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To cite this article: Jolie Christine Matthews (2016) Historical Inquiry in an Informal Fan Community: Online Source Usage and the TV Show The Tudors, Journal of the Learning Sciences, 25:1, 4-50, DOI: [10.1080/10508406.2015.1112285](https://doi.org/10.1080/10508406.2015.1112285)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10508406.2015.1112285>



Accepted author version posted online: 29 Oct 2015.  
Published online: 29 Oct 2015.



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## LEARNING OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL STRAND

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# Historical Inquiry in an Informal Fan Community: Online Source Usage and the TV Show *The Tudors*

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This article examines an informal online community dedicated to *The Tudors*, a historical television show, and the ways in which its members engaged with a variety of sources in their discussions of the drama's real-life past. Data were collected over a 5-month period. The analysis included the types of sources used in conversation; members' purpose for invoking and reaction to sources; as well as topic, participation, and response patterns in the discussion forum. The community is a space in which popular culture and the discipline of history meet. Members come together because of a fictional depiction of the past, yet a desire to corroborate, clarify, contextualize, or uncover what really happened leads users to participate in detective-like inquiry work and the learning of new topics they had not previously considered. Members also challenge and critique one another's positions *and* the sources other members invoke in multiple ways, including by using more formal disciplinary heuristics in this informal setting. Key differences emerge in members' purpose for invoking sources, with popular media used more frequently for illustrating a point or asking a question and nonfiction works most invoked to support and argue historical claims.

“Divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived” is a rhyme about the six wives of Henry VIII, a member of the English Tudor dynasty (1485–1603). Over the centuries, the royals have been the subject of an endless stream of literary, visual, and musical works, as well as Academy Award–winning and –nominated films.<sup>1</sup> The 21st century has produced its own Tudor television series and miniseries, best-selling novels, and films. A generation ago, if a student enjoyed a Tudor novel or film and became curious about the *real* story, his or her exploration might begin with an in-person library trip. Today, exploration often begins with an online search engine.

This instantaneous digital access has prompted some critics to suggest that the historical apocalypse is upon us. It is bad enough that television and film misrepresent the past, but now, some fear, Wikipedia and any crackpot who puts up a website make the educator’s and historian’s jobs even tougher. But claims of an intellectual apocalypse are not new. There were the antinovel and antilibRARY sentiments of the 19th century, with their anxieties over mass literacy and easy access to potentially corruptive and poor content in public spaces (Brantlinger, 1998; Donelson, 1981). Shakespeare, considered high culture today, was once popular entertainment for the masses (Greenblatt, 2004; Levine, 1990; Schoenbaum, 1987). Even film and television have been equally heralded and criticized since their inception (e.g., Singer, 1980; Wartella & Jennings, 2000). The Web is the latest venue for information and entertainment, and thus the latest arena for controversy. It does, however, create unprecedented opportunities to instantly connect people around the world, and though much of the content presented on it may not be new (there were movies, articles, comics, and fan fiction before the Web), information is disseminated faster and further than ever before (B. Jenkins, 2015; Kirby-Diaz, 2009). How are youth, or any of us, supposed to discern what is true from what is false? The ability to discriminate among sources and determine truth is critical in the digital age (Wineburg & Martin, 2004).

From traditional communities of location to an increasing shift toward global communities of interest (Collins & Halverson, 2009; Kirby-Diaz, 2009), a Tudor fan in Lisbon can now interact with one in London or San Francisco. It is sometimes said that people neither know nor are interested in history, but online communities exist in which members come together of their own volition out of a mutual passion for historical topics.

This study looks at the disciplinary practice of historical sourcing in fan discussions of Showtime’s *The Tudors* (2007–2010), a television show based on the reign of Henry VIII and his six queens. Source usage is a cornerstone of historical method, and the knowledge used by historians as they argue and reconstruct a representation of the past is essential in thinking critically about the discipline

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix A.

of history (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). Proper sourcing is necessary for thinking critically about the present too. It is especially salient in this day and age, when people are constantly exposed to a variety of media sources in every aspect of their lives, and more than ever they need to understand from where their information derives (Hynd, 1999).

Students and novices can have difficulty evaluating historical information, neither reading nor thinking about sources the way historians do (e.g., Britt & Aglinskis, 2002; Leinhardt & Young, 1996; Wineburg, 1991, 1998). Thus, they must learn “how much trust to place in any given piece of information” (H. Jenkins, Purushotma, Clinton, Weigel, & Robison, 2009 p. 43). An awareness of how people use sources in the wilds of digital space can help educators think of ways to better teach students historical inquiry, as well as how to think critically about information rather than merely trying to assemble a set of facts.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The central, overarching question that guided this study was as follows:

*Research Question:* When people engage in informal, fan-driven historical pursuits, in what ways do their practices run parallel to or counter the more formal disciplinary practices of historical inquiry?

However, a subset of questions around members’ specific practices with sources was developed that would inform the broader question posed previously. These were the following:

1. What types of sources do wiki members use in discussion?
2. For what purposes do members cite a source, and in what ways (if at all) do members build off one another’s source usage?
3. What kinds of reactions do sources provoke? Do members challenge source validity and members’ positions through traditional disciplinary practices or other means?
4. What subject matters promote discussion? Do some kinds of content generate more responses than others?

Members’ choices and responses to one another’s choices allow for an exploration of the norms they develop as a community when they have the freedom to discuss whatever topics and sources they like, along with how knowledge is being constructed, conveyed, and verified when boundaries to traditional academic subjects are removed and people are left to their own devices. People today remain interested in the past—it just may not be the history as presented in the classroom (Kelly, 2013; Rosenzweig & Thelen, 1998). Michael Kammen (2000), however,

noted a distinction between having an interest in the past and possessing knowledge about it. An online community, such as the one formed around the television show *The Tudors*, represents a new frontier for examining how a group of people differing in historical expertise make sense of a range of sources within a collective, digital space. In particular, understanding how students and the general public make sense of historical content within the context of popular culture may prove to be a useful tool for helping them to think critically and in a disciplinary manner about history (Cronon, 2013; Seixas, 1994; Wineburg, Mosburg, Porat, & Duncan, 2007).

### Online Communities and Fans

In the introduction to *The Virtual Community*, Howard Rheingold (1993) wrote that “millions of people on every continent also participate in the computer-mediated social groups known as virtual communities, and this population is growing fast” (p. 1). Rheingold (1996) further elaborated on the virtual community as

a group of people who may or may not meet one another face to face, and who exchange words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks. In cyberspace, we chat and argue, engage in intellectual intercourse, perform acts of commerce, exchange knowledge, share emotional support, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, feud, fall in love, find friends and lose them, play games and metagames, flirt, create a little high art and a lot of idle talk. (p. 414)

The definition of a virtual or online community has been expanded on or sub-categorized in the ensuing years, from business and marketing to design and fan perspectives (e.g., Baym, 1999; Howard, 2010; Kim, 2000). At its core, however, it remains a group of people who voluntarily gather together to explore some common interest. It can include social networking sites, gamers, aspiring or professional artists, bloggers, sports or celebrity enthusiasts, or a group of media fans of various television shows and films (H. Jenkins, 1992).

Fan communities, or *fandoms*, existed before the Web. The 1930s and 1940s saw the rise of science fiction clubs with their conventions, their fanzines, and prozines (publications typically produced and circulated by and for fans, often serving as a means of communication before the Web), and the development of their own internal practices and lingo that provided the foundation for much of what modern fandom is today; stirrings of fan-like behavior can even be traced to the mid-19th century (Warner, 1969). Fandoms have been known to organize campaigns to save a show from cancellation or keep a beloved novel, film, television, or comic series alive through community discussions, fan fiction, fan-made videos, conventions, contests, and memorabilia (H. Jenkins, 1992).

Lave and Wenger (1991) identified a community of practice as “a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (p. 98). Commonalities such as geography or race/class do not create one, nor does merely the routine practice of a skill such as “playing scales on a piano” (Wenger, 1998, p. 72). It is the interaction *and* practices of a group that are essential. Communities of practice are “people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002 p. 4). Wenger (1998) noted three core elements: (a) the *mutual engagement* of a group in “actions whose meanings they negotiate with one another” (p. 73), (b) the *joint enterprise* that is “defined by the participants in the very process of pursuing it” (p. 77), and (c) the *shared repertoire* of “routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence” (p. 83).

Much variability can exist in communities of practice, particularly in terms of the relationships between the experts/masters and novices/newcomers involved in them (Lave & Wenger, 1991). They can be heterogeneous in membership and repertoire, and furthermore having a joint endeavor does not mean that there are never disagreements (Wenger, 1998). People can and do belong to multiple communities of practice simultaneously, and since its coinage, the term has been applied to a range of groups and frameworks as well as drawn its critics.

Gee (2007) took issue with the concept because it seemed “like we are attempting to label a group of people,” which results in the “vexatious issues of which people are in and which are out of the group, how far they are in or out and when they are in or out” (p. 88). Gee found the term *community* specifically problematic, as it carried with it “romantic notions of people bonding to each other” (p. 98). Gee offered the alternative of *affinity space* in lieu of *community of practice* and noted that by beginning with *spaces*

we can then go on and ask to what extent the people interacting within a space, or some sub-group of them, do or not actually form a community . . . The answer will be different in different cases . . . Indeed, some people interacting within a space may see themselves as sharing a “community” with others in that space, while other people view their interactions in the space differently. (p. 89)

In an affinity space, “people ‘bond’ first and foremost to an endeavor or interest and secondarily, if at all, to each other” (Gee, 2007, p. 98).

However, if one returns to community of practice, the endeavor (or enterprise) is a central feature of it. People do not come together because of the bonds they share with others in the group (though these may develop over time). They come together because of the practice they engage in together. People are not at the

forefront of a community of practice; the structure, interaction, and practices are. Though space is not the focus, as in Gee's alternative, the difference between the two frameworks is practice versus space rather than people versus space.

A single fandom (such as fans of *Harry Potter* or *Star Wars*) includes numerous websites and activities that different people choose to visit and participate in. As suggested by Gee (2007), how people view these sites will differ. For some fans, certain sites will be affinity spaces. For others, the same spaces will be communities of practice. It is not a matter of either/or but the degrees of participation by each individual who frequents the site.

Take, for example, fanfiction.net, explored by Black (2005, 2009a, 2009b). It is not a fandom but a place where fans of different films, television shows, novels, and so on, can write or read stories about their media/character(s) of choice. Black has identified fanfiction.net as an affinity space in that it attracts people with an interest in fan fiction either generally or as part of a range of activities they do for a specific fandom (such as a *Harry Potter* fan who reads fanfics in addition to participating in other discussion forums, watching related videos on YouTube, playing *Harry Potter* games, etc.).

Some people read fanfics without writing stories themselves or even posting feedback to authors in the comments section for every story. Others provide feedback, whereas another set of users review *and* write fan fiction. Some offer beta services (editing someone's story before it is posted). Other users build relationships with other writers and reviewers over time; they collaborate on fanfics, follow fellow writers on their personal blogs, host contests for newbie writers, discuss their development as writers, actively ask for constructive criticism from their readers, and respond to the feedback they get. These users are in a community of practice, for they engage in a joint literary enterprise with other writers and reviewers to improve their craft. In contrast, fanfiction.net is an affinity space for the users who casually read fan fiction but who do not otherwise participate and might not identify themselves as members of a community. Thus, one does not need to define membership and who is in or out. In an online fan space, each individual does this through his or her individual habits.

## History and Popular Dramas

It is no surprise that popular media, particularly film and television, give rise to so many fandoms, including history-based ones. Modern society receives the majority of its historical knowledge from visual media (Rosenstone, 1995; White, 1999). Audiences do not always remember that these fictions are products of their creators' vision and the times in which they were made (Carnes, 1995; Doran & Freeman, 2008; Landy, 2000; Schwebel, 2011) and that drama and spectacle sometimes run contrary to historical record. But the power of media should not be denied, as it too often influences conceptualizations of the past. Wineburg et al.

(2007) found that students' narratives about the Vietnam War were more informed by the film *Forrest Gump* than classroom instruction. However, instead of seeing popular culture as an impediment, "we might try instead to understand how its forces can be harnessed—rather than spurned or simply ignored—to advance students' historical understanding" (p. 175). Seixas (1994) expressed a similar stance in his work on students' moral understanding of the past through the viewing of contrasting films on the American West. He urged researchers to explore popular media's use as a tool to help young people think critically about historical revisionism and interpretation.

The lure of historical drama is strong, as both students and the general public enjoy the "fantasy of history" (Sturken, 1997, p. 71)—that is, the ability of fiction to grant intimate access to inner lives and behind-the-scenes events of a past long gone that are otherwise denied to them. Historians must confine themselves to what the evidence permits (Becker, 1932; Cronon, 2013; Kelly, 2013). Even when letters, diaries, and other personal artifacts are available, gaining a truly complete picture of who the real historical figure was is impossible, just as one cannot fully know all of what *really happened* (Becker, 1932; Cronon, 2012), even if a near approximation may be reached. This is part of the challenge, frustration, joy, and richness of historical inquiry, the attempt to reconstruct a past in which an "event itself once occurred, but as an actual event it has disappeared; so that in dealing with it the only objective reality we can observe or test is some material trace which the event has left" (Becker, 1932, Section I, para. 2). This is why the historical drama—with its ability to give the public a story about these unknowns—becomes appealing, especially as history as a discipline has shifted away from an accessible narrative style to a more analytical form with highly specialized and often dense language since World War II (Kelly, 2013; Lord, 2005).

Broader surveys are typically left to popular history. These, along with popular biographies and sweeping historical dramas, tend to become the bestsellers read by a wide nonspecialist audience and shape what the average person thinks about the past. This has led to a growing distance between historians and the general public, as well as within the profession between historians who remain in academia and those who choose the public history route (Cronon, 2013; Lord, 2005).

## Learning and Online Spaces

Online history fan communities bring together the social and information access opportunities of the Web, the power of media, fan practices, and history in ways that are part of popular culture *and* the academy. Although historical representation in film (Carnes, 1995; Doran & Freeman, 2008; Landy, 2000; Rosenstone, 1995) and fan practices, particularly for science fiction, fantasy, and

soap communities (Baym, 1999; Harris & Alexander, 1998; Kirby-Diaz, 2009; Sandvoss, 2005; Warner, 1969), have been addressed in prior research, the study of history fans of television shows, films, and novels and how their online practices compare to traditional disciplinary norms needs to be pursued. It is important to know what people *do* in these informal, media-related environments, especially as these environments often frame what students learn in more formal settings (Wills, 1994). Steps in this direction have been undertaken for science, literacy, and mathematics practices through the analysis of discussion forums and game play of massively multiplayer online games (Steinkuehler, 2007; Steinkuehler & Duncan, 2009; Steinkuehler & Williams, 2009). Similarly, games such as *Civilization III* have been examined for their learning potential in regard to complex systems and forces, identity building, and the facilitation of a deeper understanding of history (Durga & Squire, 2009; Squire & Jenkins, 2003). Research around fan fiction has also seen a boom, with not only moves recently to examine the content of the writings themselves but more of a big data analysis of fan fiction as a whole; how the sites and repositories that house them organize, store, and allow users to locate works; the means used in tagging stories; the ethics of translating fan fiction into published works; as well as patterns of how fanfic platforms survive and thrive (Brennan & Large, 2014; De Kosnik et al., 2015; Eynard, Mazzola, & Dattolo, 2013; S. F. Johnson, 2014).

Literature on discussion forums and learning has often focused on the online spaces and platforms created for undergraduate or graduate courses (e.g., Green, Farchione, Hughes, & Chan, 2014; Lai, 2015; Loncar, Barrett, & Liu, 2014; Nami & Marandi, 2014; Rabbany, Elatia, Takaffoli, & Zaïane, 2014; Redmond, Devine, & Bassoon, 2014; Wei, Peng, & Chou, 2015), in which students are required to at least minimally participate and have been given preassigned messages and topic categories to guide their discussions (e.g., Anderson & Kanuka, 1997; Cheung & Hew, 2010; Jeong, 2004; Jeong & Juong, 2007; G. Johnson, 2008; Moore & Marra, 2005; Scherer-Bassani, 2011). However, informal online discussions around popular media can provide insight into what people do without any initially prescribed educational rules, especially as there is a suggestion that the number and kinds of constraints imposed on a discussion affect how students participate and build knowledge (Jeong & Juong, 2007; Moore & Marra, 2005).

## METHODS

The Tudor fandom, like most fandoms, is composed of a collection of websites and communities with various foci and agendas. Some fans frequent sites dedicated to a specific author or television program or favor a certain historical figure. There are sites that focus on all things broadly Tudor. There are Tudor Facebook and Tumblr groups and pages, blogs and sites devoted to one of Henry's wives

(e.g., *TheAnneBoleynFiles*), and a plethora of Tudor videos (both fan made and uploads from Tudor films, television, and documentaries) on YouTube.

The Tudors wiki is one online community within Tudor fandom and the official wiki for Showtime's *The Tudors* (2007–2010).<sup>2</sup> Though the Showtime series is the community's primary focus, the wiki also explores the actual historical period and other Tudor media. It contains collaboratively created historical profiles and inaccuracies pages, as well as pages on member recommendations and reviews of Tudor biographies and novels. The wiki houses Tudor video and artwork and has a discussion forum with subsections (or categories) such as general discussion, history, introductions, off topic, spoilers, teams, actors, Tudor extras, TV series, games, Tudor fan fiction/fan art, and Tudor media (for other Tudor books, television, and films beyond the Showtime series).

I collected data from every active thread in The Tudors wiki's history subsection over a 5-month period in 2010, though active threads started in 2009 or 2008 were discounted. This resulted in 170 threads and 2,641 posts. The community imposes a 2,000-character limit on messages. Members must either confine their comments to this limit or break them up. Three posts in a thread could technically be one long post, but I counted each post as its own entity.

As discussions evolved, threads could sometimes be moved from one forum subsection to another if the overall topic of conversation warranted a change by moderators. Threads that were part of the history section during the period of data collection, regardless of their origin, were eligible for analysis.

## Analysis

A source, specifically each instance when a member invoked one in discussion, was my first unit of analysis. In this study, no instructions or assigned tasks were given. No questions were asked. No sources were provided. Members used whatever they wanted, however they wanted. This differs dramatically from previous source research (e.g., Britt & Aglinskas, 2002; Gottlieb & Wineburg, 2012; Leinhardt & Young, 1996; Perfetti, Britt, Rouet, Georgi, & Mason, 1994; Rouet, Favart, Britt, & Perfetti, 1997; Wineburg, 1991, 1998) in which researchers were the ones who provided sources to a set of readers.

In analyses of online discussions, studies related to fan activities in digital environments have often used a combination of ethnographic and discourse analytic methods (Black, 2005, 2009a, 2009b) as well as discourse analysis in conjunction with Labov's (1972) framework for narrative structure (Steinkuehler & Williams, 2009). Steinkuehler and Duncan (2009) turned to standards in science education to assess the scientific habits of mind displayed by players in randomly selected

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<sup>2</sup>Showtime's site for *The Tudors* is <http://www.sho.com/site/tudors/home.do>. The Tudors wiki is <http://tudorswiki.sho.com/>.

posts from online discussions of World of Warcraft. Steinkuehler and Williams (2009) were interested in math usage in “everyday settings,” approaching their data with an eye toward “what math reasoning looks like when it arises spontaneously . . . with no explicit educational or mathematical intentions” (“2: Data Collection” section, para. 2). My goal was not to explore historical practices in everyday settings per se, as wiki members came to the history section with the intention to talk about history, but I did wish to explore historical source usage outside of educational contexts when it was neither required nor an explicitly stated goal of discussion. One may assume (or hope) that source usage would emerge in history discussions, but all instances in which it did occur were spontaneous in the sense that it was at the discretion of members to invoke them. My codes were thus developed with a disciplinary emphasis on source usage in mind, rather than a general discourse analysis.

All threads were printed out. A tripartite coding scheme was developed to establish (a) the *types* of sources used; (b) members’ *purpose* in invoking them; and (c) what, if any, *reaction* members had to them.

## Source Type

I identified six broad categories for source type: (a) primary, (b) secondary, (c) media, (d) Web, (e) unspecified, and (f) other.

*Primary sources* included *documents* (such as contemporary letters, chronicles, or poems) and *images* of contemporary portraits or any nondocument objects.

*Secondary sources* comprised both *scholarly nonfiction* published by academically trained historians with a doctorate and *popular nonfiction* by historians without a doctorate .

*Media sources* encompassed *novels, films, documentaries, and television*, which included Showtime’s *The Tudors* along with other Tudor television shows or miniseries.

*Web sources* were blog posts, Wikipedia, or any information that originated on the Web. I distinguished between sources used via the Web and Web sources. If a member cited and quoted a legitimate primary source from an established digital repository (such as Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic at British History Online or Early English Books Online), I coded the source as primary only. Secondary sources or novels from Google Books or Project Gutenberg were coded similarly. I coded a film, television, or documentary program viewed through YouTube or a comparable platform as media if it had first aired on television or in a theater. Fan-made videos that combined and edited clips from different films and television programs, fan fiction (e.g., a Tudor story written by a fan of *The Tudors* and posted online), and other media created specifically for Web-based distribution instead of traditional publishing or entertainment venues counted as Web

sources alone, as did information members cited from answers.com or about.com, for example.

*Unspecified* was an explicitly cited source, but the community member named neither the author nor the title. I drew a line between members saying “I’m reading a book or I’ve read” and “I’ve heard or thought I learned somewhere that . . .” The former I coded as unspecified; the latter I did not.

*Other* was a source that had no place in the previous categories (e.g., Bible teachings, a professor/teacher/specific class).

If a post contained multiple sources, each source instance received its own code.

### Source Purpose

I developed two sets of purpose codes. The first set concerned a source’s function in a thread. Specifically, did the source serve as (a) a *thread generator*, the stimulus for the thread’s creation; or was it (b) a *response* in an already existing thread? The second set of purpose codes focused on members’ reasons for using a source, such as whether they wanted to (a) *share* information with the community, (b) *support* an argument, (c) *illustrate* a point, or (d) ask a *question* related to the source. [Table 1](#) elaborates on these codes with example posts.

### Source Reactions

Reactions included members’ direct response to a source, to other members’ responses about a source, and to the topic and/or figure(s) related to and discussed in the source. This approach was adopted to better understand how discussions evolved in the community as well as to see how the group members collectively made sense of historical information by building (or not) off one another. Four categories of reactions were developed: (a) disciplinary, (b) critical, (c) personal/emotional, and (d) surface.

Wineburg (1991) identified three *disciplinary* heuristics used by historians in evaluating sources. *Contextualization* situates a source, its author, and the historical figures featured within it in their historical world. *Corroboration* checks the accuracy of a source by seeking information about it and/or comparing it against other sources. Corroboration includes the attempt to reconcile conflicting information across two or more sources or the attempt to reconcile source information against personal memory. *Sourcing* identifies the source of a source, meaning its author’s position and bias and when and why it was written. The use of one or more of these heuristics by a member was coded as disciplinary.

*Critical* reactions involved (a) members challenging either the source itself or another member’s position about the source or (b) members not directly challenging a source but possessing an awareness of its fallibility and critiquing some aspect about it.

TABLE 1  
Reasons to Invoke a Source

Reason	Definition	Example	Source Notation
Share	Members found a source interesting or salient and wished to share it with others (Example 1), or a source provided an answer to a previously raised question or comment (Example 2).	<p><i>Example 1:</i> “. . . I thought I might post the christening of the Duke of Suffolk’s daughter Frances here. (And I think we all know Frances’s story, so I won’t elaborate).:-)”</p> <p>[posts birth announcement]<sup>3a</sup></p> <p><i>Example 2:</i> [Response to another member’s question] “According to Alison Weir, ‘The Lady in the Tower,’ the money likely came from Henry VIII. Henry VIII brought Mark a lot of things, and paid him very, very well. So well that he even had his own servants . . .”</p>	<p><i>The Lady in the Tower</i> (Weir, 2010) is a popular nonfiction book on the downfall of Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII’s second wife. Alison Weir is a best-selling novelist and popular historian.</p>
Support	Members used a source to give weight to their position.	<p>[On why Henry possibly married Katherine Parr, his sixth wife] “Henry didn’t like being without a woman . . . he enjoyed female company, it was just his personality. Starkey says that even after Jane Seymour’s death, he kept her ladies together and would regularly visit them and spent time with a couple of ladies in particular (Anne Bassett &amp; Elizabeth Brooke). Katherine was descended from Edward III so she wasn’t without pedigree. The salon of free thinkers, I believe happened after she became queen. I like what Lucy Wooding said of her in her recent bio of Henry.”</p> <p>[excerpt from bio]</p> <p>“From that description she sounds perfect for the King. Just his kinda girl.”</p>	<p>David Starkey is an English historian specializing in Tudor history. Along with his scholarly works, he has also hosted a number of television series on Henry VIII, his wives, Elizabeth I, and other English royalty.</p> <p>Historian Lucy Wooding (Kostyanovsky) is a lecturer at King’s College London specializing in the Reformation and Catholic Reformation, Henry VIII, and Early Modern England’s political and social history.</p>

(Continued)

TABLE 1  
(Continued)

Reason	Definition	Example	Source Notation
Illustrate	A source was used as an illustrative example of an often broader issue that members sought to explain or make.	<p>“Well the women’s headdresses in England went through major transitions from the traditional boxish gabled hood, to a mix between the gabled and French, it basically was a headband with folded corners just above the ears, you see it in the scene where Jane Seymour takes the oath from Cromwell in HVIII mini-series, she is wearing an olive green gown if that helps. You also see this hat in TOBG with the Gold velvet Tudor gown on Scarlet Johansen. Anyway then there was a steady transition to the French hood by the time Catherine Howard is Queen . . .”</p> <p>[In a portrait of Jane Seymour, Henry VIII’s third wife, a dog rests on her skirt] “Was the dog real or was it a symbolism thing? . . . in my art history class my professor said a dog in paintings back then represented fidelity. We were not talking about the Jane Seymour painting but it made me think of it.”</p>	<p>Henry VIII was a 2003 miniseries starring Ray Winstone.</p> <p>TOBG stands for <i>The Other Boleyn Girl</i>, a 2008 film starring Natalie Portman, Scarlett Johansson, and Eric Bana. This was the second adaptation (after a 2003 teleplay) of Philippa Gregory’s (2001) best-selling novel <i>The Other Boleyn Girl</i>.</p>
Question	Members asked a question about the source or some content within it.		

<sup>a</sup>For space purposes, certain posts do not include the full source excerpt. See Appendix B for all similar instances.

*Personal/emotional* reactions were judgments that stemmed primarily from emotion and/or personal opinion and experience.

*Surface* reactions did not evaluate a source in an extended or intense way. Comments were often a line or two, cheeky or humorous.

Although each source instance was coded for one type and one purpose only, multiple reactions to the same source were coded. Table 2 explains my codes with examples and source notations.

A subset of threads (totaling 257 posts) was randomly selected and independently coded by a second rater for type, purpose, and reaction. Agreement was 90.3%, with differences resolved through discussion.

### Thread Topic Analysis

For this portion of the study, the original topic of each thread became the unit of analysis.

### Discussion Topics

I coded the initial topic of discussion (meaning the reason the thread was created) under five broad categories: (a) figures, (b) fashion, (c) events and issues, (d) authors, and (e) other.

*Figures* focused on historical individuals, which I subcoded. The *Tudor family* included Henry VIII, his wives, his children, or other Tudors (Henry's parents; his sisters; and his sisters' descendants, such as Lady Jane Grey and Mary Queen of Scots). *Political and religious figures* included chief ministers and clergymen, such as St. Thomas More, Cromwell, Cranmer, and so on. *Secondary figures* described other figures who were involved with the Tudors, such as lovers (or accused lovers), non-Tudor cousins or siblings of a wife or minister, and other people.

Some topics might have focused on figures from two subcategories, such as Henry and his wives, or a wife and her child, or a political figure and one of Henry's children. Thus, although the topic was coded under the main category of figure, it could receive two subcodes. This is the only instance in which double coding occurred. All other codes and subcodes were applied one per one for a topic.

*Fashion* discussed clothes, headgear, and so on.

*Events and issues* did not focus on the personal and interpersonal aspects of individuals' lives. These were subcoded for (a) *political*, (b) *religious*, and (c) *social*. Though there was obviously some overlap between figures and events and issues, topics were only coded as one or the other. Consider a thread about Henry's foreign policy. Henry as a person was addressed, but the thread was not created about his relationships or character, though such aspects may have come into the

TABLE 2  
Source Reactions

Reaction	Definition	Example	Source Notation
Disciplinary	Members used one or more of the three heuristics of contextualization, corroboration, and sourcing as identified by Wineburg (1991). Reactions could be disciplinary statements (Example 1) or questions (Example 2).	<p><i>Example 1:</i> "He was a humble court musician (not a violinist as he appears on the show) who progressed beyond his wildest ambitions. According to Eric Ives he was also very young—perhaps no more than about 20. Although he did very well in getting a place at court, he would still have been considered 'low class'. This doesn't come across at all in the show: Anne is seen confiding in him, hugging him (albeit platonically) and treating him almost like her brother. There is no way this would have happened in reality, given that Anne was the queen and he a mere music man. She might have patronized him, but their relationship would certainly have been that of patron and client, not friends and certainly not lovers."</p> <p><i>Example 2:</i> "In The Six wives of Henry VIII by Alison Weir 'Anne persuaded Madge Shelton; her cousin to encourage Henry's advances. In no time at all Madge was in the King's bed.' However in the book Royal Paramours by Dulcie M. Ashdown, it reads 'Early in 1535 Anne produced a cousin of her own, Madge Shelton, whom she hoped would attract Henry, but would be so grateful to Anne for her advancement that she would do no harm, while at the same time keeping the King from more dangerous women. But Henry saw through the ploy and sent Madge away.' So was she his mistress or not?"</p>	<p>In this example, a member invokes British historian Eric Ives to corroborate and juxtapose historical reality with the dramatization on the show to contextualize the relationship Anne Boleyn would have actually had with the musician Mark Smeaton.</p> <p>Eric Ives is a Tudor specialist. Among his works are a well-known biography on Anne Boleyn and a recently published book on Lady Jane Grey (grandniece of Henry VIII) in 2009.</p> <p><i>The Six Wives of Henry VIII</i> is arguably novelist and popular historian Alison Weir's most famous nonfiction work. It is a biography of all of Henry's wives and continues to be one of the most recommended Tudor works in fandom. Dulcie M. Ashdown is a writer of popular histories and biographies on British royals.</p>

Critical	Members disputed the source or another member's assessment of the source or had an awareness of a source's fallibility.	<p>“... don't knock Chapuys completely, but take what he says with a grain of salt. Everything he says about Anne Boleyn, for example, is slanted because he loved CoFA [Catherine of Aragon]. Everything everyone would say about Anne after Elizabeth took the throne was adoring. They made her out to be a freakin' saint, which she wasn't. Everyone had their own agenda, but Chapuys is one of the few sources we have who, at times, was very accurate. We can't positively DISPROVE a lot of what he said, no matter how skeptical we are. So it's best to just back up what Chapuys recorded with some good thought and great biographies by modern critics.”</p>	Chapuys was an Imperial Spanish Ambassador to Henry VIII's court. Though historians differ on the extent of his bias, his letters are still an important primary source.
Personal/ emotional	Reactions were emotional in nature or based on personal opinion and/or experience.	<p>“I relate more to Katherine because I've been that woman. I a good woman who gets dumped for a younger, prettier model. I can't relate to Anne because I can't imagine putting a woman and her daughter through that much stress. If I had been Anne I would have gone back to the French Court . . . From what I've read about her, while she was smart and very talented: she was hot tempered and quick to strike against others. She isn't the type of person who would have hung out with me.”</p>	
Surface	Statements did not assess a source in a deep way and were often humorous in nature.	<p>“Lo! Poor Cromwell, sounds like he's been banging his head against a brick wall for a very long time.”</p>	

discussion. In contrast, a thread about one of Henry's marriages or whether he loved any of his wives could have involved political discussion, but the central issue was Henry's personal life, and those threads were coded under figures.

*Authors* were topics that focused specifically on a popular or scholarly historian's perspective on the past rather than the content of a source written by him or her.

*Other* were miscellaneous topics that did not fit into one of these four categories.

## Response Levels

Threads were also categorized based on the number of responses to a topic. *No-response* threads received zero responses from the community during the period of data collection, whereas *low-response* threads received between one and 10 replies, *medium-response* threads between 11 and 30, and *high-response* threads 31 to 75. *Monster* threads were special cases that had 76 or more responses (or even hundreds).

## Participants

Participants in this community had profile pages and usernames, but some contributed a little, a lot, or nothing about themselves in regard to gender, nationality, ethnicity, education, and so on. Some members eventually mentioned their background and experiences in posts, especially if it related to a point they were making in a discussion, but others did not. Thus, although a considerable amount of membership composition and demographics could be ascertained from community observation and the analysis of posts, it was still not precise and encompassing of the entire community.

For this study, I chose to focus on a content analysis of posts around source usage, collecting participant data only as they related to understanding my research questions. I tracked all users active in the history section during the period of data collection, noting patterns of participation (such as how many posts each member contributed and who used a source and how often), but I did not systematically track age, gender, ethnicity, or educational background, nor was it part of the data set unless members included such information within a post. Because a chief goal of this research was to investigate an environment in which participants did whatever they liked and were free of any instructions on the part of the researcher, this meant that there was no regulation or interference in terms of user behavior. There was also no way to have participants elucidate their responses and thinking process, prompt them to further delve into a topic, or explore specific or additional source usage that may have been of interest.

Finally, I acknowledge that membership numbers are in constant flux. Today there can be 6,732 members. In 6 months there might be more or less. Some members are also active for certain periods, then inactive for lengths at a time, and some favor certain sections of the forum (such as the general discussion or television show) over others. The tone and direction of the wiki for the duration of this study reflected those members who were in the history section during the period. The same work done several months earlier or later might have yielded different results, or not, but it is a point of note.

## RESULTS

Out of 170 threads, 108 (63.5%) contained 484 source instances. Of the 133 different members participating in source-related discussions, 88 (66.1%) directly invoked a source themselves. Note that in both the main text and tables, posts are shown with the original misspellings and grammatical errors of the authors intact.

### What Types of Sources Do Members Use in Discussion?

Traditionally published, nonfiction secondary works predominated by constituting 30.6% of all sources invoked. Perhaps not surprising, given the wiki's focus, media was the second most invoked at 25%. Web sources made up less than a fifth of all sources in discussion at 18.6%, with unspecified at 14.9%, primary sources at 7.6%, and other at 3.3%.

#### *Subcategory Breakdowns*

Of the primary sources, 28 of 37 (75.7%) were documents, whereas the remaining nine were images (24.3%). Members equally relied on scholarly and popular secondary sources, at 74 instances each (50%). Out of the 121 media instances, documentaries were the least invoked source at 12 instances (9.9%), followed by novels at 17 (14%), films at 18 (14.9%), and television as the largest at 74 (61.2%).

### For What Purposes Do Members Cite a Source? In What Ways, If at All, Do Members Build Off One Another's Source Usage?

In terms of function, 65 source instances were thread generators. The other 419 were responses.

With regard to the four reasons to invoke a source (i.e., to share, support, illustrate, or question), members shared for 53.9% of sources but supported in 22.9% of instances. Members used a source to illustrate in 14.5% of instances and as a question in 8.7%.

Though asking questions was the least used purpose overall for invoking a source, slightly more than half of the thread-generating source instances (33 of 65) were invoked because members had a question about them. Thus, it is worthwhile to look at several of these posts and the relationship between questions and thread generators broadly.

In the following example, a community member was confused by information written in a primary document that he or she had read elsewhere:

I was just reading Henry Machyn's account of the execution of Edward Seymour,<sup>3</sup> and I think I'm missing something. He says this: [member posts excerpt that describes a chaotic scene during the execution]. Was there some sort of thunder storm that terrified everyone? What caused the big kerfuffle?

Given the community's flexibility in terms of creating discussion topics, even a random question about a "kerfuffle" during an execution could have a thread devoted to it. Primary sources made up 11.9% of sources invoked to question, and it was usually because of a member's lack of understanding about some aspect of the source (such as in the previous post) or curiosity about an oddity in an image, such as in the following example: "What kind of headgear is Henry FitzRoy<sup>4</sup> wearing in the one portrait I found on here? Looks unusual to me. Is this the only portrait of him?"

Here two questions arose from curiosity about a portrait posted on the wiki (further highlighting how the community itself can be a resource for information and lead to members generating discussion about historical content). First, the member wanted to know the type of "headgear" worn on the subject's head. Second, the member asked whether this was the only portrait of Fitzroy, perhaps wishing to further investigate the headgear and/or compare other images of the historical figure, though the member's intentions cannot be known for sure.

More often than not, questions tended to center on media sources (45%), with 40.5% centering on television in particular. These questions were also corroborative in nature, such as when members stumbled across information that contradicted previously held opinions they had read or remembered from elsewhere, or when they wished to check whether an incident really happened. Given the wiki's focus on the Showtime series, many television questions were about this show, such as in the following examples: "This seems like a silly little question but in 403<sup>5</sup> when Bishop Gardiner talks about how the Earl of Surrey is a Lutheran.

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<sup>3</sup>Edward Seymour was the oldest brother of Jane Seymour, Henry VIII's third wife and the mother of his only legitimate son. After Henry's death, Edward became Lord Protector of the Realm for a time.

<sup>4</sup>Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond, was Henry VIII's illegitimate son by his mistress Bessie Blount.

<sup>5</sup>"403" refers to Season 4, Episode 3, of *The Tudors*.

I always thought he was a Catholic. It's a silly question but just wondering" and "OK, did Henry REALLY say<sup>6</sup> that up until he married Katheryn Howard, his marriages were befallen by strange accidents but now he finally had a wife that conformed to him? If so, I'm convinced he really was losing his noggin . . ."

The first example is a basic but significant question about a historical discrepancy. A character on the show is presented as a Lutheran, although the community member believed he was actually a Catholic. The Earl of Surrey is a secondary character in the fourth season only, yet the member still wished to ask about the apparent change in his religion. Though claiming it was a "silly question," the member regardless felt comfortable enough to begin a thread about it anyway.

The second example centers on a scene with Henry and his fifth wife in which Henry comments on how he is fortunate *at last* in his marriage after having had so many "strange accidents" (this is before his fifth wife was beheaded). The member wished to know whether the historical Henry *really* claimed this about his marriages.

Members' desire to know whether what they saw or read in fiction had any real-life basis sparked threads that led the community to partake in detective-like work. The following extended example presents a set of posts from a thread that developed around a novel. It is a typical illustration of how questions about a source often resulted in members searching for more information about the work, which then led to the discovery and sharing of new sources within the community. It is notable, however, for the range of source types used in discussion and how members built off one another as the conversation evolved, highlighting the extensive give and take that can occur in response to a single source question, which is why it was selected as an exemplar.

The thread, titled "Lady Jane Douglas," totaled 70 posts with 13 different members participating.<sup>7</sup> The community counts posts by responses. The original post of a thread is numbered 0, whereas the first response is counted as Post 1 (P1).

### *Example Thread: "Lady Jane Douglas"*

P0: I am reading a book now of Henry and Catherine Parr. It says that Stephen Gardiner who was the Bishop of Winchester had a plan to discredit Catherine Parr and make Lady Jane douglas the King's 7th wife. The book was written in 1864 by L. Mohlback of Germany but translated from German by Rev. H.N. Pierce D. D. Has anyone heard of this?

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<sup>6</sup>This refers to a comment made by the character Henry on the Showtime series in Season 4, Episode 4.

<sup>7</sup>Not every post in the thread is presented; rather, a select number have been chosen to convey the thread's development and early progression.

A member asked the community about whether there was an actual plan to replace Catherine Parr, Henry's sixth and last wife, with a Lady Jane Douglas. Though it is unclear in this initial post, the book in question is a historical novel, which will be pointed out (and also missed) in the ensuing discussion. The use of *book* instead of *novel* is significant because it creates ambiguity about whether the work is fiction or nonfiction to anyone unfamiliar with the specific source.

P1: Well . . . I am not surprised. Catherine Parr stood very strongly for the Reformation and only just got away with her life due to her submission to Henry.

I think it was Catherine Willoughby that Henry was looking at for a 7th wife . . . ?

The first responder to the thread seemed to take the source information at face value, utilizing preexisting knowledge about Parr's religious sentiments, combined with the fact that she *was* nearly arrested in historical reality, to suggest that such a plot was plausible. However, the member believed that the potential replacement wife was Catherine Willoughby, not Jane Douglas, and so the mystery continued for members.

P2: Yes, there was a rumour that Henry might get rid of Katherine [Parr] and marry Katherine<sup>8</sup> Willoughby, although Antonia Fraser in her book *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* does not give much credence to this.

A third member entered the discussion, agreeing that there was a rumor about Willoughby but that Antonia Fraser (1993), in her popular biography of Henry's wives, did not give "much credence" to it. This member then attempted to search for additional information about Lady Douglas, reporting back with results in P3:

P3: I have been trying to find out about Lady Jane Douglas . . . I have not been successful—not even a mention in Susan James' book which is about Catherine Parr's period as Henry's wife. It sounds like Lady Jane Douglas must be a fictional character.

The same member from P2 returned after actively engaging in detective-like work, referencing a scholarly biography and how the lack of information about Douglas points to her likely being "a fictional character."

P4: I spent a while trying to find out about her as well . . . I will refer this book—"Henry VIII and his Court" <http://infomotions.com/etexts/gutenberg/dirs/etext02/h8ahc10.htm>

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<sup>8</sup>Through these posts, the spellings *Catherine* and *Katherine* are used interchangeably by members.

This book has been written by Louise Muhlbach (Clara Mundt), one of the MOST prejudiced writer ever! . . . IMO, she is even worse than Philippa G . . . And yes, this Lady Jane Douglas could be a fictional character, since Muhlbach wrote so-called historical romances.

The member who wrote P1 also returned after a search about Douglas, sharing a link to an e-text version of the novel mentioned in P0, with sourcing information about its author, the editor of the particular edition, and so on. The member then made a critical assessment of the author, further stating that Douglas “could be a fictional character” given the author’s historical romance background. On the comparison to Philippa G—Philippa Gregory is a contemporary best-selling novelist who has written multiple Tudor novels. Opinions on Gregory can be quite divisive within the fandom, as fans dispute her portrayal of historical figures and claims of accuracy. Muhlbach was a German writer of historical novels. *Henry VIII and His Court* (Muhlbach, 1864/1867), the source discussed here, is alternatively known as *Catherine Parr: An Historical Novel*.

P5: I believe the only Lady Douglas at court was Henry’s cousin, Margaret Douglas . . . Lady Margaret petitioned the pope for a divorce . . . I read about this signed affirmation in an old (google) book and can’t retrieve it right now, plus it didn’t cite any sources except that the author of the book had read the entire papal bull with his own eyes!

A fourth participant joined the conversation to share that the only Lady Douglas at court was a Margaret, not a Jane, and proceeded to share information about Margaret found in an unspecified Google book. However, the member acknowledged the work’s credibility issues due to a lack of citation and the author’s dubious use of sources within the source.

P13: Well what do you know!:-D

Archibald Douglas (6 E Angus) apparently did have an illegitimate daughter—Janet Douglas . . . <http://www.thepeerage.com/p10149.htm> (Archibald’s page)  
<http://www.thepeerage.com/p20492.htm#i204918> (Janet’s page) . . .

From P6 to P12, the thread continued with a discussion of the possible plot against Parr and criticisms of the original source and its author, but the member who wrote P5 eventually shared that a Janet Douglas did exist, a discovery made after more research at peerage.com. This discovery then shifted the conversation to where the novelist of the original source “dug her (Jane Douglas) up from,” with the thread eventually turning to focus on the Douglas clan and the Scottish nobility.

P18: Many thanks to all of you for clearing this up for me. Sometime it is hard to determine what is fact or fiction. Guess you can't believe anything for sure. This site is wonderful when so many of you know the real facts.

The original creator of the thread thanked everyone who had contributed so far, expressing how the community itself is a resource and a place where people can go to separate “fact” from “fiction.”

Although the Lady Jane Douglas example provides a glimpse into the variety of topics and sources used for one purpose to invoke a source, there were still discernible patterns that emerged across the four purposes of share, support, illustrate, and question. What these patterns reveal is that members invoked different types of sources for different purposes.

When members wanted to share, 29.5% of sources they used were Web, followed by secondary popular sources at 17.2%, unspecified at 15.3%, and secondary scholarly at 11.1%.<sup>9</sup> However, when they wished to support their position, 31.5% of sources invoked by members were secondary scholarly, with unspecified at 19.8%, secondary popular at 15.3%, and primary document at 9.9%.<sup>10</sup>

Media sources were more prominent in the illustrate and question categories. For illustrate, television made up 50% of sources invoked, with film a distant second at 14.3%, secondary scholarly at 10%, and secondary popular at 7.1%.<sup>11</sup> As previously mentioned, members had the most questions for television, which constituted 28.5% of sources invoked, followed by unspecified at 19%, secondary popular at 16.7%, and primary image at 9.5% to round out the top four.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Complete source breakdown for share ( $N = 261$ ): Web sources were the largest at 29.5% ( $n = 77$ ), followed by secondary popular at 17.2% ( $n = 45$ ), unspecified sources at 15.3% ( $n = 40$ ), secondary scholarly at 11.1% ( $n = 29$ ), television at 7.7% ( $n = 20$ ), primary document at 5.4% ( $n = 14$ ), novel at 3.8% ( $n = 10$ ), documentary at 3.5% ( $n = 9$ ), film at 2.7% ( $n = 7$ ), other at 2.7% ( $n = 7$ ), and image at 1.1% ( $n = 3$ ).

<sup>10</sup>Complete source breakdown for support ( $N = 111$ ): Secondary scholarly made up 31.5% ( $n = 35$ ), with unspecified at 19.8% ( $n = 22$ ), secondary popular at 15.3% ( $n = 17$ ), primary document at 9.9% ( $n = 11$ ), Web at 9% ( $n = 10$ ), television at 6.3% ( $n = 7$ ), other at 3.6% ( $n = 4$ ), novel and image tied at 1.8% ( $n = 2$ ) each, and documentary at 0.9% ( $n = 1$ ). No film was used for this purpose.

<sup>11</sup>Complete source breakdown for illustrate ( $N = 70$ ): Television constituted half of the sources used at 50% ( $n = 35$ ), followed by film at 14.3% ( $n = 10$ ), secondary scholarly at 10% ( $n = 7$ ); secondary popular at 7.1% ( $n = 5$ ); novel at 5.7% ( $n = 4$ ); other at 4.3% ( $n = 3$ ); and unspecified, primary document, and Web tied at 2.9% ( $n = 2$ ) each. No primary image or documentary was used for this purpose.

<sup>12</sup>Complete source breakdown for question ( $N = 42$ ): Television was again the largest at 28.5% ( $n = 12$ ), followed by unspecified at 19% ( $n = 8$ ), secondary popular at 16.7% ( $n = 7$ ), primary image at 9.5% ( $n = 4$ ), secondary scholar at 7.1% ( $n = 3$ ), documentary and other tied at 4.8% ( $n = 2$ ) each, and Web, film, novel, and primary document tied at 2.4% ( $n = 1$ ) each.

## What Kinds of Reactions Do Sources Provoke? Do Members Challenge Source Validity and Members' Positions Through Disciplinary Practices or Other Means?

Disciplinary accounted for 37.1% of 760 total source reactions. Surface was the next highest at 24.1%, with critical at 20.9% and personal/emotional at 17.9%.

Members reacted to sources and one another's opinions about sources in multiple ways. Sources could be reactions to other sources and/or critiques of and challenges to other members' opinions. Tables 3 and 4, along with accompanying narrative summaries, present a set of posts from two threads that highlight the different kinds of interplay among source type, purpose, reaction, and member-to-member interaction that occurred within the community. The tables include the posts themselves, the type of sources used, and members' purpose for and reaction to them. These examples provide an important contrast in showcasing instances when members reacted to a source itself versus reacting to a member's interpretation of a source.

The first example thread is titled "Henry's Courtiers: As Bad as Weir Says?" Table 3 contains its posts. The original topic focused on the claims made by popular historian Alison Weir about Henry VIII's courtiers, and it illustrates how members invoked sources to critique the original source in question. It had a total of 38 posts and 11 different contributing members.

### *Narrative Summary 1: "Henry's Courtiers: As Bad as Weir Says?"*

Alison Weir's (2010) popular biography *The Lady in the Tower* assesses the downfall of Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII's second wife and the first English queen to be beheaded. The thread began (P0) with a member wishing to know whether Henry's courtiers, particularly the men who were executed along with Anne, were as corrupt as Weir depicts them or whether the author is "exaggerating"? To pose such a question at all sets a tone of critique for the thread, casting doubt on the author and the work as a source.

In the first response to the thread (P1), a member commented without having read *The Lady in the Tower*, instead invoking community opinions about the source as a response, along with comparing Weir to another popular nonfiction work, *Sex With the Queen* (Herman, 2006). Having even only read a "snippet" of this other work, the member still critiqued it, too, for apparently exaggerating the theories of historian Retha Warnicke (1991) in her scholarly work *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn*.

In P4, a new member joined the conversation to ask about one of Henry's courtiers in particular and whether this courtier had hanged another man because of a "petty misdemeanour/personal grudge." A member in P6 mentioned that the event (the courtier hanging a man) is described in Weir's work, but a new participant in P7 shared that the incident is also described in historian Eric Ives's

TABLE 3  
Henry's Courtiers: As Bad as Weir Says?

<i>Post No.</i>	<i>Post</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>Purpose/Reaction</i>
0	<p>"In her book <i>The Lady in the Tower</i>, Weir paints a pretty ugly picture of what the some of the accused men were like . . . Did Henry and Anne run with a dangerous crowd? Or was Weir exaggerating?"</p>	One (secondary popular)	Purpose: Question (purpose) Reaction: Critical Purpose: Share Reaction: Critical
1	<p>"I have yet to read this book, but some people on this site have commented here that the sources Weir uses in her latest publication are false . . . I've heard a lot of exaggerations about the men recently, i managed to read a little snippet online of the book '<i>Sex With The Queen</i>', and the author paints a very licentious picture of some of the men as well . . . taking Warmicke's theories concerning their sexuality and blowing them all out of proportion."</p>	Three (other, popular scholarly biography)	Purpose: Share Reaction: Critical
4	<p>"Was it Brereton who hanged a man, one of his tenants on his Welsh estates, for some really petty misdemeanour/personal grudge?"</p>		
7	<p>"Its also in Eric Ives book on Anne Boleyn and there is an excerpt about the incident on Brereton's profile here on the wiki: <a href="http://tudorswiki.sho.com/page/William%20Brereton">http://tudorswiki.sho.com/page/William%20Brereton</a></p>	Two (scholarly, Web)	Purpose: Share
12	<p>It was a man who Thomas Cromwell tried to save but Brereton managed to rearrest him and rigged a trial—and it is thought that is part of the reason Cromwell included him in the 5 men who were accused with Anne"</p> <p>"I think Brereton was opposed to Cromwell's policy of centralisation that was being carried out in Brereton's area at that time. The Marches may well have been operating under the old feudal system, and Cromwell was keen to bring the whole country under one central, London based government. Brereton would've lost a lot under this piece of legislation. The same policy also contributed to the Northern Rebellions of 1537 (Pilgrimage of Grace). I'm just not wholly convinced that these men were attainted simply because Cromwell had a grudge against them."</p>		Reaction: Critical, disciplinary

15	<p>"I'm not sure if you have read John Guy's review of 'The Lady In The Tower' published in The Times newspaper some time ago. But its well worth reading, as it highlights a number of problems with Weir's research (such as using sources that are known to be fakes, etc). Here's a link anyway.  <a href="http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/toll/arts_and_entertainment/books/non-fiction/article6894033.ece">http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/toll/arts_and_entertainment/books/non-fiction/article6894033.ece</a></p> <p>I usually find that Alison Weir is a good introduction to Tudor history, but should always be followed up with more professional, scholarly works. I would never take her at face value."</p>	Two (scholarly, Web)	<p>Purpose: Share, support          Reaction: Critical</p>
20	<p>"Someone should try to pick out the 5 actually good people who existed during this time period. I swear it cant be anymore than 5 because even some of the decent people, Thomas More, did some bastard things."</p>	One (media)	<p>Purpose: Illustrate, support          Reaction: Disciplinary</p>
21	<p>". . . If we are to use our own modern standards then no one is good in the slightest . . . Or should we use the values of the day in which Thomas More is a good person and Norfolk quotes in 'A man for all seasons' (a great film about More) 'no man left the office of chance/lor poeere but More', meaning that More did not take bribes."</p>	One (scholarly)	<p>Purpose: Support          Reaction: Critical          Purpose: Share, support          Reaction: Critical</p>
29	<p>"I was under the impression that Crammer was involved in coming up with Culpepper. I believe that is what David Starykey said."</p>	One (scholarly)	<p>Purpose: Support          Reaction: Critical          Purpose: Share, support          Reaction: Critical</p>
30	<p>"In Starkey's book, Six wives, he says that Crammer's letter told Henry about the open secret of the Duchess's household . . . eg. Manox and Dereham's affairs with Katherine. From there Wriothesley took it further and many arrests were made and interrogations and torture especially on Dereham who came up with Culpepper's name saying that he was the queen's new lover probably in hopes of taking the heat off of himself."</p>	One (scholarly)	<p>Purpose: Support          Reaction: Critical          Purpose: Share, support          Reaction: Critical</p>

TABLE 4  
Was Jane Seymour Innocent?

<i>Post No.</i>	<i>Post</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>Purpose/Reaction</i>
0	<p>"I have read in 'the Six wives of Henry VIII' by Alison Weir that . . . [excerpt about Jane Seymour]</p> <p>This to me is sheds a different light of Jane Seymour than i had thought before.</p> <p>Does anyone else have any comments on this?"</p> <p>"I have always thought of Jane as a manipulative *****<sup>a</sup>, who made a show of obedience and humility to Henry. No wonder she was able to 'hold' him. The fact that she was unmarried at that age must have made her desperate to have her own man and her own house, instead of spending her life begging for favours from her relatives . . ."</p>	One (secondary popular)	<p>Purpose: Question</p> <p>Reaction: Personal/emotional</p>
1	<p>"I think we have to understand that Jane was a catholic and had been lady in waiting to Katherine of Aragon before Anne became queen so her allegiance probably lay with the first queen. meaning she had her own agenda like most people at court . . . Was she innocent? Was anyone? It reminds me of a passage from Eric Ive's book about Anne Boleyn (which can easily be attributed to Jane): [excerpt about life at court]</p> <p>(a moloch is something thing which demands or requires costly sacrifices)"</p> <p>"I think when people use the word 'innocent' to refer to Jane, they don't mean in terms of a 'crime' but rather as a character description. Jane is often imagined—look at her portrayal in the Tudors as a perfect example—of a naive, sheltered young woman who was oblivious to all the politics and nastiness happening around her . . . However, the reality is that she was quite a sophisticated woman who knew exactly what she was doing, and so far as we know, doesn't seem to have shown any concern about what happened to other people who stood in her way . . . it's not that Jane was a particularly unscrupulous character—she wasn't—but it's the contrast between the image of the innocent maiden and the reality of the ambitious court lady which is interesting."</p>	One (scholarly secondary)	<p>Purpose: Support</p> <p>Reaction: Disciplinary</p>
23	<p>"I think when people use the word 'innocent' to refer to Jane, they don't mean in terms of a 'crime' but rather as a character description. Jane is often imagined—look at her portrayal in the Tudors as a perfect example—of a naive, sheltered young woman who was oblivious to all the politics and nastiness happening around her . . . However, the reality is that she was quite a sophisticated woman who knew exactly what she was doing, and so far as we know, doesn't seem to have shown any concern about what happened to other people who stood in her way . . . it's not that Jane was a particularly unscrupulous character—she wasn't—but it's the contrast between the image of the innocent maiden and the reality of the ambitious court lady which is interesting."</p>	One media (television show)	<p>Purpose: Illustrate</p> <p>Reaction: Disciplinary</p>

30	<p>“I’m currently reading a book about Mary Tudor &amp; came across a message sent by Jane which may throw some light on her feelings. Before Anne’s downfall she sent a message telling her to ‘be of good cheer, and that her troubles would sooner come to an end than she supposed, and that when the opportunity occurred she would show herself her true &amp; devoted servant’.”</p>	One (unspecified)	Purpose: Share
31	<p>“I believe that letter is from a different lady who caught Henry’s eye, sometime in late 1534 to early 1535. Chapuys also talks about this woman, she disappears from history shortly after he mentions her. For sometime it was believed this woman could be Jane, but Jane isn’t recorded until late 1535 to early 1536, and if she had been the same woman, it most likely would’ve been brought up by Chapuys.”</p>	One (primary)	Purpose: Support Reaction: Critical
34	<p>“And little did Princess Mary guess that even Anne’s death would not improve her lot in life until she acquiesced to Dad’s demands. I wonder if she thought ‘Gee, I never realized what an *&amp;%%&amp; Dad is until now.’”</p>		Reaction: Surface

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<sup>a</sup>The \*\*\*\*\* was used by the original author of the post and is not a replacement for any term.

scholarly biography on Anne Boleyn. This member further posted a link to one of the wiki's collaboratively created historical profile pages that had an excerpt about the matter.

After P7, discussion shifted to reasons why the courtiers described by Weir might have been targeted by Cromwell (Henry's chief minister until his execution in 1540) to fall alongside Anne Boleyn. In P12, a member attempted to contextualize why one of these targeted courtiers and Cromwell may have come into conflict by situating the courtier's position within Cromwell's "policy of centralization." However, the member ended the post by expressing doubt that the courtiers targeted were chosen because Cromwell "had a grudge against them," which was a critique against Weir, who placed Anne and the men's downfall at Cromwell's hands.

The poster of P12 returned in P15 to further share a link to a review written by historian John Guy about *The Lady in the Tower*. The member made a critical comment that although Weir can be a "good introduction to Tudor history," the author should always "be followed up with more professional, scholarly works." A side conversation then developed between this member and the original creator of the thread about Weir and her potential use of fake sources.

An entirely new participant eventually asked whether there were "5 actually good people who existed during this time period" in P20, turning the discussion from Weir. A member responded in P21 that "no one is good in the slightest" if they (Tudor era courtiers) were judged by "modern standards." Instead, the member posed that they might be judged according to the "values of the day" (the Tudor era), illustrating the point through a quote from the Academy Award-winning film *A Man for All Seasons*, which is about St. Thomas More, who was for a time Lord Chancellor under Henry VIII before he was convicted of treason and beheaded in 1535.

A question was then put forth by another member about whether More was "disqualified" for goodness because he burned heretics, with another historical figure, Cranmer (archbishop under Henry VIII and his son), nominated for the good man category if he did not burn or actively seek to destroy anyone. But then the discussion focused on whether Cranmer was involved in the downfall of Henry VIII's fifth wife (who was also beheaded), with a member in P29 referencing historian David Starkey to support the claim that Cranmer was involved in "coming up with" one of the men executed with his fifth wife too. However, in P30 another member elaborated on the historian's comments about Cranmer (and thus was critical of the previous member's position) and noted that others were likely responsible for the matter, not Cranmer.

### *Narrative Summary 2: "Was Jane Seymour Innocent?"*

The second example thread centers on Jane Seymour, Henry VIII's third wife, and her role (or not) in the downfall of Henry's second wife, Anne Boleyn, who

was beheaded. When it comes to critical reactions in particular, this example shows how members invoked sources to support their reactions to other members' positions. The Jane Seymour thread contained 45 posts and involved 14 different members.<sup>13</sup> It also demonstrates how a mini-conversation can develop within the larger, overall conversation between a subset of thread contributors.

In the original post (P0), a member used a secondary popular source as a thread generator to solicit community opinion about Jane Seymour's involvement in and knowledge of Anne Boleyn's downfall and eventual execution. The first responder (P1) saw Jane Seymour as "manipulative" and "desperate," demonstrating some basic knowledge of Seymour's position through a comment about Jane being "unmarried at that age" (which was a reference to Seymour being in her mid to late 20s and what that could mean in terms of marriage prospects for a woman of her era). The member's reaction, however, was rooted in the personal/emotional, as it failed to consider Seymour's position within the full context of her time.

In contrast to this initial response, another member in P2 attempted to contextualize Seymour's attitudes and position while also showing an understanding of the complexity of her situation at Henry's court, ending the disciplinary reaction by invoking a secondary scholarly source to illustrate a point about life at court and whether *anyone* could be considered "innocent" then.

The conversation soon turned to whether Jane was better or worse than Anne Boleyn in terms of replacing a current wife—meaning was what Jane did to Anne worse than what Anne had done to Henry's first wife (examining Anne's actions along with Jane's)—but by P23 a member returned to the matter of Jane Seymour being "innocent" to explore it in another light, specifically by contrasting the interpretations and media portrayals of Seymour as "naïve" with the likely historical reality that she was a "sophisticated woman," using the television show *The Tudors* to illustrate her perspective.

In P30, a member shared a passage from an unspecified source about a letter Seymour supposedly wrote. Both P31 and P34 were direct reactions to this post and source rather than the original post and main source of the thread. The member in P31 reacted critically to the source in P30 by countering that the letter was not written by Seymour, invoking a primary source to support the stance. P34 was a humorous, surface reaction to the content of the alleged letter in P30, rather than focusing on the legitimacy of the source itself.

Secondary sources could be contentious in the community. Some members distinguished between scholarly and popular works. Others did not. Whereas a source and its author could be taken at face value in one thread and by some members, the same author could be criticized in another thread by other members. Alison Weir's work was invoked in both of these example threads, but in the

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<sup>13</sup>These numbers reflect the thread's status during the period of data collection. Seven months after the last analyzed post, someone made another comment in the thread and discussion resumed.

Jane Seymour example, Weir was a stimulus for conversation, with her work and assessment of Seymour neither critically evaluated nor really factoring into the discussion after the initial post. In the Henry's courtiers example, alternatively, Weir's work and assessment of historical figures came under scrutiny, highlighting how sources can be used to criticize other sources rather than to challenge other members' opinions.

### High Contributors

Though 133 members participated in source-related discussions and 88 invoked sources directly, 11 members contributed 61.8% of all sources invoked in discussion.

It is important to compare how these high contributors' patterns of participation varied from or were similar to those of the general community. Rather than differing from the average member in the types of sources used, such as focusing on primary or secondary sources, high contributors invoked more of every type of source. They demonstrated greater knowledge of media, Web, unspecified, and to a lesser extent other sources as well as primary and secondary works. High contributors did differ, however, in their reasons for invoking a source, as they were more likely to use a source as a thread generator or to support their stances. This perhaps suggests that an increased familiarity with sources leads to an increased tendency to rely and draw on them in discussion as well as to start discussions specifically about them. In terms of the specific breakdown, high contributors provided 49.2% of thread-generating sources, 68.5% of supports, 62.5% of shares, 57.1% of illustrates, and less than half of questions (47.6%). High contributors also provided 48.9% of all source reactions. They were lowest in surface reactions, which seems intuitive, but they were highest in personal/emotional, a perhaps unexpected result. High contributors are considered again when I look at thread topics and response patterns.

### What Subject Matters Promote Discussion? Do Some Kinds of Content Generate More Responses Than Others?

Of all 170 threads that were collected for this study, 11.8% ( $n = 20$ ) received no responses. The majority of threads fell into the low-response category at 57.6% ( $n = 98$ ), followed by medium responses at 20% ( $n = 34$ ) and high responses at 8.8% ( $n = 15$ ). Only three threads, at 1.8%, were monsters, but these three were responsible for 37.7% of the 2,641 analyzed posts.

Low-response threads had an average response rate of 4.5, whereas medium-response threads had an average of 16 responses and high-response threads 42.9.

As for each of the monster threads, one had 197 responses, the second 248, and the third 547.<sup>14,15</sup>

### Thread Topics

Figures dominated the discussion both in threads overall and within the five response categories. Among the 170 threads, 65.9% ( $n = 112$ ) of topics originated around figures, whereas other was the next largest at 20.6% ( $n = 35$ ), followed by events and issues at 8.8% ( $n = 15$ ), fashion at 2.9% ( $n = 5$ ), and authors at 1.8% ( $n = 3$ ). However, the picture is more complicated than these numbers may initially suggest. For example, although only three threads began around an author, all belonged to the high-response category and generated 115 posts among them. In contrast, the combined 15 events and issues threads generated a total of 157 posts among them.

### *Response Breakdown*

For the no-response category (20 of 170 threads), 65% ( $n = 13$ ) were figures, 20% ( $n = 4$ ) were other, 10% ( $n = 2$ ) were events and issues, and 5% ( $n = 1$ ) were fashion. High contributors created 15% (three out of 20) of threads, all three about figures.

For low-response threads (98 of 170 threads), 67.3% ( $n = 66$ ) of topics concerned figures, 23.5% ( $n = 23$ ) other, 6.1% ( $n = 6$ ) events and issues, and 3.1% ( $n = 3$ ) fashion. In terms of participation, 103 members, including all 11 high contributors, posted in this category. The 11 high contributors were responsible for starting 41.8% (41 of 98) of threads. At least one high contributor participated in 88 out of 98 threads, and two or more participated in 51 of the threads.

For medium-response threads (34 of 170 threads), figures composed 67.6% ( $n = 23$ ) of topics, followed by events and issues at 20.6% ( $n = 7$ ), and other at 11.8% ( $n = 4$ ). Eighty-three members participated with 10 high contributors posting in this category. The 10 high contributors were responsible for making 47.7% (267 of 560) of posts as well as creating 44.1% (15 of 34) of threads. High contributors participated in every thread, and 33 of 34 threads involved two or more of them. High contributors started the majority of events and issues threads at 71.4% (five of seven), but their participation patterns throughout these threads were comparable to their patterns in figure and other threads.

High-response threads (15 of 170) had a breakdown of 53.3% ( $n = 8$ ) for figures, 20% each for authors ( $n = 3$ ) and other ( $n = 3$ ), and 6.7% ( $n = 1$ ) for fashion.

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<sup>14</sup>Two of these threads generated additional responses after data collection.

<sup>15</sup>When I calculated the 37.7%, I added the first post of each of these threads (P0) to the number of responses. This meant  $197 + 1$ ,  $248 + 1$ , and  $547 + 1$ . The total number of posts differs from the number of replies.

No events and issues were part of this category. All 11 high contributors and a total of 99 different members participated in these discussions. High contributors made 46.3% (324 of 700) of posts and started 46.7% (seven of 15) of threads. At least three high contributors posted in every thread. They contributed more than 50% of posts in all three of the author threads, which were also all started by a high contributor.

Two of the three monster threads centered on figures (specifically Henry's wives), but the largest thread was other (members posted unknown or little known historical facts). In the smallest monster thread (197 responses), 23 total members and eight high contributors participated, with the high contributors generating 37.8% of posts. In the next largest thread (248 responses), 21 members, including five high contributors, were involved in the discussion, with 35.3% of posts due to those five high contributors. The largest thread (547 responses) had 43 participants, among them eight high contributors, but in contrast to the two smaller monster threads, high contributors were responsible for 71.8% of posts.

### *Breakdowns for Figures and for Events and Issues*

Members of the Tudor family were, perhaps not surprising, the most popular figures to discuss. Henry was the topic of 19 threads, his wives 49 threads, his children 20 threads, and other Tudors nine threads. Political and religious figures were the subject of nine threads. In terms of events and issues, seven threads had politically focused topics, four had social topics, and four had religious topics.

## DISCUSSION

Historical film, historical reconstructions, and historical fiction are all designed to sweep their audiences into an apparent past . . . a good history curriculum would prompt students to ask of cinematic and fictional accounts of the past, as well as their textbooks' and teacher's accounts, who constructed this account and why? What sources did they use? What other accounts are there of the same events and lives? How and why do they differ? Which should we believe? (Seixas & Peck, 2004, p. 109)

The Tudors wiki is a space in which the goals of historical fiction and "a good history curriculum" meet. Members have been "swept" into the past through the fictional representations of a television show, yet through their discussion forum they are also questioning the narratives and sources they encounter. As seen in the threads on Jane Seymour and Henry's courtiers, members challenge and critique others' positions *and* the sources invoked. They note differences between fiction and nonfiction and authors' positions. They attempt to corroborate. They source

information and contextualize figures and events. This is not to say that all members of the community engage in these practices or that all separate fiction from nonfiction. But the more critical and disciplinary posts expose members to ideas and norms that can be developed over time about what is and is not suitable in community discourse.

Results from the analysis of The Tudors Fan Wiki seem to indicate that media sources are considered more appropriate for illustrating or asking a question, whereas scholarly nonfiction is still most invoked to support a particularly disciplinary historical claim. It is also significant that even in the informal environment of an online community, more than half of source instances remained published secondary sources and media. Though Web sources constituted nearly a fifth of instances, one could argue that the number could have been higher given that the community is Web based. For people left to their own devices, the Web seems to act as more of a facilitator for accessing, disseminating, and discussing more traditional types of sources in a speedier manner.

In considering the potential design of online environments for fostering critical thinking, inquiry, and interest, offering a variety of ways for people to engage with content is essential. Not only do the features of a space—particularly ones in which users actively contribute to and collaborate on content based around a mutual interest—help to motivate and empower participants through the tools and activities at their disposal (Fields, Magnifico, Lammers, & Curwood, 2014), but fan sites such as The Tudors wiki further ensure that people have *flexibility* in how they are able to process and discuss various content. The headgear worn in a portrait or the identity of a minor character in a novel are equally valued and allowable as conversation topics alongside court politics and more important historical figures. Even when members think they have a “silly” question, such as in the example of the Earl of Surrey’s religion, they still feel comfortable enough to post about it. As shown in this study, not all topics will be responded to equally (or at all), but the community grants the *opportunity* for all members to post on whatever interests them. Though one could argue whether there is value in a question that remains unanswered (which might be seen as a rejection by the community), it suggests that the only value in a question is through the answers it receives, when asking in itself—as well as seeing what others ask even if one does not respond to a particular question—has value too.

All questions in the forum are important to a degree, as they show a greater range of what people are thinking about and willing to express to others in an informal environment. In a classroom, questions tend to arise from the lecture or a set of readings assigned by a professor or teacher. In the wiki community, questions arise from a range of sources and people, and members are not uniformly reading the same works given to them by a single authority figure.

However, though online members receive information from disparate sources, their questions are dictated to a significant degree by the television show and other

popular media. Questions about what *really* happened stem from a member viewing an episode or reading a scene in a novel. The dramatization of history promotes the questioning of whether the drama is true, but if members do not see or read about it in media, they may not know or think to ask about it. Similarly, even criticisms of media and invoking secondary or primary sources to juxtapose the drama with historical reality are still guided by the media itself.

Another central feature of the wiki is the opt-in/opt-out nature of its environment. Members participate as much or as little as they want in whatever way they want. Disciplinary reactions were highest overall, but members could also choose (and sometimes did choose) to respond with a surface or personal/emotional reaction. Any reaction is acceptable in the wiki, even if other members do not agree or accept it, and it is entirely dependent on individual inclination. If members do not wish to participate in discussion, they do not have to post. If they wish to respond to only a particular post or a particular aspect of a source, they may do that as well. Language tends toward the chatty and colloquial. This stands in contrast to formal environments in which students may have to participate in discussion regardless of whether they are interested and in which there are explicit or implicit standards of conduct for what counts as fitting language and an appropriate question or response to a topic and source.

Yet if the community's informal, opt-in/opt-out, asynchronous nature encourages and allows for increased willing participation due to a lack of pressure to perform in a real-time manner, these same qualities can sacrifice an amount of rigor and deeper engagement with historical content. Without a push, students do not always think about or understand the historian's role in having to reconstruct the past, the biases and credibility issues of evidence, or how they even process historical content personally (Hynd, Holschuh, & Hubbard, 2004; Kelly, 2013). The formal environment offers the chance, or even creates the necessity, to make them think critically and disciplinary about what they read and see. Students do "sporadically, incompletely, and often inaccurately, attempt to figure out what the past might mean for them and for their futures. The job of history education is to work with these fragments of thinking and develop them" (Seixas & Peck, 2004, pp. 109–110). In the wiki, though some members do think and react to sources in disciplinary ways, they are not held accountable for doing so. Members can choose to leave the wiki or current discussion at any time and continue to think as they did before. Still, even if every member does not choose to think critically, many do. And the community's structure grants members the time to look up and post excerpts from sources, collect their thoughts over a day or week, and talk about topics of personal interest with like-minded people. However, the wiki's structure also provides certain constraints as the classroom does, albeit in different ways. That not all topics will be responded to is a tradeoff for the freedom of asking whatever questions a member likes. In contrast, the tradeoff in more formal environments might be that though students do not feel comfortable

asking any sort of question, they expect that the ones they do ask will be at least acknowledged if not fully answered. Thus, both spaces create rules and shape norms in regard to acceptable patterns of discourse.

Desiring to know what *really* happened is not analogous to historical inquiry. As mentioned in the introduction, historians attempt to reconstruct the past with the understanding that they do so only as far as the evidence permits (Becker, 1932; Cronon, 2013; Kelly, 2013). The past is a puzzle to put back together, a mystery to solve, but what precisely happened will always be just out of reach. That is not to say that any interpretation is permissible, or that a close approximation of truth is not achievable, but the past should not be treated as some absolute to discover. Perhaps some members of the wiki do not understand this aspect of history when they ask their initial questions, believing that a clear-cut right or wrong answer is out there to be found. However, this does not lessen the impact of their actions as a start pointing for disciplinary practices.

Fan participation is attractive for reasons that go beyond flexibility or finding out what *really* happened, for members could technically research and look up information on their own. They come to the wiki because they want to experience finding out what happened in a community. The Tudors wiki offers collaborative exploration and the cultivation of a collective intelligence as members pool their interests, knowledge, and resources together (H. Jenkins et al., 2009) to generate meaningful discussions and learn about sources as a group rather than as isolated individuals. The community is a resource in which others' questions and comments can lead members to pursuits they had never considered before. As one member wrote, "That is the nice thing about the Wiki, you start off considering one piece of information and end up researching other characters and events."

Fans are not just playing about online. They enjoy being detectives and figuring out discrepancies in media. They are passionate enough about their topic to seek out primary and secondary sources for their arguments and counterarguments. Thus, the wiki fosters agency among its members, for it requires their continual input and participation to thrive.

Again, in terms of student engagement, agency can be a key factor in shaping students' experiences in and perceptions of informal learning environments (Fields et al., 2014; Lai, 2015; Polman & Miller, 2010), whether online or not, and this can be transferred to formal learning settings. Students exhibit "purposeful learning" when they are alternatively learners and teachers and when "learning [lies] in their own hands" (Roth, 1996, p. 211). Students also enjoy producing their own historical content and sharing their work with peers; they become more active and engaged when they are able to express and debate the differing interpretations of the past that appear in their work (Bickford, 2010). In the wiki, there is no knowledge to produce and consume if they do not do it themselves. Not only do members want answers to their questions, but they wish to share whatever information they have with others too. That *share* accounted for more than half of the reasons members invoked a source is not a trivial matter.

A successful online space for historical inquiry needs to leave behind some of the constraining elements of formal environments (in terms of what topics are even implicitly presented as more valuable and appropriate to discuss) while offering some of the rigors of the classroom as well as perhaps finding ways to circumvent the constraints that develop in informal environments (not having to respond to or think critically about a topic). It should also function as both an affinity space and a community of practice, in which people have multiple access points for participation. People must be able to contribute and feel that their contributions have value.

The prominence of figures as topics is also noteworthy. Historical dramas tend to focus on individuals, as readers and viewers follow characters through a time period, with events and issues set as the backdrop for the figure's story. This contrasts with history in the classroom, which typically focuses on events and issues, with little time permitted for delving into the personal and interpersonal, curiosities about conspiracies or whether someone was innocent. But as seen through the example threads and posts presented in this article, figure discussions can involve a plethora of source usage and disciplinary reactions as well as discussion of political, religious, and social contexts. This suggests that the use of the personal can lead to exploration of the political, social, and religious and thinking about broader issues.

As for the high contributors, it is interesting that in source reactions, they were highest in personal/emotional. Perhaps this is because of the intense participation and investment these members have in the community, which leads them to be less likely to separate themselves from their own experiences, emotions, or personal opinions in a discussion of sources. This also begs the question of whether being familiar with more sources automatically equates to engaging with them in the most rigorous way, an issue in need of further exploration. Similar to source usage, high contributors were also higher in all types of discussion topics as opposed to becoming more narrowly focused on specialized topics, which is an interesting contrast again to formal environments, in which longer immersion and study of history leads to specialization. It would be useful to track high contributors' and other members' posting habits over a longer period of time, such as 2 or 3 years, to see what learning developments can be tracked and noted as well as how expertise is defined and recognized in the community.

This study was a first step, an exploration of the lay of the digital, historical land, so to speak, to understand people's habits and attitudes online—what they do and what patterns emerge in discussion—so that researchers can then assess learning in these environments more deeply as well as even consider what learning is and should be considered in these spaces. This study provided information about what topics wiki members discuss and patterns of source usage. The next step is a deeper analysis of the progression of threads' conversation beyond the initial

topic to understand why and how threads develop, particularly high-response and monster threads.

In addition, although comparisons between learning in the community and in the classroom were touched on, a more rigorous comparison is required. Future research would include a direct comparison of data from a class taught on the Tudors, for example, to better examine what exactly *is* learned in the online community versus what is learned in the classroom—or rather, to understand how learning occurs across settings (Barron, 2006) and how experiences in each of these environments complement and fuel learning in the other. Future research might also explore learning in informal online spaces versus learning in formal online spaces, particularly among a variety of demographics, and whether massive open online courses, for instance, are really a potentially democratizing force for education or whether they favor and assist students who are already prepared to succeed in a real-world classroom (Evans & McIntyre, 2014). Indeed, what populations are actually benefiting from most formal and/or informal spaces needs to be explored continually.

## CONCLUSION

Regardless of whether it was because of the actors you particularly liked, the history, the costumes or the drama—it [the wiki] has brought us all together as FANS.

The Tudors Fan Wiki is a community with a specialized interest and only one community in Tudor fandom. Why does it matter? *The Tudors* provides an example of how the Web can alter the ways in which people come to know history—or any discipline. The Web, like the novel, television, or printing press, has permanently changed society. New and old media forms are colliding, merging, and remixing, and comparisons of these along with people's practices around and with them are becoming increasingly more common (e.g., Gitelman, 2006; Milne, 2010; Shapiro & Humphreys, 2013). Regardless of whether one is a proponent or skeptic of online learning possibilities, it is essential to understand what people do in these spaces and what, by extension, they bring with them into formal learning environments. The Tudors Fan Wiki allows for unique member–member and member–source interactions. Members can participate in multiple discussions simultaneously, yet posts can occur a minute, week, month, or even year after the last post. Threads develop in a fluid and complex way. Even within a single thread, a range of source types, purposes, and reactions appears. The Tudors Fan Wiki engages with a variety of sources in numerous ways.

This study highlights the extensive, and at times scholarly, knowledge exchange that occurs in fandom. Those who see the Web as a threat to serious historical learning might be surprised to see that online communities are not merely

places to share common interests but voluntary communities of learning in which disciplinary norms surprisingly resurface in traditional and nontraditional ways. Where online communities and fan activities will lead, and what disciplines will become in this new landscape, only time will tell. History lives inside and outside of the academy, and it increasingly inhabits digital spaces.

## FUNDING

This research was supported by grants from the National Science Foundation (REC-238524, REC-354453, Co-PI Brigid Barron) through the LIFE center (<http://life-slc.org/>). Any opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the sponsoring agencies.

This work was also supported by a generous grant from the Wallenberg Foundation Media Places program (Sam Wineburg, PI). Any errors that remain, however, are the sole responsibility of the author.

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## APPENDIX A

### A Selection of Tudors in Film and Television Programs

#### Film

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Henry VIII</i> (1911)                       | <i>Anna Boleyn</i> (1920)               |
| <i>Les Amours de la reine Élisabeth</i> (1912) | <i>The Prince and the Pauper</i> (1920) |
| <i>When Knighthood Was in Flower</i> (1922)    | <i>Tudor Rose</i> (1936)                |
| <i>Lady Jane Grey</i> (1923)                   | <i>The Virgin Queen</i> (1923)          |
| <i>The Private Life of Henry VIII</i> (1933)** | <i>Drake the Pirate</i> (1935)          |

<i>Tudor Rose</i> (1936)	<i>Mary of Scotland</i> (1936)
<i>Prince and the Pauper</i> (1937)	<i>Fire Over England</i> (1937)
<i>Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex</i> (1939)*	<i>The Sea Hawk</i> (1940)
<i>Das Herz der Königin</i> (1940)	<i>The Sword and the Rose</i> (1953)
<i>Catalina de Inglaterra</i> (1951)	<i>Young Bess</i> (1953)
<i>The Virgin Queen</i> (1955)	<i>The Prince and the Pauper</i> (1957)
<i>A Man for All Seasons</i> (1966)**	<i>Crossed Swords</i> (1977)
<i>Anne of the Thousand Days</i> (1969)*	<i>Mary, Queen of Scots</i> (1971)*
<i>Henry VIII and His Six Wives</i> (1972)	<i>Lady Jane</i> (1986)
<i>God's Outlaw: Story of William Tyndale</i> (1986)	<i>Elizabeth</i> (1998)**
<i>Shakespeare in Love</i> (1998)**	<i>The Other Boleyn Girl</i> (2008)
<i>The Twisted Tale of Bloody Mary</i> (2008)	<i>Elizabeth: The Golden Age</i> (2007)**

#### Television

<i>Omnibus: "The Trial of Anne Boleyn"</i> (1952)	<i>Queen's Champion</i> (1958)
<i>Elizabeth Is Dead</i> (1960)	<i>Sir Francis Drake</i> (1961)
<i>The Prince and the Pauper</i> (1962)	<i>The Queen's Traitor</i> (1967)
<i>Elizabeth the Queen</i> (1968)	<i>Kenilworth</i> (1968)
<i>The Six Wives of Henry VIII</i> (1970)	<i>Elizabeth R</i> (1971)
<i>Carry on Henry VIII</i> (1971)	<i>Shadow of the Tower</i> (1972)
<i>Drake's Venture</i> (1980)	<i>Blackadder II</i> (1986)
<i>Blackadder's Christmas Carol</i> (1988)	<i>A Man for All Seasons</i> (1988)
<i>The Six Wives of Henry VIII</i> (2001)	<i>The Prince and the Pauper</i> (2000)
<i>Elizabeth</i> (2000)	<i>Henry VIII</i> (2003)
<i>Gunpowder, Treason &amp; Plot</i> (2004)	<i>The Other Boleyn Girl</i> (2003)
<i>Elizabeth I</i> (2005)	<i>The Virgin Queen</i> (2005)
<i>The Madness of Henry VIII</i> (2006)	<i>Henry VIII: Mind of a Tyrant</i> (2009)
<i>The Tudors</i> (2007–2010)	

*Note.* \*\*denotes an Academy Award winner; \*denotes an Academy Award nominee.

## APPENDIX B

### Full Posts With Sources From Truncated Examples

#### **Birth of Frances** (Table 1, Share Example 1)

So, I love seeing how the nobility was so interwoven during this time period, so I thought I might post the christening of the Duke of Suffolk's daughter Frances here. (And I think we all know Frances's story, so I won't elaborate):-)

From British History Online:

17 July.

Egerton, 985. f. 63b.

B. M. 3489. CHARLES DUKE OF SUFFOLK.

“The christening of the Lady Frances, first begotten daughter of Charles Duke of Suffolk and Mary the French Queen.”

Born at Bishop’s Hatfield, Thursday, 17 July 1517, 9 Hen. VIII., between 2 and 3 in the morning. Christened on Saturday following. The road to the church was strewn with rushes; the church porch hung with rich cloth of gold and needlework; the church with arras of the history of Holofernes and Hercules; the chancel, with arras of silk and gold; and the altar with rich cloth of tissue, and covered with images, relics, and jewels. In the said chancel were, as deputies for the Queen and Princess, Lady Boleyn and Lady Elizabeth Grey. The Abbot of St. Alban’s was godfather. The font was hung with a canopy of crimson satin, powdered with roses, half red and half white, with the sun shining, and fleur de lis gold, and the French Queen’s arms in four places, all of needlework. On the way to church were eighty torches borne by yeomen, and eight by gentlemen. The basin, covered, was borne by Mr. Sturton, the taper by Mr. Richard Long, the salt by Mr. Humphrey Barnes, the chrism by Lady Chelton. Mrs. Dorothy Verney bore the young lady, was assisted by the Lord Powes and Sir Roger Pelston, and accompanied by sixty ladies and gentlemen, and the prelates Sir Oliver Poole and Sir Christopher, and other of my Lord’s chaplains. She was named Frances, being born on St. Francis’s day.”

#### **Catherine Parr** (Table 1, Support Example)

Henry didn’t like being without a woman . . . he enjoyed female company, it was just his personality. Starkey says that even after Jane Seymour’s death, he kept her ladies together and would regularly visit them and spent time with a couple of ladies in particular (Anne Bassett & Elizabeth Brooke). Catherine was descended from Edward III so she wasn’t without pedigree. The salon of free thinkers, I believe happened after she became queen. I like what Lucy Wooding said of her in her recent bio of Henry:

“Katherine Parr is generally portrayed as a sedate widow who was a sound choice for an ageing, infirm king, having already nursed two elderly husbands in their closing years. In fact she was an intelligent, attractive, animated woman of about 30, who loved music and dancing and dressed expensively and with flair. She was also fresh from a dalliance with one of the most attractive and reckless men at court: . . . Thomas Seymour. . . . She liked diamonds, and dressed herself and her household in crimson. In short she was a more exciting choice as queen than is usually appreciated”

From that description she sounds perfect for the King. Just his kinda girl.

#### **Ambassador Letter** (Table 3, Jane Douglas Thread, P25)

I agree with you [member’s username], I have often wondered about this rumour. Catherine Brandon was a friend of the queens and like you said, she definitely had reformist ways. . . . even fleeing England when Mary I became queen.

It seems to be based on an Ambassador’s letter In February 1547. Van der Delft wrote: ‘I hesitate to report there are rumours of a new queen. Some attribute it to the sterility of the present Queen, while others say that there will be no change during the present

war. Madame Suffolk is much talked about and is in great favour; but the King shows no alteration in his behaviour to the Queen, although she is said to be annoyed by the rumour'

First of all Henry died in January 1547 so this had to be right at the end of his life when he was pretty ill. Plus Catherine Parr had gotten over the threat to her in 1545. I am wondering if the ambassador got it wrong. But the Duke of Norfolk and his son the Earl of Surrey were trying to put forward Mary Fitzroy (nee Howard) and she turned on her brother and testified against him. She would have been the Duchess of Cornwall and that would have made more sense to me.

### **Jane Seymour** (Table 4, Jane Seymour Thread, P0)

I have read in the book "the Six wives of Henry VIII" by Alison Weir that . . . . .  
 .. Jane seymour active for months in nurturing Henry's antagonism toward Anne, and must have known that Henry intended to get rid of his wife. Henry made it clear he intended to marry her, and she must have accepted as a necessary preliminary the removal of her rival. Yet even when it became clear would not be by divorce or annulment, she did not flinch. All too often Jane Seymour has been seen merely as a willing tool, yet it is clear that was in fact quite as ambitious and ruthless as her predecessor. she was perceptive, and knew when to speak her mind, a mature woman who knew what she wanted and pursues it with steely singlemindedness. For her former mistress she had no pity whatsoever.' This to me is sheds a different light of Jane Seymour than I had thought before. Does anyone else have any comments on this?

### **Life at Court** (Table 4, Jane Seymour Thread, P2)

I think we have to understand that Jane was a catholic and had been lady in waiting to Katherine of Aragon before Anne became queen so her allegiance probably lay with the first queen meaning she had her own agenda like most people at court. She was coached by Chapuys and her male relatives and she was successful in hooking Henry. Was she innocent? Was anyone?

It reminds me of a passage from Eric Ives book about Anne Boleyn (which can easily be attributed to Jane):

"... the court was a Moloch that sucked in good people, body and soul, and spewed out a noisome plague of parasites—Anne among them—corrupting the community in the process"

[a moloch is something thing which demands or requires costly sacrifices]

### **David Starkey** (Table 4, Jane Seymour Thread, P42)

I am not sure how the dates don't line up. David Starkey believes that when Chapuys writes about Mistress Semel/Seymour, he is talking about Jane Seymour too. In his six wives book, he recounts:

"When [Anne] miscarried, Chapuys heard '[Henry] scarcely said anything to her, except that he saw clearly that God did not wish to give him male children'. Anne for her part

had protested that the disaster was due to her love for Henry. She has been distraught at his jousting accident. "And her heart broke when she saw that he loved others".

Anne's remark was pointed and Henry responded furiously. For the same day that he reported Anne's miscarriage, Chapuys mentioned for the first time that Henry was making much of 'a lady of the court, named Mistress Semel [Seymour], to whom many say [Henry] has lately made great presents."

Jane having been a court for some time and not a teenager (unlike the naive Katherine Howard) was more than likely quite well versed in the dangers of court life.