BETWEEN EVERY NOW AND THEN: HISTORY AND SOCIAL STUDIES
TEACHERS' INTERPRETATIONS OF HISTORICAL AGENCY
AND SOCIAL CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

If history and social studies instruction helps to create “imagined communities,” then presumably it also creates images of the ways in which communities have formed, now function, and will continue to evolve. Questions about the ways that people imagine their capacities and contribute (agency) to how communities change through time (social change), thus, lie at the very heart of history and social studies instruction. Yet, to what degree or in what ways teachers engage students in such questions is insufficiently addressed in the history and social studies education research literature.

This study begins with a review of this literature. I conclude that students cite an “American middle-class conception” of agency, casting celebrated individuals as the cause of social change in a light that fails to illuminate the complexities of human subjectivity and the multiple sources of social change. I continue with a theoretical investigation of historical agency as a more distributed and fractious capacity. I create a “sensitizing framework” from recent work in historiography and sociology offering a range of interpretations of the ways that social conditions and individual and group intentions and actions intersect to affect social change. In the empirical portion of this study, I use the “sensitizing framework,” observations, and individual interviews to explore four high school history teachers’ interpretations of historical agency and change in their teaching and thought. The framework serves as an effective heuristic device aiding participants’ reflection on their practice and clarifying the disjunctures and complexities of their interpretations. I conclude that a similar exploration by teachers with students will enhance both the complexity of their historical explanations of social change and reflection on their variegated capacities as agents of social life.
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CHAPTER 1

I. INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

Between the idea and the action falls the shadow.
- T. S Eliot

Women contest spaces they may legitimately occupy, gender is set free from bodily moorings, and denigrated peoples pivot derogatory epithets into anthems of self-definition. What is at stake is who may legitimately participate in a community’s preferred social, political, and economic spaces. Definitions of community and what constitutes legitimate participation within its purview result from group assertions projected onto a contested field of social life. Yet, young people interpret the social and political formation of communities in a manner that might best be described as “heroic individuals engaged in individual power struggles.” Social change occurs, they suggest, when prominent individuals lead masses. This research reveals that students are being successfully empowered into an institutionally favoured class and gender specific, and, from a disciplinary perspective, insufficient ideal of agency in their explanations of social change.

If history and social studies instruction helps to create “imagined communities,” then presumably it also serves to create imaginings of the ways in which communities have formed, now function, and will continue to evolve. Such instruction introduces students to models of efficacious action. Drawing from their review of research in social psychology and their own empirical studies, Markus and Kitayama describe the most
widely-propagated model of agency in a North American and Western European public
sphere utilized by students in their explanations of social change:

According to the dominant American middle class model, normatively 'good'
actions should be primarily the results of the individual's own desires, goals,
intentions or choices; the independent self is foregrounded as the source of action
while others are fixed in the background. Agency is constructed as personal and
bounded within the individual. This model of agency as disjoint, or as
disconnected from others and rooted solely in the individual, is widely distributed
and inscribed in mainstream American society; it is expressed by social scientists,
reflected in the media, and echoed by individuals talking about themselves
(Markus and Kitayama, 2002, p. 6).

In the following chapters, I address the insufficiency of this model as a basis for
understanding the human actions involved in social change. From a pedagogical
perspective, it fails to sufficiently honour the complexities of human subjectivity and the
group struggles to name and provide subjectivity with content. From a disciplinary
perspective, the same insufficiency is evident when students apply this model backwards
in time to explain social change.

The model identified by Markus and Kitayama has an impressive lineage. Kant's
writing on moral agency is generally recognized as the foremost articulation associated
with early European scholarly interpretations of the modern subject. Kant’s theorizing of
the sovereign self arose contemporaneously with the rise of sovereign secular states in
Europe. Hegel glorified European states as the agency through which the Spirit of History
expresses itself. In each case, the legitimacy and interaction of the modern subject and
state were premised upon their sovereignty in law, rationality, and intentions in these
philosophers’ fantasias of wholeness and unity. Accordingly, the future of both the
individual and state was already contained, or “bounded within,” and it was in reference
to their teleological purposes that the agency of each could be best explained.
The moves of post-structuralist, postmodernist, and versions of hermeneutic and phenomenological theories in contemporary conditions of cultural and national fragmentation make such premises less tenable. Scholars engaged in these conversations attempt to dress Kant’s universal and autonomous agent in the specifics of social bodies and places and with the palimpsest of intentions and desires. So too has spirit become ghastly: animated by the 20th century horror of war and genocide, this scholarship attends to the diversities in national communities elided by Hegel’s work to materialize the Spirit of History in the state personified by those occupying its offices. To excise the historical teleology of Hegel and the universalism of Kant’s bounded agent, humanities and social science scholars have theorized human complexities and diversities in a range of questions related to politics, research, and teaching.

Weinstein (1995), for example, succinctly identifies several “intractable problems” at the core of historical scholarship and social science research. I assert these problems should also be at the core of history and social studies teaching. These include the heterogeneity of populations, raising questions about how individuals and populations are connected; the discontinuities in people’s beliefs and perceptions as they re-evaluate expectations and the objects and goals around which desires coalesce; and “the capacity of people to actively construct versions of the world [...] in the context of many different social locations they occupy” (Weinstein, 1995, p. 299). In contrast to an American middle class ideal of agency read backwards into the past to explain change, Weinstein identifies a more complex and fluid relationship between subjects and social life. This relationship raises several problems or challenges. Explicitly investigating these challenges potentially enhances both students’ explanations of social change and
reflection on their relationships to social life. Such investigation challenges students to wrestle with the difficulties of historical explanation for change over time, the complexities of human subjectivity, and the diversities elided in the ways we learn to divide the world. Despite significant theoretical scholarship, however, researchers have studied neither the extent to which history and social studies teachers convey these problems in their work with students nor the challenges involved in doing so. It is with these questions that this study is concerned.

1.1 A resonating moment

I am a former high school history teacher and I have taught in Colombia, Taiwan, and Japan, and Canada. While teaching provided many powerful moments, one, conveyed below, remains especially relevant to my choice of questions to study.

I taught an Advanced Placement European history course for Grade 12 students my first year at the American high school in Cali, Colombia. These students were high academic achievers and had lobbied the previous year to get the course offered. The course I offered heavily emphasized historiographical questions and multiple interpretations such as those found in Marxist and feminist writings. We dedicated the final week of the course to address many large questions. These included whether, based on our study of a past, there was reason for hope in the face of immense and collective challenges facing humanity in general and in Colombia at that time in particular.

One student, Bernardo, brought an insatiable appetite to all historical topics and questions. He was an eager learner and dedicated student throughout the year. I was struck by Bernardo’s pessimism, however, during our final week discussions about
whether, based on our study of the past, there was reason to be hopeful about the future.

After our final class, when all the students had left, Bernardo returned to thank me again for the course and to wish me well. I asked him whether my impression of his pessimism was correct. “Yes” he said, it was. I then asked him why. He replied, “Because history proves that humans are short-sighted, greedy and violent.” With that he took his leave.

I was left devastated. I had wanted my students to recognize relationships between social power and representations of the past and the limitations of our interpretive capacities in historical work. I had hoped to direct their imaginative and ethical considerations to a past and future yet untold. The content of the course, while critically analyzed, however, was still a history of war, greed, and violence. Years later that moment was reiterated in my reflections about history textbooks:

Count the pages, how many dedicated to the acquisition of riches, land, power, and to greed? Count the pages, how many dedicated to suffering and loss? Clearly, humans are short-sighted, greedy, and violent and nothing of consequence has been lost.

Count the pages, how many dedicated to the acts of governments and great leaders? Count the pages, how many dedicated to momentous oppositions to governments? Clearly, it is patriotic to trust and follow those who formally rule us.

Count, how many references provide sources for this authoritative information that I expect you to repeat on my tests? Count, what is the ratio of statements to questions? Count the contrary opinions, do you find any? Clearly, information about the past is so clean.

What Bernardo had learned, I had not intended to teach. Perhaps Bernardo derived his conclusions from elsewhere, as the sources of young people’s historical understanding include more than schools and teachers. Whatever other ways someone might interpret this story, I reached one conclusion: that unacknowledged assumptions about human
nature exist in explanations about the past. In history classrooms, students and teachers trade these assumptions in explanations of change that, in effect, along with limited depictions of the past in content conveyed, serve to colonize hope for the future.

Teaching at that time, I did not have a means to address these assumptions my students and I shared about agents and agency in our historical explanations. Thus, despite my best efforts to show otherwise, Bernardo interpreted the history taught in school not only to be the human story but also one from which broad conclusions about human motivations and capacities could be drawn. Neither interpretation was a source of hope. That moment continues to resonate in this study of how students and teachers explain social change and my project to make more explicit the assumptions each use to explain the intentions and actions of historical others.

1.2 Historical agency

In this work, I write of agency on two related levels, the individual and the historical. I define "individual agency" as an imaginative capacity for shaping intentions, forming choices, and undertaking actions. In contrast to a predominant American middle class model, however, this capacity is not simply "bounded within" individuals. Rather, it is a capacity whose expression relies on collective conceptual resources. Schutz (1967) calls these images, ideals, and terms that individuals use in their sense-making activities a society's "stocks of knowledge." Culturally specific models of agency identified in the studies of social psychologists exemplify such sense-aiding stocks (Markus and Kitayama, 2002; Morris et al., 2001). To investigate social change adequately requires a broader and more collective interpretation of agency than that provided by the American
middle class model; one that historicizes the content of, and struggles over, the conceptual resources individuals use to guide and make sense of their actions. I define “historical agency” as a capacity expressed by groups in struggles over the conceptual resources that individuals use to interpret social and material life (e.g., interpretations of personal and social goals, terms individuals use to define and express their identities, representations of iconic role models, disciplinary interpretations). A cartoon helps to illustrate the changing conceptual resources available to individuals that result from historical agency.

The cartoon shows three people sitting cramped at three desks in an office. All the words in the cartoon are in thought bubbles. The first person on the left is thinking, “The vibrations are over-whelming. Two white people are afraid of a smart, aggressive African-American!” The second person, sitting at her desk in the center of the cartoon, is thinking, “I’m sick of their patronizing, macho glances. They can’t stand a woman in a responsible position!” The third person on the right is thinking, “I can see it in their eyes. They don’t like me because I’m gay!”

Each of the individuals identifies as a member of a group that has waged struggles over who may legitimately appear in the preferred spaces of social life and garner their concomitant material rewards. Each reiterates these terms to evaluate or interpret their present situation so as to guide a projected course of future oriented action (options each may take, for example, to resolve the discomfort). “African-American,” “woman,” or “gay” are terms that did not exist either as positive personal identifications or terms that articulated social and political positions for their grandmothers and grandfathers. What
changed between then and now? In what ways did such definitions of presence and interpretations of social situations as illustrated in the cartoon become available?

These sense-aiding stocks became available through the historical agency expressed by groups in costly struggles over “the names of history” (Ranciere, 1994). In addition to strikes, legal challenges, protests, and civil disobedience, to give their claims for participation in local or national life coherence required that these groups locate themselves temporally in the present between a historical past and projected future: a past of oppression and a future in which the struggle, in these cases, against white, male, or heterosexual social and material privilege, ceases to exist (Scott, 2001; Young, 1990). Without such historical trajectories, simultaneously articulating despair and hope, it is difficult to explain why any group of people would bother to risk life or limb against the policing forces of an existing social order of power. Of course, individuals and leaders played a role in such struggles. It is a role, however, adequately understood only by connecting their sense-making activities to broader dramas cast on the historical stage. I chose to name this agency, even though it is a collective and distributed capacity, “historical” because of what is at stake in these struggles: Whose names and images, ideals, and terms will constitute significant “historical” subjects with the legitimacy and cachet assigned such status?

These struggles continue today as does the work of competing groups to write their names into the history taught in schools. Little effort is required to identify whose images, ideals, and terms dominate that history, at least in textbooks, movies, and in the corporate press. The challenge of teaching about social change, however, is not just to represent greater diversity as teachers tell narratives of progressive national inclusion in
which a particular vision of the individual, state, and society in the present are simply given:

[W]hen rights have been granted, the first operation of the political order [is] to initiate a process of forgetfulness by virtue of which persons come to possess rights not because they were victimized or because they fought for them, but because they are individuals, i.e., abstracted persons (Alejandro, 1993, p. 15).

This challenge consists of remembering the collective struggles that produce particular historical versions and visions of individuals, states, and societies as simple givens. Doing so highlights exactly what is at stake in the teaching and learning of history.

1.3 Agency rather than citizenship

I use the term “agency” rather than “citizenship” as the student capacity to which historical and social studies instruction should contribute. The citizenship debate in the education literature concerns what attributes are necessary to participate in the civic life of the community and what classroom activities, content, and arrangements best support their acquisition (Gagnon and Page, 1999). Agency is a broader term than “citizenship.” Citizenship denotes a relationship between people and a state expressed in formal and informal sites of community life. As I argue throughout this study, and as I believe the cartoon helps illustrate, the idea of citizenship insufficiently captures the ways that people participate in social change through their sense-making activities; that is, how social change emerges from personal identifications with groups whose struggles contribute to changes in definitions of citizenship (e.g., liberal, communitarian, feminist), who counts as citizens (e.g., peasant, aristocracy, racialized groups, women), or whose practices or ways of life will be recognized as worthy of protection (i.e., gay marriage,
religious significant dress). Citizenship expresses but one relationship or site of struggle and social change. In these struggles, citizenship is itself a contested ideal rather than a posited fact, what is fought over as much as a position from which one fights.

In contrast to citizenship, a concept of historical agency assists investigation of the multiple zones-of-influence in which people contribute to the social life of their communities, sometimes supporting and sometimes contesting norms, sometimes doing so simultaneously and unknowingly, sometimes in the domain of their professional work but not in regards to their family life, and sometimes vice versa. With this distinction between citizenship and historical agency in mind, the logic supporting this study may be summarized in the following way: One way to support more sophisticated student interpretations of historical agency and social change is to engage teachers in discussions about what interpretations they bring to their practice. The richness of such engagements depends on offering teachers a range of possible interpretations of the ways people work for, resist, and unknowingly participate in social change beyond formal political relationships. The purpose of such engagements is to offer students multiple interpretations of historical agency that aid their reflection on their variegated capacities expressed through the multiple social relationships in which they live (i.e., family, as sexual beings, workers). I discuss in greater detail in the following chapter what I believe constitutes more sophisticated interpretations. Educators should support this emphasis not only because it makes good pedagogical sense, but also because scholars in historiography have also recently recognized the centrality of agency in historical explanations (Pomper 1996; Shaw, 2001).
1.4 Why social change?

I write of “social” in contrast to “historical” or “political” change for two reasons. In his widely cited discussion of nationalism and nations as imagined communities, Anderson specifically employs “social” rather than any other descriptor of change:

In the preceding chapters I have tried to delineate the processes by which the nation came to be imagined, and, once imagined, adapted and transformed. Such an analysis has necessarily been concerned primarily with social change and different forms of consciousness. But it is doubtful whether either social change or transformed consciousness, in themselves, do much to explain the attachment that people feel for the inventions of their imaginations—or, to revive a question raised at the beginning of this text—why people are ready to die for these inventions (Anderson, 2001, p. 229. Italics in original).

Anderson’s impressive analysis covers a wide range of technological, economic, political and intellectual changes many refer to as “historical.” Why then did he choose “social” change?

While I can only speculate as to his reasons for this choice, it appropriately reflects his focus on the imaginary life of communities and those who imagine themselves as members. As my concern in this study is with agency as an imaginative capacity shaped through communities, a focus on social change is likewise appropriate. Like Anderson’s “imagined communities,” agency is an imaginative and social capacity. Rather than the vagueness of Anderson’s “forms of consciousness,” however, I write of this capacity as one expressed through a stock of images, ideals, and terms that agents take to be definitive of their social world.

Another reason for using “social” change is my hope to implicate students in the present as agents of their communities. For example, it is one thing to study the emergence of racism in conjunction with the trading and colonizing efforts of the
European sea powers in the 16th to 19th centuries or the resistance of many Whites to Black civil rights, or, as an apprehension expressed in its patriarchal form, the resistance of those privileged by gender to calls for women’s rights. It is quite another for students to inquire into how such a racialized and misogynist world contributes to their present emotional life and to the ways they define themselves and their communities. “Social” connotes my belief that historical study ought to be connected to the present order of things and not only to past practices of inequality; that is, here and now and not just there and then. In this way, teachers and students might attend to the ways in which intentions, choices, and actions reiterate a troubling past better engaged as counsel than just news.

1.5 Review of chapters

This study involves a theoretical investigation of historical agency and social change as well as an empirical study of the interpretations of these key concepts that high school history and social studies teachers bring to their practice. I am interested in two expressions of their interpretations: how they explain human capacities to affect social change to their students and their interpretations of historical agency and social change as articulated in interviews.

In Chapter Two, I offer a review of the history and social studies education research literature shaped by social change and agency. Its most significant finding is the absence of research into teachers’ interpretations of these concepts. I then focus on the ways that students interpret social change and whom they cite as significant agents of such changes. In doing so, I identify what is at stake in the interpretations of historical agency and social change that teachers bring to their practice.
Research reviewed in Chapter Two suggests that students are being successfully acculturated into the privileged storylines that circulate with social cachet throughout a North American and Western European public sphere. To summarize in a highly abbreviated form, students explain social changes with an appeal to the agency of celebrated individuals. Agency is an expression of celebrated individuals’ intentions, desires, or motivations with political institutions as the instruments used to achieve their goals. After identifying several shortcomings of such interpretations, I consider two possible explanations for these findings, one each from cognitive and social psychology. I argue throughout this chapter that attending to assumptions about agents and agency used to explain change enhances both students’ historical explanations and their understanding of their capacities as agents of social life.

Chapter Three elucidates the methodology of this study. Three key concepts examined in this chapter are “sensitizing framework, “collaborative theorizing,” and “individual agency.” A sensitizing framework is one in which ideas and concepts are combined to initiate further refinement about a phenomenon, set of ideas, interpretations, or meanings:

A set of concepts and distinctions, systematically interconnected, that we believe will prove useful for the development of conjunctural [sic] causal explanations of enhanced analytical power and specificity (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1996, p. 363).

Emirbayer and Goodwin also note that a sensitizing framework is provisional, and hence, represents an initial attempt open to further addition or refinement (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1996, p. 364). Such refinement emerges in this study from a vital dialogue between theoretical work and practice in classrooms. I explore this dialogue in Chapter
Five where I report on work conducted with experienced teachers of history and social studies as "collaborative theorizers" (Kumashiro, 2002).

Kumashiro notes that the process of collaborative theorizing is one in which participants collaborate with a researcher to develop theory that both informs practice and is informed by practice. This process is one in which research is conducted with and not on participants (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 16). Participants are chosen who have a comparable background in the setting in which the study is conducted and an education background through which some familiarity, if not expertise, with the topics might be assumed.

In Chapter Three, I also describe the data collection and process of analysis before elucidating a conception of individual agency as the lens through which I read participants' interpretations. I then offer criteria and a rationale for the selection of participants before offering a partial description of the participants and the units I observe them teach.

Chapter Four reviews a special issue of History and Theory dedicated to the role of agency in historical explanations. To actualize the potential contribution of scholarship to the study of historical agency and social change, I shaped work in this special issue into a "sensitizing framework." I applied each summation of scholars' work in the framework to the historical content of participants' units and asked them to respond, critique, and question each summation and application. Influenced by my work with participants as outlined in Chapter Five, I argue that each scholar offers a potentially legitimate interpretation of historical agency involved in social change as each emphasizes a different aspect of the relationship between individuals, groups, and society. Taken
together, they contribute to multiple ways in which historical agency and social change may be explained.

In Chapter Five, I report on my work with four experienced teachers of history and social studies. That report addresses the following research questions: In what ways do experienced history and social studies teachers account for social change? How do teachers explain the human intentions, choices, and actions that made social changes possible? Do experienced teachers explicitly address such questions with students? Does my framework drawn from recent scholarship assist teachers to clarify their interpretations and teaching about historical agency and social change?

Finally, Chapter Six reviews the significant insights from this study and offers a set of implications for research, curricula, classroom practice, and pre-service and professional development teacher education.
In this chapter, I examine students' explanations for social change and the causes they attribute to selected historical events as ascertained from the history and social studies research literature. In setting up this review, I first distinguish "causality" and "change" studies as two methodological approaches to historical understanding. They are distinguished by their emphases on human reasoning as understood in cognitive and social or cultural psychology respectively, both of which I consider as explanations for how students reason about social change. I argue throughout that student attention in classrooms to assumptions about agents and agency used in historical explanations enhances both their historical explanations and capacities as citizens. Rather than citizens, however, I reiterate a feminist argument about the benefits of addressing students first and foremost as agents operating in multiple domains of social life.

In all school subjects, teachers tell stories about "now" and "then." These stories not only divide past from present. They also convey interpretations about the ways that people work for, resist, and, or unknowingly participate in those changes used to distinguish "now" from "then." While stories are told across subjects, we should expect history instruction to explicitly inquire into relationships between human agency and social change. Yet, given the lack of research, we know little about whether, or how explicitly, this study is taken up in classrooms (see a review of history and social studies research respectively in Wilson, 2001 and Seixas, 2001a). It is an assumption of this
work that questions about human capacities related to social change are critical for students to explicitly consider in history and social studies instruction.

Historical explanations about change and development in human groups depend greatly on interpretations of agency. For example, do our explanations of social changes place the sources of agency in individual desires fed by powerful experiences? Or, do we find the sources of agency in the social relationships through which individuals learn to define their emotional and intellectual commitments? I do not mean to force a false choice. A different emphasis, however, leads to very different explanations for changes through time (Shaw, 2001). Yet, as noted by several scholars, historians and history teachers by and large have preferred to get on with the task of assigning causes to events rather than pay much attention to what interpretations of agency they bring to their practice (Pomper, 1996; Seixas, 1996, 2001b; Shaw, 2001).

Left unexamined, students are likely to spontaneously employ cultural assumptions to reason about the motivations and logic of historical action. In the case of agency, Morris et al. (2001) assert that a “Western” cultural reflex is to accentuate individuality over social relations and to locate the logic of social actions primarily in an individual’s intentions, desires, or idiosyncrasies. For Markus and Kitayama (2002), this “Western” cultural disposition is more accurately described as an “American” institutionally-favoured ideal that elides the complexities of how different people make sense of their relationships to each other and social life (for example, those who suffered or are suffering and contesting racism, misogyny, enforced poverty and so on). For Markus and Kitayama, certain ideals concerning the relationship between individuals and social life, like other cultural characteristics, enjoy greater distribution and status than others (i.e., a
Confucian ideal of loyalty to family authority in contrast to an ideal of individuals unfettered by such concerns). This would help account for students’ explanations of social change in the studies reviewed further below.

As in any one of thousands of movies about macho heroic agents, most students cast celebrated individuals as the cause of social change. The social struggles that help shape agents’ intentions, choices, and actions remain for the most part unconsidered. According to these explanations, these agents of change rescued the masses from their stupidity or convinced their fellow citizens of the incorrectness of their beliefs. Research suggests, therefore, that teachers are not sufficiently disrupting culturally privileged interpretations of action that foreground an “independent self” as the source of intentions and choices “while others are fixed in the background” (Markus and Kitayama, 2002).

Perhaps teachers share these interpretations or never thought to inquire into those less popularly considered. Maybe they have, but in the face of other school demands do not have sufficient time to raise the issue with their students. Perhaps many teachers do emphasize different interpretations of agency and social change in their classrooms but such teachings are insufficient to disrupt a ubiquitous celebration of individual efficacy in movies, television, and advertisements. My research community does not know.

My review of the history and social studies education literature from North America and Western Europe found no studies investigating how teachers interpret the human influences in social change. I consider this a significant finding and one that signalled the need to initiate such inquiry as I do and report on in Chapter Five. Further, both agency and social change are insufficiently theorized in this literature. There is a lack of discussion about how we might define agency or an elucidation of a range of possible
ways such a capacity is expressed in processes of social change. To approximate the complexity of how teachers likely understand agency and social change requires an equally complex framework of possible interpretations. It is to this task that I turn in Chapter Four.

Finding no research on teachers, I turn my attention in this chapter to investigate students' interpretations for the human influences in social change. In reporting findings below I hope to clarify what is at stake in questions of agency and social change- how students understand the relational and distributed nature of their capacities as agents of future social life. Addressing another shortcoming in this literature, I turn in the next section to briefly clarify what I consider to be more sophisticated student explanations for agency and social change than those found in this review.

To ascertain how students reason about agency and social change I reviewed research that investigated causes students attribute to certain historical events (causality studies) and their explanations for social change in, for example, gender and race relations (change studies). I chose change studies that investigated how students reasoned about changes in social attitudes or more general constituents of society (e.g., technology, political institutions, civil rights movements) (Barton, 1997, 2001; Barton & Levstik, 1998; Penuel & Wertsch, 1998; Seixas, 1993, 1994). I focused on those causality studies from which inferences about students' conceptions of human agency could be drawn. Therefore, I did not include studies into the complexity of student causal explanations as a function of how many factors were included (i.e., Level 1 'no causes, only facts' Level 2, 'series of undifferentiated facts' and so on. See Dominquez & Pozo, 1998; Carretero et al., 1997; Jacott et al., 1998; Voss et al., 1994, 1998a, b). In reviewing these studies, I
note how causality and change studies constitute two distinct research approaches to historical understanding.

My reliance here on change studies reflects both their greater relevance to my questions and their more powerful articulation of students’ historical reasoning. I provide support for this claim in my review of two possible explanations for students’ interpretations of agency in social change, one each from a cognitive and a social psychology perspective.

2.1 Citizenship, agency, and sophisticated explanations for social change

In its manifestation both as a scholarly and pedagogical question, which domains of life constitute zones of citizenship has been one of many questions debated in the citizenship literature (Callan, 1997; Lister, 1997; Osborne, 1991; Riley 1992; Shinew, 2001). Both liberal and civic republican theorists attempt to answer what it means to be a citizen by defining lists of virtues good citizens should possess (Callan, 1997). They differ, however, as to whether such possessions should serve to protect and enhance a private or public domain. Liberals argue that the pursuit of the good life is a private affair. Civic republicans argue the good life ought to be sought in the community. While debate exists, especially in the Canadian context, about the legitimacy of a special status for religious and ethnic groups, both civic republicans and liberals consider citizenship first and foremost to be a relationship between a citizen endowed with rights and responsibilities and a state supposedly neutral as to questions of the good life.

Feminist work on citizenship contests both these positions. This work directs attention to the ways in which the pursuit of “the good life” for privileged individuals and
communities contributes to many more lives lived in pursuit of survival. Central to this work is the assertion that liberals and civic republicans fail to adequately address particularities of gender, sexuality, abilities, and income that contribute to disadvantage in multiple domains of life (Isin and Wood, 1999; Lister, 1997; Riley 1992). Lister explores how Giddens’ (1984) notion of “structuration” and agency might provide a more nuanced interpretation of citizenship that illuminates people’s varied and complex relationships to social life.

In similar fashion, but from a postmodern perspective, Orr and Mckay (1997) argue that “the notion of citizenship has long been abstracted from the meaning and realities of children’s lives” (cf. in Smits and Orr, 1997, p. 125). They call on teachers to attend to the formations of identities and communities and to raise questions about diversity and responsibilities of care (Orr and Mckay, 1997). Couture (1997) notes that “citizenship is placed into the curriculum as if it is a word that does not need a world to live in” and calls for local stories to be told in classrooms that will “invigorate the politics of definition and the definition of politics” (p. 135. Italics in original).

The political knowledge most commonly associated with citizenship education concerns the formation of nation-states. Werner (2000) claims that a concentration in history and social studies classrooms on narratives of states’ formal political formation tends to “beg questions about what social arrangements normalized exclusions at different times, and about the struggles that resulted in change” (p. 205). Supporting this claim, Alejandro describes this process as the formation of national identities through the erasure of group struggles that have contributed to present citizenship rights and community achievements:
[W]hen rights have been granted, the first operation of the political order has been to initiate a process of forgetfulness [...]. More specifically, the political order ends up forgetting the process which crystallized into rights. Later on, society celebrates the crystallization (the Bill of Rights, the Constitution), not the process which made it possible (Alejandro, 1993, p. 15).

Taken together, these scholars identify several limitations with a teaching of citizenship that insufficiently attends to the many domains in which people contribute to the life of their communities. Their insights applied to historical explanations for social change that might also enhance student reflection on their variegated capacities as agents include the following: attention to struggles by groups for political recognition and over the ideals and practices of social life; attention to the personal material, emotional, psychological investments in community belonging and attention to diverse and shifting images and ideals of the good life through time and place. Students' attention to these realities would constitute 'nuanced' or 'sophisticated' or 'better' explanations for social change than research to be reviewed suggests is presently the case. Perhaps we ought to substitute “what it means to be a citizen” and ask rather “in what ways have people in the past and do we today participate as agents in shared social, political, symbolic, and material worlds?” Such a question opens for investigation the multiple domains (i.e., formal political, family, sexual, physical, spiritual, economic) in which both the anonymous and powerful struggle over the terms, images, ideals, and material conditions by which they live (Lister, 1997).
2.2 Change and causality studies: Two distinct research approaches to historical reasoning

In this section, I draw distinctions between causality and change studies that informed this literature review. Causality studies focus on causes offered by students to explain specific historical episodes of, for example, the fall of the Soviet Union (Voss et al., 1994) and the “discovery of America” (Jacott et al., 1998; Carretero et al., 1997). In contrast, change studies examine how students explain changes over the longer duration of social development in, for example, gender and race relations (Barton, 1997) and social attitudes about relations between Native and non-Native Americans as depicted in two films made thirty years apart (Seixas, 1994). Two studies considered in this review did not fit so neatly into this distinction. Penuel and Wertsch’s (1998) study called upon university students to use American history to argue in two separate editorials for a ‘single’ event – to bus or not to bus African-American students to de-segregate US suburban schools. In examining how students reasoned about causes for the development of the parliamentary system in Sweden, Hallden (1994) studied causality over a longer period than what typically might be considered a historical episode.

The influence of cognitive and social psychology constitutes the main methodological difference between causality and change studies. In causality studies, researchers differentiate factors employed in student’s reasoning; between, for example, conditions attributed by students as causes for historical events in contrast to “enabling” conditions in which actions were undertaken to cause events (Voss et al., 1994). In contrast, those researching the ways that students make sense of social change did not seek to measure
particular factors within students’ explanations. Rather, in accordance with a methodology that locates sources of reasoning in socio-cultural contexts, they employ concepts such as “cultural tools” and “mediated action” (Wertsch, 1998) to examine the ways that students explain historical change (Barton, 2001; Seixas, 1993, 1994). Authors of causality studies, in contrast, report only the age of the research subjects (Carretero et al., 1997; Voss et al., 1998 a, b) while change studies offer the socioeconomic background, gender, and ethnicity of their research subjects (Seixas, 1993, 1994). These researchers also contextualize their studies in, for example, the topics recently covered in school by the research subjects or issues discussed in a broader public sphere (Barton, 1997, 2001; Seixas 1993).

The findings of causality researchers, however, remain untroubled by broader contexts. In accordance with a methodology that locates the sources of reasoning inside people’s heads, they seek to identify whether there is something particular about the historical episodes used (Carretero et al., 1998), age, educational level, or historical knowledge expertise that give rise to particular responses (Carretero et al., 1997; Jacott et al., 1998). The reader remains uninformed about the instructional context, the particular historical topics recently studied, or the ways that public concerns might influence results. The number of variables considered reduces the analysis of results.

For example, in discussing the homogeneity both of the causes Spanish high school students give for “discovery of America” and the statistically significant relative influence of each cause, Carretero et al. (1997) allude to, but do not embed their results within, a social or cultural context:

[T]he discovery of America forms a part of the history and culture of the Spanish subjects participating in the study and constitutes an important landmark which,
for them, gives meaning to historical periods. This is not the case for other events studied here. The result is interesting as it leads to another question. How are subjects' judgments influenced by the fact that a particular historical event belongs to their "own" history? An answer to this question goes beyond the goals of this study, but there is no doubt that human subjects tend to represent their own national history in a different way compared to world history (p. 252).

Perhaps the distinctions I note between studies in causality and social change can be explained by the fact these researchers address different questions. My claim here is not about the appropriateness of the different approaches to the specific ends of these studies. It is important, rather, to identify the methodological assumptions behind studies used here to collate findings of the ways that students' interpret agency. I now turn to these findings.

2.3 Students' understanding of agency

Seixas (1993) investigated how school and family shape the historical understandings of six students. To do so, he used "three elements of historical understanding"—significance, historical epistemology, and a "triad" of agency, empathy, and moral judgment (Seixas, 1993, p. 303). For Seixas' research participants, agency refers to powerful actors making a difference through their decisions (Seixas, 1993, p. 307). A few students, however, offer something more. Roberto, a student whose family immigrated to Canada to escape Chilean civil war of the 1970's, offers what I take to be a more nuanced reading of historical agency:

I don't think [things in history] change by accident. There's been mostly a group of people or something or a force trying to do something to change it, like sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse (Seixas, 1993, p. 316).
Another student, Karen, a Chinese-Canadian student, offers a more modest sense of the domains in which people contribute to change:

More people go the villages, make trade, and because of the improvement on the lives of some of the people, the other people also think, "oh, I also want to improve mine too, why do you have a better life than me?" So I try to think and improve and invent the things (Seixas, 1993, p. 319).

Both Roberto and Karen attend to how historical change results, to some degree and in some way, from collective action and modest zones of social influence. In contrast, Seixas sums up the prevalent conception of agency expressed by his adolescent subjects as a capacity belonging to powerful men:

Thinking of historical change in terms of human agency... was not foreign to [the students]. On the other hand, powerful male leaders were ubiquitous as the shapers of history in their responses. A notable exception was Pedro, who spoke of a range of effective social movements. Roberto, too, saw "the people" as active agents of historical change (Seixas, 1993, p. 320-321).

Seixas notes that his interviews with adolescents suggest "a correlation between students' despairing sense that the world is out of control in the present and an inability to grasp historical agency" (Seixas, 1993, p. 321). Such a correlation would not be surprising. Most people's lives are lived in more modest zones-of-influence. It is not that students do not grasp historically significant agency. Rather, students grasp the heroic sense of individualized agency conveyed by conceptual resources at hand quite well. To the degree it is so, students' personal despair or apathy is a logical response given the immensity of challenges we collectively face compared to what any student on their own can do about them (e.g., struggles for peace, economic and environmental sustainability, more inclusive definitions of, and material distribution for, communities). Several comments made in summation by Seixas are also noteworthy.
“Ubiquitous ... powerful male leaders” who find a problem and fix it for the better occupy that part of the cultural collage relevant to popular interpretations of agency. There is little in Canadian and US history textbooks to suggest that this ubiquitous impression is challenged (see, for example, my review of two textbooks in Chapter Five). In my experience, teachers need only to mention popular action movies and television shows for students to recognize a common cultural celebration of individual efficaciousness. Thus, despite how the logic of explanations for action and change rely on interpretations of agency, until it is mentioned, these shallow representations are so common as to be unremarkable. Once identified, however, popular representations of agents and agency can be compared to textbook and other resources used in classrooms and vital questions raised about our explanations for social action and change. Karen’s recognition of more modest zones-of-influence that contribute to personal and social changes, Pedro, mentioning “social movements,” and Roberto’s attribution of historical agency to “the people” are valuable, if vague, insights. More complex and explicit conceptions of agency might assist teachers to expand and deepen these recognitions of the collective and fractious condition of social change.

According to Hallden (1994, 1998), adolescent pupils “tend to seek explanations of historical events exclusively in the actions, reactions, and intentions of individuals or individualized phenomena” (Hallden, 1994, p. 35). Hallden asserts that adolescents view history as a study of power struggles amongst people and personified phenomena such as social institutions. According to his discourse analysis of their “shared lines of reasoning” in teacher-student classroom exchanges, Hallden argues that a gulf exists between the
ways that students understand history and the ways that teachers’ present historical content:

[Students] are more concerned with the exercise of power itself, in this case, with the political party as an agent and the influence of the actions performed. Thus, with regard to the types of answers given by these students to the teacher’s questions, it would seem to be a rather good guess that their answers are dependent on their view of the subject of history, and that this view does not entail structural conditions and structural reorganizations, but rather deals with individuals, personalized phenomena, and the actions performed by these agents (Hallden, 1994, p. 41).

Hallden asserts that the teacher and students are on different scripts with the teacher trying to offer a structural account of parliamentary democracy (i.e., the political party with the most seats forms the government) while students “are more concerned with the exercise of power itself amongst individuals [and] personalized phenomena.” Echoing findings by Seixas, Hallden’s subjects believe that historically significant agency belongs to powerful individuals motivated to act in a social field characterized by power struggles. In their struggles, social institutions are utilized as instruments for the goals of individual agents.

These findings that social change results from the contestation of individual wills are tempered by the work of Voss et al. (1994). In this causality study, Voss et al. had university and graduate students write essays outlining causes for the fall of the Soviet Union. To assist their analysis, these researchers distinguished between four types of causes. Causes might be “conditions” as states of affairs, “conditions” as psychological states (i.e. fear, dissatisfaction), “conditions” as geographical, cultural, political, institutional, and economic factors in explaining causality, and, or “actions” as something done by individuals or groups that produced a change in conditions. Voss et al. conclude:
Taken as a whole, the data indicate that most subjects delineated both conditions and actions as causes, with conditions employed more frequently. Overall, a composite set of reasons for the collapse [of the Soviet Union] was that a combination of economic and political-social conditions produced a need for a change, and that Gorbachev, therefore, instituted a set of actions that produced yet other conditions and other actions that produced the collapse (Voss et al., 1994, p. 420).

Conditions mentioned were “conditions as causes, not... enabling conditions that produce effects... not a context in which the causes operated” (Voss et al., 1994, p. 419).

Conditions produce historical actions rather than shape the context in which human agency is expressed. Here we have a picture of causality in which agency is a reaction to conditions rather than a capacity mediated by such conditions. That conditions might themselves be the more and less conscious effects of historical agency appears to be unconsidered.

Penuel and Wertsch (1998) studied the attribution of agency by American university students to certain racial categories. By “agents” they refer to “individuals or groups who are portrayed as important protagonists in history, the actors who move history forward with their collective action” (Penuel and Wertsch, 1998, p. 33). Penuel and Wertsch found a common stock of references that these university students used to argue, in two separate editorials, for and against bussing African-American students to achieve racial balance in suburban American schools (note upon whom the burden of being bussed was placed). A significant insight offered by these researchers is to whom, as a group, these students ascribe agency in American history (participants in their study were five females and four males. Eight were European-Americans and one was Asian-American).
Discourse analysis indicated that these students overwhelmingly attributed agency to European Americans who "freed" African-Americans and who "fought" for freedom through various social reformations. In these students' editorials, African-Americans always had something done to or for them. According to these students, European-Americans dominate as agents in the history of American social struggle. This attribution of agency to European-Americans indicates another successfully acquired belief from what Penuel and Wertsch (1998) refer to as "official" history.

In contrast to these findings, Epstein's research suggests that African-American students may have different understandings of "official" history presented in schools. In her 1998 study of students' attribution of trustworthiness of historical sources, non African-American students ranked teachers and textbooks ahead of family and community. In contrast, African-American students ranked teachers and textbooks below family and community. Although unexamined, it is likely that these students have a different interpretation of how social change occurs and who is responsible than participants in the study by Penuel and Wertsch. We can only speculate, however, due to the lack of research investigating conceptions of social change in specific populations either related to class, race, or gender. This is a shortcoming of the history and social studies research literature and, therefore, of this review.

Research with American students suggests that many elementary children conceive of agency in terms of iconic individuals who decide something is wrong (race and gender inequalities for example) and then change other people's mind about the issue (Barton, 1997, Barton & Levstik, 1998). Researchers refer to such logic as "deficit reasoning" (i.e., people were not as smart as today or just didn't know any better) (Barton, 1997; Lee
and Ashby, 2000). In a later study, Barton (2001) compares his conclusions about American students’ explanations with his more recent research in Northern Irish elementary schools. In this study, he finds a notable contrast to American students’ explanations for changed social practices. “Significantly” more Irish students in his study referred to collective action that caused laws to be enacted against, in a commonly referenced Irish example, the practice of caning (Barton, 2001, p. 891).

Barton concludes that, for American elementary students, capacities to effect change are the prerogative of traditionally celebrated individuals who populate the commonly exchanged narratives of American school history and popular culture. For students from Northern Ireland, how social change occurs is likely a more open question. According to his research, students in Ireland receive a historical instruction different from that encountered by students in the US:

[Irish history is] presented as a series of static portrayals of life at different times, rather than as a narrative explaining the development of modern society...the history children encounter in museums, historic sites, and history parks is similar to that which they experience in school...[B]ooks available for children in stores and libraries in Northern Ireland...focus almost exclusively on social and material life...[as] there are few figures in the history of Ireland or Great Britain who are not identified as representative of specific political positions, and thus all individuals in the region’s history are controversial and must be avoided (Barton, 2001, p. 898/900/902).

As a result, Barton claims:

[St]udents there are more likely to identify the societal contexts of change, and they are more likely to recognize that multiple images can characterize any given period in history. They are also less likely to think that individuals are responsible for all changes in history, or that change is equivalent to progress (Barton, 2001, p. 906).
Barton is quick to qualify this, recognizing that “not all children in Northern Ireland conceptualize historical change in the same way; many give explanations similar to those of their counterparts in the U.S…” (Barton, 2001, p. 906). Given the predominance of American popular culture around the world, Barton’s work suggests that it might be worth investigating how explicit or referenced narratives in these products are consumed in populations with less classroom emphasis on narrative renderings of the past. Recalling the question raised by Carretero et al. about whether students interpret their “own” history differently, it would also be interesting to investigate the ways those Irish students with more context specific study interpret social changes that occurred elsewhere that affected their country.

These studies reach complementary conclusions about the ascription of historical agency with differences attributable to age and or cultural context. With the exception of “significantly” more Irish students, children and adolescents studied tend to ascribe agency primarily to the actions of traditionally celebrated historical figures. As a result of individual power struggles, changes occurred as individuals overcame their deficit reasoning. Of course, they are not completely incorrect. In all cases of social change each is, to varying degrees, present. Deficit reasoning, however, reduces people’s agency to weigh and reject proposed social changes (they were stupid or just didn’t know, ‘why else would anyone reject racial or gender equality?’). Changes that supposedly result from individual power struggles reduce everyone else to disinterested spectators. This research also suggests that adolescent students interpret social institutions in the course of their historical study as the extensions of those desires and acts attributed to powerful individuals. University-aged Spanish students fail to adequately distinguish between
There also appears to be national patterns in the content of the past cited, indicating a remarkably successful cultural homogenization, and, excluding some participants in Northern Ireland and African-American students in the US, students’ sense of who affects social change. Penuel and Wertsch suggest non-African, non-Native, and non-Mexican American students acquire a very similar understanding of US history and who counts as agents in that history. Likewise, Carretero et al. hint (but do not explore) that the social significance of the discovery of America for Spanish national identity might explain why students of all ages attributed not only similar ‘causes’ of the ‘event’, but also the relative weight of each in ‘causing’ the ‘event’! This research should raise concerns about the limited historical references in schools available to students to use in their deliberations as agents on future social possibilities. I now turn to two possible explanations for these findings.

2.4 A deficit and sophisticated explanation for students’ impressions of historical and social agency

Hallden’s research suggests that teachers and students share “lines of reasoning” but read from different scripts. Convinced that history is the study of power struggles amongst individuals, students fail to follow their teacher’s line of reasoning: “an inability of the students to form meaningful syntheses of what they were confronted with in the instruction” (Hallden, 1994, p. 38). The inability of students to follow explanations of
political structures by the teacher is the problem and Hallden turns to cognitive psychology for answers.

Inspired by Bruner's dictum that "when pupils give wrong answers they are in fact answering other questions" (Bruner, cf. in Hallden, 1994, p. 29), Hallden argues that students have powerful "alternative frameworks" variously defined as "sets of beliefs or expectations [the pupils] hold about the way natural phenomena occur" (Driver, cf. in Hallden, 1994, p. 29) and "the views of the world and meanings for words that children tend to acquire before they are formally taught" (Osborne, Bell, and Gilbert, cf. in Hallden, 1994, p. 29). As an example of a clash between the use of historical analyses in teachers' and students' "frameworks," Hallden cites an earlier study that found that students had difficulty distinguishing "between the underlying meaning behind expressions such as, 'Sweden regards' and 'the Soviet Union wants' on the one hand, and 'what all of the citizens of a country want or regard'" (Hallden, 1994, p. 30). Thus, students likely find it difficult to understand history in any other way than individualized and personalized. It remains an open question for Hallden whether this adolescent understanding of history results from psychological limitations of age or the limitations of their conceptual frameworks (Hallden, 1994, p. 36).

Why, however, in this regard, assume twice that students lack what adults have? Why assume the deficit lies in children's heads and not in larger cultural depictions of social events, practices, and pasts? Students arguably are quite sophisticated in personifying structural phenomena and in explaining historical cause or change by citing an individual's quest for power.
Levstik's research (2000) suggests that some teachers (at least in the US) themselves personify large-scale institutions, often speaking of constitutions and events using the pronoun plural "our," "we," or abstract personifications of entire nation-states, as in "the Soviet Union wants." This way of speaking is not limited to teachers or students. In his review of the ascription of agency in historical scholarship, Pomper (1996) concludes that historians often reduce historical agents to mouthpieces or unwitting enactors of various structural conditions or forces, themselves often personified by historians.

Further to this point, in textbooks the actions of private trade companies and governments during the "Age of Exploration," for example, are cast in terms of the "British Empire" or "German expansion in Africa" as if they were Hegel's mystical national consensus rather than those of a small, if powerful, constituency fighting for dominance in a contested political field. The lack of subtlety also exists in newspaper, movies, and television reports that reduce hugely divided constituencies to "The American War in Vietnam" or "Canada supports debt reduction." If psychological underdevelopment or conceptual immaturity explains student personification of large-scale conditions or forces, then we must consider it equally shared by many adults. In addition to textbooks, other cultural texts such as movies often reduce the struggles of millions to a simple battle of chess between a protagonist and antagonist. This phenomenon could be seen most recently in the big-budget movie about the Battle of Stalingrad in WWII, *Enemy at the Gates.* Students are very perceptive about messages conveyed in cultural texts. They are unlikely to be impressed when teachers try to speak from a different script without addressing directly these broader cultural scenes.
Social and cultural psychology offers a broader and more satisfying interpretation of the ways students interpret social change. This field also provides relevant concepts for teachers and students to think about their capacities as agents of social life. Rather than the psychological or conceptual deficits of students, these researchers study "culturally conferred implicit theories of agency" that highlight the sophisticated, if culturally specific, reasoning of students about agency and social change.

Morris et al. (2001) argue that their articulation of "implicit theory" and more specifically an "implicit theory of agency" links the structural and subjective accounts of agency in psychology. That tradition consists of those who elaborate the issue of agency by focusing on autonomy (an agent's interaction with the environment) and those who focus on agents' internal dispositions such as intentions and desire:

[Borrowing] an epidemiological metaphor, we describe theories of agency as strains of culture propagated across the generations through the mutual interplay of representations in public artifacts and private knowledge structures...tied to American, or more broadly, Western culture (Morris et al., 2001, p. 170).

Morris et al. (2001) review studies that indicate that Chinese and American subjects, reflecting cultural differences, privilege different conceptions of agency. Americans, and by extension, in their view, "Western" subjects, tend to attribute agency to individuals and cite the dispositions of the individual actor to explain his or her actions. In contrast, their research suggests that Chinese subjects have a collective notion of agency and attribute acts to group needs or contexts rather than personal attitudes. This difference is also the case between American and Japanese subjects with "Japanese students less likely to endorse statements that individuals' behavior generally reflects their attitudes" (Morris et al., 2001, p. 176).
To contextualize their study, Morris et al. examine powerful cultural texts and institutions in American and Chinese culture. “Texts” include culturally revered expressions of individual-social relations as can be found, for example, in the writings of Emerson and Confucius. These “texts” also include “ubiquitous popular cultural products, such as proverbs, advertising, and journalism [that] carry conceptions of agency” (Morris et al., 2001, p.173). Morris et al. argue that institutions (e.g., legal and educational) “work in tandem” with texts to convey conceptions of agency.

For example, when one considers the variety of historical figures of note, it is surprising just how successfully schools, at least in the US and Spain, and at least with students studied by history researchers, propagate a relatively stable historical pantheon of iconic historical agents. Simple plots that tell the deeds of celebrated role models provide incentives for others to internalize cultural conceptions about agency (Morris et al., 2001, p. 174). The ubiquity of these messages constitutes a culturally conferred “implicit theor[y] of agency [what they refer to as ITAs]:”

ITAs are conceptions of agentic persons, groups, or supernatural entities. Agency conceptions allow perceivers to make sense of an outcome by asking these questions: Who is behind this? What purpose does it reflect? What enduring characteristics does it reveal? These conceptions also provide frames for construction of answers. An outbreak of war, for example, might be attributed to the wiles of a leader, the will of a nation, or the wrath of God, depending on the specific conception of agency guiding the perceiver (Morris et al., 2001, p. 169).

ITAs provide “knowledge structures” described in other ways as “lay theories, naïve theories or causal schemata” (Morris et al., 2001, p. 170). ITAs as knowledge structures differ from other cognitive mechanisms such as “episodic memories, which are less abstract, and from general mechanisms such as basic principles of inference, which can
apply to any stimulus event" (Morris et al., 2001, p. 170). ITAs exist both publicly as well as privately:

They exist in enduring public forms, and are transmitted to perceiver’s minds. The chronic accessibility of particular ITAs in perceivers’ private thoughts mirrors their prominence and prevalence in the public representations of society. This leads to cultural differences in which ITAs are most accessible (Morris et al., 2001, p. 176).

From social psychology, Markus and Kitayama (2002) define agency as an “implicit framework of ideas and practices about how to be that are engaged to construct the actions of the self, of others, and the relationship among those actions” (p. 6). Markus and Kitayama accurately describe the theory of agency most commonly propagated in American public artefacts and cultural texts that research reviewed here suggests remained untroubled in school history:

According to the dominant American middle class model, normatively ‘good’ actions should be primarily the results of the individual’s own desires, goals, intentions or choices; the independent self is foregrounded as the source of action while others are fixed in the background. Agency is constructed as personal and bounded within the individual. This model of agency as disjoint, or as disconnected from others and rooted solely in the individual, is widely distributed and inscribed in mainstream American society; it is expressed by social scientists, reflected in the media, and echoed by individuals talking about themselves (Markus and Kitayama, 2002, p. 6).

Questions remain about this research.

While fairly consistent “implicit theories of agency” might be conveyed through dominant texts and national institutions, what impact does gender or income, for example, have on the reception or consumption of ITAs? What sort of cultural unity do these researchers assume and is this assumption valid? Markus and Kitayama (2002), for example, work with a complementary interpretation of agency and its social conveyance. They assert, however, that these “cultural” differences are more accurately described as
gender and class differences in social power to define through representation privileged examples and exemplifiers of agency. This is not to suggest that each class or gender has an inherent interpretation of agency, but only to note the specificity of to whom this ideal of agency could possibly appeal. Who has the privilege to ignore the costly markers of group membership, to afford to celebrate individual needs and desires over those shared socially, and to interpret the logic of actions so narrowly? People suffering from and contesting racism, misogyny, heterosexism, enforced poverty, or physical limitations likely see in this ideal a painful mockery of the complexities and embedded-ness of their lives.

Despite the unproblematic use of “culture” by Morris et al. (substitute the word “power” for “culture” for example) their work offers a clear description of the ways interpretations of agency are conveyed. Along with Markus and Kitayama, they provide a potentially powerful explanatory framework for the ways in which findings in this chapter reflect privileged conceptions of agency found in broader social contexts. Their work also complements those change studies that embed students’ explanations of historical change within broader contexts.

2.5 Discussion

Research findings that suggest students understand the subject of history as the study of individual struggles for power and attribute historical change as the result of such struggles are not surprising. These findings indicate the successful acquisition of privileged storylines in the historical texts that circulate with social cachet throughout a North American and Western social context. It may be startling but no less accurate to
say that the psychological or conceptual deficit explanations for these findings may be as aptly applied to adults and their stories as to students. After all, students creatively use what they are given about the past to make sense of their present and to anticipate their futures. Is there not some logic in the historical stories told in the public sphere that students get just right when they attribute agency to celebrated figures, absent of ambiguities and broader social struggles? Isn’t life a power struggle between individuals?

Findings that elementary students explain change with reference to iconic individuals is perhaps as it should be. Egan’s influential work (1997 a, b) argues that such stories are a form most suited to historical instruction for children. What he calls “romantic” stories stimulate imagination, extend ideas of time, and provide role models for moral behaviour. He argues that stories highlighting individual effectiveness to alter social realities are most suitable to the interest of young people and provide moral examples to guide their individuation in the process of socialization (Egan, 1997b, p. 312). More work, however, beyond the scope of this project, is required into what young people can and cannot handle conceptually in terms of social action, conflict, and change. In any case, from these stories, perhaps a novice understanding of historical agency from elementary students is sufficient: Individuals who later become celebrated decide something is wrong and work with others to change the minds of their fellow citizens. As students become more familiar with these issues, earlier introductions to the historical social field of action need, however, to be made more complex.

Based on research reviewed, my argument may be summarized as follows: One way to aid potentially more sophisticated student interpretations for historical agency and social change is 1) to highlight a range of possible interpretations for the ways people
work for, resist, and unknowingly participate in social life, so as to inform student reflection on their variegated capacities or zones-of-influence in their many roles and relationships.

2.6 Summary

As the literature reviewed here suggests, students' explanations for social change reflect broadly distributed interpretations of who is responsible for social change and how that change occurs. These explanations reproduced a set of privileged beliefs about human nature and agency traded in explanations of the past. Student apathy or despair would not be a surprising result when they understand social change to be the prerogative of powerful individuals.

We might consider student insights into agency and change reviewed as default explanations given the absence of studies into how teachers interpret the human influences in social change. Researchers do not know what interpretations of agency and change teachers bring to their practice and there is no reason to believe that possible interpretations have been raised as questions with students. I consider this a significant finding and one that signals the need to initiate inquiry into this question as I do and report on in Chapter Five. Further, both agency and social change are insufficiently theorized in this literature. There is a lack of discussion about how we might define agency or an elucidation of a range of possible ways such a capacity is expressed in processes of social change. The complexity of social change requires not that we substitute one abstraction ("iconic individuals") for another ("social movements"). To approximate the complexity of how teachers understand agency and social change, and
how they might engage students in such questions, requires an equally complex range of possible interpretative possibilities. It is to the methodology involved in my doing so to which I now turn.
Notes:

1. An earlier version of this chapter is published in Theory and Research in Social Education. See den Heyer (2003a).

2. Their use of "collective action" refers to American racial categories and the representations of these collectives in "official" American history.

3. This movie reduces that epic battle involving 2 million people to a contest, upon which rested the symbolic meaning of the whole battle, between one Russian and one German sharpshooter.
III. METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I outline methods employed and the methodological issues considered in this study. I first clarify the purpose of this study and its questions and examine the idea of a “sensitizing framework” developed as a heuristic aid to help answer these questions. I follow this with a description of my data collection and analysis. I then outline the conception of individual agency I used to read participants’ interpretations of social change expressed in interviews and in their classrooms. I then offer criteria and a rationale for the selection of participants before describing them and the units I observed them teach.

3.1 The research questions

This study begins what I hope will be a valuable conversation eventually broadening the conceptual resources available to students to link their studies of the past with their reflection on their capacities as agents of future social life. Given the central role played by teachers in what resources students have to make such links, the more immediate purpose of this study is to investigate what interpretations for historical agency and social change teachers bring to their practice. A related purpose is to develop a “sensitizing framework” as a heuristic to investigate such interpretations (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1996). I asked several questions in this study: In what ways do experienced history and social studies teachers account for social change? How do teachers explain the human intentions, choices, and actions that made social changes possible? Do experienced
teachers explicitly address such questions with students? Does my framework, drawn from recent scholarship, assist teachers to clarify their interpretations and teaching about agency and social change? In asking these questions, I am interested in teachers' interpretations and not in making historical claims about what might have contributed to a social change studied in any specific unit.

As part of this study, and as summarized in the following chapter, I developed a sensitizing framework for historical agency from recent scholarship in historiography and sociology (I refer to this framework as 'my summaries' in work with participants reviewed in Chapter Five). A sensitizing framework is one in which ideas or concepts are combined to initiate further refinement about a phenomenon, set of ideas, interpretations, or meanings:

A set of concepts and distinctions, systematically interconnected, that we believe will prove useful for the development of conjunctural [sic] causal explanations of enhanced analytical power and specificity (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1996, p. 363).

Emirbayer and Goodwin also note that a sensitizing framework is provisional, and hence, represents an initial attempt open to further addition or refinement (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1996, p. 364). As constituents of sensitizing frameworks, sensitizing concepts give the analyst "a general sense of reference" and provide "directions along which to look" (Blumer, cf. in Patton, 2002, p. 456). Following my observations of participants' units, I engaged participants in a "think aloud" exercise (Wineburg, 1991, 2001). Thinking aloud, participants adjudicated the summaries of each scholar's work constituting the framework and then my application of these summations to their units as
different explanations for changes taught. In this way, the framework served several purposes.

First, as a sensitizing framework, it gave me directions to look concerning what interpretations participants were conveying in their teaching. The framework also served to elicit participants' potentially more complex interpretations in interviews than I might have been able to observe in their classrooms. Finally, this framework provided a set of assertions for participants to argue against, with, or partially for. In doing so, they had an opportunity to develop their interpretations in relation to recent scholarship and I had another means to trace the complexity of how they thought about social change.

Participants collaborated in the refinement of the framework in terms of language clarity and in its potential use in classrooms in addition to offering pertinent theoretical considerations about the efficacy of the framework as a set of interpretations. Thus, this framework was both a means and an end for this study. It gave me directions to look in reading the interpretations participants were conveying in their teaching. It sparked participants’ insights into social change. Finally, the framework was refined as a result.

3.2 The study

To answer my questions, I conducted a qualitative case study. I chose to do a qualitative study because I was interested in participants’ interpretations and perceptions rather than quantifiable conclusions. In an analysis of influential social science writing, Creswell (1998) notes relative agreement about the characteristics that describe qualitative inquiry:

One undertakes qualitative research in a natural setting where the researcher is an instrument of data collection who gathers words or pictures, analyzes them
inductively, focuses on the meaning of participants, and describes a process that is expressive and persuasive in language (p. 15).

This study was held in four sites and with four participants. Teachers' classrooms provided the setting in which the observations and interviews took place. Observations included the recording of all classroom talk in addition to notes I made of participants discussing social changes covered. Additional data were generated through two semi-structured interviews and a set of email questions. Email questions and interviews asked participants to do the following:

- discuss the content and objectives of their teaching,
- relate professional and personal stories they believed to be influential to their work,
- identify constraints and contextual factors impacting on their teaching,
- answer specific questions I had that emerged in observations, and
- analyze the framework for agency and social change drawn from recent sociological and historiographical scholarship.

The interview questions (see appendix 1) were open-ended and provided a set of a priori codes (Freeman, 2000); that is, key words or phrases in the questions become the basis of organizing responses having to do with citizenship, social change, powerful past moments influencing how participants viewed the subject and teaching of history, and the ways in which they interpreted social change to occur. In addition, I recorded and transcribed each lesson observed, gathered and analyzed all relevant material including class handouts, websites used as classroom resources, movies, and textbooks for data coding and inductive analysis. As mentioned, another interview consisted of participants
thinking aloud as they read through my application of each summation in the framework as a way of interpreting changes covered in their units. For Wineburg (1991), this exercise elicits participants’ reasoning in the immediate moments of sense-making. It thereby generates insights into participants’ sense-making, the content used to do so, as well as specific moments of incomprehension or difficulty. It does not, of course, provide insight into how they might apply this scholarship after the reading.

Based on data previously collected, I presented each participant with the summation I felt best reflected their views of how social change is possible, using names, movements, and events discussed in their instructional resources or in classroom talk to exemplify the summation. The same procedure was followed for the other four summations where possible (for my introduction to this exercise, see appendix 1).

Creswell (1998) delineates several types of case studies and what purposes each serve. Broadly speaking, Creswell defines a case study as an “exploration of a ‘bounded system’.”

... a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information. This bounded system is bounded by time and place, and it is the case being studied – a program, an event, an activity, or individuals (p. 61).

Case studies may be conducted in one or many sites. Sites may be defined as a physical setting or a social, historical, and or, economic setting (Creswell, 1998, p. 62). The purpose of conducting a case study can be to contribute to the understanding of an idea, a context, a person, people in a context, or as with this study, people chosen according to specified criteria (see section below discussing selection criteria for participants) in a specific setting (classrooms) in order to understand a specific set of ideas (interpretations
of agents, agency, and social change). Given the dearth of research into this set of ideas, this study employed a critical case sampling (Patton, 2002).

Patton offers two propositions that, when answered affirmatively, indicate the appropriateness of a critical case sample: If it doesn't happen here, it is likely not occurring elsewhere and, "if that group is having problems, then we can be sure all the groups are having problems" (Patton, 2002, p. 236). A critical case sample is like a best-case scenario to inquire into a new or relatively unexplored set of questions. To clarify, the "it" refers in this study to teachers' explicit investigation of agency and social change with students of history and social studies. The "here" refers to the observed instructional units and classrooms of participants. "Problems" refer to the challenges and constraints participants identified related to the complexity of interpreting and teaching about human capacities in historical questions of social change. I now turn to elucidate several ideas I used to investigate participants' interpretations of agency and social change.
3.3 Agency as a lens through which to analyze participants’ responses

My inquiry calls upon participants’ “interpretive dispositions”- a set of “disparate beliefs and assumptions whose cumulative effect produces a general moral sense and a particular view of the world” (Smith, 2001, p.141-2). In the following chapter, I will explore and merge into a sensitizing framework various interpretations for historical agency that contribute to people’s “general moral sense or…view of the world.” Investigating particular expressions of “interpretative dispositions,” however, also requires a move in the other direction; towards participants’ interpretive acts as expressions of their individual agency.

Agency has been approached from a variety of starting points. “Theorists of practice,” such as Giddens (1979, 1984, 1991) and Bourdieu (1977), emphasize the ways that social spaces condition individuals who exercise agency within these spaces as a negotiation with prevailing cultural expectations (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p. 963). Theorists of the individual (rational choice theorists, psychologists such as Bruner and Valsiner) emphasize the individual’s agency in creating personal meanings from which emerge social norms and institutions (Ratner, 2000). More recently, theorists of identity (such as Butler, D. Smith, Holland et al.) see agency expressed in people’s performance of unstable, conflicted, and politicized subjectivities. In this performance, agents “pivot” (Holland et al., 1998) or “cite” in drag (Butler, 1993) existing social roles and expectations.

Phenomenological work examines agency in the ways that individuals construct meanings, understand their actions, and negotiate end goals with their surrounding social
environments (Schutz, 1967). Cultural linguists, such as Bakhtin (1986) see agency as a linguistic act: in people’s use of language to negotiate meanings with the surrounding social and linguistic communities of which they are part.

Cultural and social psychologists, such as Markus and Kitayama, utilize each of these approaches to emphasize that conceptions of agency themselves are cultural resources that reflect social power. These resources guide behaviours, define expectations, and offer assumptions used by individuals in their explanations of the intentions and actions of others (Markus and Kitayama, 2002; Morris et al., 2001).

Building directly on many of these approaches, the sociologists Emirbayer and Mische offer an especially relevant model for thinking about agency in relation to research. They posit that “agency is always a dialogical process by and through which actors immersed in temporal passage engage with others within collectively organized contexts of action” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p. 974). In earlier work, Emirbayer and Goodwin offer a succinct definition of agency as an interpretative act that “revivifies, modifies, and sometimes challenges transpersonal (cultural, social-structural, and/or social psychological) networks in the course of empirical social action” (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1996, p. 371). The model of agency offered by Emirbayer and Mische puts in relation the storied past and expected future. In doing so, it offers a way to think through the relationship between my participants’ personal and professional pasts, their interpretations of social change, and what insights they hoped to convey in their teaching.

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) depict agency as a “chordial triad” to highlight the layered and complex bundling of interpretation, thought, and action involved in the simplest of transactions. This triad consists of “iteration,” “practical-evaluation,” and
“projectivity.” Their use of a musical metaphor emphasizes that each may be heard simultaneously, but not always harmoniously, according to the context studied (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p. 972).

“Iteration” is the selective reactivation and incorporation of past patterns of thought and action into practical activity. It is re-iteration that gives order, they argue, to “social universes” and “sustain[s] identities, interactions, and institutions over time” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p. 971). The “practical-evaluative” capacity refers to the “practical and normative judgments among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p. 971). Finally, “projectivity” refers to “the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors’ hopes, fears, and desires for the future” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p. 971). Emirbayer and Mische argue that agency consists of, and occurs in, each of the moments of iteration, practical-evaluation, and projectivity. These moments are nested in each other even while one is heard more. For example, participants in this study expressed their agency through their reiteration of past moments to evaluate the framework used in this study in addition to their responses to other questions in light of their teaching goals or projects.

Emirbayer and Mische offer a thorough articulation of the moments that constitute agency on a personal level. Agency includes calling upon the past to interpret present situations, applying evaluations and judgments, and engaging in actions towards future goals (iterative, practical-evaluative, and projective chords respectively). Informed by their work, I understand “individual agency” to be an imaginative capacity for shaping
intentions, forming choices, and undertaking actions. This capacity involves the chords of “iteration,” “evaluation,” and “projectivity.” Being a human capacity, agency is not, however, simply an intellectual elocution. Such moments also reflect cultural, social-structural, and social psychological investments.

Emirbayer and Goodwin (1996) delineate three contexts, or settings for action, in which the chorus of agency can be heard. Emirbayer and Mische assert that these contexts are empirically interpenetrated but “analytically autonomous” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p. 970). The “cultural context” consists of the symbolic patterns, images, narratives, and discourses that provide to members of a culture common references and ways of making sense. We might consider “cultural” here as something as widespread as a common language or as specific as a shared familiarity between an interviewer and interviewee of debates about history and social studies teaching and learning. The “social-structural” context of agency encompasses the network and patterns of social ties ranging from families, unions, clubs, to international settings of actions. Both structural and social, this context can be both visible, such as a classroom, and invisible, such as common expectations about what are “appropriate” relationships between a teacher and a student. As Emirbayer and Goodwin note, “each configuration of social relationships has also a symbolic reference or complement” (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1996, p. 367); that is to say, that the cultural and social structural contexts are deeply interpenetrated. While the cultural is primarily a symbolic world, the social structural materializes that world in physical settings and in behaviours expressed through relationships. Finally, the “social psychological” refers to psychical settings in which emotions and commitments are
enabled and constrained by "channelling flows and investments ('cathexes') of emotional energy" (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1996, p. 368; Zizek, 2000).

In this study, the elucidation of these settings assisted my data analysis. While the following questions do not constitute formal questions guiding this study, they did assist in the process of answering those questions. For example, to what social-structural locations do participants refer in their explanations of social changes? In relation to the social-psychological context, what stories did participants reiterate from either their study of history or personal lives to guide their evaluations of historical agency and social change? What emotions and emotional commitments or psychological, emotional, or spiritual needs might their interpretations speak to or about?

These questions provided a means to give the analysis of data further context. As Emirbayer and Goodwin note, it is necessary to consider the emotional aspects involved in agency on a personal level that shape normative commitments and group identification "as a crucial subjective dimension of collective action" (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1996, p. 370). I argue the same considerations are necessary in the task of exploring my participants' interpretations. In making sense of their interpretations, participants reiterated powerful past moments that spoke to their emotional as much as their intellectual commitments. The two of course entwine, which is precisely why it is necessary to consider the "contexts" to which participants refer and in which their chorus of agency may be heard.

In relating these powerful past moments in this study, I do not claim that they are the most powerful. Rather, as with all qualitative studies, reporting such moments, like the interpretations that they influence, should be considered suggestive rather than complete
and definitive.

3.4 Participants as “collaborative theorizers”

As previously mentioned, while research exists into agency as a culturally specific belief, and into how students reason about social change, researchers know little about the interpretations of historical agency and social change that history and social studies teachers bring to their practice. This research study begins what I hope will be a valuable conversation eventually broadening the conceptual resources available for students to link their study of the past with their consideration of their capacities as agents of future social life. To this end, this conversation, involving questions related to theory and practice, must start with those most likely to make valuable contributions. Experienced secondary history and social studies teachers, therefore, make up my critical case sample.

Four experienced teachers make up the research sample, two males and two females. Participants were chosen who have a long record of teaching (the minimum in this study is 12 years), curriculum development, and graduate university backgrounds. Such participants bring to this study the benefit of practice and reflection on historical instruction, helping to initiate, as “collaborative theorizers” (Kumashiro, 2002), a dialogue concerned with history teaching, historical agency, and social change.

Kumashiro (2002) notes that the process of collaborative theorizing is one in which participants collaborate with a researcher to develop theory that both informs practice and is informed by practice. This process is one in which research is conducted with and not on participants (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 16). Participants are chosen who have a comparable background in the setting in which the study is conducted and an education background
through which some familiarity, if not expertise, with the ideas being investigated may be assumed.

By "collaborative theorizers," I mean to draw attention to the fact that I chose participants who were likely knowledgeable about debates in education and in history and social studies instruction. As such, they brought to this study a refined perspective concerning the ways their instructional choices were shaped by both theory and by contextual conditions in their schools (e.g., population served, testing regimes in place that help determine content, availability of resources). Participants in this study taught in four different schools in three school boards serving communities with considerable variation in terms of ethnic composition, religious diversity, and economic capacity.

Participants also collaborated through their analyses of the framework for historical agency and social change, as reviewed in the following chapter, drawn from recent sociological and historiographical research and applied to their units. With a confidence that comes from their extensive backgrounds, I expected participants to provide multiple insights into these alternative explanations for social change without feeling that their practice was under criticism. My concern was not to analyze classroom practices. Rather, it was to investigate how the complexity of historical agency and social change is handled in classrooms and what factors influence what goes on there in this regard. As an example of collaboration, two participants chosen contributed to my early theorizations of historical agency and social change through their criticisms in a works-in-progress group to which we belonged. Another contributed significantly in her work with the framework during the study. Of these contributions, the one I take to be the most significant concerns the ways that these different summations might be combined in an
analysis of social changes. One or another may be more appropriate to read different moments in a process of social change or agents in differing social circumstances in a particular moment. This constitutes an important refinement to the theory and potential application of the framework in classrooms.

Another goal Kumashiro identifies for collaborative theorizing is to aid participants’ practice, “to give something back:”

After all, collaboratively theorizing required that the participants learn the range of theories I am grappling with, read and interpret their experiences against this framework, and explore what new insights are made possible for education as well as for themselves (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 19).

I was, therefore, pleased when participants communicated that they too gained from the opportunity to discuss theory, to develop a unit specifically investigating students’ interpretations of social change, to find out more about their own interpretations about a question about which they have never or seldom thought explicitly, and, with one participant, to return to using his own framework of agency in his work with students:

I think what has been very powerful for me in preparing for this process and I am sure it will become even more clear for me from the interviews, is I am beginning to reflect and recognize more directly what it is I have been doing and thinking about ways in which it could be expressed more explicitly to the students (Marv, #1, p. 13).

Of course, there was more at play than a trouble-free exchange of mutual benefit.

As initial attempts at building a sensitizing framework, I was at times uncomfortable when some participants became frustrated with the language employed. Vulnerability also existed for the participants. As a teacher, teacher educator, and researcher, it was easy for me to recognize and question choices and statements my participants made in their classrooms. Such questions could have been construed as a call to justify such
choices if participants did not have confidence in their practice. Nonetheless, even with this group, there were difficult moments. In one, a participant expressed self-doubt as she read through the framework about how well she prepared her students over her career to discuss, in their end-of-year essays, changes in the social life of Canadians over the 20th century. Another, half-jokingly, stated that we should have taught the unit together as he realized that many of the insights he wished his students to consider might have been aided with a more explicit treatment of historical agency. These are not moments to take lightly nor do I mean to invest these moments with too much drama for these exemplary teachers.

I initially sought participants with whom I shared some familiarity so as to facilitate a comfortable exchange of ideas (experienced teachers I met, for example, in graduate classes or in a works-in-progress group to which I belonged). For several and varied reasons not all on my list could or would participate. I then searched for others who met my criteria seeking recommendations from other teachers, professors, graduate students, and a "call to participate" posted on a provincial email list-service for history and social studies teachers. In our preliminary and exploratory discussions via email, on the telephone, and or in person, my potential participants and I discussed the study’s questions, aims, and procedures. This process served to familiarize the eventual participants with the study, refine its components, and lead to our decisions as to which units we felt best served the purposes of the study. Once I received an initial agreement from teachers to participate, I sought and received ethics approval from three school boards in which the study was conducted. The study was conducted in the winter and spring of 2003.
I now turn to a description of the participants and the units I observed them teaching. Participants' names have been changed for the purposes of ensuring anonymity as required by ethics agreements and quotations have been edited for clarity. I have included after each quotation a citation in this form (#, p.) indicating the interview and the page number of the transcript. This allows readers to connect quotations from different chapters and across chapter sections.

3.4.1 Mary

Mary is a big presence in the school through her years of service to the school and community. A mutual friend who teaches at the school recommended Mary. My friend was adamant that if I needed experienced high school social studies/history teachers for this study, I should check out this "master" teacher respected for her work throughout the school and community. Part of that respect results from her service. In my observation period of seven weeks, for example, she had her students organize a school-wide collection for hampers to send to Cuba to help a friend's Cuban friends with clothes, medicines, and toiletries; organized the collection, packaging, and sending of school supplies for a school in Nicaragua she helps provision along with students she also organized to go, and organized and supervised a trip for 17 students to China. The Cuba effort included having her students speak upon their return to every social studies/history class in grades 9, 10, and 11. Students who returned from Nicaragua and China were also scheduled to make slide presentations about their trips and the countries to other social studies/history classes in the school. She also regularly organized her students to assist in
district conventions held at the school, plays, and community events. In her own words, "I always have somebody asking me and my students to help out with something."

Mary has "tons of curriculum development experience." She worked on district curriculum when the Sullivan report came out in British Columbia (1988) and again when Year 2000 became that province's curriculum guide. At the time of the study, she was working with the social studies department curriculum to vertically (through grades) and laterally (through courses) integrate critical thinking, writing, and map skills. She has continued to take several university humanities and social science courses at a local university over the last several years. Mary initiated the humanities program at her school and has been its prime mover. This program takes kids from Grade 9 through to Grade 11. The students in the Grade 11 humanities course I observed have been with her for three years. They will be her last. She will retire this year after 34 years of teaching.

Unlike the other participants, Mary analyzed the framework of agency and social change in reference to a unit I did not observe; in this case a unit on Quebec taught the previous year. My observation of Mary's teaching lasted seven weeks. It was my most extended observation and included classes on the novel, The Lord of the Flies, and on WWII. I judged that the observation length, the multiple topics taught and observed, and Mary's professional and social justice background offered valuable insights into the concerns of this study. Because she applied my framework to a unit I did not observe her teach, I will provide information here that gives the reader some sense of her teaching and program. This will differ from the information with which I introduce the other participants.
In my introductory conversations with Mary, I was struck by her powerful personality. She conducted her classes, her student relationships, and indeed her program with an independent spirit. She impressed me immediately as someone who does not suffer fools or irresponsibility as was evident in her dealings with students, “What do you want me to do about that? Whose problem is that? Take responsibility” (Classroom observation, 03/13). Or, in discussing a project for the novel, Lord of the Flies: “Know this. You now have major projects due on this book. The project requires not huge amounts of work, but it does require big thinking. Do not bring me shallow, because I am going to hammer you if that is what you bring. It does not need to be revolutionary, but it needs to be revolutionary to you” (Observation, 03/11).

The following paragraph is offered to provide a vignette of her course and her work with an admirably broad and penetrating range of thought in humanities:

Mary finishes reading Lord of the Flies....

We started off in Grade 10 with this idea of man, is he basically good or basically bad? And we weren’t getting too deep into it, we were using it as a history topic. Then when we came into Grade 10, we confounded this question with some stuff around indoctrination. So, then it became, “does indoctrination make man basically good or basically bad?” That then became in place of morality, where we looked at the concept of universal morality and said that universal morality, [asking the students] what are the parts of universal morality? [Students respond with several and she adds several] beneficence and non-maleficence, freedom, justice, honest being. So those were universal moral goals. We started holding people up against them. So we have people like Atticus Finch [from To Kill a Mockingbird] held up against that. So then we looked at The Chrysalids and we looked at indoctrination of yourselves and your own life and what that meant. And now, we have gone past the traditional moralists into existentialism and nihilism. Then we are also looking at the concepts of creationism, not so much to figure out so much where the earth comes from, but the idea that indeed is there a God and order, or, is there evolution which may or may not include a god. Or, is there just chaos and we impose the order on it. So we have been running some pretty big ideas for a few years. This book [Lord of the Flies] takes you back to which of those ideas (from March 11 '03 observation notes and recording).
Mary emphasized the importance of individual choice and responsibility: "... it is about choice and responsibilities. You make choices and you need to take responsibility for that choice" (#1 p. 12). She introduced her students to existential thought and repeatedly asked students to think about difficulties characters face in novels and in historical examples; difficulties that emerge she emphasized from not knowing all the facts necessary to make fully informed decisions as well as peer pressures and psychological needs for community belonging.

This emphasis on individual choice and responsibility was also manifested in her enmity towards her teachers' union and centralized fund raising (World Vision) held in the school during the observation to combat world hunger:

I am not big into formal political structures. I hate my union. I don’t like the whole concept of institutionalized things... I think that as soon as something becomes... see that is me: that is me when these kids are standing here today talking about World Vision and the 30 hour famine- what a pile of crap! These kids are going to go and have a party, they are going to dance and fool around and they are going to stay up all night. They are not going to eat- big deal (#1 p. 4).

In contrast, her noteworthy commitment, through her co-founding of the school’s International Friendship Association, was to a school in Nicaragua and Ecuador based on relationships she has formed with locals in those countries: "All of the charities I do are one to one. I go into the third world and find somebody who is worth helping. Then I round it up to help those people. So, I am active but not through... I am not a big believer in authority or hierarchy" (#1 p. 4).
3.4.2 Rosa

Rosa’s participation in this study resulted from, as they say in marketing, a cold call. A teacher recommended by my supervisor, but who was seconded to the provincial union for the year, forwarded her name. She described Rosa as a master teacher and a force in the school, the teachers’ union, and in local political activity. Rosa’s involvement in various political activities was immediately evident in the difficulty I had getting in contact with her. During my study, the US government was tooling up for its invasion of Iraq as people around the world protested. Rosa was spending her free time maintaining a peace tent-village in the city and preparing for an upcoming annual teachers’ union meeting. This was a continuation of political commitments she has been involved with since the age of 17, and these commitments resonated throughout our interviews.

Rosa has a MA in history and studied women active in the peace movement during the cold war. Rosa developed lesson aids on various topics sponsored by her teachers’ union, of which, she is “a proud and active member” for over 20 years (#1, p. 10). She developed and taught a Ministry-approved course in Women’s Studies and a course each in Anthropology for grades 11 and 12. In her four years teaching and working at her alma mater, she served as a faculty associate supervising student teachers, instructed several courses in that B. Ed program, and worked as coordinator of its professional development program. Rosa has taught every social studies and history course at one point or another in her career over 24 years. Further, she taught several years of humanities in grades 8 and 10, and in a “bridge” program for at risk students in Grades 7 and 8.
After describing my project on the telephone to Rosa, she suggested that her Grade 12 history class and her coverage of the struggle over apartheid in South Africa was a unit worth observing. This was an important unit she suggested because of the international nature of that struggle with its connection to broader civil rights movements and changes in the political status of African states. It would be an opportunity she said to see how she taught about an important social struggle and change before time was going to force her to prepare for the provincial exams her students faced in just over a month. Preparation for the provincial exam, which constitutes 40% of the final mark in history Grade 12, was a constraint that she felt greatly hampered far more important work in historical study.

The unit I observed Rosa teach consisted of five classes over three weeks on Apartheid in South Africa. The core of the unit was the movie, "Cry Freedom" starring Denzel Washington as Steve Biko and Kevin Klein as Donald Woods, the South African journalist who Biko helps educate from a liberal, opposed to the exclusion of Black South Africans from the laws of the land, to a more radical position calling for the dismantling of the Apartheid system. The course material consisted of handouts that included a chronology of the anti-apartheid movement and the rise of the Black Consciousness, an account taken off the internet of the role Woods played in the anti-apartheid struggle, and a textbook handout to complement the textbook used by students. Terms she asked students to define and know included the social groups in South Africa mentioned in the film (i.e., Afrikaners, Bantustans, and Homelands). She also asked students to examine the legal structure of the Apartheid system including the Mixed-Marriages Act, the Group Areas Act, the Separate Universities Act, the Terrorism Act, and the treason trials.
Students were also asked to familiarize themselves with leaders of the formal South African political system and those of the various groups struggling against it.

The grading of the unit consisted of a quiz of terms and definitions and a movie review of "Cry Freedom." She asked that this review offer a critique of the film as a historical representation and an analysis of social struggle for and against Apartheid in the 1970's conveyed in the film.

3.4.3 Marv

Marv has taught high school history and social studies for 12 years in a Lower Mainland city noted for its ethnic and religious diversity. He was enrolled in a MA program the year we worked together on this study and his area of research was in the moral development of teachers in the context of history and social studies instruction. While Marv did not have formal curriculum development experience, he has been a co-chair of his school's accreditation review several years previously. Marv was a graduate of the same local university as with the other participants in this study. I met Marv at a works-in-progress group organized by professors of history education and social studies from two local universities. His participation in that group indicated that he would make an ideal participant for this study.

Marv offered insightful comments on papers presented in the works-in-progress group combining concerns for both theory and practice. He helped organize and participated in a Tuesday morning professional reading group at his school consisting of teachers from his social studies department. He continued his professional growth in helping to develop and teach critical thinking models developed at a local university, and in entering
graduate work, desired to further his understanding of the moral dimensions to his practice.

The unit I observed Marv instruct was part of his Social Studies Grade 11 course. Marv organized his courses around issues and themes:

I would prefer that the issues or the themes that we choose are focused more on issues of morality, justice, fairness, issues of race, stereotyping, sexuality first and then tie in somehow into the national story or narrative second, most of the time (#1, p. 2).

In email communication before I worked with Marv, he listed a set of issues and themes he choose from year to year. These included “Immigration and institutionalized racism (1876-1949), the two world wars, the great depression, the internment of Japanese Canadians, bilingualism/biculturalism/multiculturalism policies, the rights revolution, and the quiet revolution and separatist movement.”

The unit I observed consisted of six planned lessons and was entitled, “The Quiet Revolution and Beyond: 1960-1996.” In preparing for my observation, Marv decided to try something new. He subtitled the unit “A unit on social change” and directly addressed in the unit questions around definitions and causes of social change.

Listed in the unit’s outline given to students, the “goals/objectives” of the unit were “[t]o identify the possible causes of social/historical change; apply our understandings of these factors to the events in Quebec (1960-1996); examine the various levels or strata in Quebec society; determine the influence of key leaders, popular movements, and collectives for change; assess the success of Quebec’s transformation and examine its impact on Canadian society as a whole” (unit outline).
Several articles were used in this unit in addition to the textbook. These articles included an article written by a Quebec priest on changing social and political norms in Quebec society, summations of the career of Jean Lesage by an historian, and background reading from the textbook. A portion of another class was dedicated to research on the Quiet Revolution via the internet. Another class consisted of a role play. Students were grouped and handed mock changes to several rules of the school and its scheduling. They then were handed a role that consisted of one of four political positions studied earlier in the year—“traditionalist, liberal, reformist, and anarchist”—from which they were to analyze the “new” rules they would make. Another class was dedicated to synthesizing concepts of social change with knowledge of the Quiet Revolution, the role play, and the discussions around the mock “no hat” rule discussions.

The unit was evaluated with a three part assignment. In the first part, students were asked to summarize ideas discussed in the unit such as “social change,” its definition, causes, and in what ways it might occur. In the second part, students were asked to describe what changed in Quebec between 1960 and 1996. In the final part, students were asked to put the previous two parts together to argue why the Quiet Revolution and social changes studied occurred at that time, and at that place.

3.4.4 Terry

Terry has taught for over 26 years at the high school level. He also has teaching experience in the Bachelor of Education program at a local university from where he also received a MA in curriculum studies. His high school teaching has been recognized with
a National Governor-General's Award and a British Columbia Social Studies Teacher of The Year award. He has been involved in a host of curriculum projects.

He developed several curricula for a local teachers' union and an immigration centre in Toronto in a range of subjects. Throughout his teaching career, Terry has organized multicultural clubs and teacher study groups on literacy. He maintains a strong interest in issues around contemporary teaching, history, and social studies as evidenced by his frequent attendance at conferences and his continuous references in our interviews to recent scholarship in social studies, history, and education more generally conceived. I knew Terry previous to this project from our regular participation along with Marv in a local works-in-progress group.

The majority of Terry's teaching has been in ethnically diverse working class neighbourhoods. Terry had just returned to teach high school from teaching for two years in a Bachelor of Education program at his alma mater. He returned to a west side school drawing from a neighbourhood of high income predominantly White and Asian families to teach six courses, including English, which he had not taught in 15 years. As explored in Chapter Five, the challenges of a new community and school and six preps for unfamiliar courses and grades were not unlike those faced by a new teacher.

Despite his opposition to streaming classes and courses by ability, Terry taught in a "mini-school" at his new school. A mini-school is an enrichment program that, in this case, relied heavily on outdoor and experiential learning to complement their university preparation program.

In discussions and debates in the works-in-progress group, Terry impressed me as an open-minded individual who, despite his considerable teaching background and
professional recognition, asked more questions than he made definitive statements. As one might expect from his work in cooperative learning, Terry balanced processes of learning with product. In the unit I observed, however, Terry relied heavily on lecture punctuated with student group work. This was an unfortunate result of time constraints: "You saw me in a pretty rushed mode, pretty teacher directed, breaking off now and again, doing this that and another. We are half way through the year with history and I am supposed to still do the other areas" (#1, p. 1).

The unit was entitled, "The Trudeau Years, 1968-1984: Were they a time of triumph or tragedy?" and lasted for five classes over two weeks. The framing of the unit also included several other big questions: "What were the changes and challenges of the time? What were the government responses? Were they good responses? To what extent did Trudeau shape the history of Canada? What other factors were important?" Terry assigned reading from the textbook for background information about significant events. These events were then collated the following days on the classroom board from which and about which Terry elaborated often with personal anecdotes. He also had students "make inferences" about how an "English person and French separatist and French nationalist" might interpret this information. He did this on another occasion with income statistics from the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1967) broken down according to language group in Quebec, between Quebec and English Canada, with a similar breakdown for unemployment rates.

Another classroom activity during the unit included introducing and analyzing essays from a history essay contest. As part of his grading of this unit, Terry had students incorporate insights gained from analyzing the winning essay into their own essays about
the Trudeau years to address the following questions: "Were the times for better or worse, was it progress? Did things get better?"
IV. SIGNS FOR THE TIMES: SCHOLARS INTERPRET HISTORICAL AGENCY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

In opposition to the influence of both Althusserian or structural Marxism and its postmodernist critics, scholars from across a range of disciplines have returned in recent years to questions of agents' capacity to choose, to act, and in so doing, affect social change. As is well known, followers of Althusser prefer to discuss the structural or ideological "interpellation" of the subject. For them, subjectivity is an effect, a secondary reflection of concrete, material conditions. Against this Marxist theory of the material conditioning of human subjectivity, postmodernists privilege the "discursive condition" within which social dramas are cast and casts are scripted into social dramas. At once building on and breaking away from these insights, more recent approaches have sought to reassert the significance of agency in relation to social change through time.

Despite extensive disciplinary debates over agency across a range of disciplines, historical scholarship and instruction have until recently remained untroubled. Not surprisingly, there has been in both a reliance on common cultural and institutionalized assumptions in explanations for human influences on social change. History and Theory recently recognized the significance of agency to historical work, however, by producing a special theme issue, "Agency after Postmodernism," dedicated to its study. This special issue offers a broad range of interpretations for relationships between human agency and social change. It is, therefore, an important resource for historical scholarship.

Pomper has suggested that historians have not concerned themselves with questions about the relationship between "agency" and "structure[s]" of the world into which
agents are cast, preferring to get on with the “task of assigning causes to events” (Pomper, 1996, p. 281-282). For Aya, agency, has been the “third man” brought in “to do the dirty work,” providing an explanation without explication for the way that social structures, whether understood as “culture,” “experience,” or “class,” shape action and action leads to structures (Aya, 2001, p. 144). As Giddens notes, the appeal of “experience,” “class,” and “culture” in historical explanations is strong: “For like Marxism, we are still prisoners of the Victorian era in so far as we look first of all to the transformation of the material world as the generic motive force of human history” (Giddens, 1984, p. 259). Explaining human influences in change through time is a complex task for which this special issue offers historians an important resource.

The *History and Theory* special issue also constitutes a valuable resource for history instruction. Both agency and social change have also been insufficiently theorized in the history education literature. There is a lack of discussion about how we might define agency or an elucidation of a range of possible ways such a capacity might be expressed in processes of social change. As reviewed in Chapter Two, in spite of the lack of discussion, or perhaps because of it, students have a definite set of impressions for who is responsible for social change and how it occurs.

Research reviewed in Chapter Two indicates that questions about agency are unasked by teachers and that students, recognizing what teachers reward, have also successfully got on with the narrower “task of assigning causes to events.” To summarize in a highly abbreviated form, my findings suggest that North American students of various ages interpret the agency involved in social and political change in a manner that might best be described as “heroic individuals engaged in individual power struggles.” They reason
that, as a result of these struggles, social changes occurred as others just came to realize the incorrectness of certain beliefs that they then simply changed. That review also noted that some students interpret political structures as the extension of powerful individual’s desires and goals. As with historical scholarship, research reviewed in Chapter Two indicates a need for researchers and teachers in history and social studies education to engage more directly with the complexity of accounting for human influences in social change.

To actualize the potential contribution of scholarship to the study of historical agency and social change, I shaped work in this special issue into a “sensitizing framework” (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1996). As explored in the previous chapter, a sensitizing framework is one in which ideas and concepts are combined to initiate further refinement about a phenomenon, set of ideas, interpretations, or meanings. Emirbayer and Goodwin note that a sensitizing framework is provisional, and hence represents an initial attempt open to further addition or refinement (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1996, p. 364). Such refinement emerges from a vital dialogue between theory and practice in classrooms as explored in Chapter Five.

In reviewing this issue, I introduce the reader to the scholars and their work from which I developed the sensitizing framework. I have arranged their arguments as if in conversation, clarifying key differences. Influenced in my work with participants as outlined in Chapter Five, I argue that each of these scholars offers a potentially legitimate and applicable interpretation of agency. Historians and teachers do not have to adopt one interpretation over another as each emphasizes a different aspect of the relationship between individuals, groups, and society. Taken together, each contributes to multiple
ways in which agency and social change may be explained. For example, one or another may be more appropriate to read different moments in a process of social change or agents in differing social circumstances in a particular moment. With the exception of Ermarth's discussion about the impact of scientific and artistic movements on political and cultural practices, these scholars do not, however, sufficiently address the roles played in historical change by social movements and other manifestations of group struggles. The work of Touraine is added to this review and to the framework to address this shortcoming.

4.1 Historical agency in social conflict and change

In this section, I review accounts of agency from Ermarth, Smith, Cabrera, Fitzhugh and Leckie, Reddy, and Touraine. A cluster of related questions guide this review: In what ways is the social field of action, actor, and agency understood by these scholars? What perceived legacy of philosophical and social science shortcomings do these scholars invoke to give coherence and relevance to their understandings? Finally, how do they believe social change emerges from the relationship between human agency and social structures?

In this special issue, Ermarth, Smith, and Cabrera focus on social change most extensively. Their work challenges the predominance of materialist explanations and functional analysis in sociology and historical scholarship. They assert that appeals to class, socioeconomic factors, or experience, or, those based on agents’ internalization of social norms and values, fail to adequately explain how people’s intentions, motivations, or actions contribute to social change. Of course, objective conditions such as class and
discourse exist whether defined in terms of working conditions or wages or human rights.

What requires historical explication is how agents' experiences of those objective conditions became formative terms to their expression of agency. Cabrera (2001) summarizes this view nicely:

Of course, individual's interests are constituted out of any of their social properties, but the crucial question is why and how one or another property becomes the base or defining criterion of interests. In other words, why and how certain interests are activated (p. 92).

Such appeals, they argue, elide precisely what needs to be explained: the way agents interpreted their choices, intentions, and actions that contributed to shifting social relationships and social change. They differ as to the sources of such "shifts." Reddy locates agency and social change in "action situations," or put more simply, people's social encounters. According to Reddy, shifts emerge from the complexity of contradictory intentions and people's negotiations of personal and shared goals. Ermarth assigns sources of historical agency and social change to the space between the sign and signifier of Saussure's "semiology," between language as potential and language as spoken. Others locate historical agency and change in the conceptual adjustments required to read shifting political (Smith) or cultural contexts (Cabrera). For Cabrera, changes in social understanding of "society," "self," and "agency" result when discursive networks as "regimes of rationality" collide (Cabrera, 2001, p. 95). For Touraine, such changes are possible, not from the colliding of discourses, but rather because of struggles over how social life will be culturally and politically defined through which individuals come to interpret their identities and commitments (historicity). Scholars in this special issue on agency after postmodernism exemplify Touraine's point. Connecting a
perceived historical legacy of philosophical and social science shortcomings to their present interventions over the ways agents, agency, and social change should be interpreted reflects broader struggles over a better future for understanding such endeavours.²

Ermarth and Fitzhugh and Leckie exceed the others in polemics. Ermarth heralds the death of modernity with its history and politics founded on the twin presumptions of a rational and unified individual and the status of language as a transparent medium of representation. Working from postmodern and poststructuralist interpretations of language, subject, and representation, Ermarth calls upon historians to renounce a past clothed by modernity in “explanations that are only well dressed mistakes” (Ermarth, 2001, p. 50). She argues that the subject of history is not the past, but the ways that subjects localized their “distributed subjectivities” in “the discursive condition.” Such social subjects are, as historical explanations should be, fragment, fracture, and palimpsest (Ermarth, 2001, p. 51). It is precisely this postmodernist and poststructuralist thought that Fitzhugh and Leckie contest. I summarize their argument further below.

For Ermarth, the arrival of post-modernity, as a collection of artistic, cultural, and disciplinary practices across social sciences and the humanities, has “unsettled assumptions basic to what I call the Culture of Representation” whose foremost assumption lies upon the existence of a unified individual agent:

“[T]he individual” agent of modernity exists for and makes possible the “objectivity” that we have taken for granted, thanks to our familiarity with representational conventions first in art, then in science, then in political systems (Ermarth, 2001, p. 37).
In contrast to the unified subject of modernity, Ermarth’s subject is rather “subjectivity-in-processes,” or a “distributed subjectivity” across overlapping social semiological systems (Ermarth, 2001, p. 46):

Such a subjectivity is individual in its sequence, not in some irreducible core. Its uniqueness lies in its trajectory...within which an unpredictable series of specifications are made from available languages (p. 47)...This idea of distributed subjectivity, far from being a loss or lack, allows for the actual complexity of conscious life more fully and precisely than the modern “subject” ever did (Ermarth, 2001, p. 49).

The postmodern social field is a “discursive condition” in which agents specify linguistic and systemic possibilities without ever exhausting potential for regeneration.

Ermarth asserts that contradiction is natural to her discursive condition. She emphasizes historical agency as a distributed condition in which “discursive opportunities lie ready-to-hand in the small daily iterations” (Ermarth, 2001, p. 54). She argues, however, that it was the work of Lyotard, Saussure, Einstein, and Picasso that have more recently destabilized beliefs in purely representational media of disciplinary language through which a unified individual may be objectively read. While she argues that historians must focus on the localized articulations within semiological systems, she attributes cultural change to individuals whose powerful artistic and scientific articulations span across time, societies, and disciplines. But perhaps, as she mentions, this cannot be avoided for the present. The unified subject of modernity’s history frames the intelligibility of influential agents and their individuality so that she too must speak in these terms.

In Ermarth’s discursive condition, language itself is the source of instability; an instability that assures the emergence of differing artistic and scientific metaphors and representational practices that contribute to cultural and then social and political change.
Both Smith and Cabrera, in contrast, emphasize ideas rather than language as conceptual resources used to interpret and affect emerging realities. In a circular argument, Cabrera claims that social changes are possible when previous discourses or “conceptual networks” prove insufficient to explain “ever changing and always new social reality” (Cabrera, 2001, p. 89). Smith posits that social changes stem from the need for agents to establish, using available conceptual resources or ideas, epistemological and moral coherence in evolving political situations. As to historical agency, however, they differ significantly. For Cabrera, agents merely process discourses. Agents may construct personal meanings from discourses, but, these meanings have no effect he argues on the discourse from which it is derived. Smith rejects this deterministic role given to discourses and emphasizes the creativity of agents’ “interpretive dispositions.”

Smith contests an emphasis in “traditional history” on “experience” and on “revisionist or linguistic explanations” that appeal to “discourse.” He argues that both fail to capture the agent’s creative application of discourses to “crystallize multiple prior experiences” and guide those to come (Smith, 2001, p. 117). Rather, Smith uses agency to conceptualize what agents do between discourse and experience. Smith argues that the attribution of intention and action to either the stamp of socioeconomic properties or discursive residuum “mask[s] the creativity and moral determination that characterize the active human consciousness” (Smith, 2001, p. 127). Such attribution ignores the agent’s “interpretive dispositions” in shared and emerging contexts “that determine how people engage, process, and learn from all that occurs in their lives” (Smith, 2001, p. 127).
Smith exemplifies this argument through an analysis of Tackett’s popular historical work on the French Revolution. To contest Tackett’s explanation for the emergence of a French revolutionary spirit, Smith analyzes the writings of a contemporary of the period Tackett studies. According to Smith, the writing of a deputy to the Estates-General, the French noble, Servan, “provides an ideal entry into the evolving political consciousness” of emerging revolutionary actions “parallel [to] that described by Tackett in his analysis of the deputies to the Estates-General” (Smith, 2001, p. 129). Because Cabrera also shares Smith’s objection to the use of experience to explain historical actions, and because of its popularity, Smith’s critique of Tackett is worth a more extended analysis.

Echoing Giddens’ comments, Smith questions “the analytical instinct to derive thought from forces external to the subject, such as discourse or experience” (Smith, 2001, p. 126). According to Smith, Tackett attributes two kinds of experience as causes of the revolt by the Third Estate: social formation experience and immediate sensory experience (Smith, 2001, p. 122). The arguments for experience as a source of action are familiar, even if unsatisfactory. People exist in social locations. Experiences associated with those social locations impart underlying attitudes or values, jealousies, desires, and ways of thinking— an ethos activated by appropriate stimuli to cause action.

In the role played by Third Estate in revolutionary France, the Third Estate’s “posture toward the noble deputies...reflected not so much an intellectual position” but “an instinctive and visceral antipathy” brought to surface by the Estates-General’s deliberative process itself, which served to “crystallize and intensify social antagonisms, making more deputies far more self-conscious of those antagonisms than ever before” (Tackett, cf. Smith, 2001, p.125). Smith sums up Tackett’s reading of the French
revolutionary consciousness as having “developed by the third estate [as] a direct expression of immediate experience, a consciousness reinforced by half-suppressed memories of earlier antipathies” (Smith, 2001, p. 126):

The explosion of antinoble sentiments in 1788-89 was suggestive of a long festering anger on the part of many future Third deputies...The equally vigorous defense of privilege and noble superiority which burst forth from the Second Estate at almost the same time, was indicative of the Nobility’s sensitivity and fear of Third resentment (Tackett, 1998, p. 306).

According to Smith, Tackett’s view of consciousness, as that which records experience and then releases that experience when contacted by activating stimuli in the form of antipathies or conflict, is too passive:

The key to uncovering the connection between consciousness and agency lies not in the analysis of experience per se, but in the processes of interpretation that inevitably intersect the phenomena one regards as the subject’s experience. To go where the action is, and to find the motors that drive historical change, the historian needs to dissect the interpretive disposition (Smith, 2001, p. 126. Italics in original).

As with experience, for Smith, “the concept of discourse is not sufficiently agile” (Smith, 2001, p. 139) to explain why it is that some but not other people think and act they way they do at one and not another time:

[D]iscourses...are defined by their structural unity and which take shape only when an observer abstracts them from the processes of cognition and communication and reifies them for analytical purposes (Smith, 2001, p. 127).

In contrast, he argues that “interpretive dispositions” offer better explanatory starting points: “[T]hey reflect the multiple convictions and commitments on which the subject bases his/her sense of self, as well as the disparate beliefs and assumptions that inform those commitments” (Smith, 2001, p. 127).
In his analysis of Servan’s writing over a ten-year period, Smith notes the many “discursive regimes” this noble member of the Estates-General utilized in his writings. These ranged from classical Greek scholarship and medieval writings to the more contemporary revolutionary treatises circulating in France at that time. Not only was his reading eclectic but Servan’s moral outlook on issues of his day and the actions on which he embarked during the Estates-General cannot be reduced to the experience of his socio-cultural position. Smith’s analysis concludes that Servan’s writings and actions contradict any reasonable historical or sociological abstraction of his noble class’ interests. In other words, his choices, intentions, and actions are insufficiently explained by his likely experiences collated under socio-economic categories. Nor does discourse itself sufficiently account for the Servan’s heterogeneous intellectual influences over the course of his life studied.

Smith posits that as conflicts in the social realm unfold, the epistemological clarity and moral stance of agents are challenged. Servan’s agency laid in the work involved in interpretive dispositions “composing” and “decomposing” (Smith, 2001, p. 141). Such composition and decomposition was stimulated by the “shifting context of political argument [that] challenged [Servan] to refine and reiterate his beliefs” (Smith, 2001, p. 139). Extending from the particular to the general, Smith argues that the revolution did not inevitably emerge from social or economic or even political disparities but from the “re-arrangement of conceptual resources long familiar to both the deputies to the Estates General and their constituents” (Smith, 2001, p.127. Italics added). Explaining historical events, Smith argues, necessitates “[a]ttention…not on experience, but on the
composition and decomposition of the interpretive dispositions that inevitably frame historical agency” (Smith, 2001, p. 141).

Smith offers a set of convincing arguments that do not appeal to experience and discourse to explain shifts in Servan’s “interpretive disposition” contributing to the revolutionary possibility in France at that time. He may have, however, overplayed his hand by extending that analysis to the constituents of the Third Estate. Surely there is a difference worth noting in explanations concerning the choices, intentions, and actions of a noble with, presumably, time to pursue pertinent social and political questions and those in differing circumstances who helped to storm the Bastille or the estates of their local lords. In inappropriately extending the particular to the general in this way, Smith denies the likely possibility that to understand different agents operating in differing circumstances may require different interpretations of historical agency.

Cabrera agrees with Smith that it is how historical actors interpreted the terms of the political conflict – whether as “class”, “culture”, “change”, or “citizen” – that must be explained in accounts of social action (Cabrera, 2001, p. 96). The content of these terms are determined by what he, or rather, his translators, name at different places in the article, as “discourses,” “categories,” “cognitive categories,” or a “conceptual matrix.” In contrast to Smith’s work, however, Cabrera asserts that “discourses” are ontologically independent both of personal intentions and social realities. Changes in this independent realm, therefore, cannot be explained by human agency or through appeals to social or material facts. The ways that “discourses” change constitutes for Cabrera the most significant of historical questions:

The cognitive categories or general concepts that people use to make sense of their social world and their place in it...constitute a complex relational network
whose nature is neither objective nor subjective and whose origin is different from 
and external to the two instances (social reality and human consciousness) that 
they put in relation. In a similar fashion, categorical changes are not the fruit of 
social changes or human cultural creativity...[To accept this assertion] forces us 
to reconstruct the whole theoretical edifice of historical explanations, and in 
particular, to formulate a new concept of social action (Cabrera, 2001, p. 86).

Like Smith, Cabrera argues that the use of experience in causal explanations by 
traditional historians (political and economic experience) and social and cultural 
historians (social or cultural experience) elides precisely what requires explication. 
Cabrera asserts that even the newer cultural history never escaped the dichotomous model 
of subject-society:

[They] continue to take for granted that social and cultural realms, or simply 
structure and action, are the only components of historical processes and that, 
consequently, all historical explanations lie in the relation between the two
(Cabrera, 2001, p. 85).

While sharing the same postmodern philosophy of language, Cabrera differs in his 
analysis from Ermarth as to the significance of this philosophical orientation in historical 
explanations of social change. While Ermarth emphasizes the creative tension between 
word and utterance in the “discursive condition,” Cabrera distinguishes between 
“concepts” and “meanings” to escape the duality of structure-agency in historical 
explanations. He posits that concepts have their own ontological status independent of 
both the social and personal realm although they mediate the relationship between the 
two. In contrast, meanings are what subjects make with available concepts. It is meaning, 
and not concepts, that are “subjective entities in the sense that subjects are aware of their 
existence and manage them at will in the course of their social interactions” (Cabrera, 
2001, p. 87).
Cabrera writes that the "concept of discourse" permits analysis both of the conceptual categories through which people perceive and make sense of social reality and the beliefs, meanings, and "forms of consciousness" taken to be reality that result:

[T]he modern discursive concepts of liberty, equality, individual, citizenship, or class are one thing...if people can aspire to be free and equal and if they feel like rational individuals or citizens with rights or identify themselves as a class, it is because the respective concepts previously existed and were applied to social life (Cabrera, 2001, p. 87).

Cabrera asserts that his distinction between concepts and meanings requires that historians shift from focusing on both human agency and structural explanations for historical action to the intelligibility of that action by subjects:

[T]he crucial task is no longer a question of deciding between human action or social coercion, but a question of situating human action in a new space of causality and intelligibility...what discursive conditions have allowed a given social context to generate a particular modality of practice or course of action (Cabrera, 2001, p. 97).

Thus, the French revolution is not explained by events or intentions inevitably caused by material conditions or social divisions:

However much we may have taken for granted the fact that the social divisions of the eighteenth century were predestined to become political identities, what really caused the Third Estate to constitute a historical subject and political agent were not these divisions, but the application of modern categories, such as labor-property, [or "citizen" as Smith asserts] to them (Cabrera, 2001, p. 94).

"Agency" for Cabrera is itself defined and expressed through a discourse's "regime of rationality." Human agency is not expressed through interpreting conceptual resources as Smith argues because "discursive concepts, on the contrary, impose on and transcend subjects and they lie beyond their intentional control" (Cabrera, 2001, p. 87). He employs a distinction between political "discourse" and "ideology" to illustrate in what way both
the conception and enactments of agency transcend the individual. For Cabrera, political discourse prescribes the ways individuals express their agency, setting up both the interpretations of the conflict and the procedures of action for its possible resolution:

Political discourse is the means through which interests and identities are constituted, whereas political ideology is merely the vocabulary that people use to speak about them. Therefore, the explanation of political action must be found in discourse rather than ideology... Political agents are constituted within a shared (political) discourse that also set the conditions of possibility of certain disputes, makes mutual demands intelligible, provides agents with their rhetorical resources, and, finally, establishes the terms of political resistance (Cabrera, 2001, p. 99, Italics in original).

Cabrera might agree that Smith’s “interpretive disposition” indeed accurately describes the machinations involved in agency. But more importantly for Cabrera, both the content of that scheming and, therefore, the range of possible actions that can result, exist independently of the individual. The discursive relationality of terms or ideas already contains the parameters of the conflict and, therefore, the possible options for actions to resolve it. Because discourse exists independently of human consciousness and social reality, individual agency is, at most, the processing of discourses into personal meanings but not the capacity to influence or change them:

[P]eople always experience the world, conceive of themselves as subjects, and undertake their actions from within a categorical grid that they cannot transcend and that effectively regulates their social practice (Cabrera, 2001, p. 86).

What then cause discourses to change? Cabrera asserts that discourses change when the use of old categories to incorporate “ever changing and always new social reality” are challenged by the categories of new discourses:

Discourses are challenged not by the world but by another discourse... As Laclau and Mouffe state, the relational logic of discourse is limited from the “exterior” but this “exterior” is not an extra-discursive one; this exterior is constituted by
other discourses and, therefore, it is the discursive nature of this exterior that creates the conditions of vulnerability of every discourse, since ultimately nothing can protect it from the deformation and destabilization of its system of differences by other discursive articulations that act from outside it (Cabrera, 2001, p. 90).

Reddy and Smith locate one source of discursive change in the challenge that complex social situations present to the limits of, and desires for, apprehension. In contrast, for Cabrera such social situations are only material referents, neither objective nor causal mechanisms of discursive change. Although people use discursive concepts to make social realities meaningful, Cabrera cautions against concluding that in doing so social agents change discourses:

> [E]ven though discourse is renewed in speech, that speech is, in turn, a projection of the rules of signification of discourse itself (Cabrera, 2001, p. 89)...discourses are not challenged by the world but by another discourse and by the instability inherent in any language system (Cabrera, 2001, p. 90).

So called ‘social changes’ do not occur because of new material realities but through the use of concepts to make the realities of those ‘changes’ meaningful, believable and, hence, true. ⁴ This indeed may be the case. In what ways other than descriptive, hence, conceptual, would a “social change,” in contrast to a technological development, for example, be intelligible? Yet, while Cabrera asserts there is no exterior to discourses, he, like Smith, argues for an “ever-changing and always new social reality” as one reason discursive categories lose veracity. He then argues that this is only a material referent but not a cause of change. We do not have to look far to find criticism of this position.

Fitzhugh and Leckie do not address questions of agency as much as critique what they believe to be the selective and outmoded use of Saussurian linguistics by historians such as Ermarth and Cabrera. They argue that those who take the “linguistic hemeticism”
(Fitzhugh and Leckie, 2001, p. 73) of Saussure’s “semiology” seriously cannot adequately account for how social change occurs:

For not even the collective, non-individual, sub/unconscious processes favored by Foucault can logically allow for change given language’s culture without resort to an unsatisfactory black box ...how language could itself be changed so as to in-turn effect change in the reality human’s perceive remains unexplained (Fitzhugh and Leckie, 2001, p. 74/69).

They argue that a “biological turn” towards cognitive linguistics influenced by Chomsky will provide a better basis to theorize agency and change. Such a turn allows scholars to escape “the black box of language” because, in their view, language is a cognitive tool of communication and not the determinant of the content of communications; that is to say, language merely conveys and does not create social experience. According to Reddy, however, such linguistic debates are unnecessary.

In his analysis, Reddy argues that the emphasis on linguistics and culture in questions of agency, structure, and change is misplaced. Postmodern theorists assert that language is insufficient to capture ‘the’ reality of anything, or conversely, is unlimitedly productive. In contrast, for Reddy it is the complexity of action situations that gives language the appearance of complexity. Reddy asserts that social scientists should focus on the conflicted, confused, yet directed interactions of subjectivities in action situations (Reddy, 2001, p. 27). For Reddy, the complexities of action situations call forth unexpected, partial, and always diverse responses from agents.

Reddy asserts that such complexities explain the failure of qualitative studies he cites to find any correlation between social categories (i.e., racial, religious, class categories) and individual motivation (Reddy, 2001, p. 31). Alleged representatives of such categories repeatedly fail to be representative. By illuminating the complexity of action
situations, Reddy challenges what he takes to be the reliance in historical accounts on language, culture, and, or, social categories as explanatory simplifications.

### 4.2 An open debate

Each of these scholars emphasizes different aspects of social life. Taken together they offer a range of insights useful for inquiry into what makes social change possible and the social circumstances most cogent to consider in accounting for human action. Cabrera, for example, offers many pertinent insights into the ways discourses help shape people’s choices, intentions, and actions. Do discourses define “subjects” and allow for subjects to articulate meaningful relationships and to conceptualize their “agency” in one or another “political” action? Yes, to some degree. The terms that constitute his “categorical grid” likely do determine which issues should be of social import and a range of logical actions to follow for those who attribute validity to them. Attributing significance to the discourse of human rights, for example, would, at the very least, help direct people’s claims in and for social life and provide social life, should they be successful, with a reference for such claims. As Reddy explores, however, the application of ideals and goals to specific and complex situations become confusing on the ground. A commitment to human rights might not translate into actions taken against, for example, misogynist or homophobic behaviours or policies without the demands and agitation of groups. Thus, I hesitate to endorse the concomitant view I believe is required to agree with Cabrera’s argument: that people think and act in such straight cause (discourse) and effect (personal meanings of identity and expressions of agency) manners (Jones, 1996). As with discourse, I hesitate too with Ermarth’s interpretation of the representational practices of
language, art, and science as sources of social change. Rather than Cabrera’s discourse, for Ermarth powerful articulations from art and science inscribe, as if in stone, which way the rain-water of human choices, intentions, and actions will flow regardless of its concentration in time or the material upon which it falls. Nonetheless, in her discussion of language, Ermarth offers an exemplary analysis of the distributed condition of agency scholars concerned with social change must consider.

Smith’s “interpretive disposition” gets closer to individual agency as an imaginative capacity for shaping intentions, forming choices, and undertaking actions. He offers a cogent analysis of changes in Servan’s thinking that contributed to actions he took in response to the pertinent questions of his time. This is the realm of individual agency in which people struggle over what or whose terms should be applied to what or whose situations so as to suit the future appropriately according to what or whose vision of society. Yet, Smith focuses on agency at an individual level and then applies this particular to the general. He thereby avoids necessary analysis of the ways that people become concerned with certain questions and not others and why certain intellectual resources become available with which to address such questions. To investigate social changes through time requires a broader scope of analysis, yet one that avoids appeals to non-social warrants.

To aid such analysis, I build on the work of Touraine to define “historical agency” as a capacity expressed by groups in struggles over the conceptual resources that individuals use to interpret social and material life (e.g., interpretations of worthy personal and social goals, representations of iconic role models, terms of identity, disciplinary interpretations). Touraine argues that the very meaning of “society,”
“subject,” “agency,” and “change” available for agents to interpret and take actions in their lives are facts of “historicity.” These facts emerge from struggles across a range of social locations including the legitimacy of disciplinary interpretations and the stories and images available to individuals in school to define “society,” explain social relations contained therein, trace trajectories from past to future, and influence consideration of worthy social goals and personal practices.

4.3 Historicity and social movements: “We, the people…”

Touraine asserts that, like individuals, societies are characterized by heterogeneity and conflict. They come to know themselves through their action in three areas: inventing knowledge, making investments, and creating of images of creativity (Touraine, 1977). These three areas of action constitute a society’s “historicity.” In contrast to traditional views of sociology premised on organicist or mechanistic metaphors (i.e., societies seek homeostasis or societies seek to function smoothly), Touraine proposes a sociology of action to challenge a philosophical tradition in which warrants for social actions are sought in non-social explanations (e.g., the “nature” of societies, the inevitabilities of class dynamics). By doing so, the creative production and struggles over how “society” will come to know “itself” can be better studied aiding the reflective cycle of social action, social reflection, and informed social action.

Touraine split from his Marxist comrades following the French student movement’s failure of 1968. He departs from a Marxist analysis by observing that any recent social changes (e.g., changes associated, for example, with the women’s movement, post-colonialism, multiculturalism or anti-racism in schools) are better explained by the
struggles over what and who constitute sources of "legitimate" knowledge than by changes in the relations of production (Touraine, 1981). In these struggles, appeals to universal principles, shouted out in street marches or in the more hushed tones of scholarly debate and analysis, feed back into "stocks of knowledge" from which people define themselves and their social commitments (Schutz, 1967). Social changes are possible, Touraine argues, because of battles waged by social classes and movements over such stocks.

Touraine uses historicity to name different aspects of his argument. Historicity denotes the struggle by social movements over the terms through which "society" idealizes "itself." This conflict is why it is crucially important whose questions are identified as worthy historical subjects for scholarship and which or whose interpretations gain legitimacy. Historicity also names what is at stake in this struggle: the way society understands, evaluates, and reproduces itself through "symbolic representations of experience, economic investments, and cultural legitimization of self-generating activity" (Touraine, 1981, p. 59. Italics in original). For Touraine, the production and distribution of symbolic goods within a society constitute the site of the most central conflicts—conflicts over this cultural ordering of social and material relationships and the economic investments that sustain them. This is a key move. By linking social struggle to the range of ideas, images, and terms available for individuals to form choices, shape intentions, and take action, it is unnecessary to appeal to non-social warrants or abstract categories such as "class" or "discourse." Of course, objective conditions such as class and discourse exist whether defined in terms of working conditions and wages or human rights. What requires historical explication, however, is how agents' experiences of those
objective conditions became cogent terms contributing to the formation of their choices, intentions, and action.

Interpreting social change requires that sociologists and historians include the historical agency expressed through social movements. Fortunately, there is much theory and study to assist. For Touraine, social movements do not define their conflict, as do interest or advocacy groups, at the local level of specific demands. Nor is their conflict defined in relation to how institutions operate, as with reform movements. Rather, social movements contest the very definitions of what and of who constitute political subjects. The demands of social movements may include economic or structural reform but cannot be reduced to them because they seek to redefine the drama in which society and selves are cast. According to Touraine, what defines a social movement is the understanding of politics employed:

[I]t advances the hypothesis that the state of social organization depends on conflicts and negotiations between social actors...a social movement combines a consciousness of self, of an adversary, and of a conflict in which an appeal is made to cultural orientations (Touraine, 1996, p. 322)

But do not all social interventions define themselves through conflict? Touraine responds:

Reform movements...speak more naturally of socio-political crisis, of institutional deadlock or hindrances to democracy, - i.e. in political, non-social terms- of freedom and negotiation rather than of social conflicts properly so called. We should refer to these as reform campaigns, not as social movements (Touraine, 1996, p. 310).

As I read Touraine, the demands of social movements cannot be redressed in an existing form of politics. Of course, attempts will be made to accommodate demands and count
“successes” such as, to use more recent examples, all women getting the vote and the formal acceptance of homosexuals into military machines. This will, in fact, constitute for some their delineation of social change. Social movements, however, contest the very definition, image, and the perceived form and necessities of society. There are no terms here of surrender.7

Social movements struggle over what conceptual resources will be available for cultural members in their sense-making activities. On a personal level, Touraine emphasizes that social subjects disagree over, rather than merely reproduce, meaning and values:

[And hence] the rationale for lived commitment to values which are themselves a mix of cultural orientations, power relations, particular experiences and consciousness of the subject (Touraine, 1996, p. 301).

For Touraine “social critique and the subject’s capacity for self-understanding are inseparably bound up with each other...rooted in the subject-actor’s self-understanding of the meaning and reality of what they are fighting and fight for (Gorz, 1996, p. 283).

Unlike Cabrera’s attribution of historical and individual agency to discourse, for Touraine social change results from the successful insertion of questions and concerns into the social sphere by social movements along with the conceptual resources available to individuals with which to answer. For Touraine, social changes are not the inevitable product of discourses, or the instability of language, or the confusing complexities of social interaction. They emerge from cultural struggle over “legitimate” questions and conceptual resources available to interpret social interactions that produce selves, societies, and futures.
4.4 A framework for historical agency and social change

In this section, I summarize and organize the perspectives reviewed here from Touraine, Smith, Cabrera, Tackett, and Ermarth into a framework for historical agency and social change. I chose these scholars because their arguments most centrally assert a position in addition to identifying the shortcomings of others. In reducing these arguments into a form suitable as a heuristic device, I recognize the potential of losing the complexity of their arguments or the nuance of their positions. This is an unavoidable risk in translating these complex arguments for use in this study.

Touraine:

Agency contributing to social change emerges through group struggle over the legitimacy of certain claims and identities in society. People articulate these struggles through a framework of justification: a framework that includes a problem, the legitimacy of a claim based on an ideal, and a group through which problems, claims, and ideals find articulation, support, and coherence. These struggles give rise to ideas and terms that allow people to (re)interpret and to (re)define their society and themselves as social subjects. Agency is a capacity expressed by groups in struggles over the conceptual resources that individuals use to interpret social and material life (e.g., interpretations of worthy personal and social goals, representations of iconic role models, disciplinary interpretations).
Tackett:

The agency of people contributing to social change emerges from socioeconomic motivations. There are two types of experiences associated with such motivations: social formation experiences (type 1) and immediate sensory experience (type 2). The first are experiences gained from a particular socioeconomic status or position that are activated by type 2 experiences. Experiences associated with social locations impart underlying attitudes or values, jealousies, desires, and ways of thinking—an ethos. These experiences are activated by the more immediate experience (type 2) of social, political, and/or cultural conflicts to cause action contributing to social change. Agency is an expression of motivations (a combination of interpretations and desires) that emerge from socioeconomic and class experiences stimulated by political or cultural struggle.

Smith:

People express agency contributing to social change through their (re)interpretations of changing political or material conditions. Such changing circumstances cause people to reconcile conflicting beliefs, ideas, and/or images so as to make moral and intellectual sense of such changes. Facing such challenges, people might re-interpret their experiences in light of new ideas and images leading to calls for political, social, or material adjustments. The felt veracity of certain ideas or images from, for example, discourses of civil or human rights, nationalism or political sovereignty, leads to support for such calls. Agency is the personal action of reconciling differing social beliefs, ideas, and images in order to establish or reestablish a general moral sense and particular view of the world.
Cabrera:

Social change results from the collision of discourses. Discourses are related sets of ideas, concepts, and terms that define personal identities and the possible ways to express agency. When people encounter new discourses, such as human rights or political self-determination, their conceptions of social relationships and their identities are reconfigured. For example, if people can aspire to be free and equal and if they feel like rational individuals or citizens with rights or identify themselves as a class, it is because the respective concepts previously existed and were applied to social life. *Agency, like identities, is defined by discourses that determine the range of possible expressions of claims and of social and political action in the world.*

Ermarth:

As with the ever-changing nature of language use, artistic and scientific innovations give rise to new metaphors and descriptions of some aspect of the world that spur social change. Changes in artistic and scientific representations of individuals, nature, and or, society disrupt and thereby contribute to new or emerging representations of the world. These changed representations lead to new expressions of the relationships between individuals and, or, communities and between human endeavors and the non-human world. These emergent metaphors filter into social consciousness through their conveyance in popular art, academic disciplines, political arguments, and advertisements. Changing metaphors thereby confront older metaphors that help guide the ways that people make sense of the world. *Agency is a distributed capacity, a capacity to make*
sense of the world guided by changing artistic metaphors and scientific representations that are utilized across a range of social locations.

4.5 Summary

Whether explained by discourses speaking people, people speaking discourses, or people actively interpreting and choosing in response to material realities, clashes over the cultural terms of social relationships appear to be the first certainty of both past and present. Whether it is the looseness of language or the dissonance created by complex social situations, people's socially dependent “interpretive dispositions” are always vulnerable and shifting by the mere fact of their collective nature. As these writers exemplify, debate over the ways agents, agency, and social change will be cast in historical inquiry depends greatly upon which aspects of individual and social life are emphasized: the multidimensionality of action situations, spaces between grammars and utterances, the reading of shifting political contexts through personal interpretive dispositions, the collisions of differing discursive frameworks in which society, selves, and social dramas are cast, or the struggles by social groups to define the signs for the times.

As expressions of individual agency, these writers each reiterate a perceived history of the debate, evaluate present states of scholarship, and project better ways to inquire into historical agency and social change. Touraine's notion of "historicity" provides a useful shorthand for the site, the agents, and what this conflict, with its cogency and vitality for social life, concerns. Based on my reading of his work, I have offered a simple definition of historical agency as a capacity expressed by groups in struggles over the conceptual
resources that individuals use to interpret social and material life (e.g., interpretations of worthy personal and social goals, representations of iconic role models, terms of identity, disciplinary interpretations).

For Touraine, the very meaning of "society," "subject," "agency," and "change" are exactly what is at stake in historical and educational debates over the cultural resources through which society will form in the minds of those who consider themselves referenced in such fictions as, for example, "We, the people..." As with all fictions, such as universal principles, employed to create realities of political and social identities, perhaps the question we need to ask of historical agency and social change is not so much about what it is, but rather, about what "we" wish to emphasize and who this wishing "we" will be.
Notes:

1 Three articles from the *History and Theory* special issue are not included in this review. Aya explicates the explanatory power of rational choice theory. According to his review, the cause of action can be read backwards, extrapolating, based on an assumption that actors act according to utility, from what was done to conclude what was intended. As with a detective, the historian explains actions by showing motivation and opportunity. I am interested, however, not with behavioral assumptions, “but in how forward-looking (but not always utility-maximizing) actors actually construct choices out of fluid and shifting fields of possibilities” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p. 987). Carr’s article reviews the incommensurable distance in geography and time, and in perceptions of geography and time, between historians and those they study. While this is an important work, it lies outside the questions that guide this review. Finally, Bonneuil’s article reviews recent advancements in dynamical systems, set-valued analysis, and chaos theory in shaping social and historical time. I simply am not qualified to discuss his research.

2 Differing models of agency have marked important lines of disagreement within, for example, the various schools of psychology: “The reformulation of agency and the identification of its necessary elements are rapidly becoming controversial within psychology” (Markus and Kitayama, 2002, p. 14). For a discussion of disagreements about conceptions of agency in sociology, see Calhoun (1994) and Sztompka (1994), and in education, see Bowers (1984, 1987). For a comparison of agency in the works of Giddens and Touraine, see den Heyer (2003b).


4 On this point, Cabrera’s argument is reminiscent of Lechte’s review of Spinoza’s claim “that science is true because it is successful; it is not successful because it is true” (Lechte, 1994, p. 38). For Cabrera, discourses affect social change by making such change meaningful, believable, and hence, true. Cabrera asserts that neither discourses nor social change has external referents so as to be ‘objectively’ true, hence, meaningful and believable.

5 In this regard, Touraine’s point is certainly not unique. Basil Bernstein, for example, offers a set of finely wrought distinctions of different social classes and their role in struggles over the legitimacy of various terms of social interpretation, see Bernstein (1971).

In this view of political struggle, Touraine shares much with another important thinker in French scholarship, see Ranciere (1994, 1995, 1999). For relevant commentary, see Arditi & Valentine (1999) and, for an introduction to Touraine's political commitments, see Clark and Diani (1996).
CHAPTER 5

V. PARTICIPANTS INTERPRET HISTORICAL AGENCY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

In this chapter, I report on my collaboration with participants. As reviewed in Chapter Three, qualitative studies draw from partial and limited moments with participants materialized in recordings and transcripts. These moments are shaped by moods, location, and participants' perceptions about the research project or the researcher and by the interaction between each over the course of the study. Thus, quotations and material presented here should be considered suggestive rather than definitive of participants' interpretations or beliefs. The researcher/writer further mediates the presentation of such moments through the translation of transcription, editing, and arrangement.

I have arranged responses and insights from all four participants together in one chapter. Because this is a qualitative study investigating insights into a set of questions and not one concerned with quantification (i.e. noting frequency of certain responses), the reader is burdened only with what I judge to be the most illustrative moments that shed light on those questions. I do note, however, where an interpretation is shared by all or some of the other participants, or where there are similar interpretations and insights.

There are unfortunately drawbacks to this arrangement. One concerns a question of context and I have used block quotations to provide the reader a degree of context relating to the ideas expressed by the participants. This arrangement also creates breaks in the presentation of each participant. I have tried to mitigate readers' possible frustration by extensive section numbering in this chapter. I also try to assist by signalling and
connecting themes across sections. Finally, I have included after each quotation a citation in this form (#, p.). This allows readers to connect quotations from the same interviews across the sections. I indicate where I have shortened quotations with […] Before reporting on findings and the organization of this chapter, it is worthwhile to recount the central argument running through this work.

Social change over time and the question of human capacities to affect change lie at the very heart of history and social studies instruction. A notable absence exists, however, right at its core. There is a lack of discussion in the history and social studies education research literature about social change or human agency. Further, researchers do not know what interpretations of agency and change teachers bring to their practice and there is little reason to believe that possible interpretations have been raised as questions with students. Consequently, it is unsurprising to find, as reviewed in Chapter Two, that students' explanations for social change are more reflexive than reflective when they cite what Morris et al. and Marcus and Kitayama identify as a "Western" institutionally-favoured interpretation of agency. I have argued that such citations are insufficient on several grounds.

Students live lives filled with conflict and ambiguities played out in modest zones-of-influence. Yet, textbooks, along with other cultural texts, present a heroic North American representation of agency in stories they convey. We should not be surprised, therefore, if students become apathetic about the future or full of despair when they interpret and explain social change as the prerogative of heroic individuals performing transformative deeds. As I explored in Chapter Four, such citations are also insufficient on disciplinary grounds. Historians have recently acknowledged the question as central to
their work and, borrowing from a range of disciplines and methodologies, have offered
diverse accounts of the complexities of agency and social change. A range of possible
interpretations exist, therefore, to engage agency and change as questions to be explored
rather than as assumptions to be made.

Given the central role played by teachers in students’ education, I shaped recent
scholarship as a heuristic both to investigate what interpretations teachers bring to their
practice and to provide content for the use of agency as a second-order concept. As a
critical case sample experienced teachers are best situated to help initiate this inquiry. I
hope this study contributes to a reflective cycle among experienced teachers, researchers,
and beginning teachers towards a more conscious, sophisticated, and informative set of
student interpretations of change over time. I now turn to the organization of this
chapter.

I begin the chapter with a section on participants as agents expressing intentions
behind their work, making choices about content and approach, and projecting what they
hope to achieve with students in their teaching projects. These three moments correspond
to my definition of individual agency as an imaginative capacity for shaping intentions,
forming choices, and undertaking actions. Beginning the chapter in this way introduces
the reader to the commitments of participants and, thus, contextualizes the work we did
together. I was not surprised that, in that work, these superb teachers expressed their
individual agency so clearly in the units I observed. I was surprised, however, to see a
correlation between how participants understood their own personal and professional
intentions, choices, and projects and what they found most sensible in my summations of
scholars work from Chapter Four.
Up to this point, I have only written of the potential benefits of explicitly engaging students with questions of agency and social change. The benefit of doing so is illustrated in the second section where I review the observations of two participants’ units, one unit organized around such questions and the other not. These two units also provide two examples of how differently the individual agency of teachers related in the previous section is expressed in classrooms.

This section is followed by another investigating whether my summations developed in Chapter Four were efficacious as a heuristic device to investigate participants’ interpretations of historical agency and social change. In this section, I review participants’ interpretations both in reference to the topics covered in their units and as more generally considered before I conclude with some remarks about findings in this chapter.

5.1 Participants as agents: “iteration,” “evaluations,” “projectivities”

I have defined individual agency as an imaginative capacity for shaping intentions, forming choices, and undertaking actions. As reviewed in Chapter Three, this capacity involves three “moments,” the re-“iteration” of significant past moments that inform present “evaluations” that are both guided by and contribute to future oriented action, or “projectivity.” But agency expressed on a personal level is not just a cognitive act. As Emirbayer and Goodwin note, their model also offers a way to consider the emotional commitments that shape desires, goals, or projects. Thus defined and elucidated, I use individual agency to inquire into possible correlations between my participants’ personal pasts, what they hope to accomplish through their teaching, and the interpretations of
historical agency contributing to social change they bring to their practice. Thus, I include moments that participants identified in interviews as influential in shaping their teaching commitments, that I also observed emerging in their classes and that I, therefore, believe provide some insight into their interpretations of historical agency and social change.

5.1.1 Mary as agent

Mary comes from a wealthy Vancouver family and attended university despite a common expectation for women at this time: “My mom just could not believe me: ‘You have to be kidding me. Why would you go there and waste all that money when you are just going to meet some man who you are going to marry and that education will be totally wasted?’” (#1 p. 13).

Mary went to university and, after graduating, travelled to Prince Rupert in northern British Columbia to take up a teaching position and later a position as counsellor for First Nations students. She quickly realized a disjuncture between her institutionalized role and the needs of these students: “I invent their problems and I solve their problems and I send them on their way. I am into efficiency. It took me four months to stop doing that, it was stupid stuff” (#1 p. 10). She realized that she was unable to serve her students unless she “walk[ed] their geography” as opposed to reading them through her background and institutional location:

This was huge! It was a culture shock for me! [...] I tried to get into that community a bit more. So I went out and spent a lot of time on the islands. I lived on reserve Christmas vacation, Easter vacation, summers, and I tried to get a feel for that... So, that was a really interesting thing because I connected with a group of people with whom I never would have had anything in common. I learned a whole lot about walking the geography to understand the culture” (#1 p. 10).
Her attention to “walking the geography” is evident in her desire to get students “on the ground” of those countries covered in her course:

I don’t think you can teach the Third World unless you take people there. You can’t sit [here] and understand what it is to live in Quito. You just can’t do that. They need to go and see what would happen on the ground. You can say that whole thing, you can draw pictures of that whole thing. But until they are on the ground, it is just not the same. (#1 p. 7).

The echoing influence of her past as a social psychological context for her present commitments can be noted in her following articulation. It combines her previous maturation with First Nations in Prince Rupert with another shocking encounter, and in her understanding, an opportunity for change: a change that was to influence her teaching over 34 years:

KdH: You mentioned that at that tennis club in Cali, Colombia, you went for a walk around the perimeter and saw those kids…

Because I had never experienced it. What I had seen, I mean you have this exclusive [tennis] club and this little exclusive upbringing of mine, and then with the Rupert experience which really knocked me on my rear end in terms of “holy cow, there is a whole group of people who live very differently than I did.” But there is some joy in the way that they live too. There is huge freedom. [In Cali] I was looking into the eyes of children who were already dead and they were only five. They were walking around just staring into space with their stomachs out to here and hopeless. It was just awful! [...] I just could not come to terms with it and I could not come to terms with it there (#1 p. 10).

The influence of this past is evident in her evaluation of her teaching project to break down the shells of privilege in which she believed her students exist:

I think we all come from relative privilege because I spent a lot of time in the third world. I think it is really important to be a citizen of the world, not a citizen of [name of her town] or a citizen of Canada and so I do a lot of debunking things like common sense and cultural indoctrination … So I spend a lot of time doing that sort of thing with them but mainly because you cannot accept the whole world if you can only see it from your shell (#1, p. 15).
In my introductory conversations with Mary, I was struck by her powerful personality. She conducted her classes, her student relationships, and indeed her humanities program with an independent spirit. Yet, she taught WWII as conventionally as one could imagine; a sort of blow by blow description of battles, strategies, weapons, set backs, and eventual victory for the Allies. This narrative was aided by sonorously narrated documentaries with dramatic music, strategy maps, and lots of old movies of pasty men congregating or departing from some or another war meeting. It was a curious disjuncture. In our conversations and interviews, Mary emphasized that it was her teaching project to inform students’ deliberative capacities. I asked why it was she concentrated so exclusively on military affairs of this time when she strongly viewed her goals with students as being “...to look, stop, and look at themselves. What do you believe, why do you believe?” (#1 p. 19):

I do not know...it should be on Canada, that is what the IRP [British Columbia’s Ministry of Education Integrated Resource Package] says- “Canada in World War II” which they are going to do on their own because that is how they learn it. But I think that WWII is a big thing. I cannot imagine you just do not do it... So now I am going to look from the point of view of what it is like to be in those battles... But I do not... I never know how to teach this war (#1 p. 19-20).

Pushing for her to explain her exclusive focus on battles, I spoke about the difficulties, yet the necessity, of separating war-induced changes in technology, social life, and political commitments, from war, as a set of battles:

And that is what I did with WWI. I did not talk about at all the battles of war. I talked about Vimy and Paschendale [the two most significant battles in the narrative of Canada’s international ‘coming of age’] but I did not talk much about the war at all. What is happening to women, what is happening to the minorities, what is happening to the Native people, because those are the people we brought through [in our study] to 1914...(#1 p. 20).
She quickly returned to her musings on war: “I think… I don’t know how to do it! I don’t know how to explain to kids what it must be like to be at war” (#1 p. 20):

KdH: And then for who? For us sitting back here in Canada…

Well, I watched my Dad die a few years ago. Whenever he took sleeping pills or any kind of medication, he had flashbacks. Now that war was fifty years ago. My dad never talked about the war. So for fifty years, he repressed unbelievable stuff and then, as he was dying, there it all was. He got to the point where he chose to die in unbelievable pain rather than revisit that time in his life. That is a huge, that is huge, and how you get that across that when you send a group of young men to war, when they cannot think for themselves and they have no… they have no idea of what they are getting into but it is going to warp and change them forever (#1 p. 21).

This was a powerful moment. I was unprepared for this personal turn in the interview as I listened to her exasperation at the price of war and the disbelief in her voice at its far ranging costs. Mary reiterated a compelling moment that guided her evaluations of working with students “to explain to kids what it must be like to be at war.” This moment helps explain the importance she attributes to helping “young men think for themselves” and to “terrify boys so that they never go to war” (#1 p. 21) by having them walk its geography. Mary offered a powerful example of social psychological context in which intentions, choices, and actions form. To recall, the social psychological context refers to the “psychical settings in which emotions and commitments are enabled and constrained.” This, however, was not the initial compelling moment with the personally experienced costs of an allegedly distant war:

But in the middle of Vietnam, our [also referring to her husband] two best friends are both draft-dodgers who are up from Oklahoma, and then Noel who is from London […] He had just come out of the Borneo where he had done two years there garrotting people, like unbelievable stuff. He just cracked, one day he just cracked. So war is huge, it is not just about “shucks, you go there and you are to see dead bodies.” You are still a dead body, just because you come out walking.
So it is important to somehow get that across. So, I don’t know. It is because I hate war that I get into these things.

KdH: What I find fascinating here, that, on the one hand, my sense of your beliefs and what you are doing, and on the other, your concentration on battles.

But look at what I did with war. I stepped way back and taught the war as a philosophical thing because this war is too close to home (#1, p.21).

Her reference to teaching war “as a philosophical thing” refers to several conversations with kids that book-marked my observation. The first day, (02/11) she reintroduced Sun Tze and The Art of War (a book she had taught earlier). Then again on April 1st, Mary led two big discussions to close off the unit. In the first, she asked, “Does Hitler recognize what he has done as bad?” which was followed by a lecture on different types of evil. The compelling social psychological context framing her work emerged in a comment that spoke to how close to home for her this war was as students watched Canadian WWII veterans talking about D-Day: “Are you watching these old men? They can barely get it out and its 55 years later!” (Observation, 02/22).

Mary reiterated a set of resonating moments that inform her teaching intentions, choices, and actions. Mary’s teaching intentions, choices, and actions might be described as “existentialist” in her project to get young people to think for themselves and to take responsibility for their choices and actions; to be agents of their lives and that of communities broadly considered.
5.1.2 Terry as agent

Terry’s interpretation of his teaching intentions, choices, and project might most aptly be described as that of a “bridge builder.” The bridges he attempts to build, in addition to those between the past, present, and by implication, a future through his history teaching span across different races and ethnicities, economic classes, immigrant and already established communities, and the “two solitudes” of Quebec and English Canada. He reiterated several past moments that guided this evaluation of his teaching project.

Having grown up on the west side of Vancouver, it was his teaching on the east side he most enjoyed: “You know I have worked at [name of an eastside school] and that is the kids I should, I mean, like to work with although I am from the west side” (#1, p. 1). In response to my question about whether he saw his teaching contributing to social change, he drew a distinct line between his former and present schools and the possibilities for such a contribution in each:

I think I just tried working with kids about ethnicity in my last school I worked in. Just all that valuing and working together, valuing and other important principles and caring for human beings [...] There was a good feeling with most of the classes with many diversities. They worked together very well (#1, p. 11).

Terry’s desire to work with racial or ethnic diversities emerged out of influential past moments reiterated in our interviews and in his teaching.

Terry described attending a two week teachers’ seminar in the US several years ago where both the challenges of bridging differing communities and his desire to do so became apparent. He described an “ungodly row” that broke out along racial lines during the seminar and the position he took up in relation to those fighting:

And afterwards, you know I walked with the Whites and I walked with the Blacks and here were two different worlds, two solitudes talking about two completely different versions of what happened. It was just amazing and... I am just sort of
saying that there is a role for being a bridge builder. There is a role for that (#1, p. 9).

It was Terry’s work in the early 1970’s with CUSO (formerly the Canadian University Services Overseas), however, that constituted an especially cogent reiteration guiding his desire to teach for ethnic and racial respect. Terry spoke about the subtle racism of co-workers on a job in Africa who cast Africans as “they” and North American teachers as “we:”

One of them was much beloved by the kids who thought she was wonderful but when the kids weren’t around and when there were no Africans around it was all the “they” “we” “them” language and all that stuff (#1, p. 9).

Terry also encountered the casting of Anglophone - Francophone relations in Canada into “they” and “we” solitudes:

I had the dynamic of meeting a language and I enjoyed the training sessions and the Francophones and Anglophones and just seeing the whole language and the whole tensions and all that kind of thing which became personal sorts of issues (#1, p. 9).

The subtlety of polite racism, the first time to work with French-Canadians, the learning of a new language, and the dynamic of Francophone and Anglophone relations contributed to many of Terry’s present commitments to build bridges between communities: “With English Canadians I will talk about the reasonableness of Quebec sovereignty. But in Quebec, I talk about the reasonableness of Canada” (#2, p. 2). On a personal level, Terry married a Francophone woman. The connections between this past and his present teaching commitments were clear for Terry:

Like I go on with a lot of our talk here on a racial or cultural dimension and that is clearly linked back to when I was in Africa or being married to a Quebecois and all that stuff. It is very clear to me (#2, p. 4).
This comment speaks to the importance of offering less experienced or reflective teachers a means to investigate personal-public connections between teaching choices, intentions, and actions (individual agency) and group identifications and struggles (historical agency).

Terry expressed his agency as an imaginative capacity in which choices are formed, intention shaped, and actions undertaken in both the selection of the unit on Quebec in "an already crowded curriculum" (spoken to students, observation, 01/07). On the second day of the unit, Terry told his students that, in studying the time period popularly known as the 60's, "We don't need to focus just on Quebec which might be a bit distorted to understanding this time. But Quebec is part of my personal story and we could be looking at other things" (observation, 01/09). The personal connection emerged throughout our interviews:

People generalize and say, "Quebec wants to separate" Ok they voted twice. They voted to stay very narrowly and people were very torn and all those kinds of things. For me this was very real. This was my family with lots of tearful phone calls long distance during the 1995 referendum and it continually is something so important (#1, p. 3). Just basically, I get tired of people saying "Quebec wants to separate." Well, no. Which Quebeckers? And then the vast numbers who are in the middle and who were torn (#2, p. 2).

As a teacher and curriculum writer, the dynamics of "they" and "we" and the assumptions people make with such distinctions were precisely what was at stake for Terry. While both he and Mary encouraged students to wrestle with existential questions, Mary cast such questions exclusively in terms of individuals while Terry was concerned with the complexities of communities. This was evident in the many multicultural clubs of which he has been part or started and his clear preference to work with multicultural
communities in schools. As I later take up, this commitment to engage students in the complexities of “we” and “they” became evident in his identification of a major challenge in his unit I observed about Quebec.

5.1.3 Rosa as agent

Rosa’s involvement in various political activities was evident in the difficulty I had contacting her to set up this study. At that time, Rosa was spending her free time maintaining a peace tent-village in the city and preparing for an upcoming annual teachers’ union meeting. This was a continuation of her involvement in political action since the age of 17, and these commitments resonated throughout our interviews and in her teaching. Rosa’s teaching project might best be described as “activist.” She attended in her unit to the agency of groups struggling against oppressive power relations and reiterated in interviews a tapestry of moments indicative of her extensive participation in social justice issues. She had difficulty, however, offering definitive moments: “It is such a part of my life:”

I was one of the women in Vancouver who founded the Vancouver Women’s Caucus, being in on the ground floor of the post 1965 women’s movement. It is such a part of my life. I have been involved in the anti-war movement since I was 17. When I was 18, I was working with a couple of women in the context of the students’ movement – Students for a Democratic University – to develop a women’s movement there (#1, p. 10).

Rosa related a story about watching on television with her father the abuse hurled at a young African-American girl in the movement to de-segregate Southern schools. This abuse starkly illustrated for Rosa the injustices she contested throughout her life:

But that had an impact on me, “Like oh my god, this is terrible. Why is this going on?” And you get kind of really confused. So that was one of my little kid
cathartic experiences. I did not really put anything together but it really stuck there and I still remember it (#1, p. 10).

Rosa conveyed other moments of this type to her students:

A number of African-American entertainers came here quite regularly as it was on the circuit, very well known African-American entertainers. They were not allowed to stay at the CPR [Canadian Pacific Railway] hotel. So they all stayed at the Georgia. When my mom and dad got married, they had their reception in the Hotel Georgia not in CPR and that was part of the reason. The kids say, “Oh my God, we had no idea” (#1, p. 9).

Another story communicated to students the value of citizenship with its rights and responsibilities. That story concerned the efforts during WWII by young Chinese-Canadian men in Vancouver who, despite White racism and a lack of voting rights, lobbied to serve in Canada’s armed forces overseas (observation, 04/28). Such stories, highlighting the non-institutionalized sites of political efficacy and the work of students, activists, and social movements, informed her commitment to teach about the Black struggles in South Africa and internationally for social change.

While Mary enacted her activism through her many independent charitable efforts, Rosa’s activism was rooted in political participation. Mary’s activism, like her existential teaching goals, focused on individuals. Rosa, in contrast, cast conflicts primarily in group terms, whether resulting from class disparities or gender or racial inequalities. Yet, Rosa is not a bridge-builder like Terry who assumed that a bridge should be able to find support on either side of a gulf between communities. For Rosa, deep structural inequalities exist that can be rectified only through struggle.
5.1.4 Marv as agent

Marv’s teaching project was centered on the moral development of his students gained through the contemplation of moral complexities raised by past social conflicts:

This is one of the issues I am grappling with myself in the work that I will be doing: trying to look at creating these moral beings, or helping them understand these issues of morality through the study of events in history that create moral questions and moral dilemmas and ethical dilemmas that were actually dealt with poorly or unjustly in the past (#1, p. 5).

Marv’s intention in his teaching was to familiarize students with the stories of the country’s racialized and immigrant communities. Two units around which such moral grappling takes place every year are immigration and the internment of Japanese Canadians. He argued that these units were necessary to highlight because such stories are insufficiently considered in schools. He reiterated a past moment contributing to this evaluation of his teaching project:

I read an article in this Indo-Canadian magazine and an editorial by a younger fellow who said that he never learned about the Komagata Maru incident and asked, “Why did I not learn of these things in my classroom?” I thought to myself, “Who doesn’t teach that? We all teach that don’t we?” That was sort of the opening of going, “Not everyone does what I do for better or for worse but what is going on with this whole teaching enterprise if we are not doing this stuff, we should be.” Look at the nature of our population, look who makes up our community, these stories do not seem to be in our textbooks, let us do something about that (#1, p. 9).

Marv used these stories as historical examples of people “struggling to understand themselves, understand their society, and come to grips with what happened to themselves and to their society” (#1, p. 5).

For Marv, the internment of Japanese Canadians constitutes the most relevant example of such struggle, an injustice that occupies a central place every year in this course: “I
worry less about how much coverage we get, and how much content we cover, and how well they know about John A. MacDonald versus what they know about the Japanese internment” (#1, p. 2). Referencing John A. MacDonald to make his point is telling. This reference contrasts the “father of confederation,” and by implication the school narratives of Canada’s national political unification, with one of many examples of the enforced racial singularity of this confederation. It was Marv’s concern with the latter that shaped his choices and teaching project.

In response to my question about what powerful moments have contributed to his historical understanding, Marv quickly reiterated a story that has long resonated with him:

I can pin down one example for sure. It always jumps out at me, and I cannot articulate how it may have affected me, but I just feel it has. It is the story of my wife’s parents. My wife is ethnic Japanese and her mother was interred. Her father was not, but suffered of course through the war. And interestingly at the end of the war he was able to move back and re-enter university and to go on to medical school. He happened to be, not long after the war, at Vancouver general hospital doing his internship and the fellow who he interned under was a Canadian POW imprisoned in Hong Kong for the entire four years. They became absolute best friends. My wife’s father passed away a few years ago and this other fellow is still around and he wrote a book called A Guest of Hirohito talking about his time there and yet how he loves Japanese culture (#1, p. 13).

This was a story of hope, as two people overcame historical antipathies to become colleagues and friends:

Somehow, not long after the trauma of that war, and all those things that even today can get people to boil, they collaborated on careers and became the closest of friends. They put all that other baggage somehow aside […] I always saw that as such a powerful way of thinking about that, in spite of history, there are ways as human beings for us to move beyond some of these things or ways of dealing with the past that are somehow moving forward. There is light at the end of the tunnel. So, that always sits on the back of my mind about not accepting the simple notion of hatred between groups because of the past. (#1, p. 13).
“Dealing with the past” by “not accepting the simple notion of hatred between groups” raises the complexities of living a moral life as both an individual and community member. By “taking on” the Japanese internment in his teaching, Marv worked “to move forward:” “We chose to take on those causes which is interesting, because it is that small contribution to some form of social change” (#2, p. 16).

Marv’s contribution to the moral development of his students did not rely on content alone. Rather, as reflective of his reading and his graduate work, he attended to the many realms in which moral teaching and learning occur:

In my teaching, there are very strong undercurrents about issues of morality and virtue and I try to carry that through with the relationships I have with my students and how I work with them that has nothing to do with the curriculum (#1, p. 6).

In addition to his relationships, Marv modeled a sceptical moral position that had little to do with the formal curriculum. He consistently drew attention to the limitations of his own points of view, those of arguments contained in readings, and, while always supportive, of those provided by his students. Indeed, if a single adjective sufficed to describe Marv’s teaching, it would be that of the “sceptic.” Attending to the particularities and limitations of various knowledge claims is a moral stance because it encourages students to grapple with complexities rather than to be satisfied with easy summations of historical others.

This stance is illustrated in what was for him a dramatic story in which the complexities of human interaction always exceed summary statements based on familiar categories of race, ethnicity, experience, or class by which people often apprehend others (from a psychoanalytical perspective, “apprehension” is a telling word; meaning to arrest,
to understand, and or, used to describe a mood, to fear). He was consistent in this scepticism, attending with his students to the complexities of the questions his unit raised and the limitations of what he himself could claim to know.

5.1.5 Review of participants' individual agency

Participants reiterated several influential moments to give coherence to their teaching projects. Marv gave shape to his intentions by recounting stories of injustice and of people overcoming historical antipathies. As a sceptic, he wanted his students to look beyond easy answers and to contemplate the complexities of moral choice and struggle. He modeled the stance of a moral sceptic by challenging easy summations of those in the past and the choices they faced. Mary too had this existential commitment, but gave shape to her intentions by recounting personal moments of epistemological crises. Her teaching choices, commitments, and social justice projects were framed exclusively in terms of her students as individuals. Rosa too recounted stories of racism that shaped her intention and teaching commitments. These were not those of a sceptic, however, but of an activist committed to participating in and teaching about group struggle. Terry gave shape to his intentions by recounting stories that cast him in the role of a bridge-builder between different communities. He sought to overcome gulfs between communities separated by race, language, and political antipathies. As will also become evident, participants' individual agency and teaching projects or commitments—what I have described as those of a sceptic, existentialist, activist, and bridge-builder—resonated not only in their teaching in the units I observed (which, with such experienced teachers, was
unsurprising) but with what they found most sensible in the framework for agency and social change.

5.2 Work with students on social change

In this section, I review units taught by Terry and Marv to illustrate the benefits of directly raising questions of historical agency and social change with students. I do so by recounting two major challenges Terry identified about his students' understanding of Quebec and Quebecers. As a bridge-builder, Terry wanted his British Columbian students to appreciate the difficulties for Quebecers facing challenges and changes studied in his unit. In raising agency and change as questions, Marv's students contemplated what Terry identified as several shortcomings in his students' understanding in the study of change in Quebec—the diversity elided when political units are personified (e.g., "Quebec wants...") and the complexity of human subjectivity. As a sceptic, Marv raised the whole issue of social change as a question so as to surface assumptions about what it is, how it happens, and what definitions of community must be considered so as to trace its development.

Among the participants, only Terry explicitly asked students about the human influences on social change before this study. As a result of our work together, he was encouraged to return to that question and formulation. This is not to suggest that participants have not sought to tell students why or how social changes occurred. Rather, being unexplored, I suggest that participants conveyed an interpretation without identifying it as such or as one among many possible ways to account for the human influence or participation in social change.
For example, Mary, expressing her existential commitments, worked with students to show the ways individuals lead social changes: “So, they [her students] know that [revolution] is actually led by a person. That social revolution comes about because there is a leader with a vision and there is a bunch of people really dissatisfied with their lot.” (#1, p. 17). As later reviewed in her work with the framework, this lesson accurately reflects how she interpreted the agents and agency “leading” to social change. Rosa explored historiographical questions in her work with students at the beginning of the school year:

At the very beginning of the year, we also spent a little bit of time doing historiography. I think that if I had complete freedom in this particular matter, I would spend a great deal more time on historiography and examining questions and have a little class on political narrative historians. How do we know what we know? What counts as evidence? Who decides what counts as history? How has history writing and the conception of history changed over the last 30 years? Why did social historians emerge? What prompts those particular movements and intellectual development and intellectual history? But again, the time constraint is quite considerable (#1, p. 3).

These questions provide opportunities for students to examine what prompts changes in historical understandings, intellectual development and, presumably, their relationship to broader questions of power in the formation of social and historical identities. Due to time limitations imposed by provincial examinations, these were questions, however, explored only briefly at the beginning of the year. While these might be considered related questions, questions concerned with the human influences in social changes were not explored.

Of all the participants in this study, Terry was the most familiar with the term “agency,” an idea he believed to be “quite captivating for students. It is another time to talk about fate and destiny so it is philosophical and religious. I am no great philosopher
on this at all, but I want to raise the question” (#1 p. 2). Terry’s reference to philosophy that questions of agency potentially raise in classrooms is significant: To what degree is motivation singular and known or torn and ambiguous? What limitations do people face in working towards personal and social goals and how do they differ in differing social circumstances? How do we measure either the occurrence or sources of social change in time and space and the human influences behind such? To have students consider such philosophical questions constituted the central challenge Terry identified in the observed unit. As explored further in section 5.4, my summations greatly assisted his reflection on this challenge.

Terry offered a well thought out set of responses to my questions about agency. While agency can refer to actions by beneficiaries to maintain a system, agency is also expressed by “humans making a difference, humans influencing events in some way as opposed to it being inhuman social forces” (#1, p. 2). Terry offered the following justification for the importance of using agency as a teaching objective:

It is a good way of making sense of the world, personally. It is a cliché but “lord help me with the things I can change and accept the things which I cannot.” We go between being too idealistic and trying to change the world or being defeatist and just thinking there is nothing I can do (#1, p. 4).

Terry had used a model of agency to guide his instruction in the past. His model related a prominent individual, various social forces, and groups to ask students questions about varied influences on a time period studied:

The conception that I have used [...] especially in talking about the women’s movement with Nellie McClung focused on her and then the question was, “were the changes that took place, were they social forces, were they McClung, were they women’s groups working together.” Put McClung, social forces, and groups in a triangle and ask the question of influence. It is something perhaps I should have come back to so that they get this sense of what was going on, to think
historically. I mean historians look at social forces and then they might look at people, the context and so on, but students don't. They have a hard time recognizing this (#2, p. 14).

Terry has never asked students, however, about how social change is possible or in what ways it occurs (#1, p. 10). As a result of our work together, Terry was inspired to return to this concept and model of agency in the future: “What I get from this is that this was probably a pretty good conception that I had, at least I know it, but that I need to think about it a bit more and remember to return to it with students more often” (#2, p. 14).

Despite the title’s emphasis on an individual, his unit, entitled, “The Trudeau Years, 1968-1984: Were they a time of triumph or tragedy?” reflected the importance he attached to questions around inter-group relations in Canada as discussed in section 5.1.2. In our first interview, Terry displayed an impressive knowledge of a wide diversity of agents contributing to social change in Quebec, Canada, and internationally at this time. The narrative he weaved in interviews tied individuals to racial, artistic, religious, and economic groups that challenged “internal contradictions” within Quebec society.

Challenges to the status quo emerged out of influences not only internal to Quebec. Terry cited movements elsewhere that helped animate changes in Quebec:

There was the “le refus global”, notably Borduas artistically, there was Père Untel or Frère Untel the priest who was writing, there was the television strike, and Levesque was involved in it. So there was all this kind of stuff and there were resentments against Duplessis and corruption. And then there was Trudeau and the asbestos strike. So what actually lead to it? ...There were all sorts of internal contradictions and movements for change going on in Quebec at this time. There were lots of them, lots of them. The '60's happening. And then probably outside of that was the whole spirit of the '60's taking on this “wow we have all this stuff going on with all these issues, and so does everyone else too.” Although in many ways this all started earlier...perhaps in the civil rights movement in the '50's.

KdH: And these movements of change, do you mean artistic?
Artistic and trade unionists and the priesthood. Untel had some kinds of questioning. There was the Pope and then the whole Vatican affair, the Second Vatican, liberation theology and those sorts of things going on. But inside Quebec there was also pretty vibrant movement for change. So, yes, certainly artistic. This incredible flowering taking place. Music was taking place, reinforced by outside stuff in the US but there was also Félix Leclerc who was very popular in France. He came back and played songs and about place... Then of course we had wild and crazy Robert Charlebois who had hung out in Haight-Ashbury and started to sing these wild and crazy rock songs but they were in French (#1, p. 10).

Impressed with Terry’s breadth of knowledge about local and international class, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to change, I mentioned that “all sorts of stuff [was] going on...” Terry interrupted me with a key moment of reflection: “Yes. I didn’t really talk about that so much about this with the kids! There is just so much, so much. It would have been nice to though. It would have been nice to though” (#1, p. 11).

My observations contradict his claim that he did not speak much with his students about diverse movements and influences affecting questions in Quebec. He showed a video of multiracial performers during a St. Jean de Baptise concert to illustrate and talk about Quebec’s diversity in citizens and music. He used a popular song at Party Quebecois gatherings, “Gens du Pays,” as a document through which he asked students to interpret the existence and degrees of Quebec nationalism. Further, he mentioned in discussions about the growing nationalist sentiment that “the ‘60’s were a lot about... groups joining together around images” (observation notes, 01/14). However, his sophisticated analysis lacked a coherent framework by which students might consider diverse historical agents that contributed to change in Quebec at this time. That absence in this unit contributed to two issues Terry felt required greater student attention.
The first was the complexity, or the ambiguity, for many Quebecers over the issue of separation. In reference to that issue, Terry said several times in class that, “...this was very difficult. People were torn.” This was mentioned during a discussion about Quebec nationalism in response to what he perceived as the students’ insufficient appreciation for the complexity both of Quebecers’ subjectivities and indeed the term “Quebec” itself.

After that class, I asked him if he thought his point was sufficiently conveyed in the discussion:

No, they were reading stuff into it [the song, Gens du Pays, commonly played at PQ conventions and nationalist celebrations]. People are quick to make it an “us” and “them” thing. You know, my sister-in-law once asked me “Do English Canadians hate us?” I was shocked (discussion after class, 01/09).

The “stuff” students brought to this document was their own familiar terms of engaging history as a set of events between “us” and “them.” They refused to read the document as evidence of anything other than how they already framed the issue, preferring to simplify their engagement with it in familiar terms.

Terry’s frustration with this casting of history was brought up again in the interview when he spoke about an essay in which a student had written that “I just don’t know why they [French Quebecers] don’t go back to France:”

And some of the more milder but very common ones, people say, “Quebec wants to separate.” Ok, they voted twice. They voted to stay very narrowly and people were very torn and all those kinds of things. For me this was very real...Unfortunately in the little time that we had, you may have a sense of how much or what we did with that, maybe not much...I want to explore that more (#1, p. 3).

In the absence of a reason or method to do so, students refused to move from their “us” and “them” prejudice to wrestle with the complexities Terry wanted to raise. In a following class, Terry tried to draw an analogy between the mini-school and Quebec in
relation to the larger school of which the mini-school was part and Canada to show the
limitations of generalizations. Following that class, we both agreed that the moment,
however, had passed.

I followed up on this point. I asked Terry whether his use, and indeed the common use
by textbooks and historians of a “colligatory term” such as “Quebec wants to separate”
might contribute to the lack of appreciation for complexity and diversity. His response
was swift:

Colligatory, you mean over-generalizations?
KdH: Yes, big nouns that...
Well, it is probably something that exactly we probably should address, because
you are right. We do a shorthand and, yes, we lie with it even though it's efficient
(#1, p. 3).

Terry’s use of “shorthand” and “lie” are powerful word choices. Do history and social
studies teachers lie in the interests of efficiency? After all, any instance of interpretation
reduces living complexity to serve cognitive management. Likewise, any choice teachers
make to manage their material in the interests of student coherence unavoidably excludes
degrees of complexity. As Terry began to identify, however, the investigation of
students’ assumptions about agents or agency and colligatory terms would have moved
them out of familiar terms of historical engagement and offered opportunities to engage
the complexity of the subjects these concepts reference. The question of agency
references interpretations about people’s capacities to “make a good sense of the world”
(#1 p. 4) and to “make a difference” (#1, p. 2). Historians use colligatory terms as
abstractions to conceptually connect disparate events, processes, places, and, or, people
into singular references so as to aid historical analysis (Shemilt, 2000). Engaging students
in a discussion about such concepts would have aided the complexity and diversity that
Terry wanted his students to consider. In such discussions, students would have had opportunity to think more deeply about the complexities and ambiguities of individuals and the heterogeneities elided with the un-reflexive use of colligatory terms or big nouns:

KdH: Several times both in the class and in our interview you mentioned that in regards to Quebec’s place in Canada and in regards specifically to the question of the referendums that “people were really torn.” What insights were you trying to convey to the students with this comment?


Terry brought an impressive scope of knowledge into classroom discussions. Questions remained for both us, however, whether students followed his discussions of diverse cultural, artistic, and political groups and social movements contributing to social changes conveyed. Likewise, in the absence of philosophical discussion about agents and historical agency, students had no opportunity to engage with the complexity of such subjects. As a result, there was likely little that transferred between this study of the past and how students might explain social change or reflect on their present capacities as agents of social life. In fact, any transfer that did exist did so the other way. Students engaged difficult questions with their familiar terms, which I have argued, are insufficient on a number of counts.
5.2.1 Directly addressing questions of social change

In preparing for my observation, Marv decided to try something new. He subtitled his unit on Quebec, “A unit on social change,” and explicitly raised questions around definitions and causes of social change. This was a new approach to historical issues for Marv as he suggested in our first interview in reference to his work with students on immigration. Marv speculated that students believed relations between immigrants of colour and White Canadian society were better today then in the past. In response to my question about the ways students might explain how these improvements came about, Marv was unsure:

I am not sure I can answer how they would [...] It is an excellent question, and not one that I have asked them. I would be interested to see how they see that happening, “How do you think we went from there to here?” (#1, p. 11).

Based on his teaching, Marv thought that students could speculate on two things:

They would say either that the groups themselves made this happen through their various redress and compensation movements, which they have studied at various points. Or, somehow identifying that white society sort of matured or grew into a sense of not being so unfair, recognizing that people of colour are the same as themselves. I would suspect that they would give a relatively superficial response, not really understanding why things have changed (#1, p. 11).

His unit on Quebec and social change provided each of us with an opportunity to investigate such suspicions.

This unit not only provided Marv with insights into students’ definitions for and interpretations of how social change becomes possible: the “study of social change [also provided] an opportunity to dispel several myths about history as a discipline and about
historical change in general” (email answer to email questions, p. 2). For Marv, these myths included:

[H]istory and change are the product of ‘great men’ only; that history is the struggle between the powerful and powerless; that change only occurs when great leaders motivate the masses to act; that historical consciousness precedes change; that history and change are significant only when they affect the greatest number (email response to email questions, p. 2,).

Each of these myths emerged in class discussions with students. As a sceptic, that is someone who questions accepted beliefs, Marv did not necessarily have a better way or ways to describe or explain social change:

That said, I do not offer a clear substitution for this process. It appears to me to be a complex tangle of factors not easily defined or spelled out in a formula, conception, or model (email response to email questions, p. 2).

While Marv did not have any answers, this unit allowed him to directly address what he felt to be powerful myths about social change and in what ways it might occur. This focus also raised a number of pertinent philosophical and sociological issues related to the teaching of history. These specifically included what changes, and to what degree, in what realms of social life indicate social change; definitions of community in which social change takes place, and the individual’s relationship to community and change. I suggest this unit’s focus provided rich opportunities to engage students in complex assumptions about agency and social change. It did so by surfacing familiar responses from students so as to deepen their engagements with the past. I do not make any claims, however, about what students did or did not take away from the unit. In recounting Marv’s work, I provide the reader with long quotations to provide a sense of both Marv’s
skill at uncovering students’ assumptions about agency and social change and the benefits of doing so.

The first class of the unit saw groups of students each addressing one of the following questions: “What is social change? How does it occur? When does it occur? Why does it occur? How do we know that it has actually happened?” Marv collected their responses and typed them out as an overhead and a handout for the next class. Attention to the importance of definition when considering communities in which change might have occurred was evident in his summation of a group’s response to the first question:

So the group that did “what is social change” said social change is a change in “beliefs, principles, values, ideals or one’s lifestyle.” I put in brackets at the end there, the word they used, change that happened in a “(community).” I put that in brackets because a community could be any number of things. We could be taking about Canada as a whole, Canada as a community. We could talk about the people of British Columbia. We could be talking about a particular ethnic or racial group to which a particular change applies. So if you want to make a note of that, that when I say or we say this word we mean any number of different things because change does not happen to just one group at one place in one time. So that was really good (observation, 03/26, p. 1).

In addressing community definitions, he noted with students the complexities often elided when social struggles or changes are referenced to political units such as Quebec or, as with Terry’s students, in the presumptuous use of the plural pronouns “us” and “them.”

In reference to the second group’s response to the question about how social change happens, Marv noted that changes can emerge from a number of different influences broader than commonly recognized political boundaries or parties:

You also talked about individuals or groups. So I heard comments from people who say, “Well, it could be a group of people that might start a change or a whole community or it can be an individual.” So it might not be just one. Again a really insightful comment was when someone noted they think sometimes changes happen because of a broader trend already happening [...] something happening outside of our own borders. It was not just that this was happening only in one
place. Sometimes these changes occur because of stuff happening on a large scale (observation, 03/26, p. 1).

The myth Marv identified about great men as the sources of social change was evident in this group’s response that he here summarizes:

Then people talked about well, “how does it happen?” Who or how can we make change occur?” Again, some interesting answers. For the most part, your answers indicated that, the belief of the class, that people who we might call “extraordinary” or people in the public eye or people who are motivated for a particular reason are the ones who make change happen. So I started to try and think about this a little bit last night. I thought about whether we think somebody already has to be famous to help motivate change or whether it is their job in making things change that makes them famous […] So that is an interesting question that you guys came up with here. Do you start out as sort of an unknown person with great goals and this sort of consciousness or understanding of something you want to change? Or does it only work when the people are famous already? Is that more like the Jean Chrétien and George Bushes of the world wonder about and make things happen? So that is a question we can talk about as we work through this (observation, 03/26, p. 1).

The difficult question of where in society one might look to see the sources and indications of social change was another issue immediately raised for further discussion:

Compared to groups 2 and 3, group 4 is highly focused on government while others focused on what might be called more superficial things of life, our appearance and attitudes to a point, not that those are unimportant. This is good because it gives us different levels of change to think about. It is something that we are really going to wrestle with; it makes it actually more complex to think of all of this at one time (observation, 03/24, p. 2).

The myth of historical progression identified by Marv, and an interpretation commonly found in historical research on students’ understanding of change through time, did not take long to surface:

The “when” is a tough one and the answer for me was kind of hard for me to pin down. I think this one we are going to have to talk a little bit about […] The answer you came up with, and again it is not necessarily wrong, but problematic, is you guys are equating time, the movement of time, as being always equated
with progress. So that as time moves forward, societies are moving forward, and therefore we must be progressing and progressing means change. If you are progressing something is changing, something is happening that is different. The sense I got from the group that answered this at least was that you associate our changes with the movement of time, therefore, the present and the future will always be better than the past [...] We will get into that later (observation, 03/26, p. 2).

I suggest that in this unit Marv provided rich opportunities for students to work with definitions of social change, questions about the ways it occurs, who is responsible, and its relationship to time. These are complex questions to tackle as Marv pointed out with students throughout the observation:

[To a student as the others work]: So we are trying to look at what is motivating them to work for changes. So the first question is who is changing it and why are they unhappy in terms of the specifics. What would people actually experience of these changes? This is tough stuff. Some of these things you might ask me about but I am not going to have answers for. This is very complex stuff and the answers are hard to come by. So if you are having trouble it is also that I am having trouble. We are doing some very sophisticated things in a way here that are hard to grapple with (observation, 03/26, p. 4)

To assist students in a more sophisticated analysis of social change, Marv used students insights reviewed briefly above to analyze the unit’s documents:

So what you want to do now that you have a little bit better understanding of that document is to go in here and start filling out the boxes in the chart. So first of all you want to start identifying those words and ask “what is the most important thing that they want changed? Again that is what we are talking about. What do they want changed? Also, who is doing the change or who is trying to provoke the change? Is it an individual or is it a group? If you want to go back to your text you can check the pages the references for which I gave on the first page I handed out to you first class of this unit. You can do a little background work if you want help with that. When is this occurring? Is it suppose to happen in a day or do you think the changes they are talking about are going to happen over a longer period of time? So you have to do maybe a little bit of a guesstimate here. Here we are trying to think about what it is that they see as the issue motivating this desire for change. Do they feel oppressed? Do they want equality? Is it part of a larger trend? I think at this point you probably cannot answer that because you do not have enough information. Or do they simply see here is an opportunity, “the
moment has come for us to change something, let us take it down, here is our chance.” Maybe that is it. Do you think these changes are something that you could see or hear about or something people would actually experience and feel. Again you would have to make a guess (observation, 03/26, p. 4).

In setting up the unit in this way, Marv offers a refined set of teaching moves. He first surfaces common assumptions about agency and social change, names them and discusses them from the front of the class. He then skilfully reinforced these discussions with the application of student insights to their analysis of various historical documents related to changes in Quebec.

As mentioned, I observed in Marv’s teaching the position of a sceptic. He envisioned his teaching as contributing to students’ moral development. He sought to do so by having them contemplate moral complexities of past social conflicts and, as evident in this unit, the difficulties of historical explanations for social change. Before this unit, however, he did not engage students in a study of agency in such conflicts or in the ways change between then and now might occur. He suspects “that they [students] would probably give a relatively superficial response, not really understanding why things have changed” (#1, p. 11). Indeed, in this unit, students did utilize a number of different myths as Marv suspected.

This unit provided opportunities to directly address these myths and “superficial” responses. Such potential emerged from discussions about community definitions, the question of what scale of analysis is necessary to study social changes, what might constitute social change, and a tendency by North American students to highlight the role of individuals at the expense of more collective actions in social conflicts. In addressing these issues, Marv directed students to consider complexities often elided when social
struggles or changes are referenced to political units such as “Quebec wanted...” or, as with Terry’s students, in the presumptuous use of the plural pronouns “they” and “we” and “us” and “them.”

5.3 Participants’ interpretations of historical agency and social change

In the previous chapter, I shaped recent historiographical scholarship and sociology into a sensitizing framework for this study (referred to as “my summations” in my work with participants). Used in this study, my summations of that scholarship assisted participants to clarify or broaden their interpretations of agency and social change covered specifically in their units and the complexities of their interpretations as more generally considered. The question addressed in this section then is, “in what ways did these teachers interpret the human influences (agency) contributing to social change?” Another related concern is whether this framework was an effective heuristic device for clarifying or broadening these interpretations.

The material conditioning of intentions, choices, and actions contributing to social change was the most strongly cited interpretation throughout the interviews and common to all participants. As with the other participants in this study, Marv’s interpretation of agency and social change relied heavily on socioeconomic motivations as sources of action:

Ok. Tackett says that “The agency of people contributing to social change emerges from socioeconomic motivations.” That would be where I fall in my perspective (#2, p. 6).

My summation of Tackett appealed to each of my participants. For Mary, “economics always caused social change. So they [her students] could see that when you are in boom,
we behave in a totally different way then when we are in a bust as it were we behave
totally different” (#1 p. 16).

Rosa also attributed the motivations and actions for social change primarily to class
experience. For example, in response to my summation of Tackett, Rosa questioned the
use of socioeconomic categories rather than class:

What is so uncomfortable since 1975 with the use of the word “class”? (#2, p. 1). I
would argue that when everything else is taken into consideration, that class is
still the last great divider. It really is (#2, p. 6).

While Rosa cited economics as the primary divide in society and source for motivations
for social conflict, the role of class motivations or class based actions in changes in South
Africa was never considered in her unit (It is relevant to note that, in her participant
check, Rosa mentioned that she had covered class analysis in another unit). Like Rosa, all
participants sourced intentions, choices, and actions for social change in socioeconomic
experiences and, with all, such an analysis was absent in the observed units.

While each participant saw their interpretations accurately summarized in my
summation of Tackett, each also felt that this summation could not sufficiently account
for people’s intentions, choices, and actions that result from ideals or senses of justice. In
other words, in their work with my summations, participants struggled to reconcile
materialist and idealist explanations for historical agency and social change. Cabrera and
Smith served to raise for participants the role of ideals and, in Smith’s view,
psychological needs to maintain coherence between ideals and actions in complex
worlds. The strong deterministic role Cabrera assigns to discourses, however, was one
not shared by my participants. Rosa also asserted that Smith’s emphasis on individuals
needed connection to broader struggles.
As with Cabrera, the description of Ermarth’s focus on the contributions of artistic representational practices and scientific metaphors to social changes raised insightful comments from two participants. Overall, however, my summation of Ermarth was either not comprehensible or convincing to participants as an explanation for historical agency and social change. With the exception of Rosa, I do not know whether this resulted from the comprehensibility of my summation or what might have been the argument’s novelty to my participants. Rosa most strongly rejected what she accurately read as Ermarth’s postmodern position.

A tension in participants’ interpretations existed in their struggle to reconcile the role played by leaders, discourses, and broader movements in social change. With the exception of Mary, each participant believed that individual leadership was over-emphasised in curricula and in popular media. Thus, they were already sensitive to ascribing social change solely to the actions of leaders. In working through my summations, Mary also began to identify this prejudice in her own thinking and teaching. This constituted less of a tension for Rosa. Both her interpretation and teaching included diverse agents in terms of individuals, political, cultural and religious groups, and international movements. She offered insights that suggest she interpreted historical agency as a broadly distributed capacity expressed through international movements and local protests over material conditions and social statuses. Terry and Marv struggled more apparently with the limitations of a Whig or Marxist-Leninist explanations of social change. To simplify, the former explanation concentrates on great leaders who shape political, military, or technological developments for progressively better social change while the latter focuses on a vanguard of leaders who activate class conflict to do so.
Perhaps a default in this regard, my summation of Touraine offered participants a way to account for this tension.

I believe this was so because that summation links ideals to group struggles over material practices and definitions of social life that inform individual capacities. Thus, my summation of Touraine contains aspects for which each participant believed it was necessary to account in interpreting social change – diverse agents, ideals and discourses, group struggle, and changing individual notions about their capacities to affect social life. In containing these elements, this summation helped to clarify or broaden their interpretations of intentions, choices, and actions in social change based on socioeconomic categories.

What is absent in the literature is a definition for historical agency that put these elements in relation to each other. To recall, building on Touraine’s work and work with participants, I define “historical agency” as a capacity expressed by groups in struggles over the conceptual resources that individuals use to interpret social and material life (e.g., interpretations of personal and social goals, terms individuals use to define and express their identities, representations of iconic role models, disciplinary interpretations). As mentioned in the previous chapter, for Touraine social changes are not the inevitable product of discourses or material interpellation, or the instability of language, or the confusing complexities of social interaction. They emerge from cultural struggle by groups and movements over “legitimate” conceptual resources for interpreting social interactions and material conditions. I now turn to examine the complexity of each participant’s interpretation evident in their teaching and through their work with my summations.
5.3.1 Mary's interpretations of historical agency and social change

Mary's conception of social change emphasized individual change that she believed results from existential crises:

I think you change when you are frustrated

KdH: What causes that frustration?

Not getting your pictures met.

KdH: Pictures? By pictures do you mean epistemological sense of the world, like explanations and so on?

Yes, like I have a picture of what it feels like for me to be in control of my life. In my classroom that looks this way, and in my home that looks this way, and in my staffroom it looks some other way, and I have basic feeling, pictures, ideas about what it feels like to belong (#2 p. 4).

Mary believed that personal and social opportunities for change follow a similar dynamic of crises and opportunity:

So I think in a society I don't think it is much different. There is some vision about where we are going. So we have this picture around what or where we are going and maybe, even, somewhat around what the process will feel like to get there. When it is not going well, when it is not going right, that causes huge frustration (#2 p. 4-5)

Reflecting her own existential teaching commitments, Mary emphasized the individual in social change:

I want these kids to wake up and realize that they cannot go through life only thinking about themselves: That they have to...its beneficence, you know. If you can do something you have to it. That is what I would like them to understand... So I am working really hard at "grow up." That matters to me in terms of social change (#1 p. 12).

Mary imagined her own agency and teaching in terms of individuals. Social change was also considered as any change in the interaction between individuals and within
individuals: "Maybe it is between me and me too. A whole bunch of social changes I have undergone is to examine me, like why do I hold these beliefs and why do I hold these assumptions" (#1 p. 18). In contrast to her emphasis on individuals, Mary cited group struggles to illustrate social change:

[A]ll of the things that have affected the Native-White question, the French-English question, the male-female question, stuff to do with racism, stuff to do with immigration and multiculturalism (1. p. 12).

I believe the "stuff" to which Mary referred is struggle; group struggles over the conceptual resources used by individuals to define their social presence, shape intentions, form choices, and undertake actions. I return below, in section 5.4, to Mary's recognition of the need for a broader analysis than one cast primarily in individual terms that my summations helped to raise.

For Mary, social change emerges from within and between individuals when their "pictures" are not being met, or when it becomes apparent that social ends and their means are insufficiently aligned. Accordingly, and while not directly addressing questions concerning agency and social change, her goal was to have her students more conscious of their "pictures." She used history and literature to inform students' intentions and to encourage them to take responsibility for their choices: "We looked at the kids' assumptions and asked why they believed what they did not even know they believed" (#1 p. 12). This goal was consistent with her interpretation of and, hence, her contribution to social change.

As someone who imagined agency and social change in existential terms, Mary's interpretation was most closely aligned with my summation for Smith:
Smith, I use Smith all the time. Like I use that conflict of our basic needs with what we are seeing constantly in my classroom, in all kinds of different ways so that kids understand that frustration is an opportunity for change. We talk about that a lot and then we talk about that a lot when we come up against various things throughout history (#2.3 p. 11).

According to Mary, the experience of being Quebecois contributed to the possibility of change. Such experience was activated through the leadership of an educated elite who articulated cogent discourses that found resonance amongst a population. Alternatively, this elite helped form popular antipathies into a more coherent call for change enacted in part through laws:

Ok, Tackett, “Tackett: Agency is an expression of motivations that emerge from socioeconomic and class experiences stimulated by political or cultural struggle.”

Well definitely that. So, let’s stick with Quebec. In terms of what Tackett has to say we talk about the strip farms and the ineffectiveness of them and how they did not work in Grade 9. Then in Grade 10 we talk about so why did that not change? Why when Lord Durham comes over does he see the French as inferior, stupid, and unwilling to come into the century like that. Then we talk about what happens with that as more and more immigrants come and the Quebecois insist on them towing this line. So we talk quite a bit about...what they do is make themselves an underclass...as an agrarian underclass in an industrial country. Then come too, after WWII, they go “Wait a minute, why are we here?” And why are all these people above us Anglophones?”

KdH: Who is the “they”?

“They” that would be the youth, because they are being educated because they are coming back from the war to free education in universities [...] So that leads to a whole crew of French speaking young men, like Trudeau, Levesque, and Lesage, who stand up and go ‘wait a minute.’ So in that case, that class experience and that socioeconomic experience thing comes in there. As far as Smith is concerned, that would come in later for me. So the Quiet Revolution [...] would be about Tackett and Cabrera because that discourse would be going on among those people. And they would be passing it on. Then the party would be picking it up and it would be going on in their meetings and rallies (#2.3, p. 9).

She was, however, unwilling to agree with Cabrera’s attribution of agency to the discourse itself:
Right, it is the discourse... Well, in that case, the discourses are going on and then it's... See I really think those people have a big play. Like I think that the newly educated men of Quebec had a huge play in that happening (2.3 p. 11).

While having difficulty with the deterministic role Cabrera assigns to discourses, Mary found that framework combined with Tackett had or "would" have relevance to her teaching of changes in Quebec:

So, back to teaching kids, I would use that combination in terms of socioeconomic things and in terms of discourse; that the change needed to take place [pointing to the one line summations of Tackett and Cabrera] but it could not take place without those men, without those people in place who initiated the discourse (2.3 p. 11).

Mary identified a role for discourses in her own life:

The male-female changes [associated with changes in the 1960's] were made possible because more and more females became conscious of the role they played and who they were and how they were dealt with, and that that just was not right- that there was no justice in that (#1, p. 13).

Notably, in my observations and in our interviews, Mary did not direct student attention to the broadly distributed condition of agency involved in this breakdown of coherence that made individual and social changes possible. Yet, in her life, the feminist movement caused her to reinterpret her "pictures" in the 1960's (#1, p. 14). Mary also raised the influence of broad social and scholarly movements when she discussed Ermarth's assertion that social changes are possible when new metaphors of representation in art or science replace older metaphors:

When they [former professors] looked at feminist scientists or feminist science that was kind of interesting. You know the idea of why things were happening and that did make me look at the world differently. So I could see that (2.3 p. 5).
In relation to changes in Quebec, however, Mary emphasized individual leadership to explain social changes associated with the “Quiet Revolution:”

[T]he Quiet revolution it is about awareness. But I attributed the awareness to the leaders of the revolution more than what was going on in the rest of North America at that time. And I don’t know why, but I do (2.3 p. 3).

Consistent with her own expressions of agency, Mary interpreted social change as the result of changes that occur on an individual level. These changes occur she believed when coherence breaks down or when expectations are not met. In her interpretation of agency and social change in Quebec, Mary believed that there was some experience she associated with being Quebecois that was activated as a cohort of leaders emerged in Quebec conversant in new ideals and discourses that articulated a frustration felt by the population. Articulating such discourses, leaders focused the motivations of the Quebecois that made social change possible. As she worked through my summations, Mary began to question her heavy emphasis on leaders. I discuss further below her answers to this question as she continued to work with my summations of scholarship.

5.3.2 Terry’s interpretations of historical agency and social change

Terry offered a well-considered set of responses to my questions about definitions of agency and the constraints and possibilities in which choice, intention, and action take place. While agency can refer to actions by beneficiaries to maintain a system, agency is also expressed by “humans making a difference, humans influencing events in some way as opposed to it being inhuman social forces” (#1, p. 2). In our interviews, Terry also emphasized constraints to expressions of agency. “Change,” whether considered socially, personally, or institutionally is very difficult: “There are a thousand ways to get it wrong
and only two or three to get it right” (#1, p. 8). Change is understood by Terry as occurring or to have occurred when “people do things differently, say, and act differently in ways that stay rooted, that is supported, so that at least is connected to something deep and that it lasts over time.” (#1 p. 12). In this quotation, Terry seems to suggest that “making a difference” in practices relies on challenges to sets of social relations and cultural beliefs and that these in turn require psychological as well as material support.

According to Terry, people work within structural constraints of their economic position and social forces. However, sometimes people overcome barriers of social forces and structural constraints (of race, class, for example) by struggling to make “something happen” when they cease to just cooperate with existing expectations. Terry spoke about the importance of a curriculum unit he developed as an example of making “something happen” beyond expectations and constraints of a historical time:

KdH: What about [that curriculum] represents for you, or players in there represent effective citizenship?

Ah yes, that was a good one...It was a positive example of Blacks and Whites, poor and rich, Canadians and Americans working together for change, and it is a positive model. ...you want to teach for hope and about people working hard at great risk to help [...] people working together and overcoming barriers of race and class to do something. That is such an important message to get through (#1, p. 7).

Race, nationality, and class are the categories he used for socioeconomic experiences. Unsurprisingly then, Terry recognized much that appealed to him to explain agency in my summation of Tackett and his emphasis on social locations to explain how social change becomes possible:

I think of social forces as something almost, it seems to be beyond our control. It depends, how you are brought up. For most people to a large extent it is outside their control (#1, p. 7).
While the use of socioeconomic categories to explain intentions, choices, and actions appealed to Terry, he was cautious about attributing a direct cause and effect:

He [Tackett] is linking it [actions] almost in a causal way to experiences in part. There is a very strong causation here to your status or position that causes values, jealousies, and so on. I am not so sure if it is quite so much there. I think of Rhodesians and South Africans communists, White communists, Doris Lessing in some of her books, how the hell did they become communists, there was nothing in their socioeconomic status position here that causally linked them? So I think it is a little more complex than he is saying here (#2, p. 4).

In reading through the application of my summation of Smith to his unit, Terry again saw connections to his work, this time working it through in relation to his own thinking:

“The felt veracity of certain ideas or terms- whether, for example, from discourses of civil rights, political sovereignty, “Queer” rights- makes support for such calls possible. Agency is expression of people’s reconciliation of differing beliefs, ideas, and terms to establish or re-establish a general moral sense and particular view of the world.”

Yes, so if you say you believe in something and stuff is going on then I better be consistent in how I see the world. So if I believe in human rights and there is an abuse of Queer rights or gay rights, even though I am not really called towards it, if I am going to be consistent...Yes, that makes sense to me that people do that. [Smith offers] quite a different take. It is much more of a psychological cognitive take on things than the other one. So I am just thinking in terms of my own stuff (#2, p. 5).

My summation of Cabrera highlighted for Terry the influence of discourses in relation to Trudeau’s vision of Quebec in Canada and the political actions undertaken by Trudeau to secure that vision:

And that is very appropriate here to any discussion of Quebec and any discussion of Trudeau’s own development intellectually. This whole idea of having a constitution and a Charter of Rights and Freedoms seems to be from a canoe trip down the Mackenzie river with F.R. Scott who was the prime exponent of that but who actually had troubles dealing with Quebec nationalism. He was a progressive CCF’er but had trouble reconciling himself, perhaps because he was an
Anglophone. He was the one who was Trudeau’s mentor for all I know but very influential. He had a really strong idea before Trudeau. So certainly entering new discourses, having that here makes a lot of sense, apart from the part that I don’t understand (#2, p. 8).

The part that Terry did not understand was Cabrera’s assertion that agents process discourses but that this in fact does not constitute agency as the discourse already defines the range of possible actions that may be undertaken:

Why that would be agency is beyond me because agency has to have some sense of doing something. So, maybe it means people process but do not understand it well enough, clearly enough. Lets go back to the “collision of discourses,” that insight here. I think there is some sense of that here. “When people encounter new discourses such as human rights…” Absolutely, I mean I think that is insightful. You got to articulate, you don’t have to, but it certainly helps to, articulate your reasoning, your thinking, your goals, your sense of values, the right order of things or whatever (#2, p. 8).

Like Mary, Terry rejected the strong determinist claims made by Cabrera for discourse. In contrast, Terry saw discourses as aiding people’s agency as an articulation of goals, interpretations, and, or, desires that shape “doing something.” Interestingly, as reviewed in section 5.6, the only people “doing something” in textbook representations of the past are prominent political leaders or governments. Any analysis of how they came to define and express political programs is absent in textbook accounts.

Discourses had a role in Terry’s interpretation of social change as contributions to rather than determinations of the way people might envision and work towards certain goals. In the following quotation, Terry’s description of Trudeau “channelling” discourses in his “own particular way” is noteworthy. It speaks to a tension for Terry between agency as an individual expression of “doing something” and discourses as social facts which allow people to articulate their “thinking,” “goals,” and their “sense of values [and] the right order of things...:”
"In the case of the changes covered in the Trudeau unit, it was the clashing of different discourses that made social changes possible. Parochial discourses, embodied by those who occupied positions in the social institutions of Quebec, lost veracity when confronted with those calls for change that were possible as a result of the emergence in popular media of discourses of civil rights, individuality, and female and colonial liberation."

Yes, yes, I mean that is clearly there. Again, did I really express that here? I think so although it is hard to tell... Yes, and to some extent Trudeau's discourse was of course opposed to these new changes and to some extent he was in favour of them. But he channelled them in his own particular way. ...[T]his makes sense to me, your summary of what was there. You should have been teaching the course that is all there is to it! We could have done it together. (#2, p. 9).

The role of discourses clearly had a place in Terry's interpretation of his teaching and interpretation of how social change is possible. As reviewed above, he wondered, however, whether this was sufficiently conveyed in his unit. As will be further explored below in section 5.4, the efficacy of my summations for instigating reflection on practice was evident throughout my work with Terry.

This same tension between individual agency and discourse for Terry was evident in his reading of my summation of Ermarth with artistic and scientific metaphors rather than discourse as the source of tension (#2, p. 10). While not entirely convinced of Ermarth's position as I represented it, Terry affirmed its applicability with his own interpretation of the role played by dominant metaphors:

I mean people talk about computers "good," high tech "good" and that is a cultural change in the scientific representation and people talk about "networking" and using all the language and the metaphors, "hardware" and so on. People in the 19th century talked about railroads all the time and all that kind of stuff. So, if somebody just uses it, I don't see what that has anything to do with agency (#2, p. 10).

Later in the interview, we spoke again about the distinctions between discourses and changing representations in artistic and scientific activities. Terry again showed a
disposition towards assertions by Smith and Touraine that interpretations and the
selective application of discourses in social struggles constitutes the agency contributing
to social change:

KdH: For Touraine and Smith, nothing is stable. There is no thing such as
discourses in Cabrera's sense. People take different ideas and terms from different
discourses in order to make moral and epistemological sense of the world.

That makes sense. It does not necessarily contradict discourses and some of those
scientific and artistic representations; those too could be very fragmented. (#2, p. 12).

Terry saw in each summation a potential explanation for the agency involved in social
changes depending on which aspects of the relationship between individuals, groups, and
social forces were emphasized. Each of the summations spoke to both his understanding
of changes in Quebec at that time and his teaching about those changes. Thus, the lines
that might connect the three elements of his model (social forces, prominent individuals,
and groups) are potentially thickened with a range of explicit articulations for the ways
each might be connected to the other.

5.3.3 Rosa's interpretations of historical agency and social change

For Rosa, social change covered in her unit in South Africa resulted from the choices,
intentions, and actions of broadly distributed agents. These agents contributed through
political and intellectual work to open spaces of possibilities. In doing so, the
maintenance of relations of power in South Africa during Apartheid ceased to be tenable.
While Rosa posited strong links between class and economics and people's motivations
and struggles for social change, such an interpretation was not evident in her unit.
In classroom observations, Rosa emphasized the actions of collective agents in opposing South Africa's Apartheid governments. The significance of the following date and action was one Rosa mentioned in several classes:

June, 1976, the Soweto massacre marks the beginning of the end of Apartheid. And you should note the group involved in that particular series of actions. Who was involved, what kind of people? [a student answers, “students”] That is right, thank you. We are not talking primarily university students here either. We are talking secondary students and sometimes younger (observation, 04/08).

On another day, she told students that she was in England when Steve Biko died. She recounted the active movement in England at that time to help people in South Africa led by “university and secondary students and the Liberal Party of England who had set up a permanent picket” (observation, 04/09).

Rosa’s commitment to teaching about non-institutional forms of activism was evident in her comments to students about the personal choices involved in political boycotts:

There is one more term that I want you to be sure you understand—boycott. What is a boycott? It is to ignore or to not participate or buy products from a person or nation. Often this relates to trade. For example, since we are talking about South Africa, many North Americans, with not necessarily the support of their governments refused to buy South African products in the era of Apartheid [...] Many people of course under the apartheid regime did not visit South Africa, some people did, others did not. In the case of non-government response to the boycott, it would be very much a matter of personal choice. What does this say about economic sanctions? It says, especially since neither the British or American governments were willing to impose trade sanctions, in many, many instances, boycotts are citizen initiatives. So individuals...in the case of South Africa and many other situations where governments are regarded as being oppressive in the West, church groups have been involved in taking the initiative. So church groups have taken leadership and established relationships through boycotts with church leaders. For example, in South Africa the former archbishop of the Church of England was Desmond Tutu. He provided that link between church groups and what we call big communities and the boycott activities (observations, 04/08).
In this segment of classroom lecture, Rosa connected personal choices and actions with broader collective actions in the international struggle against Apartheid. In doing so, she attended to the actions of multiple agents in multiple locations who took moral stances to support action for change. She emphasized that these stances and actions preceded that of governments and formal political action.

Rosa’s explanation to students of what made Apartheid increasingly difficult to sustain was reiterated in our interviews:

[Reading from my summation of Cabrera applied to her unit] “Racist and parochial discourses, embodied by those who occupied positions in the social institutions of South Africa, lost veracity when confronted with those calls for change that were possible as a result of the emergence in popular media of discourses of civil rights, racial equality, economic redress, and full democracy.”

And it became increasingly difficult to govern without... Well, I mean there was a state of siege for the last few years, basically. Well, even from the middle 1980’s and on. There is really a complete state of siege, impossible to govern. One of the things that happens, really, in South Africa in the 1980’s is that there is a whole bunch of stuff happening. So we have Desmond Tutu and then we have... his name escapes me now, but the guy who became the leader of the South African reform church. He was an activist anti-apartheid worker. There were all sorts of scandals that followed him. But the point I am trying to make is that a whole variety of different areas became open: that is, well, we have Biko dead but we have young folks involved in a whole bunch of stuff. Mandela is still a focus for organizing even though he is still in jail. The church really swings into activism on a number of different levels. There are the activities outside of South Africa, the de-investment stuff that starts to happen. So I guess there is a real flowering of a variety of different things that are worked on, particularly the work on the international diplomatic scene. You get pressure brought by governments around the world, and in particularly I guess the US, Canada, and the UK to put pressure on that government (#2, p. 3).

Rosa’s inclination towards agency as expressed through groups struggling in processes of social change was evident in an initial response to my summation of Cabrera:

“Discourses are sets of ideas, concepts, and terms that define personal identities and the possible ways to express agency.”
We could also say “group identities” couldn’t we? Did Cabrera just talk about personal identities? Is he only talking about personal identities or can we also talk about the identifications of particular groups who agree with what you have defined, or are in the process of defining as your own personal identity?

Rosa identified the role of social movements contributing to individual agency as is connected to what I have defined as historical agency. Rosa emphasized the interplay between groups involved in social struggle and how individuals come to understand their capacities. In setting up a segment of the movie, for example, Rosa asked students to speculate on what movements and ideas influenced the prominent editor Woods to risk his position as a privileged White man in South Africa and publicly call for the end of Apartheid. On another occasion, Rosa offered biographical details on Biko and connected the influence of the Anglican Church in his education and the role of this church in Anti-Apartheid movements (observation, 04/19).

I was impressed with the balance I observed in her teaching between individuals as agents and, in my terms, the historical agency of social movements expressed in how individuals come to interpret their own place and capacities in a social world. I asked her if this was something she did consciously:

KdH: I also notice in your teaching a flagging of social movements around these individuals when you talk about the Soweto students and the role of the church and the priests. So you are both flagging individuals and are you not also taking care to point out to kids that these individuals are part of larger movements?

Yes, I am. We do think in terms of individuals, or the way that social leadership is presented to kids in every other part of their life. They are probably... it is probably true that somebody like Mandela, who did not become president for life, is quite indicative of how important he knew that the ANC and the movement in South Africa was that it could and did create other leaders (#1, p. 3).
Rosa noted how leaders are created through movements. Yet, there is more subtlety to her interpretation. It is not just leaders, but individuals, some of whom later become identified as leaders and many who remain historically anonymous, whose agency is both defined and expressed through the discourses propagated by movements: “I see some value in Cabrera’s clashing of different discourses because the framing of new discourses allows people to conceive of themselves as agents” (#2, p. 6).

Rosa sought to achieve this balance in the face of the privileged North American emphasis on individual agents:

We learn through the media that there are two or three guys who we should take seriously. Right now it is Tony Blair and Bush. There are other currents in history and in current events who represent the ideas and feelings of more people. I think we have to pay attention to those (#1, p. 3).

Reflecting this bias, Rosa believed that the individuals students of history and social studies most commonly encounter are those operating in the formal political realm:

They [her colleagues] focus on various formal institutions rather than have any deep understanding of extra parliamentary institutions and the relationships, sometimes tense and sometimes fruitful and what that tension produces, with extra-parliamentary movements and formal institutional movements (#1, p. 7).

Political movements in history and collective actions undertaken in non-formal political realms of action represent “the other currents in history.” In response to my summation of Tackett, she immediately noted the absence of political movements in that framework:

So far I don’t detect any focus on a political movement and I think that is pretty clearly needed. We have popular ideas, images, and we have interpretations of experiences and making calls, but I think probably it would be very helpful to focus on political movements. Like, it is fine to have a bunch of ideas. Women have ideas about their inferiority in social terms for many years before they were able to anything about it. That required the creation of organizations which in the absence of even a basic democratic impulse, in terms of re-organizing social life,
was not possible until the beginning of the 19th century in Western Europe and North America (#2, p. 2).

The role of “other currents” in social change for Rosa was evident in her response to my summation of Smith and his emphasis on ideas and images circulating in the public sphere:

“Biko, Mandela, Tutu, Subukwe, and other leaders were part of a widespread reinterpretation of social life made possible from a greater diversity of ideas and images circulating in the public sphere.”

Yes. I like that. I like the last sentence.

KdH: Why do you like the last sentence?

Because part of a widespread reinterpretation of social life is something I think like ideas reaching critical mass; but to do that they have to connect to a movement. So to me, “circulating in the public sphere” is perhaps another way of saying a political movement or movements that do something. It has to be more active than just ideas (#2, p. 3).

Rosa was clearly inclined towards the materiality of political action in contrast to the idealism expressed in my summation of Ermarth:

Is Ermarth saying that it is metaphors in collision? Nope. This seems far too totally subjective for me to buy into. “Changing metaphors?” I would say this is a total stretch for me. It is...I think that this is pretty limp (#2, p. 4).

Neither of us was able to apply my summation of Ermarth to the South African context of the unit. This was not, however, the case with my summation of Cabrera:

I see some value in Cabrera’s clashing of different discourses because the framing of new discourses allowing people to conceive of themselves as agents. So they might have previously seen themselves as powerless or inconsequential but now something about those clashing of discourses allowed some people, many people perhaps, to see themselves as having some power and if they got together capable of making some changes (#2, p. 5).
I believe what made Cabrera’s emphasis on discourses coherent for Rosa (in contrast to Ermarth’s emphasis on metaphor) was her own connection in class between Black Consciousness in South Africa with the Black civil rights movement in the US. For example, in an observation (04/14), Rosa handed out a chronology of the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa and connected that movement to the rise of Black civil rights in the US and specifically to a gathering of Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In this same sequence, she told students that the Black leadership had requested that White supporters of Black civil rights leave the Conference. She connected this to the scene in the movie in which Biko’s character told Woods’ that, for the time being, Blacks themselves needed to do the work of regaining their dignity and rightful place in the affairs of the country:

Also, I guess, one of the things that happened in South Africa after 1974, no 1964 up till 1974, was the focus on what in the States was called “Black Power” but in South Africa was called “Black consciousness” which was primarily a cultural movement focussing on the need for Black Africans to do the political work together first. This is something you saw the students dealing with when they did the work on South Africa and focused on the “Cry Freedom” tape (#2, p. 1).

As she emphasised throughout our interviews, however, discourses themselves are insufficient sources of social change. Like each of the other participants, Rosa rejects Cabrera’s strong determinist interpretation of discourse. Rather, she was drawn to my emphasis in Touraine’s work on historical agency in social change as a collective capacity: “I agree that agency is collectively expressed in the struggles of social movements and social classes:”

[Rosa reading from my summation of Touraine applied to her unit] “In the South African case, social changes were made possible because of different social groups such as youth, workers, students, church and international organizations
who challenged racist, economic, and social practices entrenched in South African society."

The first sentence is good. Yes, I think for me it most adequately reflects how I would frame in really general terms what happened there. It is sort of a hierarchy of sort of understanding consciousness and that fanning out and eventually becoming a source for fairly fundamental and central change.

KdH: So, Touraine for you out of these frameworks makes the most sense?

Yes, as framed in the South African context (#2, p. 5).

For Rosa, social change resulted in the South African context from the choices, intentions, and actions of individual and collective agents whose historical agency was expressed through struggle over definitions of social life and the legitimacy of who may participate in that life. These agents contributed to open spaces of political and social possibility. In doing so, the reactions of authorities, such as the massacre of protesting students at Sharpville, contributed to the un-tenability of Apartheid’s relations of power. Touraine’s emphasis, however, concerns how various categories (socioeconomic categories for example) become cogent terms of social understanding. Rosa, in contrast, attributed the sources of social change primarily to class as an absolute category contributing to social division, struggle, and change.

In response to my summation of Tackett, Rosa questioned the use of socio-economic categories in his analysis rather than class:

Socio-economic experiences. Humm [...] It seems like a weasel-ly out to me, socio-economic status or position. What is so uncomfortable since 1975 with the use of the word “class”? (#2, p. 1).

Later in the interview, we entered into a discussion as to the efficacy of class as a category of analysis:
KdH: In relation to Tackett, again, I think socioeconomic is now used instead of class because we recognize that intersections between gender, sexuality, economic well being and survival. If we say class, then don't we have a fundamental category?

Well, we need to look at how class is being defined and how it is being demonized by the academic world in North America to a certain extent as well as the business elite or those who have hegemony.

KdH: And those in academia...they might say we need a category more diverse because the battles we are fighting are more diverse. All these challenges, can you have one category?

I would argue that when everything else is taken into consideration, that class is still the last great divider. It really is (#2, p. 6).

Rosa believes that class is “the last great divider.” This analysis, however, was absent in her teaching of the Anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa and its connections to international struggles in the US and England (although such analysis was covered in previous units). As is evident in her responses, she found those summations that spoke about group struggle and discourses most applicable to understanding, in general terms, social change. Rosa’s interpretation differs from Touraine and Cabrera, however. She interpreted class as an absolute category, that is, one that transcends social life, to explain intentions, choices, and actions contributing to social change. In contrast, for Touraine, “class” is a category of understanding propagated and used in the service of a social struggle.
5.3.4 Marv’s analysis of the framework of historical agency and social change

The observant reader will note that I have titled Marv’s section differently from the others. I am unable to offer the reader much as to how Marv interpreted social change. This is the result of two factors. The first is that Marv raised historical agency and social change as a question explicitly examined with his students. Therefore, rather than implicitly conveying an interpretation, he applied his sceptical skills with students to explore myths and assumptions rather than assign causes to events. Marv also applied a sceptical position throughout his analysis of my framework. He had no formula for social change. Rather, he approached this issue by what it is not, elucidating, as previously mentioned, a set of commonly found myths that he believes exist around the question. Two of the myths he listed are noteworthy: that of a Whiggish interpretation of history written around great men who lead political change and that of a Marxist interpretation premised on the need for a consciousness to precede social changes.

The emphasis on celebrated leaders was one he found hard to avoid in the histories available to him when he did background reading in preparation for the unit:

I guess with the issue of the Quiet revolution, I am almost attempting to not talk about some of the leading names. As I went through my research and decided that I needed to bone up on my understanding of this time, everywhere you go though it is always the same names. It is almost always Jean Lesage, Pierre Trudeau, this, that, and everything. But I do not want it to seem that way because that would explain into that whole mythology. If I keep using these names, even if they were in fact involved, as, of course, they were, then that is the perception that the students will have (#1, p. 15).

Marv believed that this emphasis was one that students found quite appealing in their explanations for social changes:
I suspect, when it comes up, the information that students by and large will take away is that these are individuals of some stature that seem to be working the change. So even if I am doing the internment you know, when in a way it is not really clear who did the redressing, who advocated and why did they do this or that, I think they still would probably want to pin that down to leading figures in the community. I think that they sense that is how things change is that somebody grabs hold and makes it happen (#1, p. 15).

Despite seeking to avoid an emphasis on great men as leaders of social change, in his analysis of my summations, Marv repeatedly found it difficult to account for social changes without appeal to the leadership of individuals.

I think in that sense, it [my summation of Smith] makes sense. However, it seems, this model seems to come back to the idea that not only is it a product of this common understanding or knowledge that is somehow made apparent, that gets into this consciousness. I think more importantly would be the leadership of individuals or groups of individuals who were then taking this and saying this is the direction we need to consider [...] I think only a handful of people per se are going to do that. The rest will just follow afterwards but they will not make the sacrifices or they wouldn’t know what to do (#2, p. 8).

Collective consciousness as a necessary precursor to changes was also a myth and an insufficient explanation for Marv:

KdH: I get the sense though that you reject the notion that we are dealing with a consciousness issue from a Marxist approach and therefore...

I find the question itself fascinating. I had a problem with authors who write various texts who we would study who tried to pinpoint a moment of consciousness among the proletariat that then rose up and did something. You would be reading a book about a labour movement and then the author would go to great lengths to show that they were following this model and saying, “Well this is the moment of consciousness where they finally dawned upon them that this is their predicament and they then formed this association and then they did all these things.” What seemed far more evident most of the time from what I read and in my understanding of history, was that the people who actually end up leading the more well known kinds of changes, they might be conscious of it, but the rest of the people are not. They just sort of drag them along and make sure that they somehow help them as to why they should join the fray (#1, p. 14).
Yet, other aspects of a Marxist analysis of history and social change were appealing.

Giddens asserted in Chapter Four that we are all Marxist when we seek to explain motivations and actions by referencing material conditions. Throughout our work together, Marv cited socioeconomic causes for intentions, choices, and actions contributing to social change. This, he argues, is in part, a reiteration of his education: “I came from the good Marxist-Leninist institute on the hill (name of a local university) and did a lot of social and labour history and the whole thing” (#1, p. 3). For example, in reviewing my summation of Tackett, Marv was quite clear about where he stood:

Ok. Tackett says that “The agency of people contributing to social change emerges from socioeconomic motivations.” That would be where I fall in my perspective.

“The first are experiences gained from a particular socioeconomic status or position that are activated by type 2 experiences. Experiences associated with social locations impart underlying attitudes or values, jealousies, desires, and ways of thinking- an ethos. These experiences are activated by the more immediate experience (type 2) of social, political, and, or cultural conflicts to cause action contributing to social change.”

I like it. My gut instinct tells me that would…without the research background that you have, I would, without hesitation, latch onto that and probably teach by and large to that kind of thinking as was probably evidenced by the topic we chose (#2, p. 5).

This was not only the perspective from which he taught, but also for Marv a partially accurate explanation for changes in Quebec at that time:

“This experience of inferiority was also felt in relation to the social institutions and forces in Quebec (i.e. Church run education, Anglophone dominated industry).” From my knowledge that appears apparent and accurate (#1, p. 6).

Confronted with a summation that he too read as an accurate reading of his interpretation, Marv remained sceptical. Like the other participants in this study, Marv
did not see how my summation of Tackett, or its accurate application to his unit, could account for those people who appear to act out of intentions not attributable to their economic background:

It is interesting to note maybe where does that idealism fit in this. What experience would motivate...So the kids earlier in [another] class did the Mississippi Burning thing and the civil rights movement. Not only would there be some class differences no doubt with some of the White Americans who got involved in that movement and were willing to go down and literally sacrifice their lives. There is the obviously simple difference in race which was the primary activator in terms of what was occurring. So, it is interesting to ask whether these people who read about this and went, "This is wrong so I have to do it" or did they have an immediate experience. Did they see someone get discriminated against? Did they go to the south and look at "Whites Only" and "Coloreds Only"? I think they are obviously tied together (#2, p. 6)

Marv’s reiteration of his Marxist background was evident in his response to Smith’s explanation for social changes as possible when people confront moral and epistemological uncertainty: “Aren’t they all material adjustments that lead to the political and social changes?” (#2, p. 7). In response to my summation of Touraine, Marv expressed his belief that the desire to sacrifice and struggle for a change “stems a lot from one’s standing in terms of that social economic standing first” (#2, p. 11). This reading of social change was evinced in Marv’s reaction to Cabrera’s emphasis on discourses for the way social change is possible:

But I am still, I am going to fall back to the very first model [Tackett] and go, we will only do that if we are disadvantaged for some reason. We have been disadvantaged and it is usually so economic disadvantage. I guess it is that [name of a local university] education that still just sits in the belly, sits in my gut, and eventually brings me back home. It always starts to boil down to those forms of disadvantage and that these issues of power relations and other forms of things that people become aware of are still ultimately a product of that (#2, p. 8).
This continued a theme expressed in the first interview where Marv reiterated his education in evaluating his teaching project:

I guess in terms of moving from being a student of history in terms of doing the Marxist – Leninist analysis you deal a lot with agency and consciousness as powerful forces in what motivates human beings to change. Then you get into issues of class and power struggle. I think I don’t tend to emphasize those in terms of what I do directly in my teaching. They are there, however, and I think we do discuss them from time to time. Part of my historical learning, as a student of history, is still serving me well in terms of trying to make sense of these developments for my students (#1, p. 14).

Yet, Marv is a sceptic more comfortable acknowledging the complexity of issues at hand than accepting or offering specific interpretations. In his comments on textbooks, Marv raised the relationship between leaders and followers as itself an important question:

The problem with textbooks is their conception of how history should be taught. Textbooks are written in a certain way by and large in that they present history as a form of change led by certain leaders only and ignore a lot of the other things that are occurring in terms of how movements work. The interaction between those who are advocating the change and those who support the change and get involved is such a complex question (#2, p. 15).

Marv acknowledged the complexity of this question with his students during the first lesson of this unit:

So what we are going to do, this is the transitional moment, what we are trying to do the next day is ask why these things [changes] occur. We have a good sample from your work here [groups sharing their responses to the questions about social change]. We are starting to talk about why... Is it certain people? Is it Gandhi who did it? Was it Malcolm X who made a change? This would be the great person theory that they somehow made everything change. We need to talk about this more and we will get into this when we get into the case of Quebec and try to find out whether it is the common people who create a groundswell for change. And then once we understand a little bit about who motivates or how changes occur then we can start looking at this a bit more carefully. There are no answers to that question in my opinion (observation, 03/24, p. 6).

Sufficiently explaining social change is for Marv a conundrum.
On the one hand, sceptical of his Marxist education while at the same time returning to it, he argued that “simply having broad consciousness I guess is not enough” to account for social change (#2, p. 8). On the other, he was conscious of what he named as the myth “that social change occurs when great leaders motivate the masses to act.” Thus, he is critical of what could be taken up either as a Whiggish or Leninist position:

KdH: I am reading from your email where you write that it is a myth that history changes because of great men and it is a myth that collective consciousness precedes historical changes...

...those are assumptions. It is the way I feel although I cannot prove it...

KdH: Well, what I think you have done is put the two poles that we would typically use to explain changes, great men or collective consciousness, and you are rejecting both those...

Yes. Somewhere in between is probably the answer (#1, p. 15).

And yet, as evinced above, he found it difficult to explain social change without appealing to leaders. Despite his opinion that ideals are insufficiently considered in Tackett’s framework I believe this conundrum for Marv centered on his belief that people who are not oppressed by material conditions do not think much about issues relevant to social change. In the following quotation he stated this belief in response to my summation of Touraine’s position:

So the idea of sort of interpreting and reflecting and thinking about one’s place, I don’t know if that many people without being motivated by someone else or being in the absolute condition of being oppressed ever have to deal with that. It is a non-issue. And that is a statement in itself (#2, p. 12).

Such a belief was also evident in our first interview when Marv discussed a challenge he perceived in working with students on moral questions raised by past injustices:
I think that the one thing that is hard for students when you are getting into some of these kinds of conversations is that they are still wrestling with “Who cares? Like why would we need to know that it is better today?” Like, “If I feel it is better and I see it is better in my life then I really don’t care how it got here. I am just glad that whatever you were doing back then we don’t do it anymore, people are better than that. We are better today, things have progressed or whatever it is.” I don’t think they would wrestle much or think much unless I made them do it, made them ask that question (#1, p. 11).

In comfort, people do not concern themselves much with issues not directly affecting their material conditions. Marv’s impression of social change, as with the interpretations of the other participants, relies on socioeconomic explanations of intentions, choices, and actions. This is evident in his agreement with my summation of Tackett. Social changes require struggles informed by leaders and “that different groups of people, depending on where they stood in that society, would or would not want things to change” (#1, 16). Leaders, groups, and oppressive material conditions are necessary but not sufficient to account for social changes. Marv was sceptical as to what makes social changes occur or in what ways we might measure such changes as was evident in discussions with his class in section 5.2.1. While Marv sought to avoid emphasis on the role of leaders, as a sceptic he has not “so far consciously replaced that with anyone else yet either” (#1, p. 15).

5.3.5 Review

Mary believed social change was possible when leaders articulate rising levels of frustration. This frustration emerges when people’s epistemological “pictures” are not being met, or when personal or social ends and their means are insufficiently aligned. My summation of Tackett appealed to her sense of what causes intentions, choices, and actions contributing to social change. She identified my summation of Smith,
emphasizing the individual’s struggle for coherence with divergent ideals or ideas, as an accurate representation of both her teaching practice and interpretation of changes in Quebec. My summation of Smith also reflected her own sense of agency expressed in existential terms. As will be seen in section 5.4, Mary’s emphasis on individuals and on leaders to explain social change began to shift as she thought more about my summation of Touraine and Cabrera.

For Rosa, social change resulted in the South African context from the choices, intentions, and actions of individual and collective agents whose agency was expressed through local struggles influenced by international movements. These agents contributed to open spaces of possibilities. As with other participants, my summation of Tackett appealed to Rosa’s interpretation of the sources of intentions, choices, and actions contributing to social change. Expressing her individual agency in activist terms Rosa also identified my summation of Touraine as the most applicable framework for interpreting struggles and change in the South African context. That summation focuses on group struggle and the widely distributed condition of historical agency.

According to Terry, people work within structural constraints of their economic position and social forces. These forces include, in addition to economic conditions, wars, and disease, shared norms and attitudes that “mould and shape” people. Elements of each summation applied to Terry’s interpretation for changes in Quebec and for his teaching. My summation of Tackett reflected Terry’s interpretations as evinced in interviews, while Terry asserted my summation of Cabrera accurately portrayed interpretations he tried to convey in his teaching. As a bridge-builder, he identified socioeconomic experiences and the role of discourses as two gulfs dividing communities. As will further be shown below,
Terry's emphasis on group struggle, social movements, and his recognition of the role of discourses in social change aligned him with many of the frameworks.

Several tensions existed in participants' interpretations. One concerned the role of leaders and what makes that leadership efficacious at particular junctures in processes of change. A related tension was evident between their interpretations and their teaching. Despite their clear inclination towards socioeconomic explanations for what makes social change possible, Terry and Marv did not explore struggles over material conditions in classes I observed. Rosa mentioned material conditions more than once in her class but in reference to the conditions facing Black South Africans in the Townships, not as a category of analysis.

Of course, material disparities affect the formation of intentions, choices, and actions. As scholars reviewed in the previous chapter argue, I believe these tensions emerged from participants wrestling with how agents' experiences of those objective conditions form or function with leaders to became sufficiently powerful formative terms to an expression of agency contributing to social change. Perhaps these tensions emerge from the ubiquitous North American representations of leaders, efficacious action, and social change. Influenced by Whig or Marxist representations of social change, participants were inclined to look for a moment when leaders used ideals and discourses to activate social tensions that emerge from material disparities.

Rosa identified another way to think through these questions. For Rosa the problem in historical instruction about social change is not so much the concentration on individuals or leadership. Rather, there is an insufficient attention paid to social movements and to the struggles through which individuals express their agency and with which leaders
come later to be identified. By offering a range of interpretations, my summations helped in this regard. They did so by offering multiple interpretations for the relationship between individuals, groups, and social life (i.e., social movements, discourses, social relationships and material conditions) and the implications of each in the other.

5.4 Insights gained in work with the framework

As evinced in the previous section, the framework instigated a challenging task for participants. It required them to articulate interpretations for a question seldom explicitly asked. The framework raised several tensions in these articulations. This was itself a worthy end of the research process. In this section, I highlight two insights my summations raised for two participants during the study.

In working through the framework, Mary began to distinguish between teaching history as a series of causes and effects based on temporal position and exploring questions of agency and social change. Mary also came to see how her previous teaching relied on a textbook account of privileged North American presentations of how individuals cause social change.

For Terry, the summations instigated a noteworthy degree of reflection about his teaching specifically related to the central challenge he identified in the unit I observed. Terry’s reflection articulated exactly why it is vital to have a set of interpretations for engaging both teachers and students in the complex philosophical questions of agency and social change: Simple explanations, in contrast to the engagement of complexity, are always more time and effort efficient. It is evident in reviewing these insights that the
framework proved to be efficacious as a means to instigate reflection on the complexity of historical agency and social change.

My summations raised important insights for Terry about his teaching and what insights he tried to convey in his unit. I use extended quotations to illustrate the train of thought stimulated for Terry by my summations. My summation of Tackett’s framework, for example, was evidently relevant to both Terry’s historical understanding and teaching:

“In the case of social changes covered by the “Trudeau” unit, social changes in Quebec were possible because of French Quebecers’ experience of inferior socio-economic standing in relation to English Quebecers. This experience of inferiority was also felt in relation to the social institutions and forces in Quebec (i.e. Church run education, Anglophone dominated industry).”

I think in that sense that was covered here in my unit. Yes.

“Such cultural and class experiences (type 1) produced motivations activated (type 2) by increased media exposure to North American popular culture that conveyed, for example, liberation movements (e.g. civil rights) and the questioning of sexual and social norms.”

Yes, we did that. It might have been nicer and clearer if I had explained it in terms of the framework that is here!

“We can explain social changes at this time as a result of struggles to which these experiences gave rise.”

Yes. Yes. So I think that this was definitely part of that unit… I can see how going back I could make the unit have some…it would be easy to do. I could perhaps…You know focusing on Trudeau and trying to move the unit along and make it simple I think, I…In that question that I ask there is another question that goes with it: “Were these times of progress?” And that is the one… I mean that was the actual test question. “Were the times for better or worse, was it progress? Did things get better?” But the agency one is probably the more powerful one. That was there. This was all there, so I agree with you that you got it. It seems to fit Tackett’s conception of type 1 and type 2 (#2, p. 5).
To return to a theme mentioned throughout, my summations helped participants clarify their more and less explicit treatment of historical agency and social change with their students. To this end, I applied each of my summations to changes conveyed in their units:

[Terry reading from my application of Smith to his unit] “In the case of social changes covered by the “Trudeau” unit, social changes in Quebec were possible because of the emergence of human rights, civil rights, feminist liberation, and the exaltation of personal freedom into the mainstream of popular consciousness.”

You know... I didn't layer it. Yes, this was all mentioned there. Sometimes it would just emerge in passing and in elaboration, but I didn't root it as I could have in the '60's and say “this is what was going on around the world.” I did talk about it, maybe you can remember better than I do. Did I really stress that and spell it out? No, and I probably could have. You know, just reflecting on this, that might be a very useful thing to do (#2, p. 6).

Further reflection on whether the depth and scope of his insights were available for students to think about their own interpretations of social change emerged from his reading of my summation of Ermarth:

Here we are talking about art and science. I think that was very strongly in the unit. Not in the same words that you are saying. Would you agree with that? You tell me why if it was not there with the video and the songs?

KdH: I think it was there. I think the kids might not have, if kids didn't get it, I think they didn't get it because there was not a second order concept like agency that allowed you to stand back and say “look at what I am doing here. Here are several possible explanations and examples to explain how social changes in Quebec might have occurred.”

Yes, no, I think you are quite right. To some extent that was me trying to make things simple and go on. And to another extent it was just that... I think that a lack of clarity on my part, up front, meaning I was trying to get them to just understand what was going on by my focusing on nationalism (#2, p. 11).

In thinking further on this point, Terry identified the potential benefit of more explicitly engaging students with multiple interpretations for agency and social change:
But it is a pity not to have done that [talked explicitly about agency]. For a lot of these things you are talking about, it would have been nice to see, to have done, and might have been more, yes, more second order concepts that you are talking about. It might have made them better historians (#2, p. 11).

As an experienced teacher, Terry knew that difficult choices exist about what to emphasize in any specific unit. In the case of changes in Quebec he chose to focus on nationalism:

Yes, but it is good to talk with you about that and to do this, this exercise of yours so that it will be clearly a conscious choice as it should be in doing this again. I mean that is the... we have to make some choices, but to some extent I was making them because I was in, well you know the context there. I might still make the same choices but...(#2, p. 11).

I will return to the italicized comments in a moment. “The context” to which Terry referred was his teaching load (6 preps) with new grades and courses and the time pressures on these courses with the additional outdoor education focus of the mini-school: “You feel the time pressure and half the year in history and the curriculum divides, allocates; a third of the year for history. So what are you going to do?” (#2, p. 11): “I am rushing! I mean here it is in January and we are still doing history!” (discussion after class, 01/11). At a new school and new community, and with a daunting course load, Terry’s situation was one faced by far too many new teachers to the profession.

Daunting course loads make reflection on where and when choices are made difficult. I found Terry’s comment about making choices more conscious, therefore, especially satisfying. It exemplifies where we as researchers and teacher-educators can help to shape intention by elevating, or in Terry’s case, reminding, where choices exist in
planning. To do so is to potentially inform actions beyond the expediencies of overwhelming teaching loads and concomitant time pressures.

Time pressures resulting from demanding teaching loads contribute to a reliance on highlighting celebrated individuals in explanations for social change. For example, Terry organized the unit around Trudeau despite the impressive scope of his knowledge of the 1960’s in Quebec as it related to local, national, and international groups and movements struggling for change. I found this curious and asked him why he gave Trudeau such prominent role in the unit:

Simplicity, clear narrative, access points for the students. But it is that thing... Do we simplify too much? That is the question...it’s time, it’s the pressure to get through [...] If we had a whole year for history I could make it a little bit more human [...] So simplicity, to make it human, put a face on it, probably just to simplify it. And it is probably destructive, you are absolutely right. I don’t know if you are saying that...

KdH: I didn’t say that!

I am interpreting (#2, p. 2).

Without a way to raise the complexity of historical agency and social change, teachers facing daunting teaching loads are likely to engage students in the terms students find most familiar.

Terry’s concern was for students to have “access points” into the set of issues and times referenced in the unit. Beyond the pressures of time as a reason to highlight prominent individuals, his strategy was a form of mental ‘place marking’ where an individual signifies a position in a social struggle or a mnemonic device for such struggles. Terry’s organization likely makes more immediate sense to students raised within a North American cultural context that celebrates individual initiative and action
and looks to such for explanations of changes. As I reviewed briefly in Chapter Two, Egan believes such organization of the past potentially encourages brave individual possibilities providing moral lessons about the efficacy of individual dreams, hopes, or motivations. Organized in this way, history shares a plot line or motif with most widely distributed television shows and movies. As Terry suggested, many students can, therefore, easily recognize this narrative arc. I question, however, whether, without the consideration of multiple interpretations, the complexities of agents, agency, and social change get lost within these important lessons of individual efficacy:

KdH: It seemed that you were trying to, as part of the subtext [of the unit]... it seemed to me that you were trying to get at the complexity of human subjectivity as well.

That is a nice way of putting it. Yes.

KdH: That one person could be, for example, in one context pro separation, but in another, within themselves, “torn” by this question.

Yes, and I am like that. (#2, p. 2)

While Terry emphasized individuals for the sake of simplicity, Mary’s emphasis on individuals reflected the existential commitments of her teaching project. As previously mentioned, Mary worked with students to examine how individuals lead social changes.

As she read through the summations of Touraine and Cabrera, Mary’s interpretation, however, expanded beyond the individual leadership. She saw explanatory value in what I have called, using Touraine, “frameworks of justification,” through which groups articulate and define social struggles:

I think that he [Touraine] is correct that the struggle gets articulated inside of a framework of justification where you do lay out the problem and the legitimacy of the claim and all of the ideals and assumptions that go with that and then you go about trying to do something about that. These group struggles [...] took on their own ideas, their own ideals, their own language and their own stuff [...] But I
think that the individuals inside of the society worked it through. And then I think that Trudeau worked it through. Passing all the laws, or allowing Quebec to pass all the laws and not interfering in those laws and insisting on bringing the French Canadians up and making them ‘masters in their own house’ as it were I think did that but I am not sure that it was the group that did it. It is a tough thing...I don’t know I don’t know (2.3 p. 4).

Her claim to not “know” articulates a tension Mary encountered between her reliance on individuals to explain social changes and, in working with my summations, her increased recognition that individual capacities might only become coherent through the historical agency expressed through group struggles. This recognition was furthered by Cabrera’s emphasis on social change as the result of the collision of discourses:

[Reading from my summation of Cabrera] “Such discourses provided new ways for people to conceive of themselves as agents…”

Well now, there is a possibility right...So I am sitting in Quebec and I am hearing about the Blacks standing up for their rights, and women standing up for their rights, and India is standing up for its rights, and the whole concept of individuality is hugely being pushed (2.3 p. 8).

As she worked through the frameworks near the end of the interview, Mary returned to her idea of combining insights provided in her work with kids:

So, back to teaching kids, I would use that combination in terms of socioeconomic things and in terms of discourse; that the change needed to take place [pointing to the one line summations of Tackett and Cabrera] but it could not take place without those men, without those people in place who initiated the discourse (#2.3 p. 11).

In applying aspects of the different summations, Mary was able to articulate both her previous reliance on individuals who act out of socioeconomic motivations to be agents of change with an increased recognition of the role played by discourses and group struggles in their capacities to do so. As previously explored, Mary rejected Cabrera’s
assertion that discourses "initiate" identity and agency, arguing here again that it was leaders who "initiated" the discourse.

As she worked through the frameworks for historical agency and social change Mary also began to distinguish between her teaching of history as a series of cause and effects and questions about agents, agency, and social changes: "I have been more concentrated on the fact that social change occurred...It has been more cause and effect than agents of change" (#1, p. 17). In another interview she explored this distinction further:

All the cause and effect stuff that I have done has been around political or economic because it is simple and it is easy to see [...] that changes come from historical things because that is how my textbook is written. So I assume that something large happens that causes us to see the world differently and therefore change occurs. You can do the little petty changes and you can kind of look at what leads to those and that is easier but I have not really looked at large change (#2.3, p. 11).

She concluded that her concentration on historical cause and effect will not provide for the depth of analysis she has expected from her students.

Yet, I am going to ask these kids to write me an essay in May on what it is to be a Canadian and expect them to be able to show how Canadians changed from 1900 to today. I have done lots of talking about how people have changed and various reasons that they changed but the reasons were not reasons. They were things that came before. So it is sort of cause by position in time; because you come before this happens you must be a cause of that occurring (#2.3, p. 12).

Mary's objective was to have students wrestle with the complexity of individual subjectivity in relation to changing circumstances. As she recognized, this requires frameworks with which to engage students in such difficult questions. This was in fact a powerful moment in the interview process. As she worked through the difference between teaching history as a cause and effect based on temporal position, I observed the dawning of a profound questioning of her approach to teaching about social change: "I
would really like to pose some of these questions to the kids […] So that is an interesting thing. Now I feel like a failure. 34 years of teaching and I fail!” (#2.3, p. 12). She suddenly asked if the interview was over. As we exited the classroom, I thanked her for her time and insights. As she walked down the hall to her parking lot, she lobbed her keys into the air and to no one in particular she said, “It just goes to show, you never know, you are never finished.”

5.5 Constraints on sophisticated analyses of historical agency and social change

The frameworks raised for Mary several of her assumptions about change. In thinking through the frameworks, she came to see that her reliance on leaders to explain social change required greater explication. She mused over the ways her own understanding resulted from the ways textbooks frame social change as a series of causes and effects. In doing so, she joined the other participants in identifying several challenges involved in moving the question of historical agency and social change towards a less reflexive and more sophisticated analysis.

At the time of my work with her, Rosa was anxious about the pending provincial exam: “Unfortunately, and increasingly, now that we are in the home stretch, there is very little room for the open-ended group work and discussion and presentation of information. We just do not have the time” (#1, p. 2). This was not a time constraint about which nothing could be done:

I think that the provincial exam is not necessary. I think as professional well educated competent autonomous teachers in this system, we should have the responsibility for taking care of all aspects of instruction including giving grades in June. That is it. I do not see any function at all to the final exam (#1, p. 6).

In her estimation, the exam encourages lower order capacities such as memory:
It is really just one of those things that if you have an excellent memory you can regurgitate and out it comes. 40 of the questions are multiple choice. The rest are short or long paragraph type questions. There are some political cartoons occasionally and you have an assignment where you have to deal with a primary document or documents but really since you have very little time to really develop interesting and in-depth answers, I do not think it is very satisfying for the kids (#1, p. 6).

In Rosa's view, preparation for these exams took time away from more significant work with historiographical questions related to "what prompts particular movements and intellectual development and intellectual history." As was the case with Terry, however, systemic priorities limited the time and opportunities to address significant questions. The time to engage in such analysis was not the only cost of the exam.

Rosa also felt that the exam and the workbooks sold to prepare students for these exams reinforced an emphasis on memorization and "questionable theory" reflecting a heavy Eurocentric bias in the content of the course:

[The course] is very Euro-centric. You know there is supposed to be only the world wars and then the various political crises of the cold war and then there is the rise of China. But the course does not even do China between the wars. It just starts after 1945 when the civil war breaks out again after being stopped temporarily. I do not think you can understand why the communists became the government unless you understand the inter-war years. So we spend a lot of time on that which I may live to regret (#1, p. 4).

Rosa hoped to redress an imbalance in the content areas of the course by spending more time with Asian and African content:

We have spent more time on this than the course would suggest we should. In fact, the course does not spend a huge amount of time on Africa at all, unless you count the "Suez crises" which does not get a lot of play. So that is one thing, to redress an issue of imbalance, spend a little bit of time in Africa (#1, p. 3).

The unit I observed was part of addressing that imbalance:
I think the movement for the abolition of apartheid was extremely important. In its heyday, really, after détente, and the solidarity movement in Poland, there are a number of different social movements that are really in the public eye in the 1980s and this is one of them, and it is in Africa. It produces as well a lot of cultural heroes including Mandela and Biko. All of the kids have heard of Mandela and to give him some background is really, I think, important (#1, p. 3).

Rosa felt nervous about the spent time with these content areas and historiographical skills rather than what was likely to be asked in the exam. She felt it was necessary, however, to attend to diverse content given the community and students she served:

This is a very multicultural community. It is pretty interesting because, although lots of the kids are Asian, we really do not have one completely and totally dominate group so the kids hang around with each other. So I have kids from Ghana, Uganda, Vietnam, Burma, everywhere in China, Philippines, Latin America, Eastern Canada; all over the world. And we are in a working class community although the demographics are changing a little bit (#1, p. 8).

For Rosa, the testing and accountability priorities of the ministry materialized in content and classroom time challenged her concern to attend to the diverse particularities of her students’ backgrounds:

So you realize that even if you were inclined to push a completely Eurocentric vision, it does not represent reality and it would not be adequate to explain what has been going on in the world and what is going on in the world to satisfy students (#1, p. 8).

Marv also identified such priorities to quantify student (and by extension, teacher) performance as a problem:

It is a problem when we are in a system that now wants numbers, to quantify everything. Reading scores are down, {name of school} sucks and you better start reading and we better see better numbers that show a change. You know you do accreditation and all this stuff and you are looking at social studies and they are trying to ask us how did you change your students? I am like “I took five temples and a mosque” tell me twenty years from now whether they remember and whether it meant something. If you ask me now I don’t know how we would know this (#1, p. 5).
Rosa identified the textbook as another constraint to diverse content than asked for by either the course IRP or exam. To work against that bias, Rosa was cataloguing a binder of articles she had gathered over the years. In her opinion, a compendium of articles from which teachers could choose material would offer a source of broader historical content and analysis than is available from textbooks:

It adds to the areas the textbook is deficient in, in terms of topic areas and depth. Like the women's movement in its entirety is deficient in the textbook. Apartheid and the Southern African cone stuff, which has been really important in the last little while. The textbook spends no time on Mozambique and Angola which is stupid, at all, basically in the course (#1, p. 7).

Rosa sought to achieve this balance Rosa in recognition of the emphasis on individual agents in North America:

We do think in terms of individuals, or the way that social leadership is presented to kids in every other part of their life. [...] We learn through the media that there are two or three guys who we should take seriously. Right now it is Tony Blair and Bush. There are other currents in history and in current events who represent the ideas and feelings of more people. I think we have to pay attention to those (#1, p. 3).

The Eurocentric bias of the course and textbooks and the presentation of agents of emerging social life were each aspects of a single shortcoming in the school history that students encounter:

Most people, and I am talking about people who are my colleagues in the secondary schools, they know almost nothing about social history. So they are still grinding away on some version of the great man and occasionally the great woman theory of history. Or they focus on parliamentarianism whether that is in a parliamentary democracy or not. They focus on various formal institutions rather than have any deep understanding of extra parliamentary institutions and the relationships, sometimes tense and sometimes fruitful and what that tension produces, with extra parliamentary movements and formal institutional movements. You almost never hear colleagues, except those few progressive ones, talk about class. That is also a very important issue that cannot be emphasized enough and it does not get emphasized enough. So that is some of the
stuff that is problematic in terms of the course itself and how it is perceived and how it is taught (#1, p. 7).

Rosa’s criticism of her colleagues is supported by research from Hallden (1994). Teachers in his study described political change by concentrating on structural changes of political institutions. Rosa identified several shortcomings such a focus. Echoing the insights of Alejandro, Werner, Orr and McKay, and Couture described in Chapter Two, Rosa identified two shortcomings in the lack of attention to crucial contributions to social life from outside formalized political arenas and the inattention to the multiple domains in which people are implicated in social change.

Marv shared Rosa’s identification of such shortcomings and his concern for content and analysis more suited for his multicultural classroom. Marv’s choice of issues for a particular year depended on his students’ background and what issues might raise pertinent moral questions:

I think what you are getting a glimpse of [in the range of social changes he listed in response to my email question about what social changes he covers] are issues that either I have a strong personal interest because I have these various positions I am trying to take, background of the students is important, moral stance is important that helps me select what I think I should be doing. It is not exactly the same from year to year (#1, p. 10).

Marv’s learning objectives focused on moral deliberation. In choosing historical events and issues that convey “how people struggled,” Marv introduced students to those stories not traditionally found in historical curricula. This desire emerged, in part, from the context of the community in which he worked:

I am sure there has been an influence in the choices I made about these justice issues from the fact that a large percentage of our students are East Indian, Chinese of heritage, Japanese, well we do not have many first nations students in this particular school, but again, like the Dukabors, groups that have been cast
aside by society and discriminated against. I think there is a time when I feel that their stories need to be heard. These stories need to be told in the curriculum [...] Look at the nature of our population, look who makes up our community, these stories do not seem to be in our textbooks, let us do something about that (#1, p. 9).

By having students grapple with stories and perspectives usually omitted from historical curricula, Marv combined his learning objectives with his social justice concern for greater diversity in the stories and perspectives with which such grappling will take place:

Yes, and their stories were not being told, other than within those communities, and they should be told. So it is an interesting now that we are sort of pulling this apart a little bit...it is not a dichotomy it is an interesting way of saying that on the one hand, I am looking at these human beings and wanting good human beings, there is this moral component. But the mechanism I am choosing to use also has a dimension to it in terms of this sort of social justice or injustice [...] If there is a consistent theme that is going to underlie its groups who are being oppressed, have been oppressed and whose stories are not being told. They deserve recognition in the curriculum somewhere (#1, p. 10).

As with Rosa, Marv argued that the suggested content for the course needed to be broadened so as to be significant to his multicultural students.

Not only did Marv argue it was necessary to bring these stories into the curriculum, but he also wanted to consider alternative explanations for change to that presented in textbook presentation of the past:

The problem with textbooks [is] their conception of how history should be taught. Textbooks are written in a certain way by and large in that they present history as a form of change as led by certain leaders only and ignore a lot of the other things that are occurring in terms of how movements work (#2, p. 15).

Along with Rosa, Marv asserted that an emphasis on individuals in explanations of change was one that students found quite appealing. He did not, however, have
alternative explanations. I believe that this signals the need for a framework with which teachers can clarify their interpretations or offer students a range of interpretive possibilities.

5.6 Limiting tests and textbooks

Rosa and Marv each implicated the quality of curricula resources as a constraint to engaging students with something more than content reflecting a Eurocentric bias and implicit interpretation of agents, agency, and social change. Taking their assertions seriously, I examined the tests and textbooks they used in their course. I was interested in the content of the exam Rosa cited. In the textbooks, I examined how social change was explained in relation to cause, significant agents of that change (i.e., individuals or groups, individuals acting in what capacity— as members of government, non-government organizations etc), and conditions cited as having contributed to the possibility of change. Distinctions were further identified as to whether conditions were used either to explain why something happened or as context in which past actions took place.

Rosa asserted that the provincial exam tested student capacities for memorization and “regurgitation” in which “very little time [is available] to really develop interesting and in-depth answers.” This certainly is borne out in my study of the exam (http://www.gov.bc.ca/bced). The forty multiple choice questions are overwhelmingly about European and US events and the actions of governments and government leaders in those events. There is one question about South Africa:

Use the following table to answer question 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant events in South Africa:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Afrikaner nationalists elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pass laws tightened</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. De Klerk changed apartheid laws

25. Which of the following events completes the chronology above?
   a. Group Areas Act
   b. Sharpville Massacre
   c. Mandela elected President
   d. Establishment of the African National Congress

Interestingly, all but c. “complete” the chronology above. In the exam’s instructions, students are instructed to pick the “best” answer. I would fail. In this case, I do no know what that would be.

The leader who called for the partition of India was the only other multiple choice question that dealt with a non-European or North American country. Worth 7 of 90 marks (for which the creators of the exam recommend 12 minutes), students could offer a short answer to the question of to what extent the Camp David Accord reduced conflict in the Middle East after 1978 or answer “[t]o what extent was nationalism the cause of conflict in India and French Indo-China between 1945 and 1954?”

This Eurocentric emphasis is reflected in one of the textbooks available for use in the course, Twentieth Century History, written by Howarth with second edition credited to Brooman. The textbook is subtitled, The World Since 1900. Out of three hundred and eight pages of text on the world since 1900, Africa receives eight pages, Asia (including India and Pakistan) nineteen, the Middle East is covered in eight, and South America and the Caribbean receive two pages. The text overwhelmingly ascribes historical agency to the actions of governments. There are few notes about conflict within the nations over official policies and actions. Social movements receive short thrift. Marxism’s significant contribution to various movements in the 20th century, for example, receives one page.
Colonial rule is described with such phrases as “India was provided with a complete system of government and an army” while Canada and other privileged members of the Empire are described as “the former white colonies” (Howarth, 1987, p. 15).

In the six pages dealing with “Africa since 1945,” Howarth offers familiar vagueness about changing political and social realities. He notes several changes in Africa that contributed to Black Nationalism: increased concentrations of Blacks in towns and cities as “surplus people” moved from the countryside constituting an audience for Black politicians as part of the new economic, political, judicial, and military elites. He uses a version of the domino theory to suggest that de-colonization was a cumulative process wherein once one colony became independent it was harder for colonial powers to justify keeping others from attaining the same status. Nothing is noted of people struggling over the symbolic and material conditions of their lives. Rather, a combination of conditions inevitably occurred to cause the un-tenability of the colonial system. Students are given little with which to think about the historical agency expressed in and over such conditions.

Struggles over changing social philosophies, political beliefs, and human ideals are for Howarth, quoting a speech by British Prime Minister Macmillan, “winds of change.” Black nationalism is a “rising tide.” This is his most specific articulation of that tide: “The old doctrine that Europeans were a ‘master race’ destined to govern non-European peoples, lost ground in the second half of the twentieth century” (p. 283). Howarth later writes that European governments faced pressures from the American government and from public opinion in their own countries. Liberation movements are mentioned but not explored, referenced as something European public opinion was unwilling to sacrifice to
suppress. Ideals are mentioned, but only in relation to the reference to the ideals of parliamentary democracy learned by Black elites in their foreign education. While much is offered in terms of changing historical conditions (with no discussion whether these were necessary or sufficient causes of change), little is given as to the ways people’s action in such conditions led to social changes associated with the “lost grounds” to “the rising tides” of new interpretations and struggles over social arrangements.

The majority of the coverage given to South Africa, and indeed the whole of Africa, concerns itself with government acts and the changing historical conditions in which they acted (i.e., economic downturns). The propagation of racist beliefs amongst the Afrikaner population by the Dutch Reform Church is the only Church group mentioned. In the one page of text dedicated to “Pressures on Apartheid,” the role of the South African Anglican Church is not mentioned. The pressures cited in the 1970’s primarily concern those from White South African businessmen for a modification of the apartheid regime that would reduce criticism and restore confidence in the economy. In response, South African Prime Minister Botha “quickly adopted a more liberal policy in an attempt to make apartheid more acceptable to its critics, both home and abroad” (Howarth, 1987, p. 287). In the 1980’s, Howarth lists without explanations the “increasingly violent protests” organized “by the ANC - whose leader, Nelson Mandela, remained in prison - by the Inkatha Oragnization of the Zulu tribe, by the Azanian People’s Organization and by the United Democratic Front” (Howarth, 1987, p. 287). A note is given on pressures to release Mandela and there the coverage ends.

I analyzed in Marv’s textbook those chapters covering the Quiet revolution and social changes in Quebec. Marv used Counterpoints written in 2001 by Cranny and Moles. As
Marv and Rosa affirmed, this textbook focuses solely on the political leaders and legislative acts to tell the story of change associated with the Quiet revolution and the separatist movement in Quebec. As Rosa noted, the fertile dynamic between formal politics and group struggles over issues in the broader public realm are unexplored. Cranny and Moles concentrate almost exclusively on great men.

The roots of Quebec nationalism laid in the regime of Duplessis and the role priests of the Catholic Church played in maintaining traditions of “farm, faith, and family.” Following Duplessis’ death, Lesage took over the leadership of Quebec and instituted the Quiet Revolution through legislation affecting education, health, politics and the nationalisation of certain industries. Without explanation, students are told that the Quiet Revolution was in reaction to the backwardness of Duplessis. No consideration is given to the forwardness of various movements within and outside Quebec struggling over the social and material practices of Quebec society. According to Cranny and Moles, French Canadians then gained pride and “became angrier at what they perceived as injustices at the hands of English-speaking Canadians” (Cranny and Moles, 2001, p. 193). Pearson then initiated a commission on language and culture, gets Canada a new flag, and then is succeeded by Trudeau. Levesque left the liberal party of Quebec and founded the Parti Quebecois. He and Trudeau then struggled over the hearts and minds of Quebec in the 1980 referendum:

At rally after rally, Levesque inspired his listeners to seize the opportunity to become “maîtres chez nous.” Prime Minister Trudeau also made impassioned speeches urging the people of Quebec to remain part of a strong, united, and forward looking Canada [...] In the referendum, 40 per cent of Quebeckers voted “yes” to sovereignty-association; 60 per cent voted “no.” In front of thousands of distraught supporter, a visibly upset Rene Levesque accepted defeat (Cranny and Moles, 2001, p. 198).
Other agents of change and struggle mentioned include the FLQ and “some” French Canadians who desired greater French control in Quebec. “Western Canadians” are grouped to have opposed the imposition of French across Canada in government jobs and manufactured goods. That’s all folks.

Of course these men were the nexus around which reporting at the time and documentaries of the times focus. Their roles in the political questions of Quebec’s relationship to the rest of Canada are undeniably important. Yet, vital information is missing. The role of discourses affecting the leaders is missing as Terry noted, for example, in his interpretations of the framework in reference to the influence of F. R Scott on Trudeau. It is difficult to ascertain why Lesage did what he did or felt the need to do so without encompassing a broader analysis than government acts. Likewise, movements challenging status quo positions with radically new discourses such as civil rights, Black Consciousness, and Feminist theory are absent in the textbook coverage of changes at this time. And yet, in the Cranny and Moles textbook, that is not all together accurate.

The chapter previous to “The Canadian Identity: One Two or Many Nations?” is titled “A Changing Society.” In a section of that chapter entitled, “Towards social change,” the authors address the influences of the “youthquake” demographic contributing to a changing society. This is followed by brief references to the musical “British invasion,” the mention of drugs and psychedelia, the women’s movement, and the environmental movement that precede another section entitled “Economic challenges” dealing with the debt in Canadian politics in the 1980’s and ‘90’s. However, the political and social are firmly separated both in connection and in section. Attentive students might notice a co-
temporality between chapters, but there is little reason to believe they would connect the two in any other way.

5.7 Summary

My summations of recent scholarship elicited significant insights into participants' interpretations of agency and social change. Participants wrestled with difficulty of the question and combined different aspects of my summations to make sense of both their interpretations and their teaching. Participants also interpreted the framework in terms of their own personal and professional intentions, choices, and teaching projects.

These summations challenged several of Mary’s assumptions about change. She came to see that her reliance on leaders to explain social change required greater explication. She mused over the ways her own understanding resulted from the ways textbooks frame social change as a series of causes initiated by prominent political leaders as reviewed in the previous section. She recognized that this simple explanation of change did not sufficiently assist her students to address the questions she asked of them.

Mary interpreted social change to occur when a cohort of leaders articulate rising levels of frustration. Frustration for people emerges when epistemological “pictures” are not being met, or when it becomes apparent that personal or social ends and their means are insufficiently aligned. Thus, she saw in my summation of Smith an accurate reflection of her existential teaching commitments. She also recognized that the framework offered a more sophisticated set of explanations for her students. As one example, the role of discourses articulated through group struggles that provide or provoke new
understandings of those frustrations was an insight she expressed working with my summations of Cabrera and Touraine.

For Terry, my summations raised relevant elements of his interpretation and what he tried to convey in his teaching. Terry understood change as occurring or to have occurred when “people do things differently, say, and act differently in ways that stay rooted, that is supported, so that at least is connected to something deep and that it lasts over time.” He evidently interpreted agency and social change in a complex manner. He cited a wide variety of agents, tried to connect different political and cultural movements, and identified the role of discourse and struggle in social change. As he asserted, what he tried to convey about the complexities of agency and social change might have made more sense to his students with access to these summations.

As a bridge-builder, Terry wanted his students to appreciate the complexity of agents facing such changes and challenges studied in his unit as well as the diversities elided in “big nouns” such as “Quebec.” Terry’s valuable insights and goals, however, were insufficiently conveyed to his students. Despite his best efforts, the lack of discussion about agents and historical agency left Terry’s students with little opportunity to engage deeply with either his insights or goals. Little was likely transferred, therefore, from the conveyed past in this unit and student insights into their present capacities as agents of social life.

Marv engaged students directly with questions related to social change. He and his students thereby examined questions and insights Terry wished to examine with his students. These specifically included what changes, and to what degree, in what realms of social life indicate social change, definitions of community in which social change takes
place, and the individual’s relationship to community and change. As a sceptic, Marv offered a refined set of teaching moves to point out the complexities of such questions and the limitations of any answer offered.

As with all the other participants, Rosa located sources of intentions, choices, and actions contributing to social change in class disparities. As an activist, she attended more directly in her classroom, however, to the distributed condition of historical agency as expressed through multiple cultural, political, and religious organizations and social movements. In her work with the summations, Rosa identified a Eurocentric bias in the content of exams and textbooks as a problem that needs to be addressed. In addition to Rosa and Terry, Marv extends this bias to include the ascription of individuals or “great men” as leaders of social change.

For Rosa the challenge in teaching about social change was not so much the concentration on individuals or leaders. Rather, the challenge was to give sufficient attention to the social movements through which leaders express their agency and with which a few come later to be identified. My literature review in Chapter Two indicates she is right to be concerned. As with students’ explanations, this gender and class-biased reading better suits a James Bond movie than either the lives of students or disciplinary explanations. My summations help to address this issue. They offered participants multiple interpretations for the relationship between individuals, groups, and social life and the implications of each in the other. Perhaps in the future, the privileged Eurocentric sense of a “Western” individual agent in social change and its Marxist complement with which participants were most familiar will not be cited by default. The emphasis on individuals is reinforced, as Terry identified, by demanding teaching loads and, as Marv
and Rosa asserted, the priorities of accountability that contribute to a reliance on highlighting celebrated individuals in explanations for social change. To these insights I would add that this emphasis is very much a default position in the absence of a framework that articulates differing interpretations of important concepts such as historical agency.

My summations served as an effective heuristic to clarify participants' interpretations of historical agency and social change, even if only to the degree of helping to clarify what they are not. Further, they raised several tensions. In their work with my summations, participants struggled to reconcile materialist and idealist explanations of intentions, choices, and actions in processes of social struggle. Another tension in participants' interpretations concerned how to reconcile the role played by leaders, discourses, and broader movements in social change. In my summation of Touraine, participants identified several aspects necessary to account for in interpreting social change – diverse agents, ideals and discourses, group struggle, and individual capacities. I believe that the framework provided a starting point for the refinement of such interpretations. Such refinement during this study was evident in the insights on their practice and interpretations explored by Terry and Mary.

Another tension that emerged in this work existed between participants' interpretations and what they conveyed in their teaching. In their work with my summations, all participants cited socioeconomic motivations behind the intentions, choices, and actions contributing to social changes. With the exception of Mary, participants conveyed in the observed units little socioeconomic analysis to their students. Rather, the interpretations evident in their teaching resembled my summations of
Touraine and Cabrera. In Marv's case, because he raised agency and social change as a question, he conveyed less in this regard and explored more.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the history and social studies research community knows little about the interpretations of agency and social change teachers bring to their practice. Based on work with participants in this study, they include a reliance on socioeconomic sources to explain intentions, choices, and actions contributing to social change. They likely also include a number of tensions and elements. Foremost amongst these are questions about the relationships between ideals and material motivations, and between leaders, discourses, and social movements. I also conclude that questions of agency and social change are not explicitly addressed in history and social studies classrooms. Hence, students are likely receiving unspecified interpretations from their teachers reducing their opportunities to wrestle with this central and stimulating historical question. As also noted, the ability of teachers to engage students in this complexity is constrained, however, by a host of factors including accountability priorities, insufficient resources, and the cultural celebration of individual efficacy that makes more complicated analysis unlikely. I conclude that the framework is a useful means to highlight the complexities of explaining social change.

My summations, however, extended these preliminary findings at the same time as they revealed some insight into them. Thus, they aided the study of participants' interpretations while providing an opportunity for participants either to express or broaden their interpretations. The framework put necessary elements such as ideals and discourses, group struggles, diverse agents, and individual capacities into various formulations to assist analysis. While different, the summations offer a more distributed
sense of agency than that found in students' explanations. To recall, I have defined
"historical agency" as a capacity expressed by groups in struggles over the conceptual
resources that individuals use to interpret social and material life (e.g., interpretations of
personal and social goals, terms individuals use to define and express their identities,
representations of iconic role models, disciplinary interpretations). This definition puts in
succinct relation the elements participants identified as necessary to consider in
explanations of social change. It also highlights how individual agency is itself
implicated in broader struggles to shape intention, identify choices, and undertake
actions.
VI. CONCLUSION

While researchers know little about the explanations for social change that teachers bring to their practice, we do know from literature reviewed in Chapter Two that students studied believe celebrated individuals cause social change. In their explanations, these students cast these agents in a light that does not illuminate the complexities of human subjectivity or the collective condition of social change. Rather, their explanations suggest that social change results from a capacity bounded within celebrated individuals who lead masses convincing people about the incorrectness of their beliefs ("deficit reasoning"). In this view, agency is teleological in nature, social change is devoid of life’s contingency, and exclusionary social arrangements are simple misunderstandings.

A few students in Seixas’ study cited in Chapter Two suggest that social change involves more than celebrated individuals and transformative acts. Karen recognized people’s more modest zones of influence in change through trade. Pedro mentioned “social movements,” while Roberto attributed historical agency to “the people.” These are valuable, if vague, insights. Would a set of succinct accounts for the human influences involved in social change assist teachers to expand or deepen recognition of their distributed and fractious occurrence? As a study into a relatively unexamined set of concerns, this investigation sought to answer more modest questions: In what ways do experienced history and social studies teachers account for social change? How do teachers explain the human intentions, choices, and actions that made social changes possible? Do experienced teachers explicitly address such questions with students? Does
my framework drawn from recent scholarship assist teachers to clarify their interpretations and teaching about agency and social change?

To address these questions I developed a “sensitizing framework” for historical agency. As explored in Chapter Four, I developed this framework from a recent special issue of History and Theory and from the work of the French sociologist, Alain Touraine. Taken as a whole, this scholarship offers multiple interpretations of how social life and the intentions, choices, and actions of groups and individuals intersect to affect social change (i.e., social movements, discourses, scientific and artistic metaphors and representations, and material interpellation).

Using the work of Tackett, historical agency is best understood as an expression of motivations (a combination of interpretations and desires) that emerge from socioeconomic and class experiences stimulated by political or cultural struggle. From Smith’s work, historical agency is located in the personal action of reconciling differing social beliefs, ideas, and images in order to establish or re-establish a general moral sense and particular view of the world. In contrast, from Cabrera, historical agency resides in discourses that determine how people understand themselves and the range of their possible expressions of social and political action in the world. Rather than discourses, Ermarth looks to explain social change through the distributed agency of those artists and scientists whose work contributes to new metaphors and representations utilized across a range of social locations. For Touraine, social changes are not the inevitable result of discourses or material interpellation, or the instability of language, or the confusing complexities of social interaction. Change is possible because of the cultural struggle by
groups and movements over "legitimate" conceptual resources to interpret social interactions and material conditions.

While these scholars articulate different relationships between individuals, collective influences, and social change, each offers an analysis of historical agency that moves beyond the limited individualism propagated in an American middle class model of agency. To challenge the default reasoning to which this model leads, I have built on work from Touraine and insights from participants in this study to define historical agency as a capacity expressed by groups in struggles over the conceptual resources that individuals use to interpret social and material life. Empirically, this definition of historical agency highlights how people participate in social life through their sense-making activities. Normatively, this definition potentially deepens responsibility for such participation.

The framework served as a heuristic device to initiate study into what interpretations of historical agency and social change experienced teachers bring to their practice. As a study into a relatively unexamined set of concerns, I started with practitioners most likely to be in a position to offer a high degree of reflection on their practice as well as those with whom some facility, if not expertise, relating theory and practice could be assumed. The choice of participants was, therefore, crucial to this study's methodology.

As "collaborative theorizers," participants offered important theoretical insights and identified several tensions in teaching about social change. Reviewing their contributions below, it is also evident that the framework served as an effective heuristic for stimulating reflection on their interpretations and teaching practice. Each summation in the framework, for example, raised valuable insights for Terry in regard to his teaching
and his interpretation of how social changes in Quebec were possible. Mary combined summations to distinguish different elements of her work with students:

So, back to teaching kids, I would use that combination in terms of socioeconomic things and in terms of discourse (2.3 p. 11).

This idea that a range of interpretations may be necessary to investigate social change adequately was absent in the work offered by scholars reviewed in Chapter Four.

In her teaching and in her work with the framework, Rosa embedded individuals and their imaginative capacities in the broad influences of cultural and intellectual movements. She theorized that many different elements need to be considered when investigating social change: ideals and discourses, group struggles, and diverse agents engaged in overlapping struggles. Her articulation of each of these elements helped to clarify my definition of historical agency.

Marv raised the complex question of what constitutes social change in class discussions and interviews:

I think the one thing that began working in my head and it came up again today in the work that you did... in a way some of this gets tied back to what kind of change are we talking about here. If it is we are going to wear our bras on the outside of our bodies instead of under our clothes, I am not sure if this model works for me anymore. Is it confined to certain kinds of change? (#2, p. 6).

What may constitute appropriate time parameters in a study of a specific social change was another significant question raised by Marv:

My understanding is that there were people long before 1960 lets say as sort of a starting point of the so called “Quiet Revolution” or, in the Duplessis regime, who were quite prepared to offer alternative discourses to what was going on, I mean the calls for changes to the government regime and the corruption that was occurring. As I understand, [this] happened a long, long, time before that [Quiet Revolution]. Whether or not it has to come to a head or whether it needs to reach
a broad enough popular understanding or whether those people who eventually advocated the change, as classes became aware, I cannot answer (#2, p. 7).

There are no simple answers to these questions. Like explanations of human capacities, answers as to what might constitute social change and the appropriate parameters of time to investigate its emergence depend on which aspects of individual and collective life scholars and teachers emphasize.

Marv also contributed to theorizing through his identification of several myths surrounding social change. His succinct scepticism deserves further theoretical consideration:

[H]istory and change are the product of 'great men' only; that history is the struggle between the powerful and powerless; that change only occurs when great leaders motivate the masses to act; that historical consciousness precedes change; that history and change are significant only when they affect the greatest number (email response to email questions, p. 2,).

In preparation for our work together, Marv organized his unit around a set of questions about social change. As reviewed in Chapter Five, doing so provided him with an opportunity to engage students' conceptions that included a number of these myths. He and his students provided this study with a concrete example of the sorts of conceptions teachers are likely to encounter when they engage students in questions about agents, agency, and social change.

Participants also identified a number of tensions in their work with the framework. One tension is how to account for the role of leaders in processes of change. Marv raised the relationship between leaders and followers as an important question:

The interaction between those who are advocating the change and those who have to support the change and get involved is such a complex question (#2, p. 15).
While Marv sought to avoid emphasizing the role of leaders, as a sceptic, he had not “so far consciously replaced that with anyone else yet either” (#1, p. 15). In his work with the framework, he repeatedly appealed to leadership to explain social change. This indicated the difficulty he had to explain social change any other way. Rosa identified a broader need for such a framework:

Most people, and I am talking about people who are my colleagues in the secondary schools [...] are still grinding away on some version of the great man and occasionally the great woman theory of history [...] They focus on various formal institutions rather than have any deep understanding of extra parliamentary institutions and the relationships, sometimes tense and sometimes fruitful and what that tension produces (Rosa #1, p. 7).

These comments signal precisely why a range of interpretations is needed to assist teachers and students to consider vital historical questions related to social change. For example, Terry organized the unit around Trudeau despite the impressive scope of his knowledge about Quebec and the local, national, and international groups and movements who struggled for change. Why?

Simplicity, clear narrative, access points for the students. But it is that thing... Do we simplify too much? That is the question (#2, p. 2).

The framework instigated significant insights for Terry concerning a central challenge he faced in his unit. In contrast to his appeal to a simple narrative organized around leaders and their transformative acts, Terry recognized that an explicit engagement with questions about historical agency and social change might have assisted his students to grapple with the complexities of leadership, human subjectivity, and the diverse contexts in which people work for, resist, or unknowingly participate in social change.
Marv asserted that textbooks offer a shallow representation of leaders and social change. Rosa identified her colleagues’ emphasis on formal political acts as a hindrance to more sophisticated students’ historical understandings of change and Terry acquiesced in the simple narrative with which he believed his students were most familiar. Each was likely correct. In one textbook, for example, students learn that, following Duplessis’ death, Lesage took over the leadership of the Quebec government and instituted the Quiet Revolution through legislation affecting education, health, politics and the nationalization of certain industries as a reaction against the previous government. A similar emphasis on leaders in formal political positions is found in the textbook used by Rosa’s students to study South Africa. No consideration is given in these texts to the forwardness, for example, of Lesage’s actions; of those advising or supporting leaders; or, of those various local and international intellectual, cultural and material groups whose struggles helped shape the intentions, choices, and actions of both the historically anonymous and celebrated. Mary identified this over-emphasis on individual leadership in her explanations of social change:

[T]he Quiet revolution it is about awareness. But I attributed the awareness to the leaders of the revolution […] And I don’t know why, but I do (2.3 p. 3).

As she worked through my summations, Mary identified this focus as a shortcoming of her teaching: “I have been more concentrated on the fact that social change occurred…It has been more cause and effect than agents of change” (#1, p. 17). She returned to this distinction in another interview:

All the cause and effect stuff that I have done has been around political or economic because it is simple and it is easy to see (#2.3, p. 11).
Mary concluded that her concentration on historical cause and effect did not provide for the kinds of analyses she expected from her students:

Yet, I am going to ask these kids to write me an essay in May on what is to be a Canadian and expect them to be able to show how Canadians changed from 1900 to today. I have done lots of talking about how people have changed and various reasons that they changed but the reasons were not reasons (#2.3, p. 12).

I conclude that participants collaborated significantly in this study. Their insight into the need for multiple interpretations to explain intentions, choices, and actions involved in social change is one previously unconsidered in scholarship reviewed in Chapter Four. They also illustrated a noteworthy degree of reflection on their own practices that identified for further study a number of tensions related to teaching about social change. In contrast to textbooks, in interviews each of these teachers offered interpretations of people's capacities to act and choose that were both more complex and hopeful. Yet, as was evident in our work together, the complexity of their understandings was difficult to convey in classroom practice. How much more difficult must it be to convey a range of interpretations of social change for teachers with less extensive teaching experience and educational background?

6.1 Findings

Participants in this study constituted a critical case sample. Patton offers two propositions that, when answered affirmatively, indicate the appropriateness of a critical case sample: If it doesn't happen here, it is likely not occurring elsewhere and, “if that group is having problems, then we can be sure all the groups are having problems” (Patton, 2002, p. 236). To recall, the “it” refers in this study to teachers’ explicit
investigation of human influences in social change with students of history and social studies. The “here” refers to observed instructional units and classrooms. “Problems” refer to the challenges and constraints participants identified related to the complexity of interpreting and teaching about human capacities in historical questions of social change. A critical case sample offers a best initial view into a new or relatively unexplored set of questions. I now turn to examine findings.

As explored in Chapter Five and reiterated above, participants identified several challenges and constraints. These included textbook depictions that rely on prominent political leaders to explain social change. The emphasis on individuals is reinforced, as Terry identified, by demanding teaching loads and, as Marv and Rosa asserted, the priorities of accountability. To these insights I would add one more. This emphasis is very much a default position for teachers in the absence of content for central concepts like agency.

Do teachers explicitly address such questions with students? With the exception of Terry, participants had not previously engaged students explicitly in questions of historical agency and social change. This study encouraged Terry to return in the future to this question.

How do experienced history and social studies teachers explain the human intentions, choices, and actions that made social changes possible?

- Participants believed that the intentions, choices, and actions contributing to social change result from class disparities or socioeconomic experiences. Such analysis, however, was not evident in the observed units.

All participants identified my summation of Tackett as an accurate reflection of their beliefs as to the conditions that make social change possible. Additionally, each
emphasized something distinct about this summation. For Rosa, who expressed her individual agency in activist terms, class constituted the most significant divide in society and cause of social struggle and change. She considered the use of socioeconomic categories in my summation of Tackett as too weak; as insufficiently conveying the fissures that divide class-based societies creating the need and motivations for social struggle and change. As a sceptic, Marv believed that people not affected adversely by economic disparity likely resist social change while Mary, expressing her existential commitments, believed economic booms and busts create personal crises that make people more susceptible to follow certain leaders. Race, nationality, and class are the categories Terry used for socioeconomic experiences. Terry recognized much that appealed to him in my summation of Tackett and his emphasis on social locations to explain how social change becomes possible. While people work within these constraints, as a bridge-builder, Terry’s curriculum work and teaching reflected his project to overcome antipathies based on socioeconomic difference.

The affinity of participants’ for Tackett’s work contrasted significantly to the absence of any analogous analyses in the observed units. Each participant made comments in their classes about the material conditions that made change necessary and that led certain social groups to advocate for change. Rosa, for example, made several comments concerning the material poverty suffered by Black South Africans under Apartheid and Terry mentioned in a lecture the role of unions who advocated for change in Quebec. In their lessons, I could read with the assistance of the sensitizing framework the logical similarities of these comments and Tackett’s work. Because this way to explain the intentions, choices, and actions behind social change was not identified as such, I doubt
that students could do so. Rather, they likely took what my student Bernardo did from historical instruction: People primarily act out of self-interest and that self-interest is primarily expressed in material terms. What then explains this contrast between what participants believed and knew and what they did in the classroom? To answer this question, I need to examine the nature of this disconnect.

First, what participants did in the classroom, in terms of what lessons they sought to convey to students, was consistent with the stories they reiterated to make sense of their teaching projects. As an activist who recounted stories of being effected by racial prejudice, Rosa attended in her lessons to the group activism and overlapping struggles fought by those contesting the political and social inequalities of the time covered in her unit. Terry understood his role as that of a bridge-builder between communities divided by political, racial, and economic antipathies. His attempt to bridge this divide was evident in a central struggle he faced with his British Columbian students: their lack of appreciation for the complexities of the problems being faced by Quebecers in negotiating their relationship to the rest of Canada. As a sceptic, Marv organized his unit around a whole set of questions concerning social change. He skilfully attended to the limitations of answers provided by students in order to have them wrestle with the complexities of historical explanation. Recounting stories of personal crises that led to changes and growth in her understandings of the world, Mary used history and literature in her classrooms, and in multiple projects beyond, to have students contemplate the nature and limitations of their beliefs. Thus, there was a consistency between how participants understood their teaching projects and what occurred in the observed units. This is consistent with the history and social studies research reviewed by Grant (2003).
While a complex net of influences shape what teachers do in classrooms, the one influence most apparent is that "what teachers hold dear influences them everyday" (Grant, 2003, p. 207).

However, there is inconsistency between the complexity of participants’ interpretations in their work with the sensitizing framework and the lack of complexity in what they asked students to consider. Of course, one would expect a difference in the complexity of discussion conducted in a high school classroom and that conducted between a researcher and participants. With the exception of Marv, who raised the whole issue of social change as a question, however, participants conveyed little of the complexity around possible explanations for changes studied to students. Why?

Throughout this work I have suggested possible explanations. First, taking insights from Terry, Marv, and Rosa, their teaching is limited by tests, texts, and timetable constraints. While these influences might have been factors in their thinking, they remain unsatisfactory reasons for the lack of complexity conveyed in the observed classrooms. Rosa, for example, already taught units that had little to do with the provincial exam (e.g., the historiographical questions she asked students to consider at the beginning of the year and the observed unit on Apartheid). The units Marv and Terry taught took up a similar number of classes, yet, could not have been more different. Finally, these teachers used the textbook as a minor resource at best.

I think a more satisfactory explanation lies elsewhere. First, with the exception of Terry, participants had previously not considered the question of social change and how it occurs with their students. Perhaps they considered the question as insufficiently important to address. Given their backgrounds and teaching projects, this explanation is
unlikely. A more likely explanation is that the question of social change is not in fact a question for these teachers. With the exception of Marv, each participant wanted their students to be able to assign causes they emphasized (i.e., the role of leaders in Mary’s case and the role of group activism in Rosa’s) to events reflecting their beliefs about what, within a range of possible causes, should be emphasized. In the absence of a succinct articulation of a range of possibilities, how could anyone expect it to be otherwise? The disjuncture in the level of complexity in interviews and in classrooms, as further explored below, lies in the effect of the framework in interviews to raise questions about agency and social change in light of a range of possibilities. A comparable set of alternatives had not existed for participants to use in classrooms. I turn now to other aspects of that complexity.

- Participants identified a need to account for the role of ideals and a sense of justice for historical actions they believe are not attributable to intentions associated with people’s socioeconomic experiences.

While in strong agreement with the function Tackett assigns to socioeconomic conditioning, in interviews each participant quickly identified the absence of a role for ideals and a sense of justice as a limitation of Tackett’s interpretation. This constitutes an important tension in their understanding of what makes social change possible. Each saw in my summation of Cabrera a way to account for the significant role ideals and discourses play in how people, individually and collectively, imagine their capacities as agents. Each participant was equally quick to reject the strong deterministic role Cabrera assigns to discourses. Rather, they interpreted Cabrera’s use of discourse as something that either leaders or movements use to provide coherence for individual crises (Mary), material disparity (Rosa and Marv) or historical conflicts between communities (Terry).
My view of Cabrera’s determinism changed as a result of these insights. Beginning this study, I thought Cabrera accurately described the deterministic role of discourses. I now find myself in agreement with each of these points as a plausible way to think about the assistance of discourses for people answering pressing epistemological, material, or moral concerns. These concerns, however, are as likely to spring from material, moral, or epistemological conundrums as from the discourses themselves.

How do experienced history and social studies teachers account for social change?

- Participants identified several elements for which it is necessary to account in interpreting social change – diverse historical agents (e.g., religious organizations, political and cultural movements, and local protestors), ideals and discourses, and links between group struggle and individual leadership.

As I summarized in the previous chapter, participants offered diverse accounts of the human influences involved in social change. Mary believed social change occurs when leaders articulate a program to assuage existing frustrations felt by people in a given community. While she believed my summation of Tackett accurately accounted for the material sources of this frustration, she extended that summation by also speaking about epistemological crises as sources of social change. Thus, she saw in my summation of Smith an accurate reflection of her existential teaching commitments. In working through my summations of Cabrera and Touraine, however, that too was extended to include the role of discourses articulated through group struggles that provoke new understandings of those frustrations. Ermarth also instigated reflection for Mary about what she felt was her insufficient attention to artistic and scientific movements in changing how individuals envision social life.
For Terry, each summation in the framework raised relevant elements of his interpretation for social change and what he tried to convey in his teaching. My summation of Tackett reflected Terry’s interpretations as evinced in interviews, while Terry asserted my summation of Cabrera accurately portrayed interpretations he tried to convey in his teaching. As a bridge-builder, Terry was able to use each summation effectively as a means to express his interpretation and his goals in his classroom. Terry saw in Smith’s emphasis on the personal crises caused by pressing social issues much of what he tried to convey to students about the complexity of Quebecer’s subjectivities during the time covered by his unit; the ways in which Quebecers were “torn” about their role in Canada. Ermarth served to raise for Terry the importance of attending to cultural movements in how people conceive of themselves and social life. The emphasis Terry gave to such movements was evinced in classroom observations of his teaching.

Marv’s interpretation of social change, as with the interpretations of the other participants, relied on socioeconomic explanations of intentions, choices, and actions. This was evident in his agreement that my summation of Tackett accurately described his interpretation of social change; a summation he returned to again and again in examining the other summations. While Marv avoided emphasizing prominent individuals in his unit, in interviews it became evident that he could not account for social change without doing so. Social changes require struggles informed by leaders and “that different groups of people, depending on where they stood in that society, would or would not want things to change” (#1, 16). As a sceptic, Marv believed that leaders, groups, and oppressive material conditions are necessary but not sufficient to account for social changes.
For Rosa, social change resulted in the South African context from the choices, intentions, and actions of individual and collective agents whose agency was expressed through local struggles influenced by international movements. As with other participants, my summation of Tackett appealed to Rosa’s interpretation of the sources of intentions, choices, and actions contributing to social change. Expressing her individual agency in activist terms Rosa also identified my summation of Touraine as the most applicable framework for interpreting change in the South African context. That summation focuses on struggle, group action, and the widely distributed condition of historical agency. Based on my work with participants’ individual agency and what they emphasized in the framework, another finding may be suggested:

- Participants tended to interpret the framework in terms of their own personal and professional intentions, choices, and teaching projects.

I will return to this point below.

Despite significant commitments to progressive social change in their teaching and personal lives, and with extensive backgrounds in education, these participants did not convey to students the sophistication of their historical understandings of social change. With the exception of Marv, participants did not provide opportunities in the observed units for students to wrestle with the difficulties of accounting for the human influences in social change. Based on these findings, it is likely that, in the absence of a means to do so, most teachers do not explicitly engage students in a range of such interpretations. Further, the interpretations teachers bring to their practice likely remain insufficiently clarified to improve students’ explanations of social change or of their understandings of their own capacities as agents of future social life. Part of that clarification must include
a greater reflectivity on the part of teachers regarding what is at stake in our explanations for change over time.

6.2 Implications for teacher training

As noted above, a correlation existed between participants' personal expressions of agency and what they found most sensible in the framework. Participants reiterated powerful past moments and evaluated their present projects in relation to social struggles having to do with race, economic inequality, and historical antipathies between individuals and between different communities. In their sense-making activities participants also exemplified the connections between individual and historical agency that I have argued are necessary for both teachers and students to make. This formulation connects the content particular agents cite in their sense-making activities to broader dramas cast on the historical stage. Investigating these connections would assist pre-service teachers to explore how their intentions, choices, and projects do not belong to them alone. In the interests of historical reflection, pre-service teachers need to explore how their teaching intentions, choices, and projects are entwined with broader issues of social power regarding, for example, who decides what stories are retold in history textbooks, what content is found in standardized tests, and whether Marxism receives one page in a textbook out of 308. Even if history teachers acknowledge that multiple interpretations of evidence exist to explain an event or narrate the past, can they present students with an explanation of how they have come to teach the history they do? In the absence of doing so, are students presented with a profoundly ahistorical history?
Touraine’s notion of historicity reminds us that as teachers we as much produce, as merely describe, social life. Historicity implicates each of us in our various roles as students, scholars, teachers, and agents in larger struggles to “define and conquer” (Edgerton, 1996, 25). In the interests of offering students a “critical history,” aware of its own investments and limitations, the connections between individual and historical agency are questions necessary to explore in pre-service education (Segall, 1999). To do so would aid teachers’ reflection on their choices about the content and second-order concepts with which they engage students. To do so would also emphasize what is at stake in our teachings about the past – our investments in and contributions to the images, ideals, and terms that students will have as resources in their imaginings of personal and social futures.

The importance of offering pre-service teachers conceptual resources to connect the personal and social influences in their teaching is supported by research investigating influences on teachers’ instructional choices. Grant, for example, offers a thorough review of the history and social studies research literature. He examines a set of influences on teachers’ classroom decisions that he organizes into personal, organizational, and policy influences (Grant, 2003, p. 152). Of the three categories, he concludes from his own studies and those he reviews that the beliefs teachers have about students, the subject, and their own learning experiences influence instructional choices most significantly. Further, he concludes that the personal influence “most directly relevant to each teacher’s practice seems to be his or her view of history as a school subject” (Grant, 2003, p. 159). There are, however, shortcomings in this literature, not least of which is the insufficient number of studies that use complementary categories to
investigate in many sites to what extent various influences impact on instructional choices. Further, in the studies that do exist, including Grant’s, little attention is paid to the connections between social events, movements, or struggles and what is conveyed in classrooms. Surely, a teacher’s view of their subject is entangled with broader debates concerning what is worth knowing about the past and its connections to present understandings of social life. Such a connection is also necessary to explore in professional development as another site of teacher training.

Grant notes that professional development (P. D.) takes many forms – afternoon workshops, conference presentations, and summer institutes. While research offers mixed results as to the effectiveness of these programs (and, it appears, an absence of agreement about what “effective” might look like), one consensus emerges regardless of the form of P. D. offered – “teachers view most professional development with disdain” (Grant, 2003, p. 200). A common set of complaints emerge in the studies that Grant reviews. Complaints include the lack of significant content in the P. D. program, the limited time frame of P. D., and the lack of connection to teacher’s classroom practices and ways of thinking about their subject. As one teacher said, ‘Where is the meat?” (Grant, 2003, p. 203).

We can summarize the complaints of teachers who participated in research reviewed by Grant in this way: teachers want an experience in which their subject knowledge and that of classroom practice will be connected to ideas and theories that help them do what do more effectively, and, in some cases, do different things. This study offers several key ideas to address these complaints. First, positioning teachers in P. D. as collaborative theorizers recognizes their expertise and honours their ability to dialogue over theory and
practice. Second, the set of ideas contained in frameworks must be open to refinement from the insights of teachers. Third, (as I will return to below), P. D. instructors, like scholars, must provide teachers with content, the "meat," for key subject or discipline ideas. As is evident in this study, the framework assisted participants to clarify their interpretations and teaching about social change. It also potentially offers teachers a means to engage students in such clarifications. I conclude from my work with participants that scholars and instructors can address perennial complaints about professional development by developing sensitizing frameworks and positioning teachers as collaborative theorizers.

6.3 Curriculum implications

A question predictably arises when I present this work to public audiences. The question is usually introduced with a statement to the effect that the speaker wishes their history instruction included such interesting and provocative questions such as how to explain the human influences on social change. The question, however, is about whether I am being unreasonable to expect history and social studies teachers to deal with such a complex question given what they accurately perceive to be the demands of coverage in history and social studies classrooms. My answer is well practiced and it is this.

So much time is lost in classrooms driving kids from one unit to the next, cajoling and threatening them ("if you don't know this you will fail the course!") in the interest of covering content, that little is likely learned other than passivity in relation to the past. Leaving aside the question of what lessons students learn in such authoritative "structures of address" (Ellsworth, 1997), more content coverage and better understandings of its
significance can be achieved when this content serves to address significant questions. As I have come to understand from years of teaching, adolescents find questions about their relationships to broader social life, and especially the ways that social life can be improved, immensely thought provoking. What the conveyed past has to teach those in the present about their capacities as agents of future social life, therefore, gives content purpose, provides a means of connecting one unit of study to another, and positions teacher and student as co-investigators of deeply philosophical questions of human existence. Agency, therefore, is not only a second order concept and a highly provocative question; it is also a means to ground the ephemeral past in a student’s life. Therefore, I turn the assumptions behind this question about my unreasonableness around.

Given the demands of content coverage and the contentious social issues history and social studies teachers are expected to address, how can they effectively meet such obligations in the absence of this central second order concept as understood in current scholarship and by masterful teachers? Given the host of pressures facing teachers in contemporary schools, curricular resources that help to honour rather than reduce complexity in questions of agency and social change are needed (Segall, 1999). I could state that textbooks and curricula need to more accurately approximate the complexity of human action and social change. Textbooks, however, do not even contain references or acknowledge the existence of competing interpretations for causes they assign to events. Scholars and teachers should expect little even while they demand more. Textbooks should provide students with the logic of their largely implicit interpretations for social change. Yet, to suggest that this is even likely is to be wilfully ignorant of the economy of textbook production. For curricula, therefore, implications include attending to a range
of interpretations for important second order concepts. This requires that concepts such as historical agency and social change, for example, be given content and that this content be a starting point for further refinement in local settings.

6.4 Methodological considerations

This study involved a theoretical investigation of historical agency and social change as well as an empirical study into what interpretations of these key concepts high school history and social studies teachers bring to their practice. Inviting collaboration from participants, I attempted to create intellectual traffic from local contexts towards scholarship by having participants adjudicate the efficacy and applicability of recent and relevant scholarship to their teaching and interpretations. Often, research using second-order concepts lacks content and a range of interpretations for participants in a study to consider. The framework provided content for historical agency as a second order concept. It thereby helped to get at the complexity of participants’ understandings. In return, to the degree they found the framework stimulating and of possible use, participants received some benefit from scholarship and their participation in research. I hope this study helps to illustrate the benefits of researchers filling in second-order concepts with content for research and for research participants.

I believe my definition and elucidation of individual agency from the work of Emirbayer and Mische and Emirbayer and Goodwin extends a lengthening tradition of social and cultural psychological methodologies in history education research. While there are many ways to think about and define agency, the definition of individual agency used in this study puts into relation the storied past, desired futures, and the evaluations
that people use to make sense of their worlds. In the particular case of this study, it offered a way to think through the relationship between my participants' personal and professional pasts used to interpret social change with students in light of their teaching objectives. Being a human capacity, agency is not, however, simply an intellectual elocution. Individual agency also expresses cultural, social-structural, and social psychological investments. Thus, individual agency as defined in this study not only connects individual and social pasts and futures, but elucidates necessary connections between intellectual interpretations and emotional investments.

I initiated this study because I needed to address the limitations of my teaching in regards to an unacknowledged economy of philosophical assumptions that I believed to exist in more history and social studies classrooms than my own. The framework addressed this need on two counts. It offered a means to stimulate complexities of participants’ interpretations and to investigate the limited conveyance of this complexity to their students. In my work with this framework and with these participants, my initial interpretations were changed. Initially, Touraine and Cabrera said all I thought needed to be said about how social change becomes possible. I now recognize that multiple interpretations are needed to approximate the complexity of social life.

All participants inspired in me a desired reflection on my aspirations to be an agent of change. As an aspiring academic in education, I find it very easy to locate my contribution to a more just world in the play of ideas framed in a perceived legacy of intellectual insufficiency. “Bring better ideas, reflecting recent insights from theory that would be more relevant to students’ lives: that is where the important battles lie.” Working with Rosa and Mary, for example, I was struck by the thinness of my
commitment. They were teachers who enacted the play of ideas and who spent much of their free time materializing her commitment: “So I think it is really important to make a note for the need for some on the ground, some real way of focusing and enacting your ideas, your experiences, your consciousness and so on; it has to be more active than just ideas” (Rosa, #2, p. 2-3). Biko famously stated that to change the way people think is to change everything. As illustrated, for example, in Rosa’s participation in the peace camp erected to protest what seemed to be an inevitable US government’s invasion of Iraq and Mary’s extensive work with her charities, they enacted this and much more. Their dedication to the importance of ideas and material action exemplify the work necessary to actualize our intellectual commitments in the many domains in which we contribute to the social life of our communities.
APPENDIX 1

Interview 1

(1) How do you organize this course in which I am observing a unit (i.e., by themes, issues, chronology, questions)?
What benefits for students do you see in organizing your course this way?
What are your objectives for your students in this unit?
Why are these objectives important? How do these objectives connect to your overall course goals?

(2) History teaching is often thought about as a study of changes and continuity over time. What changes have you covered thus far in the year with this class? (referring to specific example)
How would students who paid attention explain that change?
Were you satisfied with that unit? Why or why not?

(3) What are the obstacles that hinder what you want your students to gain from your course?
In what ways could these obstacles be reduced or removed?
Have you ever tried to remove or reduce these obstacles?
If so, what happened? What other factors impact(ed) on that situation?
(If not mentioned) Have you ever supported or found support in a group who have tried to do so (e.g., in your department or union)?

(4) Social studies is often thought about in terms of teaching for citizenship. Do you address issues related to citizenship in your course? Examples
What qualities and experiences constitute for you effective citizenship?

What historical and present day examples represent for you effective citizenship?

In your teaching, do you ever refer to your own citizenship experiences and activities? (If an area or experience is identified) What made you participate in this issue? What would have to be done to achieve more success or was the issue for you sufficiently addressed? Is it something that you still work on or pay attention to?

If at all, what would you point to in your own teachings that reflect your citizenship experience?

(5) Are there particular personal experiences in your life that provided a powerful historical impression (for example with other people, from watching a movie, from reading a book or newspaper account or visiting a museum)? What about this experience or these experiences resonated with you?

(6) In studying social change, there are many intended and unintended causes to which we can point. As far as people work to affect social change, we can emphasize people working in all sorts of different capacities as individuals and as parts of groups. When you examine social changes in your course, what are the most common examples you use of people working to affect change?

Have you ever asked students how social changes occur? If so, what was your impression about students’ understanding of how social changes occur?

What different ideas would you like students to have?

How have you challenged those ideas?

Do you consider your teaching as contributing to social change? If so, in what ways?
Interview 2:
How do you think this unit is working in achieving the goals of the unit so far?
What are the greatest problems with the unit?
What adjustments, if any, will you make for the remainder of the unit and why?
What adjustments, if any, will you make for next year?
(Questions related to specific observed incidents)

Interview 3:
Take a moment to read over a couple of narratives explaining the social changes examined in your unit. As you do so, talk aloud about what you are thinking as you read. Pause where necessary and speak the questions that make you pause. For example, if you do not understand a sentence, “now, what is he trying to say here, I don’t understand how this and that idea connect, wait, oh yes, now I see. If he means...then that must mean...”

(After finishing reading aloud)
Is this account a reasonable interpretation of the social changes addressed in your unit, why or why not? Is this explanation, or parts of it perhaps, already considered in your unit and if so how? If not considered in your unit, why?
Do you agree with this explanation, why or why not?
Would this narrative be worthwhile for your students to think about in explaining social changes covered in your unit?

What ideas would students need to be familiar with in order for them to better grasp this narrative?

What limitations on the part of students or constraints inherent to the school make doing so difficult?

Essay questions via email:

(1) How would you define 'social change'?

(2) List the most significant social changes in Canada since 1867 (which may, of course, be in conjunction with worldwide social changes)?

(3) What social changes do you cover in your high school courses (list by grade if possible)?

(4) What social changes do you feel should be studied but are not in your courses or those offered in your school?

(5) What about these changes do you consider important for students to study?

(6) What are the most needed social changes yet to be realized in Canada? What do you believe hinders their realization?

(7) Do you believe that it is possible to make any broad generalizations about how social changes occur? If so, how do they? If not, why not?
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