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Was Columbus a Hero? A Study of Students who have been Confronted with Multiple Historical Narratives

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Abstract

This paper compares two attempts by the author to teach two different grade 12 world history classes to think historically. Both classes were presented with a similar assignment that revolved around the conflicting historical accounts of Christopher Columbus. However, the second group of students was also provided with direct instruction about the nature and construction of historical accounts. In the end, this second group of students demonstrated, on average, a more sophisticated understanding of the study of history. These results correspond with a growing body of research, which suggests that historical understanding can be taught by carefully crafted lessons.

Over the past few decades a growing body of research into historical thinking has found that students' understanding of history progresses through a series of stages (Lee, 2005; Lee & Ashby, 2000). These stages range from the naïve view of history as corresponding directly to the past, to the recognition that history is a reconstruction of selected events, based upon evidence, that is undertaken to answer specific questions (Lee & Ashby, 2000; Sandwell, 2005).

This essay describes one of my own attempts, as a practicing high school history teacher, to improve my students' understanding of what history is. This endeavor, described in detail below, required my students to consider conflicting historical accounts of Christopher Columbus. Unfortunately, this activity was only moderately successful (at best) when first used. At the time, the reasons for this mystified and frustrated me. As I became more familiar with the research on historical thinking however, I came to realize that the lesson failed because I had not taught my students to apply important historical thinking tools to this task. In particular, I had failed to see the need to teach my students about historical empathy, I assumed that my students would naturally know how to analyze conflicting historical accounts, and I had failed to discuss with my pupils how the concerns of the present influence our interpretation of the past. I also added to my students' difficulties by placing far too much stress on the detection of bias in historical documents and accounts. This had given them a faulty impression of what it means to study history, and this conception had made it difficult for them to complete my Columbus assignment in a sophisticated way. Armed with these realizations I was able to make a few small changes to the assignment, discussed below, that transformed it into a more powerful teaching tool.

In the end, this rather personal essay is meant to highlight two facts. First, it demonstrates how students' understanding of history can grow when their naïve beliefs are challenged directly. Second, and perhaps more importantly, this essay illustrates the need for teachers to clearly understand what history is and how this knowledge can be translated to students. Without a clear

conception of what it means to "do" history, it is easy for both teachers and students to mistake a moderately sophisticated historical epistemology for a fully developed one.

This paper begins with a discussion of recent research into students' conceptions of history. It then outlines my original Christopher Columbus assignment and analyzes the responses of the 12 students who completed it in 2005, using Lee and Ashby's (2000) typology of historical thinking. I then discuss the changes I made to the Columbus assignment and analyze the responses of the 12 students enrolled in the same course in 2009. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of my experience for other teachers.

Existing Research on Historical Epistemology

In recent years there has been a growing amount of research into the way that students understand history (e.g., Barton & Levstik, 2008; Husbands, Kitson & Pendry, 2003; Husbands & Pendry, 2000; Lee, 2005; Lee & Ashby, 2000; Morton; 2011; Peck, 2011; Wineburg, 2001). This research has gradually solidified to the point that Lee and Ashby (2000) have proposed a six-stage typology that describes the evolution of students' historical thinking. Students working at the first level in this continuum believe in "the past as given" (p. 212) and see historical accounts of the past as perfect and complete. These students uncritically accept the historical accounts they are presented with, seeing these stories as completely accurate. The second stage of development is the conception of "the past as inaccessible" (p. 212). Students who have adopted this point of view believe the study of history to be impossible because we were not alive in the past to directly witness events. The third stage in the progression of beliefs about history is the view of "the past as determining stories" (p. 212). Students at this phase of the epistemological continuum continue to believe that there can be only one account of the past. When these students are confronted with two conflicting descriptions of the same event, one of them is believed to be wrong. The source of this error, according to these students, must be a lack of information. Lee and Ashby's fourth stage of development is "the past as reported in a more or less biased way" (p. 212). At this point in the developmental progression, students recognize that authors create all historical accounts and there is therefore a potential for bias. Despite the recognition of the active role of the author, students working at this conceptual level still believe that there is a single story of the past that could be told if only the authors could avoid their biases. The fifth step in the typology marks a significant break with all of the previous stages. At this level, labeled "the past as selected and organized from a viewpoint" (p. 212), students recognize that accounts do not directly correspond to the past. All historical narratives are seen as being written from a legitimate point of view, with the differences between them resulting from the selections made by the author. The sixth, and final, stage of the continuum is "the past as (re)constructed in answer to questions in accordance with criteria" (p. 212). Individuals functioning at this level focus less upon the author and more on the account. They recognize that it is natural for accounts of the past to differ, and as such more attention is paid to the sort of question(s) the author is seeking to answer and the criteria he/she uses in the construction and justification of his/her interpretation of the past.

While Lee and Ashby (2000) have found that students tend to move through the stages of this topology over time, there is a great deal of variability within any grade level. Lee and Ashby are careful to note that progress along the continuum is not akin to developmental theories; that is, it is not automatic that as one gets older, one has a more sophisticated understanding of history. Thus Lee (2005) has reported finding students in the 8th grade operating at the fifth and

sixth level of this continuum, while Lee and Ashby (2000) have also noted that there are undergraduate history majors who maintain a naïve historical epistemology. The failure of many older students to progress to the highest stages of historical thinking has also been confirmed indirectly by the work of Adey and Biddulph (2001), whose survey of student perceptions of history and geography found that many students held unsophisticated views of history. While more research is needed into the later teenage years, the existing evidence (Adey & Biddulph, 2001; Britt, Rouet, Georgi, & Perfetti, 1994; Lee, 2005) seems to indicate that many students do not progress beyond the view of the "past as reported in a more or less biased way" (Lee and Ashby, 2000, p. 212).

Situating Myself and my Students

The Columbus assignment discussed below was given to two classes. The first, a group of 12 girls, undertook the assignment in 2005. The second group, also a group of 12 girls, completed the assignment in 2009. Both of the groups of students described in this study were enrolled in a grade 12, modern world history course and ranged from 16 to 19 years of age. All of the students had completed at least one history class in high school and most of them had also studied ancient world history in grade 11. The two groups were also comparable in terms of academic ability. The majority of the students tended to get grades in the 80-90% range in courses in the humanities and social sciences throughout their high school careers.

I have a background in world and European history, having specialized in these areas during my undergraduate degree. While I was a very successful student at university I must admit that my historical epistemology was rather underdeveloped when I began teaching. This is not to say that I held a naïve view of the study of history. I clearly recognized that history was made up of many narratives and accepted the validity of different interpretations of the past. However, I had never consciously considered how this should influence my own teaching, and, as a result tended to teach history as if it were comprised of a single narrative.. Reflecting back on my own past as a teacher I would say that in 2005 I had a somewhat sophisticated, but largely tacit understanding of what it meant to study history[1]. As a result of this I was often unable to clearly communicate how one went about studying history. For example, while I had successfully completed many historiographical analyses, I had never considered how I went about comparing conflicting interpretations of the past and was therefore ill equipped to explain this process to others. My lack, of what Shulman (1987) calls pedagogical content knowledge, would have a significant impact upon my teaching.

The Columbus Assignment: Version One

This lesson was originally used in a grade 12 world history class in 2005, as part of a unit on the European "voyages of discovery." I had decided to make Columbus a focal point for this unit because my students seemed to be largely ignorant of the historical controversy surrounding him and tended to view him as a heroic figure. As such, my goal for the lesson was to illustrate to my students that historians have conflicting interpretations of many historical events. I also wanted to sharpen my students' critical-thinking skills by presenting them with accounts that had clear and distinct perspectives.

[1] Schön (1983) has discussed in detail the tendency for expert knowledge to take a tacit form, as well as the implications of this for the transfer of knowledge from master to apprentice.

The lesson began with a group discussion as I asked my students what they knew about Christopher Columbus. Their knowledge about Columbus was quite limited; encompassing little more than the (erroneous) fact that Columbus discovered America, that he sailed to the west with three ships, and that he braved many dangers in order to arrive in the new world. Once the students had exhausted their knowledge of Columbus, I asked them what image they had of this man? After a few seconds of awkward silence some tentative answers were volunteered. The picture that emerged in the ensuing discussion was positive, with Columbus being described as brave and heroic.

Having brought the students' conception of Columbus into their conscious mind, we went on to read two primary documents. The first was a letter written by Christopher Columbus (1493) to Lord Raphael Sanchez. This letter, written after Columbus's first voyage to the Indies, was meant to generate support for future voyages. It depicts the west as a paradise, rich in resources and gold. The people of the Indies are described as being kind, generous, and timid. Throughout the letter Columbus also stressed his own virtues, telling Lord Sanchez how he prohibited his men from swindling and mistreating the "Indians." When asked about the purpose of this letter, the students were quick to pick up on its subtext, recognizing that Columbus's remarks were meant to convince the reader of the letter that more voyages to the Indies should be undertaken.

Having read Columbus's own account of his voyage, we turned next to an excerpt from Bartoleme de Las Casas's (1542) *Account of the Devastation of the Indies*. This document paints a very different picture of the men who "discovered" the "new world." According to de Las Casas, the Spaniards who traveled to the "new world" were not noble, but were in fact avaricious and cruel. They mistreated, abused, and enslaved the inhabitants of the Indies whom they subsequently worked to death in order to quickly obtain the riches that had attracted them to the "new world"

De las Casas's account stands in glaring contrast to that of Columbus. It also seemed to capture the imagination of the students who were both horrified by the sheer number of people who were killed, and repulsed by the methods used by Europeans to maintain control of the local population. Having piqued my students' curiosity, I then assigned them three secondary accounts of Columbus to read.

The first was drawn from Zinn's (2003) A *People's History of the United States*. This book aimed to undermine the traditional grand-narrative of American history, which tends to depict the history of the United States as one of continual progress. The chapter that addressed Columbus provided a very negative account of the explorer, largely focusing on the disastrous impact that the Europeans had on the native Caribbean population. It paints an unsavory picture of Columbus as an avaricious, deceitful, and duplicitous character bent on self-aggrandizement and enrichment. The second account comes from Boorstin's (1983) *The Discoverers*. This book focused upon humanity's drive to understand the world; it is a story of progress and discovery. Boorstin's chapter on Columbus focused largely on the difficulties he had to overcome in order to begin his journey and the impressive nature of Columbus' sailing skills. While Boorstin does acknowledge, in passing, the negative impact of Columbus' voyage on North American indigenous groups, the narrative depicts Columbus as a hero. The third, and final, account is from the textbook I used for the world history course, Haberman and Shubert's (2002) *The West and the World*. The chapter dealing with the voyages of exploration discussed Columbus only briefly. It mentions both his strengths and weaknesses, but it does this in the brief and matter-of-fact fashion that is typical of textbooks. As a result, it is possible to draw different

understandings about Columbus from the text, depending on what aspects of the account one focuses on.

Having read these three accounts, students were asked to write a short essay that "analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of each piece." Students were also asked to indicate "which account they found convincing, if any, and why." Students were given no assistance or guidance as they engaged in the reading of these three pieces as I assumed (quite incorrectly) that they would naturally engage in the process of historical thinking and analysis.

The Results (I)

The essays that my students produced contained a mixture of promising insights and peculiar mistakes or omissions. My students clearly recognized the different nature of the three accounts, and were able to describe them clearly. All of the students were also able to make some criticisms of Zinn and Boorstin; usually pointing out that both of these authors had provided one-sided accounts that ignored evidence that would have undermined their argument. For example, Elsa[2] stated that: "the major problem with both Zinn and Boorstein *[sic]* is that they only tell half of the story, therefore neither of their pieces are trustworthy."[3]

This tendency to reject both accounts due to their obvious bias was widespread amongst my students, occurring in 11 of the 12 cases. This tendency to adopt a sort of intellectual agnosticism when faced with the bias inherent in historical accounts has also been noted by Lee (2005). According to him, many students aged 16-18 struggle with the idea of bias in historical sources, often disregarding a source entirely once it is deemed to be biased. The problem seems to be that many students still believe that a "pure" account of the past is possible. They fail to see that all accounts are trying to answer a question and that all accounts use evidence, as opposed to simply relating facts. Lee (2005) describes the epistemological thinking of these students nicely, stating that:

> If accounts are not clearly and unambiguously true or untrue, they must be matters of opinion. This view carries with it the idea that it is impossible to choose between conflicting accounts and, for some students, the idea that therefore anything goes. (p. 60)

Interestingly, this same group of students all saw their textbook as unbiased and reliable. This seemed to be in part a result of the neutral, omniscient tone of the textbook. The lack of a clear authorial voice and point of view led many students, such as Victoria, to feel that: "the textbook gives an even, more un-bias *[sic]* account and less personal interpretation of Columbus and his journeys." No one in this group attempted to compare the accounts given by Zinn and Boorstin to that of the textbook, and no one in this group objected to the tendency of the textbook to compact significant aspects of Columbus' story, such as the treatment of the local population, to a sentence or two.

The remaining one student was able to adopt a more sophisticated conception of historical accounts and evidence. She recognized that accounts are not copies of the past and that

[2] All student names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

[3] Those familiar with the work of Zinn and Boorstin will recognize that there is some truth to this comment as both authors do focus upon facts that support their chosen narrative. However, what is important in this quote is the implication that there can be a single, definitive, trustworthy history.

all accounts have a point of view. She criticized all three of the narratives and argued that all three should be read:

> Looking at the three texts one can see that they all are shaped by the intentions of their author. This is why it is so important to read a wide range of texts. People do this quite naturally when dealing with the present day, reading different newspapers for different points of view for example, so it is only sensible that we do the same thing when studying history.

While I was somewhat pleased with my students' performance- they had after all met some of my initial goals- I was also frustrated by many of their essays. I could not understand, for example, why my students were so reluctant to criticize their textbook. Nor could I understand why so many of them failed to apply any sort of criteria to their analysis of Zinn and Boorstin. Realizing that this assignment was useful, but far from perfect, I continued to use it in various ways for the next three years.

Modifying the Assignment

In 2009 I enrolled in a graduate course that focused on current research into the purpose and methods of teaching history. Much of the material for this course dealt with the concept of historical thinking. My encounter with this writing led me to consider how I might recast my Columbus assignment in order to make it more effective.

The first change I decided to make was in response to the work of Sandwell (2003). Her research has highlighted how students can learn, through simple question and answer sessions, to see history as an interpretation of the past, based upon evidence, in response to specific questions. Having read about the powerful impact of this direct instruction upon Sandwell's secondary and university students I decided to try this approach myself. My own Socratic questioning came after my students had already read the three accounts of Columbus' journey. I focused at first on drawing out two points: first that all the accounts focus on Columbus because he is seen as significant and second, that our perception of what is significant changes over time. Once my students had begun to see the role of significance in the construction of a historical account, I was able to turn their attention to one of the implications of this fact: that if only significant events become history, and if our conception of what is significant changes, then history is subject to revision as conceptions of significance change.

The turning point in this conversation, in my opinion, came when I was discussing Zinn's account of Columbus with my students. At one point I asked my students if Zinn's account of Columbus could have been written 100 years ago. They felt it could not, as the concern with indigenous rights and history in the west is a recent phenomenon. I asked them, pretending to be puzzled, if we had just discovered the fact that Columbus' voyage led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of the Tanio people living on Hispaniola. They explained to me that we had always known, but that it had not mattered to people in the past, as they had not valued the lives of indigenous peoples. Once the connection between the present and our conception of the past was laid bare, many students seemed to pick up on the idea that many historical narratives of a singular event were possible.

My second alteration to the assignment was inspired by Seixas' (2006) research into the so-called "second order concepts," which are vital to historical understanding[4]. In particular, my reading of Seixas led me to believe that my students would benefit from a greater understanding of the concept of historical empathy. This concept, which is often also often referred to as historical perspective taking, requires students of history to try and understand the point of view of historical actors. Thus historical empathy is not about sympathizing with those in the past, but is instead an attempt to understand how a person alive in a particular period could have believed and acted as they did. In the case of Columbus engaging in this sort of thinking would require my students to go beyond repulsion at the mistreatment of the indigenous peoples and to wonder if Columbus was a reflection of his society. It was my belief that if my students could be armed with this tool, they would be able to judge the arguments of Zinn and Boorstin more competently. They could respond, for example, to Zinn's characterization of Columbus as a villain by considering Columbus' motives, or by researching the time period more deeply to see if Columbus' beliefs and behavior were typical or atypical of the time. Without the ability to engage in this sort of historical perspective taking my students would be left to judge Zinn and Boorstin using non-historical criteria, such as the apparent bias of the two authors or the emotional appeal of the authors' arguments. The challenge was finding a way to encourage my students to engage in historical empathy. The existing literature indicates that students find this form of historical thinking quite difficult (Lee & Ashby, 2001). In particular, students tend to engage in presentist thinking (Lee & Ashby, 2001), often lack the request background knowledge to engage in historical empathy (Levstik, 2001), and are inhibited from engaging in historical empathy by prominent historical narratives, such as the idea that history is a story of uninterrupted progress (Levsik, 2001).

With all of this in mind, I decided that the best approach to teaching my students about perspective taking was to be direct. Once they had read both Zinn and Boorstin's account of Columbus, we discussed how the two accounts contradicted one another. I then asked my students what sort of evidence would be necessary to disprove Zinn's depiction of Columbus as a villain. At first the students focused on evidence that would directly challenge Zinn (e.g., proof that Columbus had tried to prevent the mistreatment of the indigenous population). I then asked my students if Columbus' treatment of indigenous people would be more understandable if his society had not had any taboos against slavery or torture. They quickly agreed that it would, and then after a few seconds hands began to shoot up to ask if the Spanish had believed slavery was acceptable. I refused to answer these questions, but instead explained that finding out this information would allow them to engage in what historians call "historical empathy." After a brief discussion of this concept, during which I stressed that empathizing with Columbus did not mean one had to condone his actions, I moved on to discuss some ideas I had drawn from Wineburg's (1991) research into the way that historians and students read primary documents.

In particular, Wineburg's (1991) work highlighted the tendency of students to focus on the extraction of content and their subsequent failure to consider the subtext of the documents. This led me to believe that my students' failure to read their textbook critically could be a result of the heavy amount of content it contains, as well as the neutral, factual tone it assumes. I

[4] Second order or procedural concepts are not historical concepts or ideas, such as "empire" or "nation-state." Instead this term refers to the concepts historians use (often implicitly) as they "do" history. Different authors have created slightly different lists of second order concepts (e.g., Levesque, 2011; Lomas, 1990) and Seixas' list has changed slightly over time. In 2006 Sexias' focused upon seven second order concepts: evidence, significance, continuity and change, progress and decline, empathy/perspective taking, moral judgment, and agency.

decided to address this issue by having them re-read the section of the textbook that dealt with Columbus. Instead of simply reading the text in a linear fashion, however, I asked my students to stop periodically and consider the implied meaning that lay behind the text. While my students were somewhat reluctant to analyze the text at first, many of them quickly warmed up to the idea of questioning the choices of their textbook's authors. For example, the text's description of the decimation of the population of Hispaniola is limited to two sentences:

> In order to establish a government that could benefit Spain economically, the people (natives of Hispaniola) were enslaved, and a system was established that ensured labour service from the population. The hardships of forced labour and the spread of diseases brought by the Europeans killed many of the island's (Hispaniola's) people by the end of the sixteenth century (Haberman & Shubert, 2002, p. 48).

When asked if they saw any problems with this brief factual statement, my students were quick to criticize the textbook for its failure to expand on this idea. One student argued that the authors of the text had "turned a genocide into something that sounds natural," and another student wondered why there was no mention of the torture and abuse that many people had to endure.

As part of this discussion, I also asked my students to consider how their textbook differed from the accounts provided by Boorstin and Zinn. Through the use of leading questions about the content, tone, and structure of the textbook I was able to guide my students toward the realization that their text was far from neutral[5]. In particular we discussed how the tone of the textbook, its failure to use foot or endnotes, and the lack of a clear argument on the part of the authors, made the textbook feel more factual, even though the authors were making choices about their portrayal of the past. Having thus pushed my students towards viewing history in a new fashion (i.e., as a narrative about the past based upon evidence) and challenged them to apply some new historical thinking tools, such as historical empathy,, I turned them loose on their essays.

The Results (II)

The 12 students who completed the revised version of the Columbus assignment performed much better than their predecessors. All of the students approached the three texts critically; five made direct comparisons between the documents, and four attempted to empathize with Columbus in order to more fairly analyze Boorstin and Zinn's accounts. One of the students also considered the evidence that Boorstin and Zinn were using to construct their accounts, often criticizing their use of primary sources by Columbus and De las Casas. The students were also much more critical of their textbook. While four of the students continued to feel that the textbook was unbiased, the remaining eight criticized the textbook in some way.

The most frequent criticism was with regards to the tone of the textbook. This type of criticism is captured well by the work of Carol, who wrote that:

[5] As part of this discussion I challenged outright the idea that the text was neutral and argued that by providing only limited information the text was depicting Columbus in a particular way. We then discussed as a class what sort of image of Columbus the text was trying to provide and analyzed the information on Columbus line-by-line, identifying areas where additional details or choice of words would have changed the picture being presented.

> The textbook does give many valid facts, and some good interpretations but it is worse for readers, especially in high school, who have a harder time differentiating the interpretation from the facts when the textbook uses this (neutral) tone.

Three of the students leveled even more sophisticated criticisms at their textbooks. Farrah, for instance, criticized the text for its brevity, arguing that: "the textbook's failure to go into more depth makes the text a bad source…you would often need advanced knowledge about history in order to understand how a simple sentence is actually alluding to something."

In the end, the students' essays seemed to indicate that eight of them were working at level four of Lee and Ashby's typology (compared with eleven previously), while two (compared with zero previously) were working at Lee and Ashby's fifth level, and two (compared with zero previously) showed signs of having reached the highest of the epistemological categories. The students working at the fourth level, like their predecessors in 2005, struggled with the idea that there is not a single "true" historical account. Ava, for example, claimed that: "Zinn's obvious anti-Columbus bias and Boorstin's pro-Columbus attitude make them both questionable accounts…if Zinn could just tone down his rhetoric he would be much more reliable." Despite their failure to see that there is no single, pure account of the past, these students were much more likely than their 2005 counterparts to engage in criticism of their textbook, though this was often limited to a discussion of the book's omniscient tone.

The students who were working at Lee and Ashby's (2000) fifth epistemological level gave clear evidence that they did not believe in the existence of objective historical accounts. They also recognized that historical narratives are not a copy of the past. Sydney, for example, wrote that: "historians will always disagree with one another about how they should interpret the past." These students also recognized the legitimacy of the differing accounts, making comments like: "He (Zinn) has a valid point about Columbus's negative impact…he probably should not be so highly regarded today….but Columbus had to have had some serious skills in order to make his voyage." What separated these students from those I have classified as working at the sixth level of Lee and Ashby's (2000) typology were references by the later group to the potential reasons why historical accounts might differ.[6]

Farrah, for example, demonstrated signs of being at the sixth epistemological step of Lee and Ashby's (2000) progression when she claimed that:

> It is only natural for Zinn and Boorstin to write such different accounts. Zinn is focused, by his own admission, upon stories of oppression. He is rooting for the historical under-dog. Boorstin, however, is telling the story of human progress. His hero's are naturally Zinn's villains.

Students working at the sixth level of the thinking continuum also spent more time analyzing Zinn and Boorstin's use of evidence, and went to greater lengths when trying to engage in historical empathy. Gillian, for instance, reminded her readers that: "the discovery of millions of "new" humans came as a surprise to Renaissance Europeans, who believed that all of the peoples

[6] It should be stressed that it was often unclear if a student should be placed in the fourth or fifth stage of Lee and Ashby's (2000) typology. Often students were excluded from the sixth group not because of what they said, but because of what they failed to say. It is possible that further probing of these students could have revealed that more of them were operating at the top epistemological level.

of the world had been accounted for. In fact, it was not until 1537 that a papal encyclical declared that the Native Americans were rational beings with souls."

Taken as a whole, I was left with the impression that the 2009 group of students had performed better, even though they did not seem more academically able than the 2005 cohort. This seemed to indicate that my adjustments to the Columbus assignment were beneficial. However, there were still two aspects of the results that I found curious.

The first was with regard to my students' use of historical empathy. As mentioned above, four of the 2009 student cohort made some attempt at engaging in historical empathy. This group contains all of the students who were working at Lee and Ashby's (2000) sixth level of historical thinking and most of those working at the fifth level. While this figure represents a tremendous increase in the number of students engaging in historical empathy, it is interesting that none of the students working at Lee and Ashby's fourth epistemological level, "the past as reported in a more or less biased way"(Lee & Ashby, 2000, p. 212), attempted to use this historical thinking tool.

The existing literature on historical empathy points to many possible explanations for this phenomenon. Potential variables include: student confusion about what it means to engage in historical empathy (Cunningham, 2009), a lack of background knowledge on the subject (Lee & Ashby, 2001), or the inability to effectively work with conflicting historical evidence (Yeager & Doppen, 2001). Interestingly, my conversations with my students after this assignment was returned do not point to any of these potential culprits. Instead, these discussions revealed that many of the students who failed to engage in advanced historical empathy did so because they could not, or would not, step outside of their own worldview and attempt to see things from the perspective of Columbus. Caught up by the story as told by Zinn, these students were determined to see Columbus as a villain and had no interest in evidence that might help to explain Columbus' actions. When confronted with evidence that might encourage historical empathy, such as the fact that some Europeans were unsure if the indigenous peoples were human, these students retreated from the evidence arguing that this point of view was "clearly wrong."

These findings fit with VanSledright's (2001) claim that overcoming our own "historic positionality" or worldview is one of the greatest barriers to historical empathy. While this problem is not easily solved it seems likely that the development of this sort of thinking will require students to be frequently exposed to lessons that bring the existence of their worldview to the forefront of their minds. In the case of my Columbus assignment this could be done in various ways, such as requiring my students to discuss in groups their beliefs about Columbus' motives and to consider what sort of evidence they would require in order to change their view of Columbus.

A second interesting aspect of my results was in regards to my students' analyses of their textbook. Again the 2009 cohort performed much better than the 2005 group. Nonetheless, four students in the 2009 class continued to see the text as an unbiased source. There are many possible reasons for this. I suspect, however, that the failure to criticize the text represents unwillingness on the part of my students to engage in the process of unpacking the authors' apparently factual prose. This sort of analysis is an intellectually demanding process that requires an unusual form of active reading (Wineburg, 1991). Students are rarely taught the requisite skills (Wineburg, 1991), and have long been socialized to accept, uncritically, the facts offered by seemingly omniscient textbooks (Paxton, 2005). Again, it seems likely that addition

of specific scaffolding and practice would be needed to ensure that all of my students successfully analyze their textbook.

Conclusions

In the end, this personal and reflective essay has offered a few points that should be of interest to a more general audience. While the groups used for this study were far too small to be statistically significant, the stark contrast between them is interesting, as it suggests that focused direct instruction on what it means to "do" history can have an impact on students' thinking. This finding is in keeping with the existing literature (Hynd, Holschuh & Hubbard, 2004; Sandwell, 2003; Stearns, 2000).

At the same time however, the failure of the 2009 group to improve uniformly indicates that while powerful, brief direct instruction cannot guarantee improvement for all students. The failure of some students to engage in historical empathy, for example, highlights the need to monitor and assist students as they develop their historical epistemology (Seixas, 1998)

Finally, this essay indirectly raises some questions about the preparation of history teachers. While it is unknown how many teachers leave university, as I did, with a deep but tacit understanding of history, it is clear that this sort of knowledge is difficult to translate into a form that students can comprehend. While this problem could be solved in many ways, the easiest solution might be for professors of history and history education to devote more time to discussions about what it means to study history. Given the importance of historical thinking for the study of history, this would surely be time well spent.

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The Unofficial Federal School Curriculum in Canada: Issues and Implications for Quebec Education

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Abstract

This study seeks to address the ways in which the federal government has influenced elementary and secondary education throughout Canada. By producing teaching and learning material that is neither provincially sanctioned nor provincially focused, are federal agencies crossing constitutional jurisdictions in ways that compete with provincially prescribed curricula? While scholars have considered federal involvement in education from an administrative and legal standpoint, they have done less to examine the actual teaching and learning material produced by federal departments and agencies. Such teaching and learning material represents an unofficial federal curriculum in Canada aimed at promoting a pan-Canadian shared sense of identity. Using the Quebec Education Program as a case study for comparison, this study suggests that the material in many instances conflicts with the aims and intentions of provincial curricula.

In Canada, the constitution clearly makes schooling the exclusive domain of the provinces. For matters of political and social autonomy, the federal government should not be interfering with provincial curricula; and, considering the financial cost of public schooling, one might suppose that it should be happy to stay out of matters within provincial jurisdiction. Yet, it is not. Inside of Canadian classrooms, and in particular social studies classrooms, it is not uncommon to find resources that are designed, produced, and distributed by federal agencies. Various federal departments have been involved since at least the mid-twentieth century in the production of educational material for Canadian public school students. Since the advent of the internet, the sheer amount of resources, lessons and lesson plans, and direct curricular content produced beyond the borders of the provinces – disseminated despite these borders – has compounded exponentially. By producing teaching and learning material for teachers that is neither provincially sanctioned nor provincially focused, are federal agencies crossing constitutional jurisdictions in ways that complement or compete with provincially prescribed curricula? Is the federal government, through teaching and learning material created by federal agencies, instilling a Canadian national ethos within the learning environments of provincially-run schools? Are the materials produced by federal agencies compatible with learning outcomes and expectations established by provincial ministries of education? Using the Quebec Education Program as a case study for comparison, this study argues that such material is in many instances incompatible with provincial curricula. As such, the federal government may be interfering with a provincial jurisdiction in ways that negatively influence provincial education programs.

The province of Quebec offers a unique and exceptional opportunity upon which to base a case study that juxtaposes and analyzes federally produced teaching and learning material with

a provincial curriculum. Perhaps in no other province is the question of nationalism and provincial rights of autonomy more contested. Moreover, a central public debate has occurred in Quebec in recent years about the extent to which the History and Citizenship curriculum promotes a type of federal nationalism that is incompatible with the province's history and heritage. In 2006, the newspaper *Le Devoir* opened that debate in an overview of the new Quebec Education Program that suggested that the History and Citizenship Education program was written to promote Canadian nationalism through the purposeful concealment of historical and contemporary events and issues that have led to the development of a Quebecois identity (Robitaille, 2006). While critics of such arguments immediately pointed out that the Quebec History and Citizenship Education program in fact promoted the type and quality of critical thinking skills that would have students question any one single historical narrative, the debate has never fully settled. It has been a valuable learning experience, and reminder, for history educators and policy makers about "how much the national question weighs on perceptions of history education" (Éthier & Lefrançois, 2011, p. 22).

The production of resources by federal agencies raises broader and wider issues about the role of the federal government in education in Canada. Teaching and learning material produced by the federal government may very well represent an unofficial curriculum in Canada that is neither provincially prescribed nor provincially sanctioned. In this regard, all of the provinces should be concerned about the ability of federal agencies to enter into classrooms via these resources and influence the way that provincial curricula are carried out. An unofficial federal curriculum can, by its very nature, be appropriated by teachers in all of the provinces. It is often, unsurprisingly, aimed at promoting a pan-Canadian shared sense of identity. The findings from this case study suggest that teachers, curriculum planners, and policy makers in the provinces ought to more carefully examine the material produced at the federal level in order to determine the extent to which that material offers a complementary or contradictory influence on the aims and objectives of provincial education programs.

The Limits of Existing Scholarship on Federal Involvement in Canadian Education

While scholarship on federal involvement in education in Canada has been substantial, it has characteristically focused on policy issues, and in particular the question of what the federal government's role is, or should be, in public education. Studies on federal involvement in education can be divided into four distinct periods that correlate roughly with the history of federal involvement in education. In the period from Confederation to the Second World War, scholars focused on attempting to make sense of the division of powers in the BNA Act and the extent to which the federal government could intervene in matters concerning schooling and education (Anderson, 1918; Miller,1913). These scholars tended to shy away from theoretical aspects of policy concerning the legitimacy of federal involvement in education, and were more concerned about the practical implications of such involvement. Scholarship on federal involvement in education tended to be produced by the government itself, and was usually linked to the development of public policy (Canada, 1940). One major exception was James Collins Miller's study on rural schools in Canada, in which he put forward the case for a national policy on education. "Our leaders in educational work must come to realize more fully," he stated, "that, while it may be necessary to work through the medium of provincial and local machinery, our educational problems are as truly national as provincial" (Miller, 1913, p. iii).

In the period from the early 1940s to the early 1960s, scholarship on federal involvement in education was marked by optimism in centralized planning and the promise of uniform and equal education throughout Canada. Encouraged by the federal government's eagerness to spend relatively vast amounts of money on education throughout the country, scholars began to ask not what the role of the federal government was in education policy, but rather how that role could be effectively played out. The first major study to focus exclusively on the question of federal involvement in Canadian education was James Collins Miller's, *National Government and Education in Federated Democracies*, published in 1940. Miller not only suggested that the federal government could play an important role in education, but more importantly that there was an urgent need for national leadership in the field of education. The provision for education, he argued, was a basic function of government in a democracy and, as such, required government to provide equitable distribution of educational opportunity. In order to do so, funding ought to come from the federal, not the provincial, government. Given the economic pressures of the 1930s, Miller thought it was clear that the time for a national program in education had come and that the provinces, which "continue to insist on their constitutional right to practically exclusive jurisdiction in educational matters," ought to "realize more fully the implications of such a position" (Miller, 1940, p. 593).

In an article concerning control and responsibility of schooling in Canada, M.P. Toombs (1955) offered another perspective and asked why provincial governments should retain control over public education. Looking at the relationship between provincial governments and local school boards, Toombs suggested that the sharing of rights, duties, and responsibilities are key to successful state control. Toombs did not, however, argue that the federal government should play any major role in this state control. In fact, the administration of schools, he argued, "should be kept as close as possible to the community the school serves." Control from above, he thought, inevitably leads to "resentment, blind obedience, and ineffective action" (M.P. Toombs, 1955, p. 49).

In the 1960s and 1970s, scholars turned away from an "either-or" debate and toward questions about federal-provincial relations and the rights of both the federal government to intervene in education and the provincial governments to manage their educational infrastructure autonomously. The scholarship in this period tended to be either suspicious of federal involvement in education or, on the other hand, lament the inability of the federal government to effectively put forward a "national" educational strategy. Nevertheless, scholars in this period tended to agree that the federal government had, by the 1960s, assumed a role in the education of Canadians.

Wilbert Nelson Toombs (1963) questioned whether provincial control over schooling could continue to prevail in Canada. Concentration of wealth, centralization of economic control, and new technologies working to collapse geographical space and bring Canadians closer together than ever before, he argued, raised serious doubt about whether education could continue to be a purely local concern. The Canadian government, he suggested, was moving away from "a narrow constitutionalism, provincialism and isolationism" and toward "a more clearly defined and realistic position in education" (W.N. Toombs, 1963, p. 21). In a 1966 study Toombs furthered his argument by presenting his analysis of House of Commons debates pertaining to education from the period 1867 to 1960. He concluded that the federal government was broadening its financial participation in education and that parliamentary debate on federal aid in education was increasing. Toombs suggested that an increasing concern with Canada as a nation and the link between education and the promotion of nationhood had increasingly become

a central debate in the House of Commons and, by 1960, had seen an increasingly number of politicians argue for direct federal responsibilities in education. He admitted, however, that the legality of federal involvement in education remained a question and that no immediate overhaul of how education operated seemed probable.

Gibson Tallentire (1971) argued along the same line and pointed out that while in the 1940s and 1950s there was no overall central planning in Canadian education, by 1966 the federal government had little doubt that education was a national concern and thus laid claim to four areas where it could involve itself: the diffusion of Canadian culture, workforce training, higher education, and research. While other scholars (Henderson, 1960; Hyman, 1968) pointed out the federal government's involvement in these areas, Tallentire added that the federal government had also established an administrative structure to coordinate federal activities and spending in education. The federal government was increasingly building a national educational infrastructure through cooperative federalism that was respectful of provincial autonomy.

Still, other scholars presented the increased role of the federal government in educational matters in a less favourable light. Ernest D. Hodgson's *Federal Intervention in Public Education* (1976) examined Ottawa's role in education from a different perspective, concluding that while the federal government did indeed have clearly established constitutional responsibilities in education, it had, in many instances, invaded the provinces' territory. Hodgson was ultimately critical of federal involvement, and suggested that the federal government should not overstep its role.

Since the 1980s, most scholars examining federal involvement in education have begun to ask why the federal government should not have a more important role in school policy. J.W. George Ivany and Michael E. Manley-Casimir (1981) produced a collection of essays based on a symposium at Simon Fraser University on the question of federal-provincial relations in education. With Canada poised to repatriate the constitution, the time seemed ripe to reopen debates from the 1860s concerning whose jurisdiction education should fall under. The essays in this collection ranged from constitutional reform, to issues of national and cultural identity among English, French, Aboriginal, and new Canadians, to models of alternative governance structures. The authors, who included a range of voices from academics to politicians, were virtually unanimous in their belief that schools are vital instruments of nation-building. As such, they should fall under the authority of the national government, which, in this case, meant the federal government.

In an update to his 1976 book, Ernest D. Hodgson's *Federal Involvement in Public Education* (1988) continued to criticize the federal government for its interventions in education. Like other scholars at the time, however, Hodgson consciously balanced his new assessment with praise for many of the federal government's initiatives. The federal government, he argued, did have a role to play in the education of Canadians.

Support for federal involvement continued into the 1990s. Philip Nagy and Judy Lupart (1994) compiled a collection of essays in a volume on the question of a "national role" in education. The essays range from Michael E. Manley-Casimir's attempt to find a common purpose for education throughout Canada to Heather Jane Robertson's rationale for the "obvious" role that the federal government should play. Such an argument has continued to be put forward by Charles Ungerleider (2003) and Robertson (2006, 2007). With the establishment of the Canadian Council on Learning in 2002, advocates for a national educational strategy have garnered much attention and support, but, as Robertson argues, while the idea for a national

education program is one "whose time keeps coming" (Robertson, 2006, p. 410), it has failed to be realized because of a consensus-building void in educational politics.

Reva Joshee and Lauri Johnson (Joshee, 1995; Joshee & Johnson, 2005, 2007) have further advanced our understanding of the federal government's role in education by considering how it became interested in policies and programs designed to address Canada's increasing cultural diversity. While initially concerned with the assimilation of immigrants in post-war Canada, by the 1970s the federal government had established a range of initiatives that promoted contradictory objectives. Joshee and Johnson's research reveal a long history of federal involvement in cultural diversity and education and suggests that the federal government has been involved in the education of Canadians in more ways than we have previously imagined. According to Lorna McLean (2007) and Alan Sears (1996, 1997), one of the ways in which the federal government has played a major role in education is in its efforts to influence citizenship education. McLean examines debates in early twentieth century Canada surrounding efforts to create a national education bureau. She finds that proponents of a national education program grounded their arguments in a national, and patriotic, definition of citizenship. A national education program, could, according to them, work toward constructing a pan-Canadian definition of citizenship. Sears finds that although policy makers were rhetorically committed to wide citizenship participation from 1947 to 1982, actual policies and programs of the state were designed to restrict the role of citizen more in line with what he calls an "elitist" conception of citizenship. In other words, federal policies in citizenship education have worked to maintain the idea of a small group of leaders that are especially capable of ruling and governing (Sears, 1996). Sears furthermore strikingly finds that while the federal government often implemented its educational policies through official agreements with the provinces, it very often bypassed the provinces altogether through training programs for teachers, the funding of third party educational organizations, and the production and dissemination of teaching and learning resources.

Toward an Analysis of Federal Involvement in Education

The present study intends to move away from a policy analysis of federal involvement in education and toward a more comprehensive examination of the form and content of the actual teaching and learning resources produced at the federal level. Since at least the mid-twentieth century, the federal government has been involved in the development of pedagogical material to be used in the schools. This material represents an unofficial federal curriculum that we seldom consider. While scholars over the last century have considered the division of constitutional power, the question of federal involvement, and the potential for new political frameworks in public schooling, the federal government itself has been building an impressive infrastructure of teaching and learning material that can be used in classrooms throughout Canada every day. A question that needs to be addressed in the literature, then, is not what role in education *should* the federal government play, but rather, what role *does* it play, and what are the implications for provincial school systems?

This study undertakes an analysis of teaching and learning material produced by federal government departments and compares it to the Quebec Education Program. The content analyzed is drawn from the education and teaching branches of federal government departments. The total number of lessons created at the federal level for Canadian schools number in the hundreds. The sample chosen here is restricted to lessons dealing with citizenship, history, and

social studies education. A sample of lessons has been isolated from five federal departments: Citizenship and Immigration Canada; Elections Canada; Veterans Affairs Canada; Statistics Canada; and Canadian Heritage. These departments were isolated not only because of the extent to which they are involved in producing teaching and learning material, but also because the teaching and learning material they produce focuses directly on the social sciences, and, in particular, lessons surrounding history and citizenship.

In order to determine the extent to which the resources produced at the federal level are in line with history and citizenship education in Quebec, this study juxtaposes the intentions and expected learning outcomes of lessons produced at the federal level with the standards, expectations, and vision of history and citizenship education as outlined in the Quebec Education Program for the social sciences (Quebec, 2004, 2007). It concentrates on the secondary school curriculum, which, in Quebec, spans from grades seven to eleven.

The overarching question asked was whether the content produced by the federal government is in line with the aims and objectives of the Quebec Education Program. In instances where it is not, the question then posed is whether the alternative aims and objectives produced at the federal level complement or contradict those of the Quebec Education Program. It was then determined what the contradictory aims and objectives promoted in the federally-produced material are. In all instances, the aims and objectives promoted in the federally-produced material were grouped, and three main themes, which are discussed below, were identified. They include the promotion of: a sanitized history; federal-centric history and citizenship; and, finally, mindless, uncritical patriotism.

A number of resources are not examined here, but should explicitly be made note of as they will be useful for further investigations into the teaching and learning material produced at the federal level. They are not examined because they do not deal directly with aspects of the social science curriculum examined in this study. Such resources include other subject-specific topics including mathematics, the sciences, health, and other subject areas found in school curricula across Canada. This material is produced by federal agencies such as the National Research Council of Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and Environment Canada, to name only a few. Other federal agencies, such as Parks Canada and the Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation, produce a plethora of material related to history and citizenship education. Furthermore, because these agencies have a mandate to produce educational material for the public, they are outside of the scope of the present study, which deals specifically with material produced for use in the provincially administered schools.

An analysis of all of the above material is needed in order to come to a more complete understanding of the ways in which the federal government is influencing teaching and learning in provincial school curricula. Why is the federal government involved in producing this material, and what are the learning outcomes for our students? The present study addresses this question through a representative sample of federal influence in education as it relates to the social science curriculum in Quebec.

The Patterns of Cultural Diffusion and National Education in Federally Produced Teaching and Learning Material

What do we find, then, in the teaching and learning material produced by federal agencies? What follows is a consideration of this question in light of the material produced at several federal departments. In an analysis of that material, three themes can be identified in the

material and are discussed below. First, teaching and learning material produced at the federal level overwhelmingly offers a "sanitized" history. That is, the history presented is selective and tends to reinforce myths about Canada that do not touch on the complex and often troublesome realities of the country's past. Second, an analysis of the material highlights a federal-centric history and citizenship curriculum that tends to overlook the provinces and regions, and the complexity of Canadian history and governance. Third, the teaching and learning material produced by federal agencies reinforce a mindless, uncritical patriotism. Students are not expected to think critically about questions of identity and belonging, but rather they are encouraged to celebrate a form of patriotic nationalism as it is articulated in the teaching and learning material produced.

Sanitized History

"By selectively representing the histories of the many people who live in Canada," historian Timothy J. Stanley (2006) argues, "by identifying certain people as Canadian and largely ignoring the others, and by sanitizing the histories through which some people have become dominant, public memory sets the stage for racist denial" (pp. 32-33). Debates concerning what histories should be taught in schools have long consumed history educators in Canada (see Clark, 2012). Since at least the 1960s, historians have argued about whose history and whose culture should be represented in the curriculum. The grand narrative of Canadian history, which has tended to produce myths about a progressive and mainly positive development of the nation, has largely been challenged by social historians who have emphasized the multitude of complex narratives that should inform the student's sense of the Canadian past. In Quebec, History and Citizenship curriculum planners have certainly been impacted by these debates and have made a concerted effort to shift the curriculum away from "historical narratives [that] could be used to instill a national identity and a belief in the validity of the existing social and political order" and toward a "well-informed, open-minded social participation in the public sphere" (Quebec, 2007, p. 1).

Do the resources produced by federal agencies, however, reflect the changes that have taken place in the field of History? Do they reflect the aims of the Quebec Education Program? A lesson on the War of 1812 produced by Citizenship and Immigration Canada suggests not, and in fact highlights a sanitized history that tends to ignore some of Canada's more troubling history, especially that concerning minority and immigrant groups (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012b). Designed for grades 7 to 12, the lesson does not target any specific course in the Quebec curriculum, nor any high school curriculum in Canada. As such, it does not address the competencies or broad areas of learning outlined in the History and Citizenship components of the Quebec Education Program. The purpose of the lesson, according to the lesson plan, is to give students "greater knowledge of Canadian black history, the War of 1812 and slavery in general. It can also be used to launch discussions on the concepts of slavery, freedom and dignity" (para. 5). A step by step outline is provided, as well as the resources needed, including links to a video of a fictitious interview with Richard Pierpoint, who petitioned to form an all-black militia to fight alongside the British during the War of 1812, and a poster "celebrating" the contribution of black soldiers during the war.

To what extent does this lesson correspond to and reflect the expectations of the Quebec Education Program? By juxtaposing the lesson with the Quebec Education Program itself, we can conclude that the extent is minimal. One of the primary goals of the History and Citizenship

curriculum is to have students examine the complexity of history. Quoting Robert V. Daniels, the Quebec Education Program states explicitly that, "a good historical sense appreciates how rarely, if ever, clear conflicts appear between good and evil, black and white. It recognizes the differences among the many distinct shades of grey. This is the most important lesson that history can offer its students for coping with their world" (Quebec, 2004, p. 302). On this mark, the lesson offered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada falls short. The lesson does not go into any sort of complexity, but rather is set up as a lesson in commemoration. By "celebrating" the contribution of black soldiers in the "Fight for Canada" (a country, it should be pointed out, that did not exist in 1812), the lesson makes the conflict appear to be a clear one between good and evil, establishing the type and quality of black and white thinking that Daniels' warns of.

Indeed, whether we can say that the lesson recognizes complexity at all is at the very least questionable. While one of the goals of the lesson is to have students gain "greater knowledge" of slavery, the history of slavery is presented itself in a way that ignores British America's involvement in perpetuating the selling and trading of slaves. In a link to a trivia game about black history in Canada, one of the questions asks what certificate was given to blacks in 1783 who had joined the British during the American Revolution (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012c). The answer provided is "The Certificate of Freedom," leading to the suggestion that black "Canadians" fought alongside their fellow "Canadians" in 1812 for their freedom from a tyrannical American system of slavery. Yet, there is no mention of the fact that slavery in the British Empire was still legal and continued into the 1830s, and that real "freedom" was thus impossible. Moreover, the lesson ignores recent historical research which demonstrates that many blacks in British North America were in fact escaping south, to northern U.S. states, where slavery had already been abolished (Robinson, 2010). Complexity in the history of slavery in North America is not embraced, and the simplistic lesson offered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada offers a sanitized history which does not adhere to the requirements of the Quebec Education Program.

Federal-Centric History and Citizenship

In addition to promoting a sanitized history, teaching and learning material produced at the federal level overwhelmingly promote a federal-centric history and citizenship curriculum. One need not look any further than the material produced by Elections Canada. One of the most elaborate set of resources offered by this federal agency is the *Canada at the Polls!* kit. The kit includes two official Elections Canada polling stations, two ballot boxes, situation cards and notes, sample ballot papers, sample voters lists, tally sheets, pencils, and other material that would be found at a typical Elections Canada polling station. Included with the kit is a binder of suggested lessons for teachers, which can also be found online (Elections Canada, 2012b). Teachers can also access accompanying documents, audio/visual aids, and links to further resources.

The quality of the teaching and learning material produced by Elections Canada in the *Canada at the Polls!* kit is, in terms of pedagogy, excellent. There is no doubt that much time and effort has been put into the making of this material, and, indeed, continues to be put into making it a valuable resource for teachers, who are encouraged to provide feedback to Elections Canada on how the material can be made better. That said, Quebec educators should question the extent to which Elections Canada teaching and learning resources can, or should, be integrated into the History and Citizenship curriculum. The material itself is not aligned to the Quebec

Citizenship Education program, nor is it to any provincial civics or citizenship education curriculum. Elections, and democracy in general, are presented in a purely federal light and therefore not representative of the more complete electoral experience of most Canadians.

In many respects the federal bend should come as no surprise, as Elections Canada is, after all, a federal agency. However, when we remember that schooling does not fall under the mandate of the federal government, questions arise as to why the federal government is not attempting to align the teaching and learning material it produces with provincial curricula. In the case of the Quebec Education Program, while Elections Canada material meets program content designed to teach students about the formation of the Canadian federation (Quebec, 2007, pp. 51-54), it fails to meet the more substantial program content designed to teach students about Quebec society and politics (Quebec Education Program, 2007, pp. 55-63).

Part of the reason why provincial issues are overlooked may be in either an overt or covert effort to promote a Canadian national identity through this material. The argument can certainly be made that symbols of "banal nationalism" (Billig, 1995) abound in Elections Canada teaching material. The resources, activities, and material culture of the kits themselves are replete with maple leafs, caricatures of Parliament Hill, Canadian flags, and other federal symbols of nationalism. Very little learning, if any, of provincial or municipal elections and systems of government can be taught or learned through these resources. The extent to which governance in Canada is a symbiotic relationship between the provinces and the federal government is, despite its centrality in the history of Canada, simply not considered.

A federal agency that attempts to consider the importance of the provinces in its teaching and learning material, however, is Statistics Canada. In 1920, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, which would become Statistics Canada, established an Education Division charged with the statistical analysis of public education throughout Canada. Since its inception, it has also had the dual purpose of providing educational material regarding statistics in Canada. In our own time, through a partnership with the Council of Ministers of Education, Statistics Canada has developed the Canadian Education Statistics Council, which reports on issues in education, training, and literacy. It also disseminates teaching and learning material to schools, school boards, and a variety of what it calls "educational stakeholders."

Its online repository of lesson plans and activities for teachers and students is an impressive array of educational material that touches upon virtually every aspect of provincial curricula throughout Canada. Statistic Canada's public outreach program ended in June 2012, but it continues to house its repository of teaching and learning material on an archived website (Statistics Canada, 2012). Lessons produced by Statistics Canada can be broken into themes, including Aboriginal Studies, Agriculture, Arts and Culture, Business Studies and Economics, Canadian Studies, Career Education, Civics, Environment, Family Studies and Home Economics, Geography, Health and Physical Education, History, Information and Communications Technology, and Language, Law, and Mathematics.

Through an analysis of this material, we can conclude that Statistics Canada houses some of the most value-neutral teaching and learning material produced at the federal level. That is, in many cases the data is left to speak for itself, and many of the lessons are geared toward teaching students how to use statistics. In some cases, however, Statistics Canada, like other federal agencies, covertly teaches a federal-centric civic nationalism aimed at propagating and instilling a Canadian national identity. It does this for the most part by promoting a sense of Canadian national awareness. While individual provinces can be studied through the teaching and learning material produced by Statistics Canada, the lesson plans characteristically discourage a study of

the provinces in isolation and instead encourage the study of provincial statistics in a pan-Canadian comparative nature.

Whether overtly ignoring the importance of the provinces in Canadian governance, as seen through the material produced by Elections Canada, or covertly marginalizing a study of the provinces in favour of pan-Canadian analyses, as seen through the material produced by Statistics Canada, the federal government is involved in the making of federal-centric history and citizenship teaching and learning material. The potential consequence, if relying solely on this material to teach the lessons described above, is for the student to obtain an incomplete understanding of the structure and workings of Canadian governance. Moreover, the student is more apt to develop a federal-centric perspective of matters concerning his or her history and citizenship.

Mindless, Uncritical Patriotism

If the Quebec History and Citizenship curriculum attempts to produce critical thinkers who are infected with the ability to question and assess their sense of identity and belonging, then much of the material offered by federal agencies provides the antidote. Citizenship and Immigration Canada, for example, has produced a vast array of material in which patriotism and nationalism are glorified and exalted as pillars of citizenship, and little of it is to be reflected upon critically. Much of this material is offered as "A Fun Path to Learning" on its website, which includes resources available directly to children for use without the filter of the teacher or parent (Citizenship and Immigration, 2012a). Indeed, Citizenship and Immigration Canada's website is replete with resources in which patriotic games and activities do little to promote critical thinking. Games include matching "Canadian" symbols such as beavers, Mounties, and the Queen's crown, as well as multiple-choice trivia on "Great Canadians" and prime ministers. One activity designed by the federal department involves students taking an oath of citizenship and singing "O Canada" as they recreate and participate in a reaffirmation ceremony.

Perhaps nowhere is the promotion of a mindless, uncritical patriotism seen better than in the resources produced by the Department of Canadian Heritage. A lesson on the National Flag of Canada Day, for example, (Canadian Heritage, 2012a) celebrates the history of the making of the Canadian flag. "Red and white were designated as Canada's official colours in 1921 by His Majesty King George V," (para. 1) students are reminded, and National Flag of Canada Day "is a perfect opportunity to celebrate our flag and what it stands for: a Dominion that is the envy of the world" (para. 1). Teachers can order a National Flag of Canada Day poster for their classrooms, as well as other classroom posters such as "The Proclamation of the National Flag of Canada by Her Majesty the Queen (1965)," and "The Declaration of National Flag of Canada Day (1966)."

In one section of the Canadian Heritage website, teachers can find material concerning the Monarchy in Canada (Canadian Heritage, 2012b). Classroom posters can be ordered from a special "Teachers' Corner" created for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012 (Canadian Heritage, 2012c). Teachers are offered *A Crown of Maples: Constitutional Monarchy in Canada*, which can be downloaded digitally or ordered in a print version. The book itself is a celebration of the role and powers of the Canadian crown, and includes a section on "God Save The Queen," which, students are reminded, is a Canadian royal anthem. Elementary students are encouraged to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee through material provided on the website, including a printable Diamond Jubilee Emblem "for your students to colour!" (para. 13).

Canadian Heritage certainly does not shy away from its mandate to promote Canadian patriotism. Indeed, it would be difficult to characterize the teaching and learning resources produced by Canadian Heritage as a form of "banal nationalism." Its use of symbols and images as a way to promote a sense of Canadian identity is clear and overt, and teachers are themselves encouraged to take part in that effort. But whose sense of Canadian patriotism is being promoted? Who decides what constitutes the defining features of being Canadian? The Quebec Education Program, for its part, does not. While students are expected to "discover the roots of their personal and collective identity" (Quebec, 2007, p. 304), they are expected to do so critically while also "seeking to discover the origin of difference and specificity and the factors that explain them ... [understanding] that their identity is both personal and plural and that pluralism is not incompatible with the sharing of values" (Quebec, 2007, p. 306). The resources produced by Canadian Heritage, however, are not designed for a critical interpretation of Canadian identity. While much can be learned about Canadian politics, government, and constitutional monarchy in Canada, the teaching and learning material fails to meet the expectation of critical citizenship espoused in the Quebec Education Program.

Teaching and learning material produced by Veterans Affairs Canada is also problematic in this regard. Much of the material can be ordered directly by teachers free of charge via their website through an online shopping cart format (Veterans Affairs Canada, 2012a). Veterans Affairs Canada offers a slate of resources concerning the contribution of Canadian soldiers to the making of modern Canada. Their focus is especially on lessons revolving around Veterans' Week and Remembrance Day – with a special teacher's guide prepared each year for the week. Veterans Affairs Canada offers a rich array of material, including pamphlets, postcards, DVDs, games, and a special Veteran's Week newspaper covering stories from the war field from the First World War to the Afghanistan mission. Like other material produced by federal agencies, however, the lessons created by Veterans Affairs Canada overwhelmingly emphasize a mindless, uncritical patriotism aimed at commemoration and honour as opposed to the focus on critical thinking promoted by the Quebec Education Program.

A lesson plan on the liberation of Belgium, for example, states that one of the specific learning outcomes is that students "should remember, honour, and appreciate the achievements and sacrifices made by Canadians during WWII" (Veterans Affairs Canada, 2012b). Such a subject-centred approach to the study of the Second World War is ultimately not compatible with the approach to the study of history promoted in the Quebec Education Program. Whereas the lesson above presents history as a series of facts and events that the student "should" remember and honour, the Quebec Education Program is quite explicit in its assertion that the student must not "memorize a simplified, student-friendly version of the academic knowledge produced and constructed by historians" (Quebec, 2004, p. 295). Rather, according to the Quebec Education Program, students should be encouraged to reflect upon history and come to their own conclusions and decisions to honour or appreciate it.

There exists a wealth of other teaching and learning material and resources produced at the federal level not examined here. Indeed, the shear amount of material is impressive. Federal agencies' teaching and learning resources represent a significantly large and free repository of resources at the disposal of teachers across Canada. Nevertheless, they do present some challenges to teaching and learning that must be considered before they are used. What impact do these externally produced curricular resources have on provincial curricula?

Issues and Implications for Quebec Education

In the case of Quebec, one key conclusion is that the federally-produced resources contain overt and sometimes hidden messages that are incompatible with the aims and learning intentions set out by the Quebec History and Citizenship Education curriculum. The Quebec Education Program promotes a critical conception of citizenship, which does not assume that citizenship is a socio-cultural construct that must be transmitted to students. The unofficial federal curriculum overwhelmingly does. In fact, in many cases the lessons created at the federal level are based on an out of date pedagogical idea of culture as something that can be more or less defined and possessed, and thus passed on or transmitted to students. Moreover, the moral and ethical questions that allow students to critically think about what constitutes good citizenship have already been answered by the makers of federal teaching and learning resources. For example, the poster celebrating the role of black "Canadians" during the War of 1812 implies that the good black Canadian contributed to the war effort in 1812. The learning outcomes and objectives presented by Veterans Affairs Canada imply that the good Canadian student today should commemorate and honour the effort of soldiers who liberated Belgium. And perhaps they indeed should. But pedagogically speaking, students are not being encouraged, through these federal resources, to analyze and interpret the historical evidence in order to critically engage with the material; and they are not arriving at these conclusions themselves; rather they are being linearly directed to those conclusions.

In some cases, the messages teachers are encouraged to deliver are based on created or imagined histories that may or may not be supported by the available evidence in the historical record. In fact, fake records have even been created. For example, stories of war and peacekeeping are assembled in a pseudo-newspaper, entitled "Canada Remember Times," that is developed each year by Veterans Affairs Canada. These stories are fun and interesting for children and adolescents, and they are indeed engaging, but Quebec teachers should make no mistake: they are not real news stories. Indeed, teachers throughout Canada clearly need to question the usefulness of presenting secondary source material in history as though it were primary source material. What's more, when considering the wealth of real newspapers from the actual time available in libraries and archives across the country, and increasingly getting easier to access through digital technologies, the reasoning behind the production of pseudo-newspapers as a way to teach history in the classroom is furthermore questionable. In terms of promoting historical thinking, these resources produced at the federal level fall short of the mark, and students may be better served if teachers stayed away from the fake articles and stories and instead integrated real ones into their teaching.

Such an assertion is not meant to suggest that the intentions of the developers of this material are necessarily malevolent. But, ultimately, it is not the intentions teachers should be concerned about. Rather, it is the results. And the results may indeed be less than satisfying, and perhaps dangerous. The standards, expectations, and vision of history and citizenship education promoted at the federal level is often out of line, and in some cases at odds, with that of the provinces. If teachers decide to use these materials, then, they may be inadvertently handing over curricular development decisions to federal agencies that have no accountability to the provincial constituency they serve. That said, it is not my assertion that teachers should not use these resources. All resources, whether sanctioned by the Ministry of Education or not, contain forms of biases and hidden messages. In this regard, federally-produced resources, like all teaching and learning material that enters into the classroom, should be used critically by teachers. Further

research is needed, and could be helpful to Quebec teachers, which identifies the strengths and weaknesses of federally-produced material. This would allow teachers to build upon and supplement the material in ways that can make it more consistent with the Quebec Education Program.

Finally, and perhaps the most provocative conclusion we can draw from an analysis of this material, is that despite schooling being the constitutional domain of the provinces, we indeed have a federal school curriculum in Canada. It is one that is produced at the federal level, by federal employees. The lessons promote the civic interests of the federation, and it is a curriculum that can be shared by school children in every province and territory in the country. It is a curriculum that transcends provincial borders, or ignores them, and it certainly ignores the legal jurisdiction over schooling in Canada. By doing so, the federal government is engaging in a deliberate attempt to instil a Canadian national ethos within the learning environments of provincially-run schools. Through the appropriation of the unofficial federal curriculum, Canadian students are encouraged to acquire a sense of national identity and national citizenship as seen through a federal perspective.

The existence of an unofficial federal curriculum in Canada should at the very least raise our awareness to the multiple ways in which children are influenced to identify themselves as Canadians. This unofficial federal curriculum adds a layer of content neither anticipated nor often desired by provincial authorities. Teaching and learning material produced by federal agencies is aimed at promoting the integration of citizens into a national society and culture. The unofficial curriculum provides for a shared national teaching and learning experience inside of Canadian classrooms, and can reinforce notions of national belonging rooted in a federal identity.

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Teaching Aboriginal perspectives: An investigation into teacher practices amidst curriculum change

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This paper reports on a study exploring ways in which five experienced teachers interpreted and responded to a curricular initiative in Alberta calling for teachers to help students see social studies through multiple perspective lenses representing Aboriginal (and Francophone) communities. Over the course of the study, which focused primarily on how the research participants integrated Aboriginal perspectives in their teaching, the teachers generally interpreted and practiced the teaching of multiple perspectives as providing students with alternative viewpoints on contemporary issues. Of note were teachers' resistances to affording room for Aboriginal perspectives, and a general absence of engagements with these perspectives in the classroom. I argue that these resistances may stem from the legacy of a collective memory project that has worked to foster a historical consciousness that makes it hard to perceive, as well as acknowledge the relevance of engaging 'Other' perspectives. In response, I draw attention to perspectives unique to Aboriginal traditions and communities and then offer possibilities for how teachers could alternatively conceptualize and take up this curricular mandate.

Increasingly, curricular initiatives across Canada emphasize the need to teach social studies from the perspective of peoples who have been traditionally marginalized in, or excluded from, national narratives told in schools. This shift in outlook reflects a move away from engaging students with any singular conception of a national past, integrating multiple perspectives in the telling of Canada's stories of origin, its histories, and the movements of its people. One jurisdiction where this policy shift has been most pronounced is the province of Alberta where a social studies program of study introduced incrementally from 2005 to 2010 calls for teachers to engage the twin pillars of citizenship and identity through multiple lenses of diverse communities. Specifically, the program asks students to "appreciate and respect how multiple perspectives, including Aboriginal and Francophone, shape Canada's political, socio-economic, linguistic and cultural realities" (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 2). The new program states that for historical and constitutional reasons, an understanding of Canadian citizenship and identity requires an understanding of Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives, experiences, and their "particular needs and requirements" (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 4). Although the Alberta Social Studies Program of Studies is not distinctive in asking teachers to address multiple perspectives when teaching social studies, the program may be unique in naming, specifically, the communities whose perspectives are to be engaged. Interestingly, the program does not name the dominant (White/Euro-centric) perspective on which these two new perspectives are to be added (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011).

This curricular initiative departs from traditional approaches to social studies whereby elite descendants of white Anglo-Saxon protestant settlers sought to impose and have people conform to their particular vision of Canadian identity (Osborne, 1997; Stanley, 2007). In contrast, the Alberta program restores Aboriginal and Francophone people, communities, and their diverse perspectives to a permanent seat of national deliberations around the future of

the country. Scholars speaking to the potential of this curricular shift in Alberta argue that re-reading and reframing stories of the nation will open up a space to cultivate care and attention towards groups formally positioned as 'Other,' while also broadening the range of responses available to meet issues of concern in our national and global communities (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011; Donald, 2009a, 2009b; Thompson, 2004).

Although this body of scholarship has reported on theoretical possibilities, as well as some of the challenges teacher candidates have faced in relation to this curricular mandate, my review of the literature suggests a dearth of empirical studies on the ways teachers in Alberta are interpreting the teaching of multiple perspectives and taking it up in their social studies classrooms. In response to this gap in the literature my study, started in the Fall of 2008, involved trying to understand how and in what ways five experienced social studies teachers teaching a grade 10 course focusing on globalization understood and engaged the program directive to teach social studies from Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives. Due to space limitations, in this article I will focus only on those themes related to the teachers' understandings of the program's directive to include Aboriginal perspectives into their teaching.

Among the most interesting themes, the teachers merged the curricular directive to teach social studies from Aboriginal perspectives with a parallel call within the Alberta program to engage multiple perspectives when teaching and learning about contemporary issues in the world. Resulting from this latter interpretation, the teachers engaged in rich and varied forms of inquiry exposing students to a range of alternative viewpoints on contemporary issues related to globalization, which was the focus of their instruction during this study. This included, for example, offering students differing ideological orientations for understanding the benefits and shortcomings of economic globalization. During a series of individual interviews with each of the participants along with a focus group discussion, my research participants communicated that it was not always necessary to afford room for Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum. They argued this was best undertaken when studying a historical event or issue where Aboriginal groups were specifically involved. Because the content they were addressing, namely assessing the economic and environmental impacts of globalization (Alberta Education, 2007), did not explicitly implicate these groups, the teachers felt it was therefore not necessary to engage Aboriginal perspectives in relation to this topic. Additionally, they felt further hindered in engaging these perspectives because the heterogeneous nature of Aboriginal communities made it impossible to offer students one uniform viewpoint from the perspective of these groups.

As I will explore, although these interpretations are understandable, they are also worrisome. This is because they work against the spirit and animating vision of the program explicitly directing teachers to employ Aboriginal (and Francophone) perspectives when exploring larger thematic issues in the program such as globalization, nationalism, and democracy. In response to this problem, I draw on work in the field related to this curriculum mandate, along with theory and research on historical consciousness (Létourneau, 2004, 2007) to critically examine the assumptions informing how my research participants conceptualized the teaching of multiple perspectives. Taking up the work of Donald (2007, 2009a, 2009b) in particular, I then explore how the teaching of Aboriginal perspectives could be reconceptualised to better reflect the intent and vision of the Alberta program of studies. I conclude by showing how Aboriginal perspectives could inform deliberations on issues related to the economic and environmental impacts of globalization.

Review of the literature

In asking teachers to help students imagine the past and take up issues of concern from Aboriginal (and Francophone) perspectives, the Alberta program gives teachers an opportunity to depart from the "collective memory" (Seixas, 2000) approach to social studies education that has guided classroom instruction for much of the 20th century. Within this frame, social studies classrooms became spaces for affirming and acculturating people into a shared sense of national culture while also advancing national prestige. Seixas (2004) asserts that the creation of a common national past is one of the primary instruments for fostering a shared national identity. A common past is in turn preserved and promoted through what French historian Nora (1996) refers to as 'lieux de memoire' or sites of memory that include history textbooks, museums, memorials, popular films, and even beer commercials. Within the realm of the classroom, as part of this process, students have been presented an authorless and authoritative story of the nation, seemingly immune to interrogation, that scholars have variously termed a "single-best story" (Seixas, 2000) or "grand narrative" (Stanley, 2007; den Heyer & Abbott, 2011).

As documented by Létourneau (2007), the promotion of an officially sanctioned national narrative reproduced and reinforced over many generations has meant that people who have been educated and live within a particular cultural milieu with strong institutional coherence generally share a common collectively held vision of the past which cohere into peoples minds into what he terms "mythhistories" (p. 71). Extensive empirical research by Létourneau (2004, 2007) and colleagues in the area of historical consciousness examining the process by which people "acquire, internalize, and make use of the history of their nation" (Lévesque, Létourneau, & Gani, 2012, p. 55) has identified the presence of a powerful mythhistory in Quebec. Specifically, this research found that when young Franco-Québécois living in Québec City are asked to tell the story of the nation the vast majority draw on a '*la survivance'* (survival) narrative template recounting a "relatively linear and unhappy representation of Québec's national place in history rippled with ideas of nostalgia and historical melancholy" (Lévesque et. al, 2012, p. 56). Underpinning this narrative template is the story of an alienated and impoverished people seeking emancipation from their largely Anglophone oppressors. Within this matrix of understanding, the British conquest of New France in 1759 set off a long struggle by the Francophone peoples in Québec to liberate themselves from the continual pressure of the British to assimilate them. In this way, events such as the Quebec Act of 1774 through to the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s can be understood as part of a dynamic whereby the Québécois attempted to assert and preserve their unique language, culture, religion, and identity against the continual incursions of the greater Anglophone community.

Létourneau (2007) believes the way a mythhistory is narrated has profound implications for identity formations in the present in terms of how people orientate themselves in the world and relate to 'Others.' This is because embedded in the narrative structures, or what Wertsch (2004) calls a "schematic narrative template" (p. 55) of a mythhistory are reference points for making sense of the world involving "binary notions of insiders and outsiders, stereotypes, and other representations that act as a basic matrix of understanding" (p. 79). Létourneau claims that people too often become so deeply situated in particular matrixes of historical understanding that it limits their ability to see the past in ways that depart from the dominant narrative. He believes this is the case even when a narrative has long outlived its usefulness and has been shown to poorly reflect the nature or complexity of the past. In this way people become trapped in mistaken identities where they come to see those positioned within the narrative as 'Other,' in ways that have little connection to reality. Within the Franco-Québécois narrative template, Létourneau (2007)

notes the way Anglophones are positioned as threatening and dangerous outsiders, while the contribution and participation of minority groups such as women, Aboriginal people, and immigrants are rendered invisible.

This same dynamic is similarly at play in educational jurisdictions outside of Quebec where scholars argue that elite descendants of white Anglo-Saxon protestant peoples that first settled Canada were able to impose and have people conform to their particular vision of Canadian identity (Osborne, 1997). To promote an Anglo-Euro vision of Canada generations of students have been presented a grand narrative that presents a particular "schematic narrative template" (Wertsch, 2004) of the nation. Donald (2009a) argues the narrative template promoted by the collective memory project involves a European settler story of European 'explorers' first 'discovering' Canada with later European arrivals carving civilization out of a largely unoccupied wilderness. Stanley (2007) similarly asserts that the officially sanctioned history of Canada focuses on "the progress of European resettlement, emphasizing 'nation building' by far-seeing 'great men' and even, today, the occasional 'great women'" (p. 34)[1].

Although this narrative has been presented to students as if it was the past itself, this narrative is far from neutral or value-free. Stanley (2007) notes for example, that within this framework Aboriginal people like Elijah Harper, or Métis people such as Louis Riel, seem to only intrude when they block the nation building process. In a similar vein, Donald (2009a) writes that the historical reference points used in this narrative such as 'settling the West' or 'the opening up of Western Canada' create an imagined past where these lands were empty and untouched, simply waiting for Europeans to put them to productive use. This frame of reference and matrix of understanding, similar to the Franco-Québécois "schematic narrative template" (Wertsch, 2004), in turn positions Aboriginal peoples outside the story of Canada. When Aboriginal peoples are made visible, Donald (2009b) argues that Indigenous peoples have been storied as unfortunate historical remnants of the civilizing process of building a nation. While not making Quebec and Canada's Francophone populations invisible, scholars have argued that the dominant narrative has placed them on the margins (Osborne, 1997; Thompson, 2004). Francis (1997) further contends that the official story of Canada has traditionally worked to infantilize the Québécois in a variety of ways including portraying them as living in a perpetual state of rural backwardness.

How a mythhistory like the English Canadian grand narrative (Stanley, 2007) operates has profound implications for the teaching of multiple perspectives. By simultaneously enabling and limiting how people perceive the past, many Canadians are unaware that the story of Canada they have come to know is not a universal and transcendent retelling of the past 'as it was.' As a result, in line with Létourneau's (2007) argument, many Canadians possess a historical consciousness that makes it difficult to appreciate that the past could be imagined outside particular matrixes of understanding that they have come to see as natural and value-free. This assertion is supported by the work of den Heyer and Abbott (2011) who asked groups of teacher candidates to produce two digitally rendered historical narratives that convey interpretations of Canadian history not reliant on dominant perspectives. Their findings suggest that the understandings of Canadian history these pre-service teachers had been acculturated into limit their ability to imagine a narrative from another perspective.

Donald (2009a) believes that the official story of Canada continues to deny and marginalize the historical, temporal, spatial, and legal relationship among Indigenous peoples and Canadians. He writes, "Canadians have given themselves so deeply to this mythic national narrative that the story has come to *own* the ways in which they conceptualize their

[1] See also den Heyer & Abbott (2011) for further pedagogical engagements with grand narratives.

past and present relationships with Aboriginal peoples" (p. 3). As a consequence, Donald (2009b) theorizes that the nation-building narrative and its accompanying colonial imaginary have made many educators "unable to comprehend historic and ongoing Aboriginal presence and participation within Canadian society" (p. 23). Accordingly, Donald believes that the stories of Canada that young people have been taught in schools has made it hard for them to see the relevance of ensuring that Aboriginal people, communities, and their diverse perspectives can and should inform deliberations around the future of the country.

As part of this dynamic Donald (2009b) argues that many educators have developed resistances to taking up or engaging Aboriginal perspectives in their teaching. Because the grand narrative creates an architecture of insiders (Canadians) and outsiders (Aboriginal peoples), many educators have come to see Aboriginal ways of knowing and being as existing completely outside of Euro-Western civilization and therefore unknowable. Consequently, cultural differences come to be seen as an "imposing rift that works to restrict membership, and its related authority to speak and re-present, to those deemed most culturally authentic" (Donald, 2009b, p. 32). In other words, when teachers are confronted with the directive to engage knowledge or perspectives they deem foreign and outside what is knowable, Donald argues that they often retreat behind a wall of wilful ignorance, invoking self-disqualification to speak on behalf of an Aboriginal perspective because only those that are authentically Indigenous can so.

To remedy this situation, Donald believes that teachers need to appreciate that Aboriginal peoples and Canadians do not inhabit separate realities. In line with the thinking of Saul (2008), Donald argues that seeing Aboriginal peoples and Canadians as completely separate peoples ignores the long history of contact, cooperation, collaboration, integration, and inter-mixing through marriage that occurred for hundreds of years on this land we now know as Canada. In this way Aboriginal peoples cannot be 'Othered' as, to a certain extent, the 'Other' inhabits who 'we' are as people living in Canada. Informed by an ecological imagination that emphasises relationships among people and all living entities, Donald (2009a) promotes an pedagogical approach he terms "Indigenous Métissage" (p. 5) involving the juxtaposition of dominant historical perspectives and beliefs about Canada with Aboriginal historical perspectives. Donald (2009a) writes:

> The ethical desire is to reread and reframe historical understanding in ways that cause readers to question their own assumptions and prejudices as limited and limiting, and thus foster a renewed openness to the possibility of broader and deeper understandings that can traverse perceived cultural, civilizational, and temporal divides. (p. 5)

For Donald, one of the central goals of this orientation is to create an ethical space whereby Aboriginal-Canadian relations can be decolonized and re-imagined.

As part of this decolonizing process, Donald asserts that educators could respectfully draw on Indigenous wisdom traditions for guidance on how to live well on the land. In so doing, teachers and students could move towards seeing the introduction of Indigenous perspectives in the classroom "as an opportunity to learn *from* Aboriginal perspectives rather than as a government-imposed requirement to learn *about* Aboriginal peoples" (Donald, 2009b, p. 29). Here teachers would be aided by a rich body of scholarship documenting ways of knowing, traditions and perspectives found in Aboriginal wisdom traditions. This includes cyclical understandings of time where the past, present, and future are simultaneously intertwined (Lightning, 1992; Indian and Northern Affairs of Canada, 2009); an ecological imagination which emphasises the interconnectedness of all things (King, 2003; Lightning, 1992); spiritual principles emphasizing an integral relationship and connection to the land

and specific sacred sites (Borrows, 2000; Christensen, 2000); as well as a particular understanding of the land as citizen whereby we cannot differentiate ourselves from the earth and must preserve it for future generations (Borrows, 2000; Donald, 2007). By exposing students to ways of knowing and being found in Indigenous wisdom traditions and oral stories, teachers could broaden the range of responses available to meet issues of concern in our national and global communities.

Study

In this study, begun in September 2008 and completed in July 2009, I explored how five social studies specialist teachers interpreted, understood, and taught the call within the Alberta Social Studies Program of Study (2007) to engage students with multiple perspectives. Adopting a case study approach (Yin, 2009), I employed purposeful sampling (Merriam, 2009) to identify five experienced teachers[2] at a large, ethnically diverse urban high school in Alberta to participate in my study. I chose to work with experienced teachers based on an assumption that the opportunities and challenges these highly competent and seasoned practitioners experienced would be similarly reflected in the broader teaching community.

For the sake of anonymity I have given the five research participants pseudonyms as follows: Tom, Doug, Ben, Danna, and Mary. All the teacher participants, like myself, reflect the largely Anglophone, white, and middle class backgrounds of many teachers in Alberta. Notably, however, Mary has a Franco-Albertan background on one side of her family. Over the course of my research study, all five participants were teaching the grade 10 Alberta social studies course on globalization and their teaching was focused on "Issue 3" from the program of studies, which asks students to "assess the economic, environmental and other contemporary impacts of globalization" (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 23). During this time, Ben was teaching the 10-2 for 'non-matriculation' stream students, Mary and Doug were teaching the mainstream 10-1 class, and Tom and Danna taught the advanced course for students who planned to enter the International Baccalaureate program the following year.

My data collection process began with semi-structured individual interviews with each of the five teachers (Creswell, 2008). I then augmented the data generated from these conversations with classroom observations of each of the five teachers over the course of one unit ranging from eight to ten classes. In order to elicit richer and more nuanced data, I subsequently engaged in a final focus group interview (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007) where the five teachers and I discussed various themes that emerged during the interviews and classroom observations. All interviews and classroom observations were digitally recorded and over the course of the study I kept detailed field notes in a personal journal. Once I transcribed all the interviews and focus group discussion, I began coding the data set based on common categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994) reflecting shared and corresponding interpretations and understandings of the teaching of multiple perspectives. Wishing to verify if the participants' interpretations were reflected in their pedagogical practices, I then examined these categories in relation to the data I had gathered in their classrooms.

To develop the interpretive framework that would inform my analysis of the data, I began by conducting a close reading of the Alberta Socials Studies Program of Study (2007). Here, I sought to understand what the program was specifically directing teachers to do when teaching social studies from multiple perspectives. To analyze my research participants' interpretations and enactments of the teaching of multiple perspectives, I drew on my review of the literature. Specifically, I was informed by literature related to the curricular mandate

[2] Here I am referring to teachers with at least five years of experience teaching high school social studies.

in Alberta to teach from multiple perspectives (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011; Donald, 2007, 2009b) as well as scholarship on historical consciousness (Létourneau 2004, 2007; Stanley, 2007; Seixas, 2000). Additionally, I drew on literature outlining ways of knowing and beliefs particular to Aboriginal wisdom traditions (e.g., Borrows, 2000; Christensen, 2000; Donald, 2009a). Taken as a whole, this diverse body of scholarship lent insight into the challenges and potential resistances my teacher participants might be facing in teaching multiple perspectives. As well, it afforded me access to a range of rich conceptual possibilities opened up by this curricular mandate.

Results

The first major theme to emerge from the data involved an argument that the teaching of multiple perspectives should not be limited to a specific focus on Francophone or Aboriginal perspectives. During the individual interview, when asked how she understood multiple perspectives, Danna explained that:

> When I talk to other people about multiple perspectives, for them it's the traditional European perspective, it's the Aboriginal and the French Canadian perspective. But that is not at all how I interpreted the new curriculum. When you look at just the curriculum it is there, it is part of our history but I'm not limited by that. (Danna, 58-61)[3]

That the teaching of multiple perspectives should not be only limited to addressing Francophone and Aboriginal perspectives was also in line with Tom's thinking:

> Rather than different opinions supposed to be French and Aboriginal, I see it as, here is a given way of looking at an issue, here is a counter argument from what you just heard and now how do you decide. (Tom, 76-78)

He elaborates on this point later in the interview:

> Yes, the Francophone perspectives and Aboriginal perspectives are written into the curriculum and that is what we are supposed to be doing, but what I am finding out is that it is possible to teach the course without dealing with that stuff at all if you don't want to; some teachers won't. I think there is another way of interpreting multiple perspectives; it could just be simply differences of opinion or points of view on particular issues and that offers you all kinds of opportunity to bring in different voices and different perspectives. (Tom, 118-123)

In contrast to an interpretation of multiple perspectives emphasizing teaching social studies from specifically Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives, Tom's interpretation frames multiple perspectives around differences of opinion or points of view on particular issues. Despite an explicate curriculum directive to do so, Tom's comments make it clear that it is possible to teach the grade 10 program without in any way engaging Aboriginal (or Francophone) perspectives.[4]

[3] These indicate transcript line numbers of the individual interviews I had with each of my research participants. The transcript for the focus group discussion is labelled as FG.

[4] I remind the reader that, due to space limitations, I will restrict my analysis to the participants' discussions of integrating Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum.

This resistance to affording room for Aboriginal perspectives was an ongoing theme throughout the study and reflected the classroom practice of my teacher participants. Over the course of the study I observed only one class when the participating teachers specifically addressed Aboriginal perspectives. This occurred during a discussion on economic cycles in one of Danna's classes. When Danna was discussing the Great Depression, she asked her students about what this time must have been like for Aboriginal people who were living on reserves and were previously unable to participate in many of the economic benefits of the former boom years. The conclusion by Danna and the class was that the lives of Aboriginal people, which were already very difficult, would have become even harder during this sustained economic downturn.

In contrast to a general absence of engagements with Aboriginal perspectives, during the study I observed rich and purposeful examples of pedagogical practice orientated around Tom's interpretation of multiple perspectives emphasizing providing students with differing viewpoints on contemporary issues. In the case of Tom, Doug, and Ben's classes, students had the opportunity to explore a number of issues related to the economic and environmental impacts of globalization from a range of conflicting and divergent viewpoints. For example, Doug began his unit on economic globalization by providing his students with the guiding issue question: "To what extent is economic globalization a positive force in the world?" He then exposed his students to a range of thinkers on this issue including people he terms 'globophiles' (e.g. Milton Freedman) and others he terms 'globophobes' (e.g. Naomi Klein). While the former see economic globalization as a profoundly positive force in the world able to lift millions out of poverty, globophobes see globalization as an environmentally destructive excuse for a small group of elites to enrich themselves at the expense of the majority of the world's population. Doug ended the unit with a class debate around the guiding inquiry question.

The participants' interpretations and teaching of multiple perspectives reflected relevant and provocative possibilities for what this curricular mandate could entail. However, their emphasis on exposing students to alternatives viewpoints on issues meant the teachers did not assess the economic and environmental impacts of globalization (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 23) from Aboriginal perspectives. Consequently, during the focus group session I sought to better appreciate how my research participants understood the nature and place of Aboriginal (and Francophone) perspectives in the curriculum.

During the focus group discussion all five teachers agreed that teaching from an Aboriginal perspective meant providing a uniform group perspective around an issue. Based on this understanding, the research participants spoke to the difficulty, and even impossibility of providing one uniform viewpoint from the perspective of Aboriginal peoples. For example, Doug stated:

> I don't cover this [an Aboriginal] perspective all the way through [the course], even if there was a way; what is the Aboriginal perspective on the internet? You can come up with examples of a First Nation using the internet but that's not really a perspective, what is the Franco-Albertan perspective on the world trade organization? (FG, 111-114)

During this explanation, Tom added: "I can't say what the Aboriginal perspective is on mining and logging" (FG, 115). The participants felt that presenting one uniform Aboriginal perspective was particularly untenable given the diverse, varied, and complex situations and circumstances of Aboriginal peoples and communities today.

This understanding, however, was accompanied by the belief among my research participants that certain topics lend themselves to engaging Aboriginal perspectives, while

other topics do not. For example, during the individual interview Tom stated that the only time he could talk about Aboriginal perspectives would be with regard to particular circumstances, such as the "conditions in communities and residential schools" (FG, 137). In this instance he would be able to help students understand how Aboriginal people have been badly treated in the past. Similarly, in my individual interviews with both Mary and Doug, the same theme re-emerged. Mary felt that the best opportunities for engaging Aboriginal perspectives would be in relation to an historical event or an issue where these groups were involved. Mary elaborated that if this were not the case, bringing in Aboriginal perspectives would be contrived (Mary, 76).

In what follows I want to unpack and critically examine some of the assumptions underpinning my research participant's interpretations of the teaching of multiple perspectives. Before proceeding; however, I want to make clear that my intent is not to critique the practice of these teachers. All five participants were responding to a new program of study that they were teaching for the first time. In this regard, the directive within the program to specifically consider and acknowledge Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives in relation to a topic like globalization created a challenging pedagogical space for teachers. Moreover, as I only observed one unit of instruction, the claims I make only reflect a small portion of the participants' total course as a whole. Rather than critique these teachers' practice, my intent is to explore the themes that emerged from the data in relation to insights offered through my review of the literature. In doing this I seek to offer conceptual possibilities as to how teachers could richly engage the opportunities offered by this curricular initiative.

Discussion

Although providing students with multiple perspectives on issues related to the economic and environmental impacts of globalization could open up a conceptual space to engage Aboriginal perspectives, one of the most prominent themes emerging from my study was a belief among my research participants that this was not possible. This belief was partially based on the claim that Aboriginal perspectives are really only relevant when they stand in relation to an issue or historical event in which these groups are associated. Conceptualized in this way, Aboriginal perspectives could be addressed in relation to residential school experiences or treaty agreements. However, because the teachers did not see Aboriginal groups as directly involved in issues concerning economic globalization and sustainability, it was not deemed necessary to engage this topic from Aboriginal perspectives.

An argument can be made that this unwillingness to accept that Aboriginal peoples, communities, and their diverse perspectives could make a meaningful and necessary contribution to national life is rooted in a historical consciousness shaped by the stories of Canada that generations of students have been taught in schools. As outlined in the review of the literature, this story has placed Aboriginal peoples outside the national narrative. Donald (2009a) argues that the way teachers take up Aboriginal perspectives is directly connected to how they imagine the relationship among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples living in Canada. In turn, how people see this relationship reflects the values inherent within the founding myths of the nation. Notably, the *official* story of Canada does not emphasize the original relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canadians as one of mutuality and interdependence, nor does it promote an idea that the legal and historical foundations of Canada rest on treaty and constitutional agreements where *all* Canadians are treaty people living on treaty land (Indian and Northern Affairs of Canada, 2009; Tupper & Cappello, 2008). In contrast, as Donald (2009a) has shown, this story of the nation continues to deny and marginalize the historical, spatial, and legal relationship among Indigenous peoples and

Canadians. This insight suggests that in order for teachers to see Aboriginal perspectives as relevant to deliberations on issues of national concern, they must first possess a historical consciousness that traces the origins of Canada to an equal partnership among three distinct and equal founding nations.

The second reason why my research participants felt they could not engage Aboriginal perspectives in relation to their topic of study was based on a belief that engaging multiple perspectives primarily means providing students with a series of conflicting viewpoints on a contemporary issue. This interpretation may partially stem from how the Alberta program uses the term multiple perspectives in differing ways. On one hand the front matter of the program states that social studies seeks to help students "appreciate and respect Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives" (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 3). However, later on the same page the teaching of multiple perspectives is associated with helping "to promote metacognition through critical reflection, questioning, decision making and consideration of multiple perspectives on issues" (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 3). This second articulation of multiple perspectives, in line with the teachers' interpretation, carries with it no obvious connection to Aboriginal (and Francophone) communities and how they shape "Canada's political, socio-economic, linguistic and cultural realities" (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 2).

This move away from engaging Aboriginal perspectives was also informed by a belief that representing these perspectives involves presenting students with a uniform, collective viewpoint. Because Aboriginal groups are heterogeneous in nature, comprised of people with a wide variety of opinions and viewpoints, the teachers felt that providing a uniform viewpoint was therefore impossible. This interpretation seems justified in the sense that the research participants point to the danger of reducing a group's perspectives to a simplistic and reductive 'they think this' about an issue. However, this understanding is also highly problematic as it negates the possibility of fulfilling one of the central curricular mandates of the Alberta program, namely, asking teachers to engage contemporary issues from Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives.

Part of what seems to be at play here is what Donald (2009b) calls the "cultural disqualification" argument deployed by teachers to justify why they are unable to work with Aboriginal perspectives. Tom's view that he "can't say what the Aboriginal perspective is on mining and logging" (FG, 115), for example, seems to follow this logic. As outlined earlier, within this frame cultural difference becomes an imposing rift where only those deemed 'culturally authentic' are able to speak from a particular group's perspective. Donald asserts that this logic of insiders and outsiders allows teachers to "retreat behind the comforting shelter of real or passive ignorance that effectively disqualifies them from participation" (p. 32). Additionally, the idea that Aboriginal perspectives cannot be represented seems to also be influenced by a Euro-Western belief about knowledge that a teacher must be an expert in full control of the information they present to students (Donald, 2009b, p. 33). According to these teachers, they have had little or no exposure to Aboriginal perspectives on citizenship, history, and politics, thus retreating into a shelter of ignorance is understandable.

In seeking a conceptualization of Aboriginal perspectives that is not reductive, and that can open up a space where perspectives from these communities could be brought to bear in helping students deliberate on issues of concern in Canada, the work of Létourneau (2004, 2007) seems highly relevant. His insights point to a conceptualization of a group perspective as a unique set of reference points, traditions, and matrixes of understanding shared by, and unique to a particular cultural community. In reframing the teacher's role as an opportunity to help students learn *from* perspectives unique to Aboriginal communities and traditions (Donald, 2009b), teachers would be able to draw from the rich body of scholarship outlined earlier.

In particular, teachers could draw on a large body of literature documenting ways of knowing, beliefs, and traditions emerging from Aboriginal wisdom traditions. Accordingly, teachers, for example, could connect issues of globalization and sustainability to the struggles of the Beaver Lake Cree Nation to have their treaty and constitutional rights respected in relation to resource developments on their traditional lands (Pratt, 2013). In examining this issue students could come to appreciate how the Beaver Lake Cree Nation have not been consulted about resource developments connected to the tar sands, which has destroyed animal habitat and compromised the integrity of rivers that sustain the traditional Cree way of life. Here, teachers could expose students to the Kétuskéno Declaration (2008) that highlights treaty and constitutional agreements requiring "deep consultation and accommodation" (p. 1) with the Beaver Lake Cree Nation before any economic activity on their traditional lands takes place. In engaging this issue, teachers would find a range of possibilities for taking up learning outcomes from the Alberta Social Studies program (2007) related to "multiple perspectives on sustainability and prosperity in a globalizing world" and the "impact of actions and policies associated with globalization on the environment" (p. 36).

In this vein, teachers could explore the ascendant and now dominant, rhetoric of globalization predicated on "*Homo Oeconomicus*" or "economic man" (Smith, 2006) that sees humans as primarily consumer driven actors seeking to maximize economic gain. An ensuing discussion with students could involve showing how this value structure justifies increasingly unsustainable resource exploitation, a veracious and dispiriting consumerism, and also supports current economic arrangements that channel the vast amount of economic wealth to a few well-positioned elite. In searching for new models that might inform our stewardship of the natural world, the model of *Homo Oeconomicus* could then be contrasted with insights gained from Aboriginal theories of "landed citizenship" (Borrows, 2000) recognizing the land as a relative and citizen along with values emphasizing the need to preserve the land for future generations (Donald, 2007). Both of these sets of beliefs are evident in the Beaver Lake Cree Nation's Kétuskéno Declaration (2008):

> Our responsibility to this land, our ancestors and our future generations cannot be surrendered or abandoned. We have an obligation to ensure that the lands, waters, and resources in our traditional territory are used sustainably and responsibly. (p. 1)

With the realization that *Homo Oeconomicus* is just one identity formation among many, and one whose values are increasingly becoming problematic, by asking us to attend to the webs of relationships, both human and natural we are enmeshed within, Aboriginal perspectives offer new ways to imagine ourselves and our connection to the natural world.

Conclusion

While the introduction of the curricular initiative in Alberta to teach social studies through the lens of Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives offers the opportunity to engage with perspectives that have been traditionally marginalized in social studies classrooms, this study suggests that significant barriers still exist for the full potential of this curricular initiative to take effect. At the heart of these barriers may be a story of the nation that has worked to deny the historical, legal, and spatial relationships that exists among the three founding peoples of Canada (Donald, 2009a, 2009b). However, by helping students reimagine the nature, place, and role of Aboriginal (and Francophone) peoples, communities, and their diverse perspectives within our national community, teachers can work against this historical legacy and thereby realize the spirit and intent of Alberta's Social Studies program.

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The Canadian Heritage Committee Kerfuffle: A History Educator's Take

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The latest round in Canada's History Wars was set off by reports on May 2, 2013 that the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage was going to "undertake a thorough and comprehensive review of significant aspects in Canadian history." As details of the Heritage Committee's review emerged, controversy erupted as politicians, historians, political scientists and members of the chattering classes rushed to either defend or oppose the committee's proposed mandate through public statements, articles, news reports, and editorials. The controversy centred on three main issues: why the committee is reviewing federal, provincial and municipal programs designed to preserve Canadian history and heritage when they have already made key decisions in this area, whether the heritage committee's review of Canadian history was infringing on provincial rights, and whether the Conservative government was trying to rebrand history to suit their vision of Canada.

While all of these controversial issues focus on important discussions that Canadians need to have, the overblown partisan rhetoric that fuelled the debates served as a red herring that distracted the public from having a thoughtful discussion about what Canadian history educators have been focusing on for years—why Canadians should learn history, and the methods and practices that best enhance Canadians' understanding of their past. In other words, the importance of "how" Canadians best learn, access, preserve and engage with their history was pushed to the sidelines.

Before describing the controversy, it is important to understand what all the fuss was about in the first place. The Conservative dominated committee (seven Conservative MP's, four NDP MP's and one Liberal MP) met behind closed doors on April 29 and agreed to give themselves what historian Christopher Dummit charitably described as "an eccentric mandate." (Click here to see the Minutes of the Proceedings for April 29). Like the recent Conservative omnibus bills that were swept through Parliament, the Heritage Committee's diverse mandate includes many aspects that are commendable, but includes other aspects that justifiably raised the ire of different groups across Canada.

The Committee's review of the significant aspects in Canadian history will focus on three specific subjects and themes, all three of which proved to be enormously controversial in the public debate that ensued:

1. To compare the standards and courses of study offered in primary and post-secondary institutions in each of the provinces and territories;
2. To review federal, provincial and municipal programs designed to preserve our history and heritage;
3. To focus on Canadian history including but not limited to pre-Confederation, early Confederation, suffrage, World War I, with an emphasis on battles such as Vimy Ridge, World War II including the Liberation of Holland, the Battle of Ortona, Battle of the Atlantic, the Korean conflict, peacekeeping missions, constitutional development, the Afghanistan conflict, early 20th century Canada, post-war Canada, and the late 20th century.

The other aspects of the committee's proposed investigation evaded controversy. The Committee's review also seeks to emphasize how Canadians utilize the tools and methods available for accessing and preserving historical content and education, how Canadians increase their knowledge of history, and in what can only be described as a bizarre and random addition, how Hansard can be used as a means of preserving important witness testimony.

The methods that the Heritage Committee will utilize to gather information for their review are also relatively straightforward and uncontroversial. The Heritage Committee plans to "interview witnesses and gather firsthand accounts of significant periods in history, visit national museums, and meet with public and private broadcasters to determine their role in preserving important accounts of Canadian history." What remains to be seen is how the Heritage Committee plans to interview witnesses and gather firsthand accounts for the events on their list that occurred more than a hundred years ago?

Lastly, the final report is expected to "highlight best practices, new methods and potential opportunities to preserve, protect and enhance Canadians' knowledge of our history while recommending ways of improving access to our historical collections." Who could argue with a report that intends to improve Canadians' knowledge of history while also improving the preservation of history and Canadians' access to history?

Preserving Canadian Heritage and History

The Heritage Committee's decision to review federal, provincial and municipal programs designed to preserve Canadian history and heritage struck many commentators as being ironic, if not hypocritical. Why is the federal government interested in reviewing how Canadians preserve and access Canadian history and heritage when they have already made key policy decisions that have limited the preservation of Canadian history and heritage and the access that Canadians will have to their history?

In two recent articles Thomas Peace and Sean Kheraj described how the Conservatives have made significant cuts to federal programs and institutions that have significantly decreased Canadians' access to important heritage institutions. They cancelled the $1.7 million National Archival Development Program that helped support local archives, despite the fact that a 2010 audit of the program deemed it "adequate and efficient."

Additionally they cut $9.6 million from Library and Archives Canada (LAC), and $29 million from Parks Canada. As a result Library and Archives Canada terminated twenty-one archivist and archival assistant positions, a fifty per cent reduction in digitization and circulation staff and the elimination of the interlibrary loans program. When considered collectively, the cuts to LAC will greatly reduce public access to archival materials, and the ability of LAC to preserve the past via the acquisition of new records or the digitization of current materials.

In the 2012 budget, the federal government also reduced funding for Parks Canada by $29 million annually. Parks Canada is responsible for managing Canada's national parks and park reserves, as well as 167 national historic sites. The $29 million reduction in federal funding will result in an estimated 638 job losses including a skeletal staff of just twelve archaeologists and eight conservators, which will severely limit the ability of Parks Canada to conduct historical research and preservation. The budget cuts also forced Parks Canada to cancel its Education Outreach Program which connected park programming to school curricula.

While it is difficult to condemn the Heritage Committee's decision to review federal, provincial and municipal programs designed to preserve Canadian history and heritage, the decision comes at a curious time considering that Conservative government budget cuts have significantly decreased Canadians' access to important heritage institutions. If the Conservative government is so concerned about Canadians access to their past, it would have made much more sense if the Heritage Committee conducted their review of Canadian heritage and history before the government made the decision to cut funding to various Canadian history and heritage institutions.

Provincial Rights

When reports of the Heritage Committee's mandate emerged on May 2, opposition to the Committee's decision to compare "the standards and courses of study offered in primary and post-secondary institutions in each of the provinces and territories" followed soon thereafter. Government opposition and critics overreacted and used highly charged rhetoric to charge the Commons committee with overstepping their constitutional powers. A CBC news story reported that NDP MP Raymond Côté stated the following in the House of Commons: "That [the Heritage Committee mandate] has nothing to do with promoting Canadian history. That is interference, pure and simple. The former Reformers now want to control everything. What is the world coming to?" Critics claimed that education is a provincial responsibility, and the federal government had no business sticking their noses into issues that are not their concern. NDP deputy leader Libby Davies asked the House during question period, "Why are Conservative MPs now intent on telling provincial schools what they should teach?"

In an article in *Maclean's*, Paul Wells described how various ministers in Pauline Marois' Quebec government declared they would never tolerate such an intrusion into their provincial rights. Some critics went so far as to imagine a clandestine Conservative plot to change the way that history is taught in the provinces' schools. In an iPolitics article, B.C. Social Studies Teacher's Association President Dale Martelli argued that the federal government was trying to implement a curriculum that would focus on trivial facts and figures rather than requiring students to think through the material.

Whether the criticism was valid or not, the Heritage Committee had underestimated the intensity of the opposition to the committee's decision to review history curricula in each province and territory. When the committee reconvened on May 6, NDP MP Pierre Nantel moved that the committee "immediately halt its study on Canadian history considering the interference with provincial jurisdiction on education." While Nantel's motion to halt the study was defeated 7 votes to 4, the committee decided to backtrack and later voted unanimously to delete the language in the motion that referred to the study and comparison of the standards and courses of study offered in primary and post-secondary institutions in each of the provinces and territories across Canada.

In his May 6 column, Andrew Coyne was one of the few commentators to support the Heritage Committee's right to inquire into provincial education policies, and for the first time in recent memory I wholeheartedly agree with him. Interestingly, Coyne wrote his article on the very day that the Heritage Committee decided to retreat from comparing the standards and courses of study. At the beginning of his column he included the following note: *I had written this column in defence of the Commons Heritage committee's right to inquire into provincial*

education policies, shortly before the committee, taking heat from the opposition and no doubt under instructions from the PMO, withdrew the proposal. I stand by the idea, even if they don't.

Coyne rightly reminds those who oppose the Heritage Committee's review not to get too "out of hand" in their criticism because at the end of the day, Parliament doesn't have the power to legislate provincial curricula, nor is the committee planning on telling provincial schools what to teach. The Minutes of the Proceedings clearly state that the committee was merely planning "to breakdown and compare" relevant standards and courses of study offered in order to determine what is taught in the provinces' and territories' schools. Surely the Heritage Committee is fully justified in informing themselves on how Canadian history is being taught in schools across Canada. Isn't it logical that the Heritage Committee knows which topics and events are being studied in provinces and territories across Canada? This information could be used to help Canadian Heritage decide which initiatives and programs they should fund in order to preserve, protect and enhance Canadians' knowledge of our history and access to our historical collections.

Whose History Is Right?

But the controversy did not abate when the Heritage Committee agreed to abandon the comparison of history standards and courses of study at provincial and territorial schools. Instead, the flames of controversy were fanned by partisan politicians focused on the specific topics and events in Canadian history that were the focus of the committee. The debate about *what* topics in Canadian history should be focused on descended into a partisan contest of *whose version* of history is correct. Unfortunately this debate focused too much on the *what* of history and too little on *how* Canadians can best enhance their understandings of the past.

Critics accused the Conservative government of using the review of a select list of significant topics in Canadian history to politicize, revise and make history in their own image. In Mike De Souza's May 2 article NDP deputy heritage critic Andrew Chase stated that "They're obsessed with reframing history and rebranding it in the image of the Conservative party." Critics claim that the list of historical topics and events to be reviewed by the committee focus almost exclusively on military battles, loyalty to the crown and past Conservative achievements such as the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. In his poignant assessment of the controversy, Canadian historian Christopher Dummit argued that the Tory version of history is similar to the triumphalist and traditional history espoused by Jack Granatstein in his polemic book *Who Killed Canadian History?* Granatstein claimed that Canadians need to celebrate a history that we can be proud of, not dwell on victimization or injustices of the past. The brand of celebratory history Granatstein supports sounds remarkably similar to the statement made by Conservative Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq on behalf of the federal government: "We have been very clear about wanting Canadians to reconnect with their proud history and heritage." While I fully support the Conservative government's highlighting of proud Canadian moments in the past, I wonder what they suggest Canadians do about those not so proud moments. In some cases, one person's or group's "proud moment" is another person's or group's devastating moment. Perspective is everything. In other words, how do we define what, in the past, we deserve to be proud of?

Furthermore, government critics contend that the Heritage Committee is just another example of how the Conservatives are reorienting the nation's identity to suit their vision. They point to the Citizenship Guide brouhaha of several years ago where the Conservative government

rewrote the Canadian Citizenship Guide to focus on military history and a celebration of the crown, while replacing or ignoring many Liberal achievements. (For a summary of the initial reactions to the Citizenship Guide click here, for a variety of viewpoints on the controversy click here, and for information about "The People's Citizenship Guide: A Response to Conservative Canada" click here). Others examples include the renaming of the Museum of Civilization into the Canadian Museum of History (or is that the Museum of Canadian History?), the $30 million spent commemorating the War of 1812, the decision to put the Vimy Ridge memorial on the new $20 bill, and celebrating John Diefenbaker's Bill of Rights while ignoring the 30th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 2012.

On the other side of the partisan divide (as captured by this Globe and Mail editorial amongst others) supporters of the Heritage Committee review (some but not all are members of the Conservative party) argue that Canada's political and military past has been ignored over the past few decades of Liberal control when everyone was fed a steady diet of Liberal achievements including peacekeeping, Medicare, the Canada Pension Plan and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In the Conservative view, the winners write the history and while the Liberals used to be the winners, the Conservatives are in charge now and they believe that this gives them the right to restore some balance to Canadians' view of the past. Defenders of the Heritage Committee mandate also contend that history is subjective since historical narratives are constantly being rewritten and reinterpreted, so it is important that the Heritage Committee investigate changes in the way that the past is interpreted.

Supporters of the Conservative government also argue that the Heritage Committee has a genuine and legitimate interest in how Canada is portrayed to Canadians and should be commended for starting this conversation about Canadian history. Anthony Wilson Smith of the Historica-Dominion Institute wondered if it is inappropriate for federal members of parliament to discuss history, then who is entitled to talk about it? As Emmett Macfarlane and Christopher Dummitt point out in their respective articles, who can argue with an increased interest in Canadian history?

Paul Wells explains that history provokes tension because it cannot be divorced from a set of ideas about how society should be organized. The opposition doesn't want the Conservatives to teach history because they like to tell tales of martial success and the genius of John A. Macdonald. The Conservatives don't want the Liberals to teach history because they will focus too much on Trudeau, and they don't want the NDP to teach history because they won't be able to stop talking about Tommy Douglas. Finally no one wants the Bloc Quebecois to teach history because they will focus on how everything went to pot in 1759. So what's the solution to the partisan bickering over history?

Macfarlane and Dummitt arrive at the same solution. Public debate. Rather than having a Heritage Committee conduct a limited investigation of Canadian history as is currently being done, Dummitt suggests that the committee organize an in-depth inquiry that would focus on a wide range of historical topics and speak to many more people than they have currently planned to do. Similarly, Macfarlane believes that a public debate about Canadian history is well worth having because it will provide the opportunity for the Conservative government to explain their approach to, and vision of Canadian history, and because a debate about Canadian history is the best way to improve knowledge of it.

The Missing Part of the Debate

Throughout the controversy about the Heritage Committee's review of Canadian history we have heard from historians, politicians, political scientists and journalists who have all focused on the "what" of history, the topics and events in Canadian history that they think Canadians should learn about. What has been largely missing in this debate are the voices of history teachers and history educators who focus on the "why" and "how" of history. The "why" focuses on the purposes for learning Canadian history, and the "how" focuses on the methods and practices that help Canadians learn history in meaningful ways.

Adam Chapnick was one of the few who paid any attention to teaching and learning in his article about the controversy, and although I agree with several of his points, he gets it wrong in a couple of key places. He correctly pointed out that the biggest problem with the Heritage Committee review is that their witness list does not include anyone with a research background in teaching and learning at the secondary and post-secondary levels, or in cognitive science more generally. Chapnick rightly concludes that historical content will never mean much if it doesn't engage Canadians at the individual level, either within the academic setting or outside of it.

Later in the article, Chapnick argues that if the Heritage Committee is genuinely interested in promoting greater understanding of Canada's past, they should speak to the cognitive scientists first and worry about the actual history content later. This is to say that how one learns is more important than what is learned, a claim that is dubious at best. How one learns is important, but the how is also shaped by the what. To have content without method, or method without content seems unthinkable. It is important that the Heritage Committee investigate both the best methods for teaching and learning about Canadian history while also conducting a vigorous, wide-ranging review of the events and topics that are significant to Canadians.

What Chapnick also fails to recognize is that while cognitive scientists might be able to offer the Heritage Committee some general advice on how people learn, there is a community of scholars in Canada who specialize in history education— why students learn history, what history students learn, and how students learn history, and these scholars are right under their noses working in Canadian universities, many receiving funding from federal government programs. This group of scholars, influenced by British history education research in the 1970s and the cognitive science revolution of the 1980s, contributed to the development of an international field of history education research that exploded in the 1990s. Since this time, the number of Canadian scholars interested in history education has grown into a network that includes other constituencies interested in history education such as academic historians, public historians in museums, archives and historic sites, practicing teachers, and curriculum policy makers.

This network has been strengthened by the creation of two organizations funded in part by federal programs: The History Education Network/Histoire et éducation en réseau (THEN/HiER) and The Historical Thinking Project (HTP) that can provide the Heritage Committee with ideas about which practices and methods that could enhance Canadians' knowledge of history. These ideas and recommendations could help meet one of the key expectations of their mandate: to "highlight best practices, new methods and potential opportunities to preserve, protect and enhance Canadians' knowledge of our history…"

The History Education Network/Histoire et éducation en réseau (THEN/HiER) was formed in 2005 to promote and improve history teaching and learning by bringing together varied constituencies involved in history education "to create more research-informed practice

(from kindergarten to graduate school) and more practice-informed research through dialogue among these various communities." Dr. Peter Seixas, a Professor and Canada Research Chair at the Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness (CSHC) in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia, created the Historical Thinking Project (HTP) in 2006 as a non-profit educational initiative funded in part by the Department of Canadian Heritage (Canadian Studies Program) and THEN/HiER.

The HTP has developed a new approach to how teachers teach and students learn history by focusing on recent international research on history learning and teaching. Two questions that the Heritage Committee did not consider are asked on the Historical Thinking Project website: What should students know after 12 years of studying history in school? What should they be able to do with their knowledge? The idea that the only purpose for learning history is to memorize facts and details about one story of the past doesn't seem adequate any longer. Do we want to teach our students that there is only one correct view of history that they should know and blindly accept, or do we want our students to have the intellectual tools to interpret and analyze different accounts of Canadian history, including the Conservative and Liberal versions?

The HTP is based on the idea that historical thinking is central to learning history in the same way that scientific thinking is central to learning science. History students spend the majority of their time studying other people's historical conclusions, not constructing their own understanding. The goal of the HTP is that students develop competencies as historical thinkers as they move through their years as history students. The project has developed a framework of six historical thinking concepts that provide the basis of historical thinking:

1. Establish *historical significance*
2. Use *primary source evidence*
3. Identify *continuity and change*
4. Analyze *cause and consequence*
5. Take *historical perspectives*, and
6. Understand the *ethical dimension* of historical interpretations.

The HTP also works closely with teachers, social studies and history departments, local school boards, provincial ministries of education, publishers, and public history agencies and institutions from each province across Canada to embed historical thinking in all aspects of teaching, assessment, and learning.

It has been over 45 years since the last comprehensive report on history teaching in Canada, A.B. Hodgetts' 1968 report *What Culture? What Heritage? A Study of Civic Education in Canada.* After witnessing students learn Canadian history in classrooms across the nation, Hodgetts concluded that,

> we are teaching a dry-as dust chronological story of uninterrupted political and economic progress told without the controversy that is an inherent part of history. The great debates that could bring our history to life, the natural conflicts of opinion, the new interpretations of the past by successive generations of historians….are all grayed out of existence. (p. 24)

As long as our politicians continue to focus their Canadian history debates on whose story is correct they are missing one of the important points that Hodgetts and the rest of the

history education community figured out a long time ago: that learning history in school is not just about learning about "the" story of the past and all of its requisite facts and details; it is about helping students (and citizens) develop the tools and knowledge to participate in public debates about Canadian history rationally and knowledgeably. Rather than argue about which story students should learn, let's argue about why we teach Canadian history and how we can best teach Canadian history to our students so that they can construct a more sophisticated understanding of our past than the politicians can. Furthermore, if the Committee on Canadian Heritage is really committed to investigating how Canadians engage with their past, they should also consider funding a 2013 version of Hodgett's national study. This research study could be conducted by Canadian research scholars in history education to determine what and how students learn history across Canada. Only a federal department like Canadian Heritage has the resources to be able to commission and fund a study of this magnitude and importance.

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Book Review

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Review of:

Seixas, P. & Morton, T. (2013). *The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts.* Toronto: Nelson Education. 218 pp. and DVD.

In the past decade there has been a renaissance of sorts in North America in the area of history teaching and learning. The origins of this have been described elsewhere in *Canadian Social Studies* and other journals in both Canada and the United States.

One feature of this renewed interest has been the publication of a number of books striving to teach students how to think historically – to investigate how accounts of and from the past are constructed and reconstructed in contrast to the usual take on history as received wisdom from the past to be memorized and regurgitated in a test or two. *The Big Six* by Peter Seixas and Tom Morton is one of the latest of these efforts. It focuses on six concepts: historical significance, evidence, continuity and change, cause and consequence, historical perspective and the ethical dimension. These are similar to other dimensions of historical thinking going back to work in the UK from the late 1960s.

I review this book through two lenses. The lesser of these lenses is through my work with the authors, especially Tom Morton, who kindly notes our collaborations over several decades in the acknowledgements.

A more important lens is that of implementation. Implementing good ideas through provincial education mandates, workshops, institutes, conferences, and even professional learning communities, is largely a history of failure. My former Dean, Michael Fullan, has made a career chronicling why change is hard. There must be an "elephant graveyard" of ideas and innovations in education – sound in theory with potential for improving student learning, but through misinterpretation and overselling get distorted, dismissed, and disregarded – only to appear years or decades later freshly painted yet still repeating the same fruitless cycle. One can read Ken Osborne for the history of success and failure in the waves of history education reform in Canada.

What does *The Big Six* bring that can break this cycle of implementation failure?

The layout is very teacher friendly with an extensive use of photos, charts, and diagrams: some of which I have used in my classrooms over the decades. For busy professionals, as well as for customers and marketers, appearance counts!

Additional features that can help groups of teachers work through the ideas and traverse the "implementation dip" (Fullan et al., 1990) include the following:

- For each concept there is an artful blend of theory and practice, combining ideas of how historians actually think about the historical concept in question (and reflect it through their work) with how classroom teachers actually work with the concept. I can attest to the value of the classroom examples since I have worked

with these and similar examples in many classrooms since the early 1970s. It seems to me that any work of history deals with many of these concepts simultaneously though separating them is useful for concentrated professional learning work.

- A thought that came to mind when reading the accounts of how historians deal with the concept in question was the role of deep content knowledge as well as procedures for making connections between the content and the historical context. I wonder how classroom teachers approach additional reading of books on history by historians and how such additional reading throughout their careers shapes their thinking and curriculum work. For example, after reading Margaret MacMillan's *Paris 1919* I would approach the significance of the Treaty of Versailles very differently in my modern world history course (in its final stages of revision in Ontario). For example, I would pay much more attention to emerging nationalisms in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

- Each concept has a set of "guideposts" that I consider standards for assessing understanding. Starting with students' "limited" understandings of an historical concept, using the guideposts the authors offer a variety of teaching and assessment strategies to help students move towards "powerful" understandings without being messed up by different assessment terms and criteria that characterize education among our provincial jurisdictions. I found it easy to match. For example, the Application section in Ontario's Achievement Charts for learning can be demonstrated through powerful understandings of many guideposts such as when students can define a period of history based on justifiable criteria and can see alternative ways of defining such periods (p. 94).

- The DVD that comes with the book includes BLMs of parts and activities in each section plus additional questions and prompts to encourage the development of historical thinking in all students as well as outline rubrics for assessing the understanding of each of the concepts. These ideas are very practical and are not "methods from Mars": ideas too challenging for us to use in our classes.

If there is a challenge in using *The Big Six* it is its richness. Busy teachers, some of whom with limited background of history work as undergrads, and less in exploring issues around historiography, may wonder where to start in their further learning. The organization of *The Big Six* allows for concentration on specific thinking, perhaps with the guideposts as workshop/exploration points, this "shrinking the changes" required (Heath and Heath, 2010).

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