
Review article

Missing methods: a call for holistic analysis of history textbooks

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to call for a holistic approach to the study of history textbooks. We engaged in an extensive analysis of textbook studies for the purpose of developing our own textbook study framework for the Thinking Historically for Canada's Future project. We found that scholars rely on a narrow scope of research methods and that the field lacks attention to a holistic approach that broadens the researcher's capacity to dissect positionality and perpetuation of historical knowledge(s). We demonstrate why it is beneficial for scholars to expand beyond narrow methods in the field of history textbook studies. Specifically, we illustrate that a holistic approach enables textbook researchers to further contest the often uncritical embrace of history textbooks and expand upon our understanding of the textbook as an artefact of our societies. In this article we significantly extend the yet to be taken-up call for a holistic approach to textbook studies.

Keywords textbooks; textbook studies; textbook research methods; holistic approach to analysis of textbooks; history education

Introduction

The content of school textbooks is of perennial interest to educational scholars, teachers, parents and the broader public alike. This may be partly because textbooks are the tip of the iceberg, the most visible evidence of an education system that is vast and impenetrable. In many countries, students bring them home from school and, consequently, they serve as partial evidence of what goes on there. They are often viewed as the source of 'official knowledge' that a nation seeks to convey to its youngest citizens (Ngo, 2014). For these reasons, there is a multitude of textbook studies that examine what they have to say to their captive audience of student readers and how they say it.

Maria Grever and Tina van der Vlies (2017: 288) provide a useful definition of history textbooks, which they describe as:

educational resources related to the historical discipline, produced with the aim of supporting or – depending on the country – of determining the contents of formal history teaching and learning mostly in schools. Because textbooks are intentionally written for teaching and learning purposes, they contain implicit or explicit pedagogic and didactic visions.

Tony Taylor and Stuart Macintyre (2017: 620) have suggested that 'the primacy of the textbook as a resource may soon be at an end.' This point is contentious. We do know that in many nations the history textbook remains central to instruction (Kim et al., 2013; Naseem, 2014; Nishino, 2010). However, regardless of whether it is central or peripheral to instruction, it is an artefact of a society and how it seeks to remember itself (Morgan and Henning, 2013). It is critical that scholars are attentive to studying textbooks. It follows, then, that scholars must also be attentive to how they go about this work.

Eckhardt Fuchs (2011: 17) has asserted that the field of textbook research is mired with studies that take the research object, the textbook, as 'its point of departure' rather than 'various thematic, methodological, and disciplinary contexts'. This assertion was a point of departure for our research team on the project *Thinking Historically for Canada's Future (THFCF)*, a pan-Canadian research endeavour funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Our Curriculum and Resources Cluster within this project has a mandate to examine the curriculum and resources, including textbooks, for each of Canada's 13 provincial and territorial educational jurisdictions. As a means towards preparing for our own analysis of textbooks, we conducted a comprehensive analysis of other history textbook studies. The primary objective of our analysis was to understand what methods scholars selected for their textbook studies, why they selected those methods, and the strengths and limitations of their methods. Among our various findings is that scholars of textbook studies do not typically address their research methods in explicit ways (for example, Foster and Karayianni, 2018; Forget and Payanotova, 2003; Pingel, 2010). The lack of attention to explicit methods is troubling for the replication and relevancy of research findings. But, perhaps more importantly, this lack of attention to methods may well underpin our finding that scholars rely on a very narrow scope of research methods. We found that scholars rely overwhelmingly on content or discourse analysis, without attention to visuals, didactics, sociopolitical context and other complex aspects. Our findings lead us to agree with Ehaab D. Abdou's (2018: 482) claim that there is 'a clear absence of a holistic and integrated framework' in textbook analysis.

To our knowledge, Grever and Van der Vlies (2017) were the first scholars to note the need for a holistic approach to textbook study. They were joined by scholars such as Abdou (2018) and only a handful of others to take note of holistic analysis. Grever and Van der Vlies (2017: 294) define holistic analysis as an approach that 'goes beyond a representational analysis limited to one person, event, or period, separate from the context of the whole textbook'. For them, a holistic approach is an examination of the whole history textbook and not selected chapters, and is inclusive of 'composition, periodization, [and] visual intertextuality' (Grever and Van der Vlies, 2017: 286). While we agree that ideally a holistic analysis addresses the textbook in its entirety, we note that large comparative studies of texts often require selective samplings for analysis. However, sampling does not negate analysis beyond simply content or discourse. Instead, we call for a holistic analysis as both a qualitative and

quantitative assessment of the complex features of a text, either in its parts or as a whole, which includes content, discourses, visuals, didactics and sociopolitical context, among other aspects. Using this definition, this article draws on our comprehensive analysis of textbook studies to demonstrate why it is beneficial for scholars to expand beyond a singular method and, wherever possible, draw upon a range of methodological approaches. In so doing, we seek to extend the yet to be taken-up call by Grever and Van der Vlies (2017) for a holistic approach to textbook studies.

Research methods

We gathered a corpus of 104 peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles and book chapters published between 1991 and 2021 in English and French. Our sampling of publications was created by conducting searches in our institutional library repositories for history textbook studies over the past three decades. Our extensive list of studies is drawn from some of the most prominent social studies, history education, curriculum studies and media studies scholarly journals and prominent edited collections that offer major contributions to the field of history textbook analysis. To demonstrate the range of articles consulted, our corpus features work from the following 27 journals:

- *AlterNative: An international journal of Indigenous peoples*
- *BC Studies*
- *Citizens Education Research Journal*
- *Comunicación y Sociedad*
- *Curriculum Inquiry*
- *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education*
- *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*
- *Education Inquiry*
- *Educational Studies*
- *History and Memory*
- *ENSAYOS: Revista de la Facultad de Educación de Albacete*
- *Ethnic and Racial Studies*
- *History of Education*
- *Historical Studies in Education*
- *History of Education Review*
- *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research*
- *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*
- *International Journal of Science Education*
- *Journal of Curriculum Studies*
- *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society*
- *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*
- *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*
- *McGill Journal of Education*
- *Paedagogica Historica*
- *Social Studies Research and Practice*
- *South African Journal of Education*
- *Teachers College Record.*

Table 1 shows our selection of 12 edited volumes. We included studies on a wide range of topics, including representations of Indigenous peoples, class, race, gender and human rights, and concepts of nation, nationhood and nationalism. We have representation from a range of nations across the world, including Canada, the United States, England, Australia and various nations in continental Europe and Asia. Our data set was not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to offer wide-ranging examples of

relevant literature. Our aim was to scan the field broadly to identify current trends in studies of history textbooks, and more particularly to assess the methods employed for those studies.

Table 1. Our selection of edited volumes

Editor(s)	Publication date	Title
E. Erdmann and S. Popp	2011	<i>Analyzing Textbooks: Methodological issues</i>
M. Selden and L. Hein	2000	<i>Censoring History: Citizenship and memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States</i>
T. Taylor and R. Guyver	2012	<i>History Wars and the Classroom: Global perspectives</i>
M. Carretero, S. Berger and M. Grever	2019	<i>The Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education</i>
E. Fuchs and A. Bock	2018	<i>The Palgrave Handbook of Textbook Studies</i>
J.H. Williams and W.D. Bokhorst-Heng	2014	<i>(Re)Constructing Memory: School textbooks and the imagination of the nation</i>
M.W. Apple and L.K. Christian-Smith	1991	<i>The Politics of the Textbook</i>
E. Abdou and T. Zervas	In press	<i>Ancient and Indigenous Wisdom Tradition in the Americas: Towards more balanced and inclusive curricular representations and classroom practices</i>
J. Nicholls	2006a	<i>School History Textbooks across Cultures: International debates and perspectives</i>
E.A. Cole	2007	<i>Teaching the Violent Past: History education and reconciliation</i>
K.A. Crawford, and S.J. Foster	2008	<i>War, Nation, Memory: International perspectives on World War II in school history textbooks</i>
S. Foster and K. Crawford	2006	<i>What Shall We Tell the Children? International perspectives on school history textbooks</i>

We note that there are limitations to our data and the claims we can make on an international scale. For example, our focus is on studies of elementary and high school textbooks (Kindergarten to Grade 12 in most of North America, or Secondary IV in the Canadian province of Quebec and A levels in Britain), rather than those used in postsecondary classes. This is because the content of elementary and high school texts is typically vetted by educational authorities for wide use in classrooms, often across a nation. Postsecondary textbooks are far more idiosyncratic, since they are selected, and often authored by, individual instructors or instructor collectives. In addition, effort was made to generate a list of studies that was not isolated to the Global North. We acknowledge, however, that we do include a disproportionate number of studies from the Global North, a factor of language barriers and the dominance of English-language academic journals.

The process of gathering and analysing the data occurred from autumn 2019 to June 2022. We had developed a framework for the analysis of each textbook study that was approved by the THFCF Executive Committee before the study began. The framework required that researchers read articles deductively (that is, from general theory to specific findings) to critically assess epistemological claims, theoretical framework, research methods, application of methods, core methodological assumptions, strengths and limitations of the methods employed and the findings. In addition, researchers judged each article on its overall strengths and limitations, as well as on its contribution to the field. Due to the heterogeneity of each textbook study's description of methods, or lack thereof, we could not conduct a meta-analysis that provides definitive quantitative pooling of results. Rather, given that researchers needed to assess the implicit methods used in some textbook studies, we provide a qualitative narrative description of findings. As such, after analysing all 104 individual studies, the research team identified prevalent trends across the data set. Researchers created 'deep dive' briefs to draw comparisons across the data set regarding these trends. Throughout the process, researchers shared and compared their assessments to maintain consistency, validity and reliability.

Our core research team, the authors of this article, engaged in discussion until consensus was reached regarding four areas that require greater attention in history textbook studies. First, textbook researchers need to be more explicit about their methodologies and methods. Second, there is a paucity of studies related to classroom use. Third, studies focus on content in isolation from the sociopolitical landscape of production (see also, by the same team, Clark et al., 2024). Fourth, studies tend to focus on one method – often an implicit use of content or discourse analysis – without paying attention to other aspects of the textbooks under study. For example, we found that visual and didactic analysis were rarely considered in textbook studies. We contend in this article that an explicit, holistic approach that is attentive to various aspects of the textbooks under study, inclusive of content, discourse, visual, didactic and more, is critical to advancing the state of history education resources. We are conscious of how ambitious and time consuming such a five-pronged holistic analysis is for a research team, let alone an individual scholar. We argue nonetheless that striving for a holistic analysis of textbooks encourages researchers to expand their range of methods and offers a far richer understanding of what and how students learn about the past. This article supports those few scholars already calling for holistic analysis of textbooks by offering an examination of where the field stands in its methods. To do so, we focus on the implications of narrow/singular versus holistic methods for the future of textbook analyses.

Findings

We found from our study that content analysis remains dominant. It is positivist in nature, and it often involves empirical analysis of textbooks with respect to war narratives (for example, Guichard, 2018; Klymenko, 2016; McCormack, 2000; Nozaki, 2008; Sharp, 2014; Roldán Vera and Fuchs, 2018) and narratives of national identity (for example, Carrier, 2018; Heathorn, 2000; Jackson, 2018; Schissler and Soysal, 2005). We also found that increasingly scholars are turning to discourse in addition to content analysis to focus on representations or omissions of sociocultural categories such as gender (for example, Woyshner and Schocker, 2015), race (for example, Crawford, 2013; King and Simmons, 2018), disability (for example, Sleeter and Grant, 1991) and LGBTQI+ people (for example, Höhne and Heerdegen, 2018; Schmidt, 2014). Content and discourse analysis often focus on selective text, to the exclusion of other important aspects of the textbook, such as visual and didactic analysis, and to the fuller context of the textbook's production and national context (Choppin, 1992; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006; Nicholls, 2006b). Here, we address four of the most prominent methods: content, discourse, visual and didactic. Due to space limitations, we do not address textbook production in this article. This is an important element of a holistic approach, and it is an aspect we address in additional publications.

Content analysis

Content analysis has long dominated and continues to define most textbook-related studies (for example, Carrier, 2018; Fuchs, 2011; Wenzeler, 2003; Yogev, 2014). Content analysis is an assessment of the relative emphasis of a thematic subject in a singular textbook or across a sample of textbooks (Foster and Burgess, 2013). A content analysis can include a quantitative accounting of the number of pages or passages on a subject and/or a qualitative evaluation of how a particular subject matter is represented.

Among the many studies in our review that do not explicitly name their methodology, we found that most scholars were using an implicit content analysis. For example, Penney Clark (2005) conducted a study of women's representation in 55 Canadian history textbooks approved by the province of British Columbia, from the interwar period to the 1980s. While not explicit, Clark (2005) employed content analysis as she scanned each textbook for references to women. She found only minute changes to the amount and type of content regarding women, despite increased social movements for gender equality over the 50 years during which the textbooks were produced. By the 1980s, women, when included, were often relegated to sidebars separated from the central narrative of the text. Clark (2005) notes that, while this did have the beneficial effect of increasing the number of women listed in the book's index (useful when provincial and school district textbook selection committees count), it conveys the message that women are peripheral to the core narrative. Clark (2005: 257) describes this as 'filler feminism' amid a masculinist narrative of history.

Among those studies that were explicit about their methodology, we found that a large number were using content analysis. For example, Harper Keenan (2019) offered a detailed description of his thematic analysis based on coding for content references to California Indian and Spanish acts of violence in four textbooks from California, United States. Keenan (2019) concluded that only 1 to 6 per cent of coded sentences referenced violence, and when referenced, it is California Indians who are characterised as perpetrators and the Spanish as victims. He found that the content of state-sanctioned textbooks re-naturalised colonisation by minimising the violence of the California mission system (Keenan, 2019).

We concur with Eckhardt Fuchs (2011), who, in his international study of textbook trends, states that content-related analysis of a single historical event, most often related to the Second World War, defines a large percentage of studies, with an increasing focus on content related to colonialism and national identity (Crawford and Foster, 2008; see also Foster and Burgess, 2013; Fuchs, 2011). Such content analysis, when guided by a clear thematic framework, offers critical insights into the relative importance attributed to specific types of historical knowledge by the state. Scholars can assess whether social progress for inclusion, for example regarding women, Indigenous and/or racialised groups, is reflected in the amount of content covered in approved textbooks. They can also evaluate how nation states come to terms with their historical harms by, for example, the degree of attention directed towards events such as the Holocaust or other genocides. Scholars can readily convey progress and decline regarding historical subjects over time or by geographical comparisons. There are limitations, however, particularly for studies that are purely quantitative in their content analysis (for example, Éthier et al., 2013). Anne Perez Hattori (2018) used quantitative methods to examine the presence or absence of Chamorro women in five history textbooks from Guam between 1964 and 2011. The disappointing, if not surprising, finding was that textbooks perpetuated a Western, patriarchal model of history and nation with the absence of Chamorro women (Perez Hattori, 2018). While the numbers tell a story, this alone does not offer the full picture as to the construction of colonial knowledge and the ways textbooks need to be decolonised (for example, attention to Indigenous oral histories). Peter Carrier (2018) suggests that content analysis of textbook studies emerged in the 1960s as the preferred methodology, and remained strong well into the 1980s. He implies that this preferred method may have been influenced by the dominance of historians in this field of study. Carrier (2018: 189) notes that the rise of deconstructivism in the 1970s brought attention to exposing 'rhetorical assumptions about nationhood by criticizing explicit and implicit reproductions of identities, self-understandings, or stereotypes in educational media'. With this reorientation, he finds that social scientists began to dominate textbook studies and to expand their methods.

Discourse analysis

The shift in who was conducting textbook studies may well explain the dominance of discourse analysis in more recent years. Our full data set reveals that discourse analysis is second to, or complementary to, content analysis, and that it is dominant among those studies that are explicit about methods. Several contributions to *The Palgrave Handbook of Textbook Studies* (Fuchs and Bock, 2018) made similar findings in various sub-fields. In a review of textbook analyses that address religious representations, Zrinka Štimac (2018) found that most studies use discourse analysis based on mixed methods. Linda Chisholm (2018: 229) states that studies about race in textbooks have shifted from 'content-analytical to discourse-analytical strategies'. Discourse analysis is the study of 'language in use', inclusive of 'the meaning we give language and the actions we carry out when we use language in specific contexts'

(Gee and Handford, 2012: 1). Textbook scholars may be attentive to keywords, lexicon, syntax and more discursive devices.

While some scholars engage in quantitative methods (for example, coding and counting), most studies in our review were based on qualitative methods (for example, close readings, thematic constructions). Most textbook scholars who are employing discourse analysis are applying critical discourse analysis. A critical lens is applied when the goal of analysis is to understand the social formations of power shaped by a text and for the reality of our lives. Critical discourse analysis is a tool to assess and make visible the often opaque ideological and regulatory elements of language (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Kennelly and Llewellyn, 2011). Theorist Ruth Wodak (1997: 6) defines it as 'an instrument whose purpose is precisely to expose structures and "disorders of discourse"'. Theorist Norman Fairclough (1999: 75) describes it as a methodology to engage in the politics of representation by asking 'whose representations are these, who gains what from them, what social relations do they draw people into, what are their ideological effects, and what alternative representations are there?'

Many studies adopt a poststructuralist theoretical framework of power, discourse and knowledge to expose how textbooks 'naturalize relations of domination' (Foucault, 1972; Howarth, 2010). Young Chun Kim, Seungho Moon and Jaehong Joo (Kim et al., 2013) analysed three widely circulated world history textbooks in South Korea for the ways discourses reproduced Eurocentric colonial hegemony regarding the events of the discovery of the new trade routes and the Industrial Revolution. Among their findings were language that othered, excluded and silenced the contributions of the East about technological, cultural and economic world development (Kim et al., 2013). Similarly, Muhammed Ayaz Naseem (2014) explored how Urdu and social studies textbooks at the elementary level in Pakistan othered Indian people and normalised militarisation. Naseem (2014: 19) found that government-regulated textbooks used language related to valour, religion and nationalism to solidify a 'Hindu-Muslim binary as the self-other binary, as well as normalising war between India and Pakistan, the notion of jihad (with references to Kashmir), and the state as the ultimate protector'. Language of distrust, violence and enmity, Naseem suggested, is used by textbook authors to instil a value system of militarism in young people. Although not naming poststructuralist theory, Christine Rogers Stanton (2014: 656–57) likewise turned to critical discourse analysis to explore othering or 'the use of language to legitimise (or delegitimise) the actions of participants through history'. She examined five widely adopted history textbooks in the United States for representations of Native peoples' agency. Drawing on Indigenous theorists of discourse analysis (for example, Kovach, 2013; Padgett, 2015), Rogers Stanton (2014: 23) showed that depictions of the 'Westward Expansion' era of the nineteenth century were steeped in language of passivity, thereby controlling the historical and curricular agency of Indigenous peoples.

As these and many other textbook studies demonstrate, one of the strengths of critical discourse analysis is the ability for scholars to highlight the linguistic strategies – from palpable silences to emotionally charged words – that are purposefully constructed by and for state-sanctioned versions of the past. Teresa Oteiza and Mariana Achugar's (2018: 206) review of 455 textbooks from 69 countries with former dictatorships suggest that critical discourse analysis offers 'a close analysis of pragmatic effects (e.g., using presuppositions or persuasion) and linguistic choices in connection to hegemonic narratives that serve to reproduce "official history"'. It is an acknowledgement that words have power to shape young citizens. Unfortunately, a large number of these studies performed 'a loosely defined form of discourse analysis' (Guichard, 2018: 319; see also Chia, 2013; Nishino, 2010; Van der Vlies, 2016). Jason Nicholls (2006b) engaged in an ambitious study of 15 textbooks from five countries to examine 'regimes of truth' about the Second World War and their material consequences. While Nicholls (2006b) seemed attentive to a more expansive notion of discourse, inclusive of narrative tone, authorship perspective and the discipline of history, he did not offer a clear definition of discourse analysis that guided his findings. Likewise, Ken Montgomery (2005) invoked a discourse analysis but did not go further to explain his research methods. He stated that the aim of the study was to 'explore the discursive practices of naming, patterning, and ordering knowledge about racism' in 12 Canadian history textbooks from the 1960s to the 2000s (Montgomery, 2005: 428). Montgomery (2005) found that American racism during the Cold War was used to prop up Canadian exceptionalism, and that more recent imaginings of Canada referred to racism in the past or as isolated occurrences. While both studies point to the dangers of minimising nation-state harms in education, such studies are hard to replicate or enrich without greater details about research methods.

The under-theorisation of discourse analysis means that studies may reduce the methodology to a descriptive analysis. A fuller examination of the material effects of discourse for social conditions

is therefore sometimes not provided in such textbook studies. Melitta Hogarth (2017) maintains that researchers employing discourse analysis must go beyond the current descriptive assessments of policy texts. She writes, for example, that Indigenous resistance, voice and knowledges can only be recognised if we go beyond the interpretation of words, since 'the textual features and language in which the text is produced is dictated by the language of the colonizer' (Hogarth, 2017: 24). Hogarth (2017: 28) conceptualises an Indigenous critical discourse analysis as:

committing oneself not just to analysing texts, nor just analysing processes of production and interpretation, but to analysing the relationships, texts, processes and their social conditions, both the immediate conditions of the situational context and the remote conditions of institutional and social structures.

Textbook studies that address not only the discourses within textbooks but the textbook itself as discourse may well take up the challenge that Hogarth (2017) articulates. For example, Eleftherios Klerides (2010), in a comparative study of English and Cypriot high-school history textbooks after 1974, offered an expansive framework. Klerides's (2010: 32–37) textbook methods included the multilayered medium (that is, semantic, lexical and grammatical meanings), interdiscursive field (that is, discourse as a 'communicative event' constructed by different academic disciplinary perspectives, such as archeology, literature and politics) and multifunctional domain (that is, how discourse 'challenges, transforms, and dismantles reality in certain ways'). The strength of this study is the unearthing of the implicit identities that authors evoke in the narration of their nation's histories and the implications for the public dissemination of knowledge.

Visual analysis

To take up Hogarth's (2017) call for an expansive conception of discourse also requires scholars of textbook studies to be attentive to more than thematic content and linguistic codes. Visual analysis is an overlooked, yet promising, method for textbook studies. Visual analysis can be a quantitative analysis of the emphasis and types of visuals that authors use (for example, archival images, historical figures and graphs) and/or a qualitative analysis of how visuals are used to represent historical themes (for example, positioning and aesthetics). Rog Wittig (2014, quoted in LaSpina, 1998: 05) reasons that the limited attention to visual analysis is because 'literary cultures have systematically suppressed' visual representations. Woodward, citing Willows and Houghton (1987), argues that this gap in the field of textbook studies is because illustrations had been controlled by publisher policy and marketability considerations, and not by textbook authors, well into the 1990s (Woodward, 2012, as cited by Morgan, 2014: 60). There are some studies in our review that incorporated visual analysis alongside content and/or discourse analysis (for example, Duquette and Fine-Meyer, 2017; Müller, 2018). Notably, James Loewen (2000) found in his study of history textbooks in the United States that the authors used non-controversial images of the Vietnam War. Marta Araújo and Silvia Rodríguez Maeso (2012) analysed maps and other images of Portuguese textbooks and demonstrated how Black Africa (a term used in the textbooks) was equated with failure and the need for Western 'humanitarian' intervention. Among the very sparse number of textbook studies that address visual analysis, few provide any methodological discussion.

Katalin Eszter Morgan's (2014) study of South African history textbooks is a notable exception. Morgan (2014) provided a rare study that isolated visual dimensions of textbooks, including montage (the production of a new whole from fragments of visuals) and anchoring images (for example, headings, captions), as well as negative and positive space of images (for example, layouts). Drawing on Alain Choppin's work, she utilises five visual functions in her study: motivation (that is, what draws attention to images, from colour to blank spaces); decorative (the aesthetic versus educational purposes of pictures); information (the separate/complementary role of images in relation to text); reflection (how the picture is used in relation to an activity); and exemplary (the visual as an example or cultural reference for text) (Morgan, 2014). Morgan's (2014) study not only provides a concrete blueprint for visual analysis; it is also persuasive in affirming that attention to visuals is fundamental to any assessment of how textbook authors structure historical narratives. She states, 'graphics don't just explain the text, they are the text' (Morgan, 2014: 62).

Didactic analysis

Even rarer than visual analysis is an analysis of didactics, which is an assessment of the amount and types of learning activities designed for students. Activities might include, but are not limited to, both group and individual tasks involving comprehension questions, inquiries, reflections, debates and experiential applications. Barbara Wenzeler (2003), for example, critically examined the presentation of the Holocaust in 10 English and 10 German textbooks with attention to content, discourse, visuals and didactics. She asked not only how the Nazis were portrayed, but whether students were invited to investigate the issues and sources in the text. Similarly, Marijana Mirkovic and Keith Crawford (2003) comprehensively addressed content, visual and didactic analysis in their comparative study of the First World War in a Serbian and an English secondary school textbook. They were explicit in addressing the pedagogical approaches and didactic opportunities that the texts offer, including the knowledge and skills basis to the structures of activities (for example, repetition or departure from textual narrative).

Didactic analysis has been identified by textbook scholars as an emerging trend in the field. Maria Repoussi and Nicole Tutiaux-Guillon (2010: 155) claimed that textbook analysis has moved from content analysis to a 'didactical view'. They suggest that this move is because textbooks are becoming multimodal in nature and there is a pedagogical movement 'toward a kind of text that does not give answers but supports the procedures of learning and fits in with the laboratory learning environment' (Repoussi and Tutiaux-Guillon, 2010: 155). Our data set does not affirm the suggestion that textbook analysis has moved away from content and towards didactic analysis. We did find, however, that studies using didactic analysis also engaged in a more holistic approach to textbook studies. For instance, Capó García's (in press) study pays close attention to the questions posed by authors in Puerto Rican textbooks, and finds that, for instance, true or false exercises force students to assume authoritative stances over Indigenous Peoples. Furthermore, many textbooks consistently ask students to think of ways Indigenous genocide and cultural erasure could have been avoided without questioning the overall colonial project. In Capó García's (in press) study, didactic analysis is integral to a holistic approach, as he compares portrayals of Indigenous cosmologies throughout the textbook.

Discussion: the need for a holistic analysis

A holistic analysis is an attempt to expand the field from a sole focus on the written narrative of the textbook to other aspects (Repoussi and Tutiaux-Guillon, 2010). A holistic analysis is attentive to the complex aspects of the textbook and to its perception (that is, how it may be interpreted or used), rather than isolating for only one component. But scholars continue to focus on what is written, which explains the dominance of content analysis in the field of textbook studies. There is no doubt that the amount of content that publishers afford to a specific historical subject is critical to understanding what narratives are sanctioned by a state and, by virtue of this, whether we are making progress in history education. For example, the Ontario Black Historical Society in Canada created a 2020 public campaign #BlackedOutHistory to demand more Black history in schools. The Society showed that only 13 pages of a 255-page Grade 8 Canadian history textbook by Nelson Education contained Black historical content (Henry, 2020).

Content analysis alone, however, does not offer an understanding of how Black history is represented when included. In this case, a critical discourse analysis is necessary to interrogate the politics of representation – language choices and their potential ideological effects. Scholars are increasingly analysing texts for the ways social formations of power shape discourses, such as descriptors, word couplings or absences. For example, it matters if Canadian history textbooks address the institution of slavery by using the language of enslavement to recognise that Blacks were enslaved by Whites due to White supremacy, and not defined as slaves, or, worse, as indentured servants, as an identity marker that erases White supremacy.

But an analysis of what and how a text is written is incomplete without attention to the many other ways that history textbooks teach students about the past. Visuals, for example, are not frills meant to draw students to the real historical content of the text. Instead, they are fundamental sources of information that, when used well, can engage students in critical inquiries about historical evidence and interpretations. The importance of visuals for history textbooks is perhaps clearest when controversy emerges. In *Civil Rights, Culture Wars*, Charles W. Eagles (2017) describes the saga of the high school history textbook *Mississippi: Conflict and change* authored by James Loewen and Charles Sallis. This

textbook, which the authors describe as 'boldly revisionist' (Loewen and Sallis, 1980: 87, as cited by Eagles, 2017), was rejected by the Mississippi State Textbook Purchasing Board in part due to the inclusion of a photograph of a lynching and the desire to have students 'take pride in state history, not question it' (Loewen and Sallis, 1980: 184, as cited by Eagles, 2017). This example is not intended to weigh into the appropriateness of this photograph, but rather to illustrate that visuals – inclusions, types, aesthetics – are integral to the constructed historical narratives conveyed to students in textbooks.

Like visuals, inattentiveness to didactics serves as a detriment to the scholarly pursuit of understanding what and how students learn from history textbooks. The United States' history textbook controversies are again rife in this regard. For example, in 2018, Grade 8 students in Texas were asked to list the positive and negative aspects of slavery based on an activity from the 2005 textbook *A History of the United States* (published by Prentice Hall), which also argued that not all slaveowners were cruel (Greenlee, 2019). This example demonstrates the importance of asking whether textbook didactics ask for basic comprehension of historical facts (for example, repetition, two-sided debates and simplistic questions) or the cultivation of historical thinking (for example, evidentiary inquiries, significance, and cause and consequence). The latter is sorely lacking, according to the report *Teaching Hard History: American slavery*, conducted by the Southern Poverty Law Commission (2018), which included the analysis of 12 history textbooks. One of their findings was that most textbooks did not make use of original documents to 'gain insight into some of what enslaving and enslaved Americans created, thought, aspired to, and desired' (Southern Poverty Law Commission, 2018: 39). The report calls for textbook authors to 'expand their repertoire of historical documents beyond the usual narratives to do a better job of representing the diverse voices and experiences of enslaved persons', and, in so doing, 'make intentional connections – good and bad – to the present, by showing the lasting contributions of African cultures and ideas, as well as the enduring impact of racial oppression on contemporary American life' (Southern Poverty Law Commission, 2018: 41).

Of course, even with the addition of more methods of textbook analysis – moving from attention to only what is written to the inclusion of discourse, visuals and didactics – studies do not fully account for all possible aspects of a holistic approach. In addition to what we have shown in this article, the field of history textbook study still lacks consideration of the sociopolitical context of textbook production (that is, national context, authorship, publishers, approval processes) and the pedagogical use and student reception of textbooks in the classroom. For example, we know within the United States and Canada that Black authorship of history textbooks is rare, and that the teachers who use textbooks are overwhelmingly White (Greenlee, 2019). A holistic approach to textbook analysis may seek to examine the relationship between race, authorship and pedagogy.

We recognise that a holistic approach is an expansive research agenda if we are to include content, discourse, visual, didactic, sociopolitical context, usage and more in the analysis of textbooks. In our sample of 104 textbook studies, we identified five projects that managed to deploy what we have described as a holistic approach, with varying degrees of attention to the various methods and varying sampling sizes of textbooks (Araújo and Rodríguez Maeso, 2012; Carleton, 2011; Georg Eckert Institute, 2015; Mirkovic and Crawford, 2003; Sleeter and Grant, 1991). A study of Portuguese textbooks by Araújo and Rodríguez Maeso (2012) managed to check all the boxes of a holistic framework. By looking at the content and its discourse, they demonstrated that textbooks naturalise colonialism, slavery, racism and the idea of European union. Their visual analysis showed how Blackness was portrayed as backwards and needing of Western humanitarian intervention. Their attention to the didactic portions of the book highlighted how textbooks encourage empathy with enslaved peoples and their racialised descendants, yet fail to elicit critiques of the overall colonial-capitalist system that engendered these unjust relations of power. Finally, the authors, albeit somewhat briefly, discuss how political considerations and current events influenced the preparation of the book during the fifth centenary of the 'Discoveries'. The goal was to project the Portuguese nation as one of 'cultural mediators', and their colonial enterprise as an 'intercultural dialogue' that helped bring about globalisation.

Unlike Araújo and Rodríguez Maeso (2012), Mirkovic and Crawford's (2003) cross-cultural analysis of teaching history in Serbian and British schools is greatly imbued with sociopolitical discussions of the complicity of textbooks in producing and reinforcing politicised narratives of national identity. The authors begin 'with a comparison of history teaching in both nations' that details the political and contentious nature of history education (Mirkovic and Crawford, 2003: 91). Included in this analysis are topics such as the influence of state control over classroom knowledge, the selection process of textbook knowledge, and the relationships between interest groups involved in staking 'their particular

claim to defining the characteristics of nationhood' (Mirkovic and Crawford, 2003: 48). However, a more complete sociopolitical analysis delving into the particularities of textbook production itself is lacking, as the authors do not enter a conversation around the politics of publishing houses and authorial selection. The bulk of the study moves towards identifying how the discourse, content and usage in textbooks 'of photographic evidence and pedagogical approaches' perpetuate each country's emerging political context through drawing on linkages to national identity (Mirkovic and Crawford, 2003: 91).

The Georg Eckert Institute's (2015) international mapping of the Holocaust in educational materials is by far the most robust and comprehensive holistic analysis we encountered. The Institute surveyed 89 textbooks across 26 countries from 2000 onwards with a methodology focused on the 'semantic (contextual and narrative) rendering of the event in socio-political contexts worldwide', discourse and narrative structures, content and the 'didactic approaches authors adopted' (Georg Eckert Institute, 2015: 30–31). Visual analysis was further incorporated into the Institute's discursive analysis by requiring 'researchers to record the visual narrative conveyed by the selection and arrangement or sequence of images' (Georg Eckert Institute, 2015: 30). Although broader sociopolitical discussions of textbook publication were avoided, the Institute's analysis met all five of the criteria set out in our study.

Other studies that appear holistic in nature but that do not explicitly adhere to our five-pronged recommendation are Christine E. Sleeter and Carl A. Grant (1991) and Sean Carleton (2011). Sleeter and Grant (1991) analysed a large corpus of 47 textbooks, 14 of which were social studies textbooks used across the United States. Their study assessed each textbook in its entirety to parse apart the level of representation, and attention was paid to 'inequalities based on race, sex, disability, and social class' (Sleeter and Grant, 1991, 79). Their methodology is also extensive, with six aspects including a 'picture analysis, anthology analysis, "people to study" analysis, language analysis, story-line analysis, and miscellaneous' (Sleeter and Grant, 1991: 82). The extent to which didactic activities feature in the authors' discourse and content analyses, or if the authors considered each textbook's sociopolitical context is not apparent.

Carleton's (2011) study of 34 history and social studies textbooks used in British Columbia, Canada, from 1920 to 1970, is also a good example of a holistic lens. While he does not assess the didactic portions of the books, he does assess the other holistic categories to explore the ways they justify settler colonialism to non-Indigenous students. Carleton (2011: 115) conducts discourse analysis of both the content and the visuals of his data set, and he showcases how Indigenous Peoples are portrayed as savage and violent, and settler colonialism as 'gradually bringing civilization to indigenous communities'. The wide periodisation of the study necessitates attention to the sociopolitical and institutional context of curricular production. Carleton (2011) discusses the effects of the interwar period, the Second World War and the Cold War on the Canadian nation-building project and its provincial curricula, and then aptly segues into textbook analysis.

There are a few additional studies in our data set that addressed the wholeness of the text with attention to two or more of these forms of assessment. In this regard, some of the studies already noted for conducting visual and didactic analysis could well be classified as engaging in a holistic analysis, such as Wenzeler (2003) and Abdou (2018), among others. We found that those studies that could be classified as more holistic often tended to provide a more cursory application of different methods or examined far fewer textbooks relative to studies that focused only on content or discourse analysis. We also found, however, that perhaps because of the complexity of analysis, those studies that embarked on a more holistic approach were often clearer and more explicit about their methods than other studies. Greater detailed procedures for methods offer the welcome possibility for replication by other scholars. The overall lack of holistic analysis is in many respects understandable, given the complexities of each approach, especially for individual scholars, and the limitations of space in publications. That being said, digital technologies have made combining qualitative and quantitative methods much more feasible, and, consequently, holistic approaches potentially much more manageable.

Based on our findings from textbook studies, our research team has embarked on a rare and ambitious holistic analysis that examines two history textbooks – one for elementary and one for secondary schools – from each of Canada's 13 provinces and territories. The two co-leads of the research team selected textbooks and two chapters per textbook based on a focus on Canadian history, attention to the project's main themes of historical thinking and civic engagement, and a breadth of historical time periods across the data set. While we do not analyse each textbook in its entirety using all methods of analysis, different aspects of our research design require attention to the wholeness of the text, as well as to the front and back cover, additional front-end information and the index. Our study

begins with an NVivo-assisted keyword search of each textbook for pre-identified keywords related to the main themes. This keyword search assists with a later manual analysis of content and discourse by providing the number of occurrences and coding for usage of terms. Next, researchers conduct a manual reading of the chapters for each textbook, which includes content analysis (that is, frequency and conceptions of main themes), critical discourse analysis (dominance and usage of key words, including linguistic codes), visual analysis (inventory of images, including type, text, positioning and purpose) and didactic analysis (inventory of activities, including pedagogical approach, skills and purpose). Finally, one researcher is conducting a sociopolitical context analysis that considers the authorship, publication period, publisher, approval process and more of each textbook. Classroom usage of these textbooks will be part of the team's research, but it will emerge from survey and interview data from the larger project. For all methods, the study requires that researchers answer specific questions related to equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonisation. For example, for the visual analysis, we ask: Are historical power imbalances, supremacies and hierarchies made visible or invisible in the images? This study is ongoing and resource heavy, including a team of over 12 research assistants and professors engaged in the work over the course of more than a year.

We have taken up this ambitious research method because an assessment of history textbook studies makes clear that to isolate only one or two methods would miss the complex ways in which students are taught about the past. Our team is thus among the few scholars to take up Grever and Van der Vlies's (2017) call for a holistic approach to textbook studies. They assert that a holistic approach is the only way to make visible the 'organization of historical knowledge [that] sustains the perpetuation of national narratives in history textbooks' (Grever and Van der Vlies, 2017: 287). Grever and Van der Vlies (2017), like Hogarth (2017), Repoussi and Tutiaux-Guillon (2010) and others, argue that the immense power of textbooks over how nations engage with their past and what that means for their political futures is undervalued. That power is unaccountable without a fuller examination of the complex and interrelated structures within and in relation to the textbook. We agree with Grever and Van der Vlies's (2017) conclusion that a holistic analysis, from composition to comprehension, provides the tools that researchers require to understand and harness the power of textbooks for education. It is the future for textbook studies.

Conclusion

We have demonstrated that the call for the field of textbook studies to provide analysis from composition to comprehension has gone unrealised with respect to an explicit and holistic approach. Since the textbook represents a fruitful area for analysis that offers a multiplicity of insights regarding what is valued by the educational system, it is imperative that scholars do not become mired in studying written text alone and in isolation from other aspects of textbook creation (Klymenko, 2016; Podeh, 2000). This article is a renewed call for scholars in the vibrant field of textbook studies to be attentive to missing methods. We call for an expansion of methods when approaching textbook analysis. Many studies employing content or discursive analyses have focused on the processes of exclusion or inclusion based on sociocultural categories within textbooks. While content and discourse analyses are important, their disproportionate use, to the exclusion of additional methods, negates fuller discussion of the intricacies of textbook research supported by a holistic approach.

Departing from Grever and Van der Vlies's (2017) and Eckhardt Fuchs's (2011: 27) reviews of history textbook studies that identified the movement of textbook analysis 'from traditional content analysis' towards 'paths with a view to methodological diversity' and holistic analyses, we found that even many years after these studies, researchers still overwhelmingly deploy narrow and traditional analyses. Overwhelmingly, the field still lacks attention to methods and, more specifically, to a holistic approach that broadens the researcher's capacity to dissect the positionality and perpetuation of historical knowledge(s). Addressing missing methods will enable textbook researchers to further contest the often-uncritical embrace of history textbooks. Moreover, a more holistic approach can challenge textbook researchers to consider how we might expand upon our understanding of the textbook as an artefact of our societies.

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The authors declare no conflicts of interest with this work. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the authors during peer review of this article have been made. The authors declare no further conflicts with this article.

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