Theory and Research in Social Education
Fall 2010, Volume 38, Number 4, pp. 574-617
© College and University Faculty Assembly
of National Council for the Social Studies

"It's not like [I'm] Chinese and Canadian. I am in between": Ethnicity and Students' Conceptions of Historical Significance

Carla L. Peck
University of Alberta

This article explores the relationship between students' ethnic identities and their ascriptions of historical significance to moments in Canada's past. Twenty-six grade 12 students living in an ethnically diverse urban centre in British Columbia, Canada participated. Phenomenographic research methods were followed, with a range of data informing the findings. In groups, students completed a "picture-selection task" during which they were asked to make decisions about the historical significance of particular events and themes in Canadian history. Students were asked to describe their ethnic identity and then reflect on the ways in which their ethnic identity may have influenced the decisions they made during the picture-selection task. Analysis determined that students employed five types of historical significance and three narrative templates to construct the history of Canada. Students used specific types of historical significance depending on the narrative(s) they used. The students' ethnic identities played a central role in determining which narrative template(s) they employed and the criteria they used to select the events for their narratives. Many students articulated complicated notions of their identities, with some perceiving that particular "sides" of their identity were at play, or in use, during the research task. Students were able to engage in metacognitive thinking because of a research design that pushed them to articulate their beliefs about the relationship between identity (self-ascribed) and the narrative they constructed. Implications for teaching and further research are explored.

Historical significance is the cornerstone of all historical inquiry. Without it, stories from the past become jumbled assortments of facts and are rendered meaningless. Indeed, it has been argued that

> 'significance' is at the heart of the subject matter of both academic and school history. It is fundamental to understand a distinctive feature of the discipline: discrete events are not understandable

> without their link to a frame of reference and a sense of authorship behind them. (Cercadillo, 2001, p. 116)

Rogers (1987) also highlights significance as a key concept in historical understanding and notes that decisions about significance involve discriminating "between the various members of a mass of crude facts and of showing their significance in relation to some theme or development" (p. 6). However, according to Seixas (1997b), this process is also about establishing a relationship between the events and the people "in the present, who are doing the historical thinking" (p. 120). For Seixas, our understandings and interpretations of the past help us "organize events into a narrative that will show us something important about our position in the world" (p. 120). Hunt (2000) agrees, and notes specifically that

> the assessment of the significance of events, changes and people in the past not only deepens pupils' understanding of the world, in which they live, but also helps them consider the ageless social, moral and cultural issues, which adolescents see as being very relevant." (p. 39)

However, both Seixas (1996) and Hunt (2000) note that helping students understand the significance of the past in relation to their own lives is one of the most difficult challenges that history teachers face.

One reason why this is so difficult is because, as Lévesque (2005b) explains,

> Teachers, students and people in general, no less than historians, confront the study of the past with their own mental framework of historical significance shaped by their particular cultural and linguistic heritage, family practices, popular culture influence, and last, but not least, school history experience. (¶ 2)

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the relationship between students' ethnic, cultural, linguistic and national identities and their conceptualizations of history in general, and historical significance in particular. The research demonstrates that minority students can experience difficulty organizing the history they encounter in school because they approach historical study with different frameworks and understandings of what counts as historically significant. However, in much of the previous research on ethnicity and students' historical thinking, the nature of ethnicity has not been sufficiently theorized.

In this article, I examine the relationship between Canadian students' ethnic identities and their explanations of the historical significance of moments in Canada's past, and attempt to address this

theoretical gap. I begin by exploring the term "ethnic identity." I then provide an overview of findings from previous studies that have investigated questions of identity and historical significance. Next, I turn to my research and explain the methodological approach and research findings. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of this work.

Ethnic Identity and Conceptions of Historical Significance

What do I mean by "ethnic identity"? Although there are no clear-cut definitions of ethnicity or ethnic identity – indeed, Pryor, Goldman, Sheridan and White (1992) describe ethnicity as a "conceptual maze" (p. 215) – many theorists agree on certain characteristics of ethnicity (Barker, 1999; Hall, 1991; Nagel, 1994; Rattansi, 1999). First, ethnicity is fluid and potentially plural in nature. The enunciation of one's ethnic identity may change depending on the social, political, and/or cultural context in which one finds oneself. Second, the development of ethnic identity is both a personal and social process, which occurs through inter- and intra-group boundary formation. Individuals look not only within themselves, but also within-group for clues to their ethnic identity. Individuals also take cues from the larger society, including people, social, and political institutions, to define their identity. Finally, some of the markers associated with ethnic identity include language, religion, appearance, ancestry, regionality, nonverbal behavior, values, beliefs, cultural symbols and practices.[1]

Abu-Laban and Stasiulus (2000) note that "many Canadians, including those of second and further generations, have developed a hybrid sense of identity. While they are of Canadian *nationality*, their ethnicity is not simply that of being of English-Canadian *ethnic* identity" (p. 481). While this use of the term "hybrid" is seemingly employed to describe a multifaceted ethnic identity, already formed, for Bhabha (1990), hybridity theory is useful for explaining *the process by which* ethnic identities are formed. Using the colonizer-colonized relationship as his example, Bhabha uses hybridity to explain the new types of ethnic identities that were formed through the process of colonization: Instead of reproducing the colonized in the image of the colonizer, some combination of these two identities is actually produced – the hybrid identity. This discussion on dimensions of ethnicity and ethnic identity, albeit far too brief due to space constraints, complicates the once taken for granted belief that ethnicity and ethnic identity are easily defined concepts.[2]

Until quite recently, little attention has been paid to how Canadian students from diverse ethnic backgrounds understand and negotiate the histories they encounter both in and out of school. Barton and Levstik (2004) argue that this is a crucial area of research, because

> ethnicity…is such a profound determinant of social experience that representations of the past are likely to differ substantially among groups within the same country. Attention to these differences will help us [educators, researchers] better understand how students' ideas arise in interaction with their environments, and it may also alert us to previously unexamined assumptions about the nature of historical learning. (p. 18)

Although current scholarship has shed light on some aspects of the relationship between students' ethnic identities and their historical understandings, there is much more to learn. We know that students rely on their identities to help shape their understandings of history, and conversely, we know that they rely on their understandings of history to help shape their identity. What remains unclear is a more precise understanding of these processes. The missed opportunity of directly asking students to reflect on the relationship between ethnic identity and their understandings of historical significance is common to many of the studies that have had this as their focus. This represents a significant gap in research design, particularly with older students who are likely capable of articulating such connections. As Hall (2003) notes,

> we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position...We are all, in that sense, *ethnically* located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are. (p. 94)

Barton (2008) argues that, "much more research is needed to illustrate the specific ways in which students of given backgrounds [including gender and class] learn history both in and out of school" (p. 250). What research exists has found that many students have difficulty understanding the significance of certain events from the past when the criteria used to ascribe significance do not mesh with their own experiences, prior knowledge, or significance markers. Below I trace some foundational research on this topic.

One of the first studies to demonstrate that students' understandings of historical significance can be influenced by ethnic identity was that conducted by Seixas (1993). Seixas interviewed students about a school project on family oral histories. He found that family experiences were important not only as sources of information but also in shaping "the students' underlying approaches to history" (p. 319). Students relied on family histories and experiences to help them process historical information and thus these "had a profound impact on how many of these students understood history" (p. 319). Seixas notes that, at least

for some students, family histories – including an understanding of one's ethnic identity – can provide frameworks for organizing the history they learn in school.

In the United States, Epstein (1998) investigated how secondary students' racialized identities affect their construction of significance in the context of U.S. history. Through interviews with youth, she found that students of European descent tended to see American history from either a "traditional" Eurocentric perspective or a "revisionist" Eurocentric perspective, whereas students of African-American descent perceived U.S. history from either an "Afrocentric" or a "double historical consciousness" perspective. Epstein (2000) suggests that history teachers need to be aware of "the difficulties of teaching history to students who had constructed perspectives based primarily on the historical experiences of the racial group with which they identified" (p. 204). By incorporating the differing logics of representation into their teaching, Epstein suggests, teachers can help students wrestle with the often contradictory historical perspectives they bring to the classroom.

Levstik's (2001) work with Maori and White students in New Zealand found that not only did ethnic identity influence students' understandings of historical significance, but so too does a country's global positioning affect how students ascribe significance to historical events. In this study, students ascribed historical significance to events that helped them understand their own history, connected New Zealand to the rest of the world, were symbolic of fairness and peaceful coexistence amongst diverse groups in New Zealand, and were examples of New Zealanders' accomplishments. The events to which the students ascribed significance differed depending on their ethnicity. For instance, White students viewed the Treaty of Waitangi as an instrument for the fair distribution of land, whereas the majority of Maori and Pacific Islander students saw it as a struggle over land that was rightfully theirs in the first place.

In a study comparing conceptions of significance among eighth grade students in England and the United States, Yeager, Foster and Greer (2002) found evidence to support the contention that "class, race, family history, popular culture, the media, and other social and cultural forces are important influences" that affect students' understanding of history, including historical significance (p. 202). While the finding that most of the English students' choices reflected their English background was hardly surprising, some were "influenced by their own [ethnic] cultural upbringing" (p. 207). For instance, a student whose father lived in Iraq found the Iran-Iraq war historically significant. For another born in South Africa, the end of apartheid was significant. In these cases ethnic identity played a key role in determining the significance of events for these students. Identity was important for the American

students in this study as well. While their "choices were somewhat less culture bound than [those of] the English students" they tended to ascribe significance to events "in terms of American involvement or effects" on the world (p. 209).

Barton and McCully's (2004) work with Protestant and Catholic students in Northern Ireland is a rare example of a study that sought to investigate students' "constructions of historical themes or concepts *and the connection they made between those and their own identities*" (p. 6). In this study the authors do ask participants to think about such connections. The authors found that older (compared to younger) students tended to use national, cultural or religious identifications as a way to select meaningful events in Northern Ireland's history, although they note that the majority of students' explanations did not rely on such identifications. They also note that gender, geographical location, and other factors can influence students' historical understandings. The authors argue that "history educators need to examine more closely the unintended consequences of their choice of content, particularly the ways in which students from diverse backgrounds may interact with the same curriculum" (p. 27).

In a Canadian study that investigated Franco- and Anglophone Ontario students' conceptions of historical significance, Lévesque (2005a) found differences in the events chosen by students in each linguistic group as well as in the criteria they used to determine the significance of events. Anglophone students typically ranked Francophone events low on their list of significant events. A parallel finding held for the Francophone students, who were more invested in events that predominantly featured Francophone history and identity. Lévesque posits that the Francophone students ascribed significance as a function of – or an expression of – their Francophone identity.

Lévesque's (2005a) research is significant for a number of reasons. It represents the first study in English Canada to replicate well-established research methodologies (Barton, 2005; Barton & Levstik, 2004; Epstein, 2009; Levstik, 2000) to investigate Canadian students' understandings of historical significance. It also attempts to understand the role that ethnic identity might play in these understandings. Although Lévesque attended to the importance of ethnic identity in the analysis of his data, like other researchers, he missed an opportunity to ask participants directly how they believed their ethnic identity influenced the ways they selected and ascribed significance to historical events.

Terizan and Yeager's (2007) research methodology closely mimics that employed by Lévesque (2005a). Using an open-ended questionnaire and interviews, Terizan and Yeager asked urban Latino/a students in their junior year of high school to identify 10 significant events, 10 significant people, and five significant documents in United States history. Students typically designated those events, people and

documents as historically significant if these phenomena were seen to contribute to a narrative of national unity, freedom, and progress. In addition, significance was ascribed if these phenomena contributed to the students' sense of national identity. The researchers noted the possible influence of the teacher on students' conceptions of historical significance, noting that the teacher also held similar beliefs about what counts as historically significant in U.S. history. Consistent with earlier research, students "did not attempt to resolve conflicting questions in American society about the meanings of freedom and unity or how the two ideas should be balanced" (Terizan & Yeager, 2007, p. 73). Perhaps even more interesting, the authors report that these ethnic minority students "did not question official themes in American history" (p. 74). The authors contend that the Latino/a students in their study were more like the European-American students than the African-American students in Epstein's (1998) study, in that "both groups [European-American and Latino] viewed examples of inequality and racism as aberrations, and they emphasized examples of progress and worthy intentions throughout U.S. history" (p. 74) and conclude by questioning the "salience of regional and cultural settings in attributing historical significance" (p. 74).

This study is interesting in that it contradicts some earlier work that found that ethnic minority students often challenge the narrative of progress, unity, and equality that tends to dominant mainstream U.S. history. Terizan and Yeager (2007) claim that very few students saw the need to incorporate more Latino history into their high school history course. The authors posit that cultural and economic factors may explain this but their findings remain somewhat puzzling nonetheless. Would the researchers have noticed differences had they conducted a comparative study, like those discussed above? What would have been the impact of directly asking students if and in what ways their ethnic identity impacted their ascription of significance to phenomena in U.S. history? The methodological approach taken in the present study, described below, was designed to more fully attend to issues of ethnic identity and students' historical understandings.

Methods

Phenomenographic Research

This study follows the traditions of phenomenographic research methods (Marton, 1981). Phenomenography

> deal[s] with both the conceptual and the experiential, as well as with what is thought of as that which is lived. [Phenomenographic researchers] would also deal with what is culturally learned and

with what are individually developed ways of relating ourselves to the world around us. (Marton, 1981, p. 181)

Researchers first used phenomenography to discern students' conceptions of learning, but it has since been used to investigate diverse research interests centered upon people's conceptions of various phenomena. Researchers in a wide variety of fields such as health care, nursing, civil engineering, physics, geography and physiotherapy (to name but a few) have employed phenomenography as a research method. Phenomenography has emerged as a well-established method in educational research (Chareka, 2005).

A central tenet in phenomenography is that there are a limited number of ways in which people understand a given phenomenon, although Martin and Booth (1997) note that

> the system of categories presented can never be claimed to form an exhaustive system. But the goal is that they should be complete in the sense that nothing in the collective experience as manifested in the population under investigation is left unspoken." (p. 125)

Phenomenographic research aims to map people's conceptions and then describe the variations of these conceptions in such a way that distinct categories of description are produced and employed to demonstrate how a target population understands a particular concept or phenomenon. According to Webb (1997), "phenomenography has played an important role in suggesting to educational developers an agenda for researching and improving educational practice" (p. 196). Phenomenography offers a method for understanding the ways in which people, and in particular students, conceptualize various phenomena of the world. As such, it holds great potential for educational researchers wanting to identify students' conceptual understandings.

Pang (2003) has noted a shift in the primary objective of phenomenographic research. Most phenomenographic research is descriptive in nature; its goal is to describe the range of conceptions held by a group of people, and to delineate the relationship between and among the conceptions. Pang explains the shift as one "in primary emphasis from questions concerning how different ways of experiencing something can be captured methodologically to theoretical questions about the nature of the differences" (p. 147). Given that the main question guiding the research documented in the present study was, "What is the relationship between students' ethnic identities and their understandings of historical significance?" phenomenographic research methods provided a means for me to investigate variations in students' understandings of the concept (historical significance) under study. Most important, with this approach I could theoretically explore the nature of these differ-

ences, with a specific focus on students' ethnic identities.

Participants

This study had two important dimensions to consider in the selection of participants. First, students needed to have enough background knowledge to perform the research task. Second, because I was interested in the relationship between a student's ethnic identity and his/her ascription of historical significance in Canadian history, it was important to have participants from a range of ethnic groups.

The population in the Lower Mainland region of British Columbia is ethnically diverse and the schools from which participants were drawn reflected this diversity. This study took place in three urban secondary schools which share a similar socio-economic status, are located in similar working-class neighbourhoods, and are in close proximity to one another. "Eastside A" is an "outreach" school providing rich, alternative educational services to Aboriginal students, grades nine to twelve. Approximately 20 students attended Eastside A secondary school.[3] A modified academic program is supplemented with outdoor education and counselling, and is largely designed around Aboriginal cultures, knowledge and epistemologies. Approximately 930 students attend "Eastside B," the second school from which participants were drawn for this study. Eastside B offers a range of programs to its students, including an Alternate Program and a "Mini School," the latter of which offers an enriched and accelerated high school program to selected students. Mini Schools are quite common in the Lower Mainland region of British Columbia. The third school from which participants were drawn, "Eastside C," is a school that serves approximately 1,050 students. Like Eastside B, Eastside C offers a range of programs to its students, including a Fine Arts program and a Culinary program. In addition, and largely through the dedication of two Aboriginal Support Workers and the school's administration, Eastside C has developed a substantial support network for its Aboriginal students.

Participants were drawn from a cohort of 16- to 18-year-old students at the end of secondary school (grade 12). Four entire grade 12 social studies classes[4] were invited to participate in the research (N of students = ~120). The response rate was approximately 25% (n=29) and meant that all of the students who volunteered were able to participate in the study, although three students chose to withdraw from the study due to prior commitments. Thus, a total of 26 students participated in the study. Most (n=17) of the participants were born in Canada. Seven of the participants were immigrants to Canada, and two were Aboriginal. A range of ethnic identities was reflected in each of these sub-groups. Table 1 provides a summary of the demographic information of study participants.

Table 1
Students' Ancestral Ethnic and Cultural Origins

	Student	Ancestral Ethnic/Cultural Origins	Gender
Canadian-born	Aakil	Punjabi, Polish, Ukrainian	M
	Adélie	French Catholic, Russian Mennonite, British	F
	Aidan	Irish, Chinese	M
	Annabelle	Chinese (Hong Kong), Scottish, English, French, Russian	F
	Armand	Chinese	M
	Ben	Chinese	M
	Binh	South Vietnamese	M
	Eliya	Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian, Scottish, English	F
	Emily	French, English, Irish, German	F
	Ethan	Jamaican, Dutch, Scottish	M
	Jessica	Irish, Estonian, Norwegian	F
	Mae	Chinese (Hong Kong)	F
	Munny	Cambodian	M
	Rosa	English, El Salvadorian	F
	Shen	Chinese	M
	Victoria	English, Scottish	F
	Will	English, Scottish	M
Immigrants	Dao-Ming	Chinese	F
	Kyung	South Korean	M
	Mark	Russian	M
	Minha	Filipino, Spanish	F
	Sam	Eastern Chinese	M
	Teresa	Vietnamese	F
	Vincent	Filipino	M
Aboriginal	Ariana	BC Coastal First Nations, Nuu-Chah-Nulth Nation, Cowichan Tribe	F
	Conor	Nis ga'a, Gitxsan, BC First Nations	M

The relatively low number of Aboriginal participants (compared to Canadian-born and immigrant student participants) is, in part, a reflection of the significantly high (approximately 60%) attrition rate of Aboriginal high school students in British Columbia (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2006). It was important for me to include Aboriginal students in my study because Aboriginal groups are an integral and growing part of Canadian society yet many remain on the margins. In this study, I wanted to pay specific attention to Aboriginal students, even if it meant including students who were enrolled in

a different course than the other students in the study. Pidgeon and Hardy Cox (2002) caution researchers against research findings that "combine Aboriginal students with other minority students, resulting in inaccurate Aboriginal perspectives and often treating Aboriginal peoples as outsiders" (p. 98). Therefore, when analyzing the data gathered from Aboriginal students, I did not combine it with that collected from other students.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected in three phases over a four month period. Phase One was designed to have students provide detailed descriptions *of their own* ethnic identities, rather than assigning students a label myself. Previous studies have typically assigned students to broad racial/ethnocultural categories such as "African American," "Latino/a," or "Franco-Ontarian," however none have asked students to provide their own explanations of the ways in which they perceive their ethnic identity nor have they addressed the diversity that exists within such broad categories. VanSledright, Kelly, and Meuwissen (2006) contend that "studying ideas about historical significance among learners remains only a partially successful endeavour without collecting sufficient data on their biographies" (p. 227). As a White researcher I did not want to make assumptions about students' ethnic identities (Carr & Lund, 2007; Dei, Karumanchery, & Karumanchery-Luik, 2004; Delpit, 1995; Tyson, 2006). Participating students were asked to complete a questionnaire on their demographic information. In addition, I asked students to write a paragraph describing their ethnic identity "in a way that made sense to them." This proved fruitful and worthwhile because many students' descriptions of their ethnic identities were different and much more detailed than their responses to closed questions related to identity on the questionnaire. For instance, in response to a question about place of birth, Teresa answered "Hong Kong." However, when asked to describe her ethnic identity in her own words, she wrote:

> Ethnically, I would consider myself Vietnamese, but culturally, because almost all my life was spent here in Canada, I would call myself a Canadian. Knowing both languages, Vietnamese spoken at home and English at school, probably accounts for my reasoning of being a Vietnamese Canadian among many other reasons of my personal values, and not necessarily what I was taught at home or at school. (ES-B4, Student Questionnaire, p. 3)

I will return to Teresa and her work during the research task in a later part of this article.

As discussed above, ethnic identity is a complex, fluid, and

subjective concept and the descriptions the students provided should be regarded as provisional. That is, students' perceptions of their own ethnic identity likely changed over the course of the study and will have continued to develop since that time. Therefore, before beginning the final stage of data collection (the individual interviews) I conducted member-checks with students and provided opportunities for them to elaborate on their identity descriptions as desired. VanSledright, Kelly and Meuwissen (2006) counsel that no method for collecting biographical information is completely foolproof, but insist that "the effort must be made, as a means of providing some sociocultural context within which to situate" the data (p. 227).

In Phase Two, heterogeneous groups of two to four students completed a two-part "picture-selection" task modelled on well-established American and European research (Barton & Levstik, 1998; Epstein, 2009; Lee & Ashby, 2000; Lévesque, 2005a; Levstik, 2000, 2001). I reviewed the content of the demographic information and student-generated descriptive paragraphs from Phase One in order to form small groups for the next stage of data collection (picture-selection task). Groups were constructed according to the following guidelines: As much as possible, students were placed into Aboriginal, immigrant, or Canadian-born (non Aboriginal) groups. However, as is typical when conducting research in schools (and not wanting to overly disrupt the teachers' and students' schedules), these desired groupings were not always obtained. All groups were diverse whether they were composed of all Aboriginal, Canadian-born or immigrant students. This diversity added an interesting dimension to the research task as students shared and learned about their classmates' perspectives on historical significance. Table 2 outlines the interview groups that were formed for the purpose of the picture-selection task and follow-up small group interviews.

In the first part of the picture-selection task, students were asked to discuss and select, out of a possible 30, 10 significant events in Canadian history in order to create a timeline of Canadian history. Because phenomenographic interviews are often focused on a semi-projective stimulus meant to provoke the interviewee into speaking about the phenomenon under study (Webb, 1997), considerable time was spent in the construction of the stimuli that were used in this research. In order to produce the desired results (i.e., a vibrant discussion about the phenomenon under study), the stimuli had to be engaging and the titles and captions had to provide enough detail to enable students to make informed decisions about the significance of the event under consideration.

Table 2
Configuration of Interview Groups

Interview Group	School	Students
1	Eastside A	Ariana Conor (both Aboriginal)
2	Eastside B	Mark Sam Teresa Vincent (all immigrants)
3	Eastside B	Aidan Jessica Munny (all Canadian-born)
4	Eastside C	Annabelle Armand Shen (all Canadian-born)
5	Eastside C	Ben (Canadian-born) Emily (Canadian born) Kyung (immigrant)
6	Eastside C	Binh Eliya Mae (all Canadian-born)
7	Eastside C	Adélie (Canadian-born) Dao-Ming (immigrant) Minha (immigrant)
8	Eastside C	Ethan Will (both Canadian-born)
9	Eastside C	Aakil Rosa Victoria (all Canadian-born)

To select events for the picture-selection task, I examined British Columbia Social Studies 11 curriculum documents, textbooks, and teacher-prepared materials to determine which events, developments, and people were emphasized in the Grade 11 Social Studies curriculum. This curriculum focuses on the rights, responsibilities, and practices of active citizenship, 20th century Canadian history, environmental issues and global development, and the concept of "Canadian identity" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2005). I also examined similar high school Canadian history courses in several other provinces for major themes and elements. I then chose 30 events from this analysis and

developed “picture cards” for each event. Each picture card contained a title and date of the event, a short caption describing the event, and one to three images. All images were in black and white except for images of primary sources and artwork, which were left in their original form (See Tables 3 and 4 for details on the picture-cards).

In order to bring students to a state of meta-awareness regarding their conceptions of historical significance, in the second part of the picture-selection task, I conducted follow-up small group interviews with each of the groups of students to further probe their understandings of historical significance. During an interview, Walsh (2000) advises that, “it [is] essential that the interviewer be particularly attentive to what the students [are] saying but [do] not respond to the answers as a teacher would” (p. 31). The researcher’s main task is to ask challenging questions regarding the stimulus and to ask follow-up questions aimed at encouraging the child “to explain what they mean in several different ways” (Pramling, 1995, p. 139). During this follow-up interview, I asked students questions such as: “Does the timeline tell the story of Canada as you would tell it?” “Do you think other groups might agree with your choices?” “Is there was anything you would like to add or change?”

A concern when interviewing students in groups is that some individuals may feel overwhelmed or silenced in a group setting (Fontana & Frey, 2005). To counter this concern, in Phase Three of the data collection process I triangulated data by following the two small group sessions with individual student interviews, in order to create a space where students could freely comment on the decisions around historically significant events arrived at during the small group sessions. Most important, I interviewed students individually in order to probe their understandings of how their ethnic identity may have influenced the decisions they made in the picture-selection task. Each phase of the research took place on a different day, usually within a two week period. Multiple conversations with students afforded me opportunities to more deeply explore patterns that were emerging in the data (Levstik & Barton, 2008). The full interview protocol for all phases of the research is included in the Appendix.

Table 3
Summary of Interview Stimuli

Title	Date	Ethnic/ National Groups[a]	Gender[b]	Region[c]
Granting of Royal Charter for Fur Trade	1670	Aboriginal, European	M	Central & Western
English Expel Acadians	1755 – 1758	European-descent, Acadians	M, F	Atlantic
The Siege of Québec	1759	European, European descent	M	Québec
Europeans arrive on west coast of Canada	1778	European, Aboriginal	M	West Coast
The War of 1812	1812	European-descent, Aboriginal	M	Central
Creation of Indian Residential Schools	mid – 1800s	European-descent, Aboriginal	M, F	Canada
Fraser River Gold Rush	1858		M	West Coast
Confederation	1867	European-descent	M	Central & Atlantic
Building of the Canadian Pacific Railway	1881 – 1885	European-descent	M	Canada
Recruitment of Chinese workers to build the Canadian Pacific Railway	1880s – 1890s	European, East Asian	M	Western & West Coast
Imposition of the Chinese Head Tax	1885	European descent, East Asian	M, F	Canada
Louis Riel and the North-West Rebellion	1885	European descent, Aboriginal	M, F	Western
Anti-Asiatic Riots, Vancouver	1907	European descent, East Asian	M, F	West Coast
Record Immigration Numbers	1913	Various		Canada
The Komagata Maru Incident	1914	European descent, South Asian	M, F	West Coast
Britain (and Canada) enters WWI	1914 – 1918	European, European descent	M, F	Canada
The Women's Suffrage Movement	1916 – 1918	European descent	F	Canada

The Halifax Explosion	1917		M, F	Atlantic
Winnipeg General Strike	1919		M, F	Western
The Persons Case	1929	European descent	M, F	Canada
The Great Depression	1929 – 1939		M	Canada
Canada enters WWII	1939 – 1945		M, F	Canada
Japanese interment during WWII	1942	European descent, East Asian	M, F	West Coast, Western
Pearson wins Nobel Peace Prize	1957	European descent, European, West Asian	M	Canada
The October Crisis & The War Measures Act	1970	European descent, European	M, F	Québec
Canada enacts Multiculturalism Policy (1971) and Multi-culturalism Act (1988)	1971, 1988	Various	M, F	Canada
Canada Act Passed	1982	European descent, European	M, F	Canada
Collapse of the "Meech Lake Accord"	1990	Aboriginal, European- descent	M	Québec & Canada
The Québec Referendum	1995	Various	M, F	Canada
The Marshall Decision	1999	Aboriginal, European-descent	M, F	Canada

[a]Ethnic/national groups listed here as they appear explicitly in the stimuli. If no people are shown, or if the images do not clearly identify specific ethnic/national groups, or no ethnic/national groups are explicitly mentioned in the caption, this is left blank.
[b]Gender (M = male, F = female) is listed here when it is explicitly shown or mentioned in either the image, title or caption. If no people are shown, or if the images do not clearly identify men or women (or boys or girls), or if gender is not mentioned in the caption, this is left blank.
[c]Explanation of regions: Atlantic = Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador (or any part therein); Central = Quebec and Ontario (or any part therein); Quebec = Quebec; Western = Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta (or any part therein); West Coast = British Columbia; Canada = all parts of Canada

Table 4
Summary Chart of Stimuli Characteristics

		Frequency
Time Periods		
	1600s	1
	1700s	3
	1800s	8
	1900 – 1950	12
	1960 – Present	6
Regions		
	Atlantic	3
	Central	3
	Québec	3
	Western	5
	West Coast	6
	Canada (all)	15
Ethnic/National Groups		
	Acadians	1
	Aboriginal	7
	European	8
	European descent	19
	Asian (East, West, South)	6
	Various	3
Gender		
	Female	18
	Male	28

Data Analysis

Data from 18 digitally recorded small group interviews and 26 individual interviews were professionally transcribed, after which I reviewed them for accuracy. All data were analyzed using ATLAS qualitative analysis software, using the analysis procedures described below.

After a thorough reading of all transcripts, I followed a dialectical approach to data analysis. This involved an iterative process of going back and forth between an *a priori* theoretical framework of historical significance and "a more grounded approach" which allowed me to develop codes as they emerged from the data itself (Weston et al., 2001, pp. 382-386). This enabled me to both develop codes that were informed by theory and to "pursue several constructs that were explicit in the research questions" (Weston et al., 2001, p. 386). I also kept the possibility alive that new and relevant codes could and would emerge from the data.

Both approaches to coding (applying an *a priori* framework and inductively constructing codes) required the use of the constant comparative method of data analysis, which involves identifying examples of codes; comparing similar codes to each other, thereby creating categories; describing the categories; and refining these definitions by further comparing new excerpts from transcripts to those previously coded (Merriam & Simpson, 2000).

Following Marton and Booth's (1997) advice to familiarize myself with the phenomenon under study, the theoretical work of Cercadillo (2000, 2001) formed the basis for the development of the *a priori* codes used to analyze the data. I employed the same terminology for the codes as those described by Cercadillo (2001). It is important to note that students rarely employed expressions such as, "it is significant/ important because…" to explain the significance of the events chosen for their timeline. Rather, it is in the explanation of the event itself, oftentimes in relation to previous and/or subsequent events or developments, that the students' understandings of historical significance were revealed. Following these basic principles, theoretical and inductive codes were established and refined, until a saturation point was reached (Merriam & Simpson, 2000).

Findings and Analysis

The students in this study employed criteria to ascribe historical significance to moments in Canada's past very similar to those in the research literature, and in particular, those delineated in Cercadillo's (2001) study with British and Spanish youth. This finding on its own is significant because it points to a common lexicon of historical significance criteria that has been used by students across geographic locations and research tasks. Table 5 summarizes the characteristics of each of the criteria students used to ascribe historical significance to events in Canada's past in this study. However, I move beyond Cercadillo's work by linking types of historical significance to historical narratives.[5] In this study, students employed particular types of significance to create and explain particular narratives of Canadian history. Students in the same group sometimes interpreted their timeline in different ways due, in part, to their ethnic identifications. In addition, some students drew on more than one narrative template to locate themselves in the history of the nation. In what follows, I focus specifically on the relationship between the students' ethnic identities and their ascription of historical significance in the construction of narratives of Canadian history.

Table 5
Historical Significance Criteria (Adapted from Cercadillo, 2001)

Type of Historical Significance	Distinguishing Features	Key Questions/Indicators
Contemporary	• Explanations describe what occurred during an event rather than explaining the event using causal factors • Explanations are temporally located in the timeframe of the event in question and may include multiple (contemporary) perspectives on an event • May be a precursor to the development of historical empathy as students' explanations typically included attempts to understand the actions of people in the past • Historical significance inheres in the event itself	• Who were/have been affected by event? • Why was it important at the time/to them? • How were people's lives affected (in immediate circumstances, not future)? • Can/do students see different viewpoints of contemporaries? • What effect did it have at the time?

Causal	• Nature of causal significance:
	  ◦ *Aspect*: economical, social, political, religious, cultural, legal[a]
	  ◦ *Space*: geographic locators
	  ◦ *Time-scale:* immediate, short-term, long-term
	  ◦ *Scale*: # of people affected
	  ◦ *Depth:* Impact of event on people's lives (e.g., inconvenience vs. torture)[b]
	• Requires an understanding of the historical context in which a particular event is situated.
	• Students who possessed more contextual knowledge about an event offered stronger arguments about its causal historical significance.
	• Students who approached the timeline task with emergent frameworks for understanding the complexity of history and made more sophisticated arguments about an event's causal historical significance
		• Key verbs: help, make, benefit, enable, change, achieve, instigate, result, allow
		• Expressions: have an influence, due to, contribute to
		• Consequential links: therefore, so, that is why, in that way
		• Use of counterfactuals

Pattern	• Ascribed to events that students understood as "firsts," as groundbreaking or turning points, or to events that marked Canada's place in the world • Requires an understanding of the historical context in which a particular event is situated • Students usually located an event in a narrative of progress or decline.	• Use of terms "milestone," "beginning," "first" • Expressions: world might not be the same as it is now, he broadened the horizons, he achieved new things, he opened up the world, it was a first step, he was ahead of his time, it marked a beginning, from then on, it was the start of, since then, that way it started
Symbolic	• Ascribed to events in Canada's past that were symbolic of the development and growth of the nation, portrayed Canadian unity, were symbolic of Canadian identity, revealed the accomplishments of iconic individuals, or offered a lesson. • In many cases students ascribed symbolic historical significance to events that revealed negative aspects of Canada's past, such as racism (Many students decided to include such events on their timelines precisely because they were symbolic of the "warts" of Canadian history) • May be tied to a mythic Canadian history/identity. • Contains an understanding that historical significance is not an intrinsic quality of any particular event but something that human beings ascribe to events • Some indication that students understood that ascriptions of historical significance may change over time and depending on context	• Expressions: it showed, gives an indication, it proved, it highlighted, it teaches us, set a good example for others, he was an inspiration for, was a role model, indication that something was/is good (or bad) • Students may make analogies with the event/ development/person
Present-future	• Only operates in the long-term • Ascribed to events that continue to have relevance today. • Student may draw personal connections to past events • Students may establish connections between historic and current events • More sophisticated responses included students' ideas about the importance of understanding the relevance of the past to current and future events as essential for effective and informed citizenship	• Student uses contextual information to describe long-term effect of event. Information usually used as a form of evidence to support their claim • Student indicates the event's importance today/ in future • Enduring issues – does event still have implications for today/the future?

[a]I added "legal" to Cercadillo's list of possible aspects of causal significance.
[b]"Depth" was added to Cercadillo's original list.

Students' Historical Narratives

The construction of historical narratives involves, among other things, the purposeful selection of historical people, places, and events and the explanation of the relationships between them. Barton and Levstik (2004) argue that, from an early age, most North American students are very familiar with historical narratives because of frequent encounters with them. Students read, construct, and repeat narratives without necessarily recognizing them as such. Narratives of Canadian history permeate Canadian society. They appear on television and movie screens, in books and newspapers, in museums, in textbooks, and as stories passed down through generations.

In this study, three narrative templates (Wertsch, 1998) course through the data. These are:

1. *The **"Founding of the Nation"** narrative*. This narrative recounts the history of the first inhabitants of Canada (before it was a nation) and the events that "built" the country. It is characterized by an explicit focus on the history of Aboriginal peoples and the ways in which contact with European explorers affected them, the arrival of Europeans and their accomplishments, and events considered pivotal in the founding of the nation. Some of these include: arrival of Europeans, Confederation, the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, World War I and II and perhaps the Canada Act, which saw the Canadian Constitution repatriated from Britain in 1982. In most cases, the stories of Aboriginal peoples seem to disappear after Confederation (1867). In this narrative template, students rely on *pattern* and *causal* types of significance to explain the historical significance of events in Canadian history. These types of historical significance are concerned with "firsts" (pattern) and consequences (causal), and align logically with a narrative that focuses on events that resulted in the beginning of the country and the effects of such events on the country's development. In many cases, students employ this narrative and these types of historical significance to explain not only the country's development but also how they (or their ancestors) came to Canada.
2. *The **"Diverse and Harmonious Canada"** narrative*. This narrative recounts the history of Canadians overcoming prejudice and discrimination in order to establish a harmonious, multicultural, multinational Canadian identity. Conflicts might be included in some versions of this narrative but if so, are viewed as aberrations in an otherwise positive and progress-oriented history of Canada. In this narrative, students rely on *symbolic* significance and significance for the *present-future* to make their arguments

about the historical significance of particular events. Symbolic significance, which is used to ascribe significance to events symbolizing a mythic past, Canadian identity and/or students' ideas about what lessons can be drawn from history, seems especially relevant for a narrative that portrays Canada's past as "diverse and harmonious." Significance for the present-future is also relevant here, in that students make connections between past events and contemporary times, including their own lives.

3. "The Diverse but Conflicted Canada" *narrative*. This narrative recounts the history of multiculturalism in Canada, with an explicit focus on conflicts and tensions that have arisen as a result of society and government's responses to the nation's changing demography. This narrative provides a template for critiques of societal and systemic racism and discrimination and traces the origins of contemporary ethnic and cultural tensions. In the "Diverse but Conflicted Canada" narrative, students also rely on *symbolic* significance and significance for the *present-future* to ascribe historical significance to events in Canada's past. However, students seem to put more emphasis on significance for the present-future and make explicit statements about the legacy of past racisms on contemporary society.

During the individual interviews, students were asked which events in Canadian history (from their group's timeline or from Canadian history writ large), if any, were important to them in terms of their ethnic identities. Previous studies of the relationship between identity (ethnic or otherwise) and students' conceptions of historical significance have not directly asked students to reflect on the intersection between their ethnic identity and their historical thinking. The present study seeks to fill this gap by purposefully and explicitly asking students to reflect on how their ethnic identities may have impacted their ascription of significance to events in Canada's past. Metacognition, or the ability to think about one's own thinking, is recognized as a significant factor in student learning. According to Donovan and Bransford (2005), metacognition involves "an awareness of the need to ask how new knowledge relates to or challenges what one already knows" (p. 11). Even the students who would or might deny a relationship between their ethnic identities and their ascriptions of historical significance came to recognize there was one when they probed their thinking more deeply or were provoked to do so.

In the following sections, I present vignettes of three groups of students. These groups are representative of the way in which most of the students were grouped in this research. That is, Vignette 1 profiles the work of the two Aboriginal students in this study, Vignette 2 profiles the work of two Canadian-born students, and Vignette 3 profiles the

work of 4 immigrant students, although I do not claim that the data from these students are representative of all students in the study. Rather, these data shed light on the role of ethnic identity in students' historical understandings and are helpful in excavating what this relationship looks like across a range of individuals. In the discussion that follows, I analyze the students' explanations of their timelines and the relationship students established between their ethnic identities and their narrative constructions of Canadian history, including their use of particular types of historical significance. Earlier I noted that phenomenographic researchers are turning toward theoretical questions concerning the differences in students' conceptions (Pang 2003). In the remainder of this article I take up this challenge and explore the nature of the differences of students' conceptions of historical significance, with ethnic identity as the interpretive lens.

Vignette 1: Conor and Ariana. When they began the timeline activity, the two Aboriginal students gravitated immediately toward every event that had an obvious connection to Aboriginal history (Table 6). Conor wrote: "Being First Nation in Canada has made me into the person that I have learned to be and act when I respond to others, and how I would treat them, so being a Canadian citizen is one of the best part *[sic]* of living in Canada" (Student questionnaire, ES-A 1, p. 3). He explained why he selected the events that he did: "everybody likes to see something about them displayed somewhere, so that's why I chose these ones...I wanted to show and I wanted to know more about my own history" (PD1, 16-18). (The first number in parenthesis indicates from which transcript the excerpt is taken. The second number(s) indicate transcript line numbers.) However, as the students worked through the task, Ariana worked with Conor to expand the selection of events for their timeline.

Ariana provided multiple responses to the question about her ethnic identity: "An urban Aboriginal who learns about other Aboriginal culture because my own isn't offered. Multi-cultural Canadian Aboriginal I see myself" (Student questionnaire, ES-A2, p. 3). Although brief, Ariana's response indicates that she is aware of several aspects of her identity: First, she specifically identified herself as an *urban* Aboriginal, indicating that she lives in a city and does not live in a rural Aboriginal community (or reserve). Second, she uses the term "multicultural" to describe herself in addition to identifying herself as Canadian and Aboriginal. These latter terms imply some sort of national identification on Ariana's part although it is not clear to what extent she identifies herself as both Canadian and Aboriginal.

Table 6
First Timeline Created by Ariana and Conor

1778	Europeans Arrive on West Coast of Canada
Mid 1800s	Creation of Indian Residential Schools
1858	Fraser River Gold Rush
1881 – 1885	Building of the Canadian Pacific Railway
1885	Louis Riel and the Northwest Rebellion
1913	Record Immigration Numbers
1929-1939	The Great Depression
1982	Canada Act Passed
1990	Collapse of the Meech Lake Accord
1999	The Marshall Decision

Ultimately, the timeline created by the two Aboriginal students included six events with a very specific Aboriginal focus (such as the creation of Indian residential schools and Louis Riel) and four that expanded into the broader context of Canadian history (such as women's suffrage and the Great Depression). When asked to reflect on why she thought they changed their timeline, Ariana said, "My perspective of Canadian history is different than everybody else's….I think if I was born and raised on my reserve I'd try to find all Aboriginal [events] or something. But since I live in an urban setting I've tried to include all of them" (PD2, 51, 134-137). Whereas her partner was drawn almost exclusively to events depicting Aboriginal history, Ariana consciously selected events that reflected her *urban* Aboriginal identity, noting that she lived in a multicultural urban center and that the timeline should reflect that. Ariana's opinions had considerable influence on Conor's ideas about the shape of their timeline, as can be seen in the final decisions about which events to include (Table 7).

Although Conor and Ariana agreed on the final version of their timeline, they used different narrative templates (and, consequently, different types of historical significance) to explain the timeline and their relationship to it. Conor described the timeline in terms of the "Founding of the Nation" narrative, which, as described above, focuses on people and events responsible for the establishment of Canada. Conor noted that the timeline included "the important stuff that, like, happened through the years – like with the first arrival of the Europeans – and then what they did…like the different stuff we had to go through…like the big changes, like, with losing our culture" (PD4, 6-12). In this explanation, Conor relies on pattern significance ("first arrival of Europeans") and causal significance ("big changes…losing our culture") to ascribe historical significance to events and construct

his narrative. Conor's decision to explain his narrative in terms of the "Founding of the Nation" narrative is grounded in his ethnic identity ("First Nations") and his understanding of the effects of European arrival on Aboriginal people in the past. Using this narrative template, Conor locates himself in the trajectory of Canadian history that he and Ariana had mapped through the timeline exercise. His use of pattern and causal significance is tied to both his understanding of this narrative template and to his sense of his ethnic identity; this is particularly noticeable in his use of the word "our" when describing the causal effects of European arrival on Aboriginal culture.

Table 7
Revised Timeline Created by Ariana and Conor

1778	Europeans Arrive on West Coast of Canada
Mid 1800s	Creation of Indian Residential Schools
1858	Fraser River Gold Rush
1916 – 1918	Women's Suffrage Movement
1885	Louis Riel and the Northwest Rebellion
1919	Winnipeg General Strike
1929-1939	The Great Depression
1990	Collapse of the Meech Lake Accord
1995	Québec Referendum
1999	The Marshall Decision

Unlike Conor, Ariana employed the "Diverse but Conflicted Canada" narrative template to explain the timeline they had created together. Ariana argued that the creation of Indian Residential Schools was historically significant: "Even though all that happened way back then – all the abuse that the kids had to suffer and stuff – even though it doesn't happen anymore – We're still mixed in…with a bunch of cultures. Assimilated into mainstream society" (PD2, 177-181). Critically connecting the legacy of residential schools to the present day, Ariana employed significance for the present-future to explain the significance of this event to her.

Conor and Ariana's ideas about the relationship between their ethnic identity and their ascriptions of significance to events in Canada's past can best be described as a sense of loss. For Conor, this was expressed through the sentiment that if only an event had (or had not) happened, he would be a different person; he would have a stronger sense of his Aboriginal identity. For instance, Conor's explanation for why he felt it was important to include an event related to European arrival to Canada on their timeline reflects his impression of how his ethnic identity today might be different had the Europeans not come

to Canada: "If Europeans didn't come here then, like, I'd be a different kind of person. I would know how to hunt and trap and fish and provide for my whole family. Now I can't do any of that stuff" (PD1, 85-88). Conor's use of a counter-factual statement (an indicator for causal historical significance) embeds his understanding of events that founded the nation (in this case, the arrival of Europeans) within his ethnic identity.

When asked how her ethnic identity may have affected her decisions during the picture-selection task, Ariana commented that "I didn't really know how to identify myself [on the questionnaire] but I knew I'm Aboriginal but that's all I knew….The choosing of the timeline was hard too because…I'm not really sure who I am, you know…I'm lost" (PD2, 147-149, 154-157). Ariana's statement reveals much about the connection, for her, between ethnic identity and history. Castenell and Pinar (1993) argue that,

> "We are what we know." We are, however, also, what we do not know. If what we know about ourselves – our history, our culture, our national identity – is deformed by absences, denials, and incompleteness, then our identity – both as individuals and as [Canadians] – is fractured. (p. 4)

Ariana acknowledged that she struggled when she tried to explain her identity on the questionnaire. In her statement we can see that she struggled with the picture-selection task, in part because she is also struggling with her sense of self.

At the end of the task, once Ariana and Conor had reconstituted their timeline to be "more multicultural," Ariana noted that she was satisfied with the end result and, in her words, felt less "selfish about – concerning – my history because Canada is a multicultural country now" (PD4, 381-383). Remembering that Ariana reported learning about Aboriginal cultures other than her own, her comments may be read to mean that she could not really see herself or her identity reflected in some events depicting Aboriginal history but could make connections to some events that depicted Canada's multicultural history. This is in stark contrast to Conor, who would have been very satisfied with a timeline that depicted only Aboriginal history because he saw a relationship between his identity and these events.

It is worth reminding the reader that both Conor and Ariana were the only students in this study who did not take "Social Studies 11," a required Social Studies course for students in British Columbia. Social Studies 11 focuses on twentieth century Canadian history (with some geography). Students have the option of taking First Nations 12 instead, a course that focuses on Aboriginal history in Canada, and this is the course that Conor and Ariana had taken. They noted that they did not

know of some of the 30 events from which they were asked to choose 10. Although this was true for many students in the study, it is possible that Conor and Ariana were familiar with fewer events. It is probable that Conor's and Ariana's interpretations of the narrative they created was somewhat affected by the background knowledge they brought to the exercise. That said, their ethnic identities also had an important role to play in the process.

Vignette 2: Will and Ethan. Will and Ethan, two Canadian-born students, completed the picture-selection task together. Will was third generation Canadian and described himself as follows: "Most of my ancestors are Canadian, including my great grandparents. However, I consider myself a Canadian with British heritage" (Student questionnaire, ES-C 1, p. 3). He reported that his great-grandfather was one of the first people to ride the railway in Canada from coast to coast, and reflected that he (Will) was "so Canadian" because of this (PD26, 349).

Table 8
Timeline Created by Will and Ethan

1670	Granting of Royal Charter for Fur Trade
1759	The Siege of Québec
1778	Europeans Arrive on the West Coast of Canada
1881-1885	Building of the Canadian Pacific Railway
1867	Confederation
1916-1918	The Women's Suffrage Movement
1939-1945	Canada Enters World War II
1957	Pearson Wins Nobel Peace Prize
1971, 1988	Canada Enacts Multiculturalism Policy and Act
1982	Canada Act Passed

When asked to reflect on if and how his ethnic identity may have influenced the kind of timeline (Table 8) he and his partner constructed, Will drew on the "Founding of the Nation" narrative:

> So I found a lot of the original establishing things important but – I mean, I can look back and see maybe, maybe some of the stuff in the 20th century is just as important or more important – But for me, cause this [referring to the first five events on their timeline] is sort of when my ancestry came and started to do things, it's important. (PD27, 261-265)

Will's identity as "so Canadian," and the fact that he could trace his roots back to early Canadian history, meant that he selected events

related to the development of the nation during the timeline activity (Founding of the Nation narrative). His reference to when his "ancestry came and started to do things" is an example of pattern significance. That is, he denotes the arrival of his ancestors as a starting point for his own family's history and involvement in the development of the nation, and a reason for ascribing pattern historical significance and constructing the narrative he did.

Will's partner, Ethan, described his ethnic identity as follows:

> I would describe myself as Canadian. For reasons or because of my personality *[sic]* qualities I've inherited from living here. I, myself, as being a person with many different racial origins feel as if I am the epitome of Canadian culture. I feel as [if] I am a mosaic, which is what Canada is on a national level. (Student questionnaire, ES-C 3, p. 3)

When I asked Ethan to reflect on the role, if any, his ethnic identity may have had on the decisions he made during the picture-selection task, he argued that, "I wasn't really thinking about myself, I was thinking more on how people were perceiving Canada; I was thinking of Canada more on a general level" (PD29, 128-131). However, when asked if he could explain his thinking further, Ethan referred explicitly to his own identity as a visible minority:

> When I was going through [the picture cards]…I took out all the racial things right – because it didn't bother me, right, and hopefully it doesn't bother people now because Canada was in a different place 100 years ago…Canada now is a multicultural place…and that is the most important thing. (PD160-166)

This statement reflects Ethan's earlier comment on his identity ("a person with many different racial origins") being the "epitome of Canadian culture" and is an example of symbolic historical significance in that his explanation is tied to a mythic Canadian identity. For Ethan, what was paramount in his decision-making process was that the timeline reflect a multicultural Canadian society, and therefore he constructed Canadian history using the "Diverse and Harmonious" narrative. This, in turn, reflects both his perception of his ethnic identity and his understanding of Canadian history.

Ethan suggested that he bracketed his identity in favor of a timeline that would represent a broad spectrum of Canadian society. However, when pushed to think about the relationship between his ethnic identity and the events he selected for his and Will's timeline, his response indicated that he had invested much more of his identity in the selection process than he was conscious of doing. Ethan's attempts

to bracket his ethnic identity were not entirely successful because ultimately he selected events that reflected his sense of self back to him.

Ethan and Will's ethnic identities influenced their ascriptions of historical significance, as well as the different narratives they employed to explain their timeline. As mentioned earlier, Will's identity as "so Canadian," and the fact that he could trace his roots back to early Canadian history meant that he used pattern historical significance to select events related to the beginning of the nation. And while Ethan argued that he "tried to step out of my own sort of bias…to make it [the timeline] represent everyone" (PD25, 384-385), he also remarked that Canada's passing of the Multiculturalism Act was the most important event for him because of his ethnic identity: "Where would Canada be if it wasn't multicultural, right? Like I might not be able to live here if it didn't accept multiculturalism" (PD29, 195-197). Throughout the interviews Ethan was quite adamant that his ethnic identity did not really have any influence on his selection of events. Nevertheless, when asked to explain which one was most important to him, he expressed quite a different viewpoint. Ethan was not fully aware of the disjuncture between his earlier statements about setting aside his "bias" (as he put it) and the significance he placed on multiculturalism in Canada. Will and Ethan's sense of their ethnic identities helped shape the different narratives they ultimately selected to interpret the timeline they had created together.

Vignette 3: Sam, Teresa, Mark and Vincent. This group of four immigrant students spent almost an hour debating which 10 events should be placed on their timeline of Canadian history. The discussion was very animated and almost heated at times. At one point, noting that his group had not selected any events explicitly related to ethnic minority issues, Sam stood up and asked the group the following question, "All four of us are from ethnic minorities, our ancestors, right? […] So why shouldn't we look at that aspect?" (PD44, 720-725). The other members of his group argued that they preferred selecting events that could apply to a more "general" population – events that would have universal appeal to a broad spectrum of society. They expressed concern that if the group focused too intently on events directly related to ethnic minority issues they would have to choose all events related to ethnic minority issues for fear of leaving someone out of their timeline:

> Personally, I just didn't want to focus too much on minority issues because I think it…once you get into the nitty gritty it becomes, like…you have to include every other minority group. I mean, we can't talk about how the Japanese were once discriminated against in our society without mentioning the Chinese, and then we can't talk about that without mentioning the Aboriginals. (Teresa, PD7, 410-416)

Mark concurred, and added the following: “Since we’re all from different minorities we kind of reached a consensus that, like, [an] all inclusive topic like multiculturalism would probably be better suited to our purposes” (PD7, 431-433). Vincent agreed, noting, “I think it’s safe to say that multiculturalism speaks for all of us” (PD7, 482-483).

Teresa (profiled earlier), who had lived in Canada for 14 years at the time of the study, noted that she found it

> a little surprising myself that I didn’t, like, advocate so much to put minority issues, like as one of my, like, first couple of selections… but definitely I think it’s just because of how much of a Canadian I consider myself – I chose not to choose those ones and go for ones that, like, generally apply to the history of Canada, not necessarily a specific background or ethnic group. (PD10, 98-106)

Vincent and Mark, who had lived in Canada 13 and eight years, respectively, agreed with this stance. Length of time in Canada may have been a determining factor in this group’s selection process, as Sam had spent little time in Canada, at least compared to his group-mates. He was particularly drawn to issues related to minority rights. Although minority rights were a concern for his group-mates, they preferred to create a timeline that would appeal to a broader spectrum of society. The group’s solution was to include an event that, they felt, acted as an umbrella event for all ethnic minority issues – Canadian multiculturalism (Table 9).

Table 9
Timeline Created by Vincent, Teresa, Mark and Sam

1867	Confederation
1881-1885	Building of the Canadian Pacific Railway
1913	Record Immigration Numbers
1919	Winnipeg General Strike
1929	The Person’s Case
1939-1945	Canada Enters World War II
1957	Pearson Wins Nobel Peace Prize
1971, 1988	Canada Enacts Multiculturalism Policy and Act
1982	Canada Act Passed
1995	The Québec Referendum

Sam was not entirely happy with this decision and argued that the selection process should involve the following consideration:

> We should think about the present and then consider what event has contributed to the present and those events should have the biggest impact because we are still feeling that impact, right? So of all of these, I think minority rights shouldn't be excluded, since we already have multiculturalism [on the timeline] – that's actually a solution to that issue. We have a solution, but we don't have the issue. (PD44, 1188-1193)

The group reached a compromise by adding an event that described Canadian immigration in the early part of Canada's history, with Vincent noting that, "that represents, to me, the ethnic minority" (PD9, 176). Upon further examination of Sam's position, it seems clear that he employed the "significance for the present-future" criterion for historical significance in order to construct a "Diverse but Conflicted Canada" narrative.

When asked to identify an event that was most significant to her in terms of her ethnic identity, Teresa selected both Confederation and Multiculturalism. She explained:

> Because I consider myself with more of a Canadian background… even more than my own ethnic background – my parents' background – I just believe Confederation is important….I think it's important to the – generally for our country and how we came to be…the beginnings of our country and the unity of our country. (PD10, 141-150)

> And with the multiculturalism policy – I think as – as part of the being Canadian – that's something – it's probably one of the things that I'm most proud of…of our country being so multicultural and like I'm here – I'm able at the same time to grow up Canadian but in the back of my head there's still my own ethnic background that I still want to, like, I still want to remember – that I still learned about through my parents and it's probably things that I'll pass on to my children later on but at the same time… living in Canada I don't have to be – I don't have to feel ashamed of what it is – what my identity is and like, it's okay to have a mix I guess. (PD10, 169-179)

In the first excerpt, Teresa identified Confederation as a landmark moment in Canadian history ("how we came to be"), making this an example of pattern historical significance. She also noted that Confederation was a marker for the beginning of the nation and unity, firmly establishing this aspect of her explanation in the "Founding of the Nation" narrative. In the second excerpt, Teresa referred to Canadian identity ("being Canadian") and a sense of pride in Canada's multicultural

history, both of which point to symbolic historical significance and the "Diverse and Harmonious" narrative. She also indicated that this is a part of Canadian history that she would likely "pass on" to her future children, an indicator of significance for the present-future.

The relationship between Teresa's identity as "ethnically Vietnamese" and "culturally Canadian" (noted earlier) also emerged in her discussion of the historical significance of Confederation and Multiculturalism. She reported that she had "more" of a "Canadian background" and this is what prompted her to identify with Confederation. However, she also noted the influence of her ethnic identity and her feeling that she does not have to "feel ashamed" about her ethnicity precisely because of the Canadian government's approach to multiculturalism.

Sam's case is quite different than his group-mates'. As mentioned earlier, Sam had lived in Canada for a considerably shorter period of time compared to Vincent, Mark, and Teresa. He described his ethnic identity in this way:

> I still feel my pride as a Chinese. I defend Chinese history. I am still living in a typical Chinese family, eating typical Chinese food and learning the history of China. But as I live in Canada longer, I think I also have absorbed some Canadian North American culture. But here it comes – a question: What is Canadian culture? I think it is multiculturalism. So as I become more Canadian, I am more and more tolerant to other cultures. I promote both Canadian and Chinese cultures. So it would be best to describe me as a Chinese-Canadian. (ES-B6, Student questionnaire, p. 3)

When asked how his ethnic identity may have impacted the decisions he made during the picture-selection task, he had the following response:

> As I was deciding on these pictures I was kind of putting myself in the mindset of a Canadian instead of a Chinese. So I fought for the events that are important for Canadians in general – they may not be typical Chinese-Canadian, but Canadian in general – so like all the native born people or the immigrants from Britain/France…So that partly explains why we didn't…why I didn't choose a lot of minority rights because…I don't think there's any…my Chinese background had any influence on my decisions. (PD12, 213-224)

However, as he thought more about this question his response became more intricate and revealed his understanding of the complicated relationship between his ethnic identity and the decisions he made about

historical significance: "So in some ways during the process of choosing these I shifted my own identity, so not a lot of these things really represent my true identity" (PD12, 236-238). Sam was the only person in his group who argued (in vain) to include more issues related to minority rights in their selection of events. Because his group decided to create a "general" timeline, Sam reported that he emphasized his Canadian identity while making decisions about which events were significant. Importantly, Sam also added that, "it's not like [I'm] Chinese and Canadian. I am in between – but I'm actually, I'm constantly shifting between the two" (PD12, 377-379). The notion that one's ethnic identity is always a process – that it is not fixed – is apparent in Sam's reflections on the relationship between his ethnic identity and his ascriptions of significance to events in Canada's past (Barker, 1999; Hall, 1991; Nagel, 1994; Rattansi, 1999) and is a clear reflection of the theoretical work on ethnic identity discussed earlier.

Discussion

Wertsch (1998) argues that historical narratives are "cultural tools" that people use to understand the past. He notes that "the task of a sociocultural approach [to research] is to explicate the relationships between human action, on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional, and historic contexts in which this action occurs, on the other" (p. 24). In his work with American college students, Wertsch found that the "quest-for-freedom" narrative of U.S. history was so dominant that even those students who tried to resist it situated any criticisms they had about this narrative within it, rather than offering an alternative narrative. This suggests not only the ubiquity of the quest-for-freedom narrative in American society but also its dominance. The students in Wertsch's study were, seemingly, powerless to resist it.

In contrast, Wertsch's (2000) work in Estonia demonstrates that it is possible to know but not believe (or appropriate) dominant historical narratives. Wertsch found that the Estonians with whom he worked were fluent in at least two accounts of the past: the state-controlled, public, official, Russian version of history that was taught in schools, and the unofficial, private version that "consisted of loose collections of counter claims to assertions found in official texts" (p. 39). He concludes that "texts [such as narrative texts] serve as 'identity resources' to be mastered and to be employed in particular contexts in a variety of flexible ways" (p. 45).

The students in this study employed specific narratives as "identity resources" in order to locate themselves in particular narratives of Canadian history. For Teresa, this meant constructing two narratives simultaneously: The "Founding of the Nation" narrative and, alongside it, the "Diverse and Harmonious Canada" narrative, which she

employed to locate herself in a narrative of Canadian history. In examining the data discussed above, what becomes clear is that the students' ethnic identities influenced both their decisions about significance and the narrative template they used to locate themselves in the nation's past. Several students, notably Sam and Teresa, referred to a particular "side" of their identity that came to the fore during the research exercise. Both Bhabha's (2001) hybridity theory and Dei, Karumanchery and Karumanchery-Luik's (2004) theory of the salience of certain identities in specific contexts are relevant here. I propose that the grade 12 students in this study engaged in an iterative process whereby they constructed narratives of Canadian history by:

- Analyzing (consciously or subconsciously) public narratives of Canadian history in order to locate themselves (vis-à-vis their ethnicities) in relation to one or more of these narratives
- Selecting historical phenomena and employing criteria for historical significance to create their own narratives of Canadian history.
- Analyzing the narratives they produced in terms of:
    - The extent to which they reflected their understandings of Canadian history
    - The extent to which they reflected their ethnic identities
- Modifying their narratives to better reflect both their understandings of Canadian history and their understandings of their ethnicities.

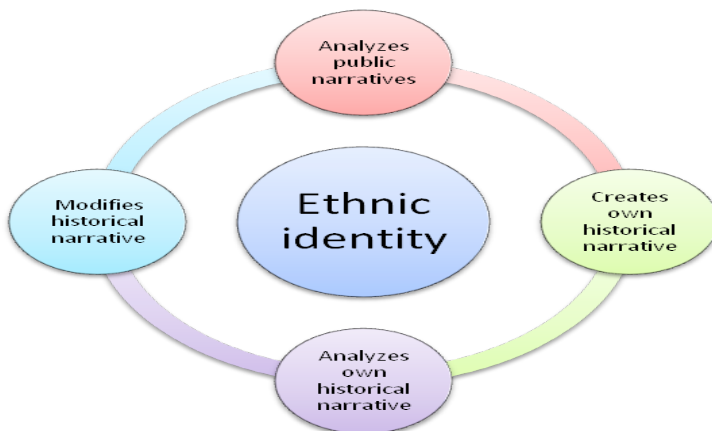

Figure 1. Process of narrative development in this study.

In presenting Figure 1, I do not assert that the students in this study engaged in the process of narrative construction in a linear, sequential manner. It is possible that the students in this study engaged in this process in different ways. For instance, one student might begin by analyzing one or more public narratives of Canadian history and proceed (clockwise) to create his/her own narrative, analyze and then modify it. Another student might begin in the same way but might then choose to modify the narrative, then analyze it, then continue to create his/her own version of Canadian history. Key is the role of a student's ethnic identity in these processes. In this study, the student's ethnic identity played a central role in determining the shape of the narrative he/she ultimately created and the criteria he/she mobilized to defend the events he/she selected for his/her narrative. This is, perhaps, most evident in Will and Ethan's case, two students who created and agreed upon one timeline but chose different narrative templates to recount Canadian history and whose ethnic identities were at the core of their explanations of significance.

Teachers and students can begin to develop an understanding of how ethnic identity can impact one's understanding of history by first identifying the point in the cycle (presented in Figure 1) at which the students began constructing historical narratives. If, through an analysis of their narrative, students discover that they have reproduced a grand narrative of Canadian history or created an alternative narrative, the next metacognitive step could be to ask students to think about why this might be so.

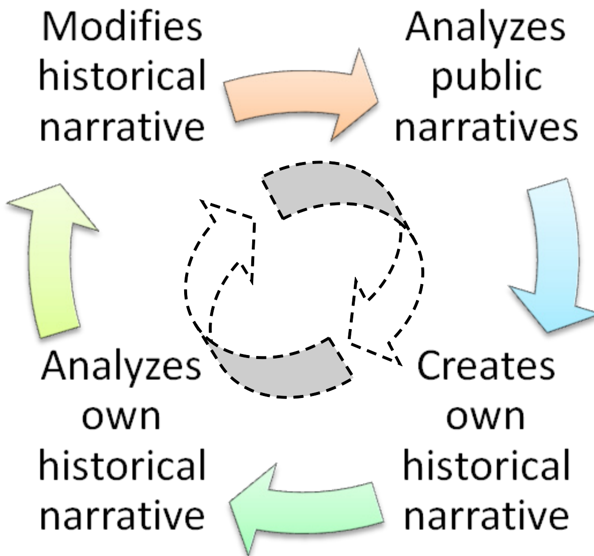

Figure 2. Deepened engagement with the construction of historical narratives.

That is, students could be asked to repeat the process by asking such questions as:

- In what way do I understand my ethnic identity?
- With what narratives of Canadian history am I familiar?
- What connections (vis-à-vis my identity) have I established with one or more of these narratives?
- How did my identification with a particular narrative shape the way in which I selected and omitted events for my own narrative of Canadian history?
- How did this shape the ways in which I selected and employed different types of historical significance?
- How did my understanding of my ethnic identity shape the narrative I constructed and/or the ways in which I selected and applied criteria for significance?
- How does my understanding of this process influence the kind of narrative I ultimately produced?
- What other narratives are possible?

Thus, students could use the cycle proposed in Figure 1 and extend it through a deeper engagement (represented by the inner arrows in Figure 2) with the processes they used to construct their narratives.

In this study, several students attempted to negotiate the tension inherent in Seixas' (1997a) subjectivist-objectivist split, a negotiation characterized by the ability to weave events of personal significance into a larger historical narrative. Both Will and Sam constantly strove to balance what was historically significant to them, personally, with the historical significance of events in Canadian history writ large. Will connected the history of his ancestors coming to Canada with the history of the development of Canada, including the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Sam argued fervently (yet in vain) for his group to consider events related to ethnic minorities, noting that as members of ethnic minorities in Canada, he and his group-mates are still affected by such events. With this argument, Sam connected events of personal significance to the history of the struggle for minority rights in Canada.

A key principle of constructivist learning theory is that students bring prior conceptions with them to every learning situation. The data in this study show that students are using criteria to ascribe historical significance to events and are constructing narratives of Canadian history even if they have not been explicitly taught how to do so. Given the role of ascriptions of historical significance in the construction of historical narratives, it is helpful to uncover students' prior conceptions, or existing frameworks, of historical significance so that researchers (and teachers) can better understand what criteria students are using and the ways in which they are using them.

Although this research focused solely on the influence students'

ethnic identities may have had on their conceptions of historical significance, glimpses of the influence of other aspects of one's identity emerged in this research. For instance, Teresa often referred to gender during the research task. An investigation into the relationship between other aspects of one's identity (e.g., class and gender) and conceptions of historical significance would enrich our understandings of the complicated interplay between identity and conceptions of history. Indeed, Barton (2008) notes that, when it comes to gender, "few researchers have explored these differences in depth or attempted to explain them theoretically" (p. 250). Further, given the fluid, complex and overlapping nature of identity (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2000), research that investigates the salience of particular aspects of one's identity over others during particular research tasks would be especially interesting: "There is no single way in which students negotiate the competing demands of differing historical discourses, and therefore much more research is needed to illustrate the specific ways in which students of given backgrounds learn history both in and out of school" (Barton, 2008, p. 250).

It is also important that students learn to interrogate existing narrative templates (e.g., in texts, movies) as well as the ones they bring to the study of history – where do these narratives come from? What is the perspective of the author of these narratives? How do students' ethnic identities influence the narratives they build? Students can identify and explore the reasons why they are drawn to particular narrative templates, and which narratives they take for granted as the status quo. If dominant narratives are reproduced, students can begin to explore reasons why certain narratives are dominant and others are marginalized. Do other students understand Canadian history in the same way? If not, why not? What is the nature of the differences in understandings? Specifically, how does one's identity influence one's understanding of Canadian history? An exploration of this type could help students understand that historical narratives can be emplotted in different ways (White, 1998).

Conclusion

When people ascribe significance to people, developments, and/or events in the past, what they are doing is imposing a framework on the past in order to understand it and putting order to all that has happened before and during their lifetime. Several factors can influence how such a framework is developed: How much knowledge does the person have about the person, event, or development? What criteria do they employ to make decisions about significance? In what ways does a person's identity (ethnic, cultural, gender, etc.) influence their decisions about historical significance?

The purpose of this article was to describe the relationship between students' ethnic identities and their ascriptions of historical significance. In this study it became evident that students' ethnic identities do influence the way in which they construct historical narratives and, in turn, their ascriptions of historical significance. The students profiled here had explicit ideas about the "kind" of story of Canada they wanted to tell and in all cases their ideas were tied to their ethnic identities. In addition, the students' ethnic identities also impacted which events they ascribed as historically significant as well as the criteria they employed to explain them. In some cases, students suppressed their own ethnic identities in favor of creating a narrative of Canadian history that would appeal to a more "general" population. In other cases, students selected events for their timeline (either consciously or not) that reflected their ethnic identity and/or their perceptions of their "place" in Canadian history.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between students' ethnic identities and their understandings of historical significance, more studies that provoke students to think about such relationships are required. The students in this study were able to engage in metacognitive thinking because of a research question that pushed and challenged their prior understandings, and pushed the interviewees to articulate their beliefs about the relationship between identity (self-ascribed) and the narratives they constructed.

Further research investigating whether a common lexicon of criteria for historical significance is tenable across ethnic groups and research tasks is also merited. The inclusion of a detailed explanation of the typology of significance presented in Cercadillo's (2000, 2001) research enabled me to assess the degree to which such a typology was useful for my own work. A noteworthy finding from this research is the degree of consistency of terms and criteria between the Canadian students in my study and the Spanish and English students in Cercadillo's research. I have added to Cercadillo's typology in important ways and suggest that more research into the application of such a typology in a diverse range of settings is warranted.

This study demonstrates that students are capable of not only articulating their perception of their ethnic identity, but also the ways in which it may have influenced their understanding of, and ascription of, historical significance in the construction of narratives of Canadian history. Exploring the relationship between a student's ethnic identity and their understanding of history opens up many new learning opportunities, such as investigating why different people, or different groups of people, have differing ideas about what is historically significant. Why are there competing accounts of the past? Why do ideas about significance differ? These questions can lead to deeper historical understanding.

Appendix

Interview Protocols

"Picture-Selection Task": Phase One:

1. Students were asked about their familiarity with timelines. I asked for brief explanations of what a timeline is, why someone might create a timeline, and invited any other information students wanted to offer about timelines.
2. Students were then asked to create a timeline by discussing and selecting, out of a possible thirty, ten significant events in Canadian history. I used the same script to describe the task at the beginning of each focus group.
3. Once I handed the set of 30 pictures to the students, I sat in the background, observed the group work and took notes to record body language, sorting techniques, and to aid in the development of questions that I asked in the follow-up focus group interviews. I did not speak during the process unless asked a specific question by one of the students, and then only gave definitive answers to questions requesting clarification of the task. That is, I did not respond to questions concerning content knowledge (e.g., "What was the Siege of Québec about?"). On rare occasions, I intervened very briefly to ensure that all group members were participating in the timeline task (e.g., "ES-C3, what do you think about that?").
4. Once the students had constructed their timeline, I asked them to explain each of their choices. I asked probing questions in order to explore the students' reasoning more deeply.

This phase was digitally recorded and lasted between 45-60 minutes.

"Picture-Selection Task": Phase Two:

The following procedures were followed for the follow-up small group interviews:

1. Students sat around a table and reconstructed their timeline with the event cards they had selected during the timeline task.
2. I asked students if they were satisfied with the events they had chosen, and asked them to explain why or why not.
3. I then asked a series of questions to further probe their understandings of historical significance, such as: Did they think other people might make similar or different choices, and if so, why? Would someone younger/older than them make similar or different choices, and if so, why? Did they

think a group of students from a different ethnic group than them might construct a timeline similar to theirs and if so/not, why? I probed the students' responses to further explore their thinking about historical significance.

The follow-up small group interviews were digitally recorded and lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Individual Interview Protocol: Phase Three

1. I met with each student individually and began by explaining that the purpose of the individual interview was three-fold: First, this was the final stage of data collection and, in essence, brought the process full circle by returning to the idea of ethnic identity that was first explored on the questionnaire they completed at the beginning of the research project. Second, I wanted to hear the student's own ideas about how they think their ethnic identity impacted the decisions they made during the timeline task, if at all. Finally, I wanted to create a space where individuals could openly discuss their ideas and offer their opinions about the timeline task and historical significance without worrying about what their peers might think or say.
2. At the beginning of the individual interview, I read to each student the paragraph he/she had written on the questionnaire describing his/her ethnic identity. I asked if he/she wanted to add or change anything that he/she had written, and provided each student with an opportunity to do so.
3. During the individual interview students were asked questions such as: Are you happy (satisfied) with the timeline your group created? Is there anything you would change about this timeline? Given that you described yourself as [x], do you think your identity as [x] impacted the decisions you made during the timeline task? Is there anything you'd like to add or take away from this timeline? If students made changes, they were asked to explain their decisions. I also asked them some questions pertaining to their ideas about history (for example, Are there any stories about the past that are handed down in your family? Why do you think these stories get handed down? Why do you think history is a subject you have to take in school?).

These interviews were digitally recorded and lasted approximately 20 minutes.

Notes

An earlier version of this article was presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Denver, May 2010.

This article is based on research conducted for my doctoral dissertation. I would like thank the schools, teachers and students who so generously gave of their time and willingly shared their ideas with me. I would like thank Peter Seixas, Penney Clark, Linda Farr Darling, Terrie Epstein and Keith Barton for their helpful comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this work.

This research was made possible through funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Doctoral Fellowships Program and two University of British Columbia University Graduate Fellowships grants.

[1] I have purposely omitted "race" from this list of ethnic identity markers due to the contested nature of the term and the caution raised by Johnston, Gregory, Pratt and Watts (2000) concerning the potential conflation of the terms *ethnicity* and *race*.

[2] I have engaged with this argument more fully elsewhere (Peck, 2009a, 2009b, in press).

[3] All school and student names are pseudonyms. Numbers provided reflect the enrolment status at the time of the study (Vancouver School Board, 2006).

[4] One class from Eastside A, one class from Eastside B, and two classes from Eastside C.

[5] Cercadillo had students explain the significance of events in pre-constructed narratives about the Spanish Armada and Alexander the Great.

References

Abu-Laban, Y., & Stasiulis, D. (2000). Constructing "ethnic Canadians": The implications for public policy and inclusive citizenship. Rejoinder to Rhoda Howard-Hassmann. *Canadian Public Policy - Analyse de Politiques, 26*(4), 477-487.

Barker, C. (1999). *Television, globalization and cultural identities*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Barton, K. C. (2005). "Best not to forget them": Secondary students' judgments of historical significance in Northern Ireland. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 33*(1), 9-44.

Barton, K. C. (2008). Students' ideas about history. In L. S. Levstik & C. A. Tyson (Eds.), *Handbook of research on social studies* (pp. 241-260). New York, NY: Routledge.

Barton, K. C., & Levstik, L. S. (1998). "It wasn't a good part of history": National identity and students' explanations of historical significance. *Teachers College Record, 99*(3), 478-513.

Barton, K. C., & Levstik, L. S. (2004). *Teaching history for the common good*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Barton, K. C., & McCully, A. W. (2004). History, identity, and the school curriculum in Northern Ireland: An empirical study of secondary students' ideas and perspectives. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 36*(6), 1-32.

Bhabha, H. (1990). The third space. Interview with Homi Bhabha. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: community, culture, difference* (pp. 207-221). London, England: Lawrence and Wishart.

Bhabha, H. (2001). *The location of culture*. London, UK: Routledge.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2005). *Social studies 11: Integrated resource package 2005*. Retrieved from the British Columbia Ministry of Education website: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/ss11.pdf

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2006). *Aboriginal report - 2005/06 How are we doing? (Province - Public schools only)*. Retrieved from the British Columbia Ministry of Education website: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/perf2006.pdf

Butler, J. (1997). *The psychic life of power: Theories in subjection*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Carr, P. R., & Lund, D. E. (Eds.). (2007). *The great white north? Exploring whiteness, privilege and identity in education*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Castenell, L. A., Jr., & Pinar, W. F. (1993). Introduction. In L. A. Castenell, Jr., & W. F. Pinar (Eds.), *Understanding curriculum as racial text: Representations of identity and difference in education* (pp. 1-30). Albany: State University of New York.

Cercadillo, L. (2000). *Significance in history: Students' ideas in England and Spain.* PhD dissertation, University of London, London, UK.

Cercadillo, L. (2001). Significance in history: Students' ideas in England and Spain. In A. Dickinson, P. Gordon, & P. Lee (Eds.), *Raising standards in history education: International review of history education* (Vol. 3, pp. 116-145). London, UK: Woburn Press.

Chareka, O. (2005). *Conceptions of democratic participation among recent African immigrants and native-born Canadians.* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (Proquest Document ID 1453222001)

Dei, G. J. S., Karumanchery, L. L., & Karumanchery-Luik, N. (2004). *Playing the race card: Exposing white power and privilege*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflicts in the classroom*. New York, NY: The New Press.

Donovan, M. S., & Bransford, J. D. (Eds.). (2005). *How students learn: History in the classroom*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Epstein, T. (1998). Deconstructing differences in African-American and European-American adolescents' perspectives of U.S. History. *Curriculum Inquiry, 28*(4), 397-423.

Epstein, T. (2000). Adolescents' perspectives on racial diversity in U.S. history: Case studies from an urban classroom. *American Educational Research Journal, 37*(1), 185-214.

Epstein, T. (2009). *Interpreting national history: Race, identity, and pedagogy in classrooms and communities*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2005). The interview: From neutral stance to political involvement. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 695-728). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hall, S. (1991). Old and new identities, old and new ethnicities. In A. D. King (Ed.), *Culture, globalization and the world systems: Contemporary conditions for the representations of identity* (pp. 41-68). Binghamton: State University of New York.

Hall, S. (2003). New ethnicities. In L. Martín Alcoff & E. Mendieta (Eds.), *Identities: Race, class, gender, and nationality* (pp. 90-95). London, UK: Blackwell Publishing.

Hunt, M. (2000). Teaching historical significance. In J. Arthur & R. Phillips (Eds.), *Issues in history teaching* (pp. 39-53). London, UK: Routledge.

Johnston, R. J., Gregory, D., Pratt, G., & Watts, M. (Eds.). (2000). *The dictionary of human geography* (4th ed.). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.

Lee, P., & Ashby, R. (2000). Progression in historical understanding ages 7-14. In P. Stearns, P. Seixas, & S. S. Wineburg (Eds.), *Knowing, teaching, and learning history: National and international perspectives* (pp. 199-222). New York: New York University Press.

Lévesque, S. (2005a, June 1). *"Pour moi c'est pas une fierté pour le Canada mais pour ma famille": The problems of Canadian identity and Francophone and Anglophone Ontario students' understanding of historical significance.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario.

Lévesque, S. (2005b). Teaching second-order concepts in Canadian history: The importance of "historical significance." *Canadian Social Studies, 39*(2), Retrieved from http://www.quasar.ualberta.ca/css/Css_2039_2002/ARLevesque_second-order_concepts.htm

Levstik, L. S. (2000). Articulating the silences: Teachers' and adolescents' conceptions of historical significance. In P. Stearns, P. Seixas, & S. S. Wineburg (Eds.), *Knowing, teaching, and learning history: National and international perspectives* (pp. 284-305). New York: New York University Press.

Levstik, L. S. (2001). Crossing the empty spaces: Perspective taking in New Zealand adolescents' understanding of national identity. In O. L. Davis Jr., E. A. Yeager & S. J. Foster (Eds.), *Historical empathy and perspective taking in the social sciences* (pp. 69-96). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Levstik, L. S., & Barton, K. C. (2008). *Researching history education: Theory, method, and context*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Marton, F. (1981). Phenomenography - describing conceptions of the world around us. *Instructional Science, 10*, 177-200.

Marton, F., & Booth, S. (1997). *Learning and awareness*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Merriam, S. B., & Simpson, E. L. (2000). *A guide to research for educators and trainers of adults* (2nd ed.). Malabar, FL: Krieger.

Nagel, J. (1994). Constructing ethnicity: Creating and recreating ethnic identity and culture. *Social Problems, 41*(1), 152-176.

Pang, M. F. (2003). Two faces of variation: On continuity in the phenomenographic movement. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 47*(2), 145-156.

Peck, C. L. (2009a). *Multi-ethnic high school students' conceptions of historical significance: Implications for Canadian history education.* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.

Peck, C. L. (2009b). Peering through a kaleidoscope: Identity, historical understanding and citizenship in Canada. *Citizenship, Teaching and Learning, 5*(2), 62-75. Retrieved from http://www.citized.info/pdf/eJournal/journal%20website.pdf

Peck, C. L. (in press). Ethnicity and students' historical understandings. In P. Clark (Ed.), *Cliffs and chasms: The landscape of history education research in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Pidgeon, M., & Hardy Cox, D. G. (2002). Researching with Aboriginal peoples: Practices and principles. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 26*(2), 96-106.

Pinar, W. F., Reynolds, W. M., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P. M. (2000). *Understanding curriculum: An introduction to the study of historical and contemporary curriculum discourses* (Counterpoints, Vol. 17). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Pramling, I. (1995). Phenomenography and practice. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, 30*(2), 135-148.

Pryor, E. T., Goldmann, G. J., Sheridan, M. J., & White, P. M. (1992). Measuring ethnicity: Is 'Canadian' an evolving indigenous category? *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 15*(2), 214-235.

Rattansi, A. (1999). Racism, postmodernism and reflexive multiculturalism. In S. May (Ed.), *Critical multiculturalism: Rethinking multicultural and antiracist education* (pp. 77 - 112). London, UK: Falmer Press.

Rogers, P. (1987). History: The past as a frame of reference. In C. Portal (Ed.), *The history curriculum for teachers* (pp. 3-21). London, UK: Falmer Press.

Seixas, P. (1993). Historical understanding among adolescents in a multicultural setting. *Curriculum Inquiry, 23*(3), 301-325.

Seixas, P. (1996). Conceptualizing the growth of historical understanding. In D. Olson & N. Torrance (Eds.), *Handbook of education and human development: New models of learning, teaching, and schooling* (pp. 765-783). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Seixas, P. (1997a). Mapping the terrain of historical significance. *Social Education, 61*(1), 22-27.

Seixas, P. (1997b). The place of history within Social Studies. In I. Wright & A. Sears (Eds.), *Trends & issues in Canadian social studies* (pp. 116-129). Vancouver, Canada: Pacific Educational Press.

Tyson, C. A. (2006). Research, race, and social education. In K. C. Barton (Ed.), *Research methods in social studies education: Contemporary issues and perspectives* (pp. 39-56). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Terzian, S. G., & Yeager, E. A. (2007). "That's when we became a nation": Urban Latino adolescents and the designation of historical significance. *Urban Education, 42*(1), 52-81.

Vancouver School Board. (2006). *Ready reference*. Retrieved from the Vancouver School Board website: http://www.vsb.bc.ca

VanSledright, B., Kelly, T., & Meuwissen, K. (2006). Oh, the trouble we've seen: Researching historical thinking and understanding. In K. C. Barton (Ed.), *Research methods in social studies education: Contemporary issues and perspectives* (pp. 207-233). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Walsh, E. (2000). Phenomenographic analysis of interview transcripts In H. W. Bowden & E. Walsh (Eds.), *Phenomenography* (pp. 19-33). Melbourne, Australia: RMIT Publishing.

Webb, G. (1997). Deconstructing deep and surface: Towards a critique of phenomenography. *Higher Education, 33*, 195-212.

Wertsch, J. V. (1998). *Mind as action*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Wertsch, J. V. (2000). Is it possible to teach beliefs, as well as knowledge about history? In P. Stearns, P. Seixas, & S. S. Wineburg (Eds.), *Knowing, teaching and learning history: National and international perspectives* (pp. 38-50). New York: New York University Press.

Weston, C., Gandell, T., Beauchamp, J., McAlpine, L., Wiseman, C., & Beauchamp, C. (2001). Analyzing interview data: The development and evolution of a coding system. *Qualitative Sociology, 24*(3), 381-400.

White, H. (1998). The historical text as literary artifact. In B. Fay, P. Pomper & R. T. Vann (Eds.), *History and theory: Contemporary readings* (pp. 15-33). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Yeager, E. A., Foster, S. J., & Greer, J. (2002). How eighth graders in England and the United States view historical significance. *Elementary School Journal, 103*(2), 199-219.

CARLA L. PECK is Assistant Professor of Social Studies in the Department of Elementary Education at the *University of Alberta*, Edmonton, AB, T6G 2G5. She can be contacted at: carla.peck@ualberta.ca