Social Studies Teachers' Resistance To Teaching Francophone Perspectives In Alberta

Raphaël Gani, University of Ottawa, Canda
David Scott, University of Calgary, Canada

International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research [IJHLTR],
Volume 15, Number 1 – Autumn/Winter 2017

Historical Association of Great Britain
www.history.org.uk

ISSN: 14472-9474

Abstract:

It is increasingly common for social studies programs to call for the teaching of multiple perspectives on past and current issues. Within the Canadian context, the province of Alberta's social studies program mandates all K–12 teachers to help students see contemporary issues and topics through the lenses of multiple perspectives, including those of Francophone and Aboriginal communities. Examining a range of data sources collected during the pre- (1999–2004) and post- (2005–2015) implementation phases of the program has demonstrated that this curricular mandate is impeded by teachers' structural resistance. This article reports on the first broad overview of this body of research as it relates to Francophone perspectives in particular. As part of this process, we identify a typology of resistance expressed by teachers towards teaching Francophone perspectives. Additionally, we trace the origins and sources of this structural resistance by drawing on a diverse body of literature in the learning sciences (Sears, 2014), memory studies (Létourneau, 2007), as well as critical (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011; Stanley, 2007) and Indigenous insights into social studies and history education (Donald, 2009a, 2009b).

Keywords:

Francophone perspectives, social studies, resistance, teacher, Alberta

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HISTORICAL LEARNING, TEACHING AND RESEARCH
Vol. 15.1

SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS' RESISTANCE TO TEACHING FRANCOPHONE PERSPECTIVES IN ALBERTA

Raphaël Gani, University of Ottawa, Canda
David Scott, University of Calgary, Canada

Abstract

It is increasingly common for social studies programs to call for the teaching of multiple perspectives on past and current issues. Within the Canadian context, the province of Alberta's social studies program mandates all K–12 teachers to help students see contemporary issues and topics through the lenses of multiple perspectives, including those of Francophone and Aboriginal communities. Examining a range of data sources collected during the pre- (1999–2004) and post- (2005–2015) implementation phases of the program has demonstrated that this curricular mandate is impeded by teachers' structural resistance. This article reports on the first broad overview of this body of research as it relates to Francophone perspectives in particular. As part of this process, we identify a typology of resistance expressed by teachers towards teaching Francophone perspectives. Additionally, we trace the origins and sources of this structural resistance by drawing on a diverse body of literature in the learning sciences (Sears, 2014), memory studies (Létourneau, 2007), as well as critical (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011; Stanley, 2007) and Indigenous insights into social studies and history education (Donald, 2009a, 2009b).

Keywords:

Francophone perspectives, social studies, resistance, teacher, Alberta

Historically, social studies and history education in Canada (A. Clark, 2009; Gereluk & Scott, 2014) and the U.S. (Banks, 2004; VanSledright, 2008) have been linked to nation-building projects seeking to create and reproduce a shared national identity among largely eclectic groups of people. As part of this process, dominant national groups – including elite descendants of settlers from the British Isles – have worked to make their language, literature, and historical memory "the 'national' language, literature and history" (Kymlicka, 2007, p. 63). Influenced by the realities of immigration and research on multicultural education (Banks, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Mckay & Gibson, 1999), particularly since the 1980s, educational jurisdictions in North America started introducing curricular initiatives that seek to make the curriculum more responsive and relevant to the culture and perspectives of minority groups.

As part of this process, curriculum reforms have been introduced to help students better appreciate the perspectives of groups who have been traditionally marginalized or excluded from curriculum documents, textbooks, and classroom instruction. The U.S. National Council for the Social Studies (1994), for instance, published an influential report calling for teachers to help students develop a "pluralist perspective based on diversity . . . [involving] respect for differences of opinion and preference; of race, religion, and gender; of class and ethnicity; and of culture in general" (p. 27).

Within the Canadian context, where education is controlled at the provincial level, many social studies program documents have focussed on helping students appreciate multiple perspectives on historical and contemporary issues (P. Clark, 2004). Accordingly, during the 1990s the Alberta

Ministry of Education worked with other western provinces and territories[1] to create a common social studies program. This program was unique in that it specifically named the perspectives that teachers and students were asked to engage – namely, perspectives emerging from Aboriginal and Francophone peoples and communities (Alberta Education, 2005; Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education [WCP], 2002). This approach was partially in response to the lobbying efforts of leaders within both Francophone and Aboriginal communities to be recognized in these documents (Pashby, 2013).

The Province of Alberta went on to incorporate key elements of this document into a new social studies program of study (POS) introduced incrementally from 2005 to 2010 (Alberta Education, 2005). The POS directed all K–12 teachers to help students "appreciate and respect how multiple perspectives, including Aboriginal and Francophone, shape Canada's political, socio-economic, linguistic and cultural realities" (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 2). Based on historical and constitutional reasons, the Alberta POS argued that an understanding of Canada requires an understanding of Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives and diverse experiences (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 4). At the core of the POS rests the mission of positively affirming both the identities and culture of Francophone and Aboriginal students in Alberta.

The historical and constitutional reasons for justifying why the perspectives of Francophone and Aboriginal peoples were specifically named in this POS are reflected in the difference between what Kymlicka (2007) referred to as substate national minorities and Indigenous peoples versus "immigrant groups" (p. 71) who have chosen to settle in a new country. National minorities (e.g., the Scots and Welsh in Britain, and the Quebecois in Canada) and Indigenous peoples have demanded constitutionally guaranteed rights that give them greater autonomy within their historic territories (Kymlicka, 2007, p. 68).

As has been well noted in the curriculum studies literature, however, introducing an innovative curricular mandate does not necessarily mean it will be embraced or meaningfully carried out by teachers in the field as "the relationship between [curriculum] documents and what transpires in actual practice is tenuous at best" (Smith, 1999, p. 94). Reflecting this reality, a growing body of research suggests that educators in Alberta feel a great deal of ambivalence, and at times resistance, towards the directive to teach both Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives (e.g., Abbott, 2014; den Heyer & Abbott, 2011; Scott, 2013).

Key scholars in Alberta, including den Heyer (2009) and Donald (2009a, 2009b), have spent considerable time theorizing and researching why educators are resistant to engaging with multiple perspectives, and in particular Aboriginal perspectives. The emphasis on Aboriginal perspectives is understandable given how historical legacies of colonialism, along with contemporary issues such as ongoing land claims, bring forth difficult emotions in classrooms and are front and centre in present-day Canadian policy deliberations. However, although Canada is officially a bilingual country, little attention has been paid to teachers' perceptions of Francophone perspectives. As den Heyer (2009) noted, most stakeholders express anxiety in relation to teaching Aboriginal perspectives but "Francophone perspectives are rarely mentioned as a concern" (p. 344). The purpose of this article is to challenge this claim through asking the research question, "How do social studies teachers and educational stakeholders in Alberta interpret and understand the curriculum directive to engage social studies from Francophone perspectives?"

1 This included British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Yukon Territory, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut.

Results from our analysis reveal that den Heyer's (2009) assertion underestimates the widespread resistance teachers in Alberta have toward teaching the perspectives of Francophone peoples, who make up approximately 23% of the population of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2015).[2] In the first section of this article, we outline three key arguments teachers make as to why they have difficulties teaching Francophone perspectives: (a) no perspectives can be identified due to the diverse nature of Francophone people and communities in Canada; (b) only educators who are Francophone can authentically offer insights into or teach Francophone perspectives; and (c) Francophone perspectives should not be given special attention, as all cultural perspectives in Canada should be given equal treatment. After outlining each of these arguments, drawing on a diverse body of literature, we point out the limitations for understanding Francophone perspectives in particular ways. In the concluding discussion section, we argue that the resistance teachers have toward engaging with Francophone perspectives can be explained by deeply rooted and widely diffused issues of identity, collective memory, and preconceptions about Francophone peoples, and in particular Quebecois, that circulate in Alberta and within English-speaking Canada more generally. In making this argument, we support our assertions with key insights from the learning sciences (Sears, 2014) and memory studies (Létourneau, 2007), as well as critical (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011; Stanley, 2007) and Indigenous insights into social studies and history education (Donald, 2009a, 2009b).

Key Terms and Methodology

In this paper, we use the term *resistance* to categorize various arguments teachers make to legitimize their lack of engagement with, disagreement about, or criticism of the inclusion of Francophone perspectives in the Alberta social studies POS (Alberta Education, 2005). Aligned with the work of Carson (2009), for the purposes of this article we understand teachers' resistance not "as something needing to be overcome" but as "a necessary part of learning when the new knowledge offered provokes a crisis in the self" (p. 220). As we will contend, Alberta teachers, most of whom are of non-Francophone origins, face the difficult task of learning from and about perspectives that have been positioned within the Western Canadian sociopolitical landscape as an ongoing threat to Canadian national unity (Francis, 1997; Osborne, 1997; Thompson, 2004).

As for a definition of *perspective,* for us, perspectives are shared by groups of people who inhabit a common societal space and therefore are not a point of view expressed by individuals. Rather, they are discourses that act as interpretative frameworks to understand and make sense of the world. Although this definition of a perspective informed our understanding, neither *perspective* nor *Francophone perspectives* are defined in the Alberta POS (Alberta Education, 2005), which only adds to teacher confusion about what they are supposed to be doing in relation to this curricular mandate. Therefore, we have adopted a bottom-up approach to investigate the plurality of meanings that these concepts offer.

In order to offer an overview of the empirical data documenting teacher resistance toward Francophone perspectives in Alberta, we initiated a rigorous and systematic search of publically available academic and professional scholarship, including unpublished doctoral dissertations, surveys, and policy documents, that highlighted teacher discourse in relation to the mandate to teach Francophone perspectives. Using search terms such as *Francophone*, *Francophone perspectives*, and *Alberta Social Studies Program*, we employed a number of strategies to access these data, including electronic searches on the following databases: Academic Search Complete, ERIC, Google Scholar, Education Research Complete, and ProQuest Dissertation.

2 According to this census data, 7.3 million people in Canada speak French as their mother tongue.

The data we collected subsequently came from two key curricular moments: the pre- (1999–2004) and post- (2005–2015) implementation phases of the Alberta POS.

This article provides an original contribution to the research literature on teaching multiple perspectives by connecting the data from these two implementation phases for the first time. Our findings revealed that teachers' resistance to teaching Francophone perspectives was *structural*: common arguments were expressed by a variety of education stakeholders, not only teachers, both at the start of the curriculum development process in 1999 and in the post-implementation phase. Making this connection allowed us to argue that this structural resistance is rooted in deeply embedded, long-standing discourses and preconceptions that act to deflect the responsibility of educators from having to take up the teaching of Francophone perspectives in their social studies classroom.

Resistances to Teaching Francophone Perspectives in Alberta

Francophone Perspectives Do Not Exist

One of the significant reasons teachers are resistant to teaching Francophone perspectives is based on an argument that such a perspective is impossible to identify. Within this logic, French-speaking communities in Canada, including the Quebecois, Acadians, and Franco-Albertans, are so heterogeneous that providing one uniform perspective is impossible (Abbott, 2014; den Heyer & Abbott, 2011; Scott, 2013; Stewart, 2002).

In 1999, the Alberta Ministry of Education held a large public consultation process on a draft curriculum document that included the mandate to engage with Francophone perspectives. In-depth interviews with participants in this consultation offered insights into early manifestations of resistance to teaching Francophone perspectives (Stewart, 2002). Many teachers expressed their lack of understanding of the nature of Francophone perspectives. One participant commented, for example, "I'm not sure what is meant by Francophones in the context of the western provinces" (as cited in Stewart, 2002, p. 96; see also Brown, 2004, p. 167). Another participant asserted that Francophone peoples or communities could not hold a single perspective because they were a diverse group: "Francophone from the Maritimes, Francophone from Quebec, Francophone from Alberta, Métis Francophone are all different from each other. How can we get a common thread for all these different groups?" (as cited in Stewart, 2002, p. 98).

Similar comments questioning the very existence of Francophone perspectives were echoed after the implementation of the Alberta POS (Alberta Education, 2005) had taken place. In a study examining the ways in which five experienced social studies educators engaged Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives within Alberta Education's (2007) grade 10 course focusing on globalization, several teachers questioned the feasibility of presenting students with Francophone perspectives on contemporary topics (Scott, 2013). One teacher, after noting that he does not take up Francophone perspectives in his classroom, stated: "Even if there was a way, . . . what is the Franco-Albertan perspective on the World Trade Organization?" (as cited in Scott, 2013, p. 38). This belief was additionally apparent in a study by den Heyer and Abbott (2011) that invited preservice teachers to produce a narrative of Canada's past that deviated from the dominant White Anglo-Saxon perspective. When asked what challenges were encountered during the task, one preservice teacher noted that "the Quebecois . . . are huge groups of people of all economic, social and political backgrounds, with varying beliefs. To lump them in a group and give their collective perspective seems to diminish their individual complexities" (as cited in den Heyer & Abbott, 2011, p. 627).

In both the pre- and post-implementation phases of the Alberta social studies POS (Alberta Education, 2005), educators pointed to the danger of reducing the various perspectives of a diverse group of people under the umbrella of *a* perspective. However, the view that Francophone peoples are so diverse that no unique set of perspectives can be identified forecloses alternative possibilities for understanding a perspective as being, by nature, multiple or polysemic (i.e., possessing multiple meanings). In looking more closely at this resistance, we note that the Alberta program, along with the various pre-implementation curriculum drafts (Alberta Learning, 2002; WNCP, 1999), calls for the teaching of historical events and contemporary issues from multiple perspectives, rather than from *a* Francophone perspective. This can additionally be seen at the grade 10 level (Alberta Education, 2007), for instance, where teachers are not directed to consider *a* Francophone perspective, or *a* Franco-Albertan perspective more specifically, on the World Trade Organization. Rather, teachers are asked to engage with "multiple perspectives [that] will allow students to examine the effects of globalization on peoples in Canada and other locations, including the impact on . . . Francophone communities" (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 27). This current curricular outcome provides ample possibilities for teachers to take up Francophone perspectives with their students.

Questioning the very existence of Francophone perspectives additionally occludes the fact that large groups of Francophone peoples do share a perspective on the past and present, regardless of their age, gender, or location in Canada. Within the Quebec, Ontario, and Acadia contexts, for example, recent empirical studies have documented the ways large number of Francophone adolescents and adults possess particular understandings of the past and present that differ from their non-Francophone counterparts in other parts of Canada (Gani, 2014; Lévesque, Croteau, & Gani, 2015; Lévesque, Létourneau, & Gani, 2012; Robichaud, 2011). According to this research literature, when Francophone people are asked to tell the story of their country, or their community, the majority of participants draw on a *la survivance* (survival) "schematic narrative template" (Wertsch, 2004, p. 55) recounting a "relatively linear and unhappy representation of Francophones' place in history" (Lévesque et al., 2012, p. 56).

Within this understanding, the British conquest of New France in 1759 or the Deportation of Acadians by the British from New Brunswick in 1755 set off a long struggle by Francophone peoples to preserve and protect their unique language, culture, religion, and identity against the continual incursions of the greater Anglophone community who sought to assimilate them into an Anglo-dominated Canadian state. Having access to both this empirically supported research on the nature of historical perspectives among Francophones in Canada and a conceptual understanding of a perspective as multiple or polysemic would provide teachers with many possibilities for authentically engaging with Francophone perspectives.

The Cultural Disqualification Argument

The second kind of resistance demonstrated by teachers in Alberta revolves around the argument that one has to be of Francophone descent to teach Francophone perspectives. Research suggests (Abbott & Smith, 2013 den Heyer & Abbott, 2011; Scott, 2013) that this resistance falls under what Donald (2009a) referred to as the "cultural disqualification" (p. 32) argument predicated on a belief that teachers are qualified to teach only about cultures to which they belong. Within this frame, cultural difference becomes an imposing rift that allows educators to retreat behind a shelter of ignorance because only those deemed culturally authentic are able to speak from a particular group's perspective (Donald, 2009a).

Cultural disqualification arguments were expressed from the beginning of the Alberta POS development phase. In 1999, representatives from the Alberta Ministry of Education asked a

variety of stakeholders, including teachers, to discuss a draft social studies program document that included the then-new mandate to appreciate Francophone perspectives. Many participants mentioned that they "did not want to comment" on this mandate because they did not hold enough knowledge on the topic, adding that, instead, Francophone should comment" (Alberta Learning, 1999, p. 56). In a subsequent focus group, one participant said that the inclusion of Francophone and Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum implies that only members of those groups would be authorized to authentically teach these perspectives. This belief is reflected in the following comment: "You would have to be a French-speaking Métis to teach this curriculum" (as cited in Stewart, 2002, p. 101).

The cultural disqualification argument additionally re-emerged in the post-implementation phase of the social studies POS (Alberta Education, 2005). In a study by Abbott and Smith (2013) investigating the efforts of preservice teachers to digitally express Alberta social studies program content through the lenses of both Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives, one participant stated, "Every time I tried to speak directly from a Francophone perspective I felt like a fraud. How could I purport to speak for the people I knew nothing about, whose language I did not even understand?" (p. 13).

This resistance towards teaching Francophone perspectives is interesting in a number of respects. Claims that only Francophone people can represent Francophone perspectives belies the easy availability of many resources that offer insights into Francophone perspectives and historical experiences, including newspaper articles, videos, books, and community leaders available on Alberta Education's Learn Alberta (2012) teacher resource support website. Alberta's curricular mandate thus provides an opportunity to draw on a wealth of resources that honours the voice of people within a particular cultural community – in this case Francophone. If taken up in this way, the role of the teacher is not to speak on behalf of, or for, particular people and communities, but to provide students with opportunities "to learn *from*" (Donald, 2009a, p. 29) the voices of people and communities who have been historically constructed as "Other." This possibility is well articulated by Britzman (1998):

> Whereas learning about an event or experience focuses upon the acquisition of qualities, attributes, and facts, so that it presupposes a distance (or, one might say, a detachment) between the learner and what is to be learned, learning from an event or experience is of a different order, that of insight. (p. 117)

Within this line of thinking, the real work of teaching and learning multiple perspectives does not reside in learning *about* the "Other," but in the insights that could be gained *from* such an encounter.

It should be noted that research on teacher resistance to engaging Francophone perspectives framed around a cultural disqualification argument has considerable convergence with research highlighting teacher resistance to Aboriginal perspectives. However, there are a number of notable differences. Teachers justified their nonengagement with Aboriginal perspectives on the basis that these communities speak from epistemological understandings that they did not have access to (e.g., nonlinear notions of time; elders as authoritative sources of wisdom). Accordingly, in studies such as the one by Donald (2009a), educators claimed that the experiences and traditions of Aboriginal peoples are inherently unknowable and incomprehensible (p. 36). Calls to engage with Aboriginal perspectives additionally brought forth emotions, such as collective guilt, that were not observed in arguments about Francophone perspectives. These differences suggest that many teachers feel they share the same epistemological frameworks as those of Francophone peoples

and do not possess a sense of guilt towards the historical treatment of Francophone peoples in Canada.

No One Perspective Should Be Privileged in a Multicultural Canadian Society

The final argument as to why educators feel they cannot engage with Francophone perspectives is connected to an assertion related to the multicultural nature of Canadian society. Many educators, including scholars in the field, have argued that given the diverse nature of Canadian society, Francophone and Aboriginal perspectives should not be privileged over other cultural groups (Richardson, 2002) or gender identities (Bradford, 2008).

One of the first concerns expressed by education stakeholders during the curriculum development phase of the Alberta POS revolved around the ways both Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives were privileged and specifically named in this document (Alberta Learning, 1999, 2002). Several comments collected during the 1999 consultation process centered on this theme. One group of participants asserted, for instance, that there was "too much emphasis on Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives while ignoring or at the expense of others and Canadianism as a whole" (as cited in Alberta Learning, 1999, p. 26). Highlighting attachment to the multicultural nature of Canada, another group of participants argued, "Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives should be included in the multicultural identity" (as cited in Alberta Learning, 1999, p. 30). In a thesis by Brown (2004) focused on the role of "culture" in the current Alberta social studies curriculum, one teacher expressed concerns during an interview about privileging *named* perspectives over other groups:

> What's so dominant in this new curriculum is the identification of Aboriginal and Francophone, so blatantly through the entire curriculum as being groups that really require very . . . careful examination of their histories and their contribution. I'm not sure what I think, and that everybody else is other. (p. 165)

This stance can additionally be found within the scholarly literature in the pre-implementation phase work of Richardson (2002), who was very critical of how the social studies program gave Francophone peoples and communities "the legitimizing sanction of being named" (p. 34), while non-Anglophone and non-Francophone ethnic groups were left unnamed, and therefore symbolically positioned on the margins of Canadian society. These comments point to ongoing resistance around how naming specific cultural perspectives can lead to unfair treatment of other perspectives in a multicultural Canadian society.

We found similar sentiments expressed within a recent large-scale survey by the Alberta Teachers' Association (2016) of 496 social studies teachers from across Alberta. Although no questions were asked on Francophone perspectives in the published survey results (which is telling in and of itself), within an open-ended questions section published on the Alberta Teachers' Association (2015) social studies website, three teachers provided insights into their views on Francophone perspectives: "The constant concern about teaching multiple perspectives and the need to incorporate Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives on every topic. Sometimes it's inauthentic, and the students know it!" (line 64); "Over emphasis on Canada including too much aboriginal and francophone emphasis" (line 218); and "too much Francophone and Aboriginal stuff" (line 250). These assertions were also present in a study by Donald (2009a) on preservice teacher responses to the introduction of Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum. In Donald's (2009a) study, one participant stated, "My students come from many backgrounds and I don't think it would be fair to teach one perspective if we can't teach them all" (p. 34).

The belief that there is an overemphasis on Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives reflects a problematic ahistorical discourse of equality. As noted by Kymlicka (2007), and restated in the rationale of the social studies POS (Alberta Education, 2005), Francophone peoples, in contrast to immigrant minorities, are historically and culturally distinct members of a bilingual Canadian state whose perspectives should be engaged and considered due to their position as national minorities who possess collective rights enshrined in the Canadian constitution.[3] This understanding is reflected in the Alberta POS argument that "pluralism builds upon Canada's historical and constitutional foundations, which reflect the country's bilingual nature *and* multicultural realities" (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 1, emphasis added).

By recognizing the distinct status of the French language, and by extension Francophone peoples within the Canadian federation, as well as the inherently multicultural nature of Canadian society, the Alberta POS (Alberta Education, 2005) acknowledges that different cultural communities in Canada can possess distinct levels of recognition. Therefore, not all perspectives are positioned equally in the POS. However, asking teachers to engage with Francophone perspectives does not require, as implied within the responses of some teachers, that they need to ignore all other perspectives. The mandate within the POS to teach multiple perspectives provides clear sanction for teachers to engage with "Other" cultural perspectives.

Discussion

By synthesizing data from peer-reviewed research, official government documents, survey results, and unpublished theses, we have been able to illustrate the many facets of teachers' resistance to teaching Francophone perspectives. Before proceeding, it should be noted that within our review of empirical data we found many teachers who agreed with the inclusion of Francophone perspectives in the Alberta POS (Alberta Education, 2005). However, support of this program mandate was rather thin in some respects. Few educators would invoke the rationale, for example, that this mandate is needed because it is important to recognize the constitutionally enshrined collective rights of Francophone peoples in Canada. In contrast, resistance towards the inclusion of Francophone perspectives is more fully articulated and precise, and ultimately seems to have a broader influence on teachers' practice. This assertion is supported by the fact that in the post-implementation phase, no clear empirical evidence exists that teachers actively engage with Francophone perspectives in their classrooms.

Our analysis demonstrates that teachers' resistance was structural in nature due to the fact that it was present in both the pre- and post-implementation phases of the curriculum. All the arguments teachers presented effectively discharged them from having to engage with Francophone perspectives in their classrooms. Along these lines, particular arguments were formulated as dead-ends for engaging this mandate, and were thus absent of alternative possible avenues to honour Francophone perspectives. For example, teachers who argued that only Francophone people can speak on behalf of Francophone perspectives did not acknowledge the existence of a rich variety of resources that would allow them to introduce Francophone perspectives in authentic ways to their students.

3 In order to preserve and protect Francophone groups in Canada, the Official Languages Act, introduced in 1969, made Canada a fully bilingual country whereby French was given equal status to English in all federal institutions. In addition, when the Canadian Charter and Rights and Freedoms was introduced in 1982, Section 23 afforded all Francophone citizens, regardless of where they reside in Canada, the right to have their children receive publicly funded primary and secondary schooling in French, where "the number of citizens who have such a right is sufficient".

A review of the literature suggests that this structural resistance can be explained in a number of ways. One body of research proposes that the dynamics we outlined above could be a result of teacher resistance toward pedagogical innovation (Gitlin & Margonis, 1995; Knight, 2009). This is certainly a possibility, as past Alberta social studies programs have not included perspective as a conceptual tool, in any sustained way, nor did they give prominence to Francophone peoples and communities (Findlay, 2010; von Heyking, 2006). However, as we will elaborate upon, our reading of the empirical data suggests that the arguments we have identified are surface level manifestations of deeper structural challenges rooted in issues of collective memory, identity, and human cognition.

One of the bodies of literature that we believe is helpful in better appreciating the deeper origins and sources of teacher resistance to engaging Francophone perspectives can be found in research examining the dynamic interplay among collective memory and identity formations in the present (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011; Donald, 2009a; Létourneau, 2007). This body of work suggests that teachers may feel unable to engage with Francophone perspectives because they are positioned as outsiders or as "Other" to an Anglo-Canadian identity position. This assertion is supported by the work of den Heyer and Abbott (2011), whose study noted that although many preservice Albertan teachers found it difficult to represent the perspectives of Francophone and Aboriginal peoples, they expressed no such difficulties with people and groups that populate mainstream Canadian historical narratives. This included Gaelic-speaking Scots immigrating to Canada in the 19th century, for example, even though this group is as culturally and temporally distant to students as both past and present Francophone peoples and communities (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011, pp. 631–632). This finding suggests that preservice teachers' identifications with an Anglo-Canadian identity position enabled them to speak on behalf Gaelic-speaking Scots; however, this identity position became a constraint when being asked to speak on behalf of Francophones.

The origins of this dynamic of not being able to speak on behalf of another perspective is explained through work in memory studies that points to the role of national narratives students have been taught for generations (Donald, 2009b; Létourneau, 2007; Stanley, 2007; VanSledright, 2008). According to Létourneau (2007), such narratives carry with them reference points including binary notions of insiders and outsiders, stereotypes, and other representations that "act a basic matrix of understanding, a simple way of comprehending the complexity of the past (and the present as well)" (p. 79). Within the Canadian context, Stanley's (2007) work has surfaced the ways the officially sanctioned Anglo-Canadian grand narrative creates an architecture of insiders and outsiders where some are positioned as part of the "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983, p. 6) of the nation, while others are not (p. 33). Research supporting this assertion has found that the historical narratives that circulate in public and educational spaces within English-speaking Canada have historically positioned Francophone peoples as outside the story of the *nation* (Francis, 1997; Osborne, 1997; Thompson, 2004). Drawing insights from Donald (2009b), this exclusion has arguably worked to make educators unable to comprehend the historic and ongoing "presence and participation" (p. 10) of Francophone people and communities within Canadian society, even though they make up around 25% of the population[4] (Statistics Canada, 2015).

The ways the Anglo-Canadian grand narrative (Stanley, 2007) might preclude teachers from acknowledging the need to engage Francophone perspectives is supported by a quote from a female Alberta social studies teacher interviewed by Brown (2004) during the pre-implementation

4 It should be noted that the Francophone population in Alberta is about 2% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2015).

phase of the curriculum. The research participant noted that the then-new program will ask teachers to

> appreciate them as an integral part of Canada identity, them being . . . Francophone presence in Canada. It states [in the program] "an appreciation of how their presence and influence contribute to Canada's foundation and identity." But . . . I don't know what it is that we're supposed to appreciate them about? (p. 167)

In a similar vein, a male social studies teacher in Brown's (2004) study stated: "People that you never thought of before all of a sudden have a very special place and that's shaking some folks, you know" (p. 162). This assertion, along with the statement that *I don't know what it is that we're supposed to appreciate about them*, speak to how Francophone peoples and communities have been positioned as outsiders and beyond the need for recognition and engagement within an Anglo-Canadian identity formation.

This theorizing around the root causes of the resistance to teaching Francophone perspectives is supported by a growing body of research in the learning sciences that suggests that the conceptual frameworks people bring with them to any new learning situation fundamentally work to filter and shape new learning (Sears, 2014). When presented with information that challenges established matrixes of understanding, "learners will often distort or discard presented information rather than doing the difficult work necessary to restructure their frameworks" (Sears, 2014, p. 16). This insight highlights a phenomenon we saw in our synthesis of teachers' resistance to teaching Francophone perspectives. Teachers may have wilfully, or unconsciously, misinterpreted this curriculum mandate so they would not have to do the difficult work of restructuring frameworks of understanding that would be needed to authentically engage with Francophone perspectives. However, as Carson (2009) has pointed out, this resistance does not necessarily imply a wholesale rejection of this mandate; it is actually a natural and necessary part of the learning process.

Research literature on prior knowledge (Doolittle & Hicks, 2003; McKeown, Beck, Sinatra, & Loxterman, 1992) additionally points to how learners encounter an "Other" perspective not as blank slates, but with already established and at times deeply entrenched preconceptions. Preconceptions about Francophone people and communities that circulate within Alberta's contemporary sociopolitical landscape may explain why teachers resist engaging with this group's perspectives. Particularly since the early 1980s with the beginning of the sovereignty movement in Quebec, political speeches, editorials, and op-ed letters in the English language media have continually positioned Francophone peoples, and particularly Quebecois, as antagonists to Alberta's interests and as threats to the unity of the greater Canadian nation (Boily & Eperson, 2014).

Evidence that these discourses have shaped how people in Alberta think about Francophone people, and in particular Quebecois, can be found within recent empirical research, modelled on the pioneering work of Létourneau (2007), that asked 2,450 Canadians from across the country the following question: "If you had to summarize the history of Canada up until the present day in a short paragraph, what would you write?" (Gani, 2014). The responses of more than 200 randomly chosen adults from Alberta who participated in the online survey revealed that Albertans possess distinct stories of Canada. When Quebecois and Francophone people were mentioned, many respondents represented the story of Canada in terms of a perpetual antagonism between Francophone Quebec and the rest of Canada. Within this matrix of understanding, Francophone peoples, including Quebecois, are not acknowledged as worthy of appreciation, but instead are portrayed as "whiners" and a threat to national unity. Prototypical examples of these opinions are expressed as follows (Léger Marketing, 2011):

> [Canada's history is] An ethnic melting pot we should be proud of. Therefore we should not give Quebec extra recognition or privileges. (line 2817)
>
> We've become a melting pot of nationalities. Quebec needs to get over themselves. French should be a choice. (line 628)
>
> There has always been a great divide in this country between Anglophones and Francophones. It has been a very divisive relationship – like an us versus them situation. I think this has prevented Canada from being the great country that it should be. We are still fighting on the Plains of Abraham. (line 2020)

The nature of this discourse was described by Boily and Epperson (2014) as a *hostage thesis*, where Quebec, and to an extent Francophone people more generally, are positioned as holding Canada and the other provinces captive through their threat to separate from the country. This perception may in turn explain the deeper origins as to why teachers in Alberta are so resistant to engage with Francophone perspectives. Simply put, educators in Alberta do not want to be held hostage to a group of people who are always demanding perceived special rights and privileges.

Conclusion

As jurisdictions of education throughout the world continue to undergo curricular reforms that seek to recognize and help students appreciate the perspectives and experiences of groups in society that have been traditionally positioned outside the imagined community of the nation (Banks, 2012), the scholarly community must have a better understanding of the dynamics at play that make such efforts difficult. Our research suggests that professional development work cannot proceed based on a deficiency discourse that treats inservice and preservice teachers as empty vessels lacking knowledge about the "Other." As our case study exemplifies, educators come to any new learning situation with already established preconceptions and matrixes of understanding that will cause them to resist efforts to teach the perspectives of those they perceive as outside their identity position. Having insight into the role identity plays in this process, according to Carson (2009), challenges how educational change is generally understood. This insight shifts attentions away from a focus on curriculum support and in-service professional development towards an appreciation of the psychodynamic forces at play that cause teachers to resist the teaching of an "Other" perspective.

Closely connected to this point, the interpretative frameworks educators possess that cause resistance to teaching "Other" perspectives are rarely named, or made explicit, by teachers themselves. In this way, teachers' own perspectives are often thought of as normal or common sense, rather than value-laden and parochial. Due to this reality, we stand with den Heyer (2009) in calling for curricular encounters that attempt to implicate what educators already do and do not know as a central part of the learning process needed to engage alternative perspectives on historical and contemporary issues. Within this framework, teachers' own sense making and subjectivity would become the focus or *subject* of the learning. Our case study identified three key areas of resistance that will need to be explicitly engaged, and challenged, before any new learning can occur around teaching Francophone perspectives in Alberta.

Correspondence

Raphael Gani
rgani011@uottawa.ca

David Scott
scottd@ucalgary.ca

References

Abbott, L. (2014). *Interstitial encounters with curriculum: Attending to the relationship between teachers' subjectivities and the language of social studies* (doctoral dissertation). Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta.

Abbott, L. & Smith, J. (2013, June). *A perilous and necessary curriculum: The fraught pedagogic challenge of mediating multiple perspective messages in social studies*. Paper presented at the 41st Canadian Society for the Study of Education Annual Conference, University of Victoria, BC.

Alberta Education (2005). *Social studies: Programs of study*. Retrieved from https://education.alberta.ca/teachers/program/socialstudies/programs.aspx

Alberta Education (2007). *Social studies kindergarten to grade 12* [Grade 6: Democracy: Action and participation]. Retrieved from https://education.alberta.ca /media/774369/ss6.pdf

Alberta Learning (1999). *Alberta response to the draft foundation document for the development of the Western Canadian Protocol.* Edmonton, AB: Author.

Alberta Learning (2002). *High school social studies needs assessment report*. Edmonton, AB: Author.

Alberta Teachers' Association (2015). *The future of social studies – The voices of Alberta teacher*s [raw data]. Retrieved from https://ssc.teachers.ab.ca/_layouts/15 /WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/SiteCollectionDocuments/2015survey/Open-ended%20Questions.xlsx&action=default

Alberta Teachers' Association. (2016). *The future of social studies – The voices of Alberta teacher*s. Retrieved from https://ssc.teachers.ab.ca /SiteCollectionDocuments/Future%20of%20Social%20Studies/Full%20Doc%20The%20Future%20of%20Social%20Studies.pdf

Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London, UK: Verso Editions.

Banks, J. (1989). Integrating the curriculum with ethnic content: Approaches and guidelines. In J. Banks & C. Banks (Eds.), *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (pp. 189–207). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Banks, J. (Ed.) (2004). *Diversity and citizenship education: Global perspectives*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Banks, J. (Ed.) (2012). *Encyclopedia of diversity in education.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Boily, F. & Epperson, B. (2014). Quebec and Alberta: The clash of perceptions (2003–2012). *Canadian Political Science Review*, *8*(2), 34–58.

Bradford, K. J. (2008). *An androcentric gauge: Portrayals of gender relation in elementary social studies knowledge* (unpublished doctoral dissertation). London, ON: University of Western Ontario.

Britzman, D. (1998). *Lost subjects, contested objects*. Albany, NY: State University New York Press.

Brown, D. C. (2004). *The role of "culture" in the new Alberta social studies curriculum* (doctoral dissertation). Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta.

Carson, T. R. (2009). Implementing the new curriculum in China: Rethinking curriculum change from the place of the teacher. In T. Autio & E. Ropo (Eds.), *Reframing curriculum discourses: Subject, society and curriculum* (pp. 213–224). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Clark, A. (2009). Teaching the nation's story: Comparing public debates and classroom perspectives on history education in Australia and Canada. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *41*(6), 745–762. doi:10.1080/00220270903139635

Clark, P. (2004). The historical context of social studies in English Canada. In A. Sears & I. Wright (Eds.), *Challenges and prospects for Canadian social studies* (pp. 17–37). Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press.

den Heyer, K. (2009). Sticky points: Teacher educators re-examine their practice in light of a new Alberta social studies program and its inclusion of Aboriginal Perspectives. *Teaching Education*, *20*(4), 343–355. doi:10.1080/10476210903254083

den Heyer, K. & Abbott, L. (2011). Reverberating echoes: Challenging teacher candidates to tell and learn from entwined narrations of Canadian history. *Curriculum Theory, 41*(5), 610–635. doi:10.1111/j.1467-873X.2011.00567.x

Doolittle, P. & Hicks, D. (2003). Constructivism as a theoretical foundation for the use of technology in social studies. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, *31*(1), 72–104. doi:10.1080/00933104.2003.10473216

Donald, D. (2009a). The curricular problem of Indigenousness: Colonial frontier logics, teacher resistances, and the acknowledgment of ethical space. In J. Nahachewsky & I. Johnston (Eds.), *Beyond presentism: Re-imagining the historical, personal, and social places of curriculum* (pp. 23–41). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Donald, D. (2009b). Forts, curriculum, and Indigenous Métissage: Imagining decolonization of Aboriginal–Canadian relations in educational contexts. *First Nations Perspectives: The Journal of the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre*, *2*(1), 1–24. Retrieved from http://www.mfnerc.org/resources /fnp/volume-2-2009/

Francis, D. (1997). *Myth, memory, and Canadian history*. Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press.

Findlay, C. (2010). *Transformative curriculum: Changing pedagogy and practice* (master's thesis). Lethbridge, AB: University of Lethbridge.

Gani, R. (2014). *Comment résumeriez-vous l'histoire de votre pays? Enquête auprès de Canadiens, d'Américains, de Britanniques et de Français* (master's thesis). Quebec, QC: Université Laval.

Gereluk, D. & Scott, D. (2014). Citizenship education and the construction of identity in Canada. In J. E. Petrovic & A. M. Kuntz (Eds.), *Citizenship education around the world: Local contexts and global possibilities* (pp. 128–149). New York, NY: Routledge University Press.

Gitlin, A. & Margonis, F. (1995). The political aspect of reform: Teacher resistance as good sense. *American Journal of Education*, *103*(3), 377–405.

Knight, J. (2009). What can we do about teacher resistance? *Phi Delta Kappan*, *90*(7), 508–513.

Kymlicka, W. (2007). *Multicultural odysseys: Navigating the new international politics of diversity*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Ladson-Billings, B. (1992). Reading between the lines and beyond the pages: A culturally relevant approach to literacy teaching. *Theory Into Practice, 31*(4), 312–320. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/1476313

Léger Marketing (2011). *Projet 13386-067* [Sondage Canada]. Unpublished raw data.

Learn Alberta (2012). *Francophone experiences and perspectives*. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education. Retrieved from http://www.learnalberta.ca/MyFolderWebLink.aspx?FolderID=78-193&lang=en

Létourneau, J. (2007). Remembering our past: An examination of the historical memory of young Québécois. In R. Sandwell (Ed.), *To the past: History education, public memory & citizenship in Canada* (pp. 71–87). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Lévesque, S., Croteau, J.-P. & Gani, R. (2015). Conscience historique des jeunes francophones d'Ottawa: Sentiment d'appartenance franco-ontarienne et récit du passé. *Revue du Nouvel-Ontario*, *40*, 177–229. doi:10.7202/1032587

Lévesque, S., Létourneau, J. & Gani, R. (2012, Spring). Québec students' historical consciousness of the nation. *Canadian Issues/Thèmes Canadiens*, 55–60.

Mckay, R. & Gibson, S. E. (1999). *Reshaping the future of social studies: Literature/research review*. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Learning.

McKeown, M., Beck, I., Sinatra, G. & Loxterman, J. (1992). The contribution of prior knowledge and coherent text to comprehension. *Reading Research Quarterly 27*(1), 78-93. Retrieved from http://www.reading.org/general/Publications /Journals/RRQ.aspx

National Council for the Social Studies (1994). *National curriculum standards for social studies: Chapter 2 – the themes of social studies.* Retrieved from http://www.ncss.org/standards/

Osborne, K. (1997). Citizenship education and social studies. In I. Wright & A. Sears (Eds.), *Trends & issues in Canadian social studies* (pp. 39–47). Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press.

Pashby, K. (2013). *Related and conflated: A theoretical and discursive framing of multiculturalism and global citizenship education in the Canadian context.* (doctoral dissertation). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto.

Richardson, G. H. (2002). A border within: The Western Canadian Protocol for social studies education and the politics of national identity construction. *Revista Mexicana de Estudios Canadienses*, *4*, 31–46.

Robichaud, M. (2011). L'histoire de l'Acadie telle que racontée par les jeunes francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick: construction et déconstruction d'un récit historique. *Acadiensis, 40*(2). Retrieved from https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php /Acadiensis/article/view/18762

Scott, D. (2013). Teaching Aboriginal perspectives: An investigation into teacher practice amidst curriculum change. *Canadian Social Studies*, *46*(1), 31–43. Retrieved from http://www.educ.ualberta.ca/css/Css_46_1/CSS-Vol-46-1-complete.pdf

Sears, A. (2014). Moving from the periphery to the core: The possibilities for professional learning communities in history teacher education. In R. Sandwell & A. von Heyking (Eds.), *Becoming a history teacher: Sustaining practices in historical thinking and knowing* (pp. 11–29). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Smith, D. (1999). *Pedagon: Interdisciplinary essays in the human sciences, pedagogy and culture*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Inc.

Stanley, T. (2007). Whose public? Whose memory? Racisms, grand narratives, and Canadian history. In R. M. Sandwell (Ed.), *To the past: History education, public memory and citizenship in Canada* (pp. 32–49). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Statistics Canada (2015). *Le français et la francophonie au Canada*. Retrieved from http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-314-x/98-314-x2011003_1-fra.cfm

Stewart, J. P. (2002). *A critical conversation with curriculum development: An interpretative inquiry into the early stage of the WCP social studies project* (doctoral dissertation). Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta.

Thompson, L. (2004). Identity and the forthcoming Alberta social studies curriculum: A postcolonial reading. *Canadian Social Studies*, *38*(3), 1–11. Retrieved from http:// www.educ.ualberta.ca/css/css_38_3/ARthompson_postcolonial_reading.htm

VanSledright, B. (2008). Narratives of nation-state, historical knowledge, and school history education. *Review of Research in Education, 32*, 109–146. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/20185114

von Heyking, A. (2006). Fostering a provincial identity: Two eras in Alberta schooling. *Canadian Journal of Education*, *29*(4), 1127–1156.

Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education (2002). *The common curriculum framework for social studies: Kindergarten to grade 9*. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Education, Training and Youth.

Wertsch, J. (2004). Specific narratives and schematic narrative templates. In P. Seixas, (Ed.), *Theorizing historical consciousness* (pp. 49–62). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.