

## *Introduction*

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### **Historical thinking, historical consciousness**

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In September, 2014, the University of Ottawa Education Research Unit, *Making History / Faire l'histoire*, hosted *Canadian History at the Crossroads*, a SSHRC-funded symposium in collaboration with the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Québec. The symposium brought together multiple stakeholders, historians, history and museum educators, classroom teachers—including Governor General's award winners as well as teacher education and graduate students—to stimulate further public dialogue on pedagogies of history and the politics of remembrance. Building on some of the symposium's

original contributions as well as other submissions, this *Canadian Journal of Education* Special Capsule advances current debates in history education, historical thinking, and historical consciousness, and forges new directions for collective understandings of the past, by connecting with everyday lived experiences in the present. The contributions range from discussions of how young people themselves understand their past to the linkages between forms of remembering and conceptions of the nation itself.

The French and English language contributions to this capsule expand historical knowledge to include traditionally marginalized narratives, including gendered, racialized, and Aboriginal perspectives (Battiste, 2013; Stanley, 2011), and offers the possibility to reinvestigate narrow and restrictive scopes and “common sense” understandings of teaching Canada’s past (Clark, 2011; Neatby & Hodgins, 2012). To steer Canadian historical disciplines in new future directions, multiple perspectives and multiple histories are incorporated in this capsule that provide a place of departure for educators, graduate students, government policy scholars, and archives and museum educators to explore Canadian historical perspectives and their consequences for present-day realities (Osborne, 2001; Seixas, 2004). Authors discuss the political, social, and ethical dimensions of historical actions (Seixas, 2006) and deeper understandings of cause, consequence, perspective, continuity, evidence, and change, the key historical thinking concepts. The issues they raise will shape how educators promote and teach Canadian history in ways that will affect the future of historical disciplines (Lévesque, 2008; Osborne, 2003).

Contributors to the capsule consider the ways that teaching and learning about history can encourage critical and historical thinking through processes of commemoration, remembering, and connecting to the past. Each of the resulting contributions is multidisciplinary; taken together, they develop multiple research and pedagogical approaches to critically examine how the practice and theory of “historical consciousness” can inform academic and public discourses (Seixas, 2004; McLean et al., 2014). The articles explore national and provincial settings, specifically Ontario, New Brunswick, Québec, and British Columbia, to uncover synchronic and conflicting histories about Canada.

First, Vincent Boutonnet discusses the pedagogical potential of integrating historical film in classrooms to problematize unifying historical narratives, confront fixed social representations, and stimulate debate, fostering critical discussion. Through the use of content analysis, Boutonnet investigates public commentaries of Québec director Pierre Falardeau’s controversial film on the Rebellions of 1837-1838 entitled, *15 février 1839*.

The author proposes that young adolescents are not passive recipients of historical film narratives. Rather, viewers take up a range of perspectives and biases that are shaped by their own historical consciousness and collective identities.

Through a critical review of Canadian literature, Nathalie Popa explores the relevance of historical consciousness for the didactics of history teaching. The author contextualizes current issues, delineates definitions, and reviews empirical research to map the complexities of pedagogies of historical consciousness. Overall, Popa contends that the notion of historical consciousness should inform academic and public discussions about how to represent, promote, and teach history in Canada.

In their article, Jocelyn Létourneau and Raphaël Gani investigate whether, and to what extent, young Québécois of French-Canadian heritage and Québécois youth of other ethnic, cultural, or linguistic ancestry share the same narratives of the collective past. Through an exploratory and preliminary approach, the authors use critical analysis to investigate 190 texts and 142 statements produced by students. Findings indicate that there is an absence of a common narrative of history both within and between the two groups of Québécois.

Cynthia Dawn Wallace-Casey probes how historical consciousness is shaped by one's informal lived experiences. By employing a participatory phenomenological approach into experiential learning in museums, Junior High students are supported by teachers and researchers to create their own understandings of material artefacts through exploratory learning. In this study, Wallace-Casey shares insights into historical consciousness-building in historical spaces that are not connected to formal school spaces.

Attentive to space in the creation of historical consciousness, Stephanie Anderson names everyday sites of collective remembrance, such as statues, "sites of pedagogy"; places and spaces that can disrupt normalized narratives of Canada's past. Using physical space to expand traditional methods of historical teaching, Anderson argues for a new way of conceptualizing the overarching historical frameworks that shape understanding of the past, paying particular attention to Indigenous frameworks and efforts at reworking historical understanding to be more inclusive. She notes that moral dimensions of history often lay outside the purview of disciplinary historical thinking. Furthermore, curricular engagement with historical spaces and places support alternate pedagogies for reconciliation with histories of colonization.

Lastly, Pamela Rogers and Nichole Grant delve into the ways in which popular historical media can contribute to uncritical historical consciousness, described by the authors as “pop-history.” With Parliament Hill in Ottawa as the backdrop to provide a spatial analysis, Rogers and Grant combine a cultural media analysis with a discussion of historically significant spaces, questioning how ongoing representations of Canada’s history in popular media affect historical consciousness.

Through these articles, this Special Capsule brings together emerging research in historical consciousness and historical thinking pedagogies. The authors problematize the influence of formal historical pedagogies and seek to understand how the ways people learn historical consciousness are embedded in informal and experiential settings. In doing so, this capsule contributes to the development of historical thinking and historical consciousness, creating spaces to acknowledge marginalized, gendered, racialized, and Aboriginal perspectives that continue to be peripheral knowledge in traditional historical teaching methods. By proposing innovative theorizations and pushing the boundaries of history education, this capsule invites opportunities to engage with historical thinking and historical consciousness as vital processes in unraveling our personal, and collective, historical narratives.

*\*To ensure that the peer review process for this Special Capsule on Historical Thinking maintained standards of blind review, the editors of the capsule recused themselves from any editorial decisions relating to submissions from anyone with whom they had pre-existing relationships including as co-author, co-investigator, thesis or post-doctoral supervisor.*

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