sourcing, historians do attempt to ascertain which individual or group of people built a building; however, very few buildings are the result of single “authorship” in the same way as documents. However, building “authorship” is an essentially collective activity, the understanding of which is more closely aligned with the processes indicated by contextualization than by sourcing. Historians appear to be attempting to understand the larger question of how did this building come be to in this place? — a process that might be better understood as determining the <u>origins</u> of a building, rather than authorship.

<p>Wineburg offers no heuristic for Supposition.</p>	<p>Supposition: Strategy with which historians both takes an imaginative departure from the evidence presented, while rooting that historical possibility in the evidence of that which is known. Supposition may take the form of either a highly-contextualized “if-then” statement or hypothesis.</p>	<p>When historians find themselves in a situation where the evidence on its own does not resolve the query, they take a very controlled imaginative leap based on the available evidence, prior knowledge, and an understanding of how the world works, to suggest a plausible scenario or outcome.</p>
<p>Wineburg offers no heuristic for Empathic Insight.</p>	<p>Empathic Insight Empathic or experiential insight into an historic moment, event, or social dynamic in which an historian puts him or herself in the place of an historic agent, in reaction to physical stimuli provided by being in an historic place.</p>	<p>In order to fully comprehend history, it is essential to grasp the goals and intentions of historical agents within the context of their situations, for the purposes of seeing how these led to a particular action or set of actions. However, those goals or intentions cannot be the sole factors taken into account when attempting to understand that historical agent’s situation. The inclusion of this heuristic is essential for modeling how to properly include the highly-contextualized empathy (as achievement) in a historical study.</p>

Baron, C. (2010). Encouraging Historical Thinking at Historic Sites. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Boston University, Boston, MA.