

CHRISTINE SLEETER, PH.D.

CRITICAL FAMILY HISTORY

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK THAT CONTEXTUALIZES
FAMILY HISTORY WITHIN A WIDER ANALYSIS OF
SOCIAL POWER RELATIONSHIPS AND CULTURE

MORE THAN A NAME ON A BRANCH IN THE FAMILY TREE

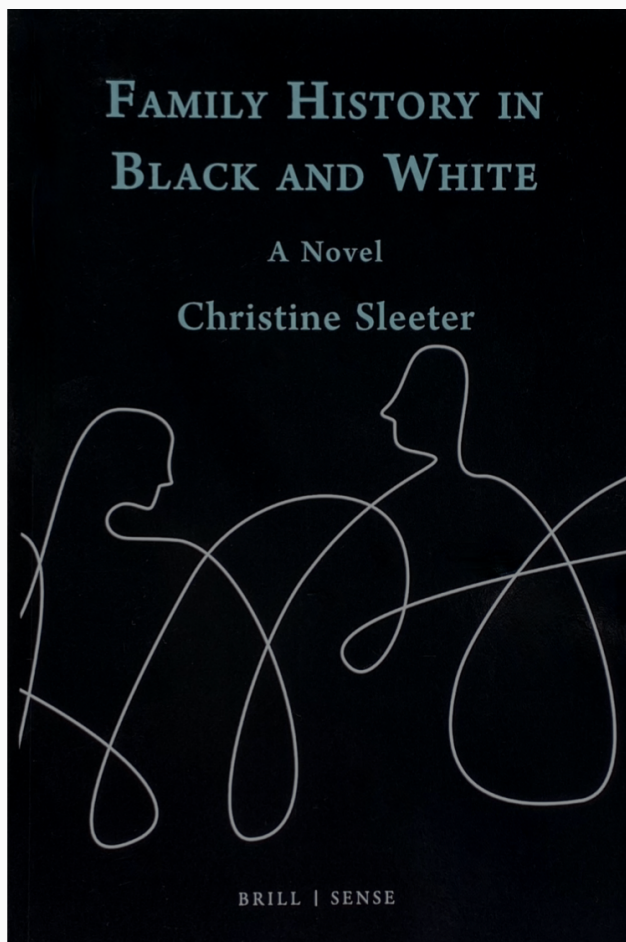


Published in: William Watson (2022). Twelve Steps for White America. Cognella Press.

ABOUT CRITICAL FAMILY HISTORY

“As a white person, I was seeking a conceptual framework that situates one’s family and its history within a wider analysis of social power relationships and culture. White people, especially those of middle class status and above, tend to think of ourselves and our stories in individualistic terms. But since who we are involves not just the work of individuals, but also how individuals’ lives were shaped by local culture and power relationships

across generations, I wanted a framework that would illuminate the social contexts of family lives, and that would help to unearth memories we have lost. In a nutshell, critical family history challenges historians to ask about their ancestors: Who else (what other groups) was around, What were the power relationships among groups, How were these relationships maintained or challenged over time, and What does all this have to do with our lives now?”



CHALLENGE TO FAMILY HISTORIANS

- What other groups were present in their lives?
- What were the power relationships among groups?
- How were these relationships maintained or challenged over time?
- What does all this have to do with our lives now?

CRITICAL GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH TOOLS

RESOURCES FOR DOCUMENTATION

Family Documents
Oral History Interviews
Census Records (Including “Slave Schedules”)
Religious Records
Military Records
Digitized Newspapers - Chronicling America (crowdsourced), Directory of Historical Newspapers on the Internet
Subscription services such as Ancestry.com, Newspaper Archive
Primary accounts written at the time
Historically researched accounts
Artifacts

CONTEXTUALIZING QUESTIONS

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

What were global, national, and local events which impacted choices and opportunities?
When did a given event occur? (Date or Date Range or Era)
What laws had an impact on choices and opportunities?

SOCIAL CONTEXT

Who else was around?
Who was not there who could have or should have been?
What values, norms, traditions were prevalent?
What economic, political, and or cultural systems, conditions, or specific circumstances had impact?

HIDDEN FOUR P FACTORS (*Re: Immigration*)

Push Factors: What drives people to emigrate from their country of origin?
Pull Factors: What are desirable and favorable conditions that motivate change?
Punishing Factors: What are the negative experiences that punish or marginalize people upon arrival?
Privileging Factors: What are positive incentives or resources that privilege people upon arrival?

ADDITIONAL READINGS | RESOURCES

PERSONAL STORIES FROM GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH in the Journal Genealogy

Edited By Christine Sleeter <https://www.mdpi.com/si/24136>

Mica Pollock: Flipping Our Scripts About Undocumented Immigration
Chantae Still: What It Means For Her Grandmother to “Walk Tall”
Avril Bell: Reverberating Historical Privilege

PERSONAL STORIES FROM GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH at the ChristineSleeter.org Blog

Traci Wilson-Kleekamp: Esoteric Clues www.christinesleeter.org/esoteric-clues
Brenda Johnson: 4 Generations of One Family’s Perspectives on Racism www.christinesleeter.org/perspectives-on-racism

PERSONAL STORIES FROM THE PBS SERIES, *FINDING YOUR ROOTS*

with Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and Director of the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University. <https://www.pbs.org/weta/finding-your-roots/>

INSERT ANCESTOR NAME HERE:

CATEGORIZE YOUR FINDINGS ABOUT EACH ANCESTOR. (COPY AND USE THIS TABLE MULTIPLE TIMES AS NEEDED)

RACE

Consider Identity, Beliefs, Position Within Society's Racial Structure

CLASS

Consider Identity, Beliefs, Position Within Society's Class Structure

GENDER

Consider Identity, Beliefs, How Gender Affected Their Opportunities

RELIGION

Consider Identity, Beliefs, How Religion Affected Their Lives

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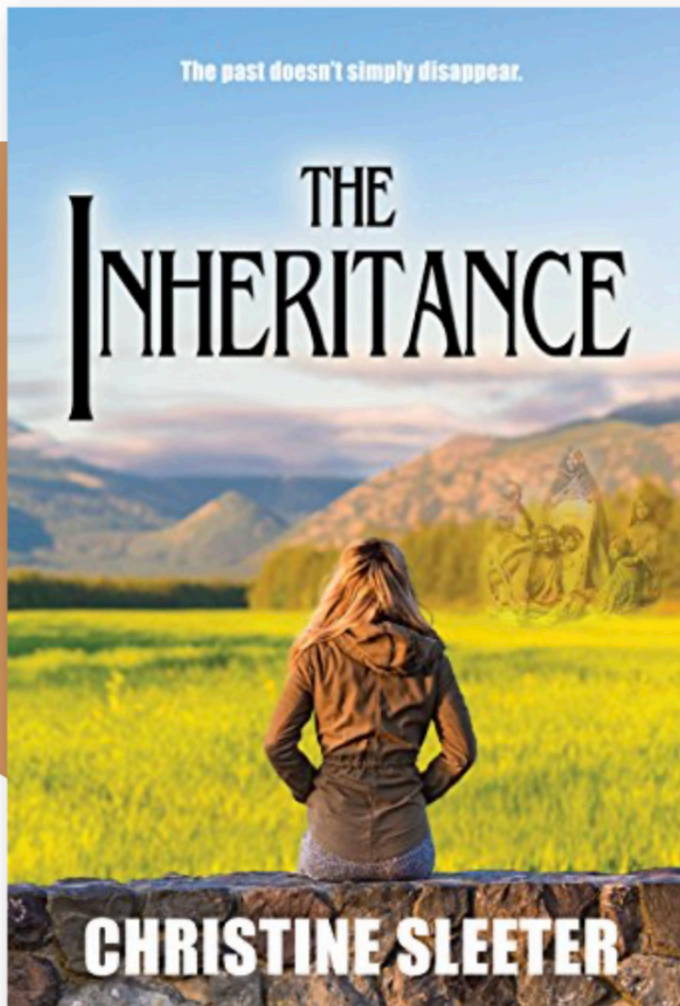
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Christine E. Sleeter (PhD, University of Wisconsin) is Professor Emerita in the College of Education at California State University, Monterey Bay. She is past President of the National Association for Multicultural Education, and past Vice President (Division K) of the American Educational Research Association. Her research focuses on anti-racist multicultural education, ethnic studies, teacher education, and critical family history. She has published over 150 articles and 24 books. She received the American Educational Research Association Social Justice in Education Award, and the National Association for Multicultural Education Exceptional Service Award. For outstanding scholarship related to education, Sleeter was elected by members to the National Academy of Education in 2020.

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