

The Social Psychology of Genocide Denial: Do the Facts Matter?

by

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Abstract

Beginning in the mid-1800s, for over one hundred years, the Government of Canada operated church-run Indian Residential Schools for the purpose of “civilizing” the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada. Scholars, as well as members of the public suggest, sometimes strongly, that the term *genocide* should be used to describe what happened in Residential Schools. The purpose of this research was to examine how non-Aboriginal Canadians might respond if the label genocide is used to describe what happened in Residential Schools. In two studies, I manipulated the perception of Residential Schools as genocide by informing (or not informing) undergraduate student participants that some people believe what happened should be labeled genocide. I also assessed the potential moderating role of knowledge by either measuring participants’ pre-existing knowledge of Residential Schools (Study 1) or manipulating how much participants learned about Residential Schools through a passage (Study 2). As expected, participants’ reactions to the genocide label depended on what they knew about Residential Schools. Participants with a superficial level of knowledge responded defensively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide, presumably because they felt symbolically (and unfairly) criticized by the label. In contrast, participants with no knowledge or high levels of knowledge responded positively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide, presumably because they could not reasonably dispute the label. Together, these findings provide theoretical insight into how knowledge affects perpetrator group members’ reactions to historical harms and offers practical advice for advocates and organizations working to foster intergroup reconciliation in Canada.

Keywords: Residential Schools, Genocide, Knowledge, Social Identity, Political Communication

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The Social Psychology of Genocide Denial: Do the Facts Matter?

Beginning in the mid-1800s, for over one hundred years, the Government of Canada operated church-run Indian Residential Schools for the purpose of “civilizing” the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada. These schools were intended to extinguish Aboriginal Peoples’ culture, language, and way of life. Until the closing of the last school in 1996, approximately 150,000 students attended 130 schools located across Canada. A long record of abuse, neglect, disease, and death has been documented within the schools. The negative effects of the Residential School system can still be seen within Aboriginal Peoples’ communities today. For example, Aboriginal Peoples’ are over-represented in both the criminal justice and child welfare systems in Canada (Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba, 1999; Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005).

In educating the public about Residential Schools, scholars (e.g., Churchill, 2001; Stannard, 1993) as well as members of the public (e.g., Annett, 2001; Stasyszyn, 2011) suggest, sometimes strongly, that the term *genocide* should be used to describe what happened. Debating the technical or legal appropriateness of this label can be contentious and emotional, for members of both victimized and non-victimized groups. To be clear, entering into this debate is not a goal of my research program. Rather, the purpose of my research was to examine how non-Aboriginal Canadians might respond if the label genocide is used to describe what happened in Residential Schools.¹

In particular, I was interested in exploring whether non-Aboriginal Canadians’ reactions to the label genocide differ depending on how knowledgeable they are about what happened in

¹ For two reasons, I decided to limit my exploration of the label genocide to the context of Residential Schools—although I acknowledge the idea of genocide might better be applied to a larger pattern of colonialism, of which Residential Schools were only one aspect. First, media and public conversations about the possibility of Canadian genocide have focused more so on the idea of *Residential Schools* as genocide, rather than *colonialism* as genocide; thus, my decision was, in part, an applied one. Second, colonialism is an admittedly abstract construct and I was unsure how to adequately measure or manipulate participants’ knowledge of colonialism.

Residential Schools. In two studies, I manipulated the perception of Residential Schools as genocide by informing (or not informing) participants that some people believe what happened should be labeled genocide. I assessed the effects of knowledge by either measuring participants' pre-existing knowledge (Study 1) or varying the amount of detail in a descriptive passage about Residential Schools (Study 2). In general, I expected low knowledge participants would respond defensively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide, while high knowledge participants would respond positively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide.

Genocide

Genocide is a powerful word. Raphael Lemkin (1944) invented it to describe the atrocities of WWII and the destruction of Armenians by the Ottoman empire, and it has since been applied to other large-scale human rights violations. According to the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (United Nations General Assembly, 1948):

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

There are a variety of reasons why people might want to use the label genocide to describe what happened in Residential Schools. For example, some might want to use the label

because they feel it is simply the only way to represent the situation validly. Some might want to use the label to evoke certain legal responsibilities of the government; if the label were ever used to officially describe what happened in Residential Schools, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide would *legally* compel the Government of Canada to punish those responsible (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). Some might want to use the label to help attract public attention and persuade people to take the issue seriously. Finally, some might want to use the label to draw on others' moral and ethical convictions to encourage acknowledgment of the harm; that is, given perhaps universal opposition to genocide, labeling Residential Schools as genocide may *morally* compel people to redress the harm.

Of these reasons, it is the latter that provides the most plausible justification for hypothesizing that the label genocide might *facilitate* acknowledgment of what happened in Residential Schools. After all, when faced with the possibility that one's ingroup has acted unjustly, people can suffer threats to their identity as moral actors (Chen & Tyler, 2001; Folger & Pugh, 2002; Montada & Schneider, 1989; Tavuchis, 1991). Furthermore, people may respond sympathetically to the label genocide due to personal moral convictions opposing human rights violations such as genocide. Kelman (2008) describes *development of a common moral basis for peace* as an important condition for reconciliation. Kelman argues that reconciliation is easier when there is a widely accepted moral basis upon which to denounce the harm, as is generally the case for crimes like apartheid or genocide. Likewise, for a minority to exert social influence over the majority, it helps for them to make reference to a superordinate normative principle (e.g., genocide is wrong) shared by both groups (Mucchi-Faina, Pacilli, & Pagliaro, 2010; Mugny & Perez, 1991; Smith, Dykema-Engblade, Walker, Niven, & McGough, 2000). In this way, using the label genocide could promote sympathy and encourage acknowledgment of what

happened in Residential Schools. However, while this hypothesis is tenable, it is also possible that non-Aboriginal Canadians will be threatened by a portrayal of Residential Schools as genocide and therefore may be motivated to respond defensively.

A Motivation to Deny

In general, people are motivated to deny that injustice exists in the world. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), just world theory (Lerner, 1980), and system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994) provide a basis for understanding this motivation. People want to think highly of the groups (e.g., Canadians, non-Aboriginal Canadians, university students, etc.) and social systems (e.g., University of Manitoba, Canadian government, Western society) that influence their lives. I hypothesize non-Aboriginal Canadians will respond defensively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide in order to protect the reputation of the groups and social systems involved.

Social identity theory. According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Tajfel & Turner, 2001), people are motivated to psychologically protect and defend the groups with which they identify. Through identification with a group, personal self-esteem becomes dependent on outcomes obtained by that group. As a result, people are motivated to defend or justify even the most negative actions of their ingroups. In fact, when thinking about historical harms (e.g., Residential Schools), people may inadvertently or deliberately suppress memories of harm doing to remember what happened in the way that most favourably reflects on their ingroups (Starzyk, Blatz, & Ross, 2009). Sahlra and Ross (2007) examined historical memory in the context of social identity theory and found that people who identify highly with their ingroup were more likely to remember history in a way that supports a favourable view of that ingroup. They manipulated level of ingroup identification and then asked Canadian participants

to recall negative and positive acts that Canadians have done to or for non-Canadians.

Consistent with research on social identity theory, participants in the low-identity condition recalled more negative incidents than participants in the high-identity or control conditions.

Furthermore, participants in the high-identity condition recalled more positive incidents than participants in the control condition. Together, these findings help to establish a meaningful and interesting link between social identity motives and the remembering of historical harms.

Just world theory. According to just world theory (Lerner, 1980), people possess a fundamental desire to believe the world is a just and fair place where everyone, including themselves, will get what they deserve. Maintaining a belief in a just world is adaptive because it instills confidence that investing in long-term goals and delaying gratification is a safe and worthwhile endeavor (Hafer, 2002; Hafer, Begue, Choma, & Dempsey, 2005; Lerner, 1977). When confronted with injustice, people can experience a threat to their belief in a just world. To maintain or restore this belief, people often respond prosocially by taking action to eliminate or amend the injustice that threatens them (e.g., by helping the victim). However, there are times where people will not respond prosocially, but may instead rationalize, deny, or reinterpret the injustice so as to subjectively eliminate its existence or make it appear somehow warranted (Dalbert, 2001, Furnham, 2003; Hafer & Begue, 2005; Lerner, 1980). Starzyk and Ross (2008) found that when reparations for a past harm were made to seem feasible, participants responded positively towards still-suffering victims. However, when reparations were portrayed as impractical (i.e., when the injustice could not be eliminated prosocially), participants were more likely to ignore the ongoing suffering of victims.

System justification theory. According to system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Jost, Kay, & Thorrisdottir, 2009), people are motivated to see

the systems that have control over their lives as legitimate and fair. When faced with injustice, people will react defensively to reaffirm the benevolence or legitimacy of their system. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the United States government was heavily criticized for failing to assist the disadvantaged members of the City of New Orleans. Consistent with research on system justification theory, only 32% of Whites believed that the disaster exposed an inherent racial inequality problem in the country, compared to 71% of Blacks (Pew Research Center, 2005). To the extent that Whites and Blacks represent high- and low-status groups in the United States, the difference in opinion was likely influenced by White Americans' greater need to justify the system and legitimize their advantage (Napier, Mandisodza, Andersen, & Jost, 2006). Research on system justification theory offers many of the same predictions and explanations as given by just world theory. However, whereas just world theory is heavily concerned with peoples' motivations to reaffirm principles of individual deservingness, system justification theory places a stronger emphasis on epistemic and existential motives as the driving force behind peoples' responses to injustice (Kay, Banfield, & Laurin, 2010).

Knowledge

Open and public discourses (e.g., Truth Commissions) have been instrumental in past attempts at reconciliation in various socio-political contexts (Hayner, 2011). As part of the Residential Schools settlement agreement, the Canadian Government has established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, with an understanding that "the truth of our common experiences will help set our spirits free and pave the way to reconciliation." I am interested in examining whether non-Aboriginal Canadians' reactions to the label genocide will change if they are educated about what happened in Residential Schools. On the one hand, people are motivated to avoid thinking about anxiety provoking information and may try to deny the reality of the

situation even when educated about it, as Frantz and Mayer (2009) found people did in the context of climate change:

Getting people to notice an event is worthless if they are so distraught that they deny its reality, deny responsibility, and have no idea what to do...increasing individuals' knowledge about an issue, although intuitively appealing, is not likely to increase a sense of responsibility (p. 215).

On the other hand, although people will go to remarkable lengths to deny what is inconvenient or threatening to them, their rationalizations are nevertheless bound by reason and constrained by reality (Blader & Tyler, 2002). In other words, people will generally arrive at the conclusion they want to arrive at, but only to the extent that they can construct a reasonable justification for that conclusion. If a threatening message is well constructed and convincing, rationalization may be difficult. Strong arguments can limit the effects of motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1990) and increase the likelihood that people ultimately judge a harm to be unjust (Biernat & Fuegen, 2001; Jones, Kugler, & Adams, 1995; Miron & Branscombe, 2008; Miron, Branscombe, & Biernat, 2010). From this, I hypothesize non-Aboriginal Canadians may not respond negatively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide, if they are knowledgeable of what happened, as they may find it difficult to justify a defensive response.

Overview of Hypotheses

The purpose of this research was to examine whether non-Aboriginal Canadians' responses to the label genocide differ depending on their knowledge of Residential Schools. Research associated with social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), just world theory (Lerner, 1980), and system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994) demonstrates that people want to maintain positive views of important groups and social systems and will reinterpret

historical events to do so. In general, I expected non-Aboriginal Canadians would perceive the label as inconsistent with what happened in Residential Schools and therefore respond defensively in order to protect the reputation of the groups (e.g., non-Aboriginal Canadians) and social systems (e.g., Canadian government) involved. However, I also hypothesized that participants who are knowledgeable about the unjust nature of Residential Schools might not deny or rationalize what happened (cf., Kunda, 1990), and may even respond positively to the label. I explored these hypotheses in two studies. In both studies, I manipulated the perception of Residential Schools as genocide by informing (or not informing) participants that some people believe what happened should be labeled genocide. I assessed the effects of knowledge by either measuring participants' pre-existing knowledge (Study 1) or varying the amount of detail in a descriptive passage (Study 2). A strength of Study 1 is that the results that are likely to represent how people will characteristically respond, but because knowledge is measured, rather than manipulated, Study 1 does not control for possible confounding variables. A shortcoming of Study 2 is that it is unclear the extent to which the effects of manipulated knowledge will generalize or be long-lasting. However, an advantage is that it offers experimental control, and therefore the ability to argue for causality. As such, Study 1 and Study 2 methodologically complement each other.

Study 1 Method

The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between knowledge and labeling. In this study, I manipulated the perception of Residential Schools as genocide by informing (or not informing) participants that some people believe what happened should be labeled genocide. I assessed the effects of knowledge by measuring participants' pre-existing knowledge of Residential Schools.

Participants

This study was administered in-person using 143 undergraduate students (78 female, 56 male) from the University of Manitoba who were 19.20 years old on average (*range* = 17 to 35 years, *SD* = 2.58). Participants read an information form and provide informed consent prior to beginning the study. In exchange for their involvement, participants received research participation credit toward their Introductory Psychology research requirement. The sample was limited to participants who are White and were born in Canada. These restrictions are necessary because I expected the findings would differ by participant ethnicity and citizenship.

Procedure

At the beginning of the academic year, all Introductory Psychology students at the University of Manitoba were given the opportunity to complete an omnibus pre-screening questionnaire containing a variety of items and measures. I included a multiple choice test in this questionnaire that assessed students' knowledge of Residential Schools (see Appendix A). Examples of questions include, "In all, approximately how many Aboriginal children attended Indian Residential Schools?" (a = 10,000; b = 80,000; c = 150,000; d = more than 400,000)" and "Which Canadian Prime Minister offered the first official apology for survivors of Indian Residential Schools?" (a = Sir John A. Macdonald; b = Steven Harper; c = Jean Chretien; d = Pierre Elliot Trudeau). Only students who had completed this pre-screen questionnaire were recruited to participate in this study. Given the relative lack of awareness of Residential Schools among the non-Aboriginal population in Canada (Urban Aboriginal Peoples' Study, 2010), I explicitly oversampled participants who were high in knowledge by recruiting from within only the top and bottom third of the distribution of knowledge scores. A potential limitation of this measured knowledge independent variable is that knowledge was assessed through "trivia-style"

questions that uniquely tested participants' knowledge of the *historical details* of Residential Schools, but there are clearly other types of knowledge that could also affect participants' beliefs about the harm (e.g., knowledge of the extent of suffering incurred).

After signing up, participants attended an in-person experimental session where they were asked to complete a series of dependent measures (as described below). For those assigned to the genocide condition, I included a short paragraph prior to the dependent measures stating that some people believe what happened in Residential Schools should be labeled genocide (see Appendix B). To avoid any confounding effects of source ethnicity (e.g., intergroup sensitivity effect; Hornsey, Oppes, & Svensson, 2002), I was careful to say "some people" rather than "Aboriginal people" or "White people" when informing participants that some think what happened in Residential Schools was genocide.

Dependent Measures

Participants completed the dependent measures in the order they are described below. Although some of these measures may refer to negative stereotypes or beliefs about Aboriginal Peoples' communities, it is important to remember that these items were either adapted directly from previous research or were based on unprompted public responses to online news articles pertaining to Aboriginal Peoples' issues. As such, these items are a valid assessment of public opinion and are an important tool in trying to understand the factors that lead to acknowledgement of what happened in Residential Schools.

To assess participants' evaluations of Residential Schools, I asked them to report their perceptions of the magnitude of the harm and suffering caused by Residential Schools, rate the extent to which they thought Residential Schools were unjust, and indicate the extent to which they thought Residential Schools happened for benevolent reasons. To assess participants'

emotional reactions, I asked them to report their feelings of guilt and empathy, rate the extent to which they feel responsible for repairing the damage caused by Residential Schools, and indicate the extent to which they feel non-Aboriginal Canadians should educate themselves about Residential Schools.² I also asked participants to indicate whether they thought the label genocide is appropriate for describing what happened in Residential Schools.

Evaluations of Residential Schools

I used exploratory factor analysis to identify the type and number of underlying constructs (i.e., common factors) represented by some of my dependent measures. As a model fitting procedure, I used maximum likelihood estimation. I interpreted the exploratory factor analysis results by examining the likelihood ratio test statistic, which estimates how well the model accounts for the pattern of correlations among the measured variables (a significant test statistic indicates that the model does not fit the data perfectly) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), which is an alternative, descriptive index of model fit. Values less than .050 are said to signify a close fit between the model and the data, values between .050 and .080 an acceptable fit, values between .081 and .100 a marginal fit, and values greater than .100 a poor fit (MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996). I studied the factor loadings (rotated using a direct quartimin oblique strategy) to estimate of the strength of the influence of the common factors on the measured items. As I have two data sets with similar measures, I took into account the stability of the factor solutions across data sets.

I identified the factor structure of the injustice, intent, and suffering measures using a single exploratory factors analysis combining these measures. After testing a series of

² A post-hoc higher-order factor analysis supported grouping my variables into ‘evaluations’ and ‘emotions’.

successive models across both data sets, I decided to retain the four-factor model for investigation. The four-factor model from Study 1 had a non-significant likelihood ratio test statistic, $\chi^2(24) = 21.68$, $p = .598$, and RMSEA indicated good fit, $RMSEA = .026$ (see Table 1 for factor loadings). The four-factor model from Study 2 also had a non-significant likelihood ratio test statistic, $\chi^2(24) = 30.48$, $p = .169$, and RMSEA also indicated good fit, $RMSEA = .042$ (see Table 2 for factor loadings). Across both data sets, the factor loadings of the four-factor model revealed two three-item injustice scales and one five-item continued suffering scale (as presented below).

Magnitude of the harm. I assessed participants' perceptions of the magnitude of the harm caused by Residential Schools using two statements (adapted from Miron, Branscombe, & Biernat, 2010). Using the scale anchors "very little" (1) and "very much" (100), participants estimated how much damage non-Aboriginal Canadians caused to Aboriginal Peoples' and how much was lost by Aboriginal Peoples' during Residential Schools. I computed the "magnitude of the harm" composite by taking the average of participants' responses to these two items. Scores could therefore range from 1 to 100, with higher scores indicating a greater perception of the magnitude of the harm.

Perceptions of injustice. I assessed the extent to which participants' thought Residential Schools were unjust using three statements (based on Starzyk & Ross, 2008): (1) "The Indian Residential Schools were unjust," (2) "The Indian Residential Schools represent a dark spot in Canadian history," and (3) "Indian Residential Schools were harmful." Participants rated their agreement or disagreement with these statements on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). I computed the "perceptions of injustice" composite by taking the average of participants' responses to these three items. Scores could therefore range from 1 to 7,

with higher scores indicating a greater perception of injustice.

Perceptions of intent. I assessed the extent to which participants' thought Residential Schools happened for benevolent reasons using three statements (based on Starzyk & Ross, 2008): (1) "The Government probably had the best of intentions with the Indian Residential Schools," (2) "The Indian Residential Schools happened out of concern for Aboriginal Peoples," and (3) "Aboriginal people were sent to Indian Residential Schools for their own good." Participants rated their agreement or disagreement with these statements on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). I computed the "intent" composite by taking the average of participants' responses to these three items. Scores could therefore range from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating a greater perception of good intentions.

Perceptions of suffering. I assessed participants' perceptions of the suffering caused by Residential Schools using five statements (based on Starzyk & Ross, 2008): (1) "Aboriginal people experience psychological pain today because of their experience," (2) "Aboriginal people are generally unhappy today because of their experience," (3) "Indian Residential Schools have few lasting negative effects on Aboriginal people" (reverse-coded), (4) "Aboriginal people continue to suffer today because of Indian Residential Schools," and (5) "In general, their experience continues to have a negative impact on Aboriginal people today." Participants rated their agreement or disagreement with these statements on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). I computed the "suffering" composite by taking the average of participants' responses to these five items. Scores could therefore range from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating a greater perception of suffering.

Perceptions of label. I assessed participants' perceptions of the label genocide by asking them to rate how appropriate they think the label is for describing Residential Schools (1 = very inappropriate, 7 = very appropriate).

Emotional Reactions

I determined the factor structure of the collective guilt, responsibility, and education measures using exploratory factors analysis. After testing a series of successive models across both data sets, I decided to retain the three-factor model for investigation. However, the three-factor model from Study 1 had a significant likelihood ratio test statistic $\chi^2(7) = 16.77, p = .019$, and RMSEA indicated poor fit, $RMSEA = .099$ (see Table 3 for factor loadings). The three-factor model from Study 2 also had a significant likelihood ratio test statistic, $\chi^2(7) = 18.36, p = .010$, and RMSEA also indicated poor fit, $RMSEA = .103$ (see Table 4 for factor loadings). Although the three-factor model did not have ideal fit in either study, the factor loadings were more interpretable than alternative models. In both data sets, the factor loadings of the three-factor model revealed one four-item scale and two two-item composite measures, together representing three separate aspects of collective guilt (as presented below).

Collective guilt. I assessed participants' feelings of collective guilt using four statements (adapted from Branscombe, Slugoski, and Kappen, 2004): (1) "I feel guilty about Canada's actions towards Aboriginal people," (2) "I feel guilty about the negative things Canadians have done to Aboriginal people," (3) "I feel regret for some of the things Canadians have done to Aboriginal people," and (4) "I can easily feel guilt for bad outcomes brought about by members of my racial group." Participants rated their agreement or disagreement with these statements on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). I computed the "guilt" composite

by taking the average of participants' responses to these four items. Scores could therefore range from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating greater feelings of guilt

Responsibility. I assessed participants' judgments of responsibility using two statements: (1) "I believe I should try to help repair the damage caused to Aboriginal people by my racial group," and (2) "I feel responsible for repairing the damage caused to Aboriginal people by Indian Residential Schools." I computed the "responsibility" composite by taking the average of participants' responses to these two items. Scores could therefore range from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating greater judgments of responsibility.

Education. I assessed participants' attitudes to Residential Schools education using two statements: (1) "Non-Aboriginal Canadians should do more to educate themselves about Indian Residential Schools," and (2) "Non-Aboriginal Canadians have a responsibility to try to learn about what happened to Aboriginal people in Indian Residential Schools." Participants rated their agreement or disagreement with these statements on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). I computed the "education" composite by taking the average of participants' responses to these two items. Scores could therefore range from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating more positive attitudes towards Residential Schools education.

Empathy. I assessed participants' feelings of empathy by asking them to rate the extent to which they feel certain emotions when thinking about Aboriginal Peoples' experiences in Residential Schools (adapted from Batson, Batson, Griffitt, Barrientos, & Brandt, 1989): (1) "Sympathetic," (2) "Softhearted," (3) "Warm," (4) "Compassionate," (5) "Tender," and (6) "Moved." Participants rated the extent to which they felt these emotions on a seven-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = extremely). I computed the "empathy" composite by taking the average of participants' responses to these six items. Scores could therefore range from 1 to 7, with higher

scores indicating greater feelings of empathy.

Study 1 Results

I used multiple regression to examine the effects of knowledge and labeling on participants' evaluations of Residential Schools. Given the correlational nature of the study, I gathered data on a number of covariates (i.e., racism, ideology, intergroup attitudes, intergroup contact) to control for potential confounds of pre-existing knowledge; however, none of these covariates correlated significantly with knowledge (all p -values $> .450$) and were therefore excluded from analyses. Using SPSS 19, I specified a two-step regression model where Step 1 included the knowledge and labeling independent variables and Step 2 added the mean-centred knowledge x labeling interaction term. To examine the effects of labeling across different levels of knowledge, I plotted a series of simple regression lines. Following the advice of Cohen and Cohen (1983), I chose values at one standard deviation below and above the mean score of my moderator (i.e., knowledge) variable. I also examined the simple effects of knowledge within both the standard and genocide conditions.

Participant exclusions. To ensure all participants in my final sample were adequately exposed to the experimental manipulation, I covertly recorded how long each participant took to read the labeling passage and excluded those who took less than one standard deviation below the average time to read the passage ($M = 22.04$, $SD = 12.26$); I eliminated six participants who read the labeling passage too quickly (< 9.78 seconds). I also excluded one participant who admitted they did not respond honestly to the survey. Thus, my final sample for Study 1 consisted of 136 participants.

Descriptives. See Table 5 for variable intercorrelations and Table 6 for descriptive statistics, including internal consistencies. A noteworthy initial observation from Table 6

concerns participants' relatively low knowledge scores ($M = 37.44\%$, $SD = 16.12\%$). Thus, a limitation that will need to be discussed is whether these high knowledge participants (i.e., at + 1 SD above the mean) should truly be considered "high" knowledge.

Knowledge

Evaluations. In general, participants who were knowledgeable about what happened in Residential Schools gave a significantly more generous estimate of the magnitude of the harm caused by Residential Schools ($\beta = .246$, $t(129) = 2.08$, $p = .039$), and perceived Residential Schools as significantly (one-way) more unjust ($\beta = .201$, $t(129) = 1.70$, $p = .092$) and significantly less benevolent ($\beta = -.228$, $t(129) = 1.95$, $p = .053$). Knowledge was not related to participants' perceptions of suffering. Participants who were knowledgeable about what happened in Residential Schools were significantly (one-way) more supportive of using the label genocide to describe what happened in Residential Schools ($\beta = .203$, $t(128) = 1.72$, $p = .089$). See Table 7 for supporting statistics.

Emotions. In general, knowledge was not related to participants' feelings of collective guilt or judgments of responsibility for repairing the damage caused by Residential Schools. However, participants who were knowledgeable about what happened in Residential Schools held a significantly stronger belief that non-Aboriginal Canadians should educate themselves about Residential Schools Knowledge ($\beta = .290$, $t(129) = 2.48$, $p = .015$), and felt significantly more empathy for the victims of Residential Schools ($\beta = .348$, $t(129) = 3.04$, $p = .003$). See Table 8 for supporting statistics.

Labeling

Evaluations. Labeling was not related to participants' estimates of how much damage was caused by Residential Schools, nor was it related to participants' perceptions of Residential

Schools as unjust or benevolent. Labeling was also not related to participants' perceptions of suffering. Finally, labeling was not related to participants' support for using the label genocide to describe what happened in Residential Schools. See Table 7 for supporting statistics.

Emotions. Labeling was not related to participants' feelings of collective guilt, but was significantly (one-way) and negatively related to participants judgments of responsibility for repairing the damage caused by Residential Schools ($\beta = -.157$, $t(129) = 1.82$, $p = .071$); that is, participants who were knowledgeable of what happened in Residential Schools felt less responsibility for repairing the damage caused by Residential Schools. Labeling was not related to participants' beliefs that non-Aboriginal Canadians should educate themselves about Residential Schools or feelings of empathy for the victims of Residential Schools. See Table 8 for supporting statistics.

Knowledge x Labeling Interaction

Evaluations. The knowledge x labeling interaction significantly (one-way) predicted participants' estimates of the magnitude of the harm caused by Residential Schools ($\beta = -.198$, $t(129) = 1.67$, $p = .097$; see Figure 1). Within the standard condition, participants who were knowledgeable about what happened in Residential Schools gave a significantly more generous estimate of the magnitude of the harm ($\beta = .242$, $t(65) = 2.01$, $p = .049$). An analysis of the simple slopes of labeling at low and high levels of knowledge revealed that when the label genocide was used, high knowledge participants showed a (non-significantly) decreased perception of the magnitude of the harm ($\beta = -.162$, $t(129) = 1.32$, $p = .189$), while low knowledge participants showed a (non-significantly) increased perception of the magnitude of the harm ($\beta = .130$, $t(129) = 1.06$, $p = .293$). Within the genocide condition, knowledge of Residential Schools was unrelated to participants' estimates of the magnitude of the harm ($\beta = -$

.045, $t(64) = 0.36$, $p = .717$). See Tables 7, 9, and 10 for supporting statistics.

The knowledge x labeling interaction was also significantly related to participants' perceptions of Residential Schools as benevolent ($\beta = .306$, $t(129) = 2.62$, $p = .010$; see Figure 2). Within the standard condition, participants who knew more about Residential Schools showed significantly (one-way) less benevolent perceptions of the harm ($\beta = -.233$, $t(65) = 1.93$, $p = .058$). When the label genocide was used, high knowledge participants showed a (non-significantly) increased perception of benevolence ($\beta = .143$, $t(129) = 1.18$, $p = .240$), while low knowledge participants showed a significantly decreased perception of benevolence ($\beta = -.308$, $t(129) = 2.54$, $p = .012$). Interestingly, within the genocide condition, those who were knowledgeable of Residential Schools perceived significantly (one-way) more benevolent intentions behind the harm ($\beta = .218$, $t(64) = 1.79$, $p = .079$). See Tables 7, 9, and 10 for supporting statistics.

The knowledge x labeling interaction was significantly related to participants' judgments of the appropriateness of the label ($\beta = -.231$, $t(128) = 1.95$, $p = .053$; see Figure 3) Within the standard condition, participants who knew more about Residential Schools were significantly (one-way) more likely to judge the label as appropriate ($\beta = .226$, $t(64) = 1.86$, $p = .068$). When the label genocide was used, high knowledge participants did not adjust their judgments of the label ($\beta = -.054$, $t(128) = 0.44$, $p = .661$), but low knowledge participants showed significantly more favorable judgments of the label ($\beta = .285$, $t(128) = 2.34$, $p = .021$). Within the genocide condition, there was no relationship between knowledge and judgments of the label ($\beta = -.124$, $t(65) = 1.00$, $p = .322$). See Tables 7, 9, and 10 for supporting statistics.

Emotions. The knowledge x labeling interaction was not related to the judgments of responsibility composite, but was significantly (one-way) related to a single-item from that scale,

“I believe I should try to help repair the damage caused to Aboriginal people by my racial group” ($\beta = -.221, t(129) = 1.90, p = .060$; see Figure 4). Within the standard condition, participants who knew more about Residential Schools felt significantly (one-way) more responsible for repairing the damage ($\beta = .214, t(65) = 1.79, p = .082$). When the label genocide was used, high knowledge participants showed a significantly decreased judgment of responsibility ($\beta = -.355, t(129) = 2.94, p = .004$), while low knowledge participants did not adjust their judgments of responsibility ($\beta = -.029, t(129) = 0.24, p = .809$). Within the genocide condition, there was no relationship between knowledge and judgments of responsibility. ($\beta = -.120, t(64) = 0.97, p = .335$). See Tables 8, 9, and 10 for supporting statistics.

The labeling x knowledge interaction was significantly related to participants’ beliefs that non-Aboriginal Canadians should educate themselves about Residential Schools ($\beta = -.278, t(129) = 2.38, p = .019$; see Figure 5). Within the standard condition, participants who knew more about Residential Schools reported significantly more positive attitudes towards education about the harm ($\beta = .310, t(65) = 2.63, p = .011$). However, when the label genocide was used, high knowledge participants showed significantly (one-way) less positive attitudes towards education ($\beta = -.219, t(129) = 1.80, p = .074$), while low knowledge participants showed (non-significantly) more positive attitudes towards education, ($\beta = .192, t(129) = 1.57, p = .118$). Within the genocide condition, there was no relationship between knowledge and attitudes towards education ($\beta = -.111, t(64) = 0.90, p = .374$). See Tables 8, 9, and 10 for supporting statistics.

Finally, the labeling x knowledge interaction was significantly related to participants’ feelings of empathy for the victims of Residential Schools ($\beta = -.385, t(129) = 3.35, p = .001$; see Figure 6). Within the standard condition, participants who knew more about Residential Schools

felt significantly more empathy towards the victims ($\beta = .321, t(65) = 2.74, p = .008$). When the label genocide was used, high knowledge participants showed significantly less empathy ($\beta = -.266, t(129) = 2.23, p = .028$), while low knowledge participants showed significantly more empathy ($\beta = .302, t(129) = 2.53, p = .013$). Within the genocide condition, those who were knowledgeable of Residential Schools felt significantly less empathy ($\beta = -.244, t(64) = 2.10, p = .049$). See Tables 8, 9, and 10 for supporting statistics.

Study 1 Discussion

The purpose of this research was to examine how non-Aboriginal Canadians might respond if the label genocide is used to describe what happened in Residential Schools. I hypothesized that participants' reactions to the label would differ depending on their knowledge of Residential Schools. More specifically, I hypothesized that low knowledge participants would respond negatively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide, while high knowledge participants would respond positively. The results of Study 1 contradict this hypothesis as I observed low knowledge participants responded positively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide and high knowledge participants responded negatively.

To interpret these findings, it is important to keep in mind the limitations of using measured knowledge as an independent variable. Most notably, I was measuring knowledge of a harm of which most participants were generally unaware. As such, instead of comparing "low" and "high" knowledge participants, as I intended, I may have incidentally compared "very low" and "medium" knowledge participants. If such a reinterpretation is reasonable, these "contradictory" findings may still fit within my original theoretical framework. Recall, I hypothesized that participants' responses would depend on whether they perceived the label as consistent with what happened in Residential schools. In this study, participants with very low

levels of knowledge may have responded positively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide because they knew nothing about the harm and therefore had little reason to feel what happened was *not* genocide. In contrast, participants with medium levels of knowledge may have responded defensively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide because they possessed a superficial understanding of the harm and therefore judged the label as inconsistent with what happened in Residential Schools. Thus, the results of Study 1 may offer tentative support for my original hypotheses, although not quite in the manner I expected. The purpose of Study 2 was to experimentally manipulate knowledge to examine the effects of labeling on *true* low and high knowledge participants.

Study 2 Method

In Study 2, I again manipulated the perception of Residential Schools as genocide by informing (or not informing) participants that some people believe what happened should be labeled genocide. I assessed the effects of knowledge by manipulating the amount of detail contained in a passage about Residential Schools.

Participants

This study was administered in-person using 153 undergraduate students (84 female, 68 male) from the University of Manitoba who were 19.01 years old on average (*range* = 17 to 34 years, *SD* = 2.63). All participants read an information form and provide informed consent prior to beginning the study. In exchange for their involvement, participants received research participation credit toward their Introductory Psychology research requirement. The sample was similar to that used in Study 1 (i.e., limited to participants who are White and were born in Canada).

Procedure

After signing up, participants attended an in-person experimental session where they were asked to complete a series of dependent measures (as described in Study 1). For those assigned to the genocide condition, I again included a short paragraph prior to the dependent measures stating that some people believe what happened in Residential Schools should be labeled genocide (see Appendix B). I manipulated knowledge by altering the passage about Residential Schools so the harm was described either relatively superficially (i.e., low knowledge; see Appendix C), or in more detail and depth (i.e., high knowledge; see Appendix D). The low knowledge passage contained a general description of the historical events, without providing many details about what occurred. In contrast, the high knowledge passage gave participants' specific details about the decisions and policies that were responsible for the Residential School system, as well as provide statistics and quotes relating to the abuse, neglect, and disease rampant within the schools. Although I based these descriptions on materials developed by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation of Canada (2009) and The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2008), I acknowledge the information in the passages may not accurately represent what happened in Residential Schools. For example, political organizations sometimes make strategic concessions in the stories they tell in order to present something that the public can more easily digest; thus, these passages may portray or represent a particular or strategic framing. Furthermore, some of the details of Residential Schools are still being documented and debated (e.g., how many Residential Schools existed). Another potential limitation of this manipulated knowledge independent variable is that the information contained in these passages is largely fact-based and therefore might overlook the historical context or process that gave rise to Residential Schools. Following a labeling (standard, genocide) by knowledge (low, high) 2 x 2 factorial design, I randomly assigned participants to one of four

conditions: Low knowledge standard, low knowledge genocide, high knowledge standard, or high knowledge genocide.

Dependent Measures

The dependent measures were identical to those used in Study 1. I assessed participants' perceptions of the magnitude of the harm and suffering caused by Residential Schools, the extent to which they thought Residential Schools were unjust and the extent to which they thought Residential Schools happened for benevolent reasons. I also asked participants to report their feelings of guilt and empathy, and rate the extent to which they feel responsible for repairing the damage caused by Residential Schools and the extent to which they feel non-Aboriginal Canadians should educate themselves about Residential Schools. Finally, I asked participants to indicate whether they thought the label genocide is appropriate for describing what happened in Residential Schools.

Study 2 Results

To ensure groups were equal across conditions, I ran a labeling (standard, genocide) by knowledge (low, high) 2 x 2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on a series of relevant variables contained in the Department of Psychology pre-screen questionnaire; specifically, modern racism, political orientation, attitudes towards Aboriginal Peoples', attitudes towards political issues involving Aboriginal Peoples', and intergroup contact. The interaction between labeling and knowledge was significant for attitudes towards Aboriginal Peoples', $F(1, 126) = 4.17, p = .043$, and intergroup contact, $F(1, 126) = 2.83, p = .095$. All other interactions were non-significant. Thus, I decided to include attitudes towards Aboriginal Peoples' and intergroup contact as covariates. Using SPSS 19, I specified a 2 (Labeling: standard, genocide) by 2 (Knowledge: low, high) Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) model with attitudes towards

Aboriginal Peoples' and intergroup contact as covariates. I followed-up any significant omnibus effects with *t*-tests.

Participant exclusions. To ensure all participants in my final sample were adequately exposed to the experimental manipulations, I covertly recorded how long each participant took to read the labeling passage and excluded those who took less than one standard deviation below the average time to read the passage ($M = 27.32$, $SD = 12.23$); I eliminated ten participants who read the labeling passage too quickly (< 15.09 seconds), the majority (80%) of whom were from the high knowledge, genocide condition. I also excluded one participant who admitted they did not respond honestly to the survey and two participants for whom I was missing pre-screen data. Thus, my final sample for Study 2 consisted of 140 participants.

Descriptives. See Table 11 for variable intercorrelations and Table 12 for descriptive statistics, including internal consistencies.

Knowledge

Evaluations. In general, high knowledge participants gave a significantly more generous estimate of the magnitude of the harm caused by Residential Schools ($F(1, 130) = 5.19$, $p = .024$), perceived Residential Schools as significantly more unjust ($F(1, 131) = 8.83$, $p = .004$) and significantly less benevolent ($F(1, 130) = 3.61$, $p = .060$), and perceived significantly greater suffering ($F(1, 132) = 4.88$, $p = .029$). Finally, high knowledge participants were significantly more supportive of using the label genocide to describe what happened in Residential Schools ($F(1, 128) = 4.24$, $p = .042$). See Table 13 for supporting statistics.

Emotions. In general, high knowledge participants felt significantly more collective guilt about Residential Schools ($F(1, 131) = 10.36$, $p = .002$), and perceived significantly greater responsibility for repairing the damage caused by Residential Schools ($F(1, 131) = 5.08$, $p =$

.026). Participants in the high and low knowledge conditions did not differ in their beliefs that non-Aboriginal Canadians should educate themselves about Residential Schools or feelings of empathy towards the victims of Residential Schools. See Table 13 for supporting statistics.

Labeling

Evaluations. Labeling was not related to participants' estimates of the magnitude of the harm caused by Residential Schools, perceptions of Residential Schools as unjust or benevolent, or perceptions of suffering caused by Residential Schools. However, participants who heard Residential Schools described as genocide were more supportive of using the label to describe the harm ($F(1, 128) = 11.89, p = .001$). See Table 13 for supporting statistics.

Emotions. Labeling was not related to participants' feelings of collective guilt, judgments of responsibility for repairing the damage caused by Residential Schools, beliefs that non-Aboriginal Canadians should educate themselves about Residential Schools, or feelings of empathy for the victims of Residential Schools. See Table 13 for supporting statistics.

Knowledge x Labeling Interaction

Evaluations. There was a significant (one-way) interaction between labeling and knowledge on participants' perceptions of injustice ($F(1, 131) = 2.94, p = .089$; see Figure 7). Within the standard condition, high and low knowledge participants did not differ in their perceptions of Residential Schools as unjust ($t(66) = 0.84, p = .402$). When the label genocide was used, high knowledge participants did not change their perceptions of injustice ($t(65) = 0.85, p = .397$), but low knowledge participants showed a significantly decreased perception of injustice ($t(68) = 1.65, p = .103$). Within the genocide condition, high knowledge participants perceived the harm as significantly more unjust ($t(67) = 3.28, p = .002$). See Table 13 for supporting statistics.

There was also a significant interaction between labeling and knowledge on participants' perceptions of suffering ($F(1, 132) = 5.74, p = .018$; see Figure 8). Within the standard condition, high and low knowledge participants did not differ in their perceptions of suffering ($t(67) = 0.19, p = .847$). When the label genocide was used, high knowledge participants showed a significantly (one-way) increased perception of suffering ($t(65) = 1.93, p = .058$), while low knowledge participants showed a (non-significantly) decreased perception of suffering ($t(69) = 1.54, p = .128$). Within the genocide condition, high knowledge participants perceived significantly greater suffering ($t(67) = 3.22, p = .002$). See Table 13 for supporting statistics.

Emotions. In general, the labeling x knowledge interaction did not predict feelings of collective guilt, but was significantly related to a single-item from that scale, "I can easily feel guilty for bad outcomes brought about by members of their racial group," ($F(1, 130) = 4.36, p = .039$; see Figure 9). Within the standard condition, high knowledge participants felt significantly more guilt than low knowledge participants ($t(67) = 3.16, p = .002$). When the label genocide was used, high knowledge participants did not change their feelings of guilt ($t(63) = 1.01, p = .318$), while low knowledge participants showed significantly increased feelings of guilt ($t(69) = 2.02, p = .046$). Within the genocide condition, high and low knowledge participants felt equally guilty ($t(65) = 0.06, p = .956$). See Table 13 for supporting statistics.

In general, the labeling x knowledge interaction also did not predict judgments of responsibility, but was significantly (one-way) related to a single-item from that measure, "I feel responsible for repairing the damage caused to Aboriginal people by Residential Schools," ($F(1, 132) = 3.44, p = .066$; see Figure 10). Within the standard condition, high knowledge participants felt significantly more responsible ($t(67) = 2.97, p = .004$). However, when the label genocide was used, high knowledge participants showed a significantly (one-way) decreased

judgment of responsibility ($t(65) = 1.69, p = .097$), while low knowledge participants did not adjust their judgments of responsibility ($t(69) = 1.00, p = .322$). Within the genocide condition, high and low knowledge participants felt equally responsible for repairing the damage caused by Residential Schools ($t(67) = 0.22, p = .824$). See Table 13 for supporting statistics.

Study 2 Discussion

In Study 2, I manipulated how much participants' knew about Residential Schools and examined how they responded to the label genocide. The pattern of interactions was consistent with my original hypotheses. An important point of discussion, however, concerns the disparity between participants' evaluative responses and emotional reactions in this study. That is, I observed there to be a somewhat hydraulic relationship between participants' evaluative responses and emotional reactions. Recall, high knowledge participants responded *positively* to the label in terms of their evaluations of the harm, but responded *negatively* in terms of their emotional reactions. In contrast, low knowledge participants responded *negatively* to the label in terms of their evaluations of the harm, but responded *positively* in terms of their emotional reactions. This hydraulic pattern of results stands in contrast to the results of Study 1, wherein participants' evaluative responses were consistent with their emotional reactions. Similarly, this hydraulic pattern of results was not observed in a pilot study conducted prior to beginning this research. In this pilot study, which was a near replication of Study 2, low knowledge participants responded uniformly negatively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide, while high knowledge participants responded uniformly positively.

One possible explanation is that high knowledge participants distanced themselves emotionally to avoid the psychological discomfort likely associated with acknowledging the severity of the harm. However, I am relatively unconvinced by this explanation, for two reasons.

First, this explanation does not account for why low knowledge participants displayed the reverse hydraulic pattern of results. Second, if this explanation were accurate, I would necessarily expect participants' evaluations of the harm to mediate the relationship between the interaction and their emotions; however, such mediation analyses were non-significant. Without further data, my inclination is to not try to explain these results. Thus, I will exclude the emotion findings from the interpretation of my results, because I cannot confidently explain this evaluation-emotion inconsistency. Furthermore, I only observed these emotional changes on two single-item measures, whereas I observed the evaluative changes on two full scales. The conclusion I therefore take from Study 2 is that my original hypotheses were supported to the extent that low knowledge participants responded negatively to the label, while high knowledge participants responded positively.

General Discussion

The purpose of this research was to examine how non-Aboriginal Canadians might respond if the label genocide is used to describe what happened in Residential Schools. In general, I expected non-Aboriginal Canadians would respond defensively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide. I also hypothesized, however, that participants' responses might depend on whether they perceived the label as consistent with what happened in Residential schools. As such, I expected participants who were knowledgeable about what happened in Residential Schools might respond positively to the label.

In two studies, I manipulated the perception of Residential Schools as genocide by informing (or not informing) participants that some people believe what happened should be labeled genocide. I assessed the effects of knowledge by either measuring participants' pre-existing knowledge of Residential Schools (Study 1) or manipulating the amount of detailed

contained in a passage about Residential Schools (Study 2). In Study 1, low knowledge participants responded positively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide, while high knowledge participants responded negatively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide. In Study 2, I observed an opposite pattern of results such that low knowledge participants responded negatively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide, while high knowledge participants responded positively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide.

To make sense of these contradictory findings, I acknowledged a limitation of my measured knowledge variable and suggested that the “high” knowledge participants from Study 1 were not, in fact, high knowledge, but rather “medium” knowledge, and the “low” knowledge participants were not, in fact, low knowledge but rather “very low” knowledge. Thus, it was somewhat inappropriate to attempt to compare the low and high knowledge groups from Study 1 with those from Study 2. In reconceptualising the low and high knowledge participants from Study 1 as “very low” and “medium” knowledge participants, the patterns of results across studies are no longer “opposite” and actually become reasonably consistent. Across both studies, participants responded defensively to the label when it was inconsistent with what they knew about Residential Schools; Study 1 medium knowledge participants and Study 2 low knowledge participants both held a superficial understanding of what happened in Residential Schools and responded negatively to the label, presumably because they felt symbolically (and unfairly) criticized. In contrast, participants responded positively to the label when it was *not* inconsistent with what they knew about Residential Schools; Study 1 very low knowledge participants and Study 2 high knowledge participants held either no understanding at all or a concrete understanding of what happened in Residential Schools and responded positively to the label, presumably because they either agreed with the claim, or at the least, could not reasonably

dispute the suggestion.

For future research to support these findings it will be important to replicate Study 1 using an injustice that people are actually knowledgeable about (as there was no true high knowledge group in that study). In such a study, I would expect a u-shaped distribution such that those who are very low or very high in knowledge would respond positively to the label, while those in the middle of the distribution would respond negatively. Future research should also try to incorporate dependent measures that adequately account for the complexity of genocide. Recall, in this research, higher scores on the “perceptions of intentions” scale (e.g., “The Government probably had the best of intentions with the Indian Residential Schools”) were taken (perhaps inappropriately) as indicative of a defensive response. It is possible, after all, for participants to agree with such statements, and yet still see the government as having genocidal intent.

Do the Facts Matter?

The purpose of this research was to examine how knowledge moderates non-Aboriginal Canadians’ reactions to the label genocide. Across both studies, findings suggest that the facts do matter, as they seem to dictate whether participants respond defensively to the label. When participants possessed a superficial understanding of what happened in Residential Schools, they responded negatively to the label, presumably because they perceived the label as inconsistent with what they knew about Residential Schools. In contrast, when participants possessed a concrete understanding of the harm, they responded positively, presumably because they perceived the label as consistent with what they knew about Residential Schools. These findings suggest that people are at least somewhat rational in their reactions to threat as I observed participants responded *positively* to system- and ingroup-threatening information when they had

reason to believe the criticism was warranted. An interesting finding from this research is that participants who possessed very low knowledge about what happened in Residential Schools also responded positively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide. Intuitively, one would expect very low knowledge participants would respond most defensively because the label would seem extremely inconsistent with what they know about Residential Schools. This finding further highlights the extent to which people might be influenced by rational concerns in their reactions to threat, as these very low knowledge participants responded *positively* to a symbolic criticism, presumably because they had no reason to believe the criticism was unwarranted.

The theoretical framework I have adopted in this research assumes that participants' reactions to the label depend heavily on whether the label is consistent with what they think happened in Residential Schools. It will be important for future research to investigate participants' perceptions of the consistency of the label as a potential mediator. In this research, the interaction between knowledge and labeling predicted participants' perceptions of the label in Study 1, but not Study 2. Furthermore, in both studies, post-hoc mediation analyses (to test whether participants' perceptions of the label mediated their responses) were non-significant. Thus, the theoretical framework I have used to explain my findings is lacking important empirical verification.

Implications for Advocacy

These findings hold important implications for advocacy organizations such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, both of whom are seeking to educate the public about the potentially genocidal nature of Residential Schools. The results of Study 1 suggest that there may be a downside to "raising awareness" in that participants who were somewhat aware of what happened in Residential Schools reacted

defensively when the label genocide was used (c.f., Study 1 medium knowledge participants).

The potential lesson here is that it might be more effective to use intensive, all-or-none methods of education when dealing with uncomfortable or threatening topics such as genocide.

Across both studies, participants' responded defensively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide, when the label was inconsistent with what they knew about Residential Schools. An important observation was that when participants held a superficial understanding of Residential Schools, it was not just *ineffective* to portray Residential Schools as genocide, but it was actually *counterproductive* to do so, because the label was perceived as a symbolic (and unfair) criticism. This "backfire" effect captures what is meant in this research as "genocide denial," which, in contrast to a simple discounting of the label, occurs when perpetrator group members respond *defensively* an accusation of genocide.

Overall, these findings underscore the importance of narrowing the gap between what people know about Residential Schools and what they think about the concept of genocide. One way to narrow this gap would be to educate people about what happened in Residential Schools. The results from Study 1, however, demonstrate that education can sometimes backfire. A perhaps more effective strategy might be to broaden the way people think about genocide (c.f., Woolford, 2009). This recommendation holds particular relevance for the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, set to open in 2014 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. A prominent (and controversial) feature of the Museum is the focus on the Holocaust. Some members of the public have expressed concern that including a *permanent* Holocaust gallery puts the Museum at-risk of becoming "just another Holocaust museum" (Winnipeg Free Press, 2010). Others insist that the Holocaust is one of the most effective tools for teaching people about human rights (Content Advisory Committee Final Report, 2010). The results of this research demonstrate the

importance of maintaining consistency between what people know about Residential Schools and what they think about genocide. Conceivably, focusing too much on the Holocaust may perpetuate the lay perception that genocide consists only of mass killing and extermination, which may in turn, reinforce lay perceptions' of Residential Schools as *not* genocide.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to examine how non-Aboriginal Canadians might respond if the label genocide is used to describe what happened in Residential Schools. Overall, participants' reactions to the label depended on what they knew about Residential Schools such that those with a superficial level of knowledge responded defensively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide, while those with no knowledge or high levels of knowledge responded positively to a description of Residential Schools as genocide. Findings highlight the importance of establishing consistency between public perceptions of genocide and beliefs about what happened in Residential Schools.

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Table 1

Study 1 Factor Loadings for an Exploratory Factor Analysis of Evaluation Measures

Item	Factor			
	Intent	CVS	Unjust	--
The Indian Residential Schools happened out of concern for Aboriginal peoples.	-.902	.090	-.076	-.180
The Government probably had the best of intentions with the Indian Residential Schools.	-.790	-.028	-.073	.035
Aboriginal people were sent to Indian Residential Schools for their own good.	-.662	-.189	-.028	.263
In general, their experience continues to have a negative impact on Aboriginal people today.	.012	.876	-.016	.306
Aboriginal people continue to suffer today because of Indian Residential Schools.	.027	.807	.033	-.038

Aboriginal people are generally unhappy today because of their experience.	.087	.745	-.110	-.017
Aboriginal people experience psychological pain today because of their experience.	-.051	.723	.109	-.089
Indian Residential Schools have few lasting negative effects on Aboriginal people.	.105	-.529	-.136	.158
Aboriginal people should let go of what happened in the past.	-.157	-.334	-.064	.112
The Indian Residential Schools represent a dark spot in Canadian history	.020	.060	.860	.045
Indian Residential Schools were harmful.	.010	-.011	.826	.090
The Indian Residential Schools were unjust.	.088	-.027	.777	-.139

Note. Factor loadings > .300 are in boldface.

Table 2

Study 2 Factor Loadings for an Exploratory Factor Analysis Evaluation Measures

Item	Factor			
	Unjust	Intent	CVS	--
The Indian Residential Schools represent a dark spot in Canadian history.	1.069	.048	-.085	.029
The Indian Residential Schools were unjust.	.500	-.112	.203	-.051
Aboriginal people were sent to Indian Residential Schools for their own good.	.062	.978	.031	-.242
The Indian Residential Schools happened out of concern for Aboriginal peoples.	-.008	.721	-.036	.104
The Government probably had the best of intentions with the Indian Residential Schools.	-.118	.564	-.025	.151

Aboriginal people should let go of what happened in the past.	-.235	.265	-.229	.016
Aboriginal people continue to suffer today because of Indian Residential Schools.	-.005	.000	.853	-.073
In general, their experience continues to have a negative impact on Aboriginal people today.	.013	.030	.823	.009
Aboriginal people experience psychological pain today because of their experience.	.025	-.044	.720	.173
Aboriginal people are generally unhappy today because of their experience.	.014	.099	.511	.415
Indian Residential Schools have few lasting negative effects on Aboriginal people.	-.067	.136	-.465	.099

Indian Residential Schools were harmful.	.303	-.122	.158	.355
--	-------------	-------	------	-------------

Note. Factor loadings > .300 are in boldface.

Table 3

Study 1 Factor Loadings for an Exploratory Factor Analysis of Emotion Measures

Item	Factor		
	Education	Guilt	Responsibility
Non-Aboriginal Canadians should do more to educate themselves about Indian Residential Schools.	1.037	.034	-.120
Non-Aboriginal Canadians have a responsibility to try to learn about what happened to Aboriginal people in Indian Residential Schools.	.647	-.019	.205
I feel guilty about the negative things non-Aboriginal Canadians have done to Aboriginal people.	.048	.994	-.059
I feel guilty about Canada's actions toward Aboriginal people.	.016	.962	-.027
I feel regret for some of the things non-Aboriginal Canadians have done to Aboriginal people.	-.010	.522	.245
I feel responsible for repairing the damage caused to Aboriginal people by Indian Residential Schools	.047	-.026	.816

I believe I should try to help repair the damage caused to Aboriginal people by my racial group.	.092	.196	.608
I can easily feel guilty for bad outcomes brought about by members of my racial group.	.021	.368	.382

Note. Factor loadings > .300 are in boldface.

Table 4

Study 2 Factor Loadings for an Exploratory Factor Analysis of Emotion Measures

Item	Factor		
	Responsibility	Guilt	Education
I feel responsible for repairing the damage caused to Aboriginal people by Indian Residential Schools	1.011	-.013	-.005
I believe I should try to help repair the damage caused to Aboriginal people by my racial group.	.396	.355	.220
I feel guilty about the negative things non-Aboriginal Canadians have done to Aboriginal people.	-.048	1.026	-.091
I feel guilty about Canada's actions toward Aboriginal people.	-.043	.954	.046
I can easily feel guilty for bad outcomes brought about by members of my racial group.	.038	.639	.047
I feel regret for some of the things non-Aboriginal Canadians have done to Aboriginal people.	.233	.525	.107

Non-Aboriginal Canadians have a responsibility to try to learn about what happened to Aboriginal people in Indian Residential Schools.	-.044	-.041	.890
Non-Aboriginal Canadians should do more to educate themselves about Indian Residential Schools.	.060	.066	.823

Note. Factor loadings > .300 are in boldface.

Table 5
Study 1 Variable Intercorrelations

	Variable									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Damage	--	.55**	-.49**	.50**	.45**	.39**	.51**	.31**	.29**	.11
2. Injustice		--	-.58**	.39**	.30**	.26**	.29**	.25**	.15	.10
3. Intent			--	-.34**	-.41**	-.45**	-.30**	-.23**	-.44**	-.02
4. Suffering				--	.33**	.42**	.42**	.31**	.26**	.05
5. Guilt					--	.68**	.50**	.34**	.35**	-.05
6. Responsibility						--	.48**	.28**	.38**	-.06
7. Education							--	.39**	.21*	.10
8. Empathy								--	.23*	.09
9. Genocide									--	.08
10. Knowledge										--

Note. N = 129-136. †p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

Table 6

Study 1 Descriptive Information

Variable	Statistic					
	Range	α	M	SD	Skewness(SE)	Kurtosis(SE)
Damage	10.00-100.00	--	78.18	18.73	-1.12(0.21)	0.98(.041)
Injustice	3.00-7.00	.88	6.06	1.05	-1.24(0.21)	0.62(.041)
Intent	1.00-7.00	.86	3.31	1.46	0.30(0.21)	-0.55(.041)
Suffering	1.20-7.00	.86	4.52	1.25	-0.27(0.21)	-0.12(.041)
Guilt	1.00-7.00	.88	4.29	1.41	-0.51(0.21)	-0.49(.041)
Responsibility	1.00-6.50	--	3.41	1.33	-0.00(0.21)	-0.67(.041)
Education	1.00-7.00	--	5.00	1.23	-0.80(0.21)	0.60(.041)
Empathy	1.00-7.00	.88	4.46	1.12	-0.48(0.21)	0.83(.041)
Genocide	1.00-7.00	--	4.26	1.12	-0.42(0.21)	-0.72(.041)
Knowledge	6.67-80.00	--	37.44	16.12	0.26(0.21)	-0.78(0.42)

Note. Damage was measured on a 100-point scale (0 = *very little*, 100 = *very much*). Knowledge was measured on a 100-point scale (0-100%). All other variables were measured on a seven-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

Table 7

Study 1 Standardized Beta-Weights Predicting Evaluations

Effect	Variable							
	Damage		Injustice		Intent		Suffering	
	<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Step 2</u>	<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Step 2</u>	<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Step 2</u>	<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Step 2</u>
Labeling (L)	-.016	-.016	-.052	-.052	-.082	-.082	.014	.014
Knowledge (K)	.112	.246*	.098	.201†	-.020	-.228*	.052	.060
L x K Interaction	--	-.198†	--	-.152	--	.306*	--	-.011
Model R2	.013	.034†	.012	.025	.007	.057*	.003	.003
Δ R2	--	.021†	--	.012	--	.050*	--	.000

Effect	Variable	
	Genocide	
	<u>Step 2</u>	<u>Step 2</u>
Labeling (L)	.117	.116
Knowledge (K)	.045	.203†
L x K Interaction	--	-.231*
Model R2	.016	.044*
Δ R2		.028*

Note. †p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

Table 8
Study 1 Standardized Beta Weights Predicting Emotions

Effect	Variable							
	Guilt		Responsibility		Resp1		Education	
	<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Step 2</u>	<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Step 2</u>	<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Step 2</u>	<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Step 2</u>
Labeling (L)	-.101	-.101	-.157†	-.157†	-.192*	-.192*	-.014	-.014
Knowledge (K)	-.046	.071	-.056	.066	.049	.199†	.100	.290*
L x K Interaction	--	-.171	--	-.179	--	-.221†	--	-.278*
Model R2	.012	.028	.028	.045	.039	.065†	.010	.052*
Δ R2	--	.016	--	.017	--	.026†	--	.042*

Effect	Variable	
	Empathy	
	<u>Step 1</u>	<u>Step 2</u>
Labeling (L)	.018	.018
Knowledge (K)	.087	.348*
L x K Interaction	--	-.385**
Model R2	.008	.087**
Δ R2	--	.080**

Note. †p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

Table 9

Study 1 Simple Slopes of Labeling

Variable	Knowledge	
	- 1 SD	+ 1 SD
Damage	.13	-.16
Injustice	.06	-.17
Intent	-.31*	.14
Suffering	.02	.01
Guilt	.03	-.23†
Responsibility	-.03	-.29*
Resp1	-.03	-.36**
Education	.19	-.22†
Empathy	.30*	-.27*
Genocide	.29*	-.05

Note. †p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

Table 10

Study 1 Simple Effects of Knowledge

Variable	Labeling	
	Standard	Genocide
Damage	.24*	-.05
Injustice	.22†	-.02
Intent	-.23†	.22†
Suffering	.06	.05
Guilt	.07	-.18
Responsibility	.07	-.20
Resp1	.21†	-.12
Education	.31*	-.11
Empathy	.32*	-.24*
Genocide	.23†	-.12

Note. †p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

Table 11

Study 2 Variable Intercorrelations

Variable	Variable								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Damage	--	.44**	-.49**	.42**	.43**	.45**	.42**	.31**	.31**
2. Injustice		--	-.49**	.59**	.33**	.38**	.48**	.261*	.27**
3. Intent			--	-.36**	-.37**	-.41**	-.43**	-.15	-.25**
4. Suffering				--	.28**	.38**	.50**	.22*	.26**
5. Guilt					--	.70**	.52**	.47**	.35**
6. Responsibility						--	.63**	.43**	.38**
7. Education							--	.38**	.30**
8. Empathy								--	.29**
9. Genocide									--

Note. N = 137-140. †p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01.

Table 12

Study 2 Descriptive Information

Variable	Statistic					
	<i>Range</i>	<i>α</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>
Damage	18.50-100.00	--	85.75	14.08	-1.69(0.21)	4.09(0.41)
Injustice	3.33-7.00	.74	6.36	0.79	-1.48(0.21)	1.97(0.41)
Intent	1.00-7.00	.79	2.75	1.27	0.79(0.21)	0.30(0.41)
Suffering	1.80-7.00	.83	4.94	1.12	-0.34(0.21)	-0.26(0.41)
Guilt	1.00-7.00	.91	4.59	1.54	-0.76(0.21)	-0.05(0.41)
Responsibility	1.00-7.00	--	3.70	1.47	0.04(0.21)	-0.60(0.41)
Education	1.50-7.00	--	5.04	1.16	-0.42(0.21)	-0.23(0.41)
Empathy	1.00-7.00	.85	4.73	1.06	-0.41(0.21)	0.96(0.41)
Genocide	1.00-7.00	--	4.54	1.57	-0.42(0.21)	-0.61(0.41)

Note. Damage was measured on a 100-point scale (0 = *very little*, 100 = *very much*). Knowledge was measured on a 100-point scale (0-100%). All other variables were measured on a seven-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

Table 13

Study 2 Main Effect and Interaction Analyses

Variable	Effect			Condition			
	Knowledge	Labeling	Knowledge x Labeling	Low Knowledge, Standard	Low Knowledge, Genocide	High Knowledge, Standard	High Knowledge Genocide
	F-Values			<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Damage	5.19*	0.52	0.32	81.35(14.05) ^{ac}	84.49(14.11)	88.23(14.10) ^a	88.56(14.20) ^c
Injustice	8.83**	0.33	2.94†	6.31(0.75) ^{ac}	6.01(0.76) ^{abd}	6.47(0.76) ^d	6.62(0.76) ^{bc}
Intent	3.61†	1.98	0.52	2.75(1.23)	3.20(1.24) ^{ab}	2.50(1.24) ^b	2.64(1.26) ^a
Suffering	4.88*	0.09	5.74*	4.94(1.04) ^c	4.55(1.05) ^b	4.89(1.05) ^a	5.39(1.06) ^{abc}
Guilt	10.36**	0.48	1.94	3.94(1.39) ^{ab}	4.45(1.42) ^c	5.06(1.42) ^{ac}	4.88(1.43) ^b
Guilt4	5.00*	0.49	4.36*	3.27(1.73) ^{abc}	4.22(1.74) ^a	4.67(1.74) ^b	4.24(1.75) ^c
Responsibility	5.08*	0.30	2.59	3.30(1.30) ^a	3.54(1.31) ^b	4.17(1.31) ^{ab}	3.68(1.32)
Resp2	5.04*	0.25	3.44†	2.82(1.36) ^b	3.15(1.37) ^c	3.78(1.37) ^{abc}	3.22(1.38) ^a
Education	0.64	0.17	0.10	5.00(1.11)	4.86(1.10)	5.09(1.13)	5.07(1.02)
Empathy	1.68	0.26	1.79	4.54(0.99) ^a	4.69(1.00)	4.99(1.00) ^a	4.67(1.01)
Genocide	4.24*	11.89***	0.03	3.04(1.41) ^{ac}	3.92(1.41) ^a	3.58(1.42) ^b	4.38(1.43) ^{bc}

Note. Means within a row that share the same subscript differ significantly from each other ($p < .05$). Italicized subscripts indicate $p < .10$. Damage was measured on a 100-point scale (0 = *very little*, 100 = *very much*). All other variables were measured on a seven-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). † $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

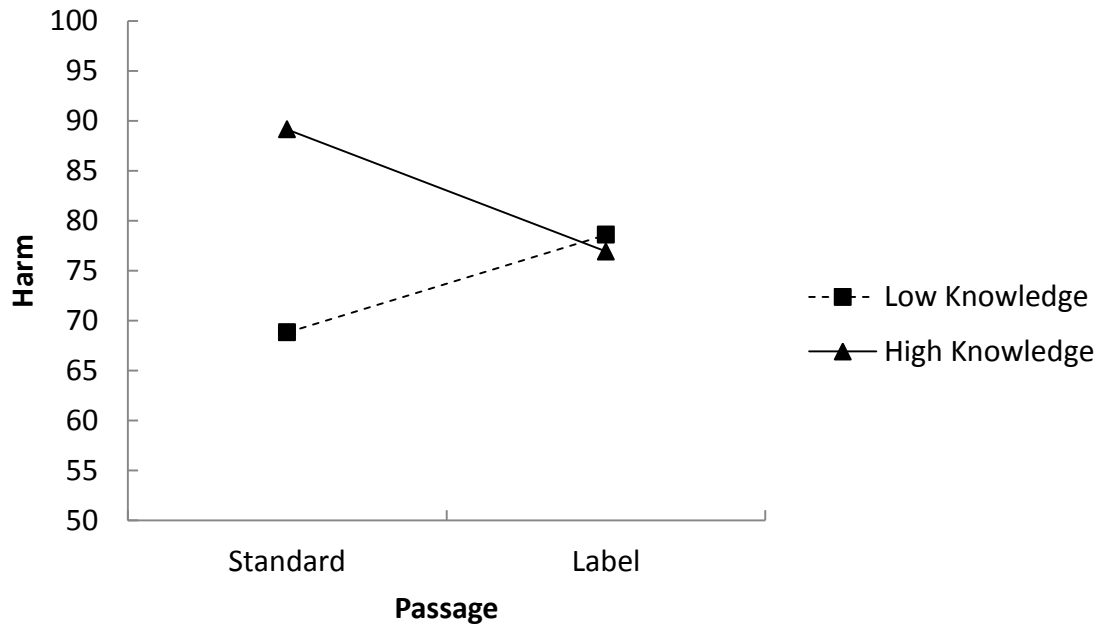


Figure 1. Study 1 interaction between knowledge and labeling on perceptions of the magnitude of the harm caused by Residential Schools.

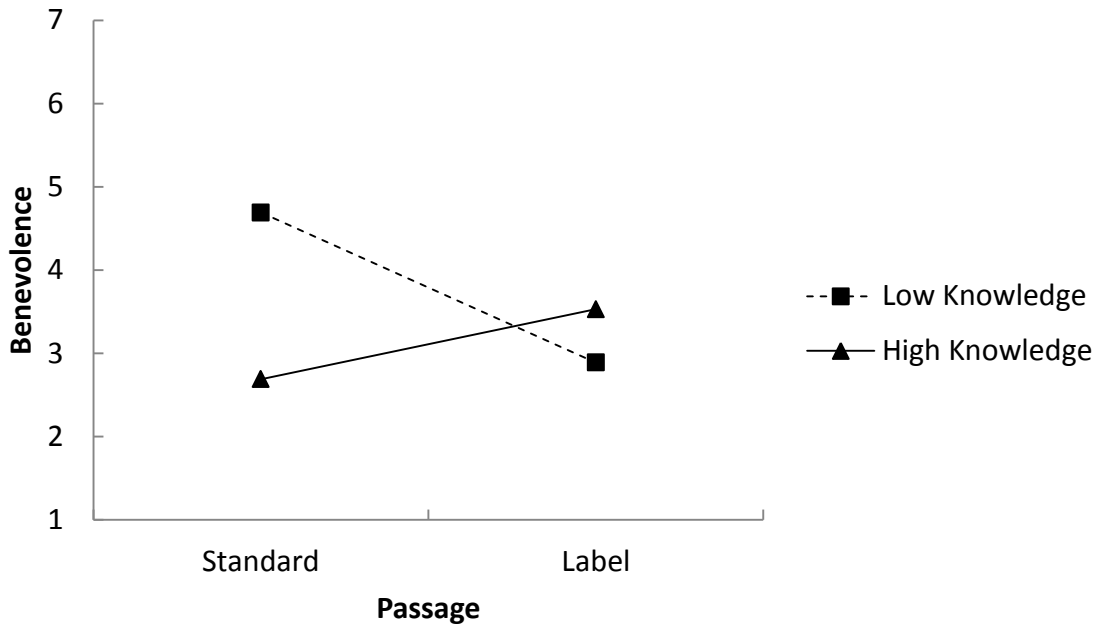


Figure 2. Study 1 interaction between knowledge and labeling on perceptions of the intent behind Residential Schools.

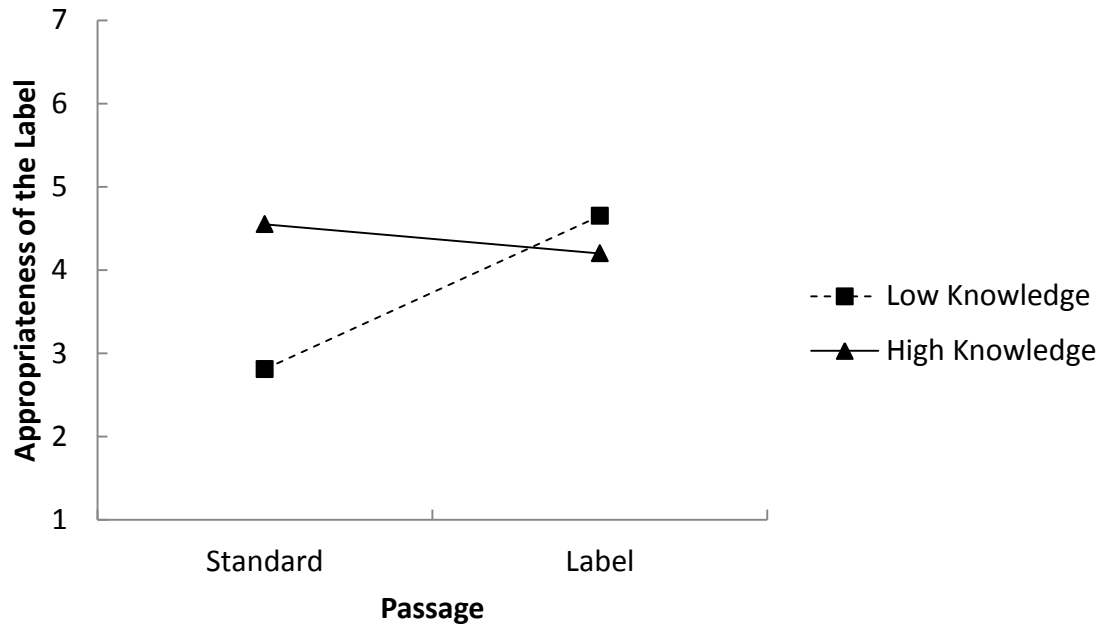


Figure 3. Study 1 interaction between knowledge and labeling on participants' perceptions of the appropriateness of the label genocide for describing Residential Schools. LK slope is $p < .05$

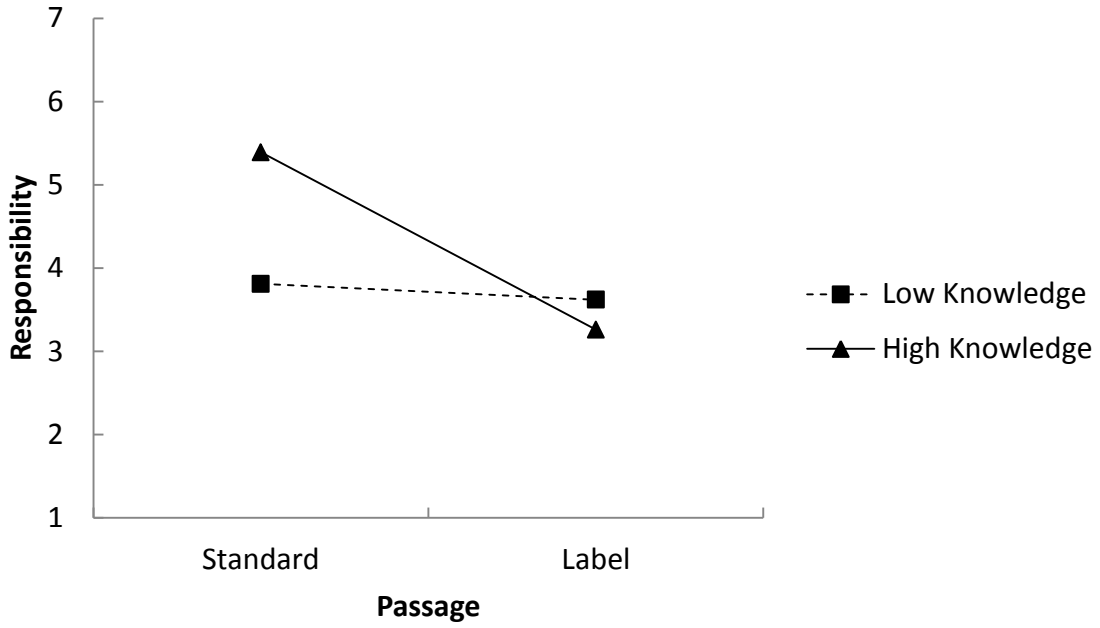


Figure 4. Study 1 interaction between knowledge and labeling on judgments of responsibility for repairing the damage caused by Residential Schools.

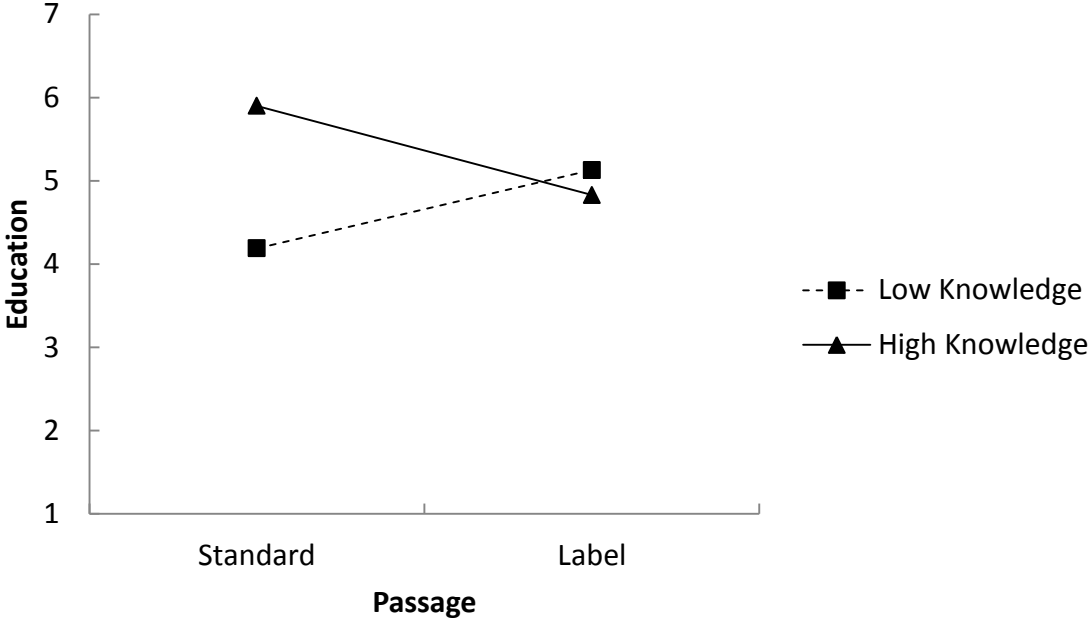


Figure 5. Study 1 interaction between knowledge and labeling on beliefs that non-Aboriginal Canadians should educate themselves about Residential Schools.

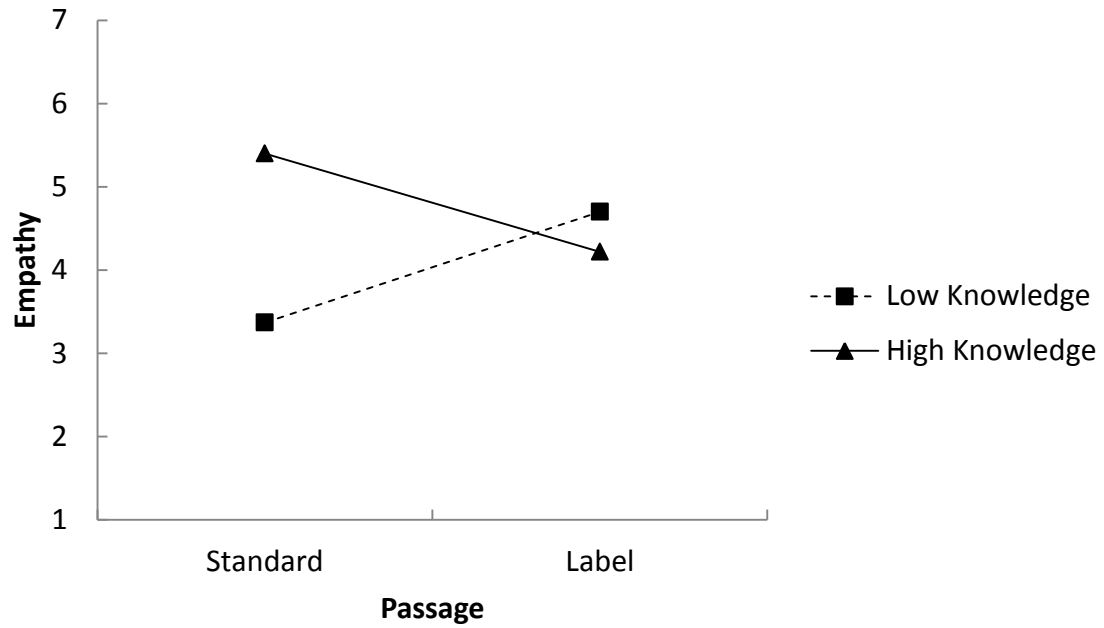


Figure 6. Study 1 interaction between knowledge and labeling on feelings of empathy for the victims of Residential Schools.

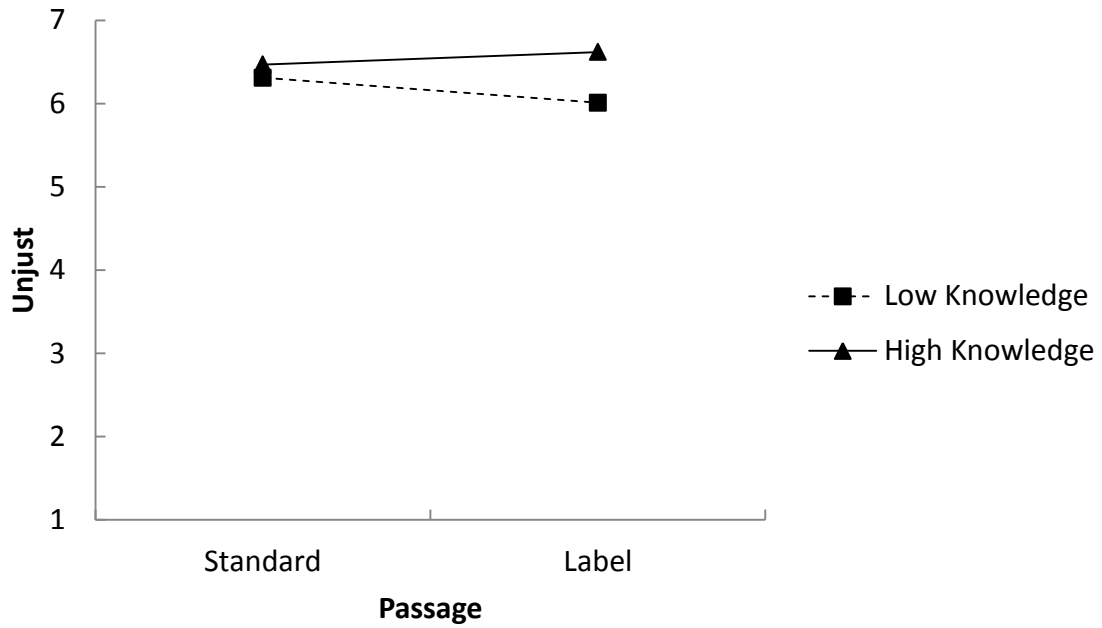


Figure 7. Study 2 interaction between knowledge and labeling on perceptions of Residential Schools as unjust.

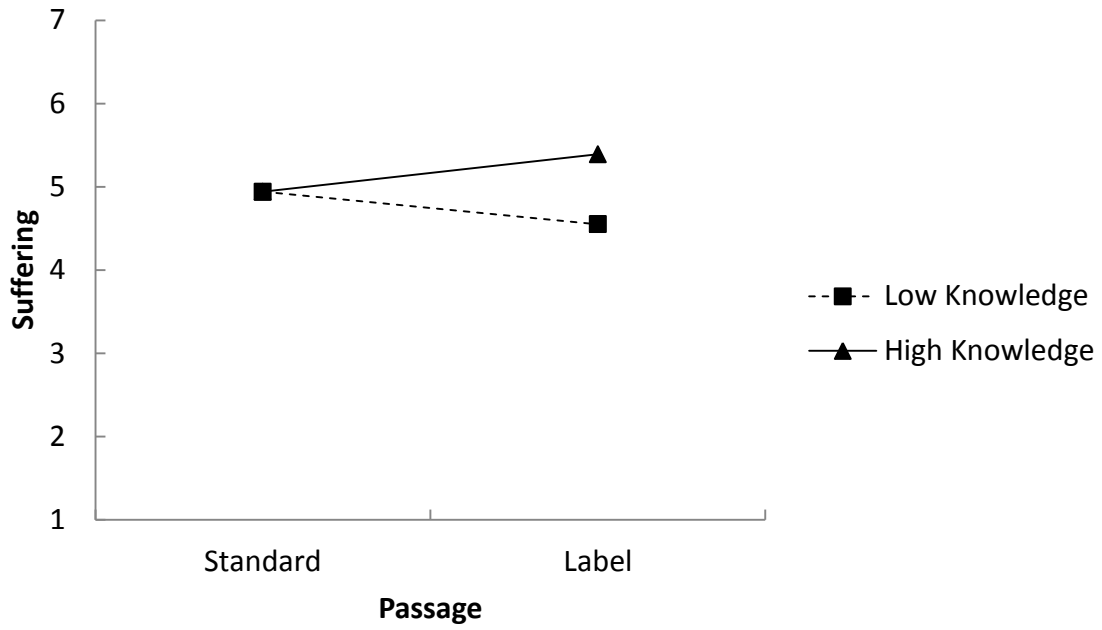


Figure 8. Study 2 interaction between knowledge and labeling on perceptions of the suffering caused by Residential Schools.

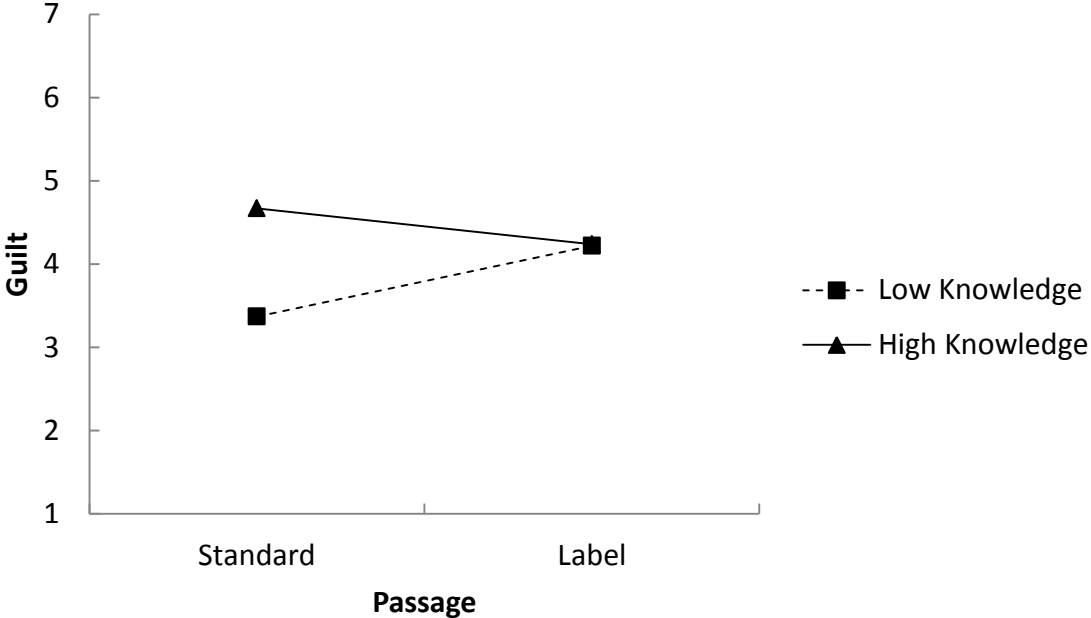


Figure 9. Study 2 interaction between knowledge and labeling on feelings of collective guilt for Residential Schools.

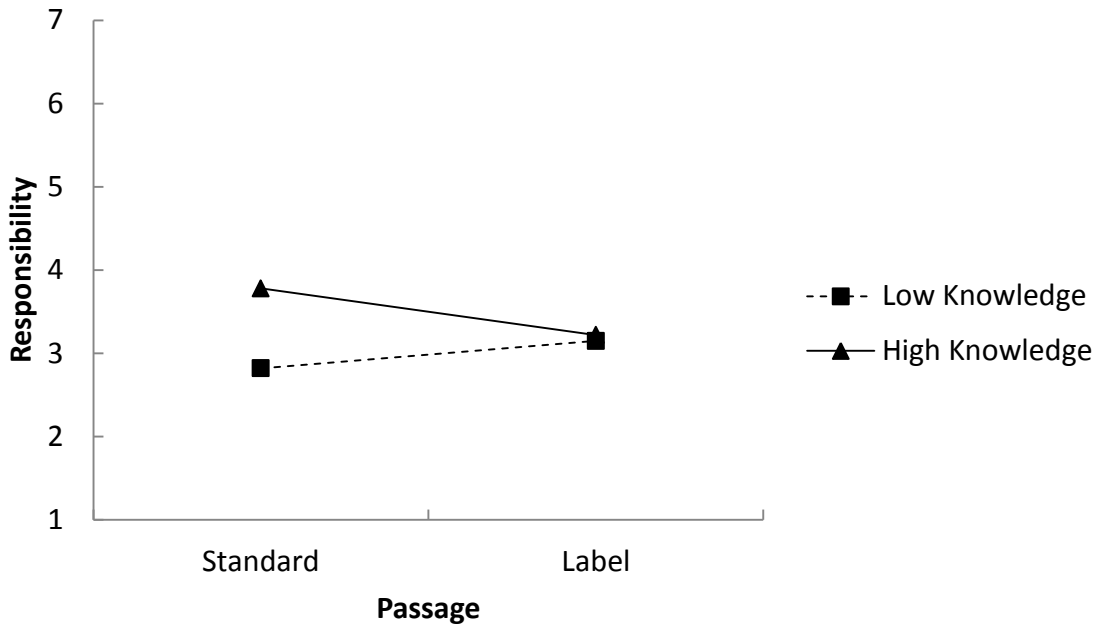


Figure 10. Study 2 interaction between knowledge and labeling on judgments of responsibility for repairing the damage caused by Residential Schools.

Appendix A

When did the Canadian government begin operating Indian Residential Schools?

- a) 1600s
- b) 1700s
- c) 1800s
- d) 1900s

In total, how many Indian Residential Schools were established in Canada?

- a) 25
- b) 130
- c) 640
- d) 1180

What was the name of the report that led the Canadian government to ultimately adopt a residential school system?

- a) Davin Report
- b) Gladue Report
- c) Royal Proclamation Report
- d) Midwest Report

What was the most common cause of death in Indian Residential Schools?

- a) Measles
- b) Tuberculosis
- c) Influenza
- d) Diabetes

When did the last Indian Residential School close?

- a) 1850
- b) 1923
- c) 1972
- d) 1996

Which former head of Indian and Northern Affairs was famously quoted as wanting to "get rid of the Indian problem"?

- a) Duncan Campbell Scott
- b) Neil Walker
- c) Sir Charles Metcalfe
- d) David Mills

Mortality rates in some Indian Residential Schools reached what percentage?

- a) 10%
- b) 25%
- c) 50%
- d) 80%

Which former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations brought issues in Indian Residential Schools to light by publicly sharing his own personal stories of abuse and sexual assault?

- a) Shawn Atleo
- b) Ovide Mercredi
- c) Matthew Coon Come
- d) Phil Fontaine

Which Canadian Prime Minister offered the first official apology for survivors of Indian Residential Schools?

- a) Sir John A. Macdonald
- b) Steven Harper
- c) Jean Chretien
- d) Pierre Elliot Trudeau

What is the value of the Indian Residential Schools Survivors Agreement?

- a) 1 million
- b) 150 million
- c) 2 billion
- d) 5 billion

Which of the following churches was NOT involved in the operation of Indian Residential Schools?

- a) Anglican
- b) Catholic
- c) Mennonite
- d) United

In all, approximately how many Aboriginal children attended Indian Residential Schools?

- a) 10,000
- b) 80,000
- c) 150,000
- d) More than 400,000.

Which of the following Aboriginal groups did NOT attend Indian Residential Schools?

- a) First Nations
- b) Inuit
- c) Metis
- d) They all attended.

Approximately how many Indian Residential Schools survivors are living today?

- a) Less than 1,000.
- b) 10,000
- c) 80,000
- d) More than 250,000.

As part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada will be holding a series of national events to engage the Canadian public and provide education about the history of the Indian Residential Schools system. The first of these national events took place in June, 2010. In which Canadian city was the event held?

- a) Ottawa
- b) Toronto
- c) Winnipeg
- d) Vancouver

Appendix B

Canadian Genocide: The Untold Story of Indian Residential Schools

Genocide is a powerful word. It is most commonly defined as “acts committed to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.” In educating the public about Indian Residential Schools, some people suggest that the term *genocide* should be used to describe what happened.

Appendix C

The Untold Story of Indian Residential Schools

From its onset, the Indian Residential School system was heavily influenced by the belief that Aboriginal cultures were uncivilized compared to European culture. To that end, it was concluded that children needed to be removed from the negative influence of their homes and families and immersed in the modern culture they were destined to become part of. In this, the idea behind the Indian Residential School system - to civilize the Indians - was born. By doing so, the hope was to assimilate Aboriginal children into mainstream Canadian culture and, at the same time, diminish Aboriginal traditions. Though the government was well informed of the issues in the schools, no action was ever taken to rectify the situation. Thus, through Indian Residential Schools, the Canadian government prevented the smooth transmission of beliefs, skills, and knowledge from one generation to the next. The long-term effects of abuse and neglect are still felt by many people, and it will still be many generations before the healing process is complete.

Appendix D

The Untold Story of Indian Residential Schools

Between the opening of the first schools in the 1830s and final closure of the last school in 1996, approximately 150,000 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students were removed from their communities and forced to attend Indian Residential Schools. From its onset, the Indian Residential School system was heavily influenced by the belief that Aboriginal cultures were immature and uncivilized compared to European culture. In fact, Duncan Campbell Scott, deputy superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs from 1913-1932, stated often that the "Indian problem" needed to be corrected through education. This was the only way, he posited, that the savage, backward people could be brought up to date and find a place in modern society.

"I want to get rid of the Indian problem... Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department, that is the whole object of this Bill."

To that end, it was concluded that children needed to be removed from the negative influence of their homes and families and immersed in the modern culture they were destined to become part of. In this, the idea behind the Indian Residential School system - to civilize the Indians - was born.

In order to develop as citizens, Indian ways and Indian culture had to be stamped out of the children within the system. The Davin Report of 1879 ultimately recommended to the Canadian government that Aboriginal children should be removed from their homes "as the influence of the wigwam was stronger than that of the school." And as stated in an 1886 report: "The need for government intervention to liberate these savage people from the retrograde influence of a culture that could not cope with rapidly changing circumstances was pressing and obvious." Through a policy of "aggressive assimilation," the goal of the schools was to "kill the Indian in the child." The schools aimed to achieve this objective by teaching Aboriginal children English and having them adopt Christianity and Canadian customs. By doing so, the hope was to assimilate Aboriginal children into mainstream Canadian culture and, at the same time, diminish Aboriginal traditions.

The primary method for removing the culture and worldview from the young people was the removal of language. Students in the residential schools were forbidden from speaking their own languages. By removing the language, the link was removed that prevented the students from embracing European values. To this end, it was an offence to be caught speaking an Aboriginal language at any of the schools. Severe punishments were meted out to those who defied the language rules. Additionally, within the schools, children were continually reminded that they, as Indians, were culturally, socially, and economically inferior and were made to feel ashamed of their parents, their ancestors, and their heritage.

In 1884 the Indian Act was amended to make attendance mandatory for all Native children under the age of 16. As a result, children were often forcibly removed from their homes and taken to schools hundreds of miles away. Children often had no contact with their parents during the year

and, in some cases, children were kept at the school year round, and so it was many years before these students saw their parents and families again. The Act also granted power to arrest, transport, and detain children at school, and parents who did not co-operate could be fined or jailed. By 1930, 75% of First Nations children between the ages of 7 and 15 years were enrolled in one of 80 such schools across the country and in the 1940s, attendance was expanded to include Inuit children as well. In some cases, children who were much younger were forced to attend. To encourage them to send their children to school, parents were sometimes coerced or threatened. The parents of the school children were not given any options, but were forced to relinquish their sons and daughters to the authorities or face criminal charges and fines. In 1927, natives were stripped of their legal rights and power to hire a lawyer and in 1929, formal legal guardianship of native children was transferred from the federal government to residential school Principals (i.e., the churches).

Insufficient and substandard food contributed to the breakdown of health for the students, with mortality rates at some schools being as high as 50%. Two government sponsored reports both outlined the tragic impact of the school buildings and the rampant spread of disease, particularly tuberculosis. The report of Dr. Peter Bryce, summer 1907, detailed a constantly high death rate of between 30%-50% was found in most western residential schools because of a practice by staff of "deliberately infecting children with infectious diseases." This death rate stayed constant for over 40 years. Furthermore, numerous accounts exist of native children sick with tuberculosis being admitted en masse into residential schools and deliberately housed with the healthy, causing subsequent deaths. No segregation of sick and healthy was practiced. Two distinct standards of health and medical care were practiced by government and church doctors at the residential schools, along clear racial lines. Native children received a consistently lower standard of attention and treatment (e.g., letter of Dr. F. Pitts, Lejac school, 1934). Furthermore, between 1929-33, involuntary sterilization laws were implemented by which any native child in these schools could legally be made infertile.

Researchers and ethnographers have also documented "cases of children being beaten, confined in dark closets, sexually assaulted, or forced to remain kneeling with arms outstretched for a prolonged period of time. Rampant sexual abuse was reported in several of the schools, including distribution of pornographic materials, sexually transmitted diseases, and prostitution. However, the schools protected the staff members who were being accused and the students' allegations were generally ignored. The work that was expected of the students, along with religious instruction and other required activities prevented them from participating in anything resembling free time or play. It is understandable why many survivors feel they were "robbed of their childhood." Children who tried to escape the schools would run away. Tragically some did not survive the long treks trying to return to their homes. For example, in 1902, Duncan Sticks died of exposure when he fled from Williams Lake Industrial School. Similarly, in 1937, four boys were found frozen to death wearing lightweight summer clothes, after running away from the Lejac School. Once a few schools were provided funds by the government, the flood of petitioners was virtually unending and the government was inundated with requests to fund schools that had already been running for many years, as well as new schools that had sprung up overnight in light of the funding opportunities. While this was certainly to the detriment of the students, the churches benefited from the government's almost open-wallet policy. The per capita funding model of these schools encouraged overcrowding which led to illness and disease

spreading effortlessly through the schools. Though the government was well informed of the issues in the schools, no action was ever taken to rectify the situation. Even the highest ranking officials in the department were aware of the problem. In fact, extensive residential school records were deliberately destroyed by federal government "document destruction teams" throughout the 1950's and '60's across Canada. Government and church officials suppressed evidence of deaths and other crimes in residential schools consistently for nearly a century, and as recently as the 1960's.

Because Indian Residential Schools existed for over 100 years, generations of children were removed from their parents for most of their childhood. Thus, through Indian Residential Schools, the Canadian government prevented the smooth transmission of beliefs, skills, and knowledge from one generation to the next. The experience often caused severe, and in many cases, permanent damage to the students, their families, and the communities to which the children eventually returned. The attempt to place graduates into mainstream society had failed spectacularly and many former students had returned to their home communities, much worse off than when they left; for now they could not speak the language, they had no knowledge of the ways of living in those communities, and they had been sufficiently indoctrinated to believe that their parents and other family members were subhuman and inferior. They were ashamed of who they were and their heritage, but they had no other options for life or livelihood.

Researchers have identified many similarities in the responses and symptoms of survivors once they left the residential school system. Post traumatic stress disorder is often cited as a result of being in the schools, with symptoms including "nightmares, sleep problems, blackouts, apathy and depression." Ineffective coping mechanisms such as alcohol and drug abuse, spousal and family abuse, and self esteem issues have been common behaviour patterns for many survivors. As well, sexual abuse and incest have also been reported by and among former students. The mortality rate of residential school survivors has also been very high, with incidences of suicide and alcohol related deaths significantly higher than national averages. In the school system, students did not learn how to be part of a family. They did not learn how to parent or how to love appropriately. These were things that children normally learned from their parents. Being removed before these lessons could be taught resulted in generations of people who did not know how to be a father or a mother, or how to handle conflict within the family in a constructive and loving way. Lack of parenting skills is perhaps one of the most profound outcomes of the residential school system. Survivors of the schools know only the rigid, authoritarian, emotionally distant discipline of the teachers and caretakers in the schools. As each person learns to parent from their parents, so the effects of poor parenting skills became a legacy of successive generations. Several writers have noted "how dysfunctional patterns of behaviour may be seen in the adult children of former students, leading them to conclude that: 'native child-rearing patterns have been indelibly marked by residential schools in ways that will last for generations.'" For over one hundred years, the Government had remained incapable of understanding that the Aboriginal people did not want to become part of the cultural majority. The long-term effects of abuse and neglect are still felt by many people, and it will still be many generations before the healing process is complete.