First year master level

"We will remember them"
- a history didactics study of First World War
  teaching in England through a teacher perspective

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Abstract

The purpose of this study has been to research what is included in the First World War teaching in English compulsory school. The teaching of this historical event is performed in a context where the war is yearly commemorated and given attention in society at large in various ways. Through conducting interviews with six history teacher working at a school in northeastern England the study was set out to investigate how teaching of the war is performed in general as well as with specific focus directed towards potential challenges in connection to the remembrance events, the collectively remembered public history and issues such as gender and colonial representation.

The study shows that there is a clear focus on the past in the teaching of the war with trench warfare and life during the war being issues that are discussed. Connections are further made to the present where the importance of remembrance is stressed. The main challenge experienced by the teachers regarding the First World War is the lack of living witnesses due to the time distance. In consequence, the war is seen as less relevant to learn about among the pupils. However, remembrance symbols can in this instance be a tool in order to entice interest for the study of the war and the common perception among the teachers is that the pupils enjoy the study of the First World War.

Key words

History didactics, history teaching, the First World War, collective remembrance, historical consciousness.
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1 Introduction

A Sister at a Catholic girls’ school in northeastern England has just held the devotion at the morning assembly for the teachers at the school when she concludes it by saying the following prayer together with the teachers:

In the rising of the sun and it’s going down,
we will remember them.
In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter,
we will remember them.
In the opening of buds and in the warmth of summer,
we will remember them.
In the rustling of the leaves and the beauty of autumn,
we will remember them.
In the beginning of the year and when it ends,
we will remember them.¹

This happened on Armistice Day, the 11th November 2014, and England had recently started its centenary commemoration of the First World War (WWI). The “them” referred to in the prayer are all the British soldiers and other people who died in the war and the remembrance of the lives lost during the war is given a large part of the focus in the centenary commemorations. One example of this was an installation at the Tower of London, called “Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red”, in which, from August to November 2014, 888,246 ceramic poppies were placed by hand around the Tower in remembrance of each of the British soldiers who died in the First World War. The poppies formed a crimson flood around the Tower’s moat and before the installation was over, millions of people had set out to see it.²

At the school, most teachers wear the poppy on their chest and it is seen all over in society at this time of year. The news anchors on the BBC morning show wear them, football players

¹ This prayer had been written down by hand and was given to the teachers during the assembly, slightly rewritten and shortened, but is originally a Jewish prayer (“We remember them”). It is often used in connection to Holocaust remembrance as well, but the phrases “We will remember them” and “We remember them” are commonly used during the First World War commemorations, for example in social media forums such as Instagram. Kamens & Rabbi Riemer, 2013.
wear them on their shirts in Premier League, Queen Elizabeth II wears one, as do Prime Minister David Cameron. The idea of using the poppy as a symbol of remembrance of the soldiers who had died during the war appeared after the war had ended and in 1921 the first man-made poppies were sold in order to raise money to former soldiers and families of soldiers who had sacrificed their lives. Today, almost a hundred years later, the poppy industry produces millions of poppies in different material every year, the Royal British Legion alone produces 35 million poppies and sells them for the same purposes that the first poppies were sold almost a hundred years ago. These poppies are worn by a large part of the British population during two weeks in November, leading up to the commemorations at Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day. Thus, the First World War commemoration clearly alludes to questions concerning national identity but discussions have also been raised about what this national identity actually includes and who is in power of dictating it. One example of this is the critique the British Prime Minister David Cameron received when he announced that the centenary commemoration should be “a truly national commemoration […] a commemoration that captures our national spirit, in every corner of the country” but was unable to develop with any depth what the national identity he praised actually meant.

Overall, the centenary commemoration has directed focus to discussions about the war in connection to “education, remembrance and national identity” and studies show that history nowadays is largely mediated outside of schools and universities. Consequently, the mediation of history in society affects pupils’ historical consciousness and what they know to be true about the past. Thus, collective memory and remembrance of the First World War are issues related to teaching and may pose both benefits and challenges in the history classroom, which teachers have to deal with. This study is therefore focused on the present-day teaching of the First World War in English classrooms.

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3 Mavin, 2015.
4 Diamond, 2015.
5 Mavin, 2015.
6 See for example Jeffrey, 2015; Mycock, 2014; Pennell, 2014a.
7 Jeffrey, 2015, p. 562.
9 Pennell, 2014b, p. 38.
2 Aim

The aim of this study is to research how history teachers’ at a girls’ school in northeastern England plan and perform their teaching of the First World War. The teaching is performed within a societal context where the public history of the First World War is prominent in the English society in a variety of ways and where the collective memory of the war is publicly commemorated every year, with particular focus put on the commemoration events during 2014 due to the centenary of the outbreak of the war.

3 Research questions

- What is taught about the First World War in secondary education in England and how is it taught?
  - What challenges, if any, do teachers encounter when teaching about the First World War in the context of the present-day commemorations of the war?
  - In what ways do the public history of the First World War and the history taught in schools differ? I.e. are there aspects of the war that the school teaches pupils that they cannot learn from history performed outside of school?
  - How are aspects of gender representation and colonial representation dealt with in the teaching?

4 Method

This study uses a qualitative methodological approach by performing structured asynchronous online interviews conducted via e-mail. Interviews were chosen as a tool for creating and gathering the source material for this study and by choosing interviews the study could be able to answer the research questions based on experiences from people’s (in this case teachers’) everyday lives. Due to the aim of the study being concerned with teaching the history of the First World War in a context where the war is actively highlighted in the English society in general, teachers were seen as natural interview subjects. To perform interviews with teachers aimed at understanding how today’s active teachers deal with issues of teaching the well-known First World War and how they reflect on this teaching.
4.1 Structured online interviews

Structured interviews were chosen partly due to the online form selected for this study since the form of e-mail interviews demanded a structured questioning system in order to be able to carry out the interviews due to the indirect communication between interviewer and interviewee. Structured interviews imply that all interviewees receive the same questions, in the same order and this is another reason for choosing this type of interview technique since it is an advantage when wanting to compare answers given by the different respondents.\(^{11}\) However, this approach together with the interviews being conducted asynchronously, limits the possibility of spontaneous and individual follow-up questions during the interview. Since this study aims at being able to compare the experiences of teachers and at the same time try to understand how they personally reflect on the issues, the solution was to use structured interviews in combination with potential follow-up questions which could be asked if needed.

Conducting interviews with the help of Internet, via e-mail for example, is a method that has grown more common along with the increased use of Internet in general. On the one hand, e-mail interviewing presents benefits such as the limiting of geographical distance between interviewer and interviewees. Other benefits are that several interviews can be conducted at the same time and that the method allows interviewees to answer when they have time to do so. Furthermore, the interviewees have more time to think about their answers and how to phrase what they want to say.\(^{12}\) Salmons calls this kind of interview set up “high-quality exchanges”, since the respondents have time to reflect on the questions and what to answer.\(^{13}\) Moreover, the fact that the respondents have the possibility to take their time to answer is positive for the purpose of this study since the aim is to find out how the teachers work with the First World War in their history classrooms and what kind of content they include for example. The majority of the questions require some reflection before answering and the spontaneous and fast answers could thus be disadvantageous for the study. It is, however, not possible to know whether or not the teachers have actually reflected upon the questions before answering or dealt with them as fast as possible but the asynchronous online method at least increased the chances of reflection.\(^{14}\)

\(^{11}\) Sveningsson, Lövheim & Bergquist. 2003, p. 83.
\(^{13}\) Salmons, 2009, p. 23.
On the other hand, the lack of face-to-face interaction in interviewing might be a limitation to the study due to the fact that facial expressions and voice tones, among other things, are lacking in interviews via e-mail. However, e-mail interviews reduce the risk of interviewer/interviewee effects that are connected to the same matters as mentioned above. Consequently, both the presence and lack of physical personal presence in interviews equally pose benefits as well as problems to take into consideration when carrying out the interviews.\(^\text{15}\) Another argument against using e-mail interviews is that the quality of the interview depends on the respondents’ writing skills. This can, however, just as well be an issue in face-to-face interviews where the respondents have to be able to express themselves in speech.\(^\text{16}\)

All in all, e-mail interviewing is seen as the preferred method for this study, especially since it increases the possibilities of performing interviews with geographically distant interview subjects, which is a prerequisite for this study.

4.2 The interviewees

In order to make contact with English history teachers working in England at the moment, an e-mail was sent out to two history teachers working at a school in northeastern England. The e-mail briefly presented the study before asking if they were willing to participate and whether they could either provide contact information to the other teachers in the history department at the school or forward the e-mail to the rest of the history staff. Both of the teachers replied positively to taking part as interviewees and forwarded the initial e-mail to the rest of the teachers in the history department with the request to contact me if they would like to take part as well. This particular school was chosen due to the fact that I have performed a period of teacher training at the school and thus know and have contact with some of the teachers working at the school. This results in previous knowledge about the school as well as some of the teachers included in this study. Furthermore, important to take into consideration is the fact that this particular school cannot be seen as representative for the average secondary school in England and this has been regarded during the work with the study.

\(^{15}\) Meho, 2006, p. 1289; Sveningsson, Lövheim & Bergqvist, 2003, pp. 95-96.

\(^{16}\) Sveningsson, Lövheim & Bergqvist, 2003, p. 92.
The history department at the school consisted of eight teachers when this study was conducted, seven female teachers and one male teacher. Including the two teachers with which the initial contact was taken, six of the teachers responded that they were willing to take part in the study. Five of them were female teachers and, consequently, the male teacher responded positively as well. However, he did never answer the interview or any of the following e-mails concerning it and thus, there were only female interviewees. In addition to these five female respondents from the history department, a sixth female teacher working at the school was asked to participate due to her background as a history teacher. For the moment being she mainly works with other assignments at the school but she teaches two history classes during the present school year. This former history teacher responded positively as well and therefore there were seven interviewees in total to whom the interview questionnaire was sent out. The remaining two teachers in the history department did not answer the request for unknown reasons. One of the non-responding teachers was however in the process of changing jobs and was thus leaving the school about the time when the interviews were to be sent out and conducted.

Six teachers is a sufficient number of respondents to the interview questions seen as it is a qualitative approach with focus on finding depth in the interviewees’ answers. A limitation to the study is however the fact that there are only female interviewees. This inequality in gender representation is due to the fact that only one male history teacher was employed at the school and he did not answer the interview for unknown reasons. Necessary to remember, however, is that a representative sample is not a prerequisite when conducting qualitative research.\(^{17}\) The ages of the respondents vary between 24-58 years and they have been history teachers for between one to 26 years. One of the teachers has been working at the present school for 26 years, a second teacher has been working there for 15 years and the remaining four have been working there between one and eight years. Three of the teachers have studied to become teachers quite recently, ranging between the years 2009-2015, while one of the teachers studied to become a teacher in the late 1970s, one during the early 1990s and one during the late 1990s. With a qualitative study with few interview subjects it is not possible to make any generalizations depending on possible differences found by making connections to years of age, years of teaching or time period when their teacher education was carried out,

\(^{17}\) Meho, 2006, p. 1288.
for example, but it is nonetheless considered as relevant background information. (For
detailed information, see Appendix B where the teachers are presented in a table.)

Few of the teachers have worked at more than one other school besides the present one, one
of the teachers has worked at three other schools, two of the teachers have worked at one
other school and the last three have not worked at any other school/s. It should be added
however that one of the teachers who has not worked at any other school is on her first year
of teaching. All of the teachers teach or have taught one or more subjects in addition to
teaching history, all of which are social science studies or English.

The school at which the teachers are employed is a Catholic girls’ school that teaches pupils
between the ages of 11-18, which means that the school is both a secondary school, Years 7-
11, and a Sixth form college. Sixth form is for pupils who have finished the mandatory
secondary school education and want to continue with Further Education (see further
explanation of the English school system in S.9).

4.3 Source material: The interviews
All of the interviewees were sent the interview form (see Appendix A) at the same time but in
separate e-mails in order to keep their participation as anonymous as possible. The interview
form included three parts; informed consent, information on how to answer the interview and
the interview questions. The form was sent as an attached file but important information was
stated in the e-mail message as well, in order to make sure that they were all able to open the
document of the interview form and in order to let them know the time frame for answering.
In order to avoid delays because of technical problems the teachers were asked to e-mail a
reply that they had received the dispatch. However, only two of the respondents answered that
they were able to open the file, which led me to send out another e-mail to the rest of the
teachers two days before their given deadline in order to make sure that everyone had
received the e-mail and been able to open the attached document. The remaining teachers
replied to this e-mail and confirmed that they could open the document and were working on
their interview responses.

The informed consent was handled in the following way: the interviewees were informed on
the significance of participation (for further details see Appendix A) and asked to e-mail back
to me if they gave their consent to take part in the interview. That was seen as a sufficient consent given to participation and all of the interviewees replied and gave their consent in a separate e-mail or in connection to sending their interview answers. The interview form did then inform the interviewees on the structure of the interview questions and how I would like for them to answer. Due to limitations when conducting e-mail interviews compared to interviews performed face-to-face this was necessary to include in order to be clear about what was expected of the interview subjects as well as for them to be aided in how to answer. This part included information such as urging them to use examples from their teaching and asking them to answer as elaborately as possible. Moreover, the respondents were encouraged to underline words and/or write words in bold for expressing emphasis and to use emoticons when appropriate and if they were comfortable in doing so, in an attempt to compensate a part of the face-to-face communication.

The information about the time frame for answering as well as the request for a reply as soon as possible saying whether or not they had been able to open the attached interview form or not were repeated in the interview form in order to be clear on these points to the interviewees. The purpose of giving the interviewees one week to answer was to ensure that they did not feel stressed to reply with a consequence that the questions were only briefly answered but at the same time if they would have gotten more time that might have caused them to delay their response with a possible loss of interview subjects. The teachers answered the interviews in writing and when the replies arrived they were thus already set for analysis, which is one benefit with online interviews. Two of the interviewees replied within the given time frame of one week. The remaining four interviews were sent between four to twelve days after the deadline, some of these were sent after receiving reminders to answer.

When constructing the interview guide a number of main themes was taken into account as important to include for example the teachers’ personal backgrounds; public history in relation to teaching; WWI in connection to national and local curricula; gender, colonial and local aspects of WWI; and teaching aids. Based on this, the interview was divided into two parts; background questions and questions about the First World War. All of the questions were open-ended in an attempt to bring forth as elaborate answers as possible from the

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19 Meho, p. 1289.
teachers. Further on, examples were given in some of the questions in order to entice the teachers to give developed answers.

The source material used in this study was thus created during the study in the form of the interviews. The interview questionnaire contained 36 questions, of which ten were included in the part called background questions and the remaining 26 were included in the part concerned with the First World War and the teaching of it (see Appendix A for further details). The responses received were quite similar in length, although some of the teachers were, as expected, more elaborative than others in their answers. Four of the respondents answered all of the questions. A fifth teacher answered all questions except for question eight in background questions (the one about the definition on historical consciousness). It has not been made clear whether the teacher missed out on this question or deliberately chose not to answer it. In the information given in connection to the interview the respondents were asked to mark questions which they, for some reason, did not answer with an X in order for me to know whether or not the lack of an answer was deliberate but it is uncertain whether or not this particular teacher had read this information since she was one of the teachers who did not reply to whether or not the attached document was possible to open or not and thus she might have missed this information. Furthermore, this teacher had not understood question number four in the questions about the First World War and asked what was meant by it. A follow-up question was therefore sent to this particular teacher explaining the question a bit further and she was then able to answer the question satisfactorily. The sixth teacher did not answer questions 14-24 due to alleged lack of time but sent her answers to the rest of the questions. This has to be regarded as an influencing decline to the study but the answers she did provide are still regarded as useful, and are thus included in the study.

None of the interviewees used emoticons, writing in bold or underlining words. Some of the teachers did, however, use abbreviations, which were all understandable when reading through. All in all, the teachers wrote understandable answers and there arose no questions regarding what their answers intended. Questions that stimulated to giving examples were often answered with examples given and the teachers seemed to have interpreted the questions in line with the implied intention. The responses were gathered into a joint document where all of the answers were placed beneath each question. This facilitated comparison between the interviewees’ answers. In order to keep the answers separated the teachers were randomly given a number from 1-6 and it is with this number they are
identified in the discussion as well. The discussion will present the teachers’ responses by naming them teacher 1, 2, 3 etc. and use the abbreviations T1-T6.

5 Ethical considerations

When conducting in-depth interviews with a few number of persons, ethical considerations are of great importance. The Swedish Research Council for humanistic and social scientific research presents four main demands when conducting research with individuals: (1) the demand to inform subjects about the study, (2) informed consent, (3) confidentiality, and (4) the demand that the collected material is used for the purpose of the study only.21 These four demands were taken into consideration when conducting this study and beneath follows further explanations of the implications of the demands for this particular study.

The first demand about information was realised both in the initial e-mail to the teachers as well as along with the e-mail where the interviews were sent out. The document containing the interview also had a section on information about the main aim of the study, what was expected of their participation and information on the right to withdraw from participation.22 Informed consent was in this study included in the e-mail and the document when the interview questions were sent out. How consent is given depends on the character of the study but can be a signed consent form or be done by a reply in an e-mail were it is stated that the participants have read the consent form and agree to take part.23 For this study, the latter alternative was chosen due to e-mail correspondence being used as the means of communication. The participants were thus asked to give their consent in a separate e-mail reply or in connection to sending back the interview questions.24

The demand for confidentiality was assured to all participants in the initial contact taken as well as in the second e-mail containing the interview questions. When sending out the e-mails with the consent form, general information about the study and the interview questions, each interviewee received their separate e-mail in order to be as confidential as possible with each teacher. The name of the school was not used in the report of the study and has been taken away from the included appendix with the interview questions. For anonymity, the

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23 Meho, 2006, p. 1288.
interviewed teachers were given numbers instead of their actual names.\textsuperscript{25} Due to the fourth demand, the interviews making up the main material for this study was treated as consumed once the study was over and will not be used for other purposes. For this specific study, the method of using the Internet has not posed any particular problems considering the ethical issues involved.\textsuperscript{26}

6 Theoretical approach

The meaning of history is twofold and denotes both the actual past and academic or pedagogic adaptations developed in order to illuminate past events with the aim of understanding the past. In one way or another, all people are affected by history and history appears all around in society – in school, in popular culture, in mass media and in our personal lives.\textsuperscript{27} This is a study within the field of history didactics in compulsory education, which implies that it deals with issues connected to the mediation of history in school for children and adolescences. The intent is to research what kind of history is mediated in the history classroom and also how it is mediated.\textsuperscript{28} Karlsson suggests that history didactics concern questions regarding “how history appears as consciousness, meaning, memory, monuments, museums and myth” [my translation]\textsuperscript{29}, which are all more or less of interest for this study where the aim is to research how the First World War is taught in English schools in a context where massive societal attention is given to the war due to the country’s large-scale involvement in the war and where commemorations are held in remembrance of it still today. The background here, as in all parts of history, is that history culture is produced, understood and used by different formations of people in order to meet specific groups’ needs and interests. Consequently, the use of history and how it is portrayed in school affect pupils to a large extent, which is why history teachers have an important task in problematizing popular assumptions and beliefs about past events and contribute with scientific history.\textsuperscript{30}

6.1 Theory of collective memory

During the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century ideas about memories being collective were starting to spread and with the school of Emile Durkheim and especially with the work of Maurice Halbwachs the
theory of collective memory took form. The school of Durkheim went against previous positions that connected social memory to be dependent on people’s races or embedded in the work of a cultural elite and instead said that social memory was found in the “social structure”. Halbwachs was the one to most elaborately develop the idea of an existing social, or collective, memory in this sense.\footnote{Winter & Sivan. 1995, pp. 21-25.} According to Halbwachs, memory is affected by the social context in which people live their lives. His ideas later led to a collective memory theory which was based on assumptions that people’s memories are (re-)created in social settings, i.e. through encounters with other people such as family members and friends for example. Halbwachs moved away from the prevalent understanding that people are remembering their memories individually, since he claimed that memories are acquired in relation to other people. Consequently, society plays a large part in our memory reminiscence.\footnote{Halbwachs, 1992, pp. 37-40.}

Considering the importance of other people in our recollection of memories, there is something that can be called collective memory – a memory that is created and shared together with groups of different people. In effect, memories that we have are remembered through external influence and not by one’s own efforts. Contrary to other theories on memory, Halbwachs took a stand against individuality of memories and claimed that individual memory is always the product of social framing. Furthermore, due to the fact that people find themselves in different settings and belonging to different groups of people at different times the memory works through different frameworks. Thus, belonging to one group of people provides one collective framework of memory while other groups provide other frameworks.\footnote{Halbwachs, 1992, pp. 37-40; Winter & Sivan, 1999, pp. 23-24.} Halbwachs argued that the collective memories also work in favour of providing unity to a group, which is expressed as a general social need among people. Hence, collective memory can also be altered and adjusted in order for the preservation of a specific group identity.\footnote{Halbwachs, 1992, pp. 182-183.}

Halbwachs’ view on collective memory in connection to history was that there is one history while there are numerous collective memories of history existing simultaneously. Consequently, history is objective, while memory is subjective. Halbwachs meant that

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understandings of the past through memories are social phenomena and engaging in the study of collective memory is thus aiming for an understanding of how these different memories have various effects in society today.\(^{35}\)

Furthermore, studies of collective memory have tended to focus on to what extent the memory is publicly represented in popular culture, politics and media. In recent years, there has been a change in the ways in which collective memory is studied and it has moved from the study of the functions memories have in social groups to a study of the memories which are silenced when certain other memories are favoured. Thus, the present focus is directed towards a collective memory having its base in a specific social group and not being a representation of an entire nation or agreed by all groups in society.\(^{36}\) This idea of a plurality of collective memory is what Halbwachs discussed early on when concluding that there is one history but many representations of it.\(^{37}\)

Winter and Sivan picture collective remembrance as “the act of gathering bits and pieces of the past, and joining them together in public. The ‘public’ is the group that produces, expresses, and consumes it”\(^{38}\). Following in the footsteps of Halbwachs, Winter and Sivan discuss the fact that collective memory is one thing and history portrayed by professional historians another thing. Political leaders and authorities use and have used collective memories as historical memories in order to further political statements or to reach certain personalized or nationalized objectives, but Winter and Sivan clearly point to the difference between historical and collective memory. Even though the two types of memories are alike to some extent the difference is that collective remembrance is achieved by people and relate to personally derived memories and feelings while history’s angle is aiming to separate from personal influence when presenting the past.\(^{39}\)

When discussing collective memory there are several opportunities offered on how to distinguish, or if to do so, between those remembering the events first versus second hand. Halbwachs contribution was that of the “remembering agent” who has had a “real experience” of something, upon which a memory is based. It can thus be claimed that


\(^{36}\) Fulbrook, 2014, pp. 68, 70-71.


someone who has not experienced something personally cannot have a memory of it and is thus reduced to remembrance or commemoration of the event.\textsuperscript{40} Karlsson, on the other hand, points to the distinction between communicative and cultural memory where the former is reserved to those who personally has lived the event. Thus, the memory can be communicated based on personal experience but culturally remembered by everyone who has been told about it.\textsuperscript{41}

In all, the most important consideration is that there is a difference between having a memory of something that you have lived through and remembering something others have lived through. This study will not further engage in differentiating between these two but since what is commonly known as public remembrance and commemoration of the First World War is part of the emphasis for this study, these terms will, in line with Halbwachs addition to the discussion, refer to collective memory remembered by the generations following those alive during the war.

6.2 Historical consciousness, history culture and use of history

The term historical consciousness was coined in 1979 by the German history didactic Karl-Ernst Jeismann and the term has been especially influential in the German and Nordic history didactic traditions but is also present in other parts of Europe as well. Since the 1990s the meaning of historical consciousness has mostly been focused on the time aspects of past, present and future and how they relate to each other but it is a contested term concerning its definition.\textsuperscript{42} Jeismann himself concluded historical consciousness in four different meanings during the 1970s and his definitions has been commonly used as a starting point among didactics when discussing the meaning.\textsuperscript{43} Jeismann’s four definitions of historical consciousness are the following: Firstly, it can be seen as a “constantly present knowledge that all people and all directions and shapes of life together that has been created exists in time, that is they have an origin and a future and are not constituted by something stable, unalterable and without prerequisites” [my translation].\textsuperscript{44} Secondly, it can be understood as the way in which the interpretations of the past affect the understanding of the present and relate to what will happen in the future. Thirdly, historical consciousness can be seen as how

\textsuperscript{40} Fulbrook, 2014, pp. 68, 70-71.
\textsuperscript{41} Karlsson, 2014, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{43} Jensen, 1997, p. 51.
\textsuperscript{44} Ammert, 2009, p. 300.
conceptions are based on the past. Fourthly and lastly, it can be seen as a shared understanding sprung from emotional experiences which are seen as necessary in order to create and keep together a society.\textsuperscript{45} Niklas Ammert means that the first two definitions of historical consciousness cover the last two definitions and says that the connection between the past, present and future is the most central idea in the definitions of historical consciousness.\textsuperscript{46} In line with the general focus on the connection between the past, present and future concerning historical consciousness in history didactics, this study concentrates on this connection of the time aspects as well. The national curriculum in England, however, does not include the term historical consciousness in the history curriculum and does not refer to the future within history teaching either. The focus in the curriculum is on the past and briefly on the present since history teaching is supposed to help pupils understand “their own identity and the challenges of their time”\textsuperscript{47} as well as discuss the use of historical sources.\textsuperscript{48}

Nonetheless, historical consciousness is of interest due to its influence on people in general. People’s historical consciousness is not only formed in school’s teaching of history but is rather affected by a number of factors in human life. History is produced and used outside of school and therefore reaches people in their everyday life. Even though historical consciousness has not been as discussed among British didactics as it has been in Northern Europe it is nonetheless of relevance when discussing English history teaching since the history outside of school also causes implications for the history within school and, thus, it is of relevance when studying history teaching of an event which receives large attention in the public history of a society.\textsuperscript{49}

In extension, the images potentially contesting “school history” with “public history” are something that school has to deal with in one way or another. According to this idea, people’s historical consciousness is developed through the encounter with publicly produced history in society. I.e. the development of historical consciousness is not dependent on school’s history teaching but is developed through history outside of school. Therefore, Jensen discusses the issue of “a qualifying learning environment [my translation]” which is an environment in school which offers both the relevant historical knowledge but also helps develop pupils’

\textsuperscript{46} Ammert, 2009, p. 300.
historical consciousness which provides a relevance for partaking in social life. In order for the history taught in school to be relevant for pupils to engage in, it has to offer both subject knowledge and aspects relevant for common life. Otherwise school history might lose attention to the publicly produced history. Thus, when it comes to educational processes connected to historical consciousness, Jensen insists on five processes that are necessary to deal with in order to provide this relevance to participate in social life. The five processes are described as complex ones which are interconnected with each other. The processes are “historical consciousness as”: “identity”, “meeting with the different”, “socio-cultural learning process”, “value- and principle explanatory” and “narrative” [my translations]. These five processes were used when analysing the teachers’ definitions of historical consciousness and the way their answers can be interpreted for their view on history teaching of the First World War. Jensen further describes two tendencies concerning history didactics and historical consciousness based on Jeismann’s four definitions; one being a traditional notion of history as equal to the past and one being an alternative notion of history as including past, present and future aspects.

Because of the fact that history today has functions such as the possibility to create identities and to express both societal traditions and critique against society, as shown, Karlsson claims that history nowadays has a different cultural value. Culture is reproductive since cultural occurrences concern meanings and values stressed during past times. Halbwachs theory on collective memory is influential here since this theory claims that social surroundings set their marks on individual memories. One of these collective memory communities can be portrayed by the nation in which one lives. History is, in this situation, a contributing factor in providing the people of the nation with cultural phenomena and symbols of the past in proving the nations uniformity and creating a national identity, i.e. a “we” which can be contrasted against other nations and other people. Pierre Nora has analysed how memorials contribute to national identities and with a historical perspective he means that as time goes by, these memorials become important since their function becomes that of connecting our present times to a past which we did not live through. Past efforts in the interest of the nation

therefore continues as signifiers for the national identity even though hundreds of years may have passed since the event actually occurred.\textsuperscript{55}

Furthermore, Benedict Anderson has added to the discussion on national identity by defining a nation as “an imagined political community”\textsuperscript{56}. Anderson explains a nation being imagined with the idea that the members of it experience a community with other members without knowing or having met all of them personally. Moreover he claims that not only nations but all communities are imagined since the imagined is what defines/explains them. The imagined community is further both limited and sovereign; limited since it includes a specific group of people and not the entire human population and sovereign since the nation state as a term arose during the Enlightenment when the idea of regime power given by God was being challenged. The fact that the nation is perceived as a community is a result of the notion that regardless of existing inequality and injustice within the nation the foundation is always built on a brotherhood shared between the members of the specific nation.\textsuperscript{57}

The cultural scene called history culture is therefore of impact since history culture portrays the history given emphasis in research, teaching, public debates and in popular culture. The history culture involves both the parts of history which are given attention to and the parts seen as unworthy of attention in society.\textsuperscript{58} Connected to this is also the issue of selection, which Zander further shines light on, when it comes to historical events. The selection is said to be largely dependent on the preconceived ideas through which people see historical events. The preconceived ideas are the filter through which past events have to pass in order to be judged as important or not in the representation of history.\textsuperscript{59} This is an issue in all circumstances, not the least in history teaching in schools where teachers have to balance scarcity of time allocated for a historical event and the selection of what to discuss regarding that particular event.

Moreover, Karlsson claims that history teachers is one of several categories of people seen as the traditional users of history and that their use of history is scientific. However, over the course of the last decade it has been evident that all people in society use history in different

\textsuperscript{55} Karlsson, 2014, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{56} Anderson, 1992, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{57} Anderson, 1992, pp. 21-22.
\textsuperscript{58} Karlsson, 2014, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{59} Zander, 2014, p. 151.
ways and for different purposes. \(^{60}\) According to Peter Aronsson use of history happens when the history culture is used in order to create meaning for different purposes. \(^{61}\) In the English national curriculum in history for key stage 3 it says that history education shall include teaching about the ways in which historical sources have been and are used in different ways and how this has led to various constructions of the past. \(^{62}\) This can be interpreted as a prescription on how to include use of history in the teaching in English schools.

7 Previous research

In 2014 an intense debate appeared in England regarding the teaching of the First World War in schools across the country. It was discussed whether or not the teaching, conducted both within History and English, portrayed the same narrow perception of the war that the British public held, which focused the war to mainly concern the trenches and the death of soldiers. At the same time, Catriona Pennell and her colleagues were in a research process regarding the teaching of the First World War in English history classrooms. The interest for the study appeared partly due to assumptions existing both in the political arena and in media of what it is that is taught in history classrooms. \(^{63}\)

When asking teachers which main topics they discuss in their classrooms while teaching WWI, the popular view of the war being about warfare in the trenches on the Western Front proved to be one of the most frequently appearing topics. Another topic placed high on the list was the one that had to do with causes of the war. This is however explained by the fact that cause and consequence is a concept advocated by the national curriculum. The study also showed that 83 percent of the responding teachers saw their teaching of the First World War as an opportunity to provide the pupils with perspectives of the war that are not commonly included in medial portrayal of the war. If accomplished, teaching in schools would then contribute to a widening of the public notion of the events of the First World War in a generation or two. \(^{64}\)

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\(^{61}\) Aronsson, 2004, p. 17.


\(^{63}\) Pennell, 2014b, pp. 34-35.

\(^{64}\) Pennell, 2014b, p. 36.
Furthermore, the study showed that teaching the First World War had the possibility to interest pupils in the study of the war due to the war being such a well-known event in British history together with the fact that a large majority of all British families were affected by the war in one way or another. The centenary of the war has thus helped in the aspect of stirring pupil interest but even before the centenary commemorations, the war has been an event given plenty of attention in media for over 50 years and have therefore been at the centre of attention in society for a long time now. What the teachers hoped to achieve with the teaching of the First World War in particular showed clearly that both practical skills useable in all aspects of history and aspects that have to do with values connected specifically to the First World War were important objectives of the teaching.65

Rachel Foster is advocating the teaching of cultural history in history lessons in general and in connection to First World War teaching in particular and she puts emphasis on the importance of teaching this kind of history even though it is not given any substantial focus in the national curriculum.66 Foster means that school history of the First World War has followed academic interest since the teaching was first focused on political history, which then turned and came to include social history, during the 1960s. However, the cultural turn during the 1980s, which lead to increased interest in cultural history, has not brought any particular changes to the history taught in schools in England. Foster questions the approach of not including cultural history in the teaching and takes on the role of justifying why valuable curriculum time should be spent on this field of history.67 Foster maintain that there are both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for including cultural history in teaching and has created a lesson plan in form of an enquiry suitable for Year 9 where the cultural legacies of the First World War are discussed. The intrinsic motivation given is in short an attempt to present pupils to different fields of history and by that creating an increased interest for history as a subject by showing that it has many different perspectives. For extrinsic motivation Foster claims that in order for history lessons to help raise “better informed, more critically conscious citizens”68 discussions about how the past is given different meanings in

66 Foster, 2014.
67 Foster, 2014, p. 11.
68 Foster, 2014, p. 11.
different times and in different groups have to be included together with a problematization of collective memory and remembrance.\textsuperscript{69}

When testing the enquiry on her pupils, Foster found that the pupils were remarkably interested and involved in the subject, which she explains partly with the distinctiveness these lessons provided in comparison to other history lessons the pupils encounter. Foster also concludes that the extensive use of visual depictions probably helped the pupils to understand more complex concepts. Furthermore, the enquiry teaching led to assumptions that cultural history is a good starting point for inter-disciplinary work since pupils made use of their knowledge and skills learnt in other school subjects.\textsuperscript{70} Foster suggests that since history teachers constantly need to review and change the contents and methods used in their teaching, including cultural history into the teaching of the First World War is a good starting point.\textsuperscript{71} However, in order for this to be accomplished on a large scale, cultural history also needs to be given attention to by the policy makers and consequently included in the national curriculum.\textsuperscript{72}

In \textit{Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European cultural history} Jay Winter discusses the First World War in connection to mourning, remembrance and how cultures cope with such issues. Winter aims at studying how different symbols of the war, such as monuments and poems for example, have been used in both the mourning and remembrance of the war in Britain, France and Germany. Mainly, the different symbols portray a search for the meaning of the war. The physical symbols of commemoration created after the war have been both political and aesthetic, Winter says, but he points to a further issue in the societal mourning which is rarely regarded – the extent to which lives were lost in the war and with that the great achievements that was hoped for when the war began in 1914.\textsuperscript{73} Thus, Winter also includes the aspects of monuments and other symbols in providing places for people to mourn and remember the people lost and he states that the existential part of the symbols of war is a part that should be added to the political and aesthetic ones when discussing motivations behind the raising of monuments as well as the use of other symbols.

\textsuperscript{69} Foster, 2014, pp. 11-12.
\textsuperscript{70} Foster, 2014, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{71} Foster, 2014, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{72} Foster, 2014, pp. 9-10.
\textsuperscript{73} Winter, 1995, p. 224.
Additionally, Winter declares that war memorials “have been important symbols of national pride”\textsuperscript{74}, which is one of the political features visible of remembrance.\textsuperscript{75}

Ann Chinnery discusses the moral implications connected to history education and uses the “didactic function” of remembrance as her starting point. Remembrance Day is mentioned as one example that can teach pupils about the past as well as our present and the future. These issues raise questions of moral agency and “what and how” pupils should be taught about historical events. Chinnery makes use of “three conceptions of history education and their respective conceptions of the ‘historically educated person’”\textsuperscript{76}. The three conceptions are called the traditional approach, cognitive historical consciousness and critical historical consciousness. The aim is to provide a history teaching that will facilitate the lessening of social identity conflicts and reducing the gap between “we” and “them” in a society. Chinnery concludes that learning from the past with the help of commemoration events, such as Remembrance Day, might potentially be used as pedagogical tools where diversity between people will decrease due to a new understanding for what happened in the past and in consequence increase the morale of the pupils.\textsuperscript{77}

Historian Susan R. Grayzel has studied the situation for women during the First World War and when comparing the situation for women in Britain and France at the time, she discusses the female identity in connection to the war. Even though women did invaluable efforts for the nation through war work in factories as well as in farming, while the men were away fighting a war, the single most important identity for women during the First World War was that of motherhood. Motherhood was an identity that was used and mediated in a variety of ways in society during this time. This identity was seen as women’s patriotic role and a duty since mothers had an essential task in providing the country with new soldiers. Women’s identity portrayed like this did also avoid all possible separations between different women depending on ethnicity and class for example. The identity connected with motherhood was of immediate importance for all women alike. The motherhood identity was also put in

\textsuperscript{74} Winter, 1995, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{75} Winter, 1995, pp. 78-79, 224.
\textsuperscript{76} Chinnery, 2011, p. 127.
\textsuperscript{77} Chinnery, 2011.
contrast to men’s identity of the soldier, which was the patriotic role and duty for the country’s male population.\textsuperscript{78}

Through this identity, women also became central in the later commemorations of the war as their roles as mourning mothers having lost their sons in combat. Thus, women illustrated the forming of the collective memory of the war.\textsuperscript{79} Grayzel concludes that the war brought change to the situation for women in both Britain and France but that the strongest lasting identification for women still was that of motherhood and their contribution to give birth to and raise future soldiers.\textsuperscript{80}

8 Background: The English school system and curricula

This chapter gives a brief introduction to the basics of the English school system and the national and local curricula set up to guide the teaching.

8.1 The English school system and the school in focus

There are five stages in the education system in United Kingdom, the three first stages are compulsory while the latter two stages are not. The stages are the following: early years, primary, secondary, Further education (FE) and Higher education (HE). The main structure of the education system looks the same for all countries in the union but there are some differences that distinguish the countries from each other. Since this study conducts research at a school in England, the study will use the English system and write “England” in connection to issues concerning the school system independently of whether the same structure applies in the rest, or parts, of the UK or not. Each nation in the union also has their own national curriculum, which support the focus on England in this study.\textsuperscript{81}

Of main interest for this study is secondary education (Year 7-11 where the pupils are between 11-16 years old) since the school in focus is a secondary school, but it is also a Sixth form college (pupils aged 16-18 years old). However, Sixth form is part of the FE and is therefore not compulsory.

\textsuperscript{78} Grayzel, 1999, pp. 2-4; pp. 119-120.
\textsuperscript{79} Grayzel, 1999, pp. 9-10.
\textsuperscript{80} Grayzel, 1999, pp. 245-246.
\textsuperscript{81} GOV.UK. 2015, pp. 1-3.
8.2 The national and local curricula and the teaching of the First World War

The present national curriculum has been in use since July 2014 and prescribes the general outlines concerning information about the statutory national curriculum as well as the overall aims of it. The national curriculum provides the foundation on which to build but every individual school are to compose their own school curriculum, which is to be in line with the national one. Four key stages form the basis for the national curriculum and there are twelve subjects to be taught in primary and secondary school. Key stage 1 and 2 are dealt with in primary school, after which key stage 3 supersede when the pupils start secondary school. Key stage 3, which is of interest for this study, is taught between year groups 7-9 and thus the three first years of secondary school. History in key stage 4, that is when the pupils are in year group 10-11, i.e. age 14-16, is not compulsory but can be offered by individual schools.

Key stage 3 History takes of during the Medieval Britain from the year 1066-1509. It continues in chronological order up until the 20th century where the overall theme, where the First World War is included, is called “challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day”. The national curriculum suggests a list of eight different non-statutory examples to include in the teaching of this historical era, of which one is “the First World War and the Peace Settlement”. The only thing posed as statutory in this section is the Holocaust.

At the school in focus in this study, the First World War is the first event studied in Year 9, and is taught from the start of the semester in September up until Christmas. The key question posed in the First World War teaching is why the war is in the news and is described to be “a developmental study of WWI and the challenges faced today in remembering it”. The specific content should include the war in the news, how it is remembered today, why 2014 is an important year, the causes, joining up, propaganda and trench warfare. The key assessment concerns war poetry. After the war has been dealt with, the teaching continues with issues

86 KS3 SOL History. (The local curriculum formed by the school was provided by one of the teachers participating in the study in the form of a word document.)
connected to what happened in Europe in the aftermath of the war, which includes the Peace Settlement of the war.\textsuperscript{87}

Further issues connected to the present research found in the national curriculum is that of the pupils own identities which is presented as something that history is supposed to help them understand together with understanding present-day challenges.\textsuperscript{88} Gender related issues are only mentioned under the headline “Inclusion” when referring to what teachers have to consider in terms of the equal opportunities legislation, where sex and gender reassignment are two of several factors included.\textsuperscript{89} In the national curriculum for History, there is one non-statutory example concerning women’s history, namely women’s suffrage that occurs in key stage 3.\textsuperscript{90} The inclusion of cultural history in the national curriculum is also of importance in this study. In the aims for history in compulsory school, cultural history is included as one of six fields of history, which are to occur in the teaching. Cultural history is also included in the non-statutory examples of content in the history curriculum for key stage 3.\textsuperscript{91}

The General Certificate for Secondary Education (GCSE) is studied after key stage 3 and the GCSE examinations are normally taken at the end of Year 11, after having taken the GCSE courses in Years 10 to 11, and are thus the exams which conclude compulsory school. The GCSEs are not nationally compulsory however, but each school decides whether or not to carry out the GCSE exams. The national curriculum decides the assessments for the different GCSE courses and in total there are about 50 GCSE subjects offered throughout England, but not all are possible to study in all schools since schools themselves can decide which GCSE courses they choose to offer their pupils, to some extent. The school in focus in this study holds the GCSE exams for a number of subjects, including History.\textsuperscript{92}

9 Results and analysis

This chapter intertwines the results of the study with the analysis in a joint discussion. It is structured based on five themes detected in the source material and is concluded by a brief summarizing discussion of the results.

\textsuperscript{87} KS3 SOL History.
\textsuperscript{89} The national curriculum in England, 2014, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{91} The national curriculum in England, 2014, pp. 232, 236-238.
9.1 The “good” history teacher and historical consciousness

A good starting point for analysing the interviews are the interviewees’ answers about which characteristics they think that a good history teacher should have. Common themes in the interviewees’ answers are that a good history teacher is someone who brings history to life and makes the subject relatable to all pupils. Most respondents also agreed on the fact that a good history teacher should have good subject knowledge about history. Other esteemed qualities described by one or more of the respondents are for example: being able to teach and assess pupils’ general study skills which are of importance in all subjects; being passionate about history and spread motivation for pupils; and being able to constantly develop their ways of teaching.\(^9^3\)

The teachers’ definitions of historical consciousness differed to some extent both compared to each other and compared to the theoretical approach set out for this study, which focused particularly on the correlation between the past, present and future.\(^9^4\) Only T4 includes both the past, present and the future in her definition\(^9^5\), while T5 and T6 include the past as well as the present\(^9^6\). The remaining two teachers, T1 and T3, focus only on “historical awareness” and are by that only placing emphasis on the past.\(^9^7\) One possible reason for this might be that the national curriculum does not include the term historical consciousness in their documents and is neither prescribing a use of any connections with the future in the history curriculum, although both the past and the present are included as content in the actual teaching.\(^9^8\) Thus, the national history curriculum does not give teachers an incentive to focus on how history might have an effect on the future in their teaching. Similarly, the local history scheme of learning does not include the future either but, just as the national curriculum, it refers to present times when teaching some of the themes set up. Teaching of the First World War is one such theme where emphasis is put on present events in connection to how the war is remembered today.\(^9^9\)

\(^9^3\) Teachers 1-6, interviewed between 2015-12-02 – 2015-12-16.
\(^9^4\) Ammert, 2009, pp. 299-300.
\(^9^5\) T4, 2015-12-10.
\(^9^6\) T5, 2015-12-04; T6, 2015-12-16.
\(^9^7\) T1, 2015-12-10; T3, 2015-12-08.
\(^9^9\) KS3 SOL History.
When Jensen discusses that there are five processes connected to historical consciousness which help make teaching relevant for the pupils’ social life, he stresses the fact that relevance is created partly through the linking of past events to present times and the future. When the teachers describe the characteristics of what they see as a good history teacher, most of them point to the quality of being able to make history relevant to pupils. One way to do this, according to Jensen, is to show pupils how the past, in different ways, have impact on life today and in the future. The lack of the inclusion of the present and future in some of the teachers’ definitions of historical consciousness might therefore seem difficult to connect. However, it is shown by their later reflections of their teaching methods and how they reflect on history in general that they all find it important to include the present in order to catch the students’ interest. The fact that historical consciousness has not been as influential in British didactics as it has been in Germany and the Nordic countries might be of influence here together with historical consciousness not being mentioned in the national curriculum.101

9.2 Conditions for teaching the First World War

According to the teachers, a fair amount of time is spent on teaching this war and regarding the resources allocated for First World War-teaching there seem to be a consensus on the fact that the allocation is satisfactorily but also that there is a large focus on resources for this area in history teaching. Even so, none of the teachers express any concern regarding the fact that WWI-teaching is given resources at the expense of other areas. However, the teachers are mainly interpreting resources as meaning material and teaching aids and not time and money more generally. T5 says that the First World War “gets a lot of interest and focus on, although we only study it in Year 9 and for a small part of GCSE”103. Since the national curriculum only includes the First World War as a non-statutory example to teach, every school decides the time spent on WWI on their own. However, the teachers express what seems as a generally large focus put on this war in history teaching, not only in their school and their teaching.105

100 Jensen, 1997, pp. 70-71.
102 T 1-6, interviewed between 2015-12-02 – 2015-12-16.
103 T5, 2015-12-04.
105 T 1-6, interviewed between 2015-12-02 – 2015-12-16.
The teachers say that they have the national curriculum to follow and the school’s joint scheme of learning to refer to but that they otherwise can choose rather freely what to include and what to focus on in their teaching. The school’s scheme of learning highlights certain specific content but the teachers express a sentiment that there are room to personalize the teaching for every teacher in a way in which she or he prefers. However, they share resources, teaching material and lesson plans within the department.\textsuperscript{106} Compared to the Swedish national curriculum, the English one is less prescriptive and the differences in the teaching between different teachers are thus reinforced by the less governing English policy document. Consequently, this leads to English teachers being, to a large extent, free to choose the content which they find most relevant and interesting to teach.

When asked how they think that their teaching of the First World War in general correlates to the policy documents, i.e. national and local curricula, the teachers gave varied answers. T3 mentions aspects such as the teaching correlating to “citizenship, emotional and social learning”\textsuperscript{107}, while T4 gives the examples of “teaching tolerance” since the world war easily connects to today’s situation of warfare presence\textsuperscript{108}. T5 claims that British values are important in today’s Britain and that these values are easy to incorporate into WWI-teaching.\textsuperscript{109} In line with T5, T6 also mentions the development of citizenship but refers further to pupils’ general skills development, which is of concern for all teachers to take responsibility for.\textsuperscript{110} T1 and T2 are more focused on specific themes linked to the First World War and T2 says that she involves all themes listed in the policy documents but also other themes in addition to these, themes she does not specify however.\textsuperscript{111} T1 claims that “[r]ight wing governments want us to teach about the glory of war and victory but often we focus on suffering”\textsuperscript{112} and this is one example given of the freedom schools and teachers have to include things they find important within their own school’s scheme of learning at the same time as they are following the national guidelines. This is further an example of how Jensen’s value- and principle explanatory process is intertwined with the identity process involved in historical consciousness since the result is that history teaching is explicitly connected to the

\textsuperscript{106} T 1-6, interviewed between 2015-12-02 – 2015-12-16.
\textsuperscript{107} T3, 2015-12-08.
\textsuperscript{108} T4, 2015-12-10.
\textsuperscript{109} T5, 2015-12-04.
\textsuperscript{110} T6, 2015-12-16.
\textsuperscript{111} T1, 2015-12-10; T2, 2015-12-02.
\textsuperscript{112} T1, 2015-12-10.
nurturing of citizens, through the implementation of different valued characteristics in the teaching. In this sense, history is a tool in order to teach and learn the values which society highly esteem. The teachers’ reasonings here show that they are keen on teaching history with the objective of providing pupils with factual knowledge together with a potential for development of their own identity and understanding of their own time.\textsuperscript{113}

For obvious reasons the teachers use a range of resources both for their own research when planning lessons about the First World War and for use in the actual teaching for the pupils to study. There are, however, some resources which the majority of the teachers use. For their own research in planning and preparing for their WWI-teaching they particularly use different kinds of online sources (the web pages for BBC and the Imperial War Museum are two examples given\textsuperscript{114}), textbooks and different kinds of literature on the subjects.\textsuperscript{115} The use of literature and online sources for the teachers own research are in accordance with the findings of Pennell’s study, in which these two resources by far were the most used ones.\textsuperscript{116} The three most commonly occurring teachings aids are literature such as poems and personal accounts, pictures of propaganda posters, the war area and other images portraying the war for example and different clips from films, TV-series and documentaries. The Department of Education does not provide any teaching resources for teaching the First World War according to the teachers but there are governmentally funded organisations that do. However, the teachers do not seem to have any particular experience in using those resources.\textsuperscript{117}

9.3 Relevant First World War teaching and the challenges of time distance

When it comes to the importance of teaching the history of WWI in today’s classrooms, the teachers keep the main focus on teaching the war linked to what it was like when the war was fought, i.e. there is a clear focus on the past. However, T2, T3, T4 and T6 include focus on links to the present as well.\textsuperscript{118} T2 says that teaching of the First World War is important due to the impact of the war for the 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} centuries and is thus subtly including the future as well.\textsuperscript{119} What the teachers mention as important about teaching pupils about WWI is for example that it was a major event in the history of the world but many of the teacher put

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[113] Jensen, 1997, pp. 72-73, 76-77.
\item[114] T3, 2015-12-08; T5, 2015-12-04.
\item[115] T 1-6, interviewed between 2015-12-02 – 2015-12-16.
\item[116] Pennell, 2014b, p. 37.
\item[117] T 1-6, interviewed between 2015-12-02 – 2015-12-16.
\item[118] T2, 2015-12-02; T3, 2015-12-08; T4, 2015-12-10; T6, 2015-12-16.
\item[119] T2, 2015-12-02.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
specific focus on Europe and Britain concerning the changes that the war brought. T4 calls it a “key event in History” and says that without knowledge of the First World War, pupils find it difficult to understand both the Second World War and subsequent conflicts.\textsuperscript{120} In line with this, both T5 and T6 bring up the fact that understanding the First World War help pupils to understand conflicts in their own time.\textsuperscript{121} T3 mainly puts emphasis on the effect on Britain and British society and point to “the breakdown of the empire” and “votes for women” as two consequences brought on by the war which are thus important for today’s pupils to learn about.\textsuperscript{122} T1 and T6 especially mention that it is important to discuss the futility of war when it comes to WWI.\textsuperscript{123} T5 further highlights the technical development generated during the course of warfare, as an important issue to discuss in class.\textsuperscript{124}

Connected to the importance of teaching First World War-history today are the potential challenges facing the teaching of the war in the future. The most challenging aspect according to T2, T3, T4 and T6 is the increasing time distance between the war and the present time, which will cause problems since the relevance of studying WWI will lessen for pupils with time.\textsuperscript{125} T1 and T5 agree upon the fact that the causes of the war are the most challenging since they are complex to discuss with pupils. Issues about the trenches and the suffering are believed to be the least challenging parts to teach in the future according to T1 and T5, since those aspects are easily depicted through photographs which can help entice empathy from pupils.\textsuperscript{126} Similarly, the challenges of remembering the war today is the main theme prescribed in the school’s own scheme of learning when teaching the First World War and according to three out of six teachers, these main challenges involve remembering something which people today have not live through and of which there are no longer any living witnesses able to spread their memories of the war.\textsuperscript{127} T3 and T6 also include the issue of why it is significant for people today to remember the war, and say that the reason is two-fold; it is both important in terms of the historical significance of the war as an event that affected large parts of both Europe and the world, as well as paying respect to those who lost their lives in

\textsuperscript{120} T4, 2015-12-10.
\textsuperscript{121} T5, 2015-12-04; T6, 2015-12-16.
\textsuperscript{122} T3, 2015-12-08.
\textsuperscript{123} T1, 2015-12-10; T6, 2015-12-16.
\textsuperscript{124} T5, 2015-12-04.
\textsuperscript{125} T2, 2015-12-02; T3, 2015-12-08; T4, 2015-12-10; T6, 2015-12-16.
\textsuperscript{126} T1, 2015-12-10; T5, 2015-12-04.
\textsuperscript{127} T3, 2015-12-08; T4, 2015-12-10; T6, 2015-12-16.
the war. T5 brings up the question of whether war can be rightful or not as a challenge to discuss in class, and that there are connections to be made to today’s situation when it comes to war in a general sense, giving Syria as an example, and thus linking past events to present and potentially future ones as well. T2 says that the challenges regarded are equal to those of other historical aspects and events, alluding to issues such as “reliability of sources” and “bias”. Thus, there are many potential challenges in remembering but the shift from collective memory to collective remembrance (due to time distance and lack of living witnesses) is a recurring issue in the teaching.

The challenge of time distance in the future teaching of WWI tacitly connects to the influence of collective remembrance in history teaching. If seeing WWI as an important event to teach future pupils about, it is also likely seen as an event which is important to collectively remember in order to keep the memories of the war alive, even without living survivors and witnesses of the war. Thus, collective remembrance can have a didactical value as well since if an event is collectively important to remember in a society, it is more easily advocated for as important in schools and education as well, which connects to Chinnery’s idea of commemoration as a pedagogical tool in school.

Although the time distance is seen as a challenge in the teaching of the First World War, the teachers seem to share the opinion that this war is important to keep teaching to the same extent. Due to the massive centenary commemorations, the English society seems to share this view. Potential reasons for this might be because the war was cause to extensive changes in the British society as well as in the world and for the way it was carried out, causing massive losses of soldiers’ lives.

Relevant to shine light on here is the issue of selecting specific parts of history to place emphasis on, since this study, which is in line with the results of Pennell’s broader study, indicates a trend that the trenches, the Western Front and the causes of the war are some of the aspects that are given main focus in the First World War teaching in England. Aspects

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128 T3, 2015-12-08; T6, 2015-12-16.
129 T5, 2015-12-04.
130 T2, 2015-12-02.
131 As discussed by Halbwachs, in Fulbrook, 2014, pp. 68, 70-71.
132 Chinnery, 2011.
133 T 1-6, interviewed between 2015-12-02 – 2015-12-16.
134 Pennell, 2014, p. 36.
which are then given less attention in teaching according to Pennell is for example other fronts than the West front and the colonial aspect.\textsuperscript{135} This study confirms the lack of teaching of other fronts when T2 and T5 agree on the fact that since the focus is mostly put on the West front, it leads to other significant aspects being given less importance.\textsuperscript{136} T5 puts forward the home front and the involvement of other countries’ soldiers as two aspects which are not given priority, while T1 pointed to the “futility of war” as an aspect that she thinks is often overlooked.\textsuperscript{137} T3 stated that this particular school could have a larger emphasis on women’s roles during the war since the school is a girls’ school.\textsuperscript{138} T4 and T6 think that the lack of inclusion of soldiers who were executed for cowardice should be prioritized more than it is today.\textsuperscript{139} The teachers’ answers are somewhat varied and this diversity in opinions over lacking aspects in the teaching shows that there are several aspects deemed important which are nonetheless invisible in the teaching. Furthermore, this is also an indication that the chosen aspects are partly selected based on the dominant and stereotypical aspects, which Zander discusses.\textsuperscript{140} According to the teachers’ own statements, they seem to have much freedom to choose to include aspects that they think are important to teach and therefore there seems to be room for them to include certain aspects which in general are given less importance, due to preconceived conceptions about the war, in their own teaching.\textsuperscript{141}

The clear focus on the past and on spreading knowledge about the events during wartime is linked to historical consciousness as a narrative process since it regards the capability to understand people’s lives in their own time as well as being able to narrate the history in this way. To include narrative competence in the teaching also furthers pupils’ potential to understand how history is created and used by succeeding generations. Furthermore, this is in line with a traditional notion of history, as discussed by Jensen, since the past receives the main attention.\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{135} Pennell, 2014, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{136} T2, 2015-12-02; T5, 2015-12-04.
\textsuperscript{137} T5, 2015-12-04; T1, 2015-12-10.
\textsuperscript{138} T3, 2015-12-08.
\textsuperscript{139} T4, 2015-12-10; T6, 2015-12-16.
\textsuperscript{140} Zander, 2014, p. 152.
\textsuperscript{141} T 1-6, interviewed between 2015-12-02 – 2015-12-16.
\textsuperscript{142} Jensen, 1997, pp. 53, 78-79.
9.4 Teaching the First World War in a context where the war is given large societal attention

According to the interviewed teachers, the general view of studying the First World War among the pupils is that it is an interesting topic to learn. The trench life, the human side of the conflict and how it was like for people in general during the war are pointed out, by several of the teachers, as some examples of what the pupils seem to enjoy particularly much about the study of WWI. Some of the teachers agree on the fact that causes as well as tactics and the actual battles are aspects of the war that more easily disengages the pupils in this school. War poetry is something that is included to some extent by almost all teachers in their WWI teaching and the experiences of what the pupils think about studying war poetry in history differs between the teachers.\textsuperscript{143} T5 experiences that pupils seldom understand why poetry is taught in History lessons, while T1 and T4 claim that their pupils enjoy reading war poetry.\textsuperscript{144} Furthermore, T5 points to the fact that many pupils look forward to the study of the First World War since it is a culturally present topic in England and is something most people hear about in one way or another.\textsuperscript{145}

Even tough T5 has experienced that pupils look forward to the study since it is an important event in the English culture, the general consensus seem to be that the pupils do not know very much about the First World War before they start studying it in Year 9. However, the teachers’ experiences of what kind of knowledge about WWI the pupils bring to the classroom are somewhat varied. T6 says that the pupils have “surprisingly little” knowledge about the war. She adds that the pupils have seen some things in media but are generally not very interested in media coverage of those kinds of topics. Lack of interest seems to be a potential reason for her saying that the pupils have “surprisingly little” knowledge about the war since the pupils have the possibility to read newspapers and watch it being presented in different shows and broadcasts on TV.\textsuperscript{146} T3 adds that unless the pupils or the families of the pupils themselves are more personally interested in the war, few of them know very much about it.\textsuperscript{147} Judging by the teachers’ experiences, most pupils do seem to know, however, that Germany was involved in the war in some way. T4 and T5 say that the pupils often confuse

\begin{footnotes}
\item[143] T 1-6, interviewed between 2015-12-02 – 2015-12-16.
\item[144] T5, 2015-12-04; T1, 2015-12-10; T4, 2015-12-10.
\item[145] T5, 2015-12-04.
\item[146] T6, 2015-12-16.
\item[147] T3, 2015-12-08.
\end{footnotes}
the Second World War with the First World War and that they therefore both blame Germany for WWI and sometimes include Nazi participation in the war. T4 states that the Second World War is studied in primary school and that the pupils therefore have some knowledge about that war but that they then have problems separating it from the First World War. Similarly, T5 has encountered pupils who believe that the British soldiers were solely innocent and have difficulties understanding that the war was more complex than having one good and one bad side making war against each other.

The publicly held war commemorations’ potential affect on teaching is predominantly regarded as a non-issue according to most of the teachers. This might be explained, at least partly, by the lack of previous knowledge about the war among the pupils expressed above. Only T1 expresses thoughts on a part which she sees as problematic with the commemoration, which is that she thinks the commemoration advocates a false image of the war as being a great one in which “people died ‘for our freedom’.” T3 and T4 say that they do not experience any problematic parts with the commemorations and say that it has rather helped to create interest among pupils and both name the poppy installation at the Tower of London as something which helped pupils in their understanding of the war. Teachers included in the study performed by Pennell expressed similar views, with the societal remembrance as a facilitating motivation among pupils to study the First World War. This also connects to Jensen’s discussion on making history relevant for life in society since it shows from this study and others that public history symbols can be used in teaching in order to raise interest among pupils. Interest is created partly because the pupils are getting aware of the fact that it is seen as important or worth paying attention to by society. Furthermore, this is an example of a remembrance event being used as a pedagogical tool. T6 expresses that she thinks that the yearly commemorations are important in order to remember those who gave their lives for their country and she feels that the issue with the commemorations nowadays is that there is a discussion on whether or not the commemoration events and the wearing of the poppy are political statements or not. According to this teacher nothing about the commemorations of the First World War is about politics but simply about the remembrance

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148 T4, 2015-12-10; T5, 2015-12-04.
149 T 1-6, interviewed between 2015-12-02 – 2015-12-16.
150 T1, 2015-12-10.
151 T3, 2015-12-08; T4, 2015-12-10.
154 Chinnery, 2011.
of the sacrifice. The notion and discussion on whether or not there are politics involved are things that she has encountered in her teaching as well.\textsuperscript{155}

The reasoning expressed by T6 can be linked to Winter’s claim that monuments express a range of different objectives, of which political ones is only one of many options. The meaning of the monuments built during and after the First World War has also been that of mourning for people directly affected by the war and the aftermath of the war. Thus, the meaning of building these monuments and visiting them was as much for politically intended national identity purposes as for existential intentions where people could mourn the lives lost and process the trauma of war which they had experienced.\textsuperscript{156} Obviously, for one reason or another, T6 has chosen to connect monuments and other symbols for remembrance solely with non-political aims. However, the discussion about the public symbols’ differing meanings might be useful in class even though the teachers make clear that they do not have any political intentions by using these symbols in their own teaching.

The fact that the teachers experience that the pupils know little about the First World War when they start studying it might be one reason to why they do not experience any specific difficulties in connection to the national commemorations in their teaching. There might be several reasons for this but the time distance, which the teachers have pointed to, is an important one. It is likely that the distance in time will lessen the experienced relevance to learn about the war among young pupils. Previous generations who have had family members and relatives involved in the war might have been personally affected by the war and thus take another interest in the remembrance of it, something which young people of today lack since too much time has passed in order for living witnesses of the war to still be alive. Thus, pupils of today might not be as affected by the public history of WWI as previous generations might have been and still are. This shows how historical consciousness as the meeting with the different is important in the process of remembering and teaching and how it is interconnected with the identity process as well since it is clear from the teachers’ answers that relevance seems to lessen for pupils with the time distance and lack of living witnesses

\textsuperscript{155} T6, 2015-12-16.
\textsuperscript{156} Winter, 1995, p. 79.
from the war. The meeting with people who experienced the war has previously been something which has helped increase the interest for learning about the war.\textsuperscript{157}

The teachers were further asked in what ways they experience that the teaching of WWI has changed over time, up until today, and they are quite unanimous in that the teaching is more balanced nowadays and shed light on more aspects of the war. There is not only focus on the actual battles and the events of the war but also on consequences and that the blame for the war was shared between all belligerent countries.\textsuperscript{158} The fact that the teachers experience a change in the teaching to one where more perspectives are given attention might be linked to the fact that more groups have been able to make their voices heard and thus challenged the preconceived stereotypical images by contributing with additional aspects as well. Therefore, the selection of topics included in the teaching has been broadened.\textsuperscript{159}

The centenary commemoration in 2014 does not seem to have influenced the content of the teaching at the school particularly, except for a two week long trial unit taught in Years 7 and 8, in November 2014. This unit was taught concurrently with the centenary of the outbreak of the war and aimed at answering the question “why should we remember?”\textsuperscript{160} The lessons for this unit were planned jointly within the department in order for all pupils to learn the same content, according to T5 and T6.\textsuperscript{161} The unit was not kept for following years partly due to reflect the national centenary commemoration which was at large concentrated to 2014. Another reason for not keeping the unit after 2014 was that it would have been repetitive for this years’ Year 8 who did it in Year 7 last year.\textsuperscript{162}

The experiences of the outcome of the unit vary among the teachers. T3 concludes that the difficulty in teaching the unit was to do it in a way in which not too many aspects were included that are part of Year 9’s content.\textsuperscript{163} T4 lacked time and resources to teach the unit to its fullest potential and also said that the planning was not “detailed enough”.\textsuperscript{164} T5 puts the focus on the pupils’ reactions she experienced and says that she thinks that the unit was both

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[158] T 1-6, interviewed between 2015-12-02 – 2015-12-16.
\item[159] Zander, 2014, p. 151.
\item[160] KS3 SOL History.
\item[161] T5, 2015-12-04; T6, 2015-12-16.
\item[162] T6, 2015-12-16.
\item[163] T3, 2015-12-08.
\item[164] T4, 2015-12-10.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
interesting and relevant to the pupils. T6 is of the opinion that “the unit was a great success” since it helped increase a better understanding of the national centenary commemoration going on at the time for all pupils studying key stage 3 history.

Moreover, T2 also points to 2014 as being a special year in the commemoration when she says that she, during 2014, included discussions about the cultural remembrance events arranged during that year. T5 did not teach Year 9 in 2014 but says that she would have done the same as T2 if she would have taught it. T4 was able to join a trip that was governmentally funded for some teachers and pupils as a part of the centenary. This trip took her to the battlefields of the First World War and she says that she now incorporates her experiences from the trip in her teaching; both with regards to information and resources she gained while being there. She has also shared her experiences with the rest of the history staff at the school. T6 says that she has not changed her teaching so far but aims to do so in 1918 as the centenary of the end of the war is commemorated. Consequently, the teacher’s intention is to place larger focus on the end of the war, when the public commemoration does so as well, than what she does at present.

In this sense, the education is affected by outside events and is somewhat adjusted in line with nationally initiated centenary commemorations but mostly by adding attention to the national commemoration by providing some First World War teaching to Year 7 and 8 as well. In terms of content for Year 9, there seems to have been few adjustments due to the centenary and the adjustments that have been made seem to have been mostly implemented in 2014 without intention of keeping them for future years.

All of the teachers acknowledge that they use public history such as museums, monuments, memorial days, memorial symbols such as the poppy and popular culture in one way or another in their teaching. T1 and T2 say that they would refer to these in their teaching.

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165 T5, 2015-12-04.
166 T6, 2015-12-16.
167 T2, 2015-12-02.
168 T5, 2015-12-04.
169 T4, 2015-12-10.
170 T6, 2015-12-16.
171 T 1-6, interviewed between 2015-12-02 – 2015-12-16; KS3 SOL History.
172 T 1-6, interviewed between 2015-12-02 – 2015-12-16.
since they are examples of the use of history in society. The remaining four teachers are more precise and all of them mention the poppy as something that they place focus on. This is done because the poppy is the symbol for the national commemoration and since it is commonly appearing in society, especially around Remembrance Day. Most teachers have focused on the use of public First World War history and T5 mentions the monument to the Unknown Soldier and the Victoria Cross as examples of what she uses in class, though she does not have the possibility to take the pupils to any monuments. T3 says that “special events or displays from museums” are used in class but that museum visits are not made with Year 9 when studying WWI. T6 has interpreted the question in broader terms and says that they usually choose a good educational site to visit with pupils which relates to one area of the syllabus, not necessarily WWI though. Furthermore, GSCE students have to visit a historical site in order to pass their GCSE exams and therefore these students make such a trip to fulfil the examination criteria.

To discuss and include monuments in class can have varying functions and objectives, since the use of monuments and other remembrance symbols can be both politically, aesthetically and existentially argued for. The teachers taking part in this study seem to mainly focus the different symbols of WWI on how they are examples of public history in the English society and in order to connect societal events and what happens in society, for example with the wearing of the poppy, to what they are studying in class. All these symbols are of course carriers of the nation’s history and thus contributing to the “imagined community” that is the English society today. Wearing the poppy is something that connects millions of British citizens every year and helps to create a feeling of commonness between them. In this way all the common symbols for WWI remembrance in England and those which are used in the WWI teaching are parts of the history culture in England as well. The poppy symbol together

173 T1, 2015-12-10; T2, 2015-12-02.
174 T3, 2015-12-08; T4, 2015-12-10; T5, 2015-12-04; T6, 2015-12-16.
175 Monuments to the Unknown Soldier or tombs of the Unknown Soldier are common in different countries as a remembrance symbol for all the lives lost in war. In England, there is a monument of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey, for example (Westminster Abbey, 2016.).
176 The Victoria Cross is the highest award possible to receive in Britain and is awarded due to exceptional valour and self-sacrifice in combat. The decoration was ordained by Queen Victoria in 1856. (Bergroth, 2016.)
177 T5, 2015-12-04.
178 T3, 2015-12-08.
179 T6, 2015-12-16.
with well-known monuments of the war are parts in the creation of a common national identity, an identity possible to differentiate against other people who are not English.\textsuperscript{182}

The use of monuments and other symbols can also fall under the category of remembrance as discussed by Nora, who said that monuments become more and more important as time goes by since they are what we have left when the all the survivors of war are gone.\textsuperscript{183} Since the lack of living witnesses was expressed as a challenge for the future teaching of WWI by the teachers in this study, it is likely that different symbols of the war will become even more crucial in the future teaching of the First World War and also in its remembrance in general. As Chinnery states, using these public symbols of the First World War in the teaching can also be a tool in order to provide pupils with further understandings of the past.\textsuperscript{184}

9.5 Aspects of exclusion? Gender, (post-)colonial and local aspects

Few of the teachers at the school have taught both boys and girls except from during their teaching practice and do therefore find it difficult to comment on the differences, if there are any, between boys’ and girls’ reflections on history in general and WWI in particular.\textsuperscript{185} T2, which is one of two teachers who has taught both boys and girls, does not think there are any major differences while T5 says that in her experience it seems as if female pupils enjoy studying female history to a larger extent, especially if they are among the older pupils. She does, however, point to the fact that other than this she believes that the differences are not many between boys’ and girl’s reflections.\textsuperscript{186}

The fact that the school is a girls’ school seems generally, based on the interviews conducted, to have little impact on the teaching of the First World War. T2 puts emphasis on the fact that it should certainly not be the case, “I hope not!”\textsuperscript{187} T3 says that no aspects are left out because of the fact that there are only female pupils.\textsuperscript{188} Oppositely, T4 and T6 say that it is affecting the content since they spend less time on war tactics and battles and instead favour the human aspects of the war.\textsuperscript{189} On the other hand, T5 says that she “[tries] to include

\textsuperscript{182} Karlsson, 2014, pp. 38-39.
\textsuperscript{183} Karlsson, 2014, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{184} Chinnery, 2011.
\textsuperscript{185} T 1-6, interviewed between 2015-12-02 – 2015-12-16.
\textsuperscript{186} T2, 2015-12-02; T5, 2015-12-04.
\textsuperscript{187} T2, 2015-12-02.
\textsuperscript{188} T3, 2015-12-08.
\textsuperscript{189} T4, 2015-12-10; T6, 2015-12-16.
weapons and battles, which girls stereotypically don’t like as much, so that they are not getting a biased teaching”\textsuperscript{190}.

In this instance, the teachers seem to see it as an issue of not wanting to “soften” military history due to the pupils being girls, while the reversed where the focus could be placed on whether or not there are advantages with teaching only girls should be taken into consideration. T3 opens up for this when stating that as a girls’ school, the school could have larger emphasis on female history in connection to the war.\textsuperscript{191} T5, who had experienced a greater interest among older female pupils in the study of female history, shines light on an important aspect with regards to making history teaching relevant for the pupils since including female role models in teaching might make the history more relatable to some female pupils. This clearly shows how the teacher sees history teaching as connected to an identity process among the pupils. Including more aspects of women during the war might help the pupils understand themselves in their time, aided by an understanding of how other women lived during past times.\textsuperscript{192}

There is agreement among most of the teachers that women’s portrayal in the teaching of WWI is not very extensive. What is included are brief parts on what women did at the home front and how the war led to a changed situation for women in Britain, essentially with the women’s suffrage. The suffragette movement is, however, something attended to more in depth in Year 8.\textsuperscript{193} This result is in line with Pennell’s study in which 70 % of the teachers declared that they included “women’s changing position in society”.\textsuperscript{194} Accordingly, the First World War teaching adds little to the common image of women during the war that is presented in society at large.

Concerning the portrayal of men and women in public history and teaching media regarding WWI most teachers seem to be of the shared opinion that even though women are far less represented than men, the female representation starts to increase more and more in these areas. The teachers say that the main focus is put on men’s experiences as brave soldiers and either victims or perpetrators of war. Women on the other hand are portrayed mostly in

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\textsuperscript{190} T5, 2015-12-04. \\
\textsuperscript{191} T3, 2015-12-08. \\
\textsuperscript{192} Jensen, 1997, p. 74. \\
\textsuperscript{193} T 1-6, interviewed between 2015-12-02 – 2015-12-16. \\
\textsuperscript{194} Pennell, 2014, p. 36.
\end{flushright}
connection to war work at the home front and not much at all for the work they did at the front lines, for example as nurses. However, the coinciding suffragette movement gets attention in media.195 Another image of women during the war mediated to people, according to T5, is that of mothers and wives worryingly sending their sons and husbands off to the front lines.196 This correlates to Grayzel’s studies showing that the most important identity for women during this time in England was that of a present or potential mother.197 T2 however, state that “[t]here is a lot of information about women during the first world war [sic!] available”198 but this does not prove that it is common in public history and/or used as teaching media. Regardless, the focus both in teaching and in public media seems to be directed first hand towards the men in the war, and less on women even though women are increasingly represented nowadays.

The colonial aspects are, if at all, only included briefly in the teaching of the First World War according to the responding teachers. The time and resources are spent on other aspects of the war but the fact that the British colonies were involved in the war and that there were not only white soldiers fighting in the trenches tends to be brought up, but not in whole lessons. This is also connected, by the teachers, to the fact that there are pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and examples of colonial soldiers fighting for the empire are sometimes brought up in order to be inclusive in the sense of teaching in a multi-ethnic classroom.199 T2 and T6 also point to the sensitivity that has to be considered when it comes to differing ethnical backgrounds and T6 further refers to an even greater importance of the teaching not becoming political concerning the colonial inclusion.200

The colonial aspect is another one up for discussion concerning the issue of selection since this is clearly an aspect which has been and still is not included specifically in the teaching due to various reasons, but mainly due to the colonies lack of representation in general in history and society throughout the past.201 The teachers do however bring up some important aspects concerning this when teaching pupils with various ethnic backgrounds. This connects to the historical consciousness among the pupils since identity and meeting the different are

195 T 1-6, interviewed between 2015-12-02 – 2015-12-16.
196 T5, 2015-12-04.
198 T2, 2015-12-02.
199 T 1-6, interviewed between 2015-12-02 – 2015-12-16
200 T2, 2015-12-02; T6, 2015-12-16.
201 Zander, 2014, pp. 151-152.
two factors influencing ones’ historical consciousness. Jensen points out that in order to become a part of the “imagined community”, identity is an important component together with the development of an understanding for people with other origins than oneself. The connection between the past, present and future as well as interconnectedness with other people are essential in order to feel like a part of the “imagined community”. As some of the teachers argue, discussing this topic is needed in order to reach an inclusive teaching for pupils from all backgrounds. Another benefit is of course that pupils learn to include a range of perspectives when analysing the events of war and are introduced to the complexities of the war.

All teachers bring up the local aspect of the war to some extent. Both studying a local soldier and including a local war memorial are mentioned by some of the teachers as ways in which they bring in the local area in the WWI teaching. The focus on local history is not extensive for this part of history but is included nonetheless. Using local history also correlates to the pupils historical consciousness as an identity process. When pupils learn about what happened during the war in their own area and study soldiers from the area in which they live, they can also start to relate to their origins and their close vicinity.

Relevant to add here is that the fact that the school is working within a Catholic Partnership did not prove to pose any considerable impacts on the history teaching, neither in general or regarding the First World War teaching.

9.6 Summary of results
This study of the teaching of the First World War in compulsory school in England has shown that the actual past, with the trench warfare and what life was like during the war, receives main attention in the history classrooms of today. This is performed with teaching aids such as literature in the form of poems and memoirs, pictures from the wartime and films clips from different documentaries, TV-series and films. Moreover, emphasis is also placed on the question of why it is important to remember the war today, a hundred years after it was fought and this connects the teaching to present times. One reason for this question to appear is the
fact that time has passed to the extent that there are no living witnesses alive to personally spread their experiences of the war and this is something that most of the teachers believe to be a challenge in the teaching of the First World War today as well as in the future. The remembrance part of the teaching can easily be connected to the societal focus directed towards yearly commemorations of the war, which received special attention during 2014 when the centenary of the war started.

However, the teachers do not regard that the public commemoration and the public history concerning the First World War are posing any challenges to the teaching and school history of the war. This is because they do not experience that the pupils have sufficient knowledge about the war when they start studying it in Year 9 for it to be problematic to teach in the context of an otherwise well-spread collective remembrance of a war that is now seen as a crucial national event. Rather, with the use of different remembrance symbols visible and attended to in society the war commemoration has helped create an interest to learn about the war among pupils.

Although the teaching is less biased compared to the public history, the teaching seems, to some extent, to focus the teaching on the aspects of the war that concurs with the public image of the events of the war. The teaching of the war also contributes with education of citizenship and tolerance for example, which is something to include in all school subjects according to the national curriculum. Furthermore, the teaching of the First World War is pointed out by some of the teachers as more or less a prerequisite for the teaching of subsequent events, especially later conflicts. Knowledge and an understanding of the First World War and its impact on the world are seen as essential for pupils in order to be able to understand the world and its different events after 1918 and up until today. Hence, the teaching of the war has different objectives compared to the public history mediated outside of school.

Even though the time spent on gender and postcolonial aspects, as well as local ones, of the war is scarce, these aspects are still briefly discussed in class. Nonetheless, these aspects are expressed by a few of the teachers as parts which could be included to a larger extent in the teaching. Since these are aspects that are often excluded or less attended to in the public history of the war, the school history could counterbalance the lack of representation by adding further teaching where these aspects are involved.
10 Conclusion

The aim of this qualitative study was to research how history teaching of the First World War is performed at a girls’ school in northeastern England which carries out education in a context where the war is given large attention in media and is publicly commemorated yearly. In order to reach this aim, the study created a source material by conducting structured asynchronous online interviews via e-mail with six female history teachers working at the school. The main reason for carrying out the interviews via e-mail was due to the geographical distance. All of the interviewees received the same set of questions posed in the same order and this structure was used in order to be able to compare the teachers’ answers with each other. The interviewee subjects were between 24-58 years old and had been working as history teachers between one to 26 years. The school in focus is a Catholic girls’ secondary school which also offers a non-compulsory Sixth form college.

The theory of collective memory as presented by Halbwachs was set up as the starting point for the theoretical approach in the study and this theory argues for the fact that memory is collectively remembered and is created in the encounter with other people in different social circumstances. Halbwachs argues that memory, on the one hand, is subjective while history, on the other hand, is objective. Furthermore, historical consciousness in connection to the use of history and today’s history culture were included as important parts in connection to history didactics. With historical consciousness being a contested term the study stated that the main focus when discussing historical consciousness is the idea that past events are relevant for our understanding of both the present and the future. Thus, these three time aspects are all important to consider in history teaching as well. In order to analyse the teaching in connection to historical consciousness, five processes which historical consciousness can take the form of are used in the analysis of the results of the study.

The most prominent results of the study are that the main focus when conducting history teaching of the First World War is directed towards the past with studies of the trench warfare and what life was like during the war, to mention two examples. The present is included as a time aspect to some extent since the time distance to the war poses current and future

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problems in the teaching, essentially because of the fact that there are no longer any living
witnesses of the war. The future however, is predominantly disregarded in the teaching of the
war and by that, the teaching is lacking an important component in the aspect of historical
consciousness. In summary, the teachers seem to value a traditional notion of history where
the past is in the centre of attention when it comes to the First World War.\textsuperscript{209} The most
commonly used teaching aids to reach the teaching objectives in the classroom are literature,
pictures and film clips.

In spite of the fact that the time distance is set forth as an obstacle in today’s WWI teaching,
the teachers express that the nation’s yearly commemoration of the war is effective as a tool
to create interest among the pupils with the help of different symbols of remembrance such as
various monuments and the poppy for example. Thus, the remembrance events and the public
history of the First World War are not regarded as causing challenges to the teaching. However, one possible reason for this might be the teachers’ experiences that the pupils seem
to have little knowledge about the war before they start studying it and thus are not taking
personal interest in what the meaning of the commemoration is.

Even though some main themes naturally are brought up both in the school history and public
history of the First World War, the teaching of the war was pointed out to be different in
various ways. One teaching objective is for example to position the war in a chronology of the
history and does thus provide the pupils with knowledge useful in order to understand
subsequent times. A few of the teachers especially mention the fact that knowledge of the
First World War is a necessity for pupils to understand later conflicts that have afflicted the
world. Furthermore, this part of history provides opportunities to include aspects which are
not explicitly related to history but to the general duty to nurture future citizens by teaching
them tolerance and other characteristics valued by the English society.\textsuperscript{210}

The study further shows that the teaching of the stereotypically disregarded aspects such as
gender and colonialism are lacking to a large extent. Concerning gender it seems as if this is
an aspect which is gradually receiving larger attention in connection to the war but the main
focus is placed on the male soldiers who fought for their country while the female

\textsuperscript{209} Jensen, 1997, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{210} The national curriculum in England, 2014, pp. 5-6.
representation is mostly limited to discussions about the suffragette movement and the way in which the situation for women was changed after the war. The colonial aspect seems, according to the teachers, to be included even less and is only brought up briefly, for instance through examples of how the colonies provided soldiers who fought in the war.

Further research in this area could be conducted based on the findings of this study. It would, for example, be rewarding to study the issues of this study through the perspective of the pupils and research how the pupils experience the war commemoration. Another interesting aspect to study would be what the pupils’ views are upon the teaching of the First World War compared to other events in history for example. Moreover, the fact that this study was conducted with only female teachers working at an all girls’ school can also be expanded by directing focus to possible differences in the teaching at a boys’ or a mixed school. Another possible elaboration is to study other nationally important historical events, in England or in other countries, in connection to the teaching of that very part of history and delve on the practical implications for teachers teaching history in such contexts.

To sum up, this study has provided insights which can be valuable for teachers who are teaching history in contexts where historical events are nationally commemorated and given large attention in society. The question of how to make history teaching of time distant events relevant to pupils is one which is ever present for history teachers. The use of remembrance symbols can be one tool in order to create interest but as Jensen shows, it is essential to provide pupils with historical knowledge at the same time as making history personally relevant for pupils by engaging in the development of their historical consciousness as an identity process, for example, which further connects to the pupils’ partaking in societal life in general.\textsuperscript{211}

\textsuperscript{211} Jensen, 1997, pp. 70-71.
References

Primary sources – Interviews:

- Teacher 1 (T1). Interview answer received via e-mail 2015-12-10.
- Teacher 2 (T2). Interview answer received via e-mail 2015-12-02.
- Teacher 3 (T3). Interview answer received via e-mail 2015-12-08.
- Teacher 4 (T4). Interview answer received via e-mail 2015-12-10.
- Teacher 5 (T5). Interview answer received via e-mail 2015-12-04.
- Teacher 6 (T6). Interview answer received via e-mail 2015-12-16.

Books:


Chapters in books:

- Ammert, Niklas. 2009. “Finns då (och) nu (och) sedan? Uttryck för historiemedvetande i grundskolans historieböcker”. In: Karlsson, Klas-Göran &


Articles:


Policy documents:


Internet sources:


Appendix A – Interview form sent out to teachers

Interview form

Content:
• Informed consent
• Information about carrying out the interview
• Interview questions

Informed consent
Thank you for wanting to take part in my study by answering the questions posed in the interview. Before you answer the questions there are some things I would like to inform you on and when you have read it I would like you to write an e-mail to me where you state that you have read through the information and give your consent to partake in the study. This can be done either in a separate e-mail right away or along with you interview answers. If you do not wish to take part as an interviewee after having read this information, please let me know.

The interviews will make up the source material for my graduation thesis at the advanced level in history, which will be published online in a Swedish digital science research archive called DiVA (Swedish: Digitala Vetenskapliga Arkivet). The overall aim of my qualitative study is to research how the First World War is being taught in England. I guarantee anonymity for all interviewees as well as the school; all participants’ names will either be exchanged for a code name or a number and the school will not be mentioned by name but will be described as a Catholic girl’s school in northeastern England.

You can withdraw your given consent if you change your mind concerning the participation at any time during the study.

Elina Jonsson
Linnaeus University, Växjö, Sweden
27 November 2015

Information about carrying out the interview
I value your participation in the interview for my study and want to thank you for taking part! The interview consists of 36 questions, which are divided into two categories; background questions and questions concerning the teaching of the First World War. I would like you to answer as elaborately as possible and feel free to give examples from your actual teaching to support your reasoning. Most of the questions are based on an interest in wanting to know your opinion and your experiences and many of the questions have the follow-up question “why” in connection to it in an attempt to deepen the reasoning in your answers.

Due to the fact that the interview is carried out via e-mail and not face-to-face, I would like to encourage you to underline words and/or write words in bold for expressing emphasis, for example. Please feel free to use emoticons along with your answers when you think it appropriate and if you feel comfortable doing so.

If a question is unclear or difficult to understand, please e-mail me and let me know and I will explain it in a different way to you. If there are questions you do not wish to answer please write so in connection to it or mark the question with an “X”. In this way I will know that the lack of an answer is deliberate and not due to the question being missed out or forgotten.

I would like you to take your time in answering the questions but please e-mail your answers 4 December 2015 at the latest. It would, however, be very helpful if you could reply to me as soon as possible that you have received the questions and have been able to open the document in order for me to know that the communication has worked as it should. I also hope that it is all right if I return with potential follow-up questions after you have sent me your reply and I have read your answers.

Thank you again for your participation!

Elina Jonsson
Linnaeus University, Växjö, Sweden
27 November 2015

**Interview questions**

**Background questions**
1. How old are you?
2. Between which years did you study to become a teacher?
3. How long have you been working as a history teacher?
4. How long have you been working at [school’s name]?
5. Have you worked at other schools than [school’s name]? If so, how many?
6. Do you teach or have you taught any other subjects than history? If yes, which?
7. How would you describe a good history teacher in a few sentences?
8. How would you define historical consciousness?
9. What part/s of history do you think is the most challenging to teach and what part/s do you think is the least challenging to teach? Why?
10. Do you have one or more parts of history that you personally find more interesting than other parts? Why? (It can, for example, be a certain time period, a specific field within history, a country/territory, a person, a war, an event etc.)

**Questions concerning the teaching of the First World War (henceforth WWI):**

1. In your opinion as a history teacher, why is it important to teach today’s pupils about WWI?
2. How do you think teaching about WWI has changed over time? For example today’s teaching compared to the teaching performed when you went to school?
3. What do you think will be the most and the least challenging aspects of teaching WWI in the future?
4. How do you think your teaching of WWI correlates to the policy documents on teaching in general?
5. Are there aspects of WWI that you think should be included in the teaching but which are not given priority in today’s teaching in general?
6. How do you experience the allocation of resources spent on teaching WWI in relation to the teaching of other areas in history?
7. In what ways do you work together within the history department at [school’s name] in your teaching of WWI?
8. Based on your experience, what do pupils in general think about studying WWI? For example, are there parts of studying WWI that they seem to enjoy more or less than other parts?
9. What kinds of material do you use for your own research when planning the teaching of WWI? (For example literature, academic research, online sources, textbooks etc.)

10. What kinds of material do you use as teaching aids in the classroom when teaching about WWI and why are these materials chosen? (For example textbooks, literature, newspapers, pictures, film/TV-series, etc.)

11. Does the Department for Education provide any teaching aids regarding WWI teaching? If so, what kinds of aids and do you use any of them?

12. Are there parts of the public centenary commemorations of WWI that you find good and/or problematic respectively? If so, which parts and why?

13. How do you use different kinds of public history in your teaching and why do you choose to include the parts that you do? (With public history I mean for example museums, monuments, memorial days, memorial symbols such as the poppy and popular culture.)

14. In your experience, what kind of knowledge about WWI does the pupils bring to the classroom that they have gained from the portrayal of WWI in different media outside of school? What kinds of challenges have this led to in your teaching?

15. In [school’s name] KS3 SOL it says, along with the key question for teaching WWI in year 9, that you are to discuss “the challenges faced today in remembering it” – what kinds of challenges do you discuss when it comes to remembering WWI today?

16. How do you think the trial unit “WWI – Why should we remember?” for year 7 and 8 in 2014 turned out based on your own teaching of it (if you taught it that is)? Was the unit kept for 2015 and for coming years, and if so why or why not?

17. Except for the trial unit “WWI – Why should we remember”, have you adjusted your teaching about WWI due to the centenary? If so, in what ways?

18. Do you think that your and the school’s teaching of WWI is affected by the fact that the school is a girls’ school when it comes to aspects such as teaching methods and content? If so, why and how?

19. In what ways are women portrayed and included in your teaching about WWI?

20. How do you experience men and women being represented in public history and teaching media when it comes to the history of WWI?

21. In your experience, are there differences in how girls and boys reflect on gender aspects in history in general and in WWI history in particular?

22. Does the fact that the pupils have different ethical backgrounds affect your WWI teaching? If so, in what ways?
23. To what extent and in what ways are the colonial aspects of WWI included in the teaching?

24. To what extent is your teaching about WWI focused on local WWI history?

25. In the guidelines for Year 9 WWI teaching in the KS3 SOL for [school’s name] it says that specific content is “subject to change due to […] Catholic Partnership focus on WWI”, what kinds of changes might that be?

26. Does your WWI teaching at [school’s name] include aspects due to the school being a Catholic school that you would not include if you were working at a school which was not Catholic (not counting things that are recommended in particular by the Catholic Partnership)?

Thank you for taking the time to participate!
Appendix B – Information about the teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Years of age</th>
<th>Years of teacher training</th>
<th>Years as a history teacher</th>
<th>Years at the current school</th>
<th>Number of other school where the teacher has worked at</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1992-1993</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>1975-1979</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28 214</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8 216</td>
<td>1 217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6 219</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

212 T1, 2015-12-10.
213 T2, 2015-12-02.
214 This teacher is now mainly working with other assignments at the school but teaches two history classes during the present school year.
215 T3, 2015-12-08.
216 This teacher worked at the school before studying to become a teacher.
217 Although not as a history teacher but as a support assistant.
218 T4, 2015-12-10.
219 This teacher worked at the school before studying to become a teacher.
220 T5, 2015-12-04.
221 T6, 2015-12-16.