

ped·a·go·gy/'pedə,gājē/'pɛdə,gadzɪ/:

a means of guidance. *Obs*

(OED, 2011)

How can we best understand the pedagogical purposes of public displays? This question served as a basis for discussion at *Beyond Pedagogy: The Limits of Representation*, an international workshop recently held at Acadia University. In taking a definition of pedagogy – a means of guidance – as their starting point, a group of educators, historians, sociologists, museologists, and cultural critics worked through questions about the pedagogical implications and limitations of narratives of suffering and conflict in the public sphere. The common concerns about the historically defined pedagogical purposes of public exhibits, the continued affirmation of museums and memorials as sites where civic identity is shaped and sustained, and the increase in displays of conflicts of the past all pointed towards the need for scholars to reflect on public exhibitions and memorials about war, violence, and death as no longer naïve but instead as complex.

The complexity of both the implicit and explicit messages presented within memorials and museums challenged the scholars in discussing the limits of representation and their own implication in the process. The interdisciplinary body of scholarship brought to the workshop by the participants extended our discussions about the pedagogical strategies of representation and ethical dimensions of history and memorialization within public institutions. While the relevance of these issues to scholars from various disciplines is clear, there has been a notable absence of scholarship on the exhibition of the past as a process of partial understanding, one that must navigate between understanding the relationship between knowing and feeling difficult historical events. Throughout the two days of discussions, we attempted to understand, envision, and critique various pedagogical attempts at public knowledge production. We were able to reflect on the difficulty of defining pedagogy and the pedagogical project that is often undertaken (and often misunderstood) by scholars, practitioners, and the attending publics.

This workshop provided a dedicated time for discussion as we worked to contribute to a unique, but growing, field of inquiry that examines the intersection of pedagogy, public history, and memorialization. We faced our own difficulties in how best to talk about, for example, representations of human rights issues as historical events, the public displays of past injustices, the politics of memorialization, and differentiating nostalgia, remembrance and memory, to name a few. We also had the privilege of having several graduate students from Canada and the United States attend and contribute to the conversations as they witnessed the wonder of extended conversations that pushed our thinking forward collectively.

The next steps? The conversations, commonalities and the points of departure will continue on in collaborative projects, published dedicated thematic journals and a short edited collection. Will we do this again? Of course, but only after we reflect on the experience and move forward with our individual research agendas. I acknowledge the generous support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada, Acadia University, the Canada Research Chair Secretariat, the Fulton Foundation, and The History Education Network/ Histoire et Éducation en Réseau.