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Special Issue: Perspectives on History Education from the Australian Tertiary Sector

**GUEST EDITORS**

*Heather Sharp & Debra Donnelly*

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# Introducing the Tertiary History Educators Australasia (THEA)

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Debra Donnelly
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The Tertiary History Educators Australasia (THEA) began in 2018 and was launched at a Symposium hosted and funded by the University of Newcastle. It brought together 11 history educators from across Australia to present research on key ideas of pedagogy and curriculum related to history education and pre-service teacher programs in Australia, including the Pacific.

Hosted in association with the HERMES research group, the Symposium was launched by patrons Adjunct Professor Tony Taylor and Professor Marnie Hughes-Warrington

Our aim was to investigate those pedagogies that are effective in the teaching of history across a range of contexts, including, but not limited to: teaching the school subject, History; historical representations and commemorations; public education such as those found in exhibitions and guided tours of museums and other cultural institutions.

Our long-term objective from this initial symposium, is for an association to work towards external grants, edited publications, consultative forum about history education, and to provide an academic voice in the field of history education at the tertiary and school contexts. This Association will develop a network of interested tertiary history educators across Australia and the Pacific in order to create a community of practice of academics and to provide a conduit to history teachers at the coal face in both primary and secondary schools.

This special issue is our first collaborative output from the Symposium.

The Symposium explored ideas of broadening the scope of history education in the Australian context to include aspects of what is commonly considered public history, such as the role of museums and other experiential learning opportunities. Public history is defined as the study of how the past works in culture and society. In particular, public history considers the ethics and issues associated with the representation, consumption, and enactment of the past in museums, public life, memorials, films, novels, computer games, replicas and in virtual reality experiences. These public history learning objects communicate versions of history, and create popular historiography that connects learners to the past in powerful ways and is part of their lifeworlds beyond school. The Symposium examined the intersections between public and school histories, as contemporary historical representations with the potential to demonstrate the nature of the discipline.

This special issue is a key output from the concluding plenary session as a way of sustaining the conversations initiated at the Symposium. We start with a provocation by Adjunct Professor Tony Taylor, who has played an influential role in the development of the

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Australian Curriculum. He was Director of the Australian Government National Inquiry into the Teaching and Learning of History in 1999. Tony was also Director of the National Centre for History Education. Since that time has worked as a consultant including in framing the Australian Curriculum: History. In his piece he surveys the field of history education policies and politics in an international context. He challenges the reader to consider how history has been and can be an "agent for political influence" by drawing on exemplars from historic and current world socio-political contexts.

Dr Bryan Smith from James Cook University follows on with his article on epistemic inheritance of historical thinking, providing a theoretical argument that codifies history education, highlighting and problematising disciplined knowledge as a distinctly Western frame. He cautions that although important, historical thinking should not be seen as completely overtaking our notions of the past.

In examining historical consciousness with Australian school students, Dr Kay Carroll from Western Sydney University, uses a survey to identify various levels of historical consciousness in students with a focus on concepts such as empathy, significance, contestability, perspective, causation and agency. She argues that these students are capable of constructing divergent ideas about the past based on evidence and rejecting the modernist paradigm of history as a fixed set of events.

Taking an applied research approach, Dr Alison Bedford from the University of Southern Queensland investigates the use of the Harkness Method as a student-centred pedagogical approach in History classrooms. Teaching 21st century skills is the focus to equip students with skills required of active citizenship into the future. Dr Bedford connects this with recent prescriptions of the Queensland Senior Secondary Syllabus and curriculum and finds that this applied pedagogical approach, enhances the development of critical literacy, empathy, active and informed citizenship, and independent learning.

Dr Samantha Owen from Curtin University examines historical perspective and empathy using a major work of leading New Zealand Māori video and installation artist, Lisa Reihana. This artwork reimagines the voyages and death of Captain James Cook and Dr Owens examines shifts in perspectives between the explorers and inhabitants. The article concludes an analysis of how empathic devices might be used to build pluricultural History "learning spaces in which all can listen and all can speak to be heard."

Dr Louise Zarmati from the University of Tasmania's contribution validates that museum educators use historical inquiry to actively teach history to their audiences. This contradicts the dominant discourse of museum education research which focuses almost learning *in* and *from* museums. The paper provides case studies that offer applied examples of how historical inquiry can be used to teach history in museums and heritage sites.

Debra Donnelly and Heather Sharp's article on historical empathy introduces a new analytical tool that analyses student activities according to the disciplinary concept of historical empathy and cognitive complexities as set out in the Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes (SOLO) Taxonomy. We examine activities in key History textbooks designed for the Australian Curriculum: History to find what levels of historical empathy students are expected to demonstrate on successful completion of activities. The data analysed shows that the majority of historical empathy tasks require only low-level empathetic responses and cognitive complexity.

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# A global perspective on history education policies and politics: A commentary

Tony Taylor
*Independent Academic*

## Prologue

This article is a recent version of a chapter I was asked to write for an overseas publisher who was compiling a series of chapters on history education to be framed as a 'manual' that would introduce readers to the field. During the writing and editing process it became clear to me that the more senior of the editors was unhappy with my approach which he described as being too much about controversy. His suggestion was that I modify the text to make it less so. My response was to withdraw politely from the project and, until now, shelve the original draft.

I withdrew because, after working for half a century as a history educator, I have learned from firsthand experience, from my research and from the research of others, that history and controversy go hand in hand, especially at the school level where history has long been, and continues to be, seen, as a potential agent of political influence. That a reader of the proposed book would be deprived of access to this interpretation struck me as an unseeing act that denied the reality of political influence in history education curricula around the word.

I would further argue that since the year 2016 when, for example, the United States elected a president who later suggested that there were 'fine people' in a neo-Nazi march in Charlottesville, when the a majority of British electors voted for Brexit, a move that led later to an increase in xenophobic and racist attacks across the nation as well as the infiltration of the pro-Brexit party UKIP by neo-Nazis, the role of research-based and professionally-designed history education classes in schools has changed. In my view, it must now take into account and attempt to counter extremist views as best it can by addressing with equal emphasis the affective as well as the cognitive aspects of a study of the past. Not that this is the complete answer, as the reader of this article will discover. In that context, the Netherlands provides a case study, covered in some detail in this article, which shows that the Dutch government moved away from history education towards social education as a more effective way of dealing with racist-inspired social disintegration in a multicultural society. In the Russian Federation, the power of one individual, President Vladimir Putin, can overcome the progressive advances made in Russian history education during the 1990s. Putin's emotive worldview that Russia must resume its lost borderlands and that the Tsarist army would have defeated the Germans in World War One if only the Bolsheviks had not stabbed the Russian army in the back is now the dominant factor in Russian history education. According to the work of Alan McCully and colleagues, Northern Irish school students can write admirably balanced assignments and return to their homes that are situated in divided and mutually hostile communities where 400-year-old grudges are still willingly borne.

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One final point about the role of affect in historical consciousness. As a young history teacher working in a large comprehensive school in peaceful and beautiful county of Somerset during the 1970s, my colleagues and I were teaching the Schools Council History Project which had an optional Depth Study on the modern history of Ireland. During the IRA's 1970s mainland (England) bombing campaign which killed 175 people and injured more than 10,000 others, because of the nearness of the campaign and because of the students' emotional response to images of death and destruction, it proved impossible to teach a course that examined the circumstances which had produced such a violent response.

In conclusion, what I am saying is that it is not enough to create carefully designed, student friendly and inquiry-based classes in history. Teachers and students, especially adolescent students, must also be aware of the nature and strength of the political process, of the power of affective sentiment that arises from prejudice, and of the capacity of students to act rationally in the classroom and behave irrationally outside school.

## Introduction: History education as an agent of political engineering

Of all school subjects taught in mass education systems during the past century and a half, it is history education that has been the most susceptible to political interference and history education has remained an object of worldwide ideological interest. There now is a growing tension between what has become an internationally established form of evidence-based history pedagogy on the one hand and globalised political pressure to turn the subject into a propagandist agent of ideology on the other. In examining how this trend works in practice, we can analyse the phenomenon within both pedagogical and political frameworks.

This process commenced with a late 19th and early 20th century use of character and nation building narratives (Taylor & Macintyre, 2016). In one case this approach led to the direst of consequences when, in 1914, the propagandist Serbian nationalist teaching of Austro-Hungarian history was the subject of Clause Three of the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum to Belgrade, a document that helped provoke World War One. 20 years later, the Nazi state apparatus regarded school history and biology as equally important propaganda agents in creating a common German national and racial identity (Korostelina, 2013). At the same time, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia directed history teachers in the Soviet education system to highlight the importance of a common Russian socialist identity within a fact-based pedagogy that had a strong focus on political content (Ewing, 2016), a situation that continued into the late 1980s.

Pedagogically, there are overtly educative (but sometimes covertly ideological) purposes that lie behind history education programs (as in intended curriculum). The documented outlines of these plans show how the programs should be implemented ( as in stated curriculum) bearing in mind that there are in-school issues of how a program is managed, taught and resourced (as in enacted curriculum) as well as what its effects are on student learning as well as teacher professional understanding (realised curriculum). These intended-to-realised curriculum elements were certainly an issue for most Australian history educators 1990-2007 when history, an allegedly regressive discipline, was subsumed within an integrated humanities approach (ages 5-16 except in New South Wales) which appeared to be progressive in intent and statement. In enactment, the changes led to a pedagogically blurred curriculum. This was an educational disaster at the classroom level resulting in student and teacher resistance. The integrated humanities approach was replaced nationwide in 2007-2008 (Taylor, 2013a).

We also have an established pedagogical context for any serious discussion of the nature of history education. This framework stems from a well-developed, transnational culture of

transparent and established empirical and analytical approaches to investigation in the field of history education (see for example, Ballard, 1970; Dickinson & Lee, 1978; Shemilt, 1980; Carretero & Voss, 1994; Levstik & Barton, 1997; Taylor & Young, 2003; Seixas & Morton, 2013). Over the past half century, this kind of research has deepened and broadened professional (as opposed to political) understanding of how history as a progressive and inquiry-based discipline is learned and how it should be taught. This understanding informs history education in nations where curriculum development processes are based in whole or in part on autonomous professional design and where curriculum planning is relatively free from political interference. Such a course of action is the preferred approach of socially progressive history educators. This contemporary, open-ended, discursive and evidence-based model operates at one end of a pedagogical continuum that ranges through to a neoconservative traditionalist, closed-ended, fact-based transmission model towards the other end of the scale with authoritarian states and religious fundamentalists well beyond neoconservatives and fundamentalists on that same continuum, bearing in mind that there can be a degree of crossover between adjacent categories.

In this context, the term *neoconservative* refers to a zealous form of United States (US) conservatism that came out of Democratic Party anti-Marxists who were disillusioned with US foreign policy in the 1960s. Neoconservatives are in favour of an evangelical approach to the spread of democracy sometimes to the extent of military interventionism. They also have an unstinting regard for the achievements of the West, they support a patriotic form of nationalism, they admire the historic and, in their view, righteous growth of Christianity and they advocate for reduced levels of government intervention combined with support for unrestricted free trade and tax reduction policies.

According to one of its leading lights US writer and commentator Irving Kristol (1920-2009), neo-conservatism is a *persuasion* rather than a specific political movement (Kristol, 2003). What this means is that neoconservatives are more often defined more by what they say and do, rather than by what they call themselves. The preferred strategy of neoconservative politicians in a number of liberal, multicultural democracies is to adopt a narrowly-conceived discipline-based form of history education as an ideological tool in identity politics and in assimilationist cultural engineering policies (Guyver, 2016; Taylor, 2013).

An authoritarian model on the other hand uses a monist, master narrative version of history as an outright nationalistic propaganda tool in societies such as the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. In contrast to the complexities of history education in democratic nations with its debates, its variations and its recurring modifications, history education in authoritarian regimes is based on a simple and inarguable premise: school history must unequivocally serve the needs of the state, as defined by its leadership. In this article the choice of our two authoritarian states Russia and China is based on the annual Economist Intelligence Unit report on government types, the *Democracy in an Age of Anxiety* report (Economic Intelligence Unit, 2015). In the 2015 list, Russia is equal 132$^{nd}$ (with Côte d/Ivoire), China is equal 136$^{th}$ (with Guinea). The most authoritarian regime of all is North Korea at 167, just below Syria.

Religious fundamentalists adopt a different approach yet again where history education is based on divine revelation, divine intervention, and divine purpose explained via an immutable view of the past. This is particularly the case in fundamentalist Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, and Islamic schools, as opposed to the classrooms of the more mainstream versions of these religions. As for Christian fundamentalism, while the late 20$^{th}$ and early 21$^{st}$ centuries have seen a decline in mainstream Christian religious observance, there has been an unprecedented and largely unexpected growth in the number of fundamentalist Christians

particularly in the US where the term fundamentalism originated in the 1920s as a label for a zealous form of Protestantism. Islamic fundamentalism too is on the rise and there has also been a growth on the Indian sub-continent in the influence of Hindutva, an early 20th century Indian form of politico-religious fundamentalism (Lehmann, 2015). Violent forms of religious fundamentalism, examples of which are perpetrated by extremists in each major religion, even Buddhism, fall outside the remit of this article if only because their assertive ideologies follow a form of historical explanation that operates well beyond the boundaries of conventional scholarly or political debate.

Having said that, there are four pedagogical terms that are useful in providing a conceptual template for analysing conservative, authoritarian and fundamentalist curriculum desiderata. The first of these terms is *essentialism*, a belief that a nation's or a religion's past can be summarised by a fixed chronicle of key past events that are to be remembered commemoratively and/or spiritually rather than analytically. The second term is *exceptionalism*, a point of view that a nation's or a religion's history unquestioningly demonstrates the uniquely superior character of its individuals, its people, its culture and its institutions. The third ideologically-situated term is *progressivism*, a certainty that the study of a nation's or a religion's past has a teleological aspect in that it provides a narrative of social, economic, political, and religious progress that points the way to continuing ideologically-based accomplishments. The final term is *functionalism*, the expectation that history education will provide a cultural/political input/output foundation for particular forms of social beliefs and actions.

Moving on, the best starting point for analysing the relationship between history education and ideology is to choose an example from each of the three major geopolitical forms of history education. If we focus on representative case studies from each type, we can construct points of reference for a global understanding of how history education might work in other states. The democratic nations category will concentrate mainly on the United Kingdom (UK), the US, Australia, and the Netherlands with a particular focus on the latter. In the authoritarian nations category the focus will be on the Russian Federation and China. In the fundamentalist religion category, the focus will be on Christianity and Islam.

## Democracy: From Cold War politics to the construction of historical canons

### *The United Kingdom*

The modern version of a close and fraught relationship between history teaching and contemporary democratic politics was first demonstrated during disputes about history education in the UK that began in 1988 and lasted, on and off, until 2014. These kinds of difference of opinion also affected the United States in the mid-1990s, Australia for the last decade, and the Netherlands 2001-2016. Initially, they were contestations based on Cold War politics of perceived leftist influence in the history curriculum. After the events of 9 September 2001 however, these kinds of "history wars" (an exaggerated term) shifted more towards dealing with conservative perceptions of internal threats to a nation from Islamic minorities.

The UK's controversial national curriculum in history (with English, Welsh, Scottish, and Northern Irish variations) was first designed for implementation in the early 1990s during prime minister Margaret Thatcher's neoconservative regime (1979-1991). The English curriculum's history variant was immediately attacked by Thatcher, by her allies in conservative think tanks and by conservative media, mainly the right wing *Daily Telegraph*. Employing the politics of derision these critics alleged that the new history curriculum was

leftist in intent, lacked 'Britishness,' required more of the right kind of facts, had too much emphasis on skills and focused on woolly-minded 'empathetic' social history.

Despite her efforts, the prime minister and her allies were blocked at the professional and academic level and the history curriculum remained largely unaffected by ideological intervention. Thatcher herself, with her popularity already on the wane over other issues, resigned in November 1990 just before she was to be removed from office by her own party. Departing from 10 Downing Street an embittered and disappointed politician, the history curriculum remained a source of grievance for the former prime minister (Thatcher, 1993). Allowing for a renewed but unsuccessful post-9/11 assimilationist assault in 2013-2014 by hyperactive neoconservative education minister Michael Gove, the history curriculum in England has since largely remained free from direct political intervention (Guyver, 2016).

### *The United States*

This UK's *governmental* interventionist approach was mirrored in a US *extra-governmental* intervention during the 1994-1996 US history wars over the innovative 1994 national (voluntary) school history standards. Lynne Cheney, a prominent Republican political figure and a President Reagan appointee as chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities (1986-1993) became the leading critic of the very standards which she had herself commissioned in 1992. Cheney supporters in the 1994-1996 history crusade included fellow Republicans, prominent media commentators, neoconservative think tanks, and a conservative press, mainly the *Wall Street Journal*. Cheney and her allies, also employing the politics of derision, focused on a familiar litany of neoconservative allegations: leftist infiltration; a lack of attention to traditional heroic figures and events; overemphasis on politically correct figures and embarrassing events; an obsessive interest gloomy social history at the expense of upbeat political and economic areas of US history; hostility to the West as a cultural inspiration; and general Un-Americanism. As with the UK, social and national cohesion were seen to be under threat from leftists (Nash, Crabtree, & Dunn, 1997).

Nationwide controversy faded as the 1994 standards were republished in revised form in a 1996 *basic edition* and were accepted by former Republican governor and congressman Albert Quie who chaired the US history revision group. Cheney continued her radical conservative activities but after 2004 moved on to other causes, including, for family reasons, same-sex marriage. Meanwhile, in the Trump era, conflicts over historical representation and history education continue but, leaving aside the 'Lost Cause' supporters of 1860s Confederate America, they are predominantly at a local level and are mainly about textbook content.

### *Australia*

Australia's neoconservative prime minister John Howard followed much the same ideological path as Thatcher in 2006-2007. Alarmed by an outbreak of inter-ethnic violence (Muslims versus the others) in a Sydney suburb in late 2005, Howard called for an assimilationist "root and branch" renewal of Australian history which, in his view, had been all but eliminated by more than a decade of almost nationwide integrated social education curriculum. The prime minister, supported by the neoconservative think tanks and neoconservative newspaper *The Australian*, a Murdoch media postmaster in political derision, convened a national history summit in August 2006 where his plan, because of its crudely essentialist political intentions, was blocked by professional history educators and academic historians. Recovering from this setback, Howard appointed a small, handpicked panel in mid-2007 which, in October 2007

delivered a national Australian history program for grades 9 and 10 only. It consisted of seventy-seven canonical events backed up by one hundred equally canonical biographies. That attempt failed too when, in November 2007, Howard lost a general election as well as his own parliamentary seat.

The next stage in history curriculum development was the 2007-2013 Australian Labor Party government's creation of a standalone Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority which planned and implemented a professionally-designed national curriculum in 2008-2010. Not to be denied, a successor Tony Abbott neoconservative government (2013-2014) ordered a partisan 'review' of the Australian Curriculum which, having degenerated into a farce, foundered on its own ideological bias in late 2014 (Taylor, 2016c). Since that 2014 intervention, little attempt has been made at this stage to interfere further in history in schools.

### *The Netherlands*

In the Netherlands, a similarly progressive history education reform process occurred during 2001-2009, but with two very interesting variations. The first point of difference was that the Dutch 2001-2009 debates eschewed the politics of derision, centering on historiographical and pedagogical issues rather than ideological matters. In this case, leftists were not the foe. The putative enemy was Dutch historical ignorance about the national past. The second point of difference was that proposed essentialist changes to the Dutch history curriculum were based much more on post-9/11 political and social anxieties about a lack of awareness of Dutch historical and cultural traditions particularly amongst *oldcomer* (established but poorly educated) and *newcomer* (more diverse recent arrivals) migrant communities mainly of Surinamese, Moroccan, Dutch Indonesian, and Turkish origin.

Integration issues were further exacerbated by the traumatic murders in 2002 of populist anti-Islamist politician Pim Fortuyn, killed by a leftist Dutch radical and the 2004 death of controversial critic of Islamic gender politics, film director Theo van Gogh, assassinated by a fundamentalist Dutch-Moroccan. Political, cultural, historical, social, and educational anxieties led to new laws requiring linguistic and cultural integration (1998-2007) and politically-inspired demands for the reform of history education. In principle, the proposed integrative changes in history education were to act as an adjunct activity to the linguistic and cultural integration regulations.

These modifications to how history was to be taught were based on three elements. First, there existed a strong sense of national pride amongst conservative opinion in the Netherlands regarding Dutch historical achievements. This view was balanced by a Dutch post-1945 progressive opposition to extreme forms of nationalism. Second, during the 1990s Dutch conservatives had expressed concerns about a *dumbing down* of the nation's history education, a process blamed in part on thematic historical pedagogy with its alleged lack of focus and its supposedly inadequate sense of chronology. Third, the Dutch solution to these tensions has to be seen as part of a parallel North European assimilationist canonical movement exemplified by the initiation of a cultural canon design process (not specifically historical) in Denmark (Islamic migrant issues) in 2006, and in Latvia (Russian minority issues) in 2007. Sweden thought about a cultural canon but decided not to proceed (see Koivunen & Marsio for a very good Finnish discussion of the canon phenomenon).

The Dutch reform initiative had begun in 2001 when a curriculum committee of historians led by Amsterdam academic Piet de Rooy chose ten key historical periods that had influenced the Dutch past. The selected periods, broad in concept, commenced with Ancient Greece and ended with space exploration. These topics, were to be repeated and studied in Bruneresque spiral curriculum fashion throughout a student's school career. The ten periods would, it was

argued, provide a common longitudinal foundation for history education in schools. The topics, flexible at first, were then incorporated into the Dutch examination system leading to an unpopular stress on content, later modified in favour of adaptability.

Although popular with teachers, the ten periods provoked a fierce, short-lived historiographical controversy about significance followed by a demand from the Netherlands Education Council, the peak Dutch government education body, for an essentialist "canon" of "valuable components" of Dutch culture. Distinguished academic historian Frits van Oostrom then chaired a second curriculum committee, mainly of fellow academics and heritage specialists, whose 2006 task was to provide a list of key events in the rich history of the Netherlands to be taught within the ten historical periods. This new list was to be known as the Dutch Canon and was to be introduced into upper primary schools (to be repeated in lower secondary schools) by the (fourth successive) Jan Balkenende Christian Democrat (conservative centrist) coalition administration (2007-2010).

The Canon, which consisted of fifty topics (pre-history through to the European Union) contained within fourteen sections, was presented to the Dutch education minister Maria van der Hoeven in October 2006, revised in 2007 and implemented in the new school year 2009. According to Ronald Plasterk, Labour coalition minister of education at the time, the Dutch Canon was expected to encouraged active citizenship by providing an essentialist introduction to Dutch history and citizenship. The Balkenende government also announced that it would provide additional funding for the thriving heritage-themed National History Museum at Arnhem, a place of Dutch heritage to be linked to the Canon.

This initiative was controversial in character (see for example Grever & Stuurman, 2007). This was mainly because of its conservative political origins, its patriarchal nature, its heritage element, its citizenship functionality, its Netherlands-centrism, and because of its seemingly imposed master narrative character. The Dutch Canon (van Oostrom, 2007) was however less a neoconservative chronicle of self-congratulatory facts (as was advocated in the UK, the US, and Australia) and more a series of topics that were meant to form an overview of a progressive Dutch past from pre-history through to the creation of the European Union. This kind of chronological arrangement is much the same as can be found in varying forms in the curricula of many nations. There was however a preponderance of good news topics in the Canon and the events chosen did seem a little arbitrary and disconnected. Not only that but missing from the Canon were several less celebrated occurrences in Dutch history such as harsh Dutch colonial interventions in Indonesia and the Dutch part in the Atlantic and the East Indies slave trades.

There were though several redeeming features of the Canon which counted against the argument that it is merely a prescribed and politicized chronicle of events in Dutch history. First, the introduction to the 115-page Canon outline, *A Key to Dutch History* (van Ostrom, 2007) stressed its pedagogical flexibility. Second, the catalogue of Canon topics highlighted two controversial, living-memory issues which did not show the Netherlands in a good light. These are Dutch officialdom's collaborative role in the Holocaust and a Dutch UN peacekeeping unit's hapless role in the genocidal 1995 Srebrenica massacre of more than 7000 Muslim Bosnian men and youths. Third, the Canon may, in the hands of good teachers, be studied as a series of contestable milestones although, over a repeated two-year program, that might be hard work even for the very best of teachers. Finally, under the provisions of the freedom of education Article 23 of the Dutch constitution, the Canon is not compulsory in most private schools. These particular schools are independently-founded but state-funded *bijzonder onderwijs*, a large proportion of which are denominational schools (*confessioneel bijzonder onderwijs*) with many of the latter group containing the very Islamist faith schools targeted by the more conservative supporters of the Canon.

As we have seen, though the Canon did have a strongly assimilationist element, it had a moderately exceptionalist character, it certainly had a progressivist viewpoint and it was very firmly functionalist. However, as was not the case in the UK, the US, and Australia, the curriculum was advocated by a centrist alliance. Moreover, the Dutch experience did not result in vitriolic political attacks on schoolteachers and educators by neoconservative opinion nor in mocking media campaigns against curriculum designers, nor indeed has it resulted in the imposition of a hard-edged, dogmatic syllabus. In effect, the Dutch Canon became a pragmatic and even an adjustable attempt at implementing an integrationist approach to history within a broader history curriculum framework. Indeed, the ten topics are currently the dominant mode in Dutch schools with, in many cases, the fifty Canon events having faded into the schools' larger history programs and in some schools, they are only taught in part.

In summary, the Dutch Canon was less politicized and far less rigid than might have appeared at first glance but its clear political purpose and its apparent emphasis on factual knowledge, did not sit well with forty years of history education research and practice. Further, despite the presumed functionality aspect of history education as an agent of assimilation, the research evidence suggests that, in a pluralist democratic society, the irrationality and the emotionality of strongly-held individual, family and community sectarian, tribal and religious beliefs can override the rational and evidence-based classroom conclusions of a cognitively-driven school subject such as history, especially at adolescent level. This is a problem made worse by ethnic and racial segregation in the Netherlands' 500 or so so-named *black schools*, one unintended consequence of the Dutch progressive free parental choice school system (Barton & McCully, 2005; Reilly & McCully, 2011; Kitson, 2007; Hamilton 2015).

As if to prove the point, on 9 March 2013, *NRC Handelsblad*, a major Dutch newspaper, reported that that Turkish-Dutch youths from Arnhem (a city with a large Muslim presence and, indeed, home of the National History Museum) had, in a February 2013 Dutch public service television documentary remarked that they supported of the Nazi treatment of the Jews. "I am in favour of what Hitler did to the Jews' remarked one youth, who with his companions would have learned about the Holocaust as part of the Canon" (van den Dool, 2013, n.p.). To put this event in a broader context, in 2014 there were 76 recorded incidents of anti-semitic behavior in the Netherlands, up from 61 in the previous year. Incidents of anti-Muslim behavior in the Netherlands rose from 150 to 230 during the same period (Newmark, 2015). As it happens, in 2015-2016, the *Instituut voor Leerplan-Ontwikkeling* (Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development or SLO) seemed to have recognized that history education has a limited value as an agent of social change. As part of an overhaul of the whole Dutch school curriculum, it began planning to introduce a generic, non-disciplinary social education program in which socially relevant civics education will play a major part. Currently, the core primary curriculum in the Netherlands comprises Social and Environmental Studies (biology, geography, history, political studies, citizenship, road safety). At the secondary level history is now subsumed within Social Studies.

## History education in Authoritarian regimes

### *The Russian Federation*

Although there are some similarities, there are clear differences between our two selected authoritarian regimes. In the first case, Russia's president Vladimir Putin has a very clear view of how Russia's history must be interpreted and how it should be taught in schools. To that end, he has made substantial efforts to intervene indirectly in framing the history

curriculum as an extension of his own presidential worldview (Taylor, 2016b). The Chinese way is different, however. It is the Communist Party of China that determines how history is taught, whoever might be president.

If we start with Putin, Russia's president has taken this unprecedented action to promulgate his historical vision which includes a revisionist version of Russia's glorious past as a great empire at war against the Germans and Austrians in 1914-1917, as the patriotic republic that stopped the Nazis in World War Two, and as a historic leader of pan-Slavism. In that context, history education in the Russian national curriculum is seen almost as a mythic master narrative form of school-level political backgrounding and a justification for Putin's attempt to revive Russia's geopolitical standing and to reclaim the nation's lost borderlands (for mythic see Sherlock, 2007)

To make this happen, Putin has guided (he has no direct executive power over education) the Duma and the efforts of the Russian Academy of Education and Science in devising a nationalist curriculum to be supported by government-authorized textbooks and supplementary materials. Not only that but in 2013, Putin supported a close friend oligarch Arkady Rotenberg in taking over as chair of *Prosveshcheniye* (Enlightenment) Russia's largest textbook publisher, an organisation that has a reputation for producing memorisation-based textbooks. Moreover, in April 2013 Putin went so far as to advocate the use of a single concept textbook, instead of multiple government-authorized textbooks, an idea that was greeted with dismay in the West and cautious criticism in Russia. Not that the Ministry objected to the Putin view. For some time, education bureaucrats had found administering the selection process of fourteen or fifteen history books at each year level very taxing. Three was their preferred number.

The Putin line included a focus on Russia's 'bright spots' such as the greatness of Peter the Great, the victorious 1812 battle of Borodino (Napoleon's downfall), and the Soviet Union's part as the major player in the Allies' victory over the forces of fascism in May 1945. Russia's dark spots too, which include the Soviet horrors of the Gulags and the Putin rewrite of a Bolsheviks revolution as a 1917 *stab-in-the-back* of the Imperial army, can also serve a useful purpose as dire precedents, commentary targeting a resurgent Communist Party of Russia. When braced by Western critics about his nationalist distortions in Russia's approach to history, Putin used a biblical-style mote and beam retort. Pointing out that, "All states and peoples have had their ups and downs through history. We must not allow others to impose a feeling of guilt on us," arguing that Russia had never used nuclear weapons, had not bombed nor dumped chemicals on Vietnam, and had not been responsible for a Holocaust (as cited in Smith, 2008, p.1).

Accordingly, Russia's single concept book with a universal historic-cultural standard for each year level was expected by his critics to provide a Putin-approved and narrow interpretation of Russia's past in the best traditions of the Soviet-era when textbooks followed the Communist Party line (Taylor, 2016b). As it happened, a consensus approach to Russian history was formulated in late 2013 by a trio of historians from the Institute of Russian History (part of the Russian Academy of Sciences) and, in keeping with existing practice, the guidelines were published in an early 2014 manual for publishers. Three publishing companies were then given authority to print the textbooks required for Grades 6-10 with the different publishing companies allowed to vary their interpretations of the 2014 guidelines. They were the publishing giant *Prosveshcheniye*, *Drofa* (a large private publisher) and *Russkoe slovo* (The Russian Word), a smaller private publisher. These officially-approved books are purchased for schools by the state. Other publishers' works may be privately bought by schools. A consensus guide in world history, an optional course of study for secondary school students, is expected to follow this new system.

The Putin-supported cultural heritage website *Russkiy Mir* (Russian Community) has characterized these universal historic-cultural standards as simply a recategorization with, for example, the Russian Revolutions and their aftermath combined into the Great Russian Revolution divided into three stages, the February 1917 revolution, the October 1917 socialist revolution, and the Civil War of 1917-1923 (Loshchikhina, 2015). Indeed, the 2015 books do not appear to follow closely a Putinist line. For example *Russian History Grade 10* (Bustard, 2015) written by N S Bodinov, head of the history department of Moscow State University, is the first of a two-book series on Russia from prehistory to the 19th century. Its online publicity (Bustard, 2015) features "priority attention given to key events: the formation and development of statehood, the peculiarities of [Russia's] socio-political development, the positional changes of our country in the world." The book's blurb seems guardedly open-ended,

> Modern Russia is a complex and contradictory society, one feature of which is what is usually called an identity crisis. Society today has no clear idea not only about their (sic) future, but also about the past. Both are seen quite differently in the light of various political opinions and personal assessments (Bustard, 2015).

The list of fairly predictable key events even includes the story of the Kievan Rus, a controversial area for Russian ultra-nationalists. The 2014 guide did not however deal with 21st century Russian history, a period that saw Putin's ascendancy, the 1999-2009 Second Chechen War and insurgency campaign, the 2008 Russian conflict with Georgia, the 2014 onwards proxy war in Ukraine, and Russia's 2015 intervention in Syria.

On the face of it, the Russian consensus textbook system bears a resemblance to the Dutch Canon in its character if not in its origins and intent which, in the Russian case, include unsubtle pressure from Putin himself and from leading members in the majority United Russia party, Putin's political followers. Not only that but in terms of enacted curriculum, both United Russia officials and teachers permeate the Russian education system, a phenomenon which could well affect how history is taught in the classroom, whatever the textbook authors write. Having said that, in a 2013 Australian Research Council national survey of Russian teachers (Taylor & Zajda, 2015) a majority of Russian teachers thought that even the pre-2015 textbooks were biased in favor of Putin's 'bright spots' which suggests that top-down influence over the writing of textbooks pre-dated Putin's contentious single concept idea.

### *The Chinese dream*

When faced with similar criticism of its history education culture, the Chinese government also uses a finger-pointing tactic against Western criticism. Unlike Russia however, the People's Republic of China (PRC) does not need to interfere directly in history education in attempting to correct any 1990s Russian-style adventures in pluralist explanations. While current president Xi Jinping has given his opinion about the singularity of the Chinese historical, social, cultural, and political experiences, an opinion that precludes multiple interpretations of the past, China does not need an activist head of state with an historical bent: that work is carried out by clear directives from the Ministry of Education.

In a pedagogical approach to the past that goes back to the nationalist Kuomintang era (1928-1949) history education in China has two clear duties. The first of these is a moral-ideological responsibility for recounting the past. In the case of Communist China, school history is meant to combine Marxist theory with Chinese revolutionary praxis as a way of producing citizens with the right political consciousness. The second duty of history education within a Kuomintang or a Communist party framework has been to maintain the unity of the

Chinese nation through the development of an appropriate historical consciousness (Jones, 2005).

At the same time, while Putin's Russia may quickly pass over or make use of controversial past events because they took place during the discredited Soviet period, the PRC has no such luxury. From a Communist Party of China (CPC) point of view, modern Chinese history, from 1949 to the present must therefore be seen as an ongoing succession of Mao-inspired party achievements, with a few mistakes along the way that are passed off as temporary errors or natural misadventures. That being the case, the arbiters of what is taught in schools in China remain the Communist party and the Ministry of Education, as has been the case since 1950. Further, the two duties of history education cited above currently form part of the basis for President Xi Jinping's *Chinese Dream* in which, by 2049, China will become a strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious nation enjoying unprecedented prosperity (Xi, 2014). To help reach that *dream*, Xi Jinping's program of educational advancement has been presided over by hardliner Yuan Guiren, a former academic who was appointed minister of education in 2009. As an indicator of his intentions, in a January 2015 address, Yuan advised an education conference that young teachers and students were key targets of infiltration by enemy forces and that China must by not allow schools to use classroom material that propagates Western values (Osnos, 2015).

In support of the party line is the People's Education Press (PEP), a Ministry of Education subsidiary and the largest supplier of textbooks in a textbook-dependent school system of 182 million primary and secondary school students. The general tenor of the PEP's approach to history can be found on its high quality website which is part of the China Culture.org site (People's Education Press [PEP], 2016a). On that site, China's recorded history, which stretches back to the 21st century BC is outlined in nineteen eras 2100 BC to 1949 AD, with the Communist Party's era commencing in 1949. One section of the PEP's current summary of the Communist Party era indicates the government's general approach to controversial foreign and domestic topics. It glides over the Korean War (presumably for contemporary diplomatic reasons) and passes off CPC-instigated disasters the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution as, respectively, a Mao-free natural disaster and a Mao-free economically problematic people's revolt (PEP, 2016b).

Going well beyond euphemistic characterizations of disastrous events, modern Chinese history education focuses on China's former humiliations at the hands of 19th and 20th century Western nations and Japan, contrasting the vicissitudes of that era with the China's modern accomplishments. Not only that, but in line with the preservation of the CPC's reputation at all costs, the Ministry of Education has banned from all textbooks any mention of the most traumatic event in modern Chinese political history, the violent June 1989 suppression of reformist demonstrations in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Five years after Tiananmen, a Communist party policy statement (directive really), *The Patriotic Education Campaign* told Chinese educators,

> We must turn patriotic thought into the underlying melody of society and create a rich atmosphere of patriotism. We must make it so that throughout all aspects of daily life—wherever, whenever—people will be subjected to patriotic thought, feeling and influence (as cited in White, 2015).

The Tiananmen Square protests have not only been blotted out of school textbooks altogether they have also been banned from general discussion, from everyday and scholarly reading in China, from the print and electronic media and from the once-lively Chinese sector of the Internet, the latter suppressed by the ironically-titled *Great Firewall of China*.

From a CPC point of view, this all makes perfect sense because history education in China is based on a historic Chinese form of social and cultural communalism where shared needs and ideas overrule the needs and ideas of the individual. The consequent collective historical

consciousness of such an arrangement serves all individuals by contributing to the political and social harmony of China's now-prosperous one-party state. To a Party official, the logic is unassailable for, as prime minister Wen Jiabao remarked in 2005 to a visiting US Congress anxious about the fate of a dissident Chinese academic, "I don't know the person you spoke of, but as Premier I have 1.3 billion people on my mind" (as cited in Osnos, 2015, n.p.). From a Party perspective therefore, individual human rights must always give way to the needs of the party and of the state. In that context, during the year following Xi Jinping's accession to the presidency, the president required party cadres to watch a documentary on the violent collapse of the USSR with its consequent secession of the nationalities, the death of the Soviet-era Communist party and Boris Yeltsin's mismanagement of Russian individualism during what became known as the 'Roaring 90s.'

From a conventional western point of view, and from the point of view of harassed and imprisoned dissidents, such a tough-minded arrangement seems to be an incomprehensible and unconscionable infringement of human rights. Xi Jinping took that step however because he is head of a state that for example, has serious Uyghur Islamic minority issues in the autonomous region of Xinjiang and a resentful Tibetan Buddhist colony. He also faces an unfriendly Taiwan across the straits with an antagonistic Japan beyond, a mere 3000 kilometers away. Closer to home is the sometimes unruly special administrative region of Hong Kong. Not only that but Xi Jingping runs a nation under internal and external pressure for democratic reform.

It comes as no surprise therefore to see Xi Jinping's regime, now regarded as the most authoritarian since Mao, insists that history in schools maintain its place as an assertive agent of Chinese political and cultural assimilation and exceptionalism, as well as an important element in achieving the Chinese Dream. Unlike China's fellow authoritarian but multi-party neighbour Russia and unlike democracies elsewhere, Xi Jinping's nation does not need a specially convened panel of historians to design a history program for schools. The party line is a sufficient enough guide.

## Religious fundamentalism

Christian fundamentalism has been explored in great detail since the 1990s particularly by US scholars and authors (see for example Provenzo, 1990; Menendez, 1993; Carpenter, 1997; Apple, 2006; Wacker, 2008; Osborn, 2010; New, 2012; Marty & Appleby et al., 1994-2007). Islamic fundamentalism however has been a more recent branch of study for western scholars (see for example Armanji, 2012; Davidson, 2013; Wood & Harrington Watt, 2012) and much of it is tied to the politics of global terrorism. One crucial conclusion however is that, diverse as they are, fundamentalists have one belief in common which is opposition to modernist ideologies and cultures.

As for history education, Christian and Islamic fundamentalists both follow, in their different ways, a transcendental approach to the past in direct contrast to a modern approach to the study of historical scholarship as a persuasive rational activity. Not only that but fundamentalist beliefs are founded on three ahistorical and unbending principles, the central and unquestionable importance of divine revelation, the reality of divine intervention, and the overarching power of divine will, with the latter often including a divinely-ordered Manichean triumph of the good (the sect or religion promulgating these beliefs) over the evil (atheists and believers in other religions). Accordingly, fundamentalists form, or attempt to form, *exclusive and homogenous* societies where beliefs are based on internal logic and where they dispute the spiritual validity of *inclusive and diverse* secular and/or mainstream religious

societies and communities. As far as fundamentalists are concerned, this split is irreconcilable.

The term *fundamentalist* has now become a subject of debate about discourse and meaning, and, in an attempt to clarify the character of religious fundamentalism, academic Grant Wacker of Duke University's Divinity School has drawn up a valuable set of cultural and behavioural categories of what he terms "generic fundamentalism" (Wacker, 2008, p. 37). These categories of anti-modernist thinking include a belief that the modern secular democratic state is the enemy because of its lack of connection to spirituality, because of its materialism, its ungodly educational culture and its pluralistic mentality. Fundamentalists generally regard a theocratic form of government as the solution to these issues. A second feature of fundamentalism is its reliance on the literal truth of revelatory sacred texts which are not to be interrogated and are not subject to interpretation. Gender relations too are governed by fundamentalist traditionalism with women occupying an unalterably subordinate role. Finally, religious belief has the same or even higher standing than scientific explanation.

As categories go, these attributes of fundamentalism place themselves in an unequivocally antithetical relationship to the study of history as practiced in contemporary democratic societies. They also sit in opposition to the Western-based pedagogy of history that, as noted above, has arguably been the global benchmark for authentic history education since the 1970s. For example, when it comes to women's rights and gender identity rights, because of a literal acceptance of traditionalist sacred texts, any fundamentalist patriarchal and/or gender-biased historical analysis of progress in these areas is duty bound to take on a regressive aspect. In addition, major religious fundamentalist sects are evangelizing in nature.

In practical terms, what this means is that while, in western democracies fundamentalist views of history education are generally set apart from more tolerant views, there have been several high profile, if isolated, evangelical attempts to influence mainstream education organizations. The first of these has come in the form of fundamentalist entryism where secular or quasi-secular school systems are infiltrated by believers. This has been the case in Texas where from 2010 onwards, a Republican-dominated Texas State Board of Education took an increasingly interventionist Christian approach to curriculum which, for example taught that the Founding Fathers were influenced by the Bible and that Moses was the inspiration for democracy in the United States (Kopplin, 2014). In the UK too, the Operation Trojan Horse conspiracy, investigated by the government, was an attempt by Salafist radicals to gain management control of a group of Birmingham's secular state schools. The intention was to radicalize the curriculum by, amongst other matters, teaching history from an anti-US and anti-Israel perspective (Wintour, 2014).

A second form of intervention has occurred for example in Australia where, within a secular government school system, the controversial fundamentalist Christian movement Access Ministries received conservative government funding and permission to teach religious classes within school time. Less noticeably controversial than these examples, faith schools have been established in many nations as self-contained alternatives to secular schooling while other fundamentalists have withdrawn their children from state schools to provide religious home schooling.

On a broad scale, thanks to the history textbooks of A Beka (sometimes Abeka), a US fundamentalist Christian publishing house, we can gain a glimpse of how history students in the US fundamentalist system are taught. Overall, the history of the United States is portrayed as a spiritual narrative with pure beginnings but with the US falling into decline in the 20$^{th}$ century because of the rise of secularism. Christianity is seen to be at war to reverse that decline (Osborn, 2010). On a much smaller scale, but as an example of how this can play out in class, an Australian inspector of faith schools reported to the author that during the 1990s

she had sat in on a Christian primary school's so-called history class where the students were told that the animals went into Noah's Ark two-by-two, as had the dinosaurs.

It is quite clear therefore that fundamentalist versions of history education and modern curricular practice in democratic societies are mutually incompatible.

## Conclusion

While creating sporadic political and media excitement, the UK's history wars were a damp squib, the US history wars petered out, morphing into localized battles over textbook-defined curriculum, and the Australian history wars ended with a rebuff for conservative interventionists. In summary, these ambitious interventions failed mainly because their essentialist campaigns were confined to a political elite, were blatantly partisan, were educationally impracticable in terms of enacted and realised curriculum, and were hindered both by overreach and by the resilient blocking character of the democratic process. What was significant during this period 1991-2006 however is the neoconservative shift from anti-leftist apprehensions to anxieties about potential internal Islamic cultural secession as occurred in the Netherlands.

What happened in the Netherlands from 2006 onwards was the first major attempt by a Western democracy to use history education to deal with its potentially alienated Muslim community. The Dutch experience therefore is a significant study in the complexities involved when a customarily progressive nation is faced with divisive, historically-framed cultural differences. On the face of it, the Netherlands authorities abandoned the idea that history can be an agent of social cohesion in favor of a broader social/civics education approach. If the Australian experience is anything to go by, this social studies approach may turn out to be another consciousness cul-de-sac. At the same time, it may well be the case that in liberal democratic societies, history as a school subject lacks any capacity to act as an agent of social engineering.

In an authoritarian but multi-party Russia, the conclusion is that there are two games being played out over history education. The first game is that Putin's extra-curricular interventionist pronouncements and political actions are devised to pressure education authorities, schools, and teachers into a compliant line of pro-government thinking. The second game is the careful pedagogical response of many academic and professional educators whose opinions seem to be cautiously at variance with the personal views of a president who, in theory at least, can only last another eight years in office. Again, and even in an authoritarian regime, prudent, professionally moderated curriculum seems to have the capacity to block manifest political interference.

This is not the case in China where history education is part of a totalitarian regime. Backed by an ideology that is carefully balancing the unbending demands of Chinese Marxism with a more flexible approach to social improvement, the Communist Chinese mindset is based on the long view in which history education is a crucial guide on the long march to the Chinese Dream.

As for fundamentalism, there is little more to be said except that its relationship with history education is based on faith while modern historical study is still largely based on an appropriate and considered use of evidence, despite incursions into its territory by dogmatic and obscurantist proponents of theory (see for example, Eagleton, 1996, Evans, 2002 and Scull, 2007).

To come to the point, an authentic version of history education, by which I mean a research-based, open-ended model of inquiry that is not tied to ideological principles, nationalist sentiment nor to political opportunism, needs to be defended resolutely by

members of the history community worldwide. To reinforce that point, in 2018, and since I started writing this piece, the government of Poland led by nationalist populist politician President Andrzej Duda amended *The Polish Act on the Institute of National Remembrance* in which a new Article 55a made it illegal (a) to promulgate negative references to Polish involvement in genocidal and other controversies that had occurred during World War Two, and (b) to promulgate Holocaust denialism. This is no less than an attempt to impose an official government restriction on historical interpretation, however uncomfortable or misguided it might be. Hungary too, under the auspices of right-wing prime minister Viktor Orbán, has been struggling with its past as represented in a new government-supported House of Fates Holocaust Museum which has been accused of underplaying the role of Hungary's late wartime regime led by prime minister Sztójay, his Minister of the Interior Andor Jaross and his state secretaries, László Endre and László Baky in collaborating with the deportation of over half a million Hungarian Jews to death camps during World War Two.

To put matters succinctly, as far as the misuse of history is concerned, it appears that what was old will always remain new, again and again and again.

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Tony Taylor's career as a history educator began in 1967 at a large comprehensive school in Brixton, South London. After ten years teaching in comprehensive schools he gained a Social Science Research Council scholarship to Cambridge where he obtained a PhD. From 1981-2014 worked in Australian higher education as a history educator. In 1999 he headed the national inquiry into history education, wrote the inquiry's 2001 report and became director of the National Centre for History Education (2001-2007) as well as history education consultant to ACARA (2008-2012). He is co-author of Pearson's *Place and Time* (2018, 2nd edition) and author of Monash University Publishing's *Class Wars* (2018). He is a life member of the History Teachers' Association Victoria. Tony is currently completing a book, *Their Lives, Their Times: A social, political, economic and military history of six British Families 1768-1998*.

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# The disciplined winds blow in from the West: The forgotten epistemic inheritance of historical thinking

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**ABSTRACT:** In various jurisdictions around the world, the methods of historical thinking have come to frame and organise how history education is taught. These methods, informed by robust and ample research, offer students a comprehensive entry into historical knowledge construction. Moreover, these methods help shift history away from a transmission centric approach towards one that asks students to engage the past and employ disciplinary thinking skills to construct and engage the past. While such an approach can be helpful in driving new approaches to the past, it's theorisation and scholarship is largely predicated on a normalised and unquestioned Western inheritance, the result of which is the expression of pedagogical method that reinscribes Western ways of knowing. In this paper, I argue that, as a result, historical thinking is often (re)presented without due consideration of both (a) how historical thinking is presented and assumed as universally transferable and; (b) done so without attention paid to the subjectivities that give rise to its conceptual base. Such practices, quintessentially Western in nature, pose challenges in settler contexts where teachers and students are being asked to begin the difficult work of unpacking and questioning Western and colonial knowledges and ways of knowing. While this is not to suggest that we dispense with historical thinking, the normalised presence of an (implied) universally applicable method raises necessary questions about the work yet to be done in complicating not just what students learn but how they do so.

**KEYWORDS:** History education, Western practise, disciplinary methods, critical history, decolonising pedagogy.

## Introduction

> The scholarly disciplines represent the formidable achievements of talented human beings, toiling over the centuries, to approach and explain issues of enduring importance. Shorn of disciplinary knowledge, human beings are quickly reduced to the level of ignorant children, indeed, to the ranks of barbarians. (Gardner & Boix-Mansilla, 1994, p. 199)
>
> Most of the 'traditional' disciplines are grounded in cultural world views which are either antagonistic to other belief systems or have no methodology for dealing with other knowledge systems. (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 65)

At first glance, the assertion put forth by Howard Gardner and Veronica Boix-Mansilla may appear rather hyperbolic. Speaking to a history of "talented human beings" (1994, p. 199), Gardner and Boix-Mansilla offer a rather bold claim that disciplinary logic is capable of rescuing peoples from barbarism. Out of such a claim, one might be led to believe that disciplines are a form of intellectual inoculation against a risky slip back to times of ignorance. Yet, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith reminds us, these disciplinary practices are

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antagonistic or incapable of dealing with certain forms of knowledge. This is largely because they are the "formidable achievement" of certain people and contexts, that is, (those in/of) the West. Gardner and Boix-Mansilla's argument here exemplifies such naivety to context and, I would argue, deference to disciplinary thinking as universally applicable and naive to the cultural worldviews from which they arise is common in education. In history, this can be seen in the work of historical thinking, a pedagogical method over how to think historically that engages with the, "richer and deeper disciplinary understanding that comes from knowing how history is made" (Sandwell & von Heyking, 2014, p. 1). Leveraging the taken-for-grantedness of Western thinking – the articulation of knowledge absent the subject and a position from which knowledge is presented as a "Truthful universal knowledge" (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 213) that is unaware of "the effects, and limitations, of its geographical location" (Alcoff, 2017, p. 397) – I suggest that historical thinking scholarship, as an unabashedly Western way of thinking for history pedagogy, inherits unresolved epistemic commitments to knowledge that risk reproducing the normative place of Western ways of constructing the past.

In this paper, I argue first that disciplines and their attendant practices cement Western thinking and in so doing, frame the terrain of legitimacy and codify the West in how we teach and learn. Further, I suggest that historical thinking, as a product of and support for Western disciplinary practice, inherits its epistemic presumptions and re-asserts it through the translation of disciplined thinking into pedagogical theory. This, I suggest, becomes clear when we look to historical thinking scholarship's adoption of Western disciplined thinking and the consequences of this, namely, presumptions of universal methodological applicability and the evacuation of the subject (that is, theorists) from critical consideration.

## Disciplined knowledge

Beginning with the Enlightenment, Western scholars sought to coalesce around particular epistemic framings for knowledge generation and dissemination (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). With the ascendancy of beliefs in the pursuit and possibility of rationality, reason and the rendering of all symbolic and material existence as definitively intelligible, the West heralded into consideration a particular epistemic framing. Here, precision, careful method and deference to universal notions of rational ideals served to anchor thinking in and through defensible modes of thinking and knowing. Anxieties about the need to discover universal truths led to the creation of a curated set of methods and ontologies, each speaking to (explaining) different aspects of humanity and the natural world. The domains in which these ideas flourished — disciplines — sought to circumscribe the terrain of knowledge and manage intrusions of folklore and mythology that threatened the noble pursuit of reasoned and rigorous knowledge-making, that is to say, Truth.

What, though, are disciplines? First, disciplines are often presented as circumscriptive with respect to what counts as legitimate knowledge claims. As Freebody argues, a discipline,

> refer[s] to a tradition of inquiry that provides a coherent suite of answers (what the answers are, how definite they are, and how shared they are) to questions such as: What counts as evidence? What counts as reliability? What counts as fact and opinion, and what is the relative significance of each in proof of truth and value? What do the 'right answers' look like and what are the 'right' ways of finding them? Is the main goal documentation, explanation or interpretation? What does the appropriate relationship between expert/teacher and novice/student look like? (2006, p. 11)

Similar sentiments about inquiry are echoed by Krishnan (2009) who suggests that one of the principle characteristics of disciplines is the articulation and use of specific methods to support "the organisation of learning and the systematic production of new knowledge" (p. 9). These methods contribute to the essential "regulatory practices" (Turner, 2006) that

comprise the guiding force of disciplines; these practices (methods) police the creation of "legitimate knowledge" as meaningful deviation risks undermining the coherence of the discipline. Each discipline engages in this uniquely, deploying their own methodological framing to guard access to legitimate knowledge. Take Shulman (1981, p. 6) who argues that.

> what distinguishes disciplines from one another is the manner in which they formulate their questions, how they define the content of their domains and organize that content conceptually, and the principles of discovery and verification that constitute the ground rules for creating and testing knowledge in their fields.

What distinguishes disciplines, then, is not their divergence with respect to the place of methods or "principles of discovery" but how they define what these look like, an argument echoed by Post (2009).

Second, disciplines require particular ways of communicating knowledge. Speaking to this notion, Tusting and Barton suggest that disciplines include, "recognised practices for data or source collection and analysis, and also with specific forms of writing – established genres and discourses for conveying the knowledge created by the discipline, which are structured in recognisable ways" (2016, pp. 16-17). To be a member of the disciplinary community, one must speak and communicate through the expected forms. A discipline, drawing on and normalising particular Discursive practices — ways of being and expression (Gee, 2012) — cements practices and theories which in turn provide a specific and expected vocabulary, identification, and mode of presentation.

Finally, disciplines have a lineage, anchored in the work of heroes. Much like historical narratives which often root themselves in the stories of individual and collective experience, disciplines often seek to ground themselves in the accomplishments of key figures. In history, Leopold von Ranke is often advanced as the discipline's key figure, the one who articulated the discipline's key methodological principles. Von Ranke, "Father of the historical profession" (Fallace & Neem, 2005, p. 330), is credited with furnishing future historians with the methodological and epistemic tools to intelligibly render a narrative of the past. Prioritising a sense of fidelity with the evidence, von Ranke sought to delineate a clear vision for what history was and could be. While historiographical work has been theorized beyond Ranke's rather empirically minded and 'objective' concerns, Ranke's imprint on the discipline is quite marked (Barber, 1982; Boldt, 2014).

While definitions of disciplines are inherently multifaceted — Sugimoto and Weingart (2015) suggests the landscape of definitions is akin to a kaleidoscope — the three characteristics above often serve as key guiding features of contemporary disciplines. What has yet to be noted, however, is how these three principles are not neutral or derived from universal principles. Indeed, disciplines can become 'guilty' intellectual practice by virtue of their use divorced from consideration of their historical and epistemic origins.

## The guilt of disciplines

Disciplines, Becher (1989) reminds us, are spaces of "recognizable identities and particular cultural attributes" (p. 22), their cultural features preserving, instantiating and reifying, "their traditions, customs and practices, transmitted knowledge, beliefs, morals and rules of conduct, as well as their linguistic and symbolic forms of communication and the meanings they share" (p. 24). Crucial here is the observation that disciplinary spaces are built upon a series of historical practices, folk heroes, and a "machinery of socialisation" (p. 25) that serves to secure particular elements of the discipline. As productions of Western conceptions of knowledge as bounded entities, these practices, modes of conduct and socialisation requirements are inescapably Western in flavour.

As noted in the epigraph, disciplines as a Western intellectual construct cannot be understood as something innocent. As a product of Western tradition, the kinds of vocabularies, theories and approaches to knowledge production that disciplines demand and command are indelibly marked by certain forms of thinking. To think in a disciplinary fashion — to use its epistemic toolset — is to think through the intellectual lens of the West, to defer to what Hirst (1974) might call its form of knowledge. This is particularly problematic in spaces where we work to address the vast series of exclusions that Western logics have enacted, justified and thrived on, particularly those in colonised spaces where exclusion was, and remains, the *modus operandi* of everyday life. The challenge here is perhaps not all that surprising; as part of what Walter Mignolo (2011) calls the "Western Code," the belief that Western epistemology can claim a monopoly over and universalise logics, disciplines are complicit framing devices that perpetuate Western languages, questioning and intellectual heroes, the consequence of which is the normalisation of methodological and epistemic exclusion. Disciplined history specifically engages in an "imperialism of categories" whereby the disciplinary approach exercises a hegemony that all but disavows other forms of knowing (Nandy, 1995). In what follows, I suggest that historical thinking, as a disciplined practice, risks reinforcing Western disciplined practice as a taken for granted mode of entering into knowledge production and its attendant exclusions. Specifically, I suggest that historical thinking's disciplinary language and intellectual culture is fundamentally Western in nature, exemplified in two quintessentially Western practices: an implicit claim to universal knowledge/method and an evacuation of the subject from consideration.

## Historical thinking and its Western essence

> Macrohistorians today go about their scholarly work using the historical methods developed largely in the West since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and refined by professional practice in the last century or so. One does not need to be a devotee of Edward Said and postcolonial thinking to wonder whether this involves a measure of intellectual imperialism [...] it seems ironic to operate functionally as if the historical methods and practices developed and used by the academy in the West exhaust what we can say meaningfully about the past (Yerxa, 2009, p. 7).

As an area of research and scholarship arising out of the UK and moving across the West (Pollock, 2014), historical thinking is shaped by Western practice by virtue of its adherence to disciplinarity. Further, I warrant that historical thinking mobilises the aforementioned "Western code" (Mignolo, 2011) to crystallise Western thought as the only mode of knowing that can support 'real' historical work. Take, for instance, Michael Marker's claim for re-imagined historical and disciplinary work. For Marker, "academic disciplines and approaches to scholarship are culturally biased and hegemonic in confrontation with Indigenous place-based knowledge" (2004, p. 103). Applying this line of thinking to history education, Marker (2011) calls for a better approach to the past that attends to the past beyond the comforts of the Western frame. In response to this, claims have been made that an effort to Indigenise historical consciousness does not respect nor meet the needs of contemporary contexts. For instance, Seixas (2012) suggests that Marker's call for non-Western modes of knowing the past do not warrant serious consideration because, "once indigenous ways of knowing are actually part of the textbook's way of knowing, then who will be able to object to histories based on Islamic cosmology, Biblical fundamentalism and Haitian voodoo?" (p. 136). Elsewhere, in a consideration of colonial historical practices and Western hegemony, Seixas suggests that "within the context of public educational systems, however, it [recognition of differential approaches to historical work] will fail to satisfy the demands of fundamentalist religious movements, aboriginal activists and *other antimodern tendencies* [emphasis added]" (Seixas, 2017a, p. 68). Further, the inclusion of "aboriginal historical consciousness" risks,

they suggest, relativizing standards of truth and access to the past, framing this as an affront to the truth-telling capacity and right of more modernist/disciplinary thinking.[1] This kind of thinking is an extension of what Brownlie (2009) identifies as the easy accommodation of some lines of thought (for example, vignettes in a textbook) and the dismissal of modes of encountering and understanding the past that do not fit into, "the existing forms, epistemologies, methodologies, and interpretive frameworks" (p. 36) of academic approaches to history.

The kinds of uncritical deference to Western logic exemplified above in defence of historical thinking is a particularly acute manifestation of disciplinary thinking obscuring, ironically, the effects of history on knowledge of the present. However, it is not an isolated concern and rather, the defence of and deference to Western logic is symptomatic of the field's unresolved and evasive position with respect to fundamental issues: the universalisation of Western disciplinary practice and the evacuation of the subject.

## The universial and vanishing Western backdrop

The first concerning deference to Western logic appears in the unquestioned presentation of historical thinking as universally applicable across pedagogical contexts (something manifest in concrete ways in the emphatic uptake of historical thinking in places like Australia and Canada in similar ways). As a product of Western epistemology that believes in a capacity to construct knowledge from a "god eyed view" (Grosfoguel, 2007), historical thinking scholarship does little to acknowledge and theorise the consequences of its Western inheritance, a natural consequence of being birthed out of a tradition averse to an "epistemic self-awareness." This is evident in cursory acknowledgments of the West as the origin of historical thinking only with the West's impress ignored in favour of "god eyed" theorisation of historical practice.

As noted, in the presentation of a method rooted in the Western epistemic tradition, historical thinking is acknowledged as a product of the West but once done, the West melts away, no longer needed as an identifier (see Lévesque, 2008; Seixas, 2017b). Elsewhere, the presence of "historical thinking" is given an origin in the American context only to persist later as a contextually independent idea that can apply to the practice of history more broadly (Lévesque, 2011). Similar presentational techniques occur in conversations of assessment, with Ercikan and Seixas (2015) beginning from the premise that the European/North American distinction in practice and theory is a given. This results in the promulgation of a powerful fiction that history and our (disciplined) entry is to be understood as only worth knowable through the Western episteme; the West is a given and unproblematic origin point, not worth critical attention as an influential intellectual frame. As Stuart Hall (1992) reminds us, the West has long been both an "organizing factor" and "the organizing concept or term in a whole way of thinking and speaking" (p. 187) and in presentations of historical thinking, the West has been granted the role as organizer of historical methods for future pedagogical work with little concern.

In a different sense, the West is elided as a conceptual and historical influence, a practice common in thinking that conflates the West with everything. For instance, Drake and Brown (2003) simply present historical thinking as a finalised accomplishment, epistemological considerations abandoned in favour of the methodological capacity. Perhaps more powerful however is the presumption of Western context, made possible through inference. For instance, Seixas and Morton (2013) suggest that, "this framework allows for *progression* [original emphasis]: students can use the concepts to move from depending on easily available, commonsense notions of the past to using *the culture's* [emphasis added]

most powerful intellectual tools for understanding history" (p. 3). While the notion of culture is without qualification, the suggestion that these concepts are those that "academic historians" use and that the "culture's tools" are from the discipline of history weds "our culture" with the context from which the disciplinary tools arise and continue development, that is, the West. Elsewhere, Roberts (2013) similarly elides the Western framing of the past, albeit in a different sense. For Roberts, disciplinary thinking is critical in preserving "our [Australian] democracy" and "our [Australian] society." Who is the "our"? Left ambiguous, it's impossible to pin down directly but as Harrison (2013) argues, the skills as outlined in the Australian Curriculum centre a "western epistemology that relies on the production of knowledge as disembodied" (p. 218). Further, they suggest that this, "will continue to suit those students who divide up their world in these ways" through "objective" skills such as "significance" and "cause and effect" (p. 221). The preservation of "our" democracy and society, then, is coupled with Western concepts which have the potential of better serving some. Said differently, those who find value in Western thinking are best suited to imagine and trace what is required to preserve "our" society. In each example, the West haunts the logics of argumentation, with disciplinary logic coming to be useful for all (or so it is presented).

### *The evacuated subject*

> Once upon a time scholars assumed that the knowing subject in the disciplines is transparent, disincorporated from the known and untouched by the geo-political configuration of the world in which people are racially ranked and regions are racially configured (Mignolo, 2009, p. 2).

I come to this work as a racialised white, middle class, cis-gendered male, whose upbringing in Canada and migration to Australia have been, and remain, centred and privileged by virtue of a white possessive logic that writes into the symbolic and material spaces of *here* a pervasive whiteness that I can be written into as someone who belongs (Moreton-Robinson, 2003, 2015). Given that our epistemic dispositions are determined, largely, by our "loci of enunciation" (Mignolo, 1999), I would be remiss not to attend to the role of my enunciantory locus for this indelibly marks the kinds of thinking that I do and, to a great extent, the kinds of thinking that I have long been trained to engage in (including disciplined thinking). As a subject whose corporeality is read comfortably into dominant discourses and patternings of supremacy, I was educated in a way and continue to be read and (re-)imagined in a fashion that reinforces my identity and its ongoing formation as normative.

I begin with this identification as a means of opening my thinking to the necessary critiques required; I cannot speak from the position of detached rationality and disincorporation that Western thinking thrives on. Such identification is by no means an absolution from the continued Western thinking reaching into my own writing, and I encourage critical readings of how who I am collides with my intellectual efforts. I want to start here as a segue into my second concern with historical thinking scholarship, that is, the absence of any regular consideration of how the thinker intrudes on the thinking. Speaking to the subject in historical thinking, Kent den Heyer (2011, p.157) rightly notes that the disciplinary methods of historical thinking are woefully inadequate with respect to their acknowledgment of the methodologist's role in pedagogical development:

> For reasons insufficiently explained, however, disciplinarians do not judge subjectivity or the social and political context of professional achievement to be important enough for students to take up as part of what historians do, or why they do what they do. It is as if the historical procedures identified as relevant for student study have been extracted in labs from historians who lack hopes, fantasies, or racialized, gendered, classed, and desiring bodies and who also lack political intelligence.

This is particularly acute in the articulation of disciplinary logics with the normalisation of whiteness. As Moreton-Robinson (2004) suggests for example, "Australian cultural representations of mateship, egalitarianism, individualism and citizenship are reproduced through disciplinary knowledges that are presented and taught as though they do not have an epistemological connection to whiteness" (p. 87). Such successful articulation of whiteness and disciplinary knowledge is, in large part possible, because of conventional practice in disciplines that insulates the racialised (along with the gendered, classed, and abled) subject from critical consideration. The racialised subject, here, can be and is evacuated from the critical space because it is of no deemed import, something we see with disciplinary thinking work.

Evidence for this claim is seen in the absence of identifications in historical thinking scholarship. Through the articulation of theory and empirical findings, theorists and methodologists conjure their own absence by avoiding consideration of their own cultural, historical and social locatedness as bearing down on their work. Aside from national identifications, considerations of racialised, gendered, classed and settler identifications are often excused from the critical work done. By evacuating the author, the impressions of identification are denied their place as an object of critique. To dispense with any acknowledgement of identity unduly positions the writer, theorists or pedagogue as ancillary or irrelevant. The damage done here is the reproduction of the quintessentially Western idea that knowledge can "just be" independent of the subject-position from which it emanates. An interesting example of this can be seen in explorations of how historical thinking can help understand cultural identity and how it mediates entry into the past. By asking participants to do this kind of work, there is an opportunity for the scholar to do the same. Yet, in varied studies of cultural and ethnic identity, this isn't the case. In some work, identification and an account of the influence of the theorist is absent (Barton & Mccully, 2005; Levstik, 2001; Seixas, 1993) or, in some circumstances, it is acknowledged but in a rather cursory fashion (Peck, 2010, 2011). As Pinar (2009) reminds us, the absence of the "I" is an act of concealment, that is, it evades attention that needs to be paid to the, "subjectivity [that] gets smuggled back in as that detached omniscient observer" (p. 193). Inquiry into the role of individual or collective identity as it pertains to the past, then, is potentially deemed relevant for the learner reading the past but not for the detached methodologist engaging in the development of tools for those very students.

## Broadening engagements with the past

Above, I argue that historical thinking scholarship theorises history education blind to the epistemic, cultural and subjective circumstances of its existence and its theorisers. Such a critique could rightly be countered with a request for an alternative which is a reasonable response. However, I'm reticent to do so for any alternative can only be of value within certain epistemic and ontological contexts; to offer an alternative that can supplant historical thinking (or even complement it in all cases) risks, falsely so, conveying the idea that the problem with historical thinking is solely its conceptual base when rather, it is (in part) the implied universality. However, in light of my second primary critique – the evacuation of the thinker – I do think there is space for different ways of seeing and working in relation to the past that principally acknowledges that students come with different ways of organising historical, social, and cultural knowledge.

As argued, neglecting consideration of the "who" of our pedagogical theorisations forgets that who we are in the making of the past is key. Indigenous students, for example, negotiate a "cultural interface" that reminds us of the problems with epistemic reduction for this is a space where "lived immersion reveals the presence of both [Western and Indigenous

knowledge systems] and the historical contingency of knowledge practice (Nakata, 2010, p. 56). Nakata (2002) further suggests that the interface "as a place of constant tension and negotiation of different interests and systems of Knowledge means that both must be reflected on and interrogated" (p. 286). This is particularly critical since, as Nakata (2007) suggests, much of our possible engagement with Indigenous knowledge is filtered and constructed through Western disciplinary practice; translation works to fit Indigenous ways of knowing into Western frames precluding such reflection. While more carefully positioning the author of pedagogical practice and theorisation, in no way, operates as a panacea or a guarantee of new spaces of reflection, surfacing the writer of practice opens this work for critique and makes evident the "translator" and the necessary interrogation not just of the past itself but the means of entering it. In settler-colonial contexts where history has for too long been written about Indigenous peoples from the falsely assumed vantage point of epistemic distance, calling attention to the contingency of practice and the role of teachers and scholars as the authors of methods opens the reflective and critical space to consider not just the *what* of the past but also the *how*.

Opening up conversations of the past in our classroom to be inclusive of the epistemological diversity of the past's very construction allows for a pedagogical practice that is attentive to the multiple entry points into the past. This, most certainly, has to be locally specific; this is not to suggest that we focus exclusively on local history but rather that our engagements with the past need to be grounded in local conceptions that may not fit neatly into universalising knowledge traditions. In Australia, the inclusion of the 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures' cross-curriculum priority, a curricular priority infused throughout subject areas, offers itself as a potential vector for this kind of work in recognising that non-Western knowledge is critical in our pedagogical endeavours. While this is the case, the organisation of history through disciplinary logics as the intellectual frame for constructing the past routes any possibilities here through Western approaches to the past, effectively colonising entry into Indigenous ways of knowing. A resolution, then, requires either (a) a reimagining of curriculum to be relational from its foundation or; (b) concerted efforts by schools to teach the methods of historical thinking as a possible way of knowing, not *the* way of knowing, emphasising how historical thinking is a way of knowing created by certain people whose vision of the past undoubtedly frames what they can know. Or, in the language of historical thinking, the writers of its methods also have perspectives about the past and students need to be availed of these.

## Conclusion

I offer my case here not as a combative proposition but rather a starting point to more meaningfully theorise the foundations of history education beyond the contemporary impulse to orbit our thinking around Western disciplined approaches. That disciplinary thinking quickly becomes the de-facto framework in history (or *de jure* in places such as Australia where it is now written into the national curriculum) is dangerous when this slippage does not recognise that other modes of existing in relation to the past can also be helpful.

It should be noted that historical thinking has a particular place and warrants one by virtue of its ability to focus inquiry into the past in ways that are robust and pedagogically operational. Historical thinking can be *a way* into the past but we can't rightly allow it to monopolise the pedagogical space. This poses a challenge for pedagogical efforts, one that I can't resolve other than to suggest that scholarly commitments to make historical thinking the quintessential and most robust means of entry into the past require a moment of suspension and internal critique of the command over the past that is (implicitly) demanded. At the very least, commitments need to be made to deny any one method exclusive control over historical

work, particularly when that method makes claims at (or lends itself to) universal applicability and ignores the role of the subject in thinking. When we do this, we allow for better, more ethical and culturally aware approaches to the past.

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## Endnotes

[1] It might be argued that Seixas's concern is more with the nature of the specific historical traditions themselves and less their non-Western form. However, the categorisation of non-Western forms as "antimodern" and the slippery slope argumentation offered against other traditions appears to reflect an epistemic concern about other non-Western historical approaches and less the approaches themselves.

## About the Author

Bryan Smith is a lecturer in Education at James Cook University. His work looks at the anti-racist and decolonising readings of humanities and social sciences education. His current line of work looks at the making of settler place and how everyday features of the urban landscape writes settler possession into the material and symbolic spaces of communities. This work has brought him to look at the role of street naming in settler communities and the complex entanglements of geography and history in normalising white settler possession. The results of this work can be seen in the online tool *Topomapper* that presents a digital mapping of the namesakes behind the City of Townsville's street names.

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# Exploring historical consciousness with Australian school children

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**ABSTRACT:** The study explores the development of historical consciousness in Australian school children (from Year 6 to Year 12). Historical consciousness can be seen, in part, as the ability to construct divergent ideas about the past based on evidence that rejects the paradigm of history as a fixed set of events. This research considers how students in Australia learn and construct concepts of historical consciousness and analyses these findings in relation to national survey of historical consciousness. This paper reports on emergent themes from the survey data of Australian school students.

**KEYWORDS:** Historical consciousness, historical thinking, globalisation, historical pedagogy

## Why is historical consciousness important?

Historical consciousness anchors us temporally and philosophically to the past, present, and future (Rüsen, 2005). Historical consciousness shapes our identity, cultural and collective narratives, and moral values. Understanding how historical consciousness is formed in school students through second order concepts such as historical thinking is an important question about how we develop and interpret historical discourses in our current globalised world.

Globally, the issues of radicalisation, polarisation, and intolerance are deep concerns for educators (Sjøen & Jore, 2019). Unlocking social stratification, inequality and social injustice enables young people to become skilled, aware and flexible citizens to deal with current and future issues of globalisation, sustainability and conflict. The Australian History Curriculum (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority-ACARA, 2012) is a key component in delivering this form of global awareness and critical thinking. In Australia, a national history curriculum defines whose stories are to be told and what history is of significance to future generations. Understanding how historical consciousness develops in Australian school students is the next step. It will enable us to learn how students can develop empathy and more willingness to accept differing perspectives and trans-national stories.

## What is historical consciousness?

Historical consciousness locates us in time, place, and space to historical events and informs our present perspectives and sense of agency. Historical consciousness re-defines the positioning of history as a grand narrative and enables us to shift our interpretation of a

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phenomenon to a temporal moment furnished with evidence and minutiae from the past to an action or perspective that resonates with our contemporary world. According to Sexias (2012), historical consciousness is based upon a dynamic context that is layered with human motivation, agency, individual and collective ideologies and actions. It is multi-factorial and complex, and recognises current and past perspectives. Wineburg et al. (2007), define historical consciousness as a shared historical understanding that is built upon social frameworks, cultural memory, and rituals. The connection between school, communities, cultural beliefs and representations, and families is critical in generating "lived history" (Wineburg, et al., 2007, p. 44.) and historical consciousness.

Historical consciousness encompasses personal and collective significance and develops empathetic understanding. In German the term historical consciousness *Geschichtsbewusstsein* is constructed as a coalescence of divergent political, critical, ideological, aesthetic and cultural perspectives. These views are informed by the works of Jörn Rüsen (1993; 2004; 2005) and Hans-Jürgen Pandel (1987). Such perspectives identify the importance of understanding real historical phenomena, as opposed to popular or hybrid accounts, and emphasize the cognitive and psychological dimensions of historical agency. Historical consciousness recognizes diverse perspectives and experiences and denies the centrality of causation and universal agency. It identifies instances of oppression, cultural or racial barriers, ambiguous motivation, and flawed ideological viewpoints. Adolescents' historical consciousness in Finland has resulted in actions of reconciliation and reparation for transgenerational historical phenomenon (Löfström & Myyry, 2017). From 2015 global multi-generational protests about *Black Lives Matter* is a form of historical consciousness about structural habitual racism and social injustice (Maraj, Prasad & Roundtree, 2018). Historical consciousness leads to social awareness and transformation.

Global historical consciousness is needed to recognise diversity and increase students' awareness of others and inter-cultural understanding (Kölbl & Konrad, 2015). Intercultural understanding is promoted through students' historical consciousness of difference. Intercultural competence is a critical skill needed for today's globalised and compressed world. New technologies, trade exchanges, social media and travel enable people from heterogeneous places and spaces to see, speak, touch, inhabit and absorb another's cultural landscape. Cultural diversity is complex, nuanced, historically, and geographically situated.

Historical consciousness includes the following intercultural and temporal dimensions;

- temporal and societal intersection of the past with the present (Duquette, 2011);
- contesting presentism (Seixas, 2017);
- understanding historical agency (Colley, 2015);
- contextual empathetic understanding (Rantala, Manninem & van den Berg, 2015), and
- understanding how historical narratives inform cultural, national, gendered and personal identities (Alphen & Carretero, 2015)..

According to Rüsen (2004) there are four types of historical consciousness that can be detected in students' understanding.

## Four types of historical consciousness

Traditional Historical consciousness provides a framework for traditions, rituals and norms. The connection with tradition reinforces values and acts of commemoration and continuity. These practices provide connections with the past, a sense of belonging and a moral

framework that humanity shares (Rüsen, 2004). Exemplary historical consciousness creates principles or conditions that inform present and future changes. History is conceptualised as a means of instructing future actions or inactions. It presents moral and value lessons from the past form part of a historical pattern for replication and acts as an exemplar for present and future generations (Rüsen, 2004). Critical historical consciousness evaluates the past actions or decisions as ideologically, ethically or morally unsound or unjust, and layers a new interpretation informed by present paradigms. The approach is evidenced by the introduction of a counter–narrative or explanation (Rüsen, 2004). Genetic historical consciousness uses historical acts and stories as a lens to detect representations or interpretations of the events. An example of this form is the normative and significant discourse of history from below that has emerged in the late the Twentieth Century. In this genetic construction, what was radical, disturbing, or negative is re-cast with modern sensibilities and possibilities (Rüsen, 2004).

| | **Traditional** | **Exemplary** | **Critical** | **Genetic** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Experience of time** | Repetition of an obligatory form of life | Representing general rules of conduct or value systems. | Problematizing actual forms of life and value systems. | Change of alien forms of life into proper ones. |
| **Patterns of historical significance** | Permanence of an obligatory life form in temporal change | Timeless rules of social life, timeless validity of values. | Break of patterns of historical significance by denying their validity. | Developments in which forms of life change in order to maintain their permanence. |
| **Orientation of external life** | Affirmation pf pre-given orders by consent about valid common life. | Relating to peculiar situations to regularities of what happened and what should occur. | Delimitation of one's own standpoint against pre-given obligations. | Acceptance of different standpoints within a comprising perspective of common development. |
| **Orientation of internal life** | Internalization of pre-given life forms by limitation-role taking. | Relating to self-concepts to general rules and principles-role legitimization by generalization. | Self-reliance by refutation of obligations from outside –role making. | Change and transformation of self concepts as necessary conditions of permanence and self reliance-balance of roles. |
| **Relation to moral values** | Morality is dictated by obligatory orders, moral validity as unquestionable stability by tradition. | Morality is the generality of obligation in values and value systems. | Breaking the moral power of values by denying their validity. | Temporalizing of morality; chances of further development become a condition of morality. |
| **Relation to moral reasoning** | The reason of values is their effective pre-givenness, enabling consent in oral | Arguing by generalization, referring to regularities and principles. | Establishing value criticism and ideology critique as important strategies of moral discourses. | Temporal change becomes decisive argument for the validity of moral values. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | questions. | | | |

Table 1: Four types of historical consciousness (Rüsen, 2004).

These aspects of historical consciousness enable us to critically interpret our own bias, temporal, cultural, national and societal positionality to understand issues of contemporary and historic concern such as racism, inequality, political instability and power (Epstein, 2000). Internationally within history education the importance of historical consciousness has become increasingly recognised (Almarza, 2011; Barton & McCully, 2004; Epstein, 2009). Yet evidence about how historical consciousness can be pedagogically developed in education settings and specifically in school classrooms is limited (Segall, Trofanenko, Schmitt, 2015).

## What is historical thinking?

In contrast, historical thinking is a second order concept that comprises elements of inquiry. Students conceive historical questions about causation, time links, consequences and evidence, and appreciate that gender, race, temporality, personal circumstance, economic, political or social status should be considered as a valid part of the interpretation (Kölbl & Konrad, 2015). Reisman suggests that historical thinking is the "ability to reason about written text" (2015, p. 52). The written text according to Lévesque, (2005) could include aspects of heritage or memory history or contemporary or present significance (Sexias & Morton, 2013). Students need to access personal heritage to connect with meta-narratives and disciplinary history (Reisman, 2015). It is a point of cognitive and affective transfer of historical thinking to disciplinary or narrative nationalistic history. Such forms of historical thinking focus students on the multiple identities and nuances of historical reality. It can inflate or conflate historical objectivity as students connect the past with present phenomena. Nonetheless it can provide a way for students to openly interrogate and critically analyse the past.

Internationally, historical thinking is aligned to historical reasoning using evidence and inquiry approaches. Van Drie and van Boxtel (2008) suggest that we should be developing students' questioning skills to include causal, textual and intellectual opportunities. This type of approach considers that students need procedural concepts and skills to examine historical texts and substantive understanding. The pedagogical challenges in developing historical reasoning are evident and require further investigation.

Teaching students to think historically requires at times a deviation from the official historical script. This approach enables students to detect the texture, weft and weave of different patches and snippets of sources, and analyse the quality, richness and effects of certain actions or events. It enables students to see the individual and collective nature of history. Sources for historical thinking should reflect this pedagogical goal and include history from below, not just from above, with official sources and written records. This position encompasses a broad range of material from artefacts, visual, and oral sources. Since 2012 with the introduction of the Australian History Curriculum this pedagogical approach has become normalised within Australian classrooms from School Year 6 to School Year 12. Students are given opportunities to inquire about the past and understand perspectives and evidence. This is the basis for authentic historical inquiry.

## What is historical inquiry?

Inquiry learning is a model of pedagogy that enables learners to critically engage in authentic and complex experiences, actively discuss, interpret and develop their own position, see and

understand other perspectives, insist and look for evidence of behaviours or meaning, and interrogate culture (Levy, Thomas, Drago & Rex, 2013). Using inquiry approaches in history, students are able to exchange ideas, learn collaboratively, and seek new knowledge that has a clear relevance for them (Barton & Levstik, 2011; Levstik, 2000). Students learn from the world that they are immersed in, and make temporal, spatial, and historical connections. Inquiry in this context is generative and critical (Lipman, 2003). The knowledge is not imparted but constructed and actively critiqued. Inquiry-based history teaching has been used in Australian schools and encourages students to interpret evidence and apply source analysis skills to their understandings of the past.

## Australian curriculum context

The Australian History Curriculum was one of the important educational outcomes of The Melbourne Declaration on Goals for Young Australians (2008) that elevated the significance of history and historical thinking within the national landscape. The Melbourne Declaration (2008) designed a national Australian curricula that enabled young learners to respond to their globalized, technology rich and diverse world and framed the contemporary rationale for the Australian History Curriculum. More recently, the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration (2019) determined that education was transformative. The imperative is the development of the intellectual, socio-cultural, aesthetic, spiritual and moral wellbeing of all young Australians. The Mparntwe Declaration (2019) acknowledged the significance of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander continuum with Australia's past, present and future. These educational policies frame much of the curricular architecture within the Australia. The Australian History Curriculum and is predicated on these policies and uses historical concepts such as contestability, perspectives, empathy, significance, agency, change and continuity to deliver these imperatives. The Australian History Curriculum content is focused on broad national, international and temporal discourses of change and continuity. Within this current Australian History Curriculum is the deliberate attention on the development of historical procedural knowledge or historical thinking skills. Students are exposed to historical language of time, source analysis, and evidence from the early years of schooling. The content is structured to include family, local and community history in the primary years of schooling from ages 5 to 12 years and more national, ancient and modern world history in the secondary years of schooling from ages 12-18 years. History is taught across all compulsory years of schooling (Foundation or Kindergarten to School Year 10 (ages 5-16 years). A continuum of historical skills and concepts has been created from the foundation year (called by various names such as Kindergarten in New South Wales, Preparatory in Queensland, Foundations in South Australia) to Year 10 (when students are typically 15 or 16 years old). Students use second order concepts such as historical thinking to interpret the past using sources, evidence and artefacts. The following table identifies the topics of study within the Australian History Curriculum (2012) from Foundation to School Year 10.

### *Are we there yet?*

Currently, the emergence and detection of historical consciousness within an Australian context is an important area for debate and further research. Within the Australian History Curriculum students are immersed in personal and local community history and then are extended to interpret people's connections with important national and global events. Commemorative history is initiated in the primary years of the curriculum. There is gradual reduction in personal and heritage related histories as students move to the upper years of secondary schooling In the secondary years of school students are confronted with

controversial and significant events such as Australia's involvement in conflicts; nation building events such as Federation; contact and Indigenous rights' movements; and more contemporary social historical phenomena such as environment protests and change. Gender, human rights, equality, race, justice and citizenship concepts such as democracy, liberalism and the rule of law are unavoidable as students' progress through their schooling years. The construct of progress is captured with topics on industrialization, colonialization, militarism, and social, civic and environmental reform nationally and globally. History in Years 9 and 10 becomes more globalized, connected with Western and Eastern progress, ideas and nationalistic narratives. However, the extent to which students in Australian schools are developing historical consciousness and considering non-linear, divergent and theoretical history is an important question. According to Sexias (2017) the need for young people to understand and interpret their world with relativity about the past and present is critical as knowledge, norms, and experiences are radically and fluidly altering within globalised, technological and culturally diverse world. Traditional norms, knowledge, stories that were bequeathed to successive generations have been shattered. Sexias (2017) contends that historical consciousness in this present context arises "from the radical discontinuity between past, present and future in a modern era of accelerating change…." (p. 60).

| **School Year** | **Topics** |
|---|---|
| Foundation Year | Personal World. |
| Year 1 | How my world is different from the past and can change in the future. |
| Year 2 | Our past and present connections to people and places. |
| Year 3 | Diverse communities and places and the contribution people make |
| Year 4 | How people, places and environments interact, past and present. |
| Year 5 | Australian communities – their past, present and possible futures. |
| Year 6 | Australia in the past and present and its connections with a diverse world. |
| Year 7 | Sustainable pasts, present, futures<br>The ancient world. |
| Year 8 | The ancient to the modern world. |
| Year 9 | The making of the modern world. |
| Year 10 | The modern world and Australia. |

Table 2: Current Australian Curriculum: History topics F-10 (2012)

## Research methods

This study considers how Australian school students may be developing or showing evidence of historical consciousness according to Rüsen's (2004) four categories or stages of historical consciousness. Rüsen's (2004) epistemological framework of four types of historical consciousness informs the research design and data analysis. The purpose of the study is identification of students' perceptions and understanding of historical consciousness. Survey

methods have been selected as an effective way to gather a purposive sample of students across schools, locations, genders, age groups and school years. Surveys are useful to gather descriptive data from a wide range or cross section of participants and can provide authentic data from participants about their perspective of a phenomena (Kelly, Clark, Brown & Sitzia, 2003). The survey comprises closed demographic questions and open-ended responses for participants to describe their experiences and perspectives. Sample size for the study is an important consideration for validity and generalisability. This study has used purposive or non-random sampling by inviting students to participate from Year 6 to Year 12 in schools across Australia. Data from this sample has been reported qualitatively and focuses on key perspectives of school students exposed to learning the Australian History Curriculum. A sample size of approximately 500 participants is used to validate the analysis, which is above the recommended minimum target of 200 participants (Brace, Kemp, and Snelgar, 2012). The survey responses were collected from school term one to school term three (March-September 2019). This paper reports on the initial themes that have emerged from the survey data.

### *Online survey of historical consciousness of school children from school year 6 – school year 12*

The online survey includes 562 school students, with different cultural, gender, geographic, socio-economic, and age ranges in Australia. The sample is purposively drawn from a cross section of participants who encompass demographic diversity and representativeness and upon completion of the project includes representation of diverse schools across all states and territories in Australia. All participants have been exposed to history in the Australian History Curriculum. De-identified survey responses have been analysed according to the four types of historical consciousness of Rüsen (2004):

- What is history to students?
- What stories, experiences, objects or people do they connect with history?
- How does connection with history help them understand their world?
- How important is history in their lives?

The five open-ended survey questions were completed online or in hard copy by students during an allocated in school time. Students were not provided with any stimulus materials and were given 15 -20 minutes to write their responses.

1. Tell us about the history you study at school. What do you like or dislike about learning history at school?
2. What stories, experiences, objects or people do they connect with history?
3. What is the most difficult thing to understand in history?
4. How does history help you to understand your world?
5. How important is it for you to know about history in your life now?

The survey responses include a valid sample across genders, schools, school years, types and year age. It is noted in the survey sample that there are more male students who have responded (63%) and a higher proportion of 14-15 year old students (44.5%). The school types are varied, with more non-government schools represented (60%) including Catholic and other non-government schools. This demographic data should be taken into account in the analysis and findings. The following figures provide an overview of the participants' gender, age, school year and school type.

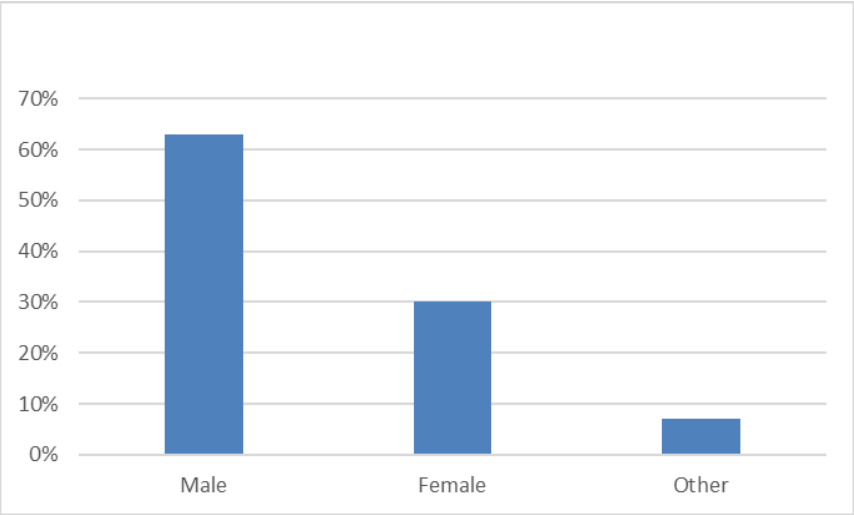


**Figure 1:** Gender of participants n=562

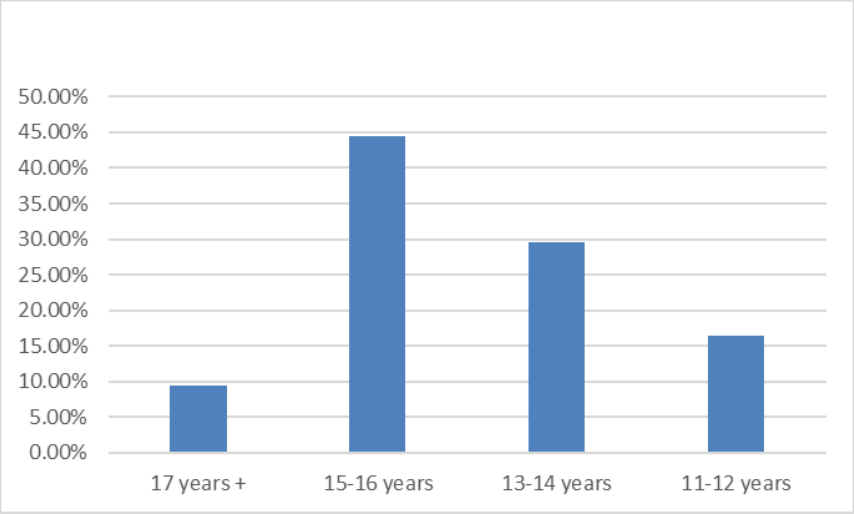


**Figure 2:** Age range of participants n=562

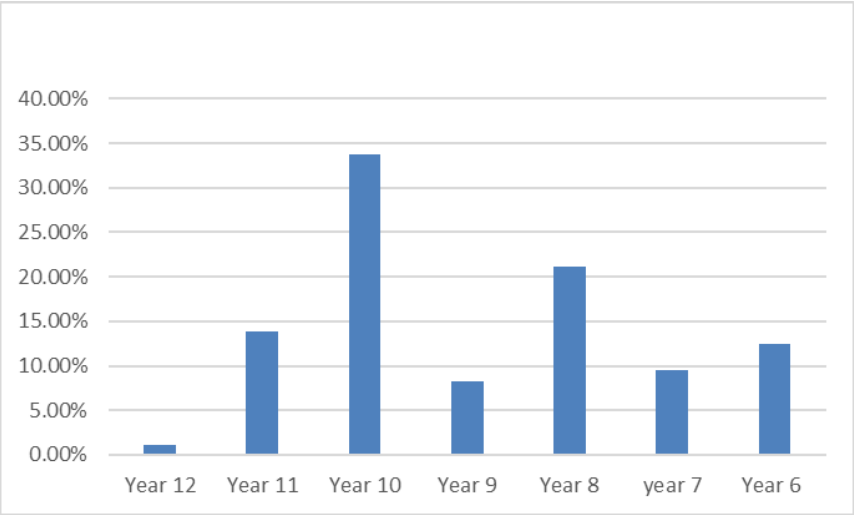


**Figure 3:** School year of participants n=562

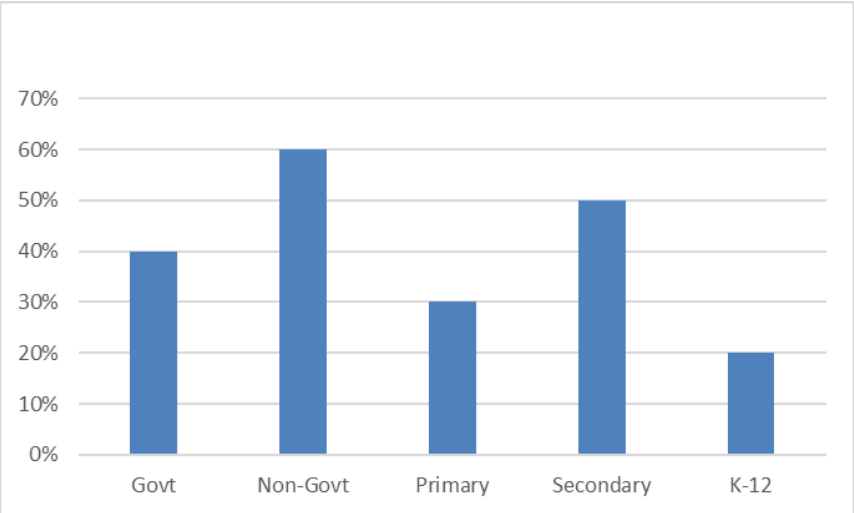


**Figure 4:** Type of school n=562

## What does the data show us?

The following results identify key themes connected to the emergence of historical consciousness and areas where this phenomenon is curiously absent or muted in participant responses.

### *Tell us about the history you study at school. What do you like or dislike about learning history at school?*

*Learning about fascinating topics, people and civilisations. Gaining a better understanding of the past* (Harry, Year 7).

Students responded to this question with a broad range of divergent comments. Some found that history provided interesting events, people and topics from the past, and others could find "nothing" (Jack, Year 9) to recommend it. Topics with complexity such as the Cold War were identified as significant. The complexity of causation and 'joining the dots' (Saad, Year 11) was an area of intrigue for students. The reliability of the past was a key feature, students wanted to know what was "probably true" (Jayden, Year 7). Students also referred to detecting patterns and mistakes from the past. The continuity of society was a focus for some respondents. While the sense of the grand narrative left some craving "multiple perspectives of history" (Jemina, Year 10).

*When it is not so epic!* (Chelsea, Year 10).

Students in years 6-12 reported history was paradoxically both "boring" and "dry" and some respondents preferred "maths" and "poetry" to "Australian history" or "Japan under the Shoguns" (Casey, Year 7; and Lilly, Year 9, respectively). Students seemed to see history in terms of the past and not as directly relevant to their lives. Students disliked learning timelines, memorising dates; "the minor events I don't care about" (Tala, Year 8). Minor stuff was apparently, "essay writing and limited time to process information" (Ruby, Year 10). However, students were genuinely engaged with different stories and sources and found some topics more interesting such as "Chinese warfare" (Max, Year 8). Topics such as 'what sort of nation are we', that were open-ended and asked for students to judge and assess our sense of democracy were seen to be more interesting. The temporal disconnect with the ancient world

for some students was disconcerting. "The Ancient World is so, so long ago" (Zoe, Year 9), and the connection with their lives was not immediately evident. Adam from Year 10 surmised that he thought learning about history was not a "necessary life skill." Repetition across year groups was identified as a problem for students. According to Adrian Year 10, "we keep studying the same things about Australia, it would be good to move on".

***What stories, experiences, objects or people do they connect with history?***

*Memories, photos, books, films!* (Charlotte)

Overwhelmingly stories or events that were contemporaneous with the history being studied resonated with students. Stories related to "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders" pasts, and Nazi Germany. Films like, "*The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, ancient objects, memories shared and photographs from my culture's past (as I'm Chinese)" were compelling, (Yun Yin, Year 10). Historical fiction was identified as a useful and engaging source to understand history- "I love to learn about WW2, so I connected with *the Book Thief"* (Sara, Year 9). Political elections and questions about leadership and voting were seen as relevant. Curiously, this finding shows evidence at least in these schools of connection to civic and citizenship knowledge which is at odds with national surveys of this understanding. Important nationalistic events such as Anzac Day were commented upon students as being part of our story. The discussion of objects centred mainly around photographs and some students identified family stories or events as relevant to their understanding of history. Families who came from migrant or refugee backgrounds were able to connect with past generations and older people as a source of history. The most important thing is "stories from Nan" (Bronte, Year 6).

***What is the most difficult thing to understand in history?***

*I find it most difficult to memorise specific dates and details, particularly with the volume that is needed to be remembered* (Ali, Year 9).

The most difficult aspect for some students was causation, dates, facts and historical language. Students responded that they were not sure why the teachers focussed on what came first or second. The difference between primary and secondary types of sources was problematic for some students. Some students found textbook teaching also concerning and could not understand why all history was so dense, hard to understand or when "people had time to write it all down" (Joe, Year 8). These interpretations of history were seen as problematic for students. Jackson in Year 10 questions "why people tend to repeat it or twist or manipulate history to suit their needs, I don't like the selfishness of history and how people can lie during their time and only later through evidence we find the truth."

The morals of historical figures confounded students and revealed the development of historical empathy and judgment- "the morals they had." (Billy, Year 8).

***How does history help you to understand your world?***

*Understanding the global ties between countries* (Peta, Year 12).

Students did respond with ideas to this question about making sense of global events such as impeachment of American President Donald Trump, the nuclear stand -off and diplomatic stalls between North Korean and United States, the ongoing Brexit instability and the climate change advocacy with school protests ignited by Greta Thunberg. The survey released in

school term one following horrific events in neighbouring countries with the Christchurch Mosque shootings in New Zealand may have contributed to this result. Nonetheless, the students were able to detect the significance of history in promoting understanding, condemning actions that withdrew rights or social justice and did link the idea of the past to actions or choices we could take into the present. Tom in Year 9 commented that history is "extremely important as it assists in my studies in other subjects as it allows me to understand the context of events and empathise with the views of those who experienced certain events." The fall-out from the Industrial Revolution and link to present day debates on climate change was made by some School Year 9 and 10 students. According to these students, history was "quite, quite important" (Tom, Year 9).

***How important is it for you to know about history in your life now?***

*As a study unto itself, not really. As context for other events that are happening in the world currently (re- Hong Kong protests, US/China relations and European nationalism), quite important* (Charlie, Year 10).

This question provoked a range of responses. The relevance of history was framed in terms of social, global, or family connections. To many students who came from migrant backgrounds, history and possible connections to future history was seen as important. To students who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander overcoming racism and people knowing the real stories was critical. The moral framework and historical patterns were recognised as centrally significant – "it is not all that important; however, it allows for reflection on past mistakes and gives advice when making future political decisions" (Chloe, Year 10). However, to some students, history was not important to them at this point; "nope, nothing, of little importance" (Sam, Year 11).

## What evidence is there for Historical Consciousness from the findings?

This data suggests that historical consciousness is formed when it is linked to present events and layered with multiple perspectives and ideological interpretations. Students were interested to understand stories and often attached significance to events that aligned with personal and cultural contexts, norms and traditions. Historical empathy and understanding of agency are evident in many of the students' responses. There was a willingness to see history as a contested text and some linkage with how the past could inform their future or direct actions. The conflation of the present with episodes from the past did occur, indicating that at times students struggled with the contextual depth or substantive knowledge of a period. Nationalistic narratives were recognised by students and there was a degree of interest in these stories. Yet clearly students are taught to see alternative perspectives and positions and were able to recognise when historical figures or institutions acted badly with power, fear or lack of decency or equality. The discipline or procedural understanding of how to treat sources, determine accuracy, provenance, reliability, bias or perspective seemed to create the most uneasiness for students. This lack of competence suggests that the discipline of history and the process of interrogating evidence is a complex task and requires further pedagogical input and opportunities. Van Drie's and van Boxtel's (2008) ideas for developing students' questioning skills to scaffold historical reasoning may be useful for this purpose.

The students' responses indicate that they are capable of understanding some aspects of historical consciousness and specifically use inclusive terms such as 'my family' and 'our story' from School Year 6 to School Year 8. This language reveals how students perceive history from a personal lens or identity. Historical consciousness is evident in students'

understanding of contemporary events and judgements about these actions. Students see evidence of racism, class, gender, inequality and difference in sources and can understand that history was experienced differently according to one's perspective, temporality and circumstances. History is filtered through these lens and enables students to form opinions about present issues and concerns. However, at times students' lack of robust historical reasoning and competence with the skills and precision of history leads to conceptual and conflation errors, and questions of relevance, or presentism.

## Conclusion

Emerging from this survey data is the identification of varying levels of historical consciousness in Australian school students. This consciousness is influenced by collective and personal connections to the past and is reinforced with social, cultural, global, and temporal fabric. Clearly, concepts such as empathy, significance, contestability, perspective, causation and agency are being developed within schools as part of the focus on historical thinking. The Australian History Curriculum is developing both historical thinking processes and creating the foundations for the emergence of different forms of historical consciousness.

Traditional historical consciousness is detected in students' responses about the rituals and continuity of the past to the present. For students of migrant ancestry traditional historical consciousness is important. The concept that history creates moral or exemplar lessons for future generations is identifiable in some students' responses. There is evidence of judgment about past decisions and patterns of human behaviour. The critical form of historical consciousness is strongly evidenced in a wide range of student responses. The survey data reveals how students interpret historical events through an ideological lens and post-modernist perspectives. The widespread acceptance of historical narratives about the 'other' is an important finding of genetic historical consciousness. However, there is still some pre-occupation with historical thinking about nationalistic narratives, fact giving, and memorisation of dates and insignificant events. This focus on historical thinking and process as a second order concept undermines the emergent roots of the four types of historical consciousness.

Historical thinking within the Australian History Curriculum as a second order concept needs further alignment with historical consciousness to promote the globalised connections and critical thinking needed about our present and future world. Teaching students to develop skills in critical historical reasoning may provide an ontological and contemporary perspective to dissect and make sense of the world. Using an array of material culture, broad social, economic, and political sources including visual and oral content could extend opportunities for Australian students to improve their historical consciousness. Further case studies are planned to provide a more complete rendering of the contemporary landscape of historical consciousness within Australia school students. This additional data could provide compelling understanding of how pedagogical choices could promote historical consciousness in Australian school students from Years 6 to 12.

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# Conversations for synthesis: Using the Harkness method in student-led historical inquiry

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**ABSTRACT:** The overhaul of the Queensland senior secondary syllabuses has provided a valuable opportunity to teachers to reconsider their pedagogy during the 2019-2020 implementation. For History teachers, the new syllabuses continue to promote inquiry and foreground the cognitions of analysis, evaluation and synthesis. However, the pedagogical approach suggested by the syllabus does not overtly support the students in the development of synthesising skills. This article explores one pedagogical approach, the Harkness Method, which through collaborative, student-led, structured conversations, may offer teachers and students a means by which synthesis can be explicitly modelled and practiced. This method may better enable students to develop and demonstrate this complex cognition, particularly when embedded within a broader practice of student-led inquiry. I argue that the implementation of a student-centred approach in senior History classrooms, coupled with the explicit emphasis on and development of synthesis through the Harkness method best enables students to demonstrate the syllabus objectives and also develop the broader 21st century skills which will enable them to become the "empathetic and critically-literate citizens who are equipped to embrace a multicultural, pluralistic, inclusive, democratic, compassionate and sustainable future" (QCAA, 2019-a, p. 1), that the Syllabus aspires to.

**KEYWORDS:** Inquiry, student-centered, student-led, Harkness method, pedagogy, Queensland, History

## Introduction

Recent changes in the Australian state of Queensland's senior schooling system offer teachers an opportunity to review and renew their classroom practice. These changes include the awarding of an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) based upon results in a suite of new syllabuses, each of which include an external assessment. In the discipline of History, a clear mandate for the inquiry approach[1] is evident. While inquiry has been an underpinning feature of Queensland syllabuses for decades (BSSS, 1987; 1995), in practice, pedagogy was not necessarily as student-centred as the documentation suggests. The ongoing debate amongst the history teaching community about the perceived content/skills binary highlights the differing views on the degree of student autonomy required by an inquiry approach (see Kiem, 2019; Counsell, 2018). The Syllabus explicitly identifies analysis, evaluation and synthesis (QCAA, 2019-a as key skills for students to master. However, the inquiry framework suggested in the syllabus (QCAA, 2019-a,) does not clearly allow for synthesis, as distinct from evaluation. This gap can be filled through the adoption of the Harkness method (Cadwell, 2018) as part of a broader student-led inquiry approach. Student-led inquiry sees students working collaboratively with their teacher and peers to devise questions, conduct research, analyse and evaulate evidence and sythesise their findings, rather than passively 'receiving' content through direct instruction alone. While a shift to student-led inquiry

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presents challenges for teachers' self-conception as 'experts', Erica McWilliam's (2009) construction of the teacher as a *Meddler-in-the Middle* is helpful in overcoming this hurdle. Once a shift to a student-led approach has occurred, the challenge of achieving synthesis remains, as the collation of research notes or the completion of individual summative assessment items does not give students the opportunity to rehearse and refine this skill. Here, I make a case for the Harkness method, a structured form of conversation pioneered at the Phillips Exeter Academy (Smith and Foley, 2009), although I suggest it is embedded within a broader student-led inquiry approach rather than a stand-alone pedagogy as it was originally designed. Harkness provides students the opportunity to practice synthesis, rehearse, and have the skill modelled with their peers and also develop a broader repetoire of skills that make the learning offered through the Harkness method relevant beyond the History classroom.

## Syllabus and systemic reform

The implementation of the new QCE History syllabuses in Queensland secondary schools occurred in 2019. With the previous Syllabus having been in place for the past 15 years, this marks a significant shift in the teaching of both Modern and Ancient History. This will have ramifications not only in secondary classrooms but in the skills and knowledge these graduates will have when they enter tertiary institutions. For the past 40 years, Queensland schools have a rigorous system of internal, teacher-designed assessment that is externally moderated through the District and State Review Panels to confirm student results. These results are combined with student performance on the Queensland Core Skills Test to award an Overall Position (OP), which is used for tertiary entrance. The last cohort of Year 12s to receive an OP was 2019, as the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) introduced the most significant overall to senior schooling many teachers will have experienced. The new Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) system differs from the OP system in a number of key ways. Rather than a general ability test such as the Queensland Core Skills Test, students will instead complete one external examination at the end of Year 12 in each subject (akin to other Australian states such as New South Wales and Victoria). Teachers continue to develop the three internal assessment items and these are endorsed by an external review process (a continuation of the Review Panel approach). Student results on these internal items are also 'confirmed' by external review. Unlike New South Wales, Queensland will not use the external examination result to scale the internal results; instead, they are seen as a cumulative total. Subject results are then combined to award students their final Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR). This systemic redesign has far-reaching implications for teachers, not only in how we design and prepare students for assessment but in how we design learning experiences that meet the expectations of the new syllabuses and best prepare our students for the world in which they will live and work as young adults.

The QCAA Ancient and Modern History syllabuses differ only in content; the Rationale and Teaching and Learning Frameworks outlined in each are the same. Reference here will be to the Modern History Syllabus but all comments are equally valid when applied to the Ancient History Syllabus. The Rationale of the Modern History Syllabus aims to have students develop historical knowledge and understanding, and "think historically and form a historical consciousness" (QCAA, 2019-a, p. 1). The Rationale states that to fulfil these aims,

> Modern History uses a model of inquiry learning. Modern History benefits students as it enables them to thrive in a dynamic, globalised and knowledge-based world. Through Modern History, students acquire an intellectual toolkit consisting of 21st century skills. This ensures students of Modern History gain a range of transferable skills that will help them forge their own pathways to personal and professional success, as well as become empathetic and critically-literate citizens who are equipped to embrace a multicultural, pluralistic, inclusive, democratic, compassionate and sustainable future (QCAA, 2019-a, p. 1).

The mandate to adopt an inquiry approach is reinforced in the Pedagogical and Conceptual Frameworks of the Syllabus, which outlines a general inquiry framework. This framework emphasises "increasing responsibility" and "independence" as goals for student learning. The other key features of the Rationale include "21st century" and "transferable" skills (QCAA, 2019-a, pp. 11-12). The final piece of the puzzle is the direction given in the *QCE and QCIA Handbook v1.1* which states that students will receive feedback on "a maximum of one draft" and that "teachers may not introduce new ideas, language or research to improve the quality of student responses" (QCAA, 2019-b, p. 77). The overwhelming message to teachers is that by the start of the senior phase of schooling, students must be able to undertake inquiry genuinely independently of teacher direction and must have the skills to make judgements about the quality of their work and know how to improve it without explicit or detailed direction.

## Teaching for independent inquiry

The question now facing Queensland teachers is how best to go about developing the "empathetic and critically-literate citizens" (QCAA, 2019-a, p. 1) with the wide range of skills the Syllabus describes. With the strong emphasis on increasing student autonomy, it is clear that teachers need to take a step back and allow the students to take ownership of their learning. While a general list, the 21st century skills outlined in the syllabuses make clear that students not only need to be able to work individually and independently, but also have skills in the domains of, "critical thinking, communication, personal and social skills, creative thinking, collaboration and teamwork and information and communication technologies (ICT) skills" (QCAA, 2019-a, p. 9). Taking all of these factors into account, a student-centred inquiry approach which fosters collaboration emerges as a suitable pedagogy for the new QCE system.

The inquiry process is not new to History teachers, but giving ownership of the process over to the students may require a shift in practice. Adopting an approach in which students co-create the inquiry questions for the unit of work; establish an understanding of "threshold concepts" (Meyer and Land, 2006) both in terms of content knowledge and discipline skills with teacher support; undertake collaborative research to develop responses to the class inquiry questions; and then communicate their knowledge through formal assessments, seems a logical structure and there are a number of ICT tools and collaborative pedagogies that can be used in this student-centred, collaborative learning approach. Meyer and Land describe threshold concepts as "a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress" (2006, p.3). This covers both content knowledge necessary for students to assimilate new knowledge and the skills needed to perform this act of synthesis, while also having strategies for when seemingly contradictory ideas are presented. Interestingly, Meyer and Land (2006) see history as a discipline with less well defined threshold concepts, yet the Syllabus clearly defines the skills which will enable students to negotiate these thresholds and construct new knowledge and understandings; for example, understanding that the past is "contestable and tentative" (QCAA, 2019-a, p.1) rather than a narrative then allows students to develop analysis and evaluation skills when engaging with historical sources.

The greatest hurdle to implementing a student-led inquiry approach with Harkness conversations embedded is often the teacher's self-conception. The gradual release of responsibility to students for their own learning is not an act of abdication of responsibility on the teacher's part (McWilliam,2009, p. 287) but rather a shift in the relational dynamics of the classroom, where "teachers are mutually involved with students in assembling and/or dis-assembling knowledge and cultural products. Meddling is a re-positioning of teacher and

student as co-directors and co-editors of their social world" (McWilliam, 2009, p. 288). McWilliam's construction of the teacher as a *Meddler-in-the- Middle* aligns closely with the role of the teacher in a Harkness classroom and the goals of the History Syllabus:

- less time spent on transmission and more time spent on working through problems in a way that puts everyone in the thick of the action;
- less time spent on risk minimization and more time spent on experimentation, risk-taking and co-learning;
- less emphasis on teaching as forensic classroom auditing and more time spent on designing, editing and assembling knowledge;
- less time spent on testing memorization and more time spent on designing alternative forms of authentic assessment; and
- less time spent on psychological counselling and more time spent on collaborative criticality and authentic evaluation (2009, pp. 290-291)

There is a close alignment between McWilliam's description of the *Meddler* and the phases of a student-led inquiry. Working through problems is achieved in the design of inquiry questions; students and teachers are "co-learners" in the collaborative research phase, where they "edit and assembl[e] knowledge"; and there is "more time spent on collaborative criticality and authentic evaluation" (2009, pp. 290-291) in the opportunities for synthesis offered through Harkness conversations.

The inquiry model provided in the Syllabus is based on Marzano and Kendall's 2008 *Designing and Assessing Educational Objectives: Applying the new taxonomy*, which has Forming, Finding, Analysing, Evaluating and Reflection as the key, interrelated, phases (QCAA, 2019-a). It is important to note that these phases are not seen as a linear progression, but rather a series of cognitive processes that students may return to again and again as they reflect upon their progress in each phase. In the Forming phase, teacher and students would work together to establish the threshold knowledge students will need to be able to assimilate and understand new information on the topic and devise inquiry questions for the unit. This threshold knowledge can be described as "what is fundamental to a grasp of the subject" (Cousin, 2006, p. 4), that is, the key ideas necessary for the student to be able to build upon and enlarge their understanding. This is the most teacher-centred component of the unit and in lower year levels the teacher may model for the students the development of the inquiry questions rather than allowing them to do so collaboratively. Having established the scope and scale of the inquiry, the class now moves into the Finding, Analysing and Evaluating phase, underpinned by regular Reflection. This 'messy middle' is where student-centred collaborative inquiry approaches can be used to develop independent learners.

## Structuring a student-led inquiry

Having established the class inquiry questions for the unit, norms for collaboration must be clearly articulated. It is only in classrooms where students clearly understand what is expected of them and how to conduct themselves that collaboration works. Ensuring that students understand that they are responsible for helping one another learn is a key feature, as it tends to prevent those who would not usually contribute to the class from relying upon the work of others. Also ensuring students understand how to relate to one another respectfully, even when they hold different views is something that should be taught explicitly. Once the norms are understood, the inquiry process can begin, with the teacher stepping back and letting the students lead.

The Syllabus Objectives for both Ancient and Modern History are:

1. comprehend terms, concepts and issues
2. devise historical questions and conduct research
3. analyse evidence from historical sources to show understanding
4. synthesise evidence from historical sources to form a historical argument
5. evaluate evidence from historical sources to make judgments
6. create responses that communicate meaning to suit purpose (QCAA, 2019-a, pp. 6-7).

What stands out here is the misalignment of the cognitions of the inquiry framework and the Syllabus objectives. The inquiry framework stages align in that the forming stage asks students to "comprehend terms, concepts and issues" and "devise historical questions and conduct research." The analysing and evaluating phases have explicit alignment with objectives 3, 5, and 6's, "create responses" is addressed in the student's assessment. While the evaluating phase of inquiry in the Syllabus states "synthesising findings" (QCAA, 2019-a, p. 12) as one of the activities of the phase, this does not match the definition of evaluate in the Syllabus: "make an appraisal by weighing up or assessing strengths, implications and limitations; make judgments about the ideas, works, solutions or methods in relation to selected criteria; examine and determine the merit, value or significance of something, based on criteria" (QCAA, 2019-a, p. 104). This mismatch is critical, as if teachers adhere to the proposed inquiry framework, they may miss the opportunity to highlight for students the differences in the cognitions of analysing, evaluating and synthesising, which are explicitly and separately addressed in the assessment and the ISMGs.

I argue that the use of Harkness conversations supports students to develop the ability to "synthesise evidence from historical sources to form a historical argument" (QCAA, 2019-a, p. 7) and so address this gap in the inquiry framework, and has the added benefit of improving the students' ability to address Objective 6 in a wider variety of contexts. As a general outline, a student-centred inquiry would have the following structure. Both the inquiry phases and the key cognitions derived from the Syllabus objectives are outlined, with the addition of communicating as a distinct phase to recognise the formal requirement to complete summative assessment and other forms of sharing their understandings.

| | **Students are:** | | **Teacher is:** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Inquiry Phases**/*Syllabus Objectives* | Years 7-9 | Senior Years | Years 7-9 | Senior Years |
| **Forming**<br><br>*Comprehend*<br>*Devise* | Taking notes as "threshold knowledge"<br>Observing teacher modelling of inquiry questions<br>Developing questions with teacher support | Taking notes as "threshold knowledge"<br>Responding to teacher provocations and guidelines to devise inquiry questions collaboratively | Providing comprehensive outline of the unit content<br>Modelling the development of inquiry questions<br>Demonstrating how student-developed questions can be improved for inclusion in inquiry | Providing a basic outline of key unit content<br>Providing prompts for the development of inquiry questions<br>Monitoring the development of inquiry questions |
| **Finding** (**Reflection** on | Collaboratively:<br>Working with | Collaboratively:<br>Locating sources | Providing sources that offer a range of | Modelling how to locate sources |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| the sources found may result in revision of the inquiry questions devised in the Forming phase)<br><br>*Devise and conduct* | provided sources<br>Locating sources with teacher support and instruction<br>Reflecting on inquiry questions with teacher | independently<br>Working with key provided sources<br>Reflecting on if sources require redesign of inquiry questions | perspectives<br>Giving direct instruction and modelling how to locate a range of sources<br>Leading reflection on questions | Reminding students of good research practice, including reflection<br>Observing and providing feedback |
| **Analysing and Evaluating**<br>(**Reflection** in this phase may see students further refining the inquiry questions or needing to return to the Finding phase to locate a wider range of perspectives)<br><br>*Analyse*<br>*Evaluate*<br>*Synthesise* | Collaboratively:<br>Using scaffolds, guiding questions, and teacher modelling: identifying the features of evidence and making basic decisions about the reliability of sources<br>With teacher guidance, reflecting on if a range of perspectives has been considered | Collaboratively:<br>With reduced teacher support, making judgements about the features of evidence and making sophisticated decisions about the reliability of sources<br>Collaboratively reflecting on if a range of perspectives has been considered | Modelling, using scaffolds and questions, how to identify features of evidence and make decisions about reliability<br><br>Modelling and providing feedback to students on their reflection | Supporting students through feedback as they evaluate features of evidence and make decisions about reliability<br>Providing feedback on the collaborative reflection |
| **Communicating**<br><br>*Synthesise*<br>*Create responses* | Individually:<br>Completing assessment<br>Using simple rubrics to provide peer feedback during drafting<br>Making judgements about likely standards against criteria | Individually:<br>Completing assessment<br>Self-reflection against criteria and feedback rubric<br>Peer feedback on criteria and feedback rubric or checklist | Modelling assessment task type and explain criteria<br>Modelling the use of sources located during the inquiry<br>Modelling the communication of source analysis and evaluation in historical writing<br>Providing a reasonable level of feedback on student drafts | Modelling more sophisticated ways of communicating source analysis and evaluation and the development of more complex historical arguments<br>Reminding students about basic expectations<br>Providing limited feedback on one draft |
| **Reflection** | Individually and as a group:<br>Students receive feedback (and do some guided self-reflection) about what they did well and what they need | Individually and as a group:<br>Students self-reflect and receive feedback on what they did well and what they need to improve both on the | Provide detailed feedback for student to consider in future learning and assessment | Support students to self-reflect on how they can improve in future learning and assessment |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | to improve both on the assessment and on their approach to learning | assessment and on their approach to learning | | |

In general, a teacher may devote one to two weeks to forming the inquiry and this will be a structured or guided inquiry, which still sees the teacher leading the learning for the most part. The finding and analysing and evaluating phases have reflection embedded within them and would take three to six weeks of a 10-week unit, depending on the nature of the assessment. The scope for increased student autonomy is greatest in these phases. Students formally communicate their knowledge and understanding through assessment which is generally completed individually, and receive feedback for reflection on this assessment. The assessment and feedback cycle may take several weeks if the students are completing a research essay, or only a week or so if completing an examination. There are a number of tools and approaches that can further support student-centred learning within a robust inquiry framework.

## ICT tools for collaboration

Having established clear norms about respectful collaboration, students need to be able to share their research and ideas with one another. In schools that have one-to-one devices tools that allow for real-time collaboration, such as Google Docs or a Microsoft Teams shared OneNote, this offers teachers the oversight and control of the learning space while giving the students freedom to organise and share their ideas as they think best. Both platforms offer live collaboration, meaning many students can be working in the one file at the same time. Google Docs works particularly well for scaffolded research, as students can add text, images and links, and can comment on the document to offer feedback or suggestions or ask questions. OneNote has the added advantage of being able to embed videos and other file types within the Notebook, which allows students greater access to the source material that their peers have found. The pages structure of OneNote also offers more flexibility in how students can organise their work, for example having a separate page per inquiry question. This is possible in Docs if students work within a shared folder with multiple documents, but is a little more unwieldy.

Another strong contender is the web-based Miro (see figure 1). Previously called RealTimeBoard, Miro is a virtual whiteboard that expands to fit the content added. The flexibility of this blank slate approach offers a range of opportunities for student collaboration. Using the space for mind-mapping is one option, or collation of notes within a scaffold in a similar way to how students may use OneNote or Docs is another. Like OneNote, Miro allows videos, audio, and documents to be embedded within it. Because it is not restricted to a traditional page layout, Miro is an excellent timelining tool. In Figure 1, students have identified key dates and events and linked references and relevant sources to these (finding). Students work collaboratively to analyse the sources to identify the “features of evidence” found in the History syllabuses; context, origin, audience, motive and perspective (QCAA, 2019-a, p. 105). Having done so, students evaluate the source’s reliability and usefulness, and reflect if they need to undertake further research to find an alternate perspective or corroborating material. This process allows students to refine their own skills in the inquiry process of analysing, evaluating, and reflection, while also having it modelled for them by their peers and receiving feedback to improve from both their peers and their teacher.

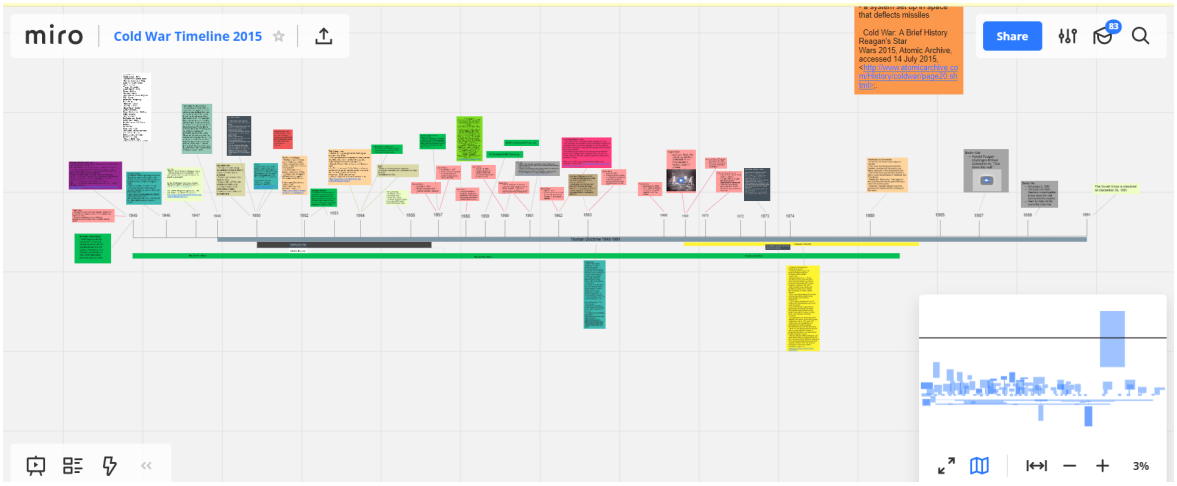


**Figure 1:** Miro 'Cold War Timeline 2015', an entirely student constructed project.

In Figure 2, students were also required to identify the defining ideology and policies that underpinned the events they researched. This timeline took students approximately three weeks in-class and served as the basis of a research essay. Having developed a shared understanding of the period, the Cold War, students then selected an aspect of the topic, for example the Space Race, for their individual research assignment. Having worked through the inquiry process collaboratively and reflected how they could improve, students then went on to undertake an individual inquiry. They were better able to adapt throughout the research process as they had had the experience of having participated fully in an inquiry rather than having just been taught the background content on the Cold War didactically.

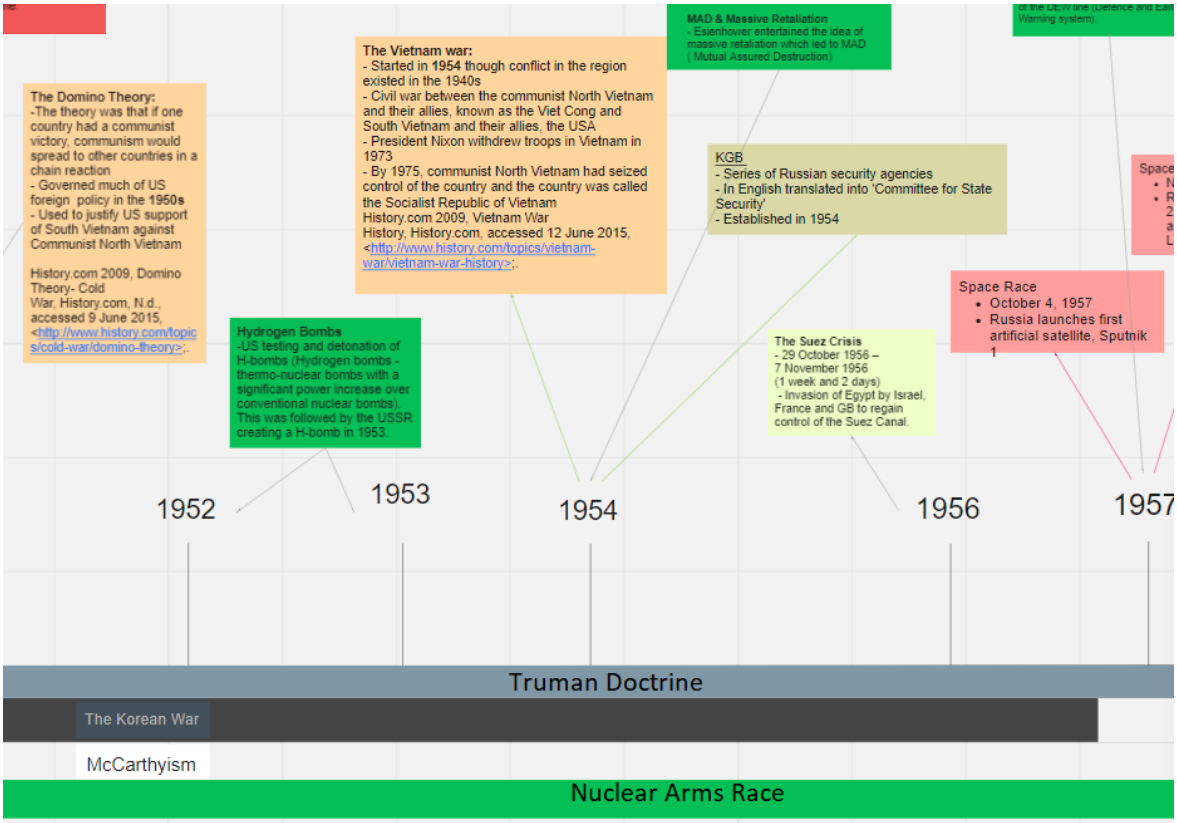


**Figure 2:** Timeline detail: broad ideological forces and key conflicts underpin colour coded timeline of key events.

The rapid rate of changes in ICT means these programs are not the only option, but their features provide a useful guide to teachers in terms of what to look for in selecting an online collaboration tool. These tools facilitate student collaboration and autonomy, but the key component of synthesis is still elusive.

## No ICT? No problem

Digital collaborative tools are not the only option when it comes to establishing a collaborative classroom. The timelining activity outlined using Miro works just as well on large sheets of paper displayed around the room. The inclusion of images, copies of key quotes and references to useful websites or videos makes the classroom timeline almost as interactive as a Miro board. Equally, in classrooms that do not have a lot of wall space, the use of chalk pens on windows is another great way to timeline, and has the added advantage of making the learning visible to the wider school community as they pass by. Students can work collaboratively with sources by printing them on A3, annotating them in groups with analysis and evaluation and placing them on the class timeline. In both a digital or physical collaborative learning space, the emphasis must fall on the collaboration. This means that rather than having students undertake individual research in multiple lessons, students can locate sources at home or in their own time and bring these to class to be analysed collaboratively. In this 'flipped' approach, classrooms become a hub of discussion and critical thinking, rather than a space for the passive transmission of information that students are asked to engage with critically in their own time. When collaboration becomes the central mode of learning during the inquiry process, students need the skills to work in this way and also the ability to synthesise their ideas for clear communication. The Harkness method, "at its core, rejects the education-as-consumption passivity that distances students from responsibilities" (Courchesne, 2005, p. 56) and offers a viable solution for ensuring opportunities for synthesis and genuine collaborative learning.

## The Harkness Method

The Harkness method was developed at Phillips Exeter Academy in the 1930s in response to philanthropist Edward Harkness's offer of significant funding if the Academy could develop a new and innovative approach to teaching. What they devised has come to be called the Harkness method and involves:

> Student-centred discussions in class, finding ways to get students to make the discoveries for themselves, to get them to draw their own conclusions, to teach them to consider all sides of an argument, and to make up their own minds based on analysis of the material at hand. (Smith and Foley, 2009, p. 478).

Essentially, a Harkness lesson starts with a prompt or reading with accompanying questions. The students bring their ideas to the table and, having established clear norms for conversation, seek to answer the questions, explore contradictions and respond as new questions are raised. The teacher's role is to observe the conversation and in most instances, use a sociogram as a way to provide feedback to the students about the nature of their participation (Figure 3). In the example below, the students responded to the high number of 'off topics' and low number of 'references' to the stimulus text in their reflection, and in the subsequent Harkness conversation there were no 'off topics' at all, and an increase in references to the source material. This explicit exploration of how conversations work to foster understanding allowed students to improve not only their subject knowledge, but the critical thinking and social interaction skills. The goal of this new pedagogy to foster independent learners and the "successful teacher in the conference [Harkness] plan would not

be a drill master, but a partner in a human enterprise" (Perry, 1930). This view of the teacher as a partner in learning rather than "the fount of information and analysis" (Smith and Foley, 2009, 478) can be a challenge for teachers who came through a more traditionally teacher-centred schooling experience and so have replicated that approach in their own practice. The role of the teacher in a Harkness conversation shifts from a content-provider to a supportive observer (who will still address errors in understanding) and a guide for student reflection and self-improvement.

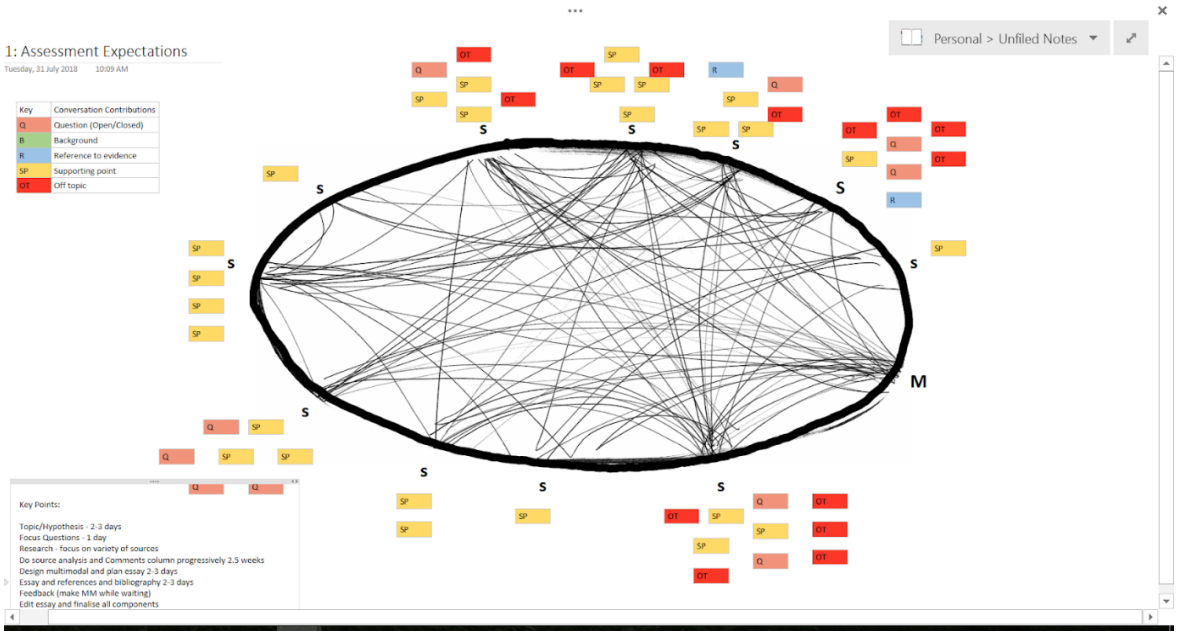


**Figure 3:** A sociogram noting the pattern of interaction and the nature of participant responses.

Harkness will not succeed if it is not embedded within a broader practice of student led inquiry,

> because teachers don't have the power to impose student leadership on occasional lessons in an otherwise didactic pedagogical culture. It involves fundamental beliefs about learning, about the agency of learning. The idea that Harkness lessons can be conceptually borrowed as a form of novel academic extension therefore involves a certain absurdity" (Williams, 2014, p. 65).

We do not argue that the Harkness method should be adopted in every lesson, all of the time. Rather, we have found a place for it within the inquiry process where it is a targeted activity aimed at enabling the students to complete the synthesis that is the implied outcome of the inquiry model presented in the QCE Modern and Ancient History syllabuses. Using the Harkness method in this way means the students take these conversations seriously, are well prepared and understand the specific purpose of each conversation is to allow them to synthesise their understandings to date and to reflect upon areas they cannot yet address.

## The challenges of Harkness

The biggest hurdle to the successful implementation of the Harkness method is the teacher's ability to rescind control of the learning. As Kimberly Fradale puts it, "our students are reticent and our teachers, talkative" (2018). Smith and Foley argue that,

> the teacher has to let go. Silences, feared and dreaded by most teachers…are quite often nothing more than a moment in time when the students are all thinking, and if the teacher were to rush and fill the silence, the students will become dependent on this and effectively be "let off the hook". (2009, p.485).

As the Modern History Syllabus states, an inquiry approach includes "developing self-directed learning over time, as students assume increasing responsibility for their learning" (QCAA, 2019-a, p. 11). If teachers are unwilling to enact a gradual release of responsibility, it is impossible for students to become the independent learners the syllabus aims for. The gradual release of responsibility framework is familiar to most teachers as the 'I do, we do, you do' model which fits well in a more teacher-centred approach. However, as Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey point out, "this three phase model omits a truly vital component: students learning through collaboration with their peers – the *you do it together* phase" (2013, p.3). If instead the units of work are centred around a lengthy period of student-led inquiry, where they *do it together*, the Harkness method is a natural fit as part of this inquiry process, and provides the opportunity for synthesis of the learning students have done in the analysing and evaluating stages of the inquiry cycle. Here, McWilliam's (2009) construction of the teacher as a *Meddler* is a helpful way for teachers to conceptualise their role in a student-led classroom.

Once teachers accept that collaborative learning is "a little experimental, a little messy" (Fisher and Frey, 2013, p.7) and let the students assume responsibility for their own learning, a few other hurdles may arise. Fradale (2018) provides a concise summary of the other key challenges in adopting Harkness. In addition to teacher reluctance to step back, she states that students are reluctant to take risks and be wrong in front of their peers, need practice with the teamwork required for discussions, can have limited opportunity to participate in larger groups, and need to feel a sense of belonging. These challenges can be overcome if the Harkness method is introduced clearly and purposefully, within an already established culture of inquiry. As Smith and Foley note:

> Assuming responsibility for the success of the class does not come easily or naturally to most students; in academic situations to which they have earlier been exposed, the teacher possesses both the authority and responsibility to fill the students with knowledge. Most students do not naturally question the teacher, nor question the text, nor disagree with their peers on intellectual matters, and yet this is exactly what they need to do in order to have successful class discussions. (2009, p.486)

However, if students are prepared well these challenges are surmountable. Explaining the approach and establishing clear norms for conversation are essential. Katherine Cadwell provides a list of expectations for Harkness conversations, including "curiosity, learning, respect and working with difference and tension" (Cadwell, n.d.). Specific expectations are then listed, such as being prepared for the conversation by completing the reading, being willing to participate and so on (Cadwell, n.d.). Another useful framework is Lauren Resnick's *Accountable Talk* (Resnick, Asterhan, & Clarke, 2018) which gives students a language to use and encourages them to engage closely with the course material. Paul Sevigny (2012) also provides a useful outline of the various roles taken up in Harkness conversation.

Another risk is emerging in the scholarship around Harkness, which is the use of the method as a way to judge, measure or grade students on participation or quality of contribution (see Areaux, 2018 and Courchesne, 2005). While one of the key tenents of Harkness is reflecting on participation through the use of the sociograms, "the point of tracking is not to evaluate the discussion, but rather to pick up specific behaviours and look for trends" (Smith & Foley, 2009, p. 489), to assign a grade to this makes the students' contributions performative rather than genuinely participatory; Smith and Foley argue against this practice (2009, p. 490). The goal of Harkness is not a grade, but a deeper understanding achieved through conversation. This understanding should be measured within formal assessment, not within the conversation itself. There is also some cynicism about Philips Exeter Academy having trademarked and monetised the Harkness method, with one article pointing out that they have "registered Harkness™, Harkness Method™, Harkness Table™ as

trademarks. Over 200 schools use Harkness tables in their classrooms according to the licensed manufacturer of Harkness Tables™, D.R. Dimes & Company" (Kennedy, 2017). However, this does not prevent schools adopting the approach, with furniture of their own choosing, nor does it invalidate the benefits of the approach.

Both teachers at Phillips Exeter Academy (Smith & Foley, 2009) and other researchers (Courchesne, 2005;Williams, 2014) note the potentially prohibitive costs to schools in adopting the Harkness method, particularly if all lessons are to be conducted as conversation. The maximum recommended class size is 12 (Kennedy, 2017), which is less than half the size of the maximum of 25 students recommended for Year 11 and 12 by the Queensland Department of Education (2018). However, a number of solutions have been put forward. Fradale (2018) suggests students could work in an inner and outer circles, the inner participating and the outer tracking the conversation. Alternately, two discussion circles may run simultaneously, with a sharing of ideas between groups and reflection on commonalities and differences in the conversations' outcomes. As another solution, using Harkness at key points in the inquiry, as we do in our context, rather than all the time makes these adaptations of the method even more plausible and comes at no additional cost to our school. We have found the challenges that arise when implementing Harkness to be surmountable, and the benefits to our students are tangible and significant, making a short period of adjustment worthwhile.

## A conversational classroom

Both the research and our own experience bear out the benefits of adopting a student centred inquiry approach in developing independent learners and critical thinkers. Further research on the efficacy of the Harkness method, particularly in an Australian context, would be beneficial. Many of the papers available are either written by Phillips Exeter Academy staff, or rely heavily on their work to make a case for Harkness. Nonetheless, what emerges in the scholarship is a clear sense that giving students the autonomy to lead their own learning through collaborative conversation has positive benefits for both the student's understanding of the content and their ability to engage critically with this historical knowledge.

Developing a pedagogical approach that is driven by student centred inquiry and has Harkness conversations embedded at critical moments of synthesis clearly meets the Syllabus description of an inquiry approach.

- a method of learning, initiated by questions or problems
- personal construction of a student's own knowledge, i.e. knowledge that is new to the student
- an active approach to learning where students have the central role
- the teacher acting as a facilitator
- developing self-directed learning over time, as students assume increasing responsibility for their learning. (QCAA, 2019-a, p. 11)

Harkness conversations have many of the features and outcomes that Stephen Brookfield and Stephen Preskill describe in their list of 15 benefits of discussion (not focussed on the Harkness method specifically), including:

1. It helps students explore a diversity of perspectives.
2. It increases students' awareness of and tolerance for ambiguity or complexity.
3. It helps students recognize and investigate their assumptions.
4. It encourages attentive, respectful listening.

5. It develops new appreciation for continuing differences.
6. It increases intellectual agility.
7. It helps students become connected to a topic.
8. It shows respect for student voices and experiences.
9. It helps students learn the processes and habits of democratic discourse.
10. It affirms students as co-creators of knowledge.
11. It develops the capacity for the clear communication of ideas and meaning.
12. It develops habits of collaborative learning.
13. It increases breadth and makes students more empathic.
14. It helps students develop skills of synthesis and integration.
15. It leads to transformation. (2005, p.21-22).

The natural fit between an inquiry approach and discussion for learning is self-evident, and the structured and reflective nature of the Harkness method also serves to address some of the pitfalls of discussion learning, such as underprepared students, insufficient attention to establishing clear ground rules and insufficient modelling (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005). As Guy J. Williams notes, "it works within a disciplined framework with prescribed content, high expectations for reading and writing, and a demanding pace for course progression. So, the framework is tough and strictly delineated, but what happens within that framework is truly open-ended" (Williams, 2014, p. 61). The lack of prescription in the outcome of a Harkness conversation is one of the key ways it integrates with a genuine inquiry approach.

In addition to the opportunities to develop the students' ability to synthesise, Harkness has the added advantage of providing students another opportunity to develop and rehearse communicating their historical understandings and thinking. As Smith and Foley (2009, p. 491) argue:

> Another crucial area in the study of history for which student-centered discussion seems well suited is writing, and this is for two distinct and different reasons. First of all, class discussion teaches analysis of sources and ideas, and encourages students to develop the habit of questioning the accuracy and -validity of sources. It also teaches students how to create an argument and support their generalizations with evidence from the text; they do every day around the table. Secondly, having critiques and discussions about student essays helps all students in the class, particularly the student whose work is under review, to better understand the mechanics of writing.

This further serves to address another of the assessment objectives that is not explicitly addressed in the inquiry framework within the Syllabus, "create responses" (QCAA, 2019-a, p.7). This approach is particularly suited to the teaching of History as it drives the student back to the sources and the skills of analysis and evaluation that they need to use to underpin any sound historical argument.

The new Queensland Modern and Ancient History syllabuses offer teachers a rich opportunity to revisit their practice. The clear mandate to adopt a student-centred inquiry approach which offers students the chance to develop the skills necessary to meet not only the Syllabus objectives but also develop the broader repertoire of 21st century skills is well supported and there are a range of both ICT and non-digital tools that can help teachers shift to a student-centred inquiry. While the Harkness method does present some challenges in implementation and would benefit from further research as a pedagogy, it fits neatly within a well-developed inquiry process and allows students the chance to address the synthesis and creating responses objectives that are not necessarily well articulated in the general inquiry approach. In adding Harkness to our inquiry process, we have found that as students "explore ideas as a group, developing the courage to speak, the compassion to listen and the empathy

to understand" (Phillips Exeter Academy, 2019), which sets them up for success in a syllabus that seeks to develop students as "empathetic and critically-literate citizens who are equipped to embrace a multicultural, pluralistic, inclusive, democratic, compassionate and sustainable future" (QCAA, 2019-a, p. 1). By foregrounding the skill of synthesis in our teaching practice, we address a gap in the proposed pedagogy for this new syllabus and better equip our students for the world in which they will live.

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## Endnotes

[1] The QCE History syllabuses draw upon the work of Spronken-Smith and Walker (2010) and Mazano and Kendall (2007, 2008) in identifying inquiry learning as an approach based on questions, where "students take a central role" and the teacher acts as a facilitator as the students work with increasing independence. This suggested model explicitly cites analysis and evaluation, however, synthesis is not present in the model.

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## About the Author

Dr Alison Bedford has been teaching secondary senior History for more than 15 years. She has served as a moderation panellist, district panel chair and now as a Lead Endorser for Modern History as part of the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority's quality assurance processes. Alison is co-founder of the Darling Down Modern History Network, established to support regional and remote teachers as the new Queensland syllabus suite was implemented in 2018. She also lectures in History curriculum and pedagogy at the University of Southern Queensland and is the co-author of a number of textbooks for both secondary and tertiary students. In addition to her pursuits in history education, Alison also holds a PhD in English literature and her monograph *In Shelley's Wake: Mary Shelley, Morality and Science Fiction* (McFarland) will be released in late 2020. She tweets @bedforda1 @ddmodernhistory

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# In pursuit of the voice of Venus: Listening for empathy in the History classroom

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**ABSTRACT:** The focus of this article is on perspectives and empathy to consider how they operate in the leading New Zealand Māori video and installation artist, Lisa Reihana's, exhibition *Lisa Reihana: Emissaries* and specifically her piece, *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]* [hereafter: *iPOVi*] which animates *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique* to reimagine the voyages of exploration and the death of James Cook. In this article I consider how the ways of viewing indicated by Reihana raise possible questions of how we teach exploration and the methodologies we employ to investigate perspectives. I specifically engage with the (re)imagining of the death – murder? – of James Cook as I ask how do we shift our perspective from being determined by the 'view from the boat' and widen it to include the 'view from the shore.' Reihana does so by employing the perspective of language – by listening and hearing and thereby obtaining understanding – to know the stories of those we could perhaps see but do not give voice to as they do speak in the language of the "world navigator, explorer or trader" (ACARA, n.d., ACHASSK084). I conclude with a discussion of how using this empathic device how it might help build pluricultural History or Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) learning spaces in which all can listen and all can speak to be heard.

**KEYWORDS:** Empathy, perspective, exploration, contested histories, Captain James Cook

## Introduction

In the second week of February 1779 the HMS *Resolution*, captained by British explorer James Cook, who was on his third southern voyage, returned to Kealakekua Bay Hawai'i with a damaged mast. It was the third year of their expedition, having left Plymouth, England on 12 July 1776. Commissioned by the Royal Society at the request of King George III, the *Resolution* had sailed via the Islas Canarias (Canary Islands_ to South Africa, where the HMS *Discovery* joined them. Together they set out across the South Indian Ocean, stopping at Van Dieman's land (Tasmania) before going onto Aotearoa (New Zealand). From there they went to the South Pacific, where they stopped in Otaheite (Tahiti) in 1777 to deliver cattle, sheep, hay, and corn for trade (Beaglehole, 2017).

When they reached Tōtaiete mā the official reason for the voyage was discharged: Mai, a refugee from Ra'iātea, who had been displaced by invaders from Bora Bora was returned home to Huahine. Mai had met Cook on his first voyage of discovery to Tōtaiete mā, when he had named them the Society Islands. Mai assisted on the second voyage, spent time in London under the guardianship of the naturalist and botanist for Cook's voyages, Sir Joseph Banks, and was now the subject of the third voyage as it was time for him to go home (Fullagher, 2019). After leaving Mai in Huahine they continued on in pursuit of the real reason for the trip, to find the Northwest Passage and establish a new trading route to Asia. Thus on they went north to the Hawai'ian archipelago, which Cook had named the Sandwich Islands, where

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they stopped briefly and continued to Nookta Sound or King George Sound, which Cook had also renamed the year before. After a brief sojourn in the Alaskan seas the expedition turned south again as the weather was too dangerous. They sighted Maui in late-November 1778 and stayed in the bays of Hawai‘i trading with those who came to the ships. In mid-January 1779 they came to Kealakekua Bay and Cook and his crew went ashore during a time of peace, the festival of Makahiki, to worship the Polynesian god, Lono. The *Resolution* and the *Discovery* left the bay on 4 February 1779 to try to go north again but they were forced to return shortly afterwards (Beaglehole, 2017).

They chose Kealakekua Bay but this time they were not so well received, the season had changed. On 13 February 1779 a cutter[1] was taken from the HMS *Discovery* and the next day Cook and a small crew of marines left the HMS *Resolution* and went ashore to demand its return. Cook tried to do so by taking Kalani‘opu‘u, the Ali‘i nui or supreme leader of Hawai‘i hostage by inviting him to come to the ship. Kalani‘opu‘u’s supporters advised him not to go with Cook. In the resulting scuffle on the beach Cook, four Marines and 16 local people were killed (Howe, 1996; Frame, 2019). Cook’s body was baked and the bones cleaned and then wrapped. Some bones and clothes were returned to his crew (Obeyesekere, 1992; Sahlins, 1995; Borofsky, 1997).

Still recovering from the horror and loss, the voyage in search of the north passage continued without the starred captain and after further mishap, the succeeding captain, Charles Clerke, died of tuberculosis, returned home on 4 October 1780 with John Gore assisted by John King in command (Beaglehole, 2017). On return home the journals from the journey were given in to the Admiralty and Dr John Douglas, Canon of St Paul’s, was employed to edit Cook’s and the crews’ journals to produce an official account of the third voyage (Beaglehole, 2017; Currie, 2005). It was published in June 1784 in three volumes and the illustrations and plates were mostly the work of John Webber (Cook, 1784). Employed by Banks as a topographical artist, Webber had travelled on the *Resolution*. Webber submitted to the Admiralty 200 sketches, drawings, oil paintings, and engravings of the trip, many of which featured ceremonies, rituals, banquets and human sacrifices. Not included in the account was Webber’s oil painting, *The Death of Captain Cook* (1781-83), which was made into an engraving by Francesco Bartolozzi and William Byrne in 1784, and is one of the best-known imaginings of Cook’s death (Joppien, 1992). Webber did not see the murder but based his rendering on his experiences on the voyage. The topography of the scene is accurate and taken from a drawing he had made when he visited. The portrayals of the Hawai‘ian people and their dress and weapons are also based on his previous observations. The scene makes Cook a hero: he is dominated on the beach by a crowd of weapon wielding Hawai‘ians. Cook is portrayed as a man of peace – he holds out his hand to stop his men in the small cutter from firing. He is guarded by Lieutenant Molesworth Phillips lies on the ground and fires at the enemy. Behind Cook a Hawai‘ian chief, identifiable by his cloak, stands poised apparently about to stab Cook in the back of the neck with a spear (Domercq, 2013). The scene is violent, desperate and carnivalesque. There is no hint that Cook has started the furious activity and had given the order to his men to fire.

After his return to Britain, and until his death in 1793, Webber travelled across Europe exhibiting. Webber’s work was seen by the painter Jean-Gabriel Charvet who had been commissioned by Joseph Dufour et Cie to produce a wallpaper for the 1806 *Exposition des produits de I’industrie française* [Exhibition of French Industrial Products]. The brief was for something spectacular as it was the first major intervention into the luxury market for Dufour and his brother since they had moved from Lyon moved to the new industrial town of Mâcon (Bioletti, Ranson and Peel, 2008). Charvet produced *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique,* which was 2.5metres high and 10 metres long and comprised 20 Drops, or panels, each 540 mm wide, which was the official standard of the time for wallpaper width (Bioletti, Davey and

Peel, 2008). The panoramic neoclassical wallpaper re-imagined the voyages of the Explorers of the Age of Sail – Cook, Jean-François de La Pérouse and Louis Antoine de Bougainville (Webb, 2015). The commercially focused wallpaper immediately became popular choice to adorn the walls of the aristocracy as the representational choices in the wallpaper reflected current fashions (Thomas, 2017). On each drop of the wallpaper, vignettes were not arranged either chronologically or geographically and with a focus on "delight" (Webb, 2017, p. 119) fantasy replaced reality: the rich foliage motif came from South America, where Charvet had just visited and which was the next destination for explorers, the light skin and Roman dress represented current Empire fashion trends and a new fascination with Pompeii, and Enlightenment ideals – reason, equality, civilisation and progress – determined the perspective for the depictions of encounters with First Nations peoples (Smallman, 2018; Devenport, 2017b). The only rupture is in the background to Drops VIII and IX where Charvet, drawing on Webber's speculative imagining, depicts Cook's death (Smallman, 2018). Here we can see Hawai'ians charging the shore, a small cutter in the water and the HMS *Discovery* and HMS *Resolution*. Cook is only a blur. Reminders of the hostile encounters Cook and his crews experienced, comprise the vignettes. Mt Yasur on the island of Tanna in the French and British colonised New Hebrides is shown billowing smoke and indicating danger, a reminder of the hostile welcome Cook received there in 1774. Identifiable by his helmet and cape, Chief Kaneena, another of Webber's subjects, watches Cook's death. Just behind him – and spectating from Aotearoa, sits Chief Kaoora, who Cook recorded had cannibalised ten of Captain Furneaux's crew earlier in the voyage (Beaglehole, 2017, p. 68). The positioning in the vignette reinforces Webber's narrative and depicts "Cook as a tragic victim of his own humanity" (Looser, 2017, p. 454).

It is this image and understanding of Cook's death which persisted and was perpetuated by the "pioneer of modern Cook studies," the New Zealand historian, John Cawte Beaglehole (Ashley, 2007, p. 109). However, since the 1960s this view has been consistently destabilised (see, for example, Daws 1968; Obeyesekere, 1992; and Sahlins, 1995), and was directly challenged in 2004 following the 'discovery' of John Cleveley the Younger's 1784 aquatint,[2] which was the preparation for his own, *The Death of Cook*. The preparation portrays Cook as an active participant in the battle, and with his musket pointed at the Hawai'ians on the beach (Domercq, 2013, 48). In 2017 leading New Zealand Māori video and installation artist Lisa Reihana entered the debate with her piece *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]* [hereafter: *iPOVi*], a 64-minute multichannel panoramic video installation on a 26-metre screen wall, which animates *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique* to reimagine the voyages of exploration and the death of Cook.

In this article I consider how Reihana treats historical empathy and what this might offer for History and/or Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) learning spaces. Cook first appears in the Australian Curriculum in the Year 4 Humanities and Social Sciences Syllabus under the curriculum content description: "ACHASSK084: The journey(s) of AT LEAST ONE world navigator, explorer or trader up to the late eighteenth century, including their contacts with other societies and any impacts." The elaboration for the curriculum code includes the specification, students "develop understandings about contact between societies (continuity and change, cause and effect) and its effects on people and their environments (perspectives, empathy)" (ACARA, n.d., ACHASSK084). The focus of this article is on perspectives and empathy: "understanding that people and societies think differently in different social, cultural and historical situations, including ourselves" (Allender et. al. 2019, p. xxiv). Following Yeager et al's (1998) finding that empathy is a device by which we can see from someone's point of view without having to hold the same values and understandings as them, I question how do we engage in new ways of knowing and understanding these explorations and colonial first contacts? How do we change from always seeing from just the

point of view of the coloniser and thereby privileging their experience? I do so by analysing how Reihana establishes empathy in *iPOVi* and how in her reimagining of the death of Cook she shifts our perspective from being determined by the view from the boat and widens it to include the view from the shore. I argue she does so by employing the perspective of language – by listening and hearing and thereby obtaining understanding – to know the stories of those we could perhaps see but do not give voice to as they do speak in the language of the "world navigator, explorer or trader" ACARA, n.d., ACHASSK084). To do so I first outline a historiography of historical empathy and historical perspective and then move to a discussion of Reihana's work. I conclude with a consideration of how using this empathic device might help build pluricultural History or HASS learning spaces in which all voices can be heard and speak to be heard.

## Historical perspective and historical empathy

The question of how we shift our perspective from the 'view from the boat' and widen it to include the 'view from the shore' has occupied two parallel and intrinsic historiographical discussions which I shall address here: the emergence of a literature on historical empathy and historical perspective and in Australian history movements to recognise that history does not begin in 1788 with the arrival of the First Fleet. Nevertheless, I begin in England. In his seminal 1961 Trevelyan lecture, *What is history?* E.H. Carr raised the question of the place of empathy in the doing of history. He defined history as "a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past" (E.H. Carr, 1961, p, 30). Later, he elaborated that history "is a social process", the act inquiry draws into conversation "the society of today and the society of yesterday" in a manner which is authentic and meaningful (E.H. Carr, p. 32). Carr suggested that to avoid bias – inherited or otherwise – in history writing then the historian should adopt "Who, When, Why" as an inquiry formula for historical and historiographical methodology, that these questions must be asked exhaustively of all characters, landscapes and situations so as to produce the most complete historical picture. Carr warned that the effects of not doing so would be to only find a "best story", what Peter Seixas later defined as a controlled and selected narrative which is presented as objective and unmediated in an attempt to create a collective memory for the society it serves (Seixas, 2000). Carr instead elaborated what Peter Seixas later termed the "disciplinary approach", which relies on taught skills as disciplinary methodologies are used to assess multiple perspectives and understandings of a historical event.

Issues of perspective were raised by anthropologist W.E.H "Bill" Stanner in the 1968 Boyer Lecture, "After the Dreaming". Stanner reflected on "the Great Australian Silence", the absence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from Australian history after European colonisation and the denial of genocide and systemic abuse (Stanner, 1969). In 1972 Henry Reynolds's work *Aborigines and Settlers: the Australian Experience, 1788–1939* tried to rethink the colonisation of Australia from a First Nations perspective. He characterised colonisation as bloody and brutal and asserted that colonisers met with resistance (Reynolds, 1972). These massacres are still the subject of the research, for example, Lyndall Ryan (2018) published the first account of genocide in *The Aboriginal Tasmanians* in 1981 and has since been the instigator of a continent-wide massacres map (Colonial Frontier Massacres in Australia, 1788-1930 https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/). Also published in 1981 was Richard White's *Inventing Australia*. White argued that the "idea of 'Australia' itself is a European invention" (p. ix) and that European views of First Nations people from the earliest landings formed an understanding of them as primitive. These views re-populated the explorers' understandings of what they viewed and recorded, and justified invasion (White, 1981, pp. 1-16).

In the 1990s feminist and multicultural approaches to history teaching further challenged singular perspectives of history and presented the possibility that when doing history, empathy can be registered for historical actors other than the privileged white male and to appreciate "human diversity and historical ambiguity" (Kornfeld, 1992, p. 28). Adopting what Seixas defined as a "postmodern approach", by analysing multiple narratives we question the roles each historical actor plays in contemporary society (Seixas, 2000). These historians have raised the question of how empathy is – or even can be – performed. How we can see from the point of view of historical subjects and reconstruct "others' beliefs, values, goals, any or all of which are not necessarily those of the historical investigator" (Riley, 1998). In 2004 Barton and Levstik argued that empathy was essential to the study of history as it meant that we did not simply understand past historical actors but we also cared about them and so were invested in the events they were involved with. They therefore defined historical empathy as "perspective recognition" and they assigned five key elements:

- sense of otherness;
- shared normalcy;
- historical contextualisation;
- multiplicity of historical perspectives; and
- contextualisation of the present (2004, pp. 210-221).

They stressed that key to historical empathy was a recognition that the subject/s under study may not share our views but that their perspective holds value. They also introduced the concept of reflexivity or critical reflection: we come to historical analysis in our particular historical present.

In her 2009 essay "Venus in Two Acts" Saidiya Hartman considered the limits of disciplinary methodology: "History pledges to be faithful to the limits of fact, evidence and archive" (p. 8). In Hartman's view violence is rendered through the promise of fidelity to the record and so she sought to alter how that was done by writing "at the limit of the unspeakable and the unknown." The method "mimes the violence of the archive and attempts to redress it by describing as fully as possible the conditions that determine the appearance of Venus and that dictate her history" (p. 1). Hartman names "Venus" or "a Black Venus" the ubiquitous slave figure forever present in history but whom remains unnamed and unidentified (p. 2). Of Venus we can ask who she is but "it would be impossible to answer such a question. There are hundreds of thousands of other girls who share her circumstances and these circumstances have generated few stories. And the stories that exist are not about them" (p. 2). We as the viewer are in her pursuit. How do we find, see and hear her? How do we "exceed […] the fictions of history […] allowing the narrative track to be rerouted or broken by the sounds of memory […] and trying to unsettle the arrangements of power"? Most importantly, how do we restore the forgotten and unseen to the "category of the human" as it was those who are seen in the "parameters of history" who judged them only for the category of waste or disposal (p. 9). Hartman pushes beyond the definition of historical empathy as the "distinctly cognitive act of reconstructing past perspectives from available historical evidence" (Brooks, 2011, p. 166) with attention to the role played by affect (*ibid.* p. 167). Hartman does so by suggesting that we engage in "speculative arguments" (2009, p. 11): read at the limits of the archive not with the aim of "recovering the lives of the enslaved" but to understand their lives as fully as possible. She asserts we do so, by presenting the known story in a new sequence, by moving around the elements, by taking contested points to present the stories. The effect of doing so is two-fold: first it displaces the "official" version and renders unstable what are thought of as established sources of truth. Second, it makes

"visible the production of disposable lives" – those who remain unreported, only appearing on the official transcripts of death. Thus we produce a "'recombinant narrative' which loops the strands of incommensurate accounts and which weaves present, past and future" (p.12).

In 2013 Jason Endacott and Sarah Brooks tried to model how this could be done by redefining the Barton and Levstik model into three parts: historical contexualisation; an affective connection; and perspective taking. The first requires deep understanding of the context and period under study (p. 43). The second looks to emotions and emotional responses and how they may have influenced the actions taken: this requires the student to accept the otherness of subjects under study even if they have different value priorities. This is what Lévesque terms the "moral judgment" dimension of historical empathy (2008). The third, perspective taking, or multiperspectivity, Seixas and Morton (2012) consider key to historical understandings. As Hartman's piece demonstrates, it requires the historian to look not just through the eyes of those under study but also those around them and to take into account that individuals and groups hold a range of attitudes, values and beliefs. It is this practice that Australian historian Iain McCalman elaborates in *The Reef* (2013). He opens with a discussion of perspective and historical and inherited hierarchies of power which persist to organise our society, and which assigned rank on the boat he wrote from. McCalman then thinks through the mindset which justified invasions and subsequent dispossessions by reviewing the voyages of Cook. Speculating on how he viewed the Great Barrier Reef on first encounter, McCalman asked whether Cook was "a Scottish Enlightenment man of reason hoping to see the cultivated landscape of civilisation, a British imperialist scouting for economic opportunities for future colonists, or simply a nostalgic Yorkeshireman […]?" (p. 23), and how these identities determined his perspective and shaped the colonial experience in Australia.

Samia Khatun's *Australianama: The South Asian Odyssey in Australia* (2018) built on the work of those like Henry Reynolds and directly tackled the legacy of myopic vision that only recognises British settlers/invaders as colonials. Khatun's work started from an inquiry: why was a compendium of Bengali poetry books presumed to be the oldest copy of the Quran in Australia? To find an answer she adopted a pluricultural approach and thereby raised the question of how we restore Indigenous geographies and understand who followed them. Khatun used linguistic perspective as a way to reverse the "discursive erasure of Aboriginal peoples and their geographical imaginations – an erasure which is foundational to settler mentality" (2018, p. 19). She did so by reimagining the routes of early travellers in Australia to determine where South Asians disappeared to from early colonial and nation-building narratives and to thereby challenge the liberal multiculturalism which currently determines Australian diversity policy. She suggested treating language as a perspective: working in different languages opens new narrative possibilities. Khatun argued that the mono, in all forms, nature of Australian colonial society has limited how we read, hear, feel, and write history. Our capacity to have historical empathy for those other than the ones we expect to see. Specifically, she asserted that if our perspective is always defined by Western consciousness, as informed by Enlightenment narratives, we perpetuate the "myth at the foundation of modern Western thought: the claim that the knowledge systems of Europeans are more advanced than the epistemic traditions of the people they colonised" (2018, p. 5). Her methodology was to use non-Enlightenment historiographical traditions to write history and thereby to challenge her readers to undertake an exercise in empathy: to abandon the ways they have been conditioned to write and know history and to try to see how it can be written by using another perspective.

Khatun shifts the perspective to 'the shore' by using non-Western methods to retrieve and write an eclipsed history. She does so as "when non-Europeans and their knowledges are analysed through interpretive methods born of Enlightenment thought, the resulting

scholarship itself systematically works to establish the 'positional superiority of Western knowledge'" (2018, p. 28). Hence, Khatun adds "hearing" and "listening" (2018, p. 171) to the dimensions for historical empathy. In her final chapter "To Hear" she explicitly demonstrates the role that language plays in understanding the perspective of "others" and she adopts a narrative style drawn from Bengali language to close her story. In doing so she abandons the structures of Western linear time narratives and she merges fantasy and reality. Time is circular, stories cross over, the timeline we know is corrupted. Khatun asks us to enter her dream, the imaginary, and to hear/listen as "far more extensive meanings are fleshed out in the imagery of aural discursive traditions" (2018, p. 185). Doing so releases the "colonial-modern historian" from "disciplining archives into tales of progress" open our ears to hear and to listen to the perspective of those on the shore (2018, p. 184). It is this work that Reihana does in her reimaging of the death of Cook.

## *Emissaries: in pursuit of Venus [infected]*

On 3 February 2018 Reihana's exhibition *Lisa Reihana: Emissaries* [hereafter, *Emissaries*] opened at John Curtin Gallery in Perth, Western Australia following a celebrated showing in the Tese dell'Issolotto at the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia.[3] Reihana's work visualises the first and early contacts First Nations peoples of Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific and Canada had with Cook and his crew. *Emissaries* and *iPOVi* began with Reihana's encounter with the woodblock designs for *Les Sauvages* at the National Gallery of Australia (Young, 2018) and the scenes of Cook's death and colonial violence drawn from Drops 9 and 10 of the wallpaper comprise the dramatic climax of *iPOVi*. Concerned with perspectives, *Emissaries* opens with an installation of "perspectival tubes" or "spying glasses" – telescopes – which were scientific instruments used by Enlightened explorers. As the viewer squints through their vision is redirected to see figures Nookta people produced in miniature or official correspondence with Mai: fragments of lives disrupted by the violence of colonial exploration. On either side of the installation are oversized portraits of the Hawai'ian Chief Mourner and Joseph Banks, both spectacularly dressed, labelled as emissaries and appearing to channel cosmic energy. To guide the viewer to the room showing *iPOVi*, along the walls are colonial sketches of encounter, Joseph Banks's specimen cases, a section of the Dufour et Cie wallpaper and finally a still produced on glass of Reihana's visual speculation on the action leading to the death of Captain Cook.

*iPOVi* shows 25 frames a second and uses green-screen technology to immerse the viewer in lush leitmotif landscapes and to tell 70 vignettes. Faithful to Charvet's wallpaper the wallpaper panorama appears as a nineteenth century Arcadian fantasy which follows the structure of Homer's *Odyssey*. The perspective is First Nations, reimagining what have happened when Cook and his crews met people from Nootka Sound, Ra'iātea, Tonga, Tahiti, Vanauatu, Hawai'i, Aotearoa, New Caledonia, Marquesas Islands, Australia, and Palau. Mai and the other (and preferred) Ra'iātean refugee Cook took on his voyages, Tupaia, are constants in *iPOVi*, and they appear together draped in brilliantly white bark cloth, "noble savages". As Rhana Devenport, the Curator of *Emissaries* for NZ Venice, concludes her Preface, in Reihana's work "The Pacific Ocean […] becomes a bed of actions for speculations on human behaviour. Greetings, exchanges, ceremonies, taints, misunderstandings, violence and untold intimacies entwine and unravel" (2017a, p. 12).

Cook and Banks are shown using new scientific knowledges and technologies to observe and record the transit of Venus in the Southern skies. However, it is not clear this is the Venus they seek: it also refers to name given to Tahiti by Bougainville, "New Cythera", which directly alludes to the birthplace of Aphrodite of Venus, the goddess of love (Devenport, 2017a, p. 10). In the vignettes we see Banks actively pursue Hawai'ian women.

His sex is unmistakeable, and on display through his amorous actions. Cook is not so clear and his breeches are pulled down to register his sex, alluding to the fact that in the Pacific, Cook's sexual identity and gender were often questioned. Some vignettes focus on the consequences of contact. In one scene a marine is flogged to the horror of those watching. Looking closely we can see the syphilis blooms on his skin, raising the suggestion that Cook ordered the flogging to try to prevent the spread of disease. By contrast, we also see First Nations men act out childbirth and breastfeeding much hilarity for all to see. The lesson is clear: intercourse has infectious consequences.

As she "explores, disrupts and reimagines notions of power, gender and representation […] Reihana's artwork 'recalibrates' accepted understandings and assumed truths" (Tamati-Quennell, 2017, p. 134). Reihana's point is that the most virulent infection was spread by the colonial gaze, which has meant that "cultural histories and identities have been distorted in the South Pacific" (Young, 2018, p.149). However, as Devenport astutely recognises, Reihana's work "is not a nostalgic revisiting or a righting/re-writing of wrongs; rather, it opens fissures in codified representation and the colonial impulse to explore directly the intentions and possibilities of human encounter and exchange" (Devenport, 2017b, 23). Instead the panorama loops in an anarchic fashion and events that took place before the arrival of the Europeans follow Cook's death, there is repetition of dancing and action sequences. Reihana plays with notions of time and progress in this sequence and throughout by adopting *Tā-Vā*, a theory of time and space used across the Pacific. This is something most clearly demonstrated in *iPOVi* in the flag-raising ceremony scenes. Disordering the narrative, she shows a series of vignettes which show marines unfurl a flag and raise it, each at different stages of completion. The vignettes are not in order and so our understanding of linear progression is disrupted. So is meaning: we expect the flag to be the Union Jack. Eventually, when revealed we can identify it through the American, British and Hawai'ian symbols as the *Ka Hae Hawai'i.* The flag was commissioned in the early 1800s by King Kamehameha I and officially adopted in 1845 to represent Hawai'i as an independent, cosmopolitan kingdom. In the 1970s the flag was an icon of the Native Hawai'ian Sovereignty Movement. Here, Reihana disturbs temporal sequence and brings the history she is telling into the present, connecting to post-colonial movements and to the struggles of other First Nations people who in spatial rupture recur in the vignettes on their home territories.

## The death of Cook?

Throughout *iPOVi* Reihana presents Cook as the "inquisitive and acquisitive explorer" (Devenport, 2017b, p. 23) and it is the intent displayed by him and his crew to possess which changes the mood as in the Arcadian fantasy the scenes of paradise drop away quite abruptly and are replaced by unrest, discomfort and violence. Cook's death or "THE site of rupture" as Reihana terms it (Looser, 2017, p. 456) is presented as a misunderstanding, which is made clear in the actions which follow. In the next episode the panorama shows a Hawai'ian *ali'i* deliver Cook's hat and thigh bone:

> **'**This was seen as a horrific thing from the crew's perspective,' Reihana says, 'but the way it was wrapped and handed over was honorific: the hat is very important because it's next to your head, which in the Pacific culture is very revered. The thigh is also a revered part of the body.' (Reihana in Jefferson, 2018)

By offering this alternative interpretation, Reihana contests what could be interpreted as horrifying cannibalism. Here Reihana points to what she is most concerned with is how the spectre of colonialism and the language of the Enlightenment has – quite literally – infected out point of view, our reading of actions and so to urge a new perspective the viewer's gaze is repositioned and refocused (Smallman, 2018). The perspective Reihana employs is "tangata

whenua view": we always see from the point of view of the Indigenous people who are receiving foreign visitors (Looser, 2017, p. 457). This literal seeing as others do is enacted in the second 32-minute cycle of *iPOVi.* This time Cook does not simply lose his breeches momentarily, instead he is exchanged and played by a woman.

Reihana shifts our perspective from being determined by the "view from the boat" and widens it to include the "view from the shore" by telling the story from First Nations perspective and she builds empathy by employing the perspective of language. Accompanying the tableau of perspectives in *iPOVi* is the soundscape by James Pinker, which changes the mood as in the Arcadian fantasy the scenes of paradise drop away quite abruptly and are replaced by unrest, discomfort and violence. Through his soundscape echoes the sounds of birds, drumming, singing and gentle voices in several languages of the Pacific. No translation is provided; we are asked to hear them. The pacific soundscape is interrupted by a "cyclical phrase from […] Bach", the sound of Western Civilisation (Clifford, 2017, p. 1270). Finally, the intent to possess is echoed into the soundscape by the rhythmic tick of Cook's clock, which he took on the second and third voyages. By listening and hearing we obtain understanding as we begin to know the stories of those we could perhaps see but do not give voice to as they do speak in the language of the "world navigator, explorer or trader" (ACARA, n.d., ACHASSK084).

## Changing the language of empathy in the classroom

In conclusion, the work of Reihana, following Khatun and Hartman, indicates that to decolonise the archive and our perspective we need to do more than to simply "find" the hidden histories. Reihana indicates this by analysing multiple narratives and questioning the roles each plays in contemporary society, cycling the past into the present as she does in the flag raising ceremony scenes. Reihana asks us to question the silences and the forgotten, the stories and perspectives that are unseen or not understood, so that the relevance of history and historical constructions to their present becomes clear. However, and drawing on Hartman, our efforts should be to do more than return "Venus" to the world: we also need to hear her and listen to her. We can hear her voice as well as the voice of the explorer. In *iPOVi* Reihana is seeking to unsettle and trouble the ways in which we receive and accept Enlightenment knowledges. By recalibrating what we may have previously thought were established histories we also disrupt our understandings of the Enlightenment legacies of race and colonialism and how they are embedded in our quotidian actions, understandings and practices. She asks us to question: does the Enlightenment and the speculative language of colonialism infect our vision? Reihana engages with contested histories and divided memories by asking the viewer to question what guides their perspective or point of view. Finally, she asks up to listen and to hear. The see from the perspective of the "Other" is not enough. We must also hear them and listen, giving weight to their story and not privileging that of the dominant as that is the one we know how to hear. When taken into the HASS and/or History classroom as an approach for perspective and empathy, it means agency is also voice. That our classrooms as decolonised spaces need to be linguistically and culturally pluralist. Using this empathic device might help build pluricultural History or Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) learning spaces in which all can listen and all can speak to be heard.

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## Endnotes

[1] A small rowing boat used by naval vessel in the eighteenth century for day trips.

[2] A print made using acid to etch copper plate to create tonal effects. Please see here for full definition: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/aquatint

[3] Please see the exhibition page for the John Curtin Gallery here: https://jcg.curtin.edu.au/emissaries-lisa-reihana/. For an extract of the work, see 'Lisa Reihana: in Pursuit of Venus [Infected]', Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 20 July 2015, https://youtu.be/WmMRF5nw9UI.

## About the Author

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# Sparking the flame, not filling the vessel: How museum educators teach history in Australian museums

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper presents some results of research undertaken in nine Australian history museums during 2010 and 2011 on the work of museum educators. The research demonstrated that museum educators use the signature pedagogy of historical inquiry to actively teach history to students. This contradicts the dominant discourse of museum education research which focuses almost entirely on constructivist learning in museums. Findings in this paper may be of interest to museum and heritage educators, classroom history teachers, pre-service history educators and museum and heritage researchers. The case studies offer cultural institutions examples of how historical inquiry can be used to teach history in museums and heritage sites.

**KEYWORDS:** History, historical inquiry, pedagogy, constructivism, museums, formal learning.

## Why study history educators in Australian museums?

When I was a secondary school history teacher, I often took my students on excursions to museums and heritage sites. The intention was to take them out of the classroom, away from the routine of the class timetable and to encounter a different teacher. I believed this would have a positive effect on their knowledge and understanding of history. Together we experienced a range of education programs. Some were more memorable than others—sometimes because of the uniqueness of the museums and artefacts and sometimes because of the educator's expertise. Interaction with the educator became an important part of our shared memories of the museum visit.

A visit to a museum or heritage site was an opportunity to disconnect the students from routines of learning that rely on reading and interpreting *written* primary and secondary sources. They offered an opportunity to physically interact with primary sources in a kinaesthetic and tactile way. The students could observe and handle unique cultural objects. In some museums they had the experience of being physically present in a place of historical significance.

As a teacher and 'customer' of education programs, I knew what worked with my students and what did not. It was easy to distinguish 'good' programs from the 'not-so-good' by the knowledge and enthusiasm exuded by the educator and, ultimately, his or her ability to capture the interest and imaginations of my students in the short amount of time they had together.

Years later, as a museum educator myself, I designed and delivered education programs with the hope they too would spark students' curiosity in history and archaeology. Most of the

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time I was able to achieve this, but sometimes, I felt I had not quite managed to engage all student visitors.

The learning programs I designed were constructed according to my belief that learning in history museums should challenge students to actively participate in *doing* history or archaeology, not just passively consuming it. I believe the educator should guide them through the process of thinking and encourage them to critically evaluate the constructions of history presented at school and in the museum. Most importantly, students should be able to use evidence from primary sources to develop their own interpretations of the past.

This experience of teaching and learning in museums inspired me to document the professional praxis of museum educators for my PhD research. What pedagogical dynamics come into action when educators delivered history education programs? How did *they* interact with students? Was it the same way I, and many of my colleagues, taught history in the classroom? Was it the same way I taught history and archaeology in museums? What constituted 'good' and 'not-so-good' learning experiences for students? What aspects of museum teaching engaged students in learning, and why? In sum, how did museum educators teach history in Australian museums?

## Research on teaching and learning history in museums

To my surprise, after a few months of wide reading I found that museum education research focuses almost entirely on *learning*, not teaching; on *informal*, not formal museum contexts; on *science* not history museums and on *primary* not secondary years of schooling. Most case studies were from the US and UK not from Australia (Zarmati, 2018). Only a handful of researchers had examined the role of museum educators as active teachers in museums, and none had investigated the work of educators teaching history in Australian museums.

The literature revealed a distinct bias against didactic, interactive teaching in museums. Well-known American museum education researchers John Falk and Lynn Dierking (2000; 2002) and George Hein (1995; 1998) draw their knowledge and expertise from their backgrounds in science education and promote a constructivist approach as the only way of learning in museums.

Constructivism is an understanding that meaning, or human knowledge, is a construct that is expanded through active construction and reconstruction of mental frameworks. Learning is not a passive process of simply receiving information; rather it involves deliberate, progressive construction and deepening of meaning (Killen 2009). Constructivists argue that learning is most effective when it is student-centred and students themselves are actively involved in construction of their knowledge.

Falk, Dierking, and Hein make a clear distinction between teaching and learning, and position them in polarised, binary terms. 'Learning' is 'good' because it is derived from constructivist theory that promotes free-choice, informal learning. In contrast, 'education' (or 'teaching') is 'bad' because it implies formal, instruction focused programs based on behaviourist theory (Falk, Dierking & Adams 2006, p. 325). As a result, in museum contexts—especially in science museums— teaching is seen as negative because it is teacher-centred, didactic, and behaviourist while learning is positive because it uses a constructivist approach that is student-centred, experiential, and active.

Most museum education research is about learning in 'informal', 'free-choice' situations and ignores 'formal', educator-led programs. Indeed, the Canadian researcher Brenda Trofanenko (2010) pointed out that the majority of museum education research focuses either on visitor study evaluations or on the role and impact of objects on visitor learning.

In her study of museum educators in science museums in the United States, Lynn Uyen Tran argued that the work of high-profile researchers, such as Falk and Dierking and Hein, has been predominantly on the processes and products of learning. Tran's research showed that it is not correct to say that teaching in museums is didactic and lecture oriented. On the contrary, teaching science in museums requires creativity, complexity, and skills (2006).

Sharon Shaffer reminds us that early childhood educators have long been using objects to actively teach young children in museums. She recommends three methods to engage them: in-depth 'exploration'; contextualisation; and using the object as provocation (Shaffer, 2018).

The focus on visitor surveys and the bias against teaching can be interpreted as the result of the continuation of research on informal rather than formal learning and teaching in museums. The situation has changed little since the 1990s.

More recently, some American researchers have investigated ways of training teachers (Grenier & Marcus 2009; Marcus 2008; Grenier 2010; Marcus, Stoddard & Woodward 2012; Stoddard 2018) and pre-service teachers (Baron, Woyshner & Haberkern, 2014) how to teach their own students when they visit history museums and historic sites. However, those teachers are expected to spend a considerable amount of their own time visiting the museum and preparing learning materials for their students because American museum educators ('docents') do not provide a teaching service to schools, unlike the Australian museums and heritage sites discussed in this study.

Over the last 30 years a false dichotomy has emerged between those who advocate student-centred learning with minimal supervision (learning), and the handful of researchers who advocate guided, didactic instruction (teaching). The advantages of both taking place in the museum are not considered. The dominance of constructivist learning has had a profoundly negative impact on the understanding of the role of educators as active teachers in museums.

The research I undertook in Australian museums examines teaching *and* learning in what other researchers pejoratively call 'formal' museum education contexts. The history education programs I studied were aligned to school curricula, most were delivered by teacher-trained museum educators, met designated subject outcomes, and built on students' prior classroom knowledge and skills.

Museum educators who specialise in the design and delivery of history education programs form a distinct professional group within many museums in Australia. The case studies presented here provide a snapshot of the professional praxis and pedagogy of history educators in nine museums from 2010 to 2011.

## Defining 'pedagogy'

Because my aim was to record the pedagogies used by museum educators and gain a clear understanding of their work, it was essential to begin with a clear definition of the term 'pedagogy.' Pedagogy has a range of meanings in current education literature. Dictionaries define pedagogy as "the profession, science or theory of teaching" (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 2008, n.p.), and most educators understand it to simply mean 'teaching' or the 'strategies' teachers use to teach.

The most fitting definition of pedagogy for this research is that posited by David Lusted which draws attention to the *process* through which knowledge is produced. It addresses the complex and inter-relational dynamic that operates between the educator, the learner, and the knowledge being transmitted. Lusted sees pedagogy as the 'transformation of consciousness that takes place in this interaction' (1986, pp. 2–3).

Lusted's definition counters behaviourist notions of the teacher as authority, the learner as 'empty vessel' and knowledge as immutable fact (for examples, see Hein 1995; 1998). Instead, it integrates the three concepts of teaching, learning and knowledge and reinforces the notion that teaching and learning are a collective process whose relationship is reciprocal and symbiotic. They work together in the dynamic of pedagogy, a process of interaction between the educator, knowledge and the learner.

Taylor and Young (2003, p. 12) also acknowledged the relationship between the teacher, learner and subject matter 'the central ingredients of teaching and learning'. In this 'pedagogical triangle', the teacher and learner communicate through the medium of the subject matter. Therefore, the definition of pedagogy as a complex interrelationship between the learner, the educator and knowledge transfer became central to the investigation.

## How is 'pedagogy' different from 'Pedagogical Content Knowledge'?

If pedagogy is the dynamic relationship between educator, the student and knowledge, then how does it relate to educators' professional praxis, particularly in the context of Australian history museums? The answer is pedagogical content knowledge.

Pedagogy scholar Lee Shulman emphasises the importance of the connections between knowledge, teaching and students in his definition of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). It is "the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organised, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction" (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). PCK goes beyond the subject knowledge (in this case, history) to the dimension of the knowledge and skills needed by the educator to teach the subject. It includes an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult as well as the concepts and preconceptions that students of different ages and backgrounds bring with them to the learning (Shulman, 1986).

Grant (2003, p. 42) rightly positions PCK at the nexus between content and pedagogy, as "a place where teachers can pull from a palette of teaching strategies those which they believe will help and encourage their students to engage the particular ideas at hand." Simply put, teachers need to know the strategies that are best suited to packaging and presenting knowledge in ways that enhance students' ability to learn.

In the interviews presented below, museum educators discuss how they use their PCK of history teaching to design and actively teach secondary students who are visiting during school excursions. It is knowing *what* to teach and *how* to teach that enabled them to effectively communicate with student visitors.

## Research method

Media critic and writer Marshall McLuhan (1911–80) once said, 'I don't know who discovered water, but I'm pretty sure it wasn't a fish.' Likewise, educators tend not to record or analyse their praxis because they are too busy living their experience every day. This is not to say educators are not self-reflective, or don't critique or evaluate their teaching or the teaching of others. The purpose of reflective practice for educators (especially classroom teachers) is to increase student learning and progression, and this is usually achieved informally—by reading and responding to their students' responses to their teaching—or formally through formative or summative assessment. A qualitative methodology with an interpretative paradigm offered the most appropriate research framework within which I could observe, record and analyse the work of museum educators in action (Merriam, 2002).

The first step was to find suitable museums in which the study could take place. Nine museums were chosen from a total of 15 that offered 'formal' history education programs designed for secondary students and actively taught by museum education staff. The nine museums were selected because they covered a range of history topics and curricula across different jurisdictions.

I corresponded with each museum by email to invite educators to participate in the research. Appointments were arranged for me to observe the educators teaching and to interview them afterwards. Table 1 shows that the nine museums offered a choice of either 'informal' (that is, self-guided) or 'formal' (educator-led) programs. I chose 'formal' educator-guided programs in order to examine the pedagogy and praxis of museum educators.

| | **Museum or heritage site** | **'Informal' teacher-led or self-guided tour (free)** | **'Formal' educator-facilitated tour (fee for service)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Australian War Memorial, Canberra, ACT | Yes | Yes |
| 2 | Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney, NSW | No | Yes |
| 3 | Immigration Museum, Melbourne, VIC | Yes | Yes |
| 4 | Melbourne Museum, VIC | Yes | Yes |
| 5 | Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, Canberra, ACT | No | Yes |
| 6 | Museum of Sydney, NSW | No | Yes |
| 7 | National Museum of Australia, Canberra, ACT | Yes | Yes |
| 8 | Port Arthur Historic Site, Tasmania | Yes | Yes |
| 9 | Sovereign Hill, Ballarat, VIC | Yes | Yes |

Table 1. 'Formal' versus 'Informal' programs offered by museums in the study

Next, I observed 12 museum educators (Henry, Olivia, Eva, Veronica, Belinda, Charlotte, Natasha, Beverly, Grace, Isabelle, Madeline, and Sharleen) teach history to secondary student visitors in 10 education programs. Participants' names were changed to protect their privacy and so they could not be connected to their workplace.

I recorded my observations of the pedagogy they used to communicate knowledge and develop skills. My initial idea was to use a prescribed check list of teaching strategies, but prior sample-testing in two museums revealed the presence of my own expectations and biases in the recording. The process proved to be less subjective when I simply described the teaching strategies as they were enacted by the educator. This provided a more authentic and less biased record of the teaching strategies used by museum educators, thus enabling me to record pedagogy in action.

I then conducted in-depth interviews (between 45 minutes to one hour) with the museum educators using semi-structured questions. This allowed them to 'speak for themselves' as

freely as possible. Interviews were electronically recorded, transcribed, and coded. Categories were created, synthesised according to axial coding procedures, and analysed using NVivo software.

The most commonly-used strategies were:

1. Making curriculum links;
2. Using historical inquiry;
3. Guided questioning;
4. Storytelling;
5. Immersive sensory experiences; and
6. Role play and dress-up.

They are described below, interspersed with relevant comments by the museum educators.

## Strategies used by museum educators to teach history

### *1. Linking the Curriculum*

At the time I undertook this research (2010 to 2011), the Australian Curriculum was still being developed, so states and territories were responsible for designing their own syllabuses or learning programs for history without the influence or guidance of the national curriculum document. Museum educators Olivia, Henry, Eva, and Veronica said that the first thing they do when they begin planning learning activities was to consult syllabus documents to find content that matched their museum or exhibition and from there, they developed learning outcomes.

They said it was important to connect the objects and themes of the museum with curriculum content and learning outcomes. This is because teachers need to justify the educational benefits of taking students on excursions to school administrators, and are required to show the link between what they will learn in the museum with what they are learning in the classroom. This is in contrast to the practice in other museums where the objects in the museum shape the content of the program (Bourdon Caston, 1989).

Henry said curriculum linking was the hook they used to market their programs to schools.

> And you know, decisions will be made about whether or not it's worthwhile constructing a program for a temporary exhibition depending on whether it does have syllabus tie-ins or not. And when the programs are constructed, and you get them there, it's clearly outlaid how they tie into the syllabus and I guess that's how you market them to the schools. So, it's, 'Look at how we connect into the syllabus, come and see us.

For Olivia, curriculum linking is her first priority:

> It's about looking at our audience and what we want to communicate to that audience, and what strategies would work for that audience. We always come from a curriculum basis and sometimes the content leads, but one of the very first filters we look at is the curriculum.

Eva stressed the importance of using curriculum-specific learning outcomes to design learning activities:

> I would say what I am looking at first of all is the outcome. When I am writing a program the first thing I do is my educational outcome. Because that in turn usually dictates the consistency of the program: sixty students coming in, four different presenters, they should all leave with basically the same outcome, and they are linked in with curriculum.

Veronica also emphasised the importance of linking to curriculum learning outcomes:

> We always look at the educational outcomes, what we want the kids to learn. What we want them to find out. What do we want them to come away with? What do we want them to learn? So, we have aims and objectives for what we want, what we want the program to fulfil. And there is always a handling, object handling component. There is always a gallery exploration component. What do we want the kids to learn from being in this exhibition? How is it going to relate to the current curriculum? How are they going to engage with it?'

### *2. Historical Inquiry*

According to the Australian Curriculum, historical inquiry is a process of investigation undertaken in order to understand the past. Steps in the inquiry process include posing questions, locating and analysing source and using evidence from source to develop an informed explanation about the past (ACARA 2018). All programs I observed used historical inquiry to structure learning activities. Some museums were explicit about telling students the problem or mystery they would be investigating. Others simply followed the process of asking questions, interrogating sources, and developing interpretations with the students.

Most learning activities took place in dedicated learning spaces in the museum. Students were able to handle and examine a pre-selected suite of authentic primary sources—such as artefacts, photographs and written sources—that were relevant to the topic and the inquiry question. Students either put themselves into groups or were allocated to a group by their teacher or the museum educator.

Belinda begins her presentation by introducing the topic, then relates what the students will be seeing and doing at the museum to what they have been studying at school. Belinda emphasises that all the programs at her museum are "all based on inquiry":

> It's all about kids finding the answers themselves. I think that kids learn better that way than being talked at by giving them things to elicit their own questioning and then with help from you. You guide them towards the answer even though they feel as though they have found the answer themselves. You are giving them the skills to find out the answer and I think it's more fun. It's a better way to learn. And it certainly suits the site in terms of the material culture we have got all around us here. It works well.

During the process of historical inquiry, educators guided students through a series of steps which could be linear or contiguous and tended to follow this order:

1. The educator explained the inquiry question that would focus the investigation. This was usually predetermined by museum education staff in relation to curriculum content and outcomes, or developed by the teacher and/or students in consultation with the museum educator;
2. The educator guided students through the process of examining sources in order to locate evidence in response to the inquiry question. Teachers actively participated by moving amongst the students and asking open-ended questions to help them locate evidence in the sources relevant to the inquiry question;
3. Students synthesised the information they had gathered from the sources and developed their response to the inquiry question; some students developed their own interpretations to either refute or support the inquiry question;
4. Students sequenced information in a logical argument or interpretation in response to the inquiry question; and
5. Due to time constraints of the visit (usually between 50 minutes to 1.5 hours), students elected one representative to present the findings of the group to the whole class. The educator (and sometimes the teacher) responded to student presentations by

supplementing students' findings with additional information that was relevant to the museum and the curriculum topic.

The strength of an inquiry approach is that it is open-ended, does not aim to achieve a 'right' answer and allows for multiple interpretations (Hattie, 2009). This fits well with the polysemic approach to the interpretation of history that underpins state and national curricula in Australia (ACARA 2018).

During the process of historical inquiry students are encouraged to think historically by asking historical questions, identifying contradictions and conflicts, and developing interpretations supported by historical evidence. Fundamental to the process of historical inquiry is the interrogation and evaluation of sources, primary and secondary, written, material, and archaeological.

Every educator in the ten education programs used some or all features of historical inquiry to teach historical thinking. Some educators told students they would be undertaking an historical inquiry, others jumped straight in and began worked historically with students, asking questions, interrogating sources, and developing interpretations.

Teaching historical inquiry is a priority for most of the history educators in the study, and teachers expect and like their students to be challenged to think outside the boxes. Educator Grace provided a detailed example of how she used historical inquiry to analyse an artefact with a class of Year 9 boys, and educators Isabelle and Grace said that teaching critical thinking was an important part of the learning experience for students in their museums.

The use of historical inquiry provides several beneficial learning outcomes. First, research has shown that the problematisation of history engages students' interest and actively involves them in the processes of historical thinking (Bain, 2000; Brophy & VanSledright, 1997; Gerwin & Zevin, 2011).

Second, because of their proximity and access to primary sources, museum educators can use authentic artefacts and sites in their teaching. In fact, the chance to see and even handle historical artefacts, especially those considered to be 'really old' or 'national treasures' is anecdotally one of the main reasons why teachers take students on excursions to museums and heritage sites. Third, using historical inquiry in museums engages students in the active process of *doing* history because they can physically interact with artefacts and sites through guided investigation.

Fourth, through the process of historical inquiry, educators and students can learn to challenge "official versions of the past" (Trofanenko 2010, p. 217) and singular interpretations presented in some exhibition narratives. By encouraging students to think critically, museum educators can 'advance a critical understanding of how museums use exhibits to fulfil their public commitment to educate citizens about their nation, the nation's past, and about how nationalism and citizenship are entwined with history' (Trofanenko 2010, p. 280). Styles (2002, p. 174) refers to this as 'reflexive representation,' or drawing attention to the representational practice in such a way that visitors recognise that exhibition materials are 'staged' and interpreted. Finally, historical inquiry provides a heuristic framework in which educators and learners can work together in the process of historical thinking.

### *3. Guided questioning*

The teaching method most commonly and consistently used by educators to communicate with students was questioning. Its purpose is to engage students in a dialogue of learning. All educators used a combination of closed and open-ended questioning. Closed questions were used by all educators to elicit student responses about specific historical knowledge.

Educators who were most successful at engaging the interest of students used open-ended questioning skilfully, to stimulate critical thinking, extrapolation and lateral thinking.

This is in contrast to Tal and Morag's observation of simplistic questioning techniques used by guides in natural history museums in Israel. They conclude that learning experiences were not effective because:

> The questions being asked at the museum are often closed and/or factual questions that do not require complex thinking from students. Quite often the questions are asked with no follow up, elaboration, or any attempt to make the students apply previous knowledge (Tal & Morag 2007, p. 748).

British museum educator Frances Sword eloquently explains that discussion through questioning is the museum educator's most powerful tool because many are forced by lack of space, time, money, and staff to work within a limited sphere of activity:

> With words we have to paint, mine, weave, pot and carve; our words have to create experiences that enable children to make sense of what they see ... I believe that the key which unlocks a child's imaginative contact with an object begins with a careful selection of ideas, and continues with an equally careful use of words … Most of us work from a discussion base, talking with rather than to children; our questions, which direct attention, create focus, and open discussion deserve close scrutiny (1994, pp. 7–8).

Beverly identified guided questioning as the most important teaching method she uses:

> I think for me the most important one is questioning and answering, so letting them have a look and have a bit of an explore and a think and then asking them questions about what they found, hearing their opinions, hearing their thoughts and giving them a chance to speak about what these things meant to them, and providing feedback if they wanted as well. I think that's really important for me. I mean you can stand up and give information which is also very helpful but yeah, interacting, giving them a chance to question you as well.

Charlotte recommends that educators engage students' attention and pique their interest in history by facilitating discussion rather than lecturing at them:

> Facilitated discussion is the big one. And that's got a lot to do with how we approach our role. I see our role as that we are not teachers. We are not in a classroom and it's not our role to give forth information. We very much emphasise the idea of people expressing opinions and all the rest of it. We always come back in the team to that quote, 'education is sparking the flame, not filling the vessel'. So, we take that very seriously in our approach. I would say the biggest skill we have got is being able to facilitate discussion rather than looking at ourselves as teachers of information or givers of information.

Educators used a mixture of closed questions to elicit specific responses relating to substantive knowledge—such as 'In what year was gold discovered in Victoria?'—and open-ended questions that encouraged students to think and interact with the educator and each other when giving their responses:

> It's about being a bridge between the students and the collection I think. And it's getting them to think. We want to provoke the questions, so we ask lots of questions in terms of technique. We don't present information ideally; we give it but we try and get the students to come to the information or to come to conclusions themselves. We might give a stimulus, like 'this is a bit of a story' or 'look at this object', or 'what do you think?' We ask a lot of questions, it's in the way that we are facilitating discussion. It's not about what we know, it's about what the students can figure out and deduce and discuss. And a lot of our activities and things are about discussion, they are not about filling in sheets, they are not about getting answers right (Charlotte).

Here Grace skilfully recounts a question and answer discussion she had with a group of Year 9 students. She describes how she uses the process of historical inquiry to interrogate artefacts and lead students to a deeper understanding of Victorian social history:

> I often use objects and that questioning technique, and I use something they know. An example I used yesterday in my health lesson, I gave them a cake of soap, a candle, candle mould and a melting pan and I said to them:
>
> 'What is the connection between all these things and what's it got to do with health?'
>
> And they said, 'The melting pan does not go with the candles.'
>
> Then someone said, 'Maybe it was to melt the wax'.
>
> And I said, 'Why do you melt the wax with this?'
>
> And they said, 'Oh, because it looks like a fry pan'.
>
> Then someone else said, 'If you turn it upside down you can use it as a meat tenderiser'.
>
> And we went on and on and then I said, 'What's it got to do with health?'
>
> Someone said, 'You could burn yourself when you're pouring the wax into there.'
>
> And I said, 'Well what if I told you that candles and soap weren't made from wax in the 1850s, what would you say to that?'
>
> They said, 'Ah, okay, what were they made from?'
>
> Then someone said, 'What about fat?'
>
> Then I said, 'do we make soap today from animal fat?'
>
> And they said, 'Oh no, that's disgusting'.
>
> So, out comes the twentieth century Coles 'Citrus Fresh' bar of soap. I said, have a read of this. What's the main ingredient in that? Sodium talloate. What's that? Animal fat!'
>
> 'Oh, come on we don't wash our bodies with fat!' they say.
>
> And it went from there. I find that so exciting!

Isabelle describes the skills involved in asking open-ended questions that elicit thoughtful responses from students:

> I give quite a bit of thought to my questions because I want them to have the satisfaction of working it out for themselves. And I think once you've worked something out for yourself it has an imprint in a way that someone telling you doesn't. It's a feel-good moment, and if learning is a feel-good experience they'll want to do more of it. And when they work it out it's a feel-good moment for me.

Frances Sword emphasises the importance of the other side of dialogue: listening to students' responses and encouraging them to ask questions, a skill that can be overlooked by some museum educators and teachers:

> Above all, we must learn to listen to the children for our cues to catch the moments which enable observations to develop into creative thinking. In this ability to listen and respond to the individual child lies the essential difference between a presentation and a genuine discussion (Sword 1994, pp. 7–8).

John Hattie (2009, p. 246) advises that successful teachers need to be "adaptive learning experts" with high levels of flexibility that allow them to innovate when teaching sequences do not engage students in learning.

The most successful educators combined historical narrative and explanation with the dialogic interaction of questioning. The time spent on explanation varied, but it was clear that the longer the educator spoke without engaging in dialogue with students, the more likely it was that students became bored and restless. The most skilful and entertaining educators were those who used humour and storytelling to capture students' interest in the subject matter. They were also able to keep their attention by reading their reactions and modifying information or switching to a different activity if students lost interest.

### *4. Storytelling*

Educators in all the education programs I observed used storytelling to adapt historical information to the appropriate age group and engage students' interest. Students have a better chance of remembering historical details if they are communicated in story form:

> As I often say to our education staff when we are training them, what do you want the students to walk out the door with? When you are doing a program what do you want them to remember? If you are going to give them a whole lot of facts their short-term memory might be that they will remember eight of the ten facts you have given. But in a week's time, a month's time, a year's time what will they remember? Chances are they are going to remember a story, and you can link in historical content into a story and do it quite well (Eva).

> I think a love of history is a huge bonus, but I think if you can back it up with some great stories from history that gives it a whole lot more whack. And I am never going to compromise that. Even though sometimes people say I spend too long on the introduction, I don't often see the kids sitting there fidgeting or wanting to go, because they love stories. And that's what the museum is all about, telling the stories of history. Having that understanding of history and what's gone on in the past and how we can learn from it and all the stories (Veronica).

Natasha is a senior educator who is responsible for designing history programs and training education staff at her museum**:**

> This is where the teaching experience comes in because if you're running an interactive session, and our approach is not to just put up a PowerPoint and talk at them, it's not just talk; it's actually an interactive session so it's more a dialogue. If you can only stand out the front and deliver what you've been told to deliver, then you're not going to get this kind of dynamic and actually the programs are designed to invite what the learner already knows. That's my whole premise, that you build on what they already know, and you need to find out very quickly in that context what they already do understand so you're not telling them, so they feel like they're participating in the process of telling the story.

### *5. Immersive sensory experiences*

At Veronica's museum, hands-on, kinaesthetic learning is a priority:

> We always get the kids to handle, and we like to get them to think of the stories, so they have got different avenues of approach to getting them enthused and to learning about the stories. And I think the hands-on is particularly important, so learning by doing.

Other educators commented on the impact that spatial and sensory experience can have on student learning and its capabilities in their teaching. Isabelle said,

> I think it's the power of the building. It's the novelty factor, and I try and develop that as well by drawing attention to where they are and asking them 'what are some words you'd use to describe this place?' so that they are aware of what sensory experiences they are having. So that they notice things, they smell things, the feel the chairs that they're sitting on. I try and point out or encourage them to notice the different things about the building and then build on that. And the focus isn't on me. It's on getting *them* to imagine. That's part of the sensory experience and the learning outcome too because I think that has an imprint.

Henry attributes the popularity of the museum where he works to the fact it is also a historically significant site, "physically you are looking at history where it happened":

> I think that's part of the idea behind the museum. By asking people to physically engage, by opening or touching interactives, you are actually then engaging their intellect in it. So, you are drawing them into the story you are trying to tell; I like that as an idea. Interaction as a way of engaging people.

Belinda commented on the power that an immersive, spatial experience can have on students' memories and learning:

> I think the difference has to be a physical experience, you know, a sensory experience that provokes questions. It's not about just presenting facts because that would be boring. So, in a lot of the ways we are halfway there because the engagement is almost guaranteed, the sheer novelty of the place.

The aim of museum education programs should be to engage students in learning by employing pedagogies that showcase the resources of the museum and make learning enjoyable, challenging, effective and memorable. As students are not in their usual learning environment, museum educators have the opportunity to introduce them to authentic primary sources they would not normally have access to in the classroom in order to engage them in learning. Active learning is generally considered to be any instructional method that requires students to engage in an active, physical response and to think about and discuss what they are doing.

The active learning activities most frequently used by educators in the ten programs were experiential/kinaesthetic learning and haptic learning and these are discussed below.

In 2004, Reading Museum undertook a ten-month evaluation in local schools, which concluded that seeing and handling real objects is an effective aid to learning and retaining information associated with the objects (Pye, 2007). Museum educator Madeline's comments remind us of the powerful effect of hands-on learning activities: 'Most of them love it. They love the fact that they are able to touch something, because in the museums a lot of the time you can't touch anything.' Educator Veronica said that artefact handling is a priority at her museum because it is 'learning by doing'.

Although artefact handling is an immediate and personal way of connecting students with the materiality of the past, simply handling an artefact for handling's sake does not necessarily result in learning. Objects are passive without some contextual information or some form of focus for handling sessions, especially if they are artefacts students have not experienced before (Pye, 2007).

The findings in this study demonstrate the vital role of the museum educator in working with students to guide them through the process of interrogating and interpreting artefacts.

### *6. Role-Play and Dress-Ups*

Many programs provided role-play and dress-up activities, and even some of the older, 'too-cool-for-school' teenage boys participated. At one well-known open-air museum, the educators dress in period costume and, although they do not assume first-person character roles, are immediately able to grab students' attention because they are in period costume. One educator started his presentation with a very informal complaint about the discomforts of his costume and how different it was to wearing my normal clothes.

Programs were particularly effective when students also dressed up in historical costumes (for example hats, shawls, jackets) or assumed the roles of historical characters so that they could empathise with their life experiences.

Sharleen believes learning should be fun, and that dressing up in costumes of one way of getting students actively involved in learning:

> I think with chalk and talk it would go in one ear and out the other a lot, but with the dressing up I think they would remember and handling of the objects they remember a whole heap more and it's more enjoyable. They really want to be involved in whatever you're doing.

## Conclusion

This research demonstrated that the educators in these Australian history museums were engaging with student visitors by actively teaching them, rather than leaving them to simply learn on their own by discovery. Museum educators used several well-known teaching strategies, such as historical inquiry, questioning, and kinaesthetic and haptic activities to engage students in learning.

This research shows that museum educators are central to the pedagogical process of teaching and learning in museums because they teach history explicitly through direct guidance by using a combination of dialogic interaction and active learning.

Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark (2006) reported that several reviews of empirical studies established a solid, research-based case against the use of instruction with minimal guidance. For example, they cite qualitative research by Aulls (2002) who found that, because students learned so little from a constructivist approach to learning, most teachers who attempt to implement unguided instruction ended up having to provide students with considerable scaffolding when students failed to make learning progress in a discovery setting. Aulls (2002, p. 533) reported that the teacher whose students achieved all their learning goals spent a great deal of time in instructional interactions with students by:

> simultaneously teaching content and scaffolding-relevant procedures … by (a) modeling procedures for identifying and self-checking important information…(b) showing students how to reduce that information to paraphrases … (c) having students use notes to construct collaborations and routines, and (d) promoting collaborative dialogue within problems.

Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark conclude: "The findings were unambiguous. Direct instruction involving considerable guidance, including examples, resulted in vastly more learning than discovery" (2002, p. 79).

The museum educators in this study communicated specific historical knowledge to students by interacting with them through dialogue—storytelling and questioning. Ideally this is delivered in digestible pieces consisting of synthesised detail, that also offer depth of understanding. The dialogue is peppered with questions that elicit responses about specific knowledge, determine whether students have understood the information and provide feedback that encourages student learning. A dialogue is established when students are prompted and encouraged to respond to questions and ask their own.

My observations of the pedagogies used by museum educators to directly guide students through the learning process is synthesised into the following six-step sequence:

1. The educator welcomes students, then contextualises the historical material in the museum or heritage site in space and time. This is done through dialogic interaction, often accompanied by an audio-visual presentation;
2. The educator uses questioning to determine prior knowledge and cognitive levels of students in order to tailor historical knowledge to their needs;
3. The educator gives clear instructions on logistics (grouping, pairing) and activities students will complete while they are in the museum and why they will do them;
4. Students participate in active learning activities. The educator assists, monitors progress, and answers students' questions;
5. The educator re-groups students who communicate their findings to the class. The educator uses questioning techniques to determine what students have discovered, concluded and interpreted. The educator gives feedback to students and elaborates on and clarifies information;
6. The educator summarises what students have learned and concludes learning activity.

This study demonstrates that museum educators in these Australian museums do not use a constructivist learning approach that leaves students to discover the museum by themselves.

Instead, museum educators used a variety of teaching strategies such as historical inquiry, dialogic interaction, and active learning to engage students in the process of historical thinking and learning. This finding challenges the dominant constructivist paradigm in museum education that focuses almost entirely on the learner and learning to the extent that the role of the museum educator as an active participant in the learning process has been largely ignored. By placing history educators in Australian museums at the centre of the inquiry, this research identified a considerable gap between museum education theory and the everyday praxis of teaching history in museums.

Since this research was undertaken there have been many innovations and developments, especially in the use of technologies for teaching and learning in museums. Digitisation is increasing visitors' access to knowledge: interactive pedagogies and augmented reality provide hyperreal experiences. The research in this study shows that human interaction has a powerful impact on learning when experienced educators use their pedagogical content knowledge of history in Australian museums to spark the flame of learning in students.

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Louise Zarmati is a Lecturer in Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Tasmania where she educates trainee teachers to teach history, geography and civics and citizenship. Louise has degrees from the University of Sydney, University of Cambridge, and Deakin University. She has had a varied career as a history teacher, archaeologist, museum educator and academic. These experiences led to her PhD research on how museum educators teach history in museums and heritage sites in Australia. Louise has written several professional and academic books and articles on teaching history and archaeology. She also provides educational consulting advice to museums, heritage sites and libraries, and works on archaeological projects as often as possible.

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# Student learning activities in Australian History textbooks: An assessment tool to examine historical empathy and cognitive domains

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**ABSTRACT:** Historians study what has already happened and so must have a mechanism to reconstruct the past in the present. The past is revived via the historian's imagination and perspective, as Parfitt (2001, p.7) asserts, "to imagine something is to make that thing present and real for ourselves." To empathize in history is founded on the assumption that the past can be reconstructed—at least in part—and accessed so that the thoughts, intentions, and actions of historical actors can be understood and so connect the past and the present. This paper examines activities in Australian high school history textbooks that include empathy activities to engage students in learning history, focusing on the Australian civil rights movement and reconciliation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders throughout the 20th century. The paper introduces an assessment tool which incorporates Ashby and Lee's (1987) levels of empathetic understanding and Biggs and Tang's (2007) Structured of Observed Learning Outcomes (SOLO) taxonomy to aid in evaluating historical empathy activities included in textbooks designed for the *Australian Curriculum: History*. Data shows that the majority of historical empathy tasks require only low level empathetic responses and cognitive complexity. This paper concludes, that although modern-day textbooks have opportunities to provide a rich array of multimodal sources to inform historical empathy tasks, they predominately call on students to produce unsubstantiated and ahistorical responses.

**KEYWORDS:** Historical empathy, SOLO taxonomy, history education, textbooks.

## Introduction: Empathy in the discipline of history

Historical empathy came to the fore of History education debates, discussion, and research in the 1990s and early 2000s. Since that time, although there has been significant research in historical empathy in education context (see, for example the work of Retz, 2018) there has been limited new practice-based or curriculum-specific research that seeks to examine how historical empathy is actioned—rather than just conceptualised—as a classroom activity. The role of empathy is part of a larger debate about the relationship between the historian and the past, the role of objectivity and subjectivity in history and the nature of historical representation. Historians study what has already happened and so must have a mechanism to reconstruct the past in the present. The past is revived via the historian's imagination and perspective, as Parfitt (2001, p. 7) asserts, "to imagine something is to make that thing present

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and real for ourselves." To empathize in history is founded on the assumption that the past can be reconstructed—at least in part—and accessed so that the thoughts, intentions, and actions of historical actors can be understood. This raises many problematic issues, such as, drawing on Jenkins (1991): understanding the context of past lives; re-constructing narratives from fragmentary and incomplete primary sources; filtering the information via the historian; and, in the case of history education, via the teacher as well.

The definition of the term *empathy* remains contentious among researchers and practitioners (Yilmaz, 2007; Cunningham, 2009, Berkovich, 2018). The influential philosopher and historian, R.G. Collingwood (1946) claimed a central role for what he termed "historical imagination" in the construction of history and his *The Idea of History* resonates in the contemporary discourse (as cited in Hughes-Warrington, 2003, p. 18). Collingwood argued that the scientific method of observation and classification was not suitable for the study of history. He theorized that the historian was not able to observe in the same way as the scientist and that in the historian's work events and their participants are examined from the temporal distance between the past and the present. Further, these unobservable phenomena have two components: an "outside," the actual happening; and then the more elusive "inside," the thoughts, beliefs and motivations of the people involved. To Collingwood, imagination is the process that is used to construct or re-construct pictures, ideas or concepts and to create a narrative (Lemisko, 2004). Similarly, the well known historian, Trevor-Roper (1958, n.p.) defined historical imagination as "the art of making the past fully intelligible to us by enabling us to enter, as it were, into the minds and passions of people who, in some ways, seem very different from us." Here the term has been used to denote a process which incorporates an affective dimension and whose role in understanding the past is more subjective. But should novice historians in secondary schools be expected to balance the cognitive and affective? Is encouraging the use of imagination in their historical studies too dangerous or perhaps confusing for students? There is much debate and little consensus in history education in answering these questions. Foster and Yeager (1998, p. 3), prominent researchers in this field, explain historical empathy as a combination of "adductive and logical thinking associated with the use of evidence with inferential and appropriately creative skills that seek to bridge the gap between what is known and what may be inferred from history." The paper introduces an assessment tool which incorporates Ashby and Lee's (1987) levels of empathetic understanding and Biggs and Tang's (2007) Structured of Observed Learning Outcomes (SOLO) taxonomy to aid in evaluating historical empathy activities included in textbooks designed for the *Australian Curriculum: History*.

## Objections and obstacles to historical empathy

There have been many objections voiced to the notion of students using historical empathy in their studies of history. Much of the debate centres on the affective/cognitive axis (Verducci, 2000) and the misgivings that arise from the idea that students are being asked to share the feelings of the people in the past. The critics often cite the dictionary definition of empathy and argue that feelings cannot be assessed (Low-Beer, 1989). This criticism takes a narrow view of empathy as sympathy and discounts the investigation of how beliefs, motivations and values impact on events. This objection is sustained by those that object to using empathy as they maintain that it is impossible for historians to think themselves into the past as the past is "never empathetically retrievable" (Jenkins & Brickley, 1989, p.22). The argument claims that this empathetic approach devalues evidence and gives credence to unsubstantiated *intuitive* deductions and that these deductions are often based on *presentism* and stereotypes.

Doubtless, lack of verification and alignment with historical evidence undermines conclusions, the problem often stems from a lack of deep knowledge and understanding of the

past rather than the approach. As Lee and Ashby (2001, p. 25) assert, "empathy demands hard thinking on the basis of evidence. It requires students to know some history, and to be able to use that knowledge in order to explain actions and institutions." Foster (1999) supports this notion of historical empathy and maintains that historical empathy does not require the student to identify with historical characters as it is impossible for a student in the present to take on the persona of another from a different time and place. He explains that attempting to do so "ignores the perspective of hindsight and is alien to the principle that historians are contemporary interpreters of the past" (p.19).

The seeming prevalence of the *empathy exercise* has only increased the passion of the dissenting voices. These exercises are criticized as works of imagination, over-identification and sympathy (Yeager & Foster, 2001). The mixed messages are evidenced by the empathy exercise which routinely requires students to imagine that they are in the past, for example, imagine you are an Egyptian pharaoh. This type of exercise suggests that it is possible for present-day students to think themselves into the values, culture and historical setting of an individual to the extent where they can speak the thoughts of the past and tends to encourage fantasy, rather than historical writing. It is obvious that over-identification and sympathizing with people from the past can be counter-productive to a considered evaluation of all available evidence and must be carefully handled in the classroom of novice historians, for example, *imagine that you are an African slave being transported to* America. Write a letter to your brother telling him how you feel. Over-identification leads to stereotyping historical agents and viewing the past in terms of *right* and *wrong*, *good* and *bad* without proper appreciation of the complexities and dangers of simplified judgments. This is also found in research that investigates intersections between historical consciousness and moral consciousness in student responses to activities (see, for example Ammert, Sharp, Lofstrom, & Edling, 2020).

## Textbooks as data

Textbooks were selected as data for identifying how historical empathy is evident in History classrooms. This curriculum resource can be viewed as a hermeneutic conduit between the official knowledge (Apple, 2004) as set out in the *Australian Curriculum: History* and the classroom. While textbooks can be sneered at and their use and influence downplayed as curriculum materials, their common and widespread usage cannot be ignored. The textbook publishing context in Australia sees (the majority of) textbooks published by private, commercial companies who produce materials only when there is an economic market to do so. As Issitt (2004) points out regarding their use in the classroom, "as a teaching aid and as part of the learning experience, they are practically ubiquitous . . . on the one hand textbooks are derided, but . . . the reality of their universal use cannot be denied." Unlike in former eras, textbooks are no longer written, published, and provided by Departments of Education. Publishers contract writers—usually discipline academics, history education experts, or History teachers—to contribute chapters to textbooks and then market them alongside competitors. As they are only published when there is an economic impetus to do so and as they are competing with other publishers, it is the case that these publications reflect the content as set out in the Australian Curriculum and state and territory based Syllabuses.

From the textbook, the focus of the data collection for evidence of historical empathy for this research is the activities within the books as this "enables an analysis of the exercises that guide students and emphasise what is important for students to learn" (Sharp & Ammert, 2017, p. 2). Textbook activities, with some scattered throughout and others at the end of a chapter or section are purposefully designed to cover the content covered in the main body of the text, to check for student understanding, and to further engage students in the content via

questions that go beyond comprehension. A further justification for focusing on textbook activities only rather than the main textbook body of text, is that while textbooks set out the content, and act as a translation of the curriculum and Syllabus documents, textbook writers can be restricted to what they include in the main text, the activities provide an opportunity for curriculum writers to direct student focus and learning on: aspects of the curriculum they deem important to highlight; and historical thinking skills, such as is the case for this paper, historical empathy. In this way, "the activities that commonly accompany the content, do provide textbook authors with the opportunities to hone in on areas of content with more flexibility" (Sharp & Ammert, 2017, p. 3).

## Methodology

This research addresses how textbook activities approach historical empathy and perspective taking and to what extent they have the potential to engage students' affectively and cognitively. Through these activities, students' historical understanding and attitudes to the past is able to be gauged. Using textbook activities to discern how students are to demonstrate their understanding of historical empathy is the focus of inquiry. An assessment tool was developed to be used to examine historical empathy activities as presented in history textbooks. It combines Ashby and Lee's (1987) five levels of empathy and the Structured of Observed Learning Outcomes Taxonomy (SOLO, Biggs & Tang, 2007). The two-pronged approach was employed to demonstrate a) the levels of historical empathy that students are asked to engage in as set out by Ashby and Lee (1987). This makes visible the disciplinary concept aspect that sits behind the design of the activities. And, b) a general education taxonomy whose structure enables learning outcomes (or in this case, outputs) to be observed for their level of sophistication from lower order to higher order thinking processes (Biggs & Tang, 2007). This brings to the fore the pedagogical side of the textbook activities—what the students are asked to demonstrate.

The influential researchers Ashby and Lee have defined empathy as "where we get to when we have successfully reconstructed other people's beliefs, values, goals and attendant feelings" (Ashby & Lee, 1987, p.63). They found that secondary students were capable of using empathy as a heuristic that can reinforce and inform other forms of historical thinking and suggested five levels of sophistication. Ashby and Lee (1987) concluded that movement to the higher stages was facilitated by their familiarity with the subject and a learning environment rich in peer discussion and problem solving. They proposed five stages of development:

1.The past is stupid – because people in the past act differently to them

2.Generalized stereotypes – believe that all individuals from particular backgrounds held similar values and acted in similar ways

3. Everyday empathy – understand the past through a prism of current-day values and attitudes

4.Restricted historical empathy – understand the past through the prism of their own knowledge

5.Restructured and contextualized empathy – learners understand the past through a range of perspectives based on research.

These levels were used as one of the two axes on the assessment tool.

The second axis uses SOLO, to grade the observable learning outcomes that students could reasonably demonstrate through successful completion of the activities. It sees student assessment—or rather as is the case in this research, completing set activities—as the performance of an intended learning. The taxonomy uses verbs to describe the degree of

complexity students should demonstrate at each level, such as *identify* at the lower—or *unistructural*—end, *compare/contrast* towards the upper—or *relational*—end, and finally *theorise* at the highest—or *extended abstract*—level of the taxonomy (see Figure 1 for the SOLO Taxonomy). Using the SOLO taxonomy as a guide in which to ascertain the level of thinking required of students is useful in determining the range of cognitive diverse activities students complete to demonstrate their learning and understanding of historical empathy. Assessing the selected activities enables a decision to be made on whether the activities encourage superficial or complex approaches to learning as is evidence from the types of responses students are able and likely to provide when responding to the activities as intended.

The five levels of SOLO, as conceptualised by Biggs and Tang (2007, pp. 77, 205-206) include:

> *Prestructural* responses simply miss the point or, like this one, use tautology to cover lack of understanding.
>
> *Unistructural*: Use one obvious piece of information coming directly from the stem. Verbs: 'identify', 'recognize'.
>
> *Multistructural*: Use two or more discrete and separate pieces of information contained in the stem. Verbs: 'list' and, in this example, 'compare', which is nearer relational.
>
> *Relational*: Use two or more pieces of information each directly related to an integrated understanding of the information in the stem. Verbs: 'interpret', 'apply'.
>
> *Extended abstract*: Use an abstract general principle or hypothesis that can be derived from, or suggested by, the information in the stem. It is sometimes possible to use a one-correct-answer format ('Formulate the general case of which the preceding (relational) item is an instance') or to use a divergent short-answer sub-item ('Give an example where (c) – the preceding item – does not occur. Why doesn't it?'). Verbs: 'hypothesize', 'design', 'create'.

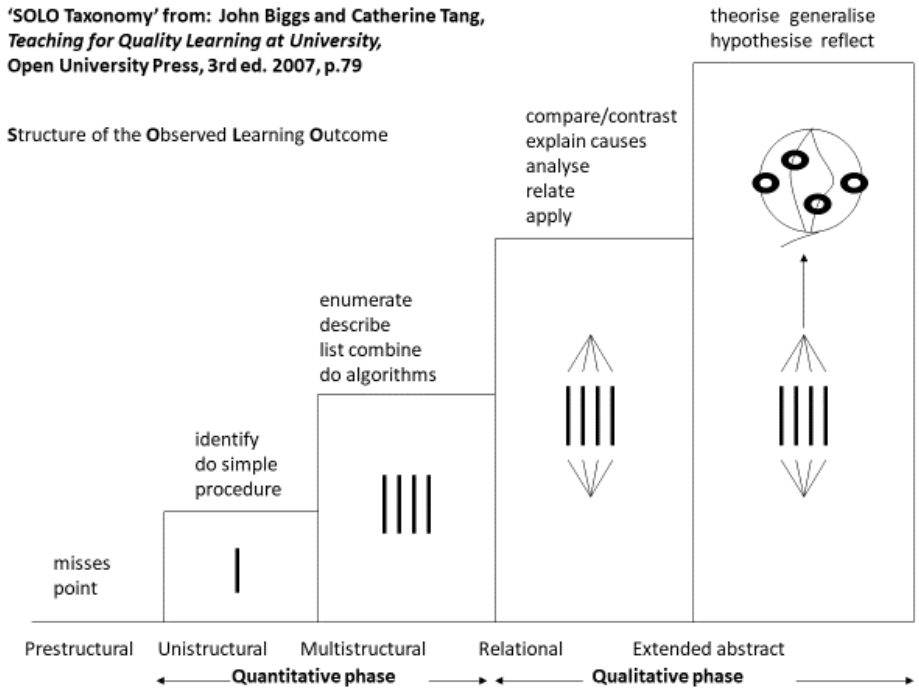



**Figure 1:** SOLO Taxonomy (Biggs & Tang, 2007, p. 79).

## Data

Five textbooks were selected as part of this study, based on their availability and publication since the implementation of the *Australian Curriculum: History*. Each of the textbooks (see Table 1: Selected History Textbooks) is from a publishing company that adheres to the curriculum and provides connection to each of the State and Territory Syllabuses, is available nation-wide, produces a separate textbook for each of the high school years 7 to 10, and are used in History classrooms. The focus was *Rights and Freedoms* and each textbook contains a separate chapter focusing on this topic. To bound the data collection, only activities that included the Australian context of civil rights and reconciliation were included. This topic, included in the *Australian Curriculum: History*, is covered by States and Territories in their curriculum documentation also includes the US civil rights movement and it is often paralleled to the Australian context. It was decided for this study, to focus on the Australian history component only, as a way to engage with national traumatic pasts. Furthermore, the historical events included in this topic (both historical and more contemporary) provides a flashpoint in race relations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples. It is a topic widely known in popular culture, is taught across Australian schools in Year 10 as part of the compulsory component of History and remains a controversial topic in some sections of the Australian community. Recognising its importance in the nation's past, commemorative days are held annually (for example, NAIDOC [1] week and Sorry Day) to acknowledge past injustices and to focus on a more inclusive future of working towards reconciliation.

| Textbook Title | Publication Year | Authors | Publisher |
|---|---|---|---|
| History 10: The Modern World and Australia | 2012 | Paul Ashton, Mark Anderson | Macmillan Education Australia |
| Connect with History: 10 | 2012 | Vicki Greer, James Mason, Sarah Mirams, Margaret Pagone, Carmel Young | Nelson Cengage Learning Australia |
| History 10: For the Australian Curriculum | 2012 | Angela Woollacott, Helen Butler, Raymond Evans, Jenny Gregory, Richard Malone | Cambridge University Press |
| Oxford Big Ideas: For the Australian Curriculum History 10 | 2012 | Geraldine Carrodus, Tim Delany, Kate McArthur, Richard Smith, Tony Taylor, Carmel Young | Oxford University Press |
| Retroactive 10: Australian Curriculum for History | 2012 | Maureen Anderson, Ian Keese, Anne Low, Brian Hoepper | John Wiley & Sons |

Table 1. Selected History Textbooks

During the preliminary data analysis stage, textbook activities were examined and historical empathy activities identified based on activities asking students to respond in the voice of a historical actor. Activities were given an alpha code identifier followed by the chapter and page numbers (for example, M3: 134 refers to the empathy activity from the Macmillan published textbook, Chapter 3, page 134). *Table 2: Historical empathy assessment tool* shows each of the identified historical empathy activities assessed on the two axes—historical empathy (disciplinary concept) and SOLO (Assessing learning).

| Empathy (disciplinary concept)<br>SOLO (Assessing learning) | Level 1: Past is unknowable | Level 2: Generalized stereotypes | Level 3: Everyday empathy | Level 4: Restricted historical empathy | Level 5: Restructured and contextualized empathy |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-structural | | | | M3: 134 (source response) | |
| Uni-structural | | M3: 113 (source response)<br>M3: 134 (role play)<br>C3: 127 (role play) | M3: 226 (letter) | | |
| Multi-structural | | M3: 131 (source response) | M3: 103 (letter) | | |
| Relational | | | | | J3: 154 (source response) |
| Extended abstract | | | | | |

Table 2. Historical empathy assessment tool

## Findings

It was found that two textbooks did not contain any historical empathy tasks for this topic (although it is noted these types of activities were included for the US race relations topic and other activities throughout the textbook). *Oxford Big Ideas: For the Australian Curriculum History 10* published by Oxford University Press and *Connect with History: 10* published by Nelson Cengage Learning had no historical empathy tasks, rather they included research-based activities that called for interpretation and evaluation of sources, rather than simplistic *imagine-style* questions. Students needed to refer to sources—and were only ever asked to respond as themselves—not as a made up or an out-of-context historical actor, or one based on a stereotype or a member of a group where it is expected everyone has the same opinions and attitudes.

Most of the examples (6) were identified in *History 10: The Modern World and Australia* published by Macmillan Education Australia. These were assessed as having low cognitive complexity on the SOLO scale and only one reached the fourth level of historical empathetic

understanding as per the Ashby & Lee levels of historical empathy (see *Table 2: Historical empathy assessment tool*). *History 10: For the Australian Curriculum* published by Cambridge University Press and *Retroactive 10: Australian Curriculum for History* published by John Wiley & Sons included one each. The strongest example in this topic was from the *Retroactive 10* textbook that placed historical empathy as a summative task, with the description positioned as a scenario, background information, a variety of sources including multimodal texts, explicit instructions on how to complete the activities both in terms of content and focus. This large activity that is spread across a textbook double page—goes beyond the requirement of students to describe or retell information in a comprehension style—requires students to interpret, evaluate, and collaborate in peer groups. Supporting students to complete the activity, a text type proforma is included in the online activities accompanying the textbook (students are provided with an online access key at the front of the book). The following section provides samples of the activity analysis, classified across the knowledge types and levels of historical empathy. The activities were selected as they demonstrated a range of historical stages and cognitive complexity.

## Example 1: Children holding photographs

The first example highlighted in this paper is the concluding activity (one of six) in Chapter 3 of the Macmillan textbook, *History 10: The Modern World and Australia*. This was assessed as being uni-structural on the SOLO axis and as generalized stereotype on the empathy levels axis. The activity contains a photograph of a group of children, each holding a framed, black and white photograph of individuals (see Figure 2: group of children), captioned: "Source 3.63. Children holding photographs of members of the Stolen Generations at the Apology to the Stolen Generations at Parliament House, Canberra, 13 February 2008" (p. 134). The accompanying activity under a subheading *Crossing cultures* reads: "'Imagine you are one of the children in source 3.63. If you had been asked to speak for one minute at the Apology, what would you have said?" (p. 134).

This source response activity is itself a stereotypical historical empathy activity, instructing students to *imagine*. It is very difficult for students who haven't experienced this kind of trauma, to make a speech in response to the Apology. Responses by students would likely be contained to value judgements, presentism, and speculation. The photograph which forms part of the activity does not communicate any contextualization of who the children are and their relation to the subject of the photos.—there is no way of knowing if the children in the photograph have any relationship or connection to the people in the photographs they are holding up on public display. So, the exercise leads to students making up a response, as they might do in a creative writing exercise.

Furthermore, adding to this activity's generalised stereotype is that fact that there is no coverage in the textbook about the Apology—an important issue in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reconciliation—and the focus of this activity. Students are being asked to respond not only on a low cogitative level (uni-structural), and there is no historical context for them to formulate a meaningful response communicating their ideas. As low as this activity is assessed on the assessment tool, students are not able to demonstrate historical understanding. The source is contemporary rather than historical, and an opportunity has been missed to teach secondary school students about this major, long-awaited, and at the time politically charged event towards Reconciliation.


**Figure 2:** Group of children[2]

## Example 2: Margaret Kay

The second example is an activity from Chapter 3 of the Macmillan textbook, *History 10: The Modern World and Australia*. This was assessed as being multi-structural on the SOLO axis and as a everyday empathy on the empathy levels axis. The source the activity is based on, in the middle of the chapter, features a photo of a young Aboriginal girls in what appears to be a servant's uniform (see Figure 3: Margaret Kay activity) and is captioned "Source 3.9. Margaret Kay at Cootamundra Girls' Home, 1923." (p. 102). The question (the fourth in a set of 15) put to students is: "Assume that you are the girl in source 3.9. Write a letter home to your mother describing conditions at Cootamundra Girl's (sic) training school. You could include a description of the day you were photographed and your feelings about being away from home" (Macmillan, p. 103).

Here, the students are asked to assume the feelings of a historical actor based on scant information as the photograph on the preceding page is the only information about her in the textbook. The only information about Margaret Kay, referred to in the activity as "the girl" does not have any information about her in the text. There is some contextual information—a few sentences from Peter Read's book The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children from NSW 1883-1969 are included. —in an additional source which is a very generalised description of life for the girls and young women living in the Cootamundra Girls' Home. The source reads as opinion, with the objective of presenting an entirely negative impression. With not attempt to make her as an individual, this anonymizing of Margaret Kay encourages students to see her as having no agency or point of view, merely representative of a victimised group—she is nothing more than a photograph in the textbook to the reader.

Rather than requiring historical understanding, this activity calls students to draw on everyday empathy of what life may have been like in an orphanage or similar institution and *assume*—which is akin to imagine—the emotional response of Margaret Kay. With the simple instruction of "include a description of…your feelings about being away from home", this is not drawing on anything historical, rather it requires from students only a descriptive recount of what it might be like to be homesick—ignoring the historical issues at play of children and young people forcibly removed from their homes, potentially reigniting intergenerational trauma for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the class, as in many cases, these children were permanently separated from their parents and kin. This is a historical issue potentially rich for exploration, however this activity treats it in a superficial manner. Only requiring students to describe this activity can only be as high as multi-structural because it

requires students to draw on the photograph and use two sets of information to form a response.

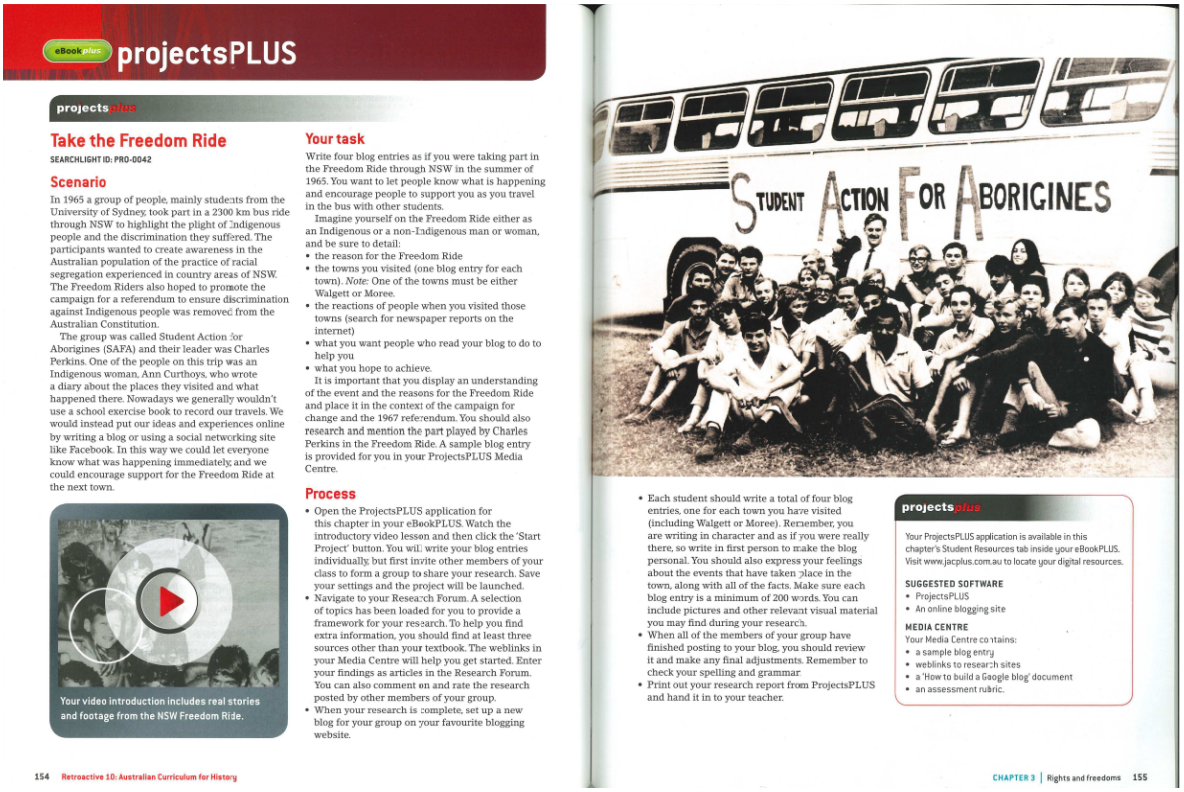
**SOURCE 3.9** Margaret Kay at Cootamundra Girls' Home, 1923

**Figure 3:** Margaret Kay activity

## Example 3: Freedom Ride

The third example is the final activity from Chapter 3 of the John Wiley textbook *Retroactive 10: Australian Curriculum for History*. The task itself reads, "Write four blog entries as if you are taking part in the Freedom Ride through NSW in the summer of 1965. You want to let people know what is happening and support you as you travel in the bus with other students" (p. 154, see Figure 4: Freedom Ride). This was assessed as being relation on the SOLO axis and as a restructured and contextualized empathy on the empathy levels axis, and features as the activity graded the highest for cognition and affective levels on the assessment tool. This source response activity is set across two pages and is the culmination of a chapter on the Australian civil rights movement of the 1960s to 1970s which featured the activist Charles Perkins and events such as the Freedom Rides. The activity stretches beyond one question and answer activity, instead it is named as *Project Plus*, a task that will take several lessons to complete. It sets out a scenario, provides detailed description of the task and output (four blog entries), tells students how to complete the activity with accompanying text type in the online sources. Multiple sources are provided for students to use to inform their response, such as archival footage, photographs, eye witness accounts, as well as secondary source material. The activity calls on a rich collection of support materials and templates to scaffold the task so that students can demonstrate their historical understanding of this era and event (the Freedom Ride) and to display historical empathy.

It sets up a rich task as it requires students to consider a range of perspectives, to consult multiple sources, establishes motivation and historical agency. Students are supported to produce a quality output as the information they are required to draw on is contained within the chapter of the textbook—that is, they have been exposed to already to the content—and learning is further extended by referring explicitly to further source material students can access in constructing their four blog posts. Teachers are supported with this task—that they could reasonably set as a research assignment—as the online support materials (that all students have access to via a code listed in the textbook) also contain a marking rubric and samples of a blog text type.



eBookplus projectsPLUS

projectsplus

**Take the Freedom Ride**

SEARCHLIGHT ID: PRO-0042

**Scenario**

In 1965 a group of people, mainly students from the University of Sydney, took part in a 2300 km bus ride through NSW to highlight the plight of Indigenous people and the discrimination they suffered. The participants wanted to create awareness in the Australian population of the practice of racial segregation experienced in country areas of NSW. The Freedom Riders also hoped to promote the campaign for a referendum to ensure discrimination against Indigenous people was removed from the Australian Constitution.

The group was called Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA) and their leader was Charles Perkins. One of the people on this trip was an Indigenous woman, Ann Curthoys, who wrote a diary about the places they visited and what happened there. Nowadays we generally wouldn't use a school exercise book to record our travels. We would instead put our ideas and experiences online by writing a blog or using a social networking site like Facebook. In this way we could let everyone know what was happening immediately, and we could encourage support for the Freedom Ride at the next town.

Your video introduction includes real stories and footage from the NSW Freedom Ride.

**Your task**

Write four blog entries as if you were taking part in the Freedom Ride through NSW in the summer of 1965. You want to let people know what is happening and encourage people to support you as you travel in the bus with other students.

Imagine yourself on the Freedom Ride either as an Indigenous or a non-Indigenous man or woman, and be sure to detail:

- the reason for the Freedom Ride
- the towns you visited (one blog entry for each town). *Note:* One of the towns must be either Walgett or Moree.
- the reactions of people when you visited those towns (search for newspaper reports on the internet)
- what you want people who read your blog to do to help you
- what you hope to achieve.

It is important that you display an understanding of the event and the reasons for the Freedom Ride and place it in the context of the campaign for change and the 1967 referendum. You should also research and mention the part played by Charles Perkins in the Freedom Ride. A sample blog entry is provided for you in your ProjectsPLUS Media Centre.

**Process**

- Open the ProjectsPLUS application for this chapter in your eBookPLUS. Watch the introductory video lesson and then click the 'Start Project' button. You will write your blog entries individually, but first invite other members of your class to form a group to share your research. Save your settings and the project will be launched.
- Navigate to your Research Forum. A selection of topics has been loaded for you to provide a framework for your research. To help you find extra information, you should find at least three sources other than your textbook. The weblinks in your Media Centre will help you get started. Enter your findings as articles in the Research Forum. You can also comment on and rate the research posted by other members of your group.
- When your research is complete, set up a new blog for your group on your favourite blogging website.

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STUDENT ACTION FOR ABORIGINES

- Each student should write a total of four blog entries, one for each town you have visited (including Walgett or Moree). Remember, you are writing in character and as if you were really there, so write in first person to make the blog personal. You should also express your feelings about the events that have taken place in the town, along with all of the facts. Make sure each blog entry is a minimum of 200 words. You can include pictures and other relevant visual material you may find during your research.
- When all of the members of your group have finished posting to your blog, you should review it and make any final adjustments. Remember to check your spelling and grammar.
- Print out your research report from ProjectsPLUS and hand it in to your teacher.

projectsplus

Your ProjectsPLUS application is available in this chapter's Student Resources tab inside your eBookPLUS. Visit www.jacplus.com.au to locate your digital resources.

**SUGGESTED SOFTWARE**

- ProjectsPLUS
- An online blogging site

**MEDIA CENTRE**

Your Media Centre contains:

- a sample blog entry
- weblinks to research sites
- a 'How to build a Google blog' document
- an assessment rubric.

CHAPTER 3 | Rights and freedoms 155

**Figure 4:** Freedom Ride

To do historical empathy well, as identified in this research, activities need to go beyond a one-question and answer style activity. Students need extensive context and a variety of primary and secondary sources to compare and contrast and to synthesise information. A very clear focus needs to be provided so that students have the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of historical empathy as it applies to the topic they are studying. Portal recommends that empathy ought not to be a separate section of syllabus, but a "characteristic dimension of each of the other historical skills" (Portal, 1987, p.34). Rather than empathy exercises, empathy embedded in the inquiry from the point of view of historical agents are integrated into the exploration of the evidence and the development of the narrative.

The research suggests that historical empathy and perspective taking can be enhanced by scaffolded learning agendas that utilize a variety of source formats and has been has found to be impacted by teacher practice (Yeager & Foster, 2001; Dulberg, 2002) Grant (2001) claims that students taught history primarily through a teacher-exposition approach did not develop an understanding of the multiple perspectives. Conversely, those who were exposed to different perspectives by participation in a variety of educational exercises, including simulations and the multi-media resources, achieved "intellectually complex" understandings

of perspectives (p.101). He uses his findings to argue for the importance of "the role of the teachers' practice in shaping, supporting and/or extending students' conceptions of history" (p.102). This is supported by Kohlmeier (2006) who found that successive utilization of the Socratic Seminar to interpret historical documents increased her students' recognition and understanding of multiple perspectives.

## Conclusion

Barton and Levstik (2004, pp.207-8) argue that historical empathy "invites us to care with and about people in the past, to be concerned with what happened to them and how they experienced their lives." This conception of empathy gives emphasis to decisions about historical significance and avenues of exploration, reactions to historical outcomes and applications of what has been learnt in the past to the present. The examples in the textbooks are, in the main, not rich enough to enable this to occur. Across all the activities selected (including those not highlighted as examples), the common trope or go to activity is based on a sentence beginning with Imagine you are a <insert anonymous historical actor, eg a boy, slave owner, bride> and write a diary entry or letter describing your day with one or no sources to inform student response. Where there is some kind of stimulus, little in the way of background knowledge and conceptual understanding is provided, so the activity encourages fiction responses and project students' contemporary values, attitudes, expectations, and roles onto the past. There is a paucity of content to stimulate an empathetic response to the historical narrative and to understand the lives of historical actors. Often, historical empathy tasks include no critical inquiry or source verification to be demonstrated by the students.

Even more than producing fiction, the activities (with the sole exception of *Example 3: Freedom Ride*) perpetrate a sense of the past through a simplistic and a-historical binary of good/bad, right/wrong, victim/perpetrator. In the examples from Rights and Freedoms, these historical empathy activities position Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people without individual agency. This is troubling as this portrayal could be sustained in students' thinking today about Indigenous issues. The danger in having students undertake activities like this is that experiences of people in the past is romanticised and trivialised. The examples in textbooks reinforce stereotypes such as racism, they engage in 'othering', and create situations in which students are emboldened to write from their own misconceptions—even if the students themselves think they are being sympathetic. They also serve to validate negative prejudices, for example about historical enemies and racial groups that are different from the student.

Empathy and perspective taking are emphasised in the Australian Curriculum: History. That two textbooks don't have historical empathy related activities in a chapter covering national historical traumas is a concern and may be an indication of *uncertainty* or *discomfort* of how to manage students' affective responses in the classroom. Research has shown that historical empathy should not be passive—students can show their understanding and connection to this historical thinking skill through their responses. If the activities are not of a sufficient high cognitive level, students are not presented with opportunities to learn this skill nor demonstrate whether or not they have a deep appreciation of how it fits within a history discipline thinking process. Repeated exposure to historical empathy may promote understanding of complex ideas, decision-making and historical action (Doppen, 2000; Endacott, 2010; Foster,1999). In addition, when students view historical figures as agents of historical change, they are able to identify characteristics of historical change agents and reflect on their own abilities to act for positive change (Endacott, 2010; Endacott & Sturtz, 2015).

Most teachers are genuinely interested in creating engaging and interesting lessons and activities for their students. With the increasing crowded curriculum and time impositions on teachers (for example, non-teaching related matters), they frequently defer to the authority of the textbook writers and publishers. Contemporary textbooks can provide rich opportunities for historical empathy, supplemented with online scaffolds, links to primary sources and further research. With many textbooks including an online component, the issues of page limits associated with costs of printing no longer exist, therefore there is opportunity for these curriculum materials to engage historical topics in greater depth in a variety of multi-modal platforms.

For teachers designing their own activities, using the assessment tool featured in this paper when historical empathy tasks are used in assessment can support teachers to develop the activities and to assess the sophistication (cognitive and empathetic) of student answers. It can support teachers to make tasks more cognitively challenging as tasks can be classified against the assessment tool to ensure they are equipping their students with the opportunities to communicate higher levels of thinking skills and historical empathy.

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## Endnotes

[1] NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) Week celebrations are held across Australia each July to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. NAIDOC is celebrated not only in Indigenous communities, but by Australians from all walks of life. The week is a great opportunity to participate in a range of activities and to support your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. (NAIDOC, n.d., para 1)

[2] Please note, that figures 2 and 3—like figure 4—include all the information about the activity (other than the question for each source as it appears in a question bank at the end of the chapter). Nothing has been omitted.

## Acknowledgements

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