

*Historical Significance as a Tool to Understand High School Students' Identity in a
Bilingual Setting*

by

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to better understand the implications of having a dual educational system on students' sense of national identity. It was centred on questions like, do high school students' identities influence their perception of what they consider historically significant? And, is there a discrepancy between high school students from Anglophone and Francophone districts when asking them to consider what is historically significant in Canadian past events? The historical thinking concept of significance was used to probe how students' linguistic identities shaped their understanding of Canada's past. Twenty-six high school students from the Francophone and Anglophone sectors were asked to draw, sketch or write what they considered the ten most important elements in Canadian history. Then, participants explained their thoughts during individual semi-structured interviews. The results were analyzed through Social Identity Theory and phenomenography. Although students' identities influenced their ascription of historical significance, similarities rather than differences were more common between participants from the Francophone and Anglophone sectors. While students demonstrated an awareness of Indigenous issues in Canadian history, they shared a European centered narrative focused on the participation of Canada in both World Wars and the consequences of this for the country's independence.

DEDICATION

J'aimerais dédier ce mémoire à Jeffrey St-Pierre qui m'a d'abord encouragée à poursuivre mes études, mais qui m'a aussi accompagnée tout au long de ce processus parfois houleux. Merci de ton soutien.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables.....	vii
List of Figures	viii
Chapter 1	1
Introduction.....	1
Historical Significance, a Tool to Understand Identity.....	4
Chapter 2	8
Literature Review	8
Historical Thinking	8
Historical Significance	13
Identity and Collective Memory Shaping Historical Narrative	20
The Gap.....	26
Chapter 3	28
Methodology	28
Introduction.....	28
Phenomenography.....	29
Social Identity Theory.....	32
Data Collection Method	35
Data Analysis	38

Limitations	39
Chapter 4	40
Results	40
Participants' Identity	40
Participants' Story of Canada	42
Participants' Interviews.....	46
Identity's Influence	46
Most and Least Important Elements	48
Others' Point of View	53
Summary	60
Chapter 5	62
Discussion	62
Similarities Instead of Differences.....	62
European Dominant Narrative	66
World Wars and Mythstories	71
First Nations Awareness	74
Historical Significance and Ethnic Identity	77
Conclusion	82
Bibliography.....	87
Appendix.....	95
Curriculum Vitae	

List of Tables

Table 1.....	15
Table 2.....	40
Table 3.....	44
Table 4.....	49

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1.</i> Story of Canada – ASF3.....	43
<i>Figure 2.</i> Story of Canada (sample) – ASF10	43
<i>Figure 3.</i> Story of Canada (sample) – FSF1	43

Chapter 1

Introduction

My research interests come from a mix of my personal background as well as my experience as a teacher and as an individual. My sense of identity and the Francophone culture in which I grew up are ingrained in my personality making me constantly interested in how our upbringing influences our world views. Since I moved to New Brunswick and started teaching social studies in a bilingual setting, my interest in the problems related to identity, language and education has been sharpened.

New Brunswick is the only officially bilingual province in Canada giving equal status of official language to both French and English. According to the 2016 Census from Statistics Canada in New Brunswick 65.4% of the population declared English as their mother tongue, 32.4% reported French, and 3.1% stated a non-official language as their maternal language (Aboriginal languages counting for 0.3% of this number). As a result of this particular status, the province regularly faces language issues related to various aspects of society such as work, law or education.

When debates arise in the public sphere, I find myself wondering how each group considers the other. Teaching in an English district gives me a glimpse of these considerations without providing the complete picture. Nevertheless, I believe students are most likely influenced by what they hear at home, and their perception of provincial bilingualism is certainly affected by the conversations around them. How much of this surrounding discourse influences a student's identity? How much of the educational environment has an influence on a student's narrative about Canadian history? Will this

situation change what a student considers historically significant when evaluating Canada's past?

Within the provincial school systems, districts welcome students from multiple ethnic backgrounds going beyond the division of being Anglophone or Francophone. Nonetheless, a choice remains: parents will decide to send their children to either the French or the English districts and those in the English system may be enrolled in the French Immersion program or not. I wish to point out that the particular situation of New Brunswick means everybody living in the province is impacted by my research subject.

Furthermore, not only is there a separation between Francophone and Anglophone schools, but the courses and the curriculum presented in each system differ significantly. At the high school level, the English sector has three compulsory social studies courses with a grade 9 Canadian Identity course (New Brunswick Department of Education, 2006), a Grade 10 Ancient Medieval History course (New Brunswick Department of Education, 1997) and a Grade 11 Modern History course (New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2012). The French sector comprises two compulsory secondary social studies courses with a grade 10 World History course, and a grade 11 Canadian History course (Ministère de l'Éducation du Nouveau-Brunswick, 2006).

The Anglophone program is clearly more European centered as opposed to the Francophone program which focuses on Canadian content with a particular interest in the Acadian past. It is somewhat surprising to notice the disparity between the two curricula. While the French sector's *Canadian History* course pays attention to the

building of Canada from its European roots in the early 17th century until the present days, the English sector's social studies *Canadian Identity* focuses on the 20th century, and is rather general, looking at a wide variety of items such as: the cultural aspects building our Canadian identity, the influence of Canadian geography shaping who we are depending on where we live, and the Canadian impact of both world wars, just to name a few. The English sector gives little place to the history of the multiple cultural groups that shaped Canada. This situation raises a number of interesting questions: Is this particular situation building different Canadian identities? Is it creating a gap between two cultures already facing challenging decisions regarding their future? Are there noticeable contrasts between students from Francophone and Anglophone districts?

Besides the obvious discrepancy in the curriculum content between both sectors, it is compelling to look at the framework in which the curricula are built. The Francophone sector combined three courses in one document written in 2006 where various components such as the program orientation were explained. The Anglophone sector describes the curricula in three separate documents written during different years (grade 10 in 1997, grade 9 in 2006 and grade 11 in 2012). While the documents from both sectors written in 1997, and 2006 mostly use a similar language to describe the development of the historical thinking process through critical thinking, the latest curriculum of the Anglophone sector is embedded in the historical thinking concepts developed by Peter Seixas and Tom Morton (2013). Therefore, in addition to the study of facts and the description of the development of historical thinking process found also in the French curriculum, there is an extra layer added to the English curriculum by

including second-order thinking concepts. These disparities in the two curricula actually beg to have some educational studies done on the potential difference in outcomes. Are the curricula and the methodologies used in class making a difference in how students understand historical significance? To which extent will students' personal identities influence their historical perspective regarding Canadian history?

Historical Significance, a Tool to Understand Identity

Since I started teaching Social Studies, I have been interested in what I call "the big picture." In other words, I like to look at human mechanisms developed through time, the connections that can be made between the past and the present day, and the concepts used to develop historical thinking. For me, understanding the world we live in is *more* than just relevant, it is essential for navigating the complex and rapidly changing socio-economic and political issues of the day. This is the reason why I consider learning social studies so essential. By looking at the past, we can make sense of what is happening in our daily life. I *always* believed that learning History was much more than the mere memorization of facts and dates, which are easily forgotten, therefore *teaching* History has to be much broader as well.

My interest in complex thought processes has grown after immersing myself in the concepts of Historical Thinking developed by Peter Seixas. Moreover, in the summer of 2011, I went to Vancouver to attend a summer institute on Historical Thinking and since then I have been trying to include the *Big Six* (Seixas & Morton, 2013) in my teaching. This inquiry-based approach focuses on six historical thinking concepts: historical significance, primary source evidence, continuity and change, cause

and consequence, historical perspectives, and ethical dimension. The premise lies in the notion that “every historical account is an act of interpretation” (Seixas & Ercikan, 2011, p.32). To make history teaching significant, the practice must be grounded in evidence; students have to study primary sources, realize the distance separating them from the past, and empathize with the historical actor in order to make a moral judgment on the decisions that were made.

The reasoning behind the methodology comes from two observations. First, in science, students explore the scientific methodology when conducting experiences like a scientist. Second, in mathematics, students resolve problems like a mathematician. Why then are students not thinking about history, and doing it like a historian? So, the goal of the approach is to bring students to imitate the work of historians by means of a step-by-step process (Seixas & Morton, 2013).

In other words, the idea behind the methodology is that students have to be able to apply complex thought processes to understand, and not only know facts about, the past allowing them to make meaningful connections to the world in which they live. When applying historical thinking concepts, students think like historians using specific skills. By doing so, they are developing their capacity of critically looking at the past. Many authors recognize that this exercise is not natural, but can be improved with practice if the concepts are intertwined with knowledge in the curriculum (Wineburg, 1999; Lévesque, 2005). It is this shift from teaching content driven curriculum to teaching second-order thought processes that we are witnessing and in which this study is embedded.

When reflecting about teaching historical thinking concepts, it is also important to take into consideration students' prior knowledge. Certainly, students come into class with information regarding the past, and they will use the information previously gathered to assess what they consider historically significant. Unfortunately, the students' construction of the past is not always accurate and their narratives are often a collage of information collected in movies, books, family stories and, more recently, social media. Their historical narratives combine fiction and reality without discrepancy. History teachers have to realize the importance of disturbing and confronting students' prior knowledge as a means to construct better understanding of the past (Sears, 2017). Therefore, educators have the responsibility to teach how to think historically (Seixas & Peck, 2004) which does not come naturally. Without teaching second-order thought processes and acknowledging students' background, teachers are at risk of failing to address the misconceptions and misunderstandings of the past (Lévesque, 2005) as well as building long-term comprehension of the ties between contemporary issues and the past (Barton & Levstik, 1998).

Many studies (Lévesque, 2008; Seixas, 1997; Seixas & Peck, 2004; Wineburg, 1999) have been conducted to show how students use historical significance, how the concepts help make sense of the past, and how "thinking historically" is not natural. This is not the focal point of my particular research. Rather, I came to realize that historical significance can become a tool to explore the phenomenon of students' identities. Considering that identity has a significant influence on an individual's ascription of historical significance, one can assume that by asking students to assess what they consider historically significant in Canada's past events can reveal information about

their sense of belonging. Some studies researching students' identities and historical significance have been completed in Canada (Peck, 2010; Létourneau, Lévesque & Gani, 2013), but the particular situation of Fredericton, the capital of a bilingual province and an undoubtedly English city, makes the following research questions worth exploring:

Do high school students' identities influence their perception of what they consider historically significant? and,

Is there a discrepancy between high school students from Anglophone and Francophone districts when asking them to consider what is historically significant in Canadian past events?

After a review of literature offering an overview of historical thinking and exploring the concepts of historical significance and identity, I present a methods section where I discuss the implications of using Social Identity Theory and phenomenography in order to make sense of the data collected. In this chapter, I will clearly explain the data collection method through its implementation, procedures and limitations. Finally, the results will be presented followed by a discussion of these and an exploration of implications.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Historical Thinking

Surveys on teaching history are completed regularly, and their reports always seem to raise questions related to the value and importance of teaching history in public schools (MacMillan, 2008; Chalifoux & Stewart, 2009; Historica Canada, 2016). Quite often a conversation ensues about what is 'teaching history' and how this discipline should be approached. This kind of discussion is not new. In Canada, traces of the debate can be found as early as the 1890s (Granatstein, 1999; Osborne, 2011). Over the years, historians, politicians and educators have weighed in on issues such as provincial versus federal curricula, and whether students should learn solely British history or a more global European history (Osborne, 2011). Another contentious aspect of teaching history is related to the best way for students to learn. Some favored a chronological and descriptive narrative while others suggested that the development of critical thinking was essential. Nonetheless, Osborne pointed out that until the 1960s, teaching history remained rooted in the desire to build a nation and memorization of facts, rather than engagement in debates, prevailed in most history classes due to provincial examinations.

By the late 60s, Osborne remarks that the forgotten people of history, women and minorities for example, pushed for a change asking for a better representation of their groups. This movement reopened the door to the contentious question regarding students' level of historical knowledge, the development of their ability to think critically, and how history teaching should be conducted. For Granatstein (1999), the

over specialization of history in micro-histories “swept away almost completely” (p.58) the old way of teaching where “the chronology mattered, and the study of the past could not neglect the personalities of the leaders and the nations they led” (p.59).

Despite the conversation, the proponents in favor of history as a way to tackle controversial public issues won out, and the subject became embedded in the broader scope of social studies which amalgamates several social science disciplines such as geography, sociology, anthropology to name a few. Although history might be included in the larger scope of social studies, the latter does not focus on the sole practice of history defined by Lévesque (2005) as being “the disciplinary inquiry into the past using historical sources and agreed-upon procedures within the domain” (p.2). Rather, social studies curricula usually focus on fostering good citizenship.

By the late 1980s a social studies curriculum meant to replace the grade 10 Ancient and Medieval History course was developed in the Maritimes causing an uproar among teachers and the public (Sears, 2011). This movement towards favoring social studies over history brought false ideas about both disciplines: history was portrayed as the dry and boring school subject, while social studies was believed to be always engaging (Sears, 2011). In the 90s, the disappearance of history alarmed the public; students didn't know their origins. This renewed debate enabled a revival of history teaching. As Osborne (2011) observes, a central place was now given to historical thinking bringing significant developments to teaching history. The latest report from Historica Canada (2016) seems to be confirming the trend noting “provinces and territories have increasingly incorporated the Historical Thinking Concepts into their curricula” (p.23).

Even so, nowadays, the ‘false’ war between social studies and history advocates is undermining the possibilities of finding a viable solution to the debate (Sears, 2011). Although curricula are changing and aim to develop students' complex thought process such as critically looking at historical events, teachers nonetheless face several challenges: How can they foster a greater sense of civic engagement in their pupils? What limits students from thinking critically about the past? How teachers can improve students’ historical thinking?

Defining historical thinking is essential to understanding its central role in teaching history. According to Lévesque (2008) thinking historically is an “intellectual process through which an individual masters – and ultimately appropriates – the concepts and knowledge of history and critically applies such concepts and knowledge in the resolution of contemporary and historical issues” (p.27). For Seixas and Morton (2013) thinking historically appeared as a necessity to resolve the fundamental problem in the discipline of history: the past is not simply there for historians to understand and present to others. History is written by historians who interpret what they understand of the past. Therefore, how do we know what we know of the past? A methodology has to exist in order to offer a comprehensive historical framework of thinking. Hence historical thinking is “the process that historians go through to interpret the evidence of the past and generate the stories of history” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p.2).

Thinking historically is complex and multilayered. Knowing facts, events and famous people is not historical thinking and critically thinking about the past is impossible without any knowledge. While teachers often find themselves stranded in a fact-driven approach, Sears (2017) argues that, nevertheless, knowledge matters, and

that students' prior knowledge "has to be confronted and disrupted before new learning can take place" (p.47). In fact, many studies (Létourneau, Lévesque & Gani, 2013; Carretero & van Alphen, 2014; Sant, 2015) suggest that students from similar ethno-cultural background share a master narrative filled with over simplified key figures and events. To overcome these biased conceptualizations, students have to practice thinking historically about the past starting by confronting their own preconceptions.

Kohlmeier (2005) conducted interesting research exploring the relationship between the teacher, the students, and how historical thinking is being experienced in class. Kohlmeier essentially became a teacher/researcher observing her own students' progress into their comprehension of second-order concepts. First-order concepts are related to the content of history comprised of events and stories of the past. When students remember previous knowledge or learn facts and concepts such as revolution, they are using first-order concepts. Second-order concepts imply using first-order concepts to make sense of the past and engage students in critical thinking through, among other, the assessment of competing views about what happened in the past (Lévesque, 2005).

This study fascinated me for two reasons. First, I often have the impression there is a lack of connection between research and practice. This research represents the link between the two. Second, considering that schools have mostly failed to promote and develop historical thinking as contended by Lévesque (2008), Kohlmeier's research offers systematic observations and solutions from the point of view of a teacher.

To conduct her study, Kohlmeier opted to use instructional strategies aimed at developing three aspects of historical thinking (historical knowledge, historical

significance and historical empathy) through the study of three women's first accounts (letters) taken from various time periods taught in class. Then, she proposed a succession of activities, such as creating a reading web of the accounts, participating in a Socratic seminar to make sense of what was read, and writing a comparative historical essay. To understand the students' progress, each participant was asked to keep a detailed journal of his/her thought process throughout the study. Kohlmeier also conducted a group discussion in order to give the students a chance to voice their feelings about the process.

While students had the tendency to make connection to their own experiences like other studies have shown (Apostolidou, 2012; Létourneau, Lévesque & Gani, 2013; Avaroğulları & Kolcu, 2016), Kohlmeier discovered that students were becoming better at using second-order thought processes with practice. She noticed that with time the students were not so much focusing their journal comments about the difficulty of finding information but rather making connections between the letters and the information given in class about the time period in question. There was significant progress made between the first account analysis and the third one. Even if the results clearly show the importance of practice, Kohlmeier suggests that a longitudinal study is needed to efficiently indicate how students can improve over time when practicing historical thinking through meaningful and well-rounded activities.

Beyond any doubt, the development of historical thinking is contentious because the process implies an interpretation of the past as opposed to the acceptance of one inalterable truth (Lévesque, 2008) thus creating uneasiness for those in favor of a single national narrative. For Lévesque, teaching historical thinking is essential because

individuals are confronted with historical knowledge and analogies on a daily basis, and they need to be able to correctly assess this information.

Historical Significance

In order to help students learn to think historically, Seixas and Morton (2013) developed six historical thinking concepts based on problems historians face when confronted with the past. This methodology offers “a six-part framework for helping students to think about how historians transform the past into history and to begin constructing history themselves” (p.3). Historical significance is part of these concepts that aim to engage students “through thought-provoking questions” (p.9).

When I ask my students a question related to the historical significance of an event or a person, I often get asked about what *significance* means. My answer is usually simple enough. I tell them that significance can be replaced by importance. In other words, I want to know why this person or that event is worth studying. Historical significance is a central historical thinking concept because it determines what topics are valuable to study. As Seixas (1994) remarks the interest of someone in something does not make it significant. Yet, the relationship between ourselves and a phenomenon might be important. So, how can we define historical significance? For Seixas (1994), "a historical phenomenon becomes significant if and only if members of a contemporary community can draw relationships between it and other historical phenomena and ultimately to themselves" (p.285). Since historical significance is determined from the present setting, Seixas notes that what is considered important changes over time.

The first challenge regarding significance is to set objective criteria. Lévesque (2008) recognizes five factors essential to acknowledge when assessing historical significance: importance, profundity, quantity, durability, and relevance. In order to avoid presentism, "the imposing of present-day values on the past" (p.46), one must examine if the event, person or innovation affected people in the past. Profundity refers to the level of affect an event, person or innovation had on people in the past. For Seixas and Morton (2013), importance and profundity are combined: if people were deeply affected by an event this event ought to be considered important. Quantity and durability are probably the easiest factors to understand for students: the more people affected and the period of time for which the affects endure, are key criteria for an event being considered significant. Lévesque (2008) warns about the trap of quantity and durability. Other factors have to be taken into consideration. For example, the number of people affected by something cannot be the single most important element, and teachers should not limit their teaching to events that affected masses of people. Relevance asks the sensitive question of relationship to the present. Seixas and Morton (2013) use the term *revealing* to approach this problematic. This criterion, Lévesque (2008) points out, is certainly the hardest to grasp for students since they have to be able to recognize how an event sheds light on an enduring contemporary issue while they often oversimplify problems of the past forgetting their lasting effects on the present. In *The Big Six*, Seixas and Morton (2013) offer four guideposts to help teachers and students explore the concept of historical significance:

Table 1	
<i>Historical significance: How do we decide what is important to learn about the past?</i>	
Guidepost 1	Events, people, or developments have historical significance if they resulted in change . This is, they had deep consequences, for many people, over a long period of time.
Guidepost 2	Events, people, or developments have historical significance if they are revealing . That is, they shed light on enduring or emerging issues in history or contemporary life.
Guidepost 3	Historical significance is constructed . That is, events, people, and developments meet the criteria for historical significance only when they are shown to occupy a meaningful place in a narrative .
Guidepost 4	Historical significance varies over time and from group to group.
<i>Note.</i> Reprinted from Seixas & Morton (2013)	

Although historical significance has always been used by historians to determine what is worth studying, this historical thinking concept is new to the education system and has only been introduced recently in school curricula. In 1997, Peter Seixas conducted a study to find out the differences in the way high school students were approaching the question of historical significance. At the time, the British Columbia social studies curriculum was simply aiming at teaching content without taking into consideration any type of complex concepts such as historical significance. To understand how students were approaching this concept, Seixas asked 82 grade 11

students to draw a diagram of the history of the world and then to explain their choices. The second part was a series of questions about a fixed list of events. A comparison was established between both parts. For Seixas, the results of the study proved that historical knowledge had to be connected to second-order thought processes in order for students to make sense of what they were learning because most students seemed to feel disconnected from the facts presented to them. This study was rather general, and aimed to push the research done on the subject.

Investigating students' assessment of historical significance seems to be self-evident because it "can help us look at, and compare, the unclear environmental influence of family, language, culture, and gender on students' understanding of their national past" (Lévesque, 2008, p.55). Following this premise, Canadian researchers started to look into how historical significance might change depending on cultural background or ethnicity. For example, in *Teaching second-order concepts in Canadian history: The importance of "historical significance"* (Lévesque, 2005), the researcher wanted to know how Francophone and Anglophone students in Ontario understood historical significance. His findings demonstrated that even if some similarities were noticeable, Anglophone and Francophone students were using different lenses to interpret historical significance. In this article, Lévesque also raised the issue regarding the choice of historical significance criteria pointing out that there is no consensus in the history community. From Lévesque's observations, history educators did not grasp "how the conceptual tool of historical significance operates" (p.9) which fed an idea of collective memory caught up in subjectivity and stereotypes, instead of nurturing a global understanding of the past made up of multiple interpretations based on evidence.

He concluded his article stressing the importance of giving better guidance to high school students and emphasizing that educators had to pay a closer attention to their students' understanding of second-order concepts such as historical significance when teaching history.

Americans also investigated how students were thinking historically, and understanding historical significance. Barton and Levstik (1997, 2004, 2005) have written many books and articles on the subject including: "Middle Graders' Explanations of Historical Significance", *Teaching History for the Common Good*, *Doing History: Investigating with Children in Elementary and Middle Schools*. Among their initial studies, the researchers were interested in understanding how early adolescents were using history to create a sense of collective memory (Barton and Levstik, 1998). Before presenting the methodology and study results, the authors argued that one of the problems in the teaching of history was that the national history presented in class was often facing conflicting ethno-cultural accounts of minorities. As a matter of fact, "children construct their understandings and representations of history in complex webs of historical images and ideas" (p.240) taken not only from schools which can be considered important forum of historical transmission, but also from other sources such as family and communities. Therefore, government efforts to present a curriculum filled with powerful emotional images might fail in the face of divergent historical narratives. Considering that the American population is not homogenous, many factors have to be taken into consideration hence the need for multiple studies conducted in a variety of settings.

In *"It wasn't a good part of history": National identity and students' explanations of historical significance*, Barton and Levstik (1998) conducted semi-structured interviews where 48 students from grade 5 to 8 had to choose from a set of 20 captioned historical images 8 of which should be included in a timeline of the past 500 years. A set of broader questions followed in order to explore the students' understanding of historical significance. The results revealed that there were little differences between the vernaculars, or what can be referred to as collective memory, and the official histories. Although glimpses of alternative histories were emerging from the conversation, the students did not have a framework to make sense of these, which resulted in not considering them as historically significant for the construction of the greater American story. The researchers were careful in their analysis because of the context in which the study was completed: all interviews were conducted in single-sex groups of 3 or 4 without discrepancy of ethnicity. Nevertheless, these results remain fascinating when compared to those of other countries, such as Canada, as previously presented, or Northern Ireland where Barton conducted a later study.

Barton (2005) studied how Northern Ireland Catholic and Protestant students assessed historical significance. Then he compared the results to previous research conducted in the United States. The methodology used in this study was similar to the previous research cited in order, I assume, to ensure a trustworthy portrait of the results, which showed a gap between both societies. In fact, as mentioned before, the American students' narrative was mostly uniform following not only the vernacular history, but also the "official" history (Barton and Levstik, 1998). On the other hand, important differences were noted between Irish Catholic and Protestant students' assessment of

historical significance. The author argues that this discrepancy can be largely attributed to the government's approach to the country's historical narrative, which avoids any type of confrontation or push for a common narrative that would raise sensitive issues and risk alienating certain social groups. Since students face no consistency in the messages related to their nation's historical narrative, they construct their own sense of historical significance. For me, these findings raise important questions regarding the government's responsibility towards the history that a nation wants to present to its population. Is it better to keep a public *status quo* or to confront the nation's historical demons? What are the government's responsibilities toward its future citizens? How can a government change a curriculum without provoking a public outrage? Finally, who should fight for a critical approach to history in a nation school system? Two books offer potential answers. Cole (2007) explores, through the concept of reconciliation, how divided societies recover from their painful past while Peck and Epstein (2018) examine current issues regarding teaching and learning difficult histories in international contexts.

The study of students' historical significance is not limited to countries where English speakers are predominant such as Canada, United States or the United Kingdom. Some examples would be recent studies conducted in Greece and Turkey. Apostolidou (2012) asked her 15 year-old Greek students to draw the most significant events from two different time periods taught in class. She discovered that students linked their assessment of historical significance to their everyday life and often used their personal interest to make their decisions. Apostolidou's results' demonstrate that no matter where

teenagers are from, they seem to assess historical significance using similar tools developed from their personal experience.

Avaroğulları and Kolcu (2016) came to a similar conclusion after conducting research in Turkey where they asked forty-four grade 11 and 12 students to determine who the most significant people in history were. Interestingly, the researchers did not offer a list of names. The participants had to come up with their own answers, which resulted in a list of 127 significant people. They discovered that high school students' assessment of who was historically significant was limited to a national narrative putting aside important historical figures because they were not directly tied to their lives in one way or another.

Identity and Collective Memory Shaping Historical Narrative

Studies on historical significance can also enhance our understanding of the construction of historical collective memory defined by Létourneau (2006) as

a set of references including, among others, teleological schemes, clichés, stereotypes, ideas, representations of all sorts, reified characters, fragments of énoncés - all items through which the past, the present, and the future are not only decoded and constructed, but also anticipated. (p.80)

In "*A Giant with Clay Feet*": *Québec Students and their Historical Consciousness of the Nation*, Létourneau, Lévesque and Gani (2013) aimed to make sense of high school students' accounts of Québec's history. As a matter of fact, French speaking young people from *la belle province* share a common narrative of melancholy and nostalgia (Létourneau & Moisan, 2004), and the researchers wanted to explore the possible reasons behind this lasting narrative. In order to do so, they drew on 142 accounts from data collected between 2003-2004 and 2010-2011 (Létourneau, Lévesque & Gani, 2013)

coming in part from a previous research interested in exploring the collective memory and historical perception of high school Québécois (Létourneau & Caritey, 2008). The research was conducted during class time in various high schools of the province. Students had 45 minutes to respond to one open-ended prompt: “Please present or account for the history of Québec since the beginning, the way you see it, remember it, or understand it.” (Létourneau, Lévesque & Gani, 2013, p.2)

The results showed that students presenting a clear narrative had a dominant vision of adversity which “refers to a permanent state of struggle to make the most out of the adverse life situations” (p.10) such as the first settlers’ hostile environment, the fight for French survival and the constant cultural battle in a country dominated by English speakers. Not only did students from a French speaking background assessed historical significance differently than their English-speaking counterparts (Lévesque, 2005), they also distinguished their collective identity from the rest of Canada. More surprising is the fact that the accounts provided by the students offered “a drastically different story than the ones in the school programs” (Létourneau, Lévesque & Gani, 2013, p.12). For Létourneau (2006), “the presence of a historical collective memory is an important factor in shaping students' narratives about the historical experience of Quebec” (p.80). Young people construct their historical knowledge early on in elementary school and from what they hear in their family circle. When they reach high school, teenagers have already built a lasting historical narrative about their nation. For Létourneau (2006), students’ “historical collective memory is (probably) inevitably founded on mythstories” (p.80), a combination of constructed stories or myths and

historical facts. Do high school students from New Brunswick have an historical collective memory? If so, what are their mythologies?

Other studies looked at the construction and transformation of national narratives. For example, Carretero and van Alphen (2014) explored the changes occurring in Argentinian students' master narratives between grades 8 and 11. The master narrative of a nation comes from the historical collective memory and it is a representation of the past that only offers "superficial changes of historical contents" (p.291). Master narratives are usually simple and without controversial issues. Since they sometimes infiltrate history education, master narratives limit the development of critical perspectives. Carretero and van Alphen wondered whether students' narratives reflected the master narrative or if a transformation to a more sophisticated account of the past could be observed between grade 8 and 11.

Thirty-eight students were interviewed, eighteen 8th graders and twenty 11th graders. The semi-structured interviews asked the participants to explain what happened on the event depicted on the picture presented about May 25th, 1810, the day Buenos Aires citizens expelled the Spaniards. In Argentina, this day "collectively represents the origin of the nation" (p.295). The interviewers did not mention words that could influence the participants' answers. Rather, they simply asked about what happened, how and why it happened. In the second part of the interview, participants had to give elaborate answers explaining their reasoning and the concepts they used.

Looking at the narrative patterns, the results indicated a difference between 8th graders and 11th graders. The latter presented more complex history content, and more sophisticated historical accounts. Yet, a considerable amount of master narrative

representations still existed in grade 11 students' accounts. Nonetheless, the difference was notable, and from the researchers' perspective the explanation lay in "[h]istory education, [which] combined with cognitive development and an increasing exposure to cultural devices, has probably been effective in producing a conceptual change" (p.308). For Carretero and van Alphen, the results revealed that national narratives are not static, and historical investigation can help transform collective representations, but history education should take into consideration that "misconceptions or simplified national historical narratives are persisting" (p.309). As previously stated, even if grade 11 students' historical accounts improved, they still presented an important amount of master narrative's elements. Since, for most of them, this was their last year of formal history teaching, misrepresentations can hardly be corrected after hence the importance of paying an early attention to students' historical preconceptions in education.

Research also weighs in on the influence of ethnic identities on historical significance. Canada's population is changing and its composition is not only from Indigenous, French or Anglo-Saxon backgrounds anymore. More and more immigrants are choosing Canada as their home. This change is noticeable in urban areas and many urban schools are multicultural. How are young newcomers understanding the history that they are being taught? What do they consider significant in Canadian history? These are some of the questions Peck (2010) asks in "*It's not like [I'm] Chinese and Canadian. I am in between*": *Ethnicity and Students' Conceptions of Historical Significance*. This article explores the relationship between students' ethnic identities and their ascriptions of historical significance of moments in Canada's past. Peck's research demonstrated that students' ethnic identity played a central role when assessing

historical significance. In fact, the lenses used to ascribe Canadian historical events were different depending on the students' ethnicity, creating multiple narratives.

The study's results were compiled in three vignettes grouping students from similar ethnic background. The first vignette presented two Aboriginal students' ascription of historical significance where both were drawn to consider the importance of events related to Aboriginal issues. The explanation of their choices clearly demonstrated how their identity played a role in their decision-making process. The first student explained: "Being First Nation in Canada has made me into the person that I have learned to be (...)" (p.596). He continued on analyzing his choices which were comprised of two events affecting Aboriginals: "everybody likes to see something about them displayed somewhere, so that's why I chose these ones...I wanted to show and I wanted to know more about my own history" (p.596). In the second vignette, the timeline presented by the two Canadian-born students did not include any Aboriginal events. For a student who viewed himself as "a Canadian with British heritage" (p.600), the first five European related events were the most significant because they represented his origins stating that "(...) when my ancestry came and started to do things, it's important" (p.600). In the third vignette, four immigrants students from ethnic minorities discussed for a lengthy period of time about whether their timeline should include events representing minorities or not. One student argued: "All four of us are from ethnic minorities, our ancestors, right? [...] So why shouldn't we look at that aspect?" (p.602). The students concluded that they could not include events representing minorities because while choosing one they would have to exclude another. The compromise was to select the only event that included them all, the Act and Policy on Canadian

multiculturalism. A student explained: "I think it's safe to say that multiculturalism speaks for all of us" (p.603).

The results brought Peck to ask fundamental questions about the competing views of what is considered historically significant, and the challenges teachers faced when trying to present the complexity of history. She wondered why multiple interpretations were possible, and finished by stressing the importance of looking into the challenges related to exploring multiple narratives in education by doing more research focusing on the discrepancy of diverse ethnic groups.

While the previous studies give historical significance a central role, other research use the concept as a tool to understand how students' identity affects the construction of their historical narrative. For example, in his article "*It's in My Veins*": *Identity and Disciplinary Practice in Students' Discussions of a Historical Issue*, Goldberg (2013) used the term historical understanding rather than talking about historical significance. In his article, Goldberg presented the results of a study conducted on sixty-four Jewish-Israeli grade 12th students. Goldberg wanted to explore the relationship between students' identity and their historical practices and understanding. He examined the process by which participants analyze historical evidence and discovered that students' identity was not only prevalent when thinking historically but necessary for the learners' engagement in historical reasoning and understanding.

Finally, Sant, González-Monfort, Santisteban Fernández, Pagès Blanch and Oller Freiza, (2015) delved into the comparison between official and students' narratives in Catalonia. Two hundred and forty-five students aged between 11 and 13 year-old were asked to write down what they remembered about Catalonian history. Through a

narrative analysis, the study found that students had a romantic-patriotic view of their history mostly referring to symbolic figures or moments in their national history memory. Even if students were not asked to assess historical moments or to explain why they privileged one event over another using the principles of historical significance, it is clear that the research focused on students' identity and how this identity influences their understanding of national history. The study's implications are important to note because they demonstrate how research on students' identity and historical understanding can point out social tensions which are essential to address in order to avoid potential intolerance, segregation and even escalation of violence.

The Gap

Although some studies have been done to compare how identity influences students' assessment of historical significance, most of them were conducted in Ontario and Québec. A certain number of studies have been conducted comparing linguistic identity of university and high school students living in a minority environment in Québec and New Brunswick (Pilote, Mangan, & Vieux-Fort, 2010; Pilote & Mangan, 2012). Nevertheless, their focal point remains sociological rather than related to the influence of students' identity on historical significance and its implications for teaching history.

Even if my research goes beyond the dual linguistic identity of the province, I think it is important to note that New Brunswick French speakers are living in a minority context, their relationship with the majority has been different than in Québec where within the province the majority is Francophone. For that matter, I would like to point

out that even if the Francophone sector includes a class called Acadian History, one would be foolish to consider all French speakers in New Brunswick Acadian. The northern French speakers close to the Québec border often consider themselves Brayon while others don't relate to either culture.

My research aims to shed some light on the influence of the French community on its students' population but also to discover whether a substantial identity discrepancy exists between students of Francophone and Anglophone districts regardless of their ethnic background. Since the province often faces tensions related to its bilingualism, and the capital, Fredericton, is at the center of it, this study could help understand how students perceive their ethnic identity and the social implications that come out of this identification.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

I discovered multiple fascinating qualitative research studies influencing my decision to pursue phenomenography and Social Identity Theory as methodological approaches. Initially, I came across a first study while completing a researcher profile on Dr. Jocelyn Létourneau. Although the article did not present the methodology used to analyze the data, the research led me to others embedded in phenomenography and Social Identity Theory.

The study *Le Mur des représentations* (Létourneau, Cousson, Daigneault & Daigle, 2015) looked into Québec's collective memory by searching for the symbolic and uncomfortable pictures of the nation's past from the perspective of ordinary people. When I read this research, I was interested in the techniques used to collect data. I thought these were original and compelling because I would not have thought of using images to understand how a person thinks. In fact, the study aimed to grasp the emotions, the way of behaving and thinking of the respondents but also noted their representations and perceptions. To do so, the first step for the researchers was to create, from a bank of illustrations available on Internet, a suggestive iconography of Québec's historical experience. The second step was to use these illustrations as a means to stimulate historical knowledge, which would be expressed by the image selections (with explanations and meanings from the respondents) representing or not the Québec condition over time. I thought that the use of open-ended questions to explain the

choices made by the respondents was more revealing than a Likert scale questionnaire influencing the decisions I would later make about my data collection method.

Phenomenography

The first research I came across using phenomenography was conducted by Hamm, Peck & Sears (2017). Instead of analyzing the thinking process of individual participants, the researchers' methodology focused on treating the data as a whole. Therefore, the focal point is not the distinctive characteristics of a single narrative as much as what the narrative reveals about the conception of an individual regarding a particular phenomenon.

Phenomenography was first developed as a reaction to conventional quantitative methods used in the majority of social studies research papers. Critics of these conventional methods were underlining the limiting aspect of quantifying subjective knowledge in order to understand it (Svensson, 1997). Instead, the core of phenomenography is to describe people's conceptions and to explain how one employs these interpretations to make sense of a phenomenon. In other words, the methodology helps to describe the human experience taking into consideration the principle that there is a relation between the subject and the world (Rosário, Grácio, Núñez & Gonzalez-Pienda, 2007). The data analysis becomes possible by sorting descriptions into categories since people's understanding of the world is usually limited to a certain numbers of shared conceptions (Peck, 2010). In education, phenomenography “offers a method for understanding the ways in which people, and in particular students, conceptualize various phenomena of the world. As such, it holds great potential for

educational researchers wanting to identify students' conceptual understandings" (p.581). It seems almost normal to use this research method when studying the relationship between the students' identity and their ascriptions of what are the historically significant moments in Canada's past.

The article *Don't Even Think About Bringing That to School* (Hamm, Peck & Sears, 2017) presents a study where the researchers used images to assess the understanding of cultural diversity of middle school students in New Brunswick. The students chosen for this research were shown 12 stimuli centered on multiple aspects of ethnic diversity. They were asked to explain each one, and a discussion followed regarding their feeling about the issues raised in the images. I thought the elicitation technique utilized might be an engaging one to use for my own research. Additionally, since I teach high school I wondered how my students would have reacted to the same stimuli. Although the method remains compelling, I decided to shift to another type of data collection after pondering the bias of presenting a chosen number of events to students.

The new idea came from an article written by Peter Seixas, *Mapping the Terrain of Historical Significance* (1997) where he described how students drew a diagram to present their account of the history of the world. I decided to go a step further and to let students choose between drawing, creating a time line or a diagram and writing a paragraph. My decision is driven by three arguments. First, I believe offering choices to students to tell their own story is more interesting. In class, they are often constrained to follow the instructions even if they are not comfortable with the medium chosen by the teacher. Secondly, students might feel as if they are being tested when ask to choose

from a set of pre-selected events. They will feel as if there is a single correct answer. Third, giving students a pre-selected number of events to choose from involves a selection on my part. The fact that students come from schools where the curricula are different makes the task not only challenging but highly subjective. I would be the one making the final decision. Although I am aware of my possible bias, I think inviting students to write or draw “a story requires them to select and connect antecedent and succeeding events in a more coherent and meaningful way than otherwise would be the case in a simple list of events” (Létourneau, Lévesque & Gani, 2013, p.159). For these reasons, I decided to move towards asking the participants to tell me their own story of Canadian history.

In my research, the students’ production – timeline, drawing, text or diagram – acted as stimuli to provoke a reaction and start a conversation about their conception of Canadian identity and its relation to their perception of what they consider significant in Canadian history. Therefore, the first activity was a tool to help understand how students perceived their identity and how they ascribed historical significance in relation to their identity. Semi-structured interviews brought the students to construct their story’s narrative. From the interviews’ verbatim and their comparisons, themes emerged. Incidentally, “phenomenography analysis is based on what is said in interviews” (Larson, 1986, p.37), although not limited to speech production. Through the description of these different students’ narratives which include interviews, but also drawings and written stories, it was possible to understand and group, using phenomenography, variations of the participants’ identity conceptions.

Although phenomenography makes sense of students' experience as a whole by investigating how students construct their identity through the conception of their own Canadian historical narrative, I believe there is another layer to the problem related to the particular bilingual context of New Brunswick. Looking at students' utterances through Social Identity Theory lens seemed perfectly suited for the research because of the obvious dichotomy created by the school system's district separations.

Social Identity Theory

One particular study using the Social Identity Theory caught my attention. In "*A Giant with Clay Feet*": *Québec Students and their Historical Consciousness of the Nation*, Létourneau, Lévesque and Gani (2013) focused on the collective memory of French Canadian students from Québec which appeared to contrast with that of their English counterparts (Lévesque, 2005). From the start, the nature of the research was compelling to me since I wanted to discover whether students from diverse cultural backgrounds and studying in different school systems, one French and another English, make similar judgments about what they consider historically significant. As a matter of fact, Létourneau, Lévesque and Gani argued that the "conflicting narratives of nation have their origins in the bilingual nature of Canada" (p.156). One can wonder whether students from a bilingual province will also present conflicting narratives. Social Identity Theory "(...) provides a valuable analytical lens through which it becomes possible to understand how students of a given community use particular tools to interpret past realities" (p.158).

Furthermore, Social Identity Theory considers that individuals tend to view themselves as belonging to one of the available social groups that will be regarded as the in-group (Goldberg, 2013). When students construct a historical narrative, they establish a historical subject in terms of inclusion and exclusion (Carretero & van Alphen, 2014) similar to the in-group/out-group specific to Social Identity Theory making the methodology compelling to use when analyzing students' identity through their national narrative and what they consider significant. The presence of one unified national group can be opposed to another completely different historical group. Hints of this opposition is often set apart by simplified characteristics of this group compared to the other (Carretero & van Alphen, 2014). As in Social Identity Theory, the historical subject will often present the opposition between *us* versus *them*.

Even if a person can belong to more than one group, a dichotomy is present when analyzing a situation. In Létourneau, Lévesque and Gani (2013), the French Canadian students defined themselves as being part of the in-group as opposed to the out-group, the English (without any distinction of their origins). The presence of specific linguistic elements such as *us/Québécois* versus *them/English* in the narrative helped to categorize utterances of in and out grouping. I wondered if students' narratives from Fredericton might reflect to a degree this idea of in and out groups. As a matter of fact, the tensions between people speaking the two official languages are strong enough to create a feeling of difference and separation thus explaining my interest in the Social Identity Theory.

The approach also sheds light on the tendency for people "to see their own group in positive terms and inevitably develop negative images about people in the other

groups" (p.163). Interestingly, the French Canadian students in the Létourneau led study often viewed themselves negatively choosing to write about events that were favorable to the out-group (the English) instead of the in-group. The results demonstrated that Québécois students shared a collective memory filled with melancholy. New Brunswick Francophones are not Québécois, and Francophones from Fredericton live in a predominantly English environment. Do students from French and English districts have a different and opposing collective memory?

A person's identity might be complex and fluid however; a separation will be established between what is considered inside the group as opposed to outside the group when facing choices related to historical importance or situational problematics. As a matter of fact, social grouping leads to increased prominence "of distinguished features between categories, exaggerating categories differences" (Islam, 2014, p.1781). In other words, students reflecting on the influence of their ethnic identity in relation to what they consider historically important versus the choices made by others might "explain biased and exaggerated perceptions of differences between groups" (p.1781). How is one group identity reflected in the students' narratives about Canadian history? Do students perceive themselves as being part of an in-group versus an out-group? If so, what can we learn from the possible tensions, bias or perceptions one group has over another?

What I wanted to know is how students categorize their past and what they consider important. I also wanted to know if their categorization is influenced by their identity. Since Social Identity Theory uses categorization to analyze the collected data

just like people categorize information in order to make sense of the past, the approach seemed adaptable to my research questions.

Data Collection Method

For this research, I recruited a total of 26 participants from two Fredericton high schools: five participants from the Francophone district and twenty-one participants from the Anglophone district. Within the participants from the Anglophone district, the majority came from the French immersion program. This situation might be attributed to the fact that I taught many students from the French immersion program, and the participants might have been more prone to participate knowing me.

The research was conducted in French in the Francophone school and in English in the Anglophone school. I explored my research questions with grade 12 students. This choice takes into consideration the differences in curricula, students' experience and the fact that most of them will never take another social studies class in their lives. Grade 12 students should have a relatively well-developed sense of identity by that point in their education and personal lives. I would also like to point out that even if I might have taught most students from the French immersion program of the English sector, I believe that my relationship with these former students has not prevented them from expressing their own point of view in part due to the time lapse since they were in my class and because they were never in a Canadian history course given by me. The participants were aware that their participation was voluntary, and I made sure to remind every student throughout the process.

After seeking district approval (See Letter to Educational Authorities, Appendix 1), I contacted the principal from both schools in order to present my research and obtain the permission to approach teachers and students (See Letter to Principals, Appendix 2). In the Anglophone high school, participant selection was completed through grade 12 teachers who helped me approach students. I presented my research in two different classes and addressed any questions students might have had. In addition, I gave them an information letter (see Information letter, Appendix 4), a consent form (see Consent Form, Appendix 5), and a passive parental consent form (see Letter to parents, Appendix 3). Those who choose to participate in the research gave the completed forms to their teachers. Participants' ethnicity was not a priority.

In the Francophone high school, I worked with the vice-principal who called all the grade 12 students for a meeting in the theater. I gave the same presentation in French and distributed the documentation. Those who choose to participate in the research brought the completed forms to the vice-principal. After trying unsuccessfully to work a schedule to meet with the students, I contacted a grade 12 teacher who helped me get in touch and organize a time for the first activity.

In order to understand students' background and how they perceive their own identity, the first step to collect data was a questionnaire asking participants to reveal personal information such as their age, their origin, and the languages they speak (see Student Questionnaire, Appendix 6). Questions related to students' origin and ethnicity were intentionally open-ended to encourage participants to define their identity in their own terms. The questionnaire was adapted from Peck (2010) and Hamm, Peck and Sears (2017). Most participants took five to ten minutes to fill the questionnaire.

Participants were then asked to complete the following task:

Tell me the story of Canada using a diagram, a drawing, a time line or a paragraph. Include 10 elements (people, events, changes, discoveries, inventions or ideas) that you consider historically important and order them in a way that makes sense to you.

This task took fifteen to thirty minutes to complete. Since the participants were sitting together or close to each other for these two activities, some of them talked about their story of Canada, some of them used their cellphone to find ideas. I decided to let the participants do what they felt like doing in order to avoid recreating a classroom evaluation atmosphere. The goal was not to test their knowledge but rather have them choose what they would consider as important elements to include in their story of Canada. While the participants were completing their task, I prepared an interview schedule. Multiple slots were offered, and participants chose the time and date that was best suited for them. In the Anglophone school, the interviews happened during class time with the permission of the participants' teacher. In the Francophone school, the participants found time outside of class hour either during lunch time or a non-instructional period where they had time to work independently.

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with all the participants and lasted between nine and thirty minutes. During these interviews, students were asked a series of questions related to their story, the reasoning behind their choices and connections with their identity (see Interview Protocol, Appendix 7). The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. I numbered students' interview according to which sector they attended (Anglophone or Francophone), gender (male or female) and a

randomly assigned number. All the quotations I pulled out of students' interviews are following this system.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, I compiled the participants' answers in various tables. I started by looking at their story of Canada, and noted the elements chosen by the students. Data triangulation was used since I also consulted the participants verbatim to confirm or clarify certain elements presented on their story.

Once I finished compiling the participants' answers in tables, I underlined meaningful utterances in relation to each question asked. Using the principles of phenomenography, I looked for recurring themes and I created categories. For this section, I focused on the most and least important elements given by the participants about their story of Canada because I want to understand the phenomenon of students' identity and its influence on their assessment of historical significance.

In order to understand how participants expressed their sense of belonging and how they view other ethnicities or groups, I highlighted possessive pronouns such as *we*, *us* and *they*. Looking through a Social Identity Theory lens, I organized answers in two categories belonging to the in-group (*we*, *us*) or the out-group (*they*). I compiled the ethnic groups considered as others (the out-group or *they*) and the recurrence in the participants' answers. As in Goldberg's research, I identified "students' utterances about the historical topic that appear to be influenced by the speaker's identity" (Goldberg, 2013, p.41). Finally, I analyzed and noted when students used these pronouns within which historical context or narrative.

Limitations

The first and foremost limitation of this study is the regional aspect related to the choice of conducting the research in Fredericton. As I previously mentioned, New Brunswick Francophone identity is not uniform. The results will reflect the perception of a specific region. As a matter of fact, the size of the sample does not allow a generalization. This is a preliminary study and further research would need to be conducted in order to have a broader perspective on the influence of students' identity on their assessment of historical significance.

The second limitation lies in the difficulty to aim at French and English speakers specifically. Fredericton is home to many ethnicities who might have various ways of reacting to a bilingual (or multilingual for that matter) setting. Although the tensions between French and English are palpable and their relations a recurrent subject of discord, a deeper look at the problematic by means of an extended research could possibly mitigate this limitation.

The third limitation is related to the curriculum discrepancies existing between both districts. This research might shed some light on the curriculum influence on students' identity, but a closer look should be given to the potential implications of having different social studies curricula in the same province. As a matter of fact, when thinking about the province education system duality, other questions arise: If Canadian provinces don't share common curriculum, is it that important for a province to offer uniform programs? Are there larger implications to the Canadian situation regarding education and what our youth learn? I think all these questions could be interesting to investigate.

Chapter 4

Results

Participants' Identity

In the student's questionnaire, the participants had to write about their ethnic identity (See Student's Questionnaire, Appendix 6). I compiled the answers in Table 2.

Student's Identity	Number of students Primary Identification	Number of Students With an Additional Identification	
Canadian	16	3	
Lebanese Canadian	2		
Chinese Canadian	1		
Scottish Canadian	1		
Japanese Canadian	1		
Filipino	1		
Acadian		(2)	1
French Canadian		(1)	(1)

I created a new category for every identity given. Most participants identified with one group although four of them identified with a second group. The additional identification is in parenthesis. It is important to note that participants identifying as Lebanese Canadian or Japanese Canadian expressed their identity as a whole, and this identity is usually related to their parents' origins. For example, one female participant

from the Anglophone sector identifying as Lebanese Canadian wrote: “I describe myself as a Lebanese-Canadian due to the fact that my parents are from there then immigrated before I was born” (ASF3¹). On the other hand, participants identifying as French Canadian or Acadian also always added belonging to another group: “I would describe myself as both Canadian and Acadian” (ASF10). Participants identifying as Canadian often specified that their ancestors had long been established in Canada: “I proudly identify as Canadian as it’s where I was born and raised here. My ancestors have lived here for a long time” (ASF11). Another student explained her identity “as simply Canadian because I’ve never been anything else. My family has been in Canada for so long that they can hardly be considered Scottish or English anymore” (ASM20).

Students identifying as Acadian or French Canadian did not necessarily come from the Francophone high school. As a matter of fact, only one student from the Francophone district identified as French Canadian and Acadian although also mentioning being *Canadienne bilingue*: “Je me décris comme étant franco-canadienne ou bien comme canadienne bilingue, ainsi que comme étant acadienne” (FSF1). Another student specified her bilingualism in her description. I did not include a bilingual category to the previous table because I considered it as being a characteristic rather than an ethnic group.

The others participants from the same Francophone high school identified as Canadian (3) and Japanese Canadian (1). From the three participants identifying as

¹ The first letter of the code designates language, the S is for student, the third letter designates gender and the number the particular student. So, ASF means Anglophone Student Female, number 3.

Canadian, two of them mentioned their French heritage, but also their disconnection from this aspect of their identity:

Je m'identifie souvent comme Canadien tout simplement, étant donné que mes racines culturelles/ethniques sont aussi multiculturelles que celles du Canada. Cependant, je me sens beaucoup plus à l'aise avec la culture européenne qu'acadienne, car j'ai grandi à Fredericton, entourée de ma famille sur le côté de ma mère et non mon père. Même si j'ai un nom très acadien, je trouve que j'ai une grande déconnection par rapport à ce côté (FSF2);

Étant née au Canada, sans de famille proche hors du pays, je me considère comme canadienne et je suis fière de l'être. Aussi, étant une francophone en milieu minoritaire, je suis fière de pouvoir être bilingue et d'être francophone même si je ne m'identifie pas trop avec l'Acadie / le Québec / la France / etc. (FSF3).

Participants' Story of Canada

The participants' stories of Canada were various in format: simple timeline without explanations, list of 10 elements, written paragraphs, and labelled drawings.

Figures 1 – 3 provide examples of three of these. Several other examples can be found in Appendix 8.

- ① 1867 - indépendance de l'Angleterre
- ② Halifax explosion
- ③ Justin Trudeau
- ④ Terry Fox
- ⑤ First ever peace keeps
- ⑥ Gay marriage 2005
- ⑦ Basketball
- ⑧ 10 provinces 3 territories
- ⑨ Queen Elizabeth + démocratie
- ⑩ Natives

Figure 1. Story of Canada – ASF3

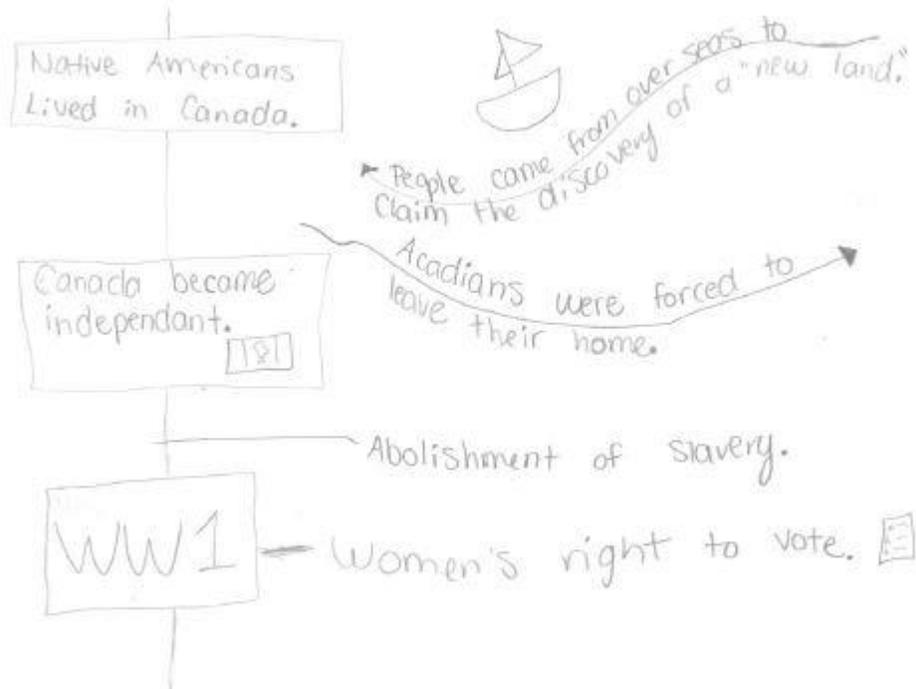


Figure 2. Story of Canada (sample) – ASF10

Une constitution qui date de 1867, c'était le début de notre indépendance comme pays.
 Depuis ce temps, la majorité des grands événements à une échelle internationale
 sont en support de l'Angleterre, à qui nous gardons encore une monarchie
 constitutionnelle.

- les contributions de guerre que les forces canadiennes ont eu sur les grandes guerres, surtout les guerres mondiales.
- La création d'organismes comme le patrimoine canadien qui ont des impacts direct sur des éléments et des projets culturels.

Figure 3. Story of Canada (sample) – FSF1

Table 3 shows the major elements commonly chosen by the participants. Other elements such as John A. Macdonald being the first Prime Minister of Canada or the flag

were present, but if their recurrence was in less than five stories, I decided to not record them.

Table 3			
<i>Participants' Elements in Their Story of Canada</i>			
Elements	Participants from the Anglophone District	Participants from the Francophone District	Total
Confederation 1867	9	4	20
Independence	7		
World War 1	14	4	18
Vimy Ridge	3		3
Independence	5		5
First Nations / Aboriginal	12	2	14
Residential schools	13	4	17
Apologies	4		4
World War 2	11	4	15
European Colonization	11	3	14
Acadia	2	1	3
Deportation	3	3	6
Immigration	1		1
First migrations	2		2
European immigration	2	1	3
Equal Rights	2		2
Women's Right to vote	3	1	4
LGBTQ+ Rights	8		8
Railroad	4	2	6
War of 1812	5		5

Some elements are grouped and divided in sub-categories mostly depending on the participants' choice of wording, but also depending on the connections between

some of these elements. For example, twenty participants mentioned 1867 in their story of Canada some using the word *Confederation* (sometimes using what I considered synonyms such as “new country”, “was founded”, “became a country”, “Dominion of Canada”) and others using the word *independence*. Since the participants used the date of Confederation to identify the “independence” of Canada, I created a sub-category but added both numbers together.

I did not add up the other sub-categories together because a participant might have only mentioned the Residential schools while another might have also specified the apologies given by the Canadian Government. One element designation does not imply the inclusion of the others from the same sub-category.

Participants’ stories presented a predominantly linear narrative. When they felt uncertain about the chronological order, they often wrote a note about it. Sometimes, during their interviews, students thought they should have had a chronological storyline making it the element they would change or add to their story. When I asked them why they wanted to add dates or chronologically organize their elements, students could not explain the reason behind their desire. They often left me with the impression that, for them, knowing dates and chronological order was a demonstration of historical understanding.

Participants’ storylines often followed a similar simplistic pattern. First, the plotline presented a beginning with the First Nations living peacefully before the arrival of the Europeans or sometimes starting at Confederation, when Canada was “created”. Then, a period of struggles and problems usually followed where, among others, British and French fought, and aboriginals were taken into residential schools. Finally, stories

finished by Canada's 'coming of age' with the country's participation in both World Wars gaining at the same time its independence from England. The last period generally emphasized the country's progress towards a multicultural, peacekeeping, and tolerant society. Struggles of the past are being recognized, but a time of reconciliation has come.

Participants' Interviews

During the interviews, the participants had access to their story of Canada. The questions were related to the participants' ethnic identity and the elements chosen to create their Canadian history. After describing the elements on their sheet, I asked the participants if they thought their identity influenced the choices they made. I used the questionnaire's description they provided in order to get a specific answer.

Identity's Influence

For some participants, there was no doubt that their identity influenced the choices they made. One participant was clear about the influence her Acadian heritage had on her choices: "I think definitely because not a lot people talk about like when Acadians were deported I mean unless they are Acadian or they are doing a project on it." She also described that "(...) from a young age I was taught about it because my mom's side of the family is Acadian" (ASF10). Another participant thought her identity

(...) influenced my background and how I was raised as a Canadian because my family has always been brought with a kind of European traditions (...) so that's kind of what I grew up to know and learn to be like consider as Canadian like my form of being Canadian. (ASF3)

After describing the importance of the European colonization because she “probably wouldn’t be alive if they didn’t come over”, this participant pointed out what she might have picked if she had been from another ethnic group:

And if I had aboriginal background I probably would have put more about, like I only have that Canada apologized for residential schools, but if I was aboriginal I probably would have put when they started, and like a bunch of things about aboriginals like you know when the Europeans came, and massacred a bunch of them. (ASF11)

Some were hesitant or not certain of their identity’s influence over their choices. For example, one participant clearly expressed her uncertainty: “I don’t know. I really don’t know. I just... chose what I remembered the most about everything. I just, I thought some of it was more interesting than other points, but I don’t really know if it influenced it” (ASF15). Another participant recognized that history had a role to play in her situation as a Francophone minority but she was not convinced that her identity brought her to choose the elements of her story of Canada:

(...) j’dirais que l’affaire francophone, j-je regarde pas beaucoup ça, hem, au niveau historique, mais plutôt juste de ma réalité aujourd’hui (...) comme je suis quand même minoritaire, pis oui, je suppose que les événements historiques influencent pourquoi que je suis minoritaire maintenant, mais j’vois plutôt ça comme une affaire d’aujourd’hui. (FSF1)

Finally, three participants thought their identity had nothing to do with the elements they picked for their history of Canada. One of them identified as Canadian, and French Canadian. Interestingly, she seemed uncertain of the influence of her Canadian identity which she thought was often embedded in the “the stereotype of us like being very nice, and us being a peacekeeping country”. She explained that she “(...) turn[ed] that idea upside down and aren’t that. So, I think that like the darker parts of our Canadian history that aren’t talked about need to be talked about, and that’s what I put in

there.” On the other hand, she did not see any influence coming from her French Canadian background: “(...) my father side of the family is French, and they speak French around me but we don’t really have many traditional Canadian French things that we do” (ASF21).

Most and Least Important Elements

I also asked the participants to tell me which elements in their story of Canada were the most and the least important in term of their identity. After transcribing the participants’ interviews, I used the principles of phenomenography, and looked for recurring conceptions grouping them (see Table 4) in order to help me to make sense of the themes, similarities and the major discrepancies between participants.

Even if participants chose various elements to describe what I categorized as *Construction of the Country*, their explanations were clear: without the selected element, the country would not be the same. For example, a participant picked the Second World War as the most important element of his story. He explained:

Both sides of my family fought in it and I've lost people on both sides of my family to it and I think it was a big step for Canada to prove that they could, they could fight for their own and they didn't need help from other countries like 'cause they fought in WW1 because Great Britain, they were like associated with Great Britain but WW2 they chose to do that on their own. (ASM7)

From this participant’s perspective, the Second World War was a way of showing the new independence from Great Britain which seems to be an important step in the construction of the country. Another important element revealed by the student’s answer is the personal connection he felt in relation with the event. Other students shared that

closeness perspective when they assessed what was considered most significant for them.

Table 4			
<i>Categories – Most and Least Important Elements in Your Story of Canada</i>			
Most Important		Least Important	
Construction of the Country	10	The Other	11
Immigrations (Europeans early and late), independence, Confederation, WW2		First Nations and the residential schools, Acadians, LGBTQ, Nunavut	
Rights	7	Symbols	10
Women’s Right to vote, LGBTQ, Equality, Youth Voice		Hockey, Basketball, Titanic, Olympics, Poutine, Flag, etc.	
The Struggle	4	Far Away	5
First Nations, Residential Schools, Acadians		The Vikings, British vs French	
Canada’s Image in the World	3		
Diversity, Suez Canal, the phone			
Nothing	2		

Another participant pointed out that Confederation was the most important element in his story of Canada, and “(...) maybe also the discovery of Canada by Europeans because while there was people here before, Canada as a country wasn’t a... thing” (ASM14). Another one noted that

(...) the arrival of the Europeans is pretty important ‘cause I don't know if... I think Canada would really be different if it was still sort of like the Native

Americans that kind of like would live their way now 'cause when the Europeans came they kind of change the way of life and everything. So I think they had a huge impact on history. (ASF17)

Participants' utterances included in the *Construction of the Country* category emphasized the before and after, they pointed to the transformation that happened in order for Canada to become what is considered a country.

For seven participants, the most significant element of their story of Canada was related to what I categorized as *Rights*. For example, one participant described her passion for equal rights making again the relation between herself and her choice: "I find I'm really passionate for equal rights for everyone. The race or your gender shouldn't change anything about how you're viewed in society" (ASF1). Another one explained why women's right to vote was not only important in Canada's history, but also closely personal: "Because I'm very opinionated, and I'd be very mad if I wasn't allowed to vote" (ASF11).

Sometimes, the answer could be included in another category such as this participant explanation of the pride she felt regarding the country LGBTQ + community, and the legalization of gay marriage: "I thought that was a really good thing that Canada did. (...) we kind of feel better that we did it earlier [than the Americans] because we accepted more people, and we're really accepting so I just thought it was really a big part" (ASF3). While she mentioned the importance of having rights for the LGBTQ community, she also specified how this decision shines on *Canada's Image in the World*.

This image of Canada in the world can be noted in three other accounts. For example, a student explained how

(...) the Suez Crisis was sort of when we started being the international peace keeping force kind of thing. And I think nowadays we are still very much like the same sort of thing, like we send soldiers out to help in certain areas of conflict. And I'm pretty proud that we do that and I think it kind of shows what Canadian foreign policy is like. (ASM24)

Another participant felt she was a "typical 18-year-old" when she chose the telephone as the most important element of her story, but her explanations went beyond her impression of being stereotypical: "(...) without that we wouldn't have had cell phones and stuff, more advance technology that way, so... I think that made a really big difference in the world and in Canada" (ASF16).

The Struggle category focuses on contentious events or particularly sensitive situation that indicate a difficult past resulting in present issues or circumstances. For example, a participant recognized that her ancestors' past struggle influences who she is: "(...) when the Acadians were deported because I am Acadian and still like has, like, like I still think about it sometimes like I did a project on it too and I know how bad it was" (ASF10). Sometimes, the struggle is not the primary focus but the explanation reveals an awareness related to a present issue like this student talking about the First Nations:

(...) juste le fait que j'suis canadienne comme je dois être, pas non seulement au courant, mais sensibilisée du fait que la terre que nous sommes c'est les Premières Nations pis que le pays n'a pas commencé avec les colons mais avec eux, comme c'était eux le début et même si moi j'suis pas Premières Nations, je dois respecter ça donc moi j'dirais que ça c'est un aspect important de juste être au courant de ce, cet enjeu qui encore, fait encore preuve aujourd'hui dans la société. (FSF4)

Finally, two participants declared that there was not an aspect more significant than another in their story of Canada. They did not feel connected to their elements. One participant simply said: "I don't really know if any of them are super important to my

identity” (ASF15). The other participant confessed: “ (...) j’dirais que y’en a pas que j’ai écrit qui influencent directement mon, directement mon identité” (FSF1).

Participants were also asked to choose the least important element in their list in term of their identity. For eleven participants, the least significant element of their story of Canada was related to what I categorized as *The Other*. In this category, participants’ answers focused on the separation between them and the other. The participants did not feel connected to a specific social group, and they explained their choices by emphasizing the disconnection. For example, a participant picked “LGBTQ rights because I’m not part of that community and I only have one friend that is and we are not even that close. So, I don’t really know about it, so it’s not really part of my history” (ASF10). Another participant explained “(...) the Acadians being deported isn’t as, like, it’s important, but that’s not as important to me because it didn’t affect me. (...) My heritage isn’t Acadian so I’d still be here anyway” (ASF11).

Seven of the eleven participants selected an element related to the First Nations. Again, the feeling of disconnection is present: “I would say the First Nations people flourish in North America would be the least important to me just because I have no First Nations heritage so I don’t really connect as much with it” (ASM24). Another one picked the residential schools “(...) ‘cause it didn’t have anything to do with me” (ASF9).

Since most answers pointed out the disconnection between the participants’ identity and what they considered the least important, I categorized the remaining participants’ answers based on the type of elements such as the *Symbols* rather than the reasoning behind their choices which will be explored in the discussion section.

Ten participants selected a symbol as the least important element of their story.

For example, one of them picked hockey and described her decision:

(...) I've never played it, it's never been that big of a part of my life and no one in my family really plays it. It's just kind of a symbol of our country, but it doesn't have a lot of significance to me personally. (ASF2)

Another selected the flag, and explained: "(...) I think it is like a very... ah... strong symbol for us, but I also think that like without it I could still, I would still identify as Canadian" (ASF21).

Finally, five participants' answers were placed in the *Far Away* category. As a matter of fact, the answers indicated a time separation between the participants' life and the event. The participants recognized the place of these events in Canadian history, for example the Vikings presence in Newfoundland, but they did not feel any connection because "(...) it happened so long ago that it doesn't really affect anything anymore" (ASF15). Another explained why the period between the colonization and the unification of Canada was not important for her since it was something that happened a long time ago: "(...) entre la colonisation puis unir le Canada, quekchose comme les tensions entre les Français et les Anglais juste parce que (...) c'est quekchose qui a eu lieu vraiment longtemps passé" (FSF5).

Others' Point of View

During the interview, three questions were related to other point of views and choices. First, I asked the participants if they thought people would agree with their choices namely the elements of their story of Canada. Apart from a participant who thought everyone could agree his elements were "a big part of the history of Canada"

(ASM7), most respondents expressed doubt about the agreement of others regarding their choices. Some students thought their story was too simple and felt as if others would “(...) probably have things that were more important than the ones that I chose because they probably know more than I do” (ASF3). Other participants were clear: “Everyone has different opinions” (ASF9). For these students, there was no doubt that differences would occur since “(...) we can all have different opinions on what makes Canada, Canada” (ASF16).

Participants often pointed out that contrasts would be fed by the various sense of belonging another person would feel towards a group or a culture. A participant explained that “(...) if it doesn't apply to someone it probably wouldn't be quite as important” (ASF20). Another one said “(...) people with different like background choose different things (...)” (ASM24). Examples were sometimes given to illustrate how the sense of belonging could change a person's perspective: “(...) one of my friends in the class, she is, like her family's French I think on one side or both, so she would, she talked a lot about the Acadian like being deported” (ASF13). Other referred to their own story to present the possible variations between people: “If you are from aboriginal descent you might include a lot more about native history than I have here 'cause as I said I summed up ten of thousands of years in a single picture” (ASM14).

Secondly, I questioned the participants about the choices a third or fourth grader would make if they were completing the same activity. I then went on to ask them about the point of view of an older person such as their parents or grand-parents.

For some participants, the first question was challenging. They had a hard time to imagine what a third or fourth grader would put on his/her story of Canada. Some

participants did not "remember doing history in elementary school" (ASF9) while others thought about their younger siblings. In general, participants imagined that an elementary student "don't really know a lot about history" (ASF20) because of a lack of experience: the younger someone is the least he/she experienced life, therefore the person's historical knowledge is mostly related to current events, what a parent might have taught and what has been learned in school.

Although various answers were given about what elementary students might learn in school, a recurring theme was the wars. A participant explained: "We do talk about like the world wars a lot in our classes" (ASF10). Another one gave a similar answer explaining the importance of the wars not only in school but also in the community showing the influence of public spaces on students' knowledge: "Peut-être quelque chose avec les guerres mondiales, j'trouve avec ça parce qu'on parle beaucoup et c'est quelque chose comme à chaque année que, au moins à l'école, on en parle beaucoup dans la communauté aussi" (FSF2).

According to the participants, older people would also know a lot about both world wars mostly because of their age and experience. As a matter of fact, in general, participants thought that their parents or grandparents would "have more like knowledge of historic events because they were closer to it" (ASF3). The answers also show the importance given to "things that've impacted their lives" such as the world and cold wars since "they probably would have lived for most of what came after World War 2" (ASM14). Experience was definitely significant as presented by this participant who was talking about an older person's historical knowledge: "Probably things they lived through that they know how badly it affected everyone" (ASF21).

High school students also viewed the older generation as less opened-minded assuming that some of them "would not put LGBTQ rights 'cause they're very like old fashion and set in their ways" (ASF10) while another underlined how certain individuals such as her uncle "have problems with aboriginal people" (ASF11). Again, for the participant, personal experience was fundamental to significance. Whether an element was worth being on a timeline depended on the person's background and interpretation.

Interestingly, three participants from the Francophone district pointed out an element related to the French "ancêtres" or the Acadians' deportation. Even the participant who did not identify as Acadian and considered the French history element as being the least important of her story admitted that for her mother's side of the family "la déportation acadienne" would be a significant element. Even if the participants from the Anglophone sector viewed a difference between their generation and the older one, a specific element characterize the students from the Francophone district: it is not because a member of their family considers his/her linguistic roots important that this feeling will be passed on to the next generation.

Thirdly, I probed the participants to know what they thought another ethnic group of students might choose to put on their story of Canada. Besides one participant who declared that "[f]or the most part, they would have the same things (...) Because... Like we go through the same education system and like I kind of chose things to do with Canada like not necessarily to do with my ethnicity" (ASM24), the others argued that a group of students coming from a different ethnic group would have distinct elements depending on their ethnicity and their background.

As a matter of fact, participants considered that historical or personal experiences would definitely influence other's narratives. A young woman presented her idea after talking about her own choices related to her ties with Scotland and the importance of the late European immigration: "Yeah, I think maybe different choices because again, they probably have pinnacle moments in Canada more important to them." She went on and explained how Japanese and Chinese immigrants historically worked on the railroad and how Asian students "(...) would have put them in there and their story 'cause that's probably, it could have been where some of their story started" (ASF23). Another participant clearly described how personal experiences had a role in someone else's choice:

ils vont mettre des choses différentes par rapport à ce que eux y ont vécu, à leurs expériences, par rapport à ce que eux y vivent en ce moment, donc ça dépend du groupe ethnique (...) par rapport à ce qui les concerne, les enjeux qui les concernent aujourd'hui (...) (FSF2).

Just like this participant, eight others gave a general answer without specific group example although the reasoning behind their choices was usually explained and varied from one to another. For example, as opposed to the participant who believed the educational system provided a commonality between students no matter their ethnic background, this participant thought that education was one of the reason for the existing discrepancies "[b]ecause I think that the Canadian history since it's so big and so like diverse like everyone is kind of taught differently, every like culture is taught differently about it" (ASF13). Another participant focused on the treatment of ethnic group explaining that "(...) their choices would probably have a lot to do with like how they have been treated especially in terms of racism and whatnot" (ASF20).

Eleven of them illustrated their point of view with the First Nations' past and present situation as an example to explain their thoughts. Participants often pointed out the challenges faced by the group and the possible implications for their story of Canada:

I think if you got people whose heritage came from like... whose ancestors were in residential schools, like if you had some Aboriginal People, I can imagine that some of their views on Canada would be much more negative than my own.
(ASM8)

A participant explained that "Indigenous People (...) would probably focus more on how... like the treatment of Indigenous People through the past 'cause that has been problematic" (ASF2) while another described how the elements on their story would be different "because there's a lot going on with First Nations and with like education and mental health with them" (ASF22).

In the end, the answers demonstrated that grade 12 students considered that someone's ethnicity was important when thinking about the past, which had to have an impact on people's lives and how they determine what is historically important. A participant summarized this idea in his answer:

Well, it depends on your ethnicity. Like if you're African-American you probably want to put more about slavery, like you'd probably say when it started and when it was abolished, and like when African-American people were like taken from Africa like by Europeans. They probably would have more of that on it because that's what affected them and their family the most (ASF11).

Interestingly, when answering this question, the participants never used the Acadians as an example as if participants considered that Acadians might have a different point of view about what is important on their story of Canada without considering them as being from another ethnic group.

Furthermore, students do not seem to develop a sense of belonging by only studying in a second language like French immersion. As a matter of fact, out of fourteen students of French immersion, only six of them mentioned an element related to the French or Acadia. Two of these six participants even considered the French of Acadian element as being the least important in their list because, as one of them explained, “(...) I’m not French at all besides French immersion” (ASF13).

I transcribed and analyzed the last two questions of the interviews through Social Identity Theory lens. Prior to my research, I thought participants would demonstrate a higher sense of belonging throughout their answers, so I was surprised to discover that students did not put any emphasis on their social group apart from when asked directly what the *other* or another ethnic group would think. Only a few students provided answers that demonstrated tensions between two social groups. Usually, participants did not talk about their own feelings or thoughts although they most likely gave an example from someone belonging to their group. A student who chose to put on her story many social issues and difficult moments in Canada’s past explained why “a lot of people would say like ‘Oh, this isn’t Canadian, so this doesn’t make up *our* identity’, because of how the, how negative a lot of *them* are for a lot of the people that are in the country” (ASF21). Another student revealed possible tensions between Canadians of European decent and First Nations: “(...) *they* don’t really wanna give the Native Americans credit almost for being the first ones here. It’s kind of like ‘Oh yeah! *They* were the first ones here but *we* made it better’ type thing” (ASF10). The answer pointed out the enhanced value of the in-group compared to the out-group who was discredited. Even if the

student did not express her personal feelings, her discourse demonstrated one of the possible views of a particular group toward another.

These two answers are the exceptions in my research besides a student who assumed that certain issues such as LGBTQ rights were “like a Canadian thing” as opposed to “a First Nation thing.” For her, an Aboriginal student would likely talk about “major fights kind of thing between *their* nations, like coming from *their* background and how... *they* got to fight for *their* land” (ASF22). Without presenting a confrontational relationship between the in-group and the out-group, she stated a classic vision of First Nations situation in Canada excluding the ethnicity from common issues.

Nevertheless, the majority considered that most differences between individuals would depend “on your culture and stuff. Like the First Nations people would remember more of like *their* stuff (...) so it just depends on your identity” (ASM5). Since the sample of this research is limited, it would be interesting to verify whether students throughout the province shared the same vision or whether actual tensions are tangible between various social groups.

Summary

Overall, students’ storylines followed a simplistic and linear pattern adopting an idea of progression and starting with what they considered as the beginning of Canada either introducing First Nations establishments or Confederation. Then, most stories presented the struggles and problems faced by the country like the fights between the French and the English or the aboriginals being forced into residential schools. Usually, they finished with the ‘coming of age’ of Canada through its progress, and its reputation

in the world as a peacekeeping and multicultural country. Participants' narratives displayed similar recurring themes such as the First Nations struggles, the Europeans' presence and influence, and the importance of both World Wars for the development of Canada.

Students' identities influenced their assessment of what they considered historically significant although participants identifying partly as Acadians or French Canadians rarely regarded their identity as important in their decision-making process. Furthermore, participants' assessment of historical significance was deeply related to who they are. In order for them to consider something important, they had to feel a connection to this element either through the impact on their life and family, or experiences they lived. They also recognized that other people or ethnic groups would probably choose differently than them because of diverse lived experiences. In order to assess historical significance, participants used multiple guideposts developed by Seixas and Morton (2013) showing a certain level of proficiency regarding the application of historical thinking concepts when reflecting about the past. The implications of these results will be further developed in the following discussion section.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Similarities Instead of Differences

My assumptions were that students from the Francophone district would assess historical significance differently because of their ethnicity, and their schooling experience in a French setting. This was not the case in this study. Participants from the Francophone and the Anglophone sectors had no major discrepancies when assessing what they considered historically significant in relation to their identity. The results are all the more surprising since the province is constantly facing political, social, and educational debates regarding its bilingualism, and the capital city, Fredericton, is generally at the center of it. We only have to think about the controversy surrounding the school busing system (Poitras, 2016) or the conversation around the entry point to the early French immersion program (White, 2016). Since students are certainly aware of these issues and the fact that they attend a separate school system, I assumed they would be more sensitive to these existing tensions and react to them. As a teacher and a Francophone living in Fredericton, I witness many debates over the bilingual situation of the province, and I expected student to mirror these tensions as demonstrated in another study in Northern Ireland where Catholic and Protestant students showed how their religious identity influenced their national narrative (Barton, 2005).

Actually, in their responses, Francophone or Anglophone participants did not show signs of tensions or resentment regarding the other group, and their stories of Canada were similar. In comparison, young Québécois cultivate a conflicting master

narrative based on struggle and survival (*la survivance*) in a country dominated by the English (Létourneau & Moisan, 2004; Létourneau, 2006; Létourneau & Caritey, 2008; Létourneau, Lévesque & Gani, 2013). In *A Giant with Clay Feet*, researchers pointed out that the “conflicting narratives of nation have their origins in the bilingual nature of Canada” (Létourneau, Lévesque & Gani, 2013, p.156). Although New Brunswick is the only official bilingual Canadian province, similar conflicting narratives do not seem to exist in Fredericton between students from both sectors. Instead, students from Francophone and Anglophone districts share a mostly common narrative about the construction of the nation. There might be multiple reasons for these similarities.

Most Francophone families in Fredericton are made of a Francophone parent and a parent from another ethnic group usually speaking another language, an exogamous family. Some would argue that this situation has an impact on a child identity even if the school is constantly looking for ways to “faire mousser la construction identitaire” (Roy-Comeau, 2016). As a matter of fact, Landry and Allard (1997) addressed the issue in a research focusing on the linguistic development of Francophone students living in a minority context and born in an exogamous family. The researchers questioned whether or not a link existed between exogamy and assimilation. The results showed that the majority of students coming from an exogamous family and living in a minority setting had a higher level of linguistic competencies in English even if they were enrolled in a Francophone school. The dominance of higher linguistic competencies in French were exceptional in a minority setting. Therefore, Landry and Allard concluded that a link existed between exogamy and assimilation warning that the former was not necessarily a factor in itself, but rather the result of a combination of familial dynamic and school

experience. Francophone students born in an exogamous family in Fredericton are certainly not an exception to the rule, and their assimilation to the English dominant community is a significant possibility.

Furthermore, a child does not need a Francophone parent to attend the French school. For example, one participant from the Francophone sector came from a family made of an Anglophone father and a Japanese mother. Her sense of belonging is not different from the French immersion students; she does not feel connected to the history she learned as demonstrated by her answer when asked about the least important element of her story: “(...) comme les tensions entre les Français et les Anglais juste parce que... moi j’suis pas Française ni Anglaise pis c’est quekchose qui a eu lieu vraiment longtemps passé pis j’suis pas Acadienne non plus” (FSF5).

Annie Pilote, a sociologist from Université Laval, noted the same phenomenon in an article published in 2010 where she compared the linguistic identity of high school students from a Francophone minority living in Fredericton to an Anglophone minority from Québec city. Anglophone students attending the Francophone school in a minority setting did not necessarily claim ownership of the school’s linguistic project. As a matter of fact, in my research, even the participant identifying as French-Canadian and Acadian suggested that her identity had nothing to do with the elements on her story of Canada. Although aware of living in a minority community, she simply did not feel connected to her French heritage.

In another research, Landry, Deveau and Allard (2006) studied bilingual identities in relation with the Francophone community’s vitality in a minority setting. It is important to note that bilingual identities are comprised of two languages, French and

English in this case, one usually dominating the other one. Landry, Deveau and Allard (2006) noticed an important link between students' identities and the influence of either communities on their social development. When students' social life is predominantly happening in English, their bilingual identity is associated with a weakening of their Francophone identity, and a growing dominance of the Anglophone identity. In order to develop a stronger sense of belonging to their Francophone identity, students have to have access to a strong linguistic community offering them the possibility of cultivating their sense of belonging. Although the present research was not focusing on students' life outside of the school setting, Fredericton predominantly Anglophone linguistic context might have played a role in students' identity development and their assessment of historical significance.

Another possible reason explaining the absence of shared identity between students from the Francophone sector could be attributed to the later development of their linguistic uniqueness. An example could be one of the teacher from the Francophone sector. Her case is interesting because, as a student, she attended the school where she is teaching and she is also from an exogamous family. Yet, her sense of belonging is strong; she feels connected to her Francophone roots, and she values the language in which she teaches. Therefore, I think it is important to stress that "[i]dentity should not be perceived as an objective stable trait. It is in many ways situational, enacted, and relational. Students' awareness of identity can be aroused and constructed through encounter" (Goldberg, 2013, p.58). Students' identity will change over time through their experiences.

Again, Annie Pilote in collaboration with Marie-Odile Magnan (2012) conducted a study with students from different Canadian Francophone universities. All the participants in her research had previously studied in a Francophone high school set in a minority environment. Pilote and Magnan wanted to know how students' identity might have changed over time, after moving in a larger Francophone environment, and in contact with other French speakers such as Québécois. They discovered that the students' identity had changed to become more focused on the linguistic aspect that characterized them. Interestingly, just a few participants actually defined themselves as bilingual. For Pilote, this discovery was surprising since most high school students from her previous study had expressed being bilingual prior to be anything else. In my research, out of the five students from the Francophone sector, two of them explained the importance of their bilingualism over the connection to their French roots.

Pilote's study shows that a person's identity is fluid and in constant evolution. These results bring interesting questions related to my subject: Would university students identifying more strongly to their linguistic roots assess historical significance as they were prior to their transformation? Would students' Canadian narratives change and give more significance to linguistic events left aside by their younger *bilingual* selves? A longitudinal study following students after their high school graduation could offer possible answers.

European Dominant Narrative

Another surprising finding is the fact that students' narratives from both districts gave a dominant place to the European contribution to Canada's transformation. As in

Peck (2010) study, participants with a European background considered their ancestors' influence the most significant element in their story of Canada. Although a place is given to the indigenous presence and key moments of certain minorities such as the women right to vote and the development of LGBTQ rights with the legalization of gay marriage, the participants' stories were dominated by the European history and its importance: colonization, European migrations, French-English wars, etc. Maybe, after all, we have not killed traditional Canadian history as suggested by J. L. Granatstein. In his 1998 book, he argued that the fragmentation of history in micro-stories created ignorant history teachers therefore educators incapable of teaching a decent history course to their students.

The results presented here raise questions about his conclusions. One of Granatstein's problems with history classes was related to the multicultural politic developed by the government over the years cumulating with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. For Granastein, this multiculturalism politic diluted history curricula because the programs needed to pay more attention to multicultural content leaving aside mainstream Canadian history. Interestingly, Seixas (2012) explained how, even if immigration is "a second key theme in Canadian history, [it] has not challenged or threatened the idea of two European founding peoples" (p.126). After pointing out the so-called fragmentation of history by Granatstein, Seixas goes on describing how "immigrants were included in the narratives of the modern Canadian State as successfully as they had been integrated into the fabric of Canadian society" (p.126).

In my research, participants who considered immigration or diversity as being the most important element of their story also included the European colonization and

the conflicts between the French and the English in their narrative, although the latter usually being the least important when considering their own identity. For example, one of the participant who stressed the importance of Canadian diversity identified as Philippino and arrived in Canada two years ago: “Diversity. Diversity like being in different... being in one place where there’s different cultures, different like personalities, different, how do you call that? Races. Just coming together that’s basically what the world needs right now” (ASM19). Even if the Canadian *mosaic* is the most significant element of his narrative, he started his story by telling me that “British and French tries to take this land and say “This is our, now.” And then, First Nations says “No!” They gonna fight for it” (ASM19). The story might be oversimplified but the participant still recognized the role played by the first Europeans colonizing the country.

This is not to say that all immigrants could or would recount the history of Canada the same way. The sample is not representative of the population. Other factors such as interest and a colonial past where similarities can be drawn between Canada and the Philippines have to be taken into consideration. Despite everything, the participant’s narrative raises other questions: Where did he learn his history since he never attended a Canadian history course? What kind of history do we want the immigrants to learn?

Nevertheless, if there is a place left to immigration and the struggles of the minorities in the present history programs, it did not erase the “grand narrative” of English Canada as Timothy Stanley (2000) described in his article “Why I Killed Canadian History”. In fact, students’ accounts often start with the Europeans’ presence “tracing the progress of European-derived communities and institutions” (p.82) as mentioned by this participant who explained her story of Canada saying that “when they

[Europeans] came, they kind of urbanized it more and (...) Canada became more technology advanced and railroads were build” (ASF25). Another student pointed out the importance of the Europeans contribution saying that “Canada in its current form is more of a European country across the continent than... an aboriginal country” (ASM14).

Although I feel there is a noticeable awareness of the indigenous issues related to the controversy surrounding the residential schools, the students’ story was often limited to this aspect or the fact that “the First Nations peoples [were] flourishing in North America” (ASM24) before the arrival of the Europeans. Too often, participants’ narrative “rarely mentions Aboriginal people except as obstacles to European progress” (Stanley, 2000, p.82). For example, a student explained to me that “while there was people here before”, the discovery of Canada by Europeans was probably the most important element in his narrative because, prior to this point, “Canada as a country wasn’t a... thing” (ASM14).

High school students were also prone to “emphasizes an inevitable, largely peaceful, and natural progress to the current configurations of the nation-state” (p.84) like this participant who explained that the Suez Crisis was the most significant element in his narrative because “we started being the international peace keeping force” (ASM24). Another one described the importance of “Canada becoming a country by asking nicely or Canada's first peacekeeping mission”. He went on telling me his reasoning: “I personally feel that there’s some countries that are bordering on being warmongers and I'm glad that Canada is not like that” (ASM8). These are few examples

that show how students were, indeed, “celebrating modern Canada as the place that redeems the evils of the past and of the rest of the world” (p.84).

A master narrative built on the idea of progress is not unique to Canada. Barton and Levstik (2004) describe how American students characterized the dominant narrative using the concepts of freedom and progress. In their findings, White American students considered “European Americans responsible for the country’s progress and development” (p.175) following a similar narrative as some of the participants from the present study. The problem is that if students see the results of history only in terms of progress, it impoverishes their ability to understand contemporary issues. Historical events and discoveries have rarely only positive consequences, and are rarely affecting various groups similarly. Barton and Levstik argue that educators need to “involve students in continual considerations of the advantages and disadvantages of historical changes and events” (p.181) because not “everything that happens is for the best” (p.182). The danger of a master narrative filled with oversimplified concepts such as freedom and progress or, in a Canadian context, peacefulness and progress is to leave students “ill equipped to engage in reasoned judgments about either history or the present” (p.177).

Although students’ descriptions from the Francophone district leaned towards this “grand narrative”, their explanations were more nuanced. For example, a participant clarified what happened after Confederation talking about “l’évolution de notre gouvernement en plus des matières d’immigration et des immigrants qui ont venus d’autres pays pour peupler notre nouvelle nation. Et avec ça la création d’un vrai pays en tout”. She continued on adding that Canada was now known as “le pays poli qui est

super gentil, qui est accueillant envers tout le monde” (FSF4), but she finished her statement by noting that the country was facing “des affaires de racisme” and that few people were fighting against it. This discrepancy was also noted in some accounts recorded by Barton and Levstik (2004) who pointed out that even when students were cynical or critical “they still voiced their criticisms within the framework of the same overarching narrative” (p.171), and participants from my own research followed a similar pattern. Even so, other factors such as the small number of participants from the Francophone sector, the absence of male participants, and the high achiever characteristic given to the five students from the Francophone high school might also have contributed to this discrepancy.

World Wars and Mythstories

Asking why students shared a relatively similar national narrative is a legitimate question. The similarities are even more mindboggling if we consider that students from the Francophone district took a mandatory Canadian history class in grade 11 while their counterparts from the Anglophone district focused on a Modern History class with an international (mostly European) focus the same year. Students from the Anglophone district only brushed over Canadian history in their grade 9 social studies class where they learned about Canada starting at the Confederation and barely touching the country's Great War involvement.

Yet, a total of eleven participants from the Anglophone district and three participants from the Francophone district declared that Canada's participation in the First World War built the nation that we know today or gave the country the opportunity

to become finally independent from Great Britain. A participant clearly explained that “After World War 1, the British finally gave independence to Canada” (ASM19). Another student from the Francophone sector who spent ten minutes staring at her blank page before writing her story described this independence in her own words: “Le Canada a participé dans ça et ça a vraiment montré qu’on était un pays pas juste comme un p’tit *sidekick* de l’Angleterre” (FSF3). Others mentioned how Canada decided to participate to the Second World War since they were now able to make their own decisions: “I added our independence from Britain and the choice to go to war or to stay home like our independence to have that choice” (ASF21). And this student who told me that “Canada enters the Second World War as an independent country and helps the allies win” (ASM5).

There is no doubt; participants’ answers are definitely far from Granatstein’s (1998) idea that “With the exception of the ever-dwindling band of veterans, the war is only a dim memory” (p.120). In fact, as a whole, both World Wars dominated students’ narratives showing that the Canadian collective memory surrounding the country’s creation is embedded in an enduring myth. Admittedly, students’ accounts were not detailed, but this fits the oversimplification in which mythstories are created. Most participants were even assuming that third or fourth graders would know about the wars because students “do talk about like the world wars a lot” (ASF10) in their classes.

In their book *The Vimy Trap*, McKay and Swift (2016) suggest many reasons behind the presence of this “highly dubious, mythologized narrative” (p.7). First of all, the authors explain how “since the 1980’s Canadians have been told again and again that Vimy represented the ‘birth of a nation’” (p.7) contributing to the creation of a collective

memory that is repeated on many public places. For instance, earlier this July, General Rick Hillier was interviewed on CBC's Power and Politics where he talked about Canada's contribution to the First World War and the lack of awareness surrounding "the founding pillar of our great nation." He kept on going saying how the conflict was an "incredible learning experience" for the country, and he felt that the younger generation did not know about "the incredible impact" the war had on Canada. The problem is that students' historical knowledge is not limited to what they learn in class. Multiple scholars have shown the influence of public history (Barton, & Levstik, 2004; Lévesque, 2008; Seixas, & Peck, 2004; Wineburg, 1999) on students who are coming in class with prior knowledge gathered here and there. The complication lies in the fact that public history does not give a lot of space for critical thinking or the exploration of multiple perspectives, and the "more often it is repeated, the truer it seems: Vimy Ridge – birth of the nation" (McKay & Swift, 2016, p.210).

Furthermore, teachers are sometimes misunderstood by students resulting in the reinforcement of a mythical narrative rather than disrupting any previous knowledge. For example, a participant told me how his teacher "was pretty good at driving the point home that Canada was a very, very key factor in actually taking Vimy Ridge" (ASM8). Even if the student did not employ words feeding the idea that Vimy symbolized the birth of the nation, his discourse presented a level of what McKay and Swift (2016) call Vimyism which can be explained as "a network of ideas and symbols that center on how Canada's Great War experience somehow represents the country's supreme triumph" (p.9), and existing in many public places.

The presence of an enduring myth embedded in a master narrative creates, again, confusion when history education “is supposed to generate an understanding of the relation between past and present” (Carretero & van Alphen, 2014, p.309). Students have to be able to distinguish the present from the past therefore, they have to have access to multiple accounts of the past in order to critically analyze what happened. Again, educators have to pay attention to students’ prior knowledge, in this case the presence of a founding myth such as Vimy Ridge, in order to avoid any confusion that could limit students’ “understanding of the complex and dynamic present” (Carretero & van Alphen, 2014, p.309) through the study of the past. Although my results are drawn from a small sample, the findings remain interesting and more research could delve into the dominant master narrative’s consequences on students understanding of the past.

First Nations Awareness

A surprising result for me was the presence of a First Nations awareness among the participants’ narratives. My surprise came from two observations. Social studies and history curricula in New Brunswick do not emphasize indigenous studies, and many teachers I know feel uncomfortable tackling the subject. Where is the awareness coming from? We can speculate that since the publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report in 2015 a lot of conversations occurred in the media, and in public places giving First Nations’ issues a central place in Canadian news. The commission was launched in 2008 and shed light on the residential schools system put in place by the government in the late 1800’s. I previously mentioned the importance of public places in the making of students’ understanding of historical knowledge. The discussions

surrounding the existence of residential schools and their long-lasting effects on First Nations peoples are certainly not an exception to the rule.

When the report Call to Action was published in 2015, another conversation started regarding the place of indigenous studies in schools' curricula bringing the issue at the center of educational and political leaders concerns. Although history program's changes are slow to come, at least in New Brunswick, facing multiple challenges such as the preconceived idea that enough is already taught (Vowel, 2015) and teachers' resistance to implement indigenous perspectives (Scott & Gani, 2018), students might have witnessed fragment of the argument in their daily lives. Schools have also taken initiative to promote an indigenous awareness and, in the Anglophone district where I teach, for example, various teachers' development workshops have been offered as well as special indigenous centered activities proposed to the students. All these factors might have contributed to the development of students' indigenous perception.

The second observation comes from the fact that even if students' answers presented an awareness of the indigenous past history and present situation, participants did not consider the issue significant for them. One student explained it clearly: "I would say the First Nations people flourish in North America would be the least important to me just because I have no First Nations heritage so I don't really connect as much with it" (ASM24). Interestingly, a student from the Francophone sector considered the First Nations as being the most important element in her story of Canada explaining

(...) le fait que j'suis canadienne comme je dois être, pas non seulement au courant, mais sensibilisée du fait que la terre que nous sommes c'est les Premières Nations pis que le pays n'a pas commencé avec les colons mais avec eux, comme c'était eux le début et même si moi j'suis pas Premières Nations, je dois respecter ça (FSF4).

She was an exception and it is not possible to draw any conclusion or make any generalizations from her assessment since another student from the same school told me how she was not influenced by the indigenous ‘business’: ‘j’dirais que toute l’affaire de autochtone, bien sûr chus pas autochtone alors ça m’influence pas directement” (FSF1). Overall, most students did not feel connected to the issue. Yet students’ engagement is essential to create meaningful connections. Seixas (1994) explains how “[a] historical phenomenon becomes significant if and only if members of a contemporary community can draw relationships between it and other historical phenomena and ultimately to themselves” (p.285). Since participants considered the First Nations elements the least significant element in their narrative, we can assume that they were not able to draw a relationship between the indigenous question and themselves.

One of the problem regarding students’ engagement might lie in the shared master narrative presented in the previous section. This master narrative is mostly built on Europeans presence and their contribution to the construction of the country. Another important element of the master narrative is Canada’s involvement in both World Wars and its consequences for the country’s identity. The Indigenous are left out of the equation. First Nations peoples are too often seen as the *other*, the out-group, creating a separation and a distance with the in-group. The problem is “that individuals processing information about in-group or out-group members almost invariably favor the in-group” (Goldberg, 2013, p.36). Is it really possible then to reconcile First Nations’ contributions in the making of Canada with this master narrative built on European influence? Tupper (2012) believes the situation has the potential danger “to render nearly impossible reconciliation and renewed partnerships with First Nations people” (p.146).

Furthermore, Tupper (2012) points out that media coverage usually has the consequences of nurturing persisting prejudice regarding Indigenous people. She argues that “[a]s long as these discourses remain uninterrupted, there is little if any need for students to rethink their own conceptions of the past, broaden their understandings of social reality or engage differently as citizens of Canada” (p.146). Thus, again, the importance for teachers to deconstruct students’ preconceptions to insure the possibilities of understanding any new knowledge (Sears, 2017). Tupper offers potential solutions through treaty education since it “requires all students to consider how their own lives and privileges are connected to and may be traced through, treaties and the treaty relationship” (p.147). For me, the challenge lies in the implantation of treaty education within current curricula because “[t]hose who have been left out of the grand narrative cannot be included simply by having their stories tacked on as separate chapters in what might be thought of as a multicultural history” (Stanley, 2000, p.85). In order to be significant, educators have to pay attention to what they teach such as treaties’ relationship, but they also have to pay attention to how they deconstruct and rebuilt students’ historical knowledge. Significance is not self-explanatory.

Historical Significance and Ethnic Identity

The results showed that participants’ identity played a certain role in the assessment of historical significance which is similar to Peck’s (2010) findings. Although my study focused on Francophone versus Anglophone identities, where Peck took into consideration students’ identifications in a broader context including students from a wider range of ethnic backgrounds, students expressed the influence of ethnic

identity on someone's choice. They were sometimes hesitant regarding the influence on their own choices, but when they were asked if a student from another ethnic group would agree with their story, the majority pointed out that others would "probably remember more stuff that happened to their ethnic groups" (ASF17). Therefore, we can suggest that there is a "clear degree of influence of identity needs on learners' engagement in historical reasoning and understanding" (Goldberg, 2013, p.55). This is important to consider since Fredericton, and the rest of Canada, is more and more receiving people from various part of the world. Schools have to adapt and teachers will have to deconstruct and confront the students' master narratives or education system might fail to engage students in critical thinking. As a matter of fact, "understanding students' prior knowledge is an important component of history teaching, as the knowledge has to be confronted and disrupted before new learning can take place" (Sears, 2017, p.47).

Students' assessment of historical significance was deeply personal and related to their everyday life. Participants connected their most and least important elements in relation with their experience. As shown in other studies (Apostolidou, 2012; Avaroğulları, & Kolcu, 2016; Seixas, 1994), an element had to be linked to students' life story in order to be considered significant. The opposite was also true. If they did not feel concerned by an issue, they did not consider the element significant in their life even if they recognized the importance the same element could have for someone else. This is important because it raises Seixas (1994) question of engagement and meaningfulness in students' understanding of the past. In order to have a lasting effect on students, personal connections have to be made between what is learned and

students' life. There is no doubt that "students sense the importance of learning about their past" (Clark, 2009, p.746), but teachers have to widen students' sense of belonging or they might fail to create the meaningful connections that enable students to have a long-lasting understanding of their past. For Clark (2009), only "critical historical engagement in the classroom, rather than any return to 'the facts' is key to connecting students with their national histories" (p.745).

Nonetheless, results show that high school students in Fredericton use, probably unintentionally, some of Seixas and Morton (2013) guideposts to historical significance. The situation might be attributed not only to curriculum where outcomes aim to developed particular competences including historical thinking concepts but also to teachers' professional development. As an educator in the Anglophone sector participating at teachers' professional development in the Francophone sector, I have witnessed the inclusion of Seixas and Morton's methods in history teaching workshops. Therefore, participants often explained the reasoning behind their answers adopting the vocabulary presented by the authors of *The Big Six*. As a matter of fact, students were able to recognize that an event had to have resulted in change and have "deep consequences for many people over a long period of time" (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 10). For example, a participant from the English sector explained to me that she chose the Europeans arrival as the most significant element in her story because she thought

Canada would really be different if it was still sort of like the Native Americans that kind of like would live their way now 'cause when the Europeans came they kind of change the way of life and everything. So I think they had a huge impact on history. (ASF25)

Although she did not explain in details how the Europeans changed the way of life in Canada, she was clear about her reasoning: the Europeans settlers had a long-lasting impact on everybody living on what would become Canada. Another student pointed out that differences in the assessment of historical significance depend

on your ethnicity. Like if you're African-American you probably want to put more about slavery, like you'd probably say when it started and when it was abolished, and like when African-American people were like taken from Africa like by Europeans. They probably would have more of that on it because that's what affected them and their family the most. (ASF11)

Not only events are historically significant because of their impact on society but it also “varies over time and from group to group” (Seixas & Morton, 2013, p. 10). When talking about what older people would put on their story of Canada, participants mentioned how “generation definitely changes the way that they would set up their timeline” (ASF10), and how “they probably have more important things that were important to them, and that they experienced” (ASF23).

Participants were also able to express how an element had to be revealing and to shed light on an enduring issue (Seixas & Morton, 2013) in order to be considered historically significant for an ethnic group: “(...) there's a lot going on with First Nations and with like education and mental health with them. Specifically, because there's obviously Indigenous women missing” (ASF22). Another talked about the point of view of an Indigenous student regarding the historical significance of residential schools and their effects: “I definitely think that Canada has some dark things, dark past towards Aboriginal people, and it wasn't exactly very nice, and I think we could be doing more now to apologize to these people” (ASM8).

Although students were using key words to assess historical significance showing a certain level of competencies, they also did not feel connected to important issues such as the First Nations present situation or the bilingualism challenges faced by the province. The situation brings central questions raised by Clark (2009) and Sears (2017): Are we, as educators, doing a good job at confronting and disrupting students' prior knowledge? How can teachers bring students to feel connected to their common past and develop critical thinking towards contemporary issues? How can we truly engage students in their historical learning process?

To sum up, the results showed that students made deep personal connections when assessing historical significance. They also revealed that ethnic identities played a role in the assessment of what students considered historically significant. These findings point out the importance of engagement in students' learning process, and the relevance, for educators, of reflecting on their practice in order to create the essential connections needed for students to have durable historical understanding of the past.

Conclusion

This research was driven by the desire to understand the implications of having a dual educational system on students' identity. More specifically, this research aimed to answer two questions: Do high school students' identities influence their perception of what they consider historically significant? Is there a discrepancy between high school students from English and French districts when asking them to consider what is historically significant in Canadian past events? Results showed that students' identity influences their ascription of historical significance, but that similarities rather than differences existed between students from the Francophone and Anglophone sectors. Furthermore, students from both sectors did not seem to consider Francophone or Acadian as another ethnic group. It would be interesting to ask students directly about their thoughts on what they consider an ethnic group, but during my interviews, they never gave an example related to these particular groups when they were asked if another ethnicity would choose the same elements as them.

The implications of this analysis remain limited because of the Francophone diversity in New Brunswick where multiple identities can be found in different regions of the province. Therefore, more research needs to be done in order to verify whether students from various regions of the province perceive their identities differently and whether students are assessing historical significance in a similar way. Given Pilote and Magnan's (2012) findings regarding the identity transformation of Francophone university students coming from a minority context, many questions arise: Would university students identifying more strongly to their linguistic roots assess historical significance as they were prior to their transformation? Would students' Canadian

narratives change and give more significance to linguistic events left aside by their younger *bilingual* selves? A longitudinal research could shed some light on the implications behind the shifting Francophone identity on the ascription of historical significance.

Overall, the results surprised me. I thought I would have a better sense of the Francophone and Anglophone relations in Fredericton after my research. I found myself facing a situation where language disparities seemed trivial to the youth. Anglophone students from the French Immersion program did not feel connected to French Canadian past events and students from the Francophone sector expressed their detachment even when their roots were partially Acadian or French Canadian. These findings are pointing out the possible assimilation of the Francophone minority in Fredericton and can give us a chance to reflect on how we treat as a whole the province bilingual situation. Are we too much focusing on the usefulness of French? Are we able to engage students to consider present and past Francophone contribution in the making of the province? Although this research does not pretend to propose an answer to these questions, a social examination of our mutual understanding of the present Francophone and Anglophone relationships might be worth taking.

Throughout this research, the idea of students' engagement emerged stressing the point of its importance in order to create meaningful and long-lasting connections without which students cannot make sense of the past (Clark, 2009; Sears, 2009; Seixas, 1994). This is true for the province bilingual situation but also for the place given to the First Nations in our curricula.

As a matter of fact, students' stories of Canada reflected a master narrative built around the Europeans' settlement and contribution as well as country's participation to both World Wars giving Canada its righteous place in the world. The problem lies in the fact that master narratives limit historical thinking (Carretero & van Alphen, 2014) and create confusion rather than helping students making sense of the present by looking at the past (Seixas, 1994). Therefore, teachers must take into consideration students' pre-constructed narratives shaped in part by our collective memory. Reflecting on my own practice, I wonder whether I truly start teaching from students' prior knowledge. Am I confronting and disrupting students' prior knowledge (Sears, 2017)? I question my students on what they know about a period or an event. I ask my students to write and share their thoughts on what they think they know or not. As much as I can, I present multiple perspectives, and ask them uneasy questions. But is it enough? How many do I reach? How can I make a better job at engaging my students?

The solution does not only lie in teachers' goodwill but also in the way educational authorities approach social studies curriculum and teachers' placement. Sears (2009) who recognizes the importance of taking into consideration students' prior knowledge stresses that "practitioners should not be regarded simply as implementers of policies developed by others but as colleagues in a process of deciding what to do and how to do it" (p.160). In order to be fit to remodel students' frameworks, educators should not only be involved in the decision process regarding school programs, but also being placed appropriately in an educational world that often prioritize a practice where teachers are "being assigned to teach subjects or areas for which they have no academic background themselves" (p.167). Ultimately, can we expect teachers to engage students

and offer alternative frameworks if they are not, themselves, familiar with the complexity of the discipline?

One of the issues emerging from the results was students' connections to the indigenous questions. Many students showed an awareness of the First Nations' situation but they often did not consider the element historically significant in terms of their own identity. Tupper (2012) suggests focusing our teaching on treaties and the realization that we are all treaty people; therefore we are all connected to the indigenous question. Students' engagement depends on their sense of connection to the subject. Therefore, as governments are following the Call for Actions (2015) recommendations and creating curricula centered on indigenous perspectives, they have to use caution when implementing these new programs. As Seixas (2012) explains:

Stories are part of history education, but stories are not the whole story. Adding more topics to the curriculum in an increasingly diverse society is not the solution. Nor is simply telling different stories. We need to teach students how to assess the significance of the stories, how to analyze the evidence behind the stories, how to relate to micro-stories to larger pictures of historical development, and how to unearth stories' underlying structures and implicit ethical messages (p.135).

We have to make sure that indigenous education through treaties for example does not become another subject or a new outcome simply added to existing curricula.

In a recent article, Scott and Gani (2018) reveal that although educators from Alberta largely support a new curriculum emphasis on indigenous perspectives, they are more likely to ignore it in their teaching. Multiple reasons are given to justify this behavior: lack of qualifications, absence of real indigenous perspective, and the need for various ethnic views in a multicultural country (Scott & Gani, 2018). Further, the authors mention teachers' engagement. If students need to be engaged in order to learn,

educators also have to feel connected in order to create meaningful activities, to encourage critical thinking, and to establish a favorable learning environment. Teacher's professional development has to be well rounded and well thought out as "many educators possess already established — and often deeply entrenched — interpretive frameworks, rooted in Canadian identity formations, which will cause them to resist these curricular mandates" (Scott & Gani, 2018, p.13). Time has to be given to teachers to learn from indigenous knowledge. After all, teachers might need to confront and disrupt their own knowledge in order to engage in a meaningful practice.

Since my results are drawn from a small sample, more research could be completed in order to better comprehend questions emerging from my results: How to Francophone students from around the province assess historical significance, and how their identities influence their decisions? What are the consequences of dominant master narratives' on students understanding of the past? Is it really possible to reconcile First Nations' contributions in the making of Canada with a master narrative built on European influence? Are we, as educators, doing a good job at confronting and disrupting students' prior knowledge? How can teachers bring students to feel connected to their common past and develop critical thinking towards contemporary issues? These questions demonstrate the relevance of this study and offer many research possibilities aiming to understand the influence of students' identity on their assessment of historical significance, the importance of students' engagement in indigenous education, and the role of teachers in changing preconceived frameworks.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Letter to Educational Authorities (English and French)

(To be printed on University of New Brunswick Letterhead.)

Project Title: Historical Significance as a Tool to Understand High School Students' Identity in a Bilingual Setting

Researcher: Véronique La Salle, graduate student, Faculty of Education, University of New Brunswick, vlal@unb.ca

UNB Contact and graduate student's advisor: Dr. Alan Sears, Professor, Faculty of Education, University of New Brunswick, 506-453-5178, asears@unb.ca

Dear [Director of school's name]: The purpose of this letter is to request your permission to conduct a research project with grade 12 students from [insert school's name] in [insert name of school district]. This research aims to understand the implications of having a dual educational system on students' identity. In order to do so, I want to verify whether there is a difference between high school students from Anglophone and Francophone districts when asking them to consider what is historically significant in Canadian past events.

Research procedures: I would like to conduct my research with 10 to 15 grade 12 students. Grade 12 students should have a relatively well developed sense of identity by this point in their education and personal lives.

The first step to collect data will be a questionnaire asking participants to reveal personal information such as their age, their ethnic origin, and the languages they speak. The second step consist of completing a 30 to 45 minutes activity where students have to write or draw their own Canadian history. Finally, I will conduct short interviews where students can explain their thoughts and the choices they made. The questions students will be facing will be similar to the ones they could encounter in their history class. For example, I could ask them what element of their story they consider the most important and explain to me why.

Confidentiality: Students' identities will be kept strictly confidential. All participants will be given a code number and only pseudonyms will appear in any research documents, including transcriptions of interviews. All documents will be kept in my supervisor office in a locked filing cabinet or on my password protected computer. This research is part of my Master degree and I will use these results in my thesis. In all

public documents (thesis) or presentations, students name will be kept confidential and only their given pseudonyms will be used when referring to their answers.

I have enclosed the following material to better explain the work:

1. A sample of the activity I will ask students to complete;
2. Samples of the information and consent form that will be provided to students.
3. A Certificate of Ethics of Approval: this research study has been reviewed by the UNB REB and is on file as #2018-067.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects: The plan for this study has been reviewed by the UNB REB and is on file as #2018-067. If you wish to contact someone not associated with this study to ask questions or raise concerns please contact Dr. Ellen Rose, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, UNB, erose@unb.ca, 506-452-6125.

With your approval, I would like to approach teachers and students to begin the process of securing their participation in this research project. I would, of course, be pleased to provide further information or answer any questions you might have about the work. I can be contacted at the email listed below.

Yours sincerely,

Véronique La Salle
Graduate student
Faculty of Education
University of New Brunswick
Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3
Vla1@unb.ca

Tire du projet: Historical Significance as a Tool to Understand High School Students' Identity in a Bilingual Setting

Chercheur: Véronique La Salle, graduate student, Faculty of Education, University of New Brunswick, vla1@unb.ca

Contact à UNB et superviseur de recherche: Dr. Alan Sears, Professor, Faculty of Education, University of New Brunswick, 506-453-5178, asears@unb.ca

Cher [Nom du directeur des écoles]: Le but de cette lettre est de vous demander la permission de mener un projet de recherche avec des élèves de 12e année de [ajouter le nom de l'école] du [ajouter le nom du district scolaire]. Cette recherche vise à comprendre les implications d'avoir un double système éducatif sur l'identité des étudiants. Pour ce faire, je veux vérifier s'il y a une différence identitaire entre les élèves des écoles secondaires anglophones et francophones en leur demandant de considérer ce qui est historiquement important dans les événements passés du Canada.

Procédures de recherche: J'aimerais mener mes recherches auprès de 10 à 15 élèves de 12e année. Les élèves de 12e année devraient avoir un sens identitaire relativement bien développé à ce stade de leur scolarité et de leur vie personnelle.

La première étape pour collecter des données sera un questionnaire demandant aux participants de révéler des informations personnelles telles que leur âge, leur origine ethnique et les langues parlées et comprises. La deuxième étape consiste à compléter une activité de 30 à 45 minutes où les élèves doivent écrire ou dessiner leur propre histoire canadienne. Enfin, je conduirai de courtes interviews où les étudiants pourront expliquer leurs pensées et les choix qu'ils ont faits. Les questions auxquelles les étudiants seront confrontés seront similaires à celles qu'ils pourraient rencontrer dans leur cours d'histoire. Par exemple, je pourrais leur demander quel élément de leur histoire ils considèrent le plus important et m'expliquer pourquoi.

Confidentialité: L'identité des étudiants sera strictement confidentielle. Tous les participants recevront un numéro de code et seuls des pseudonymes apparaîtront dans les documents de recherche, y compris les transcriptions des interviews. Tous les documents seront conservés dans le bureau de mon superviseur de recherche dans un classeur verrouillé ou sur mon ordinateur protégé par un mot de passe. Cette recherche fait partie de ma maîtrise et j'utiliserai ces résultats dans mon mémoire. Dans tous les documents publics (mémoire) ou présentations, le nom des étudiants sera gardé confidentiel et seuls leurs pseudonymes seront utilisés lorsqu'il sera question de leurs réponses.

J'ai joint le matériel suivant pour mieux expliquer le travail:

1. Un échantillon de l'activité que je vais demander aux élèves de compléter;

2. Des exemples du formulaire d'information et de consentement qui sera fourni aux étudiants;
3. Un certificat d'éthique d'approbation: cette étude de recherche a été examinée par le UNB REB et se trouve dans le document #xxx-xxxx.

Contact pour les préoccupations concernant les droits des sujets de recherche: Le plan de cette recherche a été examiné par le UNB REB et se trouve dans le document #xxx-xxxx. Si vous souhaitez contacter quelqu'un qui n'est pas associé avec cette recherche afin de poser des questions ou partager des inquiétudes, s'il-vous-plaît, contactez Dr. Ellen Rose, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, UNB, erose@unb.ca, 506-452-6125.

Avec votre approbation, j'aimerais approcher les directeurs et les enseignants concernés afin de commencer le processus de participation à ce projet de recherche. Bien entendu, je serais heureuse de fournir des informations supplémentaires ou de répondre à vos questions sur mon travail. Je peux être contactée à l'adresse courriel ci-dessous.

Bien à vous,

Véronique La Salle
Graduate student
Faculty of Education
University of New Brunswick
Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3
Vla1@unb.ca

Appendix 2 - Letter to Principals (English and French)

(To be printed on University of New Brunswick Letterhead.)

Project Title: Historical Significance as a Tool to Understand High School Students' Identity in a Bilingual Setting

Researcher: Véronique La Salle, graduate student, Faculty of Education, University of New Brunswick, vla1@unb.ca

UNB Contact and graduate student's advisor: Dr. Alan Sears, Professor, Faculty of Education, University of New Brunswick, 506-453-5178, asears@unb.ca

Dear [Principal's name]: The purpose of this letter is to request your permission to approach grade 12 teachers in order to conduct a research project with grade 12 students from your school. This research aims to understand the implications of having a dual educational system on students' identity. In order to do so, I want to verify whether there is a difference between high school students from Anglophone and Francophone districts when asking them to consider what is historically significant in Canadian past events.

Research procedures: I would like to conduct my research with 10 to 15 grade 12 students. Grade 12 students should have a relatively well developed sense of identity by this point in their education and personal lives. The first step to collect data will be a questionnaire asking participants to reveal personal information such as their age, their ethnic origin, and the languages they speak. The second step consist of completing a 30 to 45 minutes activity where students have to write or draw their own Canadian history. Finally, I will conduct short interviews where students can explain their thoughts and the choices they made. The questions students will be facing will be similar to the ones they could encounter in their history class. For example, I could ask them what element of their story they consider the most important and explain to me why.

Confidentiality: Students' identities will be kept strictly confidential. All participants will be given a code number and only pseudonyms will appear in any research documents, including transcriptions of interviews. All documents will be kept in my supervisor office in a locked filing cabinet or on my password protected computer. This research is part of my Master degree and I will use these results in my thesis. In all public documents (thesis) or presentations, students name will be kept confidential and only their given pseudonyms will be used when referring to their answers.

I have enclosed the following material to better explain the work:

1. A sample of the activity I will ask students to complete;
2. Samples of the information and consent form that will be provided to students.

3. A Certificate of Ethics of Approval: this research study has been reviewed by the UNB REB and is on file as #xxx-xxxx.
4. Information about approval of this project from your school district authority.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects: The plan for this study has been reviewed by the UNB REB and is on file as #xxx-xxxx. If you wish to contact someone not associated with this study to ask questions or raise concerns please contact Dr. Ellen Rose, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, UNB, erose@unb.ca, 506-452-6125.

With your approval, I would like to approach teachers and students to begin the process of securing their participation in this research project. I would, of course, be pleased to provide further information or answer any questions you might have about the work. I can be contacted at the email listed below.

Yours sincerely,

Véronique La Salle
Graduate student
Faculty of Education
University of New Brunswick
Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3
Vla1@unb.ca

Tire du projet: Historical Significance as a Tool to Understand High School Students' Identity in a Bilingual Setting

Chercheur: Véronique La Salle, graduate student, Faculty of Education, University of New Brunswick, vla1@unb.ca

Contact à UNB et superviseur de recherche: Dr. Alan Sears, Professor, Faculty of Education, University of New Brunswick, 506-453-5178, asears@unb.ca

Cher [Nom du directeur des écoles]: Le but de cette lettre est de vous demander la permission d'approcher des enseignants de 12e année afin de mener un projet de recherche avec les élèves de 12e année de votre école. Cette recherche vise à comprendre les implications d'avoir un double système éducatif sur l'identité des étudiants. Pour ce faire, je veux vérifier s'il y a une différence identitaire entre les élèves des écoles secondaires anglophones et francophones en leur demandant de considérer ce qui est historiquement important dans les événements passés du Canada.

Procédures de recherche: J'aimerais mener mes recherches auprès de 10 à 15 élèves de 12e année. Les élèves de 12e année devraient avoir un sens identitaire relativement bien développé à ce stade de leur scolarité et de leur vie personnelle.

La première étape pour collecter des données sera un questionnaire demandant aux participants de révéler des informations personnelles telles que leur âge, leur origine ethnique et les langues parlées et comprises. La deuxième étape consiste à compléter une activité de 30 à 45 minutes où les élèves doivent écrire ou dessiner leur propre histoire canadienne. Enfin, je conduirai de courtes interviews où les étudiants pourront expliquer leurs pensées et les choix qu'ils ont faits. Les questions auxquelles les étudiants seront confrontés seront similaires à celles qu'ils pourraient rencontrer dans leur cours d'histoire. Par exemple, je pourrais leur demander quel élément de leur histoire ils considèrent le plus important et m'expliquer pourquoi.

Confidentialité: L'identité des étudiants sera strictement confidentielle. Tous les participants recevront un numéro de code et seuls des pseudonymes apparaîtront dans les documents de recherche, y compris les transcriptions des interviews. Tous les documents seront conservés dans le bureau de mon superviseur de recherche dans un classeur verrouillé ou sur mon ordinateur protégé par un mot de passe. Cette recherche fait partie de ma maîtrise et j'utiliserai ces résultats dans mon mémoire. Dans tous les documents publics (mémoire) ou présentations, le nom des étudiants sera gardé confidentiel et seuls leurs pseudonymes seront utilisés lorsqu'il sera question de leurs réponses.

J'ai joint le matériel suivant pour mieux expliquer le travail:

1. Un échantillon de l'activité que je vais demander aux élèves de compléter;
2. Des exemples du formulaire d'information et de consentement qui sera fourni aux étudiants;

3. Un certificat d'éthique d'approbation: cette étude de recherche a été examinée par le UNB REB et se trouve dans le document #xxx-xxxx.
4. L'information sur l'approbation de ce projet par votre autorité scolaire de district.

Contact pour les préoccupations concernant les droits des sujets de recherche: Le plan de cette recherche a été examiné par le UNB REB et se trouve dans le document #xxx-xxxx. Si vous souhaitez contacter quelqu'un qui n'est pas associé avec cette recherche afin de poser des questions ou partager des inquiétudes, s'il-vous-plaît, contactez Dr. Ellen Rose, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, UNB, erose@unb.ca, 506-452-6125.

Avec votre approbation, j'aimerais approcher les enseignants et élèves concernés afin de commencer le processus de participation à ce projet de recherche. Bien entendu, je serais heureuse de fournir des informations supplémentaires ou de répondre à vos questions sur mon travail. Je peux être contactée à l'adresse courriel ci-dessous.

Bien à vous,

Véronique La Salle
Graduate student
Faculty of Education
University of New Brunswick
Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3
Vla1@unb.ca

Appendix 3 – Letter to parents (English and French)

(To be printed on University of New Brunswick letterhead.)

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Véronique La Salle and I am a graduate student at UNB’s Faculty of Education. The purpose of this letter is to invite your child to participate to a research study. The focus of the work is on students’ identity and its potential influence on historical understanding.

The research will be done through the completion of a short task and individual interviews, which will simply involve a discussion about the first activity. The interview will be similar to a discussion your child could have in a social studies class and if a question makes him/her feels uncomfortable, he/she can decline answering it.

The work will not intrude too much into the regular academic program at school and will involve two meetings lasting between 30 to 45 minutes. The interviews will be audio recorded. The information I collect will be for research purposes only. Your child will not be identified by name when information is analyzed or in any findings, such as my thesis or a presentation, that comes from the study. Your child’s participation is voluntary, and he/she is free to withdraw from the research and to withdraw any information he/she has provided, without penalty, at any time during the ongoing process of the research. In order to withdraw from the research, your child just needs to let me know at any time in person or by writing me an email. If your child decides to withdraw, I will not use any information he/she previously provided.

I have attached an information sheet that answers some of the questions that you might have. If you do not wish your child to participate in this research, please return the completed form at the bottom of this page by [date]. If you have any further questions about this work, you may contact me by email: vlal@unb.ca. The plan for this study has been reviewed by the UNB REB and is on file as #2018-067. If you wish to contact someone not associated with this study to ask questions or raise concerns please contact Dr. Ellen Rose, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, UNB, erose@unb.ca, 506-452-6125. I look forward to your child’s participation and hope he/she might find it an interesting experience.

Yours sincerely,

Véronique La Salle
Graduate student
Faculty of Education
University of New Brunswick
Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3
Vlal@unb.ca

If for any reason you **do not** wish your son or daughter to participate in this research, please sign this form and return it by _____ (date).

Student’s Name (please print): _____

Parent signature: _____

Date: _____

SOME QUESTIONS THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE ABOUT THE STUDY

Q. Why was my child selected for the study?

A. I am interested in grade 12 students' perspectives because I believe they should have a relatively well developed sense of identity by this point in their education and personal lives.

Q. Do my child has to participate?

A. No, and your child may withdraw at any time.

Q. What exactly is involved?

A. Your child will be asked to perform a simple task which should take you about 30 to 45 minutes to complete. I will meet with him/her a second time for an individual interview to discuss the choices he/she made in the first task.

Q. How long will it take?

A. Your child and I will meet two times for about 30 to 45 minutes each time. We will decide upon the best moment to meet depending on his/her teacher agreement and his/her schedule.

Q. What are the benefits of participating in the study?

A. The study is an opportunity for your child to contribute to an investigation which aims to understand whether students' identities influence the way they assess historical events more than the school curriculum. By discovering how students understand their history, teachers and curriculum planners will be able to find out the implications behind the choices they made when constructing social studies' curriculum.

Q. What are the risks?

A. There are no real risks. Students involved in the work generally find it interesting.

Q. Will my child's information be kept confidential?

A. Yes. The information I collect will be for research purposes only. Your child will not be identified by name when information is analyzed or in any findings that come from the study.

Q. Have the school authorities approved this?

A. Yes. But remember, whether your child participates is entirely a matter for him/her to decide.

If you have any further questions about this work, you may contact me by email, vla1@unb.ca. The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by a Research Ethics Board at the University of New Brunswick. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the REB at (506) 453-5189.

A FINAL NOTE: Thank you for helping me with this important work!

Mai 2018

Cher parents/gardiens,

Je m'appelle Véronique La Salle et je suis une étudiante à la maîtrise à la Faculté de l'éducation de l'Université du Nouveau-Brunswick. Le but de cette lettre est d'inviter votre enfant à participer à une recherche qui s'intéresse à l'identité des élèves et à sa potentielle influence sur la compréhension historique.

La recherche se fera grâce à une courte activité et des entrevues individuelles où votre enfant et moi aurons simplement une discussion à propos de la première tâche. L'entrevue sera similaire à une conversation qu'il/elle pourrait avoir en classe de sciences humaines et si une question rend votre enfant mal à l'aise, il peut refuser d'y répondre.

Le travail ne prendra pas trop de temps à l'horaire scolaire régulier et demandera deux rencontres d'une durée de 30 à 45 minutes chacune. Les entrevues seront enregistrées. L'information recueillie sera uniquement utilisée à des fins de recherche. Votre enfant ne sera pas identifié(e) par son nom quand l'information sera analysée ou dans les résultats de cette recherche. Sa participation est volontaire et votre enfant est libre de se retirer de la recherche et toute l'information qu'il/elle a donnée, sans pénalité, à n'importe quel moment durant le processus. Afin de se retirer de la recherche, votre enfant n'a qu'à me le faire savoir en personne ou en m'écrivant un courriel. Si il/elle décide de se retirer, je n'utiliserai aucune information que j'aurai précédemment reçue.

J'ai attaché une feuille d'information qui peut répondre à certaines de vos questions. Si vous ne voulez pas que votre enfant participe à cette recherche, renvoyez le formulaire remplis au bas de cette page avant le [date]. Si vous avez davantage de questions à propos de ce travail, vous pouvez me contacter par courriel : vlal@unb.ca. Le plan de cette recherche a été révisé par le UNB REB et se trouve dans le dossier #2018-067. Si vous souhaitez contacter quelqu'un qui n'est pas associé avec cette recherche afin de poser des questions ou partager des inquiétudes, s'il-vous-plaît, contactez Dr. Ellen Rose, *Associate Dean, Faculty of Education*, UNB, erose@unb.ca, 506-452-6125. J'attends la participation de votre enfant avec impatience et j'espère qu'il/elle trouvera cette expérience intéressante.

Au plaisir,

Véronique La Salle
Étudiante à la maîtrise
Faculté de l'éducation
Université du Nouveau-Brunswick
Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3
Vlal@unb.ca

Si pour une raison ou pour une autre vous ne voulez **pas** que votre enfant participe à cette recherche, s'il-vous-plaît, signez ce formulaire et renvoyez-le d'ici le ____ (date).

Nom de l'élève (lettres majuscules) : _____

Signature des parents : _____ Date: _____

QUELQUES QUESTIONS QUE VOUS POURRIEZ AVOIR CONCERNANT LA RECHERCHE

Q. Pourquoi a-t-on choisi mon enfant pour cette recherche?

R. Je m'intéresse aux points de vue des élèves de 12^e année parce que je crois que ces derniers doivent avoir un sentiment d'identité relativement bien développé à ce stade de leur scolarité et de leur vie personnelle.

Q. Est-ce que mon enfant doit participer?

R. Non et il/elle peut se retirer à n'importe quel moment.

Q. Quelles sont les implications?

R. Il sera demandé à votre enfant d'effectuer une tâche simple qui devrait lui prendre environ 30 à 45 minutes à compléter. Je le rencontrerai une deuxième fois pour une entrevue individuelle afin de discuter des choix qu'il/elle a faits lors de la première tâche.

Q. Combien de temps ça prendra?

A. Nous nous rencontrerons deux fois pour environ 30 à 45 minutes chaque fois. Votre enfant et moi déciderons du meilleur moment pour nous rencontrer dépendant de l'accord de son enseignant et de son emploi du temps.

Q. Quels sont les avantages à participer à cette recherche?

A. Cette étude est une opportunité pour votre enfant de contribuer à une enquête qui vise à comprendre si les identités des étudiants influencent plus la façon dont ils évaluent les événements historiques que les programmes scolaires. En découvrant comment les élèves comprennent leur histoire, les enseignants et les planificateurs de programmes d'études seront en mesure de découvrir les implications derrière les choix qu'ils ont faits lors de la construction du programme d'études en sciences humaines.

Q. Quels sont les risques?

A. Il n'y a pas de véritables risques. Les élèves impliqués trouvent le travail plutôt intéressant.

Q. Est-ce que l'information de mon enfant restera confidentielle?

A. Oui. Les informations que je recueille seront à des fins de recherche seulement. Votre enfant ne sera pas identifié(e) par son nom lors de l'analyse des informations ou dans les résultats de l'étude.

Q. Est-ce que les autorités scolaires ont approuvé cette recherche?

A. Oui, mais rappelez-vous que la participation de votre enfant est volontaire et que c'est à lui de décider.

Si vous avez plus de questions à propos de ce travail, vous pouvez me contacter par courriel, vlal@unb.ca. Le plan de cette étude a été révisé afin de respecter les lignes directrices en matière d'éthique et a été approuvé par un comité d'éthique de la recherche de l'Université du Nouveau-Brunswick. Pour toute question concernant les droits des participants et la conduite éthique de la recherche, veuillez contacter le président du REB au (506) 453-5189.

UNE DERNIÈRE NOTE : Merci de m'aider avec cet important travail!

Appendix 4 – Letter to Students (English and French)

(To be printed on University of New Brunswick letterhead.)

April 2018

Dear Student:

My name is Véronique La Salle and I am a graduate student at UNB's Faculty of Education. The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate to a research study. The focus of the work is on students' identity and its potential influence on historical understanding.

The research will be done through the completion of a short task and individual interviews, which will simply involve a discussion about the first activity. The interview will be similar to a discussion you could have in a social studies class and if a question makes you feel uncomfortable, you can decline answering it.

The work will not intrude too much into the regular academic program at school and will involve two meetings lasting between 30 to 45 minutes. The interviews will be audio recorded. The information I collect will be for research purposes only. You will not be identified by name when information is analyzed or in any findings, such as my thesis or a presentation, that come from the study. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the research and to withdraw any information you have provided, without penalty, at any time during the ongoing process of the research. In order to withdraw from the research, you just need to let me know at any time in person or by writing me an email. If you decide to withdraw, I will not use any information you previously provided.

I have attached an information sheet that answers some of the questions that you might have. If you have any further questions about this work, you may contact me by email: vlal@unb.ca. The plan for this study has been reviewed by the UNB REB and is on file as #2018-067. If you wish to contact someone not associated with this study to ask questions or raise concerns please contact Dr. Ellen Rose, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, UNB, erose@unb.ca, 506-452-6125. I look forward to your participation and hope you might find it an interesting experience.

Yours sincerely,

Véronique La Salle
Graduate student
Faculty of Education
University of New Brunswick
Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3
Vlal@unb.ca

SOME QUESTIONS THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE ABOUT THE STUDY

Q. Why was I selected for the study?

A. I am interested in grade 12 students' perspectives because I believe you should have a relatively well developed sense of identity by this point in your education and personal lives.

Q. Do I have to participate?

A. No, and you may withdraw at any time.

Q. What exactly is involved?

A. You will be asked to perform a simple task related to what you know about Canadian history which should take you about 30 to 45 minutes to complete. We will meet a second time for individual interview to discuss the choices you made in the first task.

Q. How long will it take?

A. We will meet two times for about 30 to 45 minutes each time. We will decide upon the best moment to meet depending on your teacher agreement and your schedule.

Q. What are the benefits of participating in the study?

A. The study is an opportunity for you to contribute to an investigation which aims to understand whether students' identities influence the way they assess historical events. By discovering how students understand their history, teachers and curriculum planners will be able to find out the implications behind the choices they made when constructing social studies' curriculum and planning teaching.

Q. What are the risks?

A. There are no real risks. Students involved in the work generally find it interesting.

Q. Will my information be kept confidential?

A. Yes. The information we collect will be for research purposes only. You will not be identified by name when information is analyzed or in any findings that come from the study.

Q. Have the school authorities approved this?

A. Yes. But remember, whether you participate is entirely a matter for you to decide. If you have any further questions about this work, you may contact me by email, vla1@unb.ca. The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by a Research Ethics Board at the University of New Brunswick. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the REB at (506) 453-5189.

A FINAL NOTE: Thank you for helping me with this important work!

Avril 2018

Chère/cher élève,

Je m'appelle Véronique La Salle et je suis une étudiante en maîtrise à la Faculté de l'éducation de l'Université du Nouveau-Brunswick. Le but de cette lettre est de t'inviter à participer à une recherche qui s'intéresse à l'identité des élèves et à sa potentielle influence sur la compréhension historique.

La recherche se fera grâce à une courte activité et des entrevues individuelles où nous aurons simplement une discussion à propos de la première tâche. L'entrevue sera similaire à une conversation que tu pourrais avoir en classe de sciences humaines et si une question te rend mal à l'aise, tu peux refuser d'y répondre.

Le travail ne prendra pas trop de temps à l'horaire scolaire régulier et demandera deux rencontres d'une durée de 30 à 45 minutes chacune. Les entrevues seront enregistrées. L'information recueillie sera uniquement utilisée à des fins de recherche. Tu ne seras pas identifié(e) par ton nom quand l'information sera analysée ou dans les résultats de cette recherche. Ta participation est volontaire et tu es libre de te retirer de la recherche et toute l'information que tu as donnée, sans pénalité, à n'importe quel moment durant le processus. Afin de te retirer de la recherche, tu n'as qu'à me le faire savoir en personne ou en m'écrivant un courriel. Si tu décides de te retirer, je n'utiliserai aucune information que tu auras précédemment fournie.

J'ai attaché une feuille d'information qui peut répondre à certaines de questions que tu peux avoir. Si tu as davantage de questions à propos de ce travail, tu peux me contacter par courriel : vlal@unb.ca. Le plan de cette recherche a été révisé par le UNB REB et se trouve dans le dossier #2018-067. Si tu souhaites contacter quelqu'un qui n'est pas associé avec cette recherche afin de poser des questions ou partager des inquiétudes, s'il-te-plaît, contacte Dr. Ellen Rose, *Associate Dean, Faculty of Education*, UNB, erose@unb.ca, 506-452-6125. J'attends ta participation avec impatience et j'espère que tu trouveras cette expérience intéressante.

Au plaisir,

Véronique La Salle
Étudiante à la maîtrise
Faculté de l'éducation
Université du Nouveau-Brunswick
Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3
Vlal@unb.ca

QUELQUES QUESTIONS QUE TU POURRAIS AVOIR CONCERNANT LA RECHERCHE

Q. Pourquoi m'a-t-on choisi pour cette recherche?

R. Je m'intéresse aux points de vue des élèves de 12e année parce que je crois que vous devez avoir un sentiment d'identité relativement bien développé à ce stade de votre scolarité et de votre vie personnelle.

Q. Est-ce que je dois participer?

R. Non et tu peux te retirer à n'importe quel moment.

Q. Quelles sont les implications?

R. Il te sera demandé d'effectuer une tâche simple qui devrait te prendre environ 30 à 45 minutes à compléter. Nous nous rencontrerons une deuxième fois pour une entrevue individuelle afin de discuter des choix que tu as faits lors de la première tâche.

Q. Combien de temps ça prendra?

A. Nous nous rencontrerons deux fois pour environ 30 à 45 minutes chaque fois. Nous déciderons du meilleur moment pour nous rencontrer dépendant de l'accord de ton enseignant et de ton emploi du temps.

Q. Quels sont les avantages à participer à cette recherche?

A. Cette étude est une opportunité pour toi de contribuer à une enquête qui vise à comprendre si les identités des étudiants influencent plus la façon dont ils évaluent les événements historiques que les programmes scolaires. En découvrant comment les élèves comprennent leur histoire, les enseignants et les planificateurs de programmes d'études seront en mesure de découvrir les implications derrière les choix qu'ils ont faits lors de la construction du programme d'études en sciences humaines.

Q. Quels sont les risques?

A. Il n'y a pas de véritables risques. Les élèves impliqués trouvent le travail plutôt intéressant.

Q. Est-ce que mon information restera confidentielle?

A. Oui. Les informations que je recueille seront à des fins de recherche seulement. Tu ne seras pas identifié(e) par ton nom lors de l'analyse des informations ou dans les résultats de l'étude.

Q. Est-ce que les autorités scolaires ont approuvé cette recherche?

A. Oui, mais rappelle-toi que ta participation est volontaire et que c'est à toi de décider. Si tu as plus de questions à propos de ce travail, tu peux me contacter par courriel, vlal@unb.ca. Le plan de cette étude a été révisé afin de respecter les lignes directrices en matière d'éthique et a été approuvé par un comité d'éthique de la recherche de l'Université du Nouveau-Brunswick. Pour toute question concernant les droits des participants et la conduite éthique de la recherche, veuillez contacter le président du REB au (506) 453-5189.

UNE DERNIÈRE NOTE : Merci de m'aider avec cet important travail!

Appendix 5 – Consent Forms (English and French)

CONSENT FORM – STUDENT

Title of Project: Historical Significance as a Tool to Understand High School Students' Identity in a Bilingual Setting

Researcher: Véronique La Salle, Faculty of Education, University of New Brunswick, vla1@unb.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Alan Sears, Professor, Faculty of Education, asears@unb.ca, 506-450-9971

Please check **one** box in response to each of the following questions:

	Yes	No
Do you understand that I am seeking you to participate in a research study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you read the information sheet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you understand that the information you provide will be kept confidential and that you will not be identified in any reports coming from this research?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

STUDENT CONSENT: I, _____, agree to participate in this study. (please print your name)

Student signature:	Date:
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If you would like a summary of the results of this research, please provide your mailing address below:

Thank you very much. Please return this signed form to your teacher.

FORMULAIRE DE CONSENTEMENT

Titre du projet: Historical Significance as a Tool to Understand High School Students' Identity in a Bilingual Setting

Chercheur: Véronique La Salle, Faculty of Education, University of New Brunswick, vlal@unb.ca

Superviseur: Dr. Alan Sears, Professor, Faculty of Education, asears@unb.ca, 506-450-9971

-
Coche une case en réponse à chacune des questions suivantes:

	Oui	Non
Est-ce que tu comprends que je te demande de participer à une recherche?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Est-ce que tu as lu la feuille d'information?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Est-ce que tu comprends que tu peux te retirer à n'importe quel moment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Est-ce que tu comprends que l'information que tu fournies restera confidentielle et tu ne seras pas identifié(e) dans aucun rapport provenant de cette recherche?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

CONSENTEMENT DE L'ÉLÈVE: Je, _____, suis d'accord de participer à cette recherche. (écris ton nom)

Signature de l'élève:	Date:
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Si tu veux un résumé des résultats de cette recherche, stp, écris ton adresse sur les lignes suivantes:

Merci beaucoup. S'il-te-plaît, retourne ce formulaire signé à ton enseignant(e).

Appendix 6: Student Questionnaire

1. How old are you? _____
2. Where were you born? _____
3. To which gender do you identify? _____
4. What languages do you speak?

5. What language do you speak most of the time?
At school? _____ At home? _____
6. I would now like to ask you about your ethnic ancestry, heritage or background.

This question refers to the ethnic or cultural origins of your ancestors, including ancestors from both sides of your family. An **ancestor** is someone from whom you have descended and is usually more distant than a grandparent. Ethnic or cultural ancestry refers to your “roots” or cultural background and should not be confused with citizenship or nationality.

What were the ethnic or cultural origins of your **ancestors**?

7. I would now like you to think about **your own** ethnic identity. This identity may be the same as that of your parents, grandparents or ancestors, or it may be different.

Your ethnic, cultural and/or national identity is the ethnic, cultural and/or national group

or groups to which you feel you belong. Please write a paragraph describing **your** ethnic identity.

It is possible that you could describe yourself as having more than one type of (ethnic) identity. For instance, one person might describe his or her identity as “Greek,” even though they were born in Canada. Another person might describe their identity as “Canadian,” even though he or she was born in Greece. Someone else might decide that they are both of these: “Greek-Canadian.” **There are no wrong answers** – describe yourself the way that makes the most sense to you.

(You can continue your paragraph on the back of this page. Thank you!)

Appendix 7: Interview protocol

For all interviewees:

1. Ask participant to explain their story of Canada.
2. Ask the following questions:
 - Is there anything missing in your story of Canada? If so, what, and why do you think it should be added?
 - Is there anything in your story of Canada that you would change? If so, what would you change and why would you make that change?
 - In the short paragraph that you wrote about yourself, you described yourself as _____. In what ways do you think your identification as _____ influenced the decisions you made in your story of Canada?

(Question may need to be repeated, depending on the different identifications evident in the student's descriptive paragraph).

- Which one of the 10 elements is most important to you in term of your identity?
Please explain how it is important to you.
- Which one of the 10 elements is least important to you in term of your identity?
Why?
- Is there another event in Canadian history (that is not in your story of Canada) that is more important to you, in terms of your identity? What is it? Can you please tell me why it is important to you?

- Do you think other people would agree with your choices? Why or why not? (If yes, follow-up with): What kinds of differences might there be? Why? Who might make different choices? Why do you think this might be so?
- If a group of (little kids, like third or fourth graders / older people, like your parents' or grandparents' ages) were doing this, do you think they might make different choices? Why?
- If a group of students from another ethnic group were doing this, do you think they might make different choices? Why?
- Some people come from families where the past is actually quite important because of experiences they've had, and their families talk about this. Are there any stories about the past that have been handed down in your family? Why do you think these stories get handed down?
- Do you think this task was easy or hard to do?

4. Provide ample time for responses. Do not rush the interview.

5. During the interview, observe and record what is happening as well as what is being said.

6. Listen carefully and probe the student to explain further, based on their responses to the questions. Ask the participant to tell more about 'that' through questions such as: What did you mean when you said 'X'? and, Please give me some examples of what you mean.

7. Digitally record the interview.

Appendix 8: Participants' Stories of Canada

Student #: 7

Tell me the story of Canada using a diagram, a drawing, a timeline or a paragraph. Include 10 elements (people, events, changes, discoveries, inventions or ideas) that you consider historically important and order them in a way that makes sense to you.



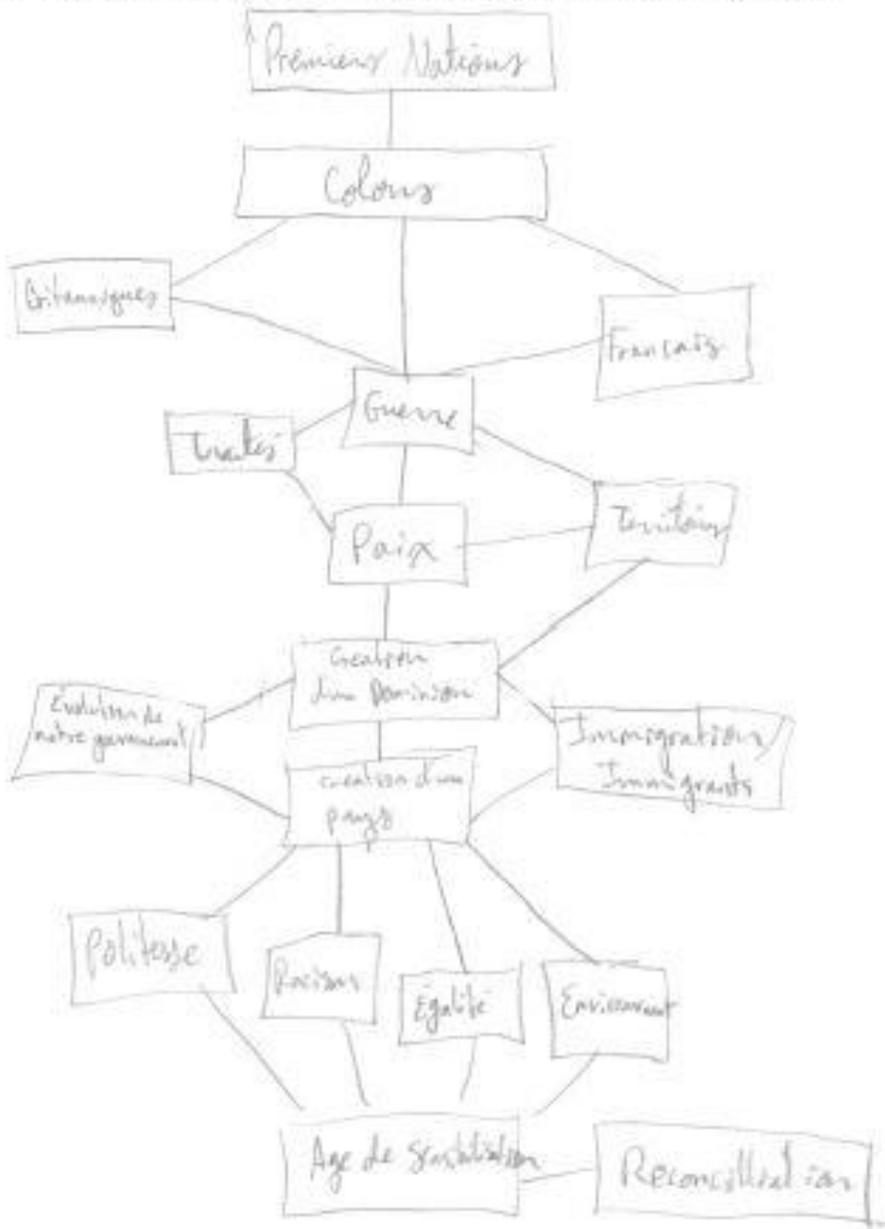
Student #: 15

Tell me the story of Canada using a diagram, a drawing, a timeline or a paragraph. Include 10 elements (people, events, changes, discoveries, inventions or ideas) that you consider historically important and order them in a way that makes sense to you.



Élève #: F4

Raconte-moi l'histoire du Canada à l'aide d'un schéma, d'un dessin, d'une ligne du temps ou d'un paragraphe. Inclus 10 éléments (personnes, événements, changements, inventions ou idées) que tu considères historiquement importants et place-les dans un ordre qui a du sens pour toi.



Curriculum Vitae

Candidate's full name: Véronique La Salle

Universities attended (with dates and degrees obtained):

Université Laval (1995-2001)

Bachelor of Education in Secondary Education

Specialization: French and History

Conference Presentations:

June 23rd, 2018

7th Annual Atlantic Education Graduate Student Conference

Fredericton, New Brunswick

- Oral presentation of master's research as a work in progress

Publications: None