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Intercultural Citizenship Education in Québec: (Re)Producing the *Other* in and Through Historicised Colonial Patterns and Unquestioned Power Relations

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Abstract

Beginning with a discussion of Québec Interculturalism, as articulated by its most prominent exponents, I explore and raise doubts about interculturalism as a basis for an equitable model of civic education. Specifically, I focus on inadequacies related to the tendency of Québec interculturalists to overlook issues of unequal power relations (especially inequalities between newcomers, established citizens, and Indigenous populations), and not sufficiently considering important complexities that arise in the formation of civic identities. My contention is that, due to its long and arduous attempts to escape the homogenising forces of colonial power, Québec is perpetuating social and political dynamics that assert the Québécois identity as both fixed and dominant. Drawing from the writing of Albert Memmi, I discuss the omission of residential schooling from Québec's history curriculum as a manifestation of Québec's longstanding and unresolved relationship with colonialism. The omission of residential schooling from the Geography, History, and Citizenship curriculum is an act of misrecognition implicitly supported and condoned by the assumptions embedded within the intercultural policy.

Keywords: Québec; Geography, History and Citizenship Education; Diversity; Colonialism; Albert Memmi.

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Introduction

In 2007, after a series of incidents that highlighted the recurring tensions surrounding cultural diversity in Québec, the government commissioned renowned philosopher Charles Taylor and historian Gérard Bouchard to conduct an extensive, province-wide, consultation; the aim of this consultation was to "take

stock” of attitudes and practices of accommodation¹ in the province. The commission consisted of focus groups, public forums, and a report entitled, *Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation* (Bouchard & Taylor, 2008a). The commission and the recommendations that it produced received much attention in the media (Montpetit, 2011) and in academic circles (Adelman, 2011; Dupré, 2012; McAndrew, 2007). In their final report, Bouchard and Taylor (2008b) offered a portrait of how organisations, individuals, and institutions reconciled what is often labelled an “old-stock” Québécois identity with a relatively recent influx of cultural diversities. They also produced a number of recommendations that aimed to ensure that “accommodation practices conform to Québec’s core values” (p. 34). One such recommendation was that public institutions such as schools take interculturalism more seriously. This entailed integrating the core values of the policy into institutional, social, and political spaces.

The ways in which Québec’s intercultural model prescribes accommodation and theorises diversity has clear implications for citizenship education in this province. Reconciliation, integration, and dialogue constitute significant theoretical components of the model and also reveal a great deal about the demands of intercultural citizenship. Supporters of the intercultural model claim that it provides the basis for fostering social cohesion, while at the same time acknowledging the attributes of a diverse social and political landscape. From this perspective, interculturalism provides a sound theoretical foundation for an approach to civic education that reinforces shared membership in a national community while also promoting principles of equal treatment (regardless of cultural or religious affiliations). However, when the model is scrutinised from a philosophical perspective and through the lens of citizenship education, its shortcomings with regard to issues of power and identity come into view; it reveals the lingering distinction between Québécois and *other*, deeply engrained within the province’s psyche.

The unproblematic ways in which the intercultural model treats exceptionally prickly power relations become especially visible when considering the treatment of Indigenous cultures within the civic education curriculum; this is exemplified by the absence of narrative around Québec’s dark history of residential schooling of Aboriginals from the Geography, History, and Citizenship program. My contention is that the forced silences in the citizenship education curriculum provide a potent example of how Québec’s intercultural policy is re-enacting many of the injustices it claims to be working to remedy. The terms set out by the intercultural policy, from my perspective, offer only an exclusive inclusivity; explicitly, the model boosts diversity as central to the progress of Québec, however, diversity is only really acknowledged and promoted when it does not risk disrupting established power dynamics.

Interculturalism in Québec: coordinating diversity

Aiming to maintain a national community, the policy’s mandate is to coordinate diversity for the sake of supporting coherence. Bouchard and Taylor (2008b) described interculturalism as a “policy or model that advocates harmonious relations between cultures based on intensive exchanges centred on an integration process that does not seek to eliminate differences while fostering the development of a common identity” (p. 287). Intercultural integration, therefore, encourages all citizens to view themselves as part of, and contributing to, a dominant political community while at the same time maintaining their distinct cultural affiliations and identities. The politics attached to the French language in Québec have shaped perceptions surrounding civic identity and therefore how the Québécois view, appreciate, and engage with diversity. “Historically, the main impetus for the increasing salience of the discourse on Québec citizenship has been language—the idea of the French language as the primary vehicle for the preservation and flourishing of

¹ In their report on the state of reasonable accommodation in Québec, *Building the future: A time for reconciliation*, Charles Taylor and Gérard Bouchard have defined reasonable accommodation as “a form of arrangement or relaxation aimed at ensuring respect for the right to equality, in particular in combating so-called indirect discrimination, which, following the strict application of an institutional standard, infringes an individual’s right to equality” (p. 7). Examples of practices of accommodation might include authorised absences for religious holidays, serving kosher meats in schools, or the presence of prayer rooms for Muslim students on university campuses.

Québécois identity” (Gagnon & Iacovino, 2004, p. 29). Québec’s adoption of an intercultural policy is the culmination of years of struggle to reconcile the province’s primary aim, maintenance of the French language, with pressure to adapt to the realities of globalisation. These adaptations, or reactions, have had profound influence on Québécois’ ability and willingness to recognise otherness as potential for constructive possibilities, or as a tarnishing of Québec’s national identity. Indeed, each of these moments have further entrenched the false perception that Québécois culture and identity is stable and static, thereby stabilising the belief that pluralism taints an established and pristine culture. Waddington, Maxwell, McDonough, Cormier, and Schwimmer (2011) have identified these moments as the Quiet Revolution, Canada’s adoption of the multicultural policy, and the “moral contract.” They offer concrete indications of the expectations surrounding citizenship, specifically in relation to diversity, for citizens of Québec, namely, how must the Québécois accommodate and integrate the other while preserving their own identity? These touchstones tell the story of how the Québécois have been expected to understand and encounter the other, and how these expectations have shifted in recent history.

A Historical Overview in Three Moments

The first moment that might be viewed as the beginnings of Québec Interculturalism was the Quiet Revolution. In 1960, the election of Liberal premier Jean Lesage ushered in a period of social and political transformation within Québec. Before this, Conservative politics, deeply entwined with the Roman Catholic Church, secured Québec’s resistance to social and technological modernisation. Within the context of the Quiet Revolution, a number of interventionist governmental practices designed to insulate Québec from Anglicisation were implemented. The paradoxical nature of Lesage’s project was that he campaigned in favour of moving away from traditional values without a complete upheaval. “The term reassured nervous Quebecers—francophone, anglophone, and allophone—that the long-overdue transformation in the governance of a modernized, urbanized, and rapidly secularizing Québec society was not going to be unduly disruptive and destabilizing” (Behiels & Hayday, 2011). As a very specific moment in Québec’s history, the Quiet Revolution was a reaction to increased awareness of shifting demographic realities within the province. This was pivotal to the construction of its interculturalism because it set in place social, political, and cultural structures to ideologically insulate Québec from the rest of Canada. These practices might be viewed as the embryonic stages of interculturalism because they instantiated boundaries between so-called Québec and Canadian cultures.

The second key moment in the construction of intercultural policy was Québec’s rejection of the Canadian multiculturalism instated in 1971 (Waddington et al., 2011, p. 314). The basis of Québec’s adoption of an intercultural policy arose out of a desire for a sense of independence from the rest of Canada. The inclination to carve out its own space and to define its own distinct identity led to a categorical rejection of the pan-Canadian multicultural policy. As Waddington et al. (2011) argued, “Québec’s opposition to multiculturalism is grounded in the belief that the Canadian government’s policy of multiculturalism is a betrayal of Québec’s historical status within the Canadian federation and undermines Québec’s grounds for seeking greater political autonomy” (p. 314). According to this view, under the multicultural model, Québec would be relegated to one of many minority cultures within the Canadian panorama of cultural diversity – and this is a cause of contention. From a Québécois perspective, adherence to the multicultural policy would subvert its distinct historical trajectory and reference points, its unique contributions to the Canadian identity, as well as its aim to preserve the French language. In other words, interculturalism is viewed as offering a means of partial or limited integration within Canada, releasing the Québécois from the fear of loss of their linguistic culture while providing a sustainable means of remaining within Canada.

The third and final significant moment in Québec’s adoption of interculturalism is the moral contract. In 1970, the Liberal government produced a document entitled, *Au Québec Pour Bâtir Ensemble*,¹ that defines

¹ In Québec, Building Together

the nature of integration in Québec. While main proponents of the intercultural model (Bouchard, 2011) argued that this contract was aimed at all members of Québec society, others argued that its subtext indicated that the responsibilities associated with integration lay solely on newcomers. Bertelsen (2008) wrote:

For the Québec government, this “moral contract” identifies the three critical points with which arrivées¹ must agree if they wish to join Québec society. Agreement on these tenets is essential because it produces the grounds upon which successful integration can be achieved (p. 50.)

The contract defines integration according to the following three tenets: a society in which French is the common language within the public sphere; a democratic society in which participation and exchange is encouraged; an open society that values the contributions of pluralism and liberal democratic values (Ministère des Relations avec les Citoyens et de l’Immigration, 2001). Québec pluralism is therefore framed as French speaking and openly secular. According to Bouchard (2011), the moral contract is meant to clarify the rules of engagement for both newcomers and established Quebecers. For newcomers, it outlines their rights and responsibilities as they enter Québec society. For established citizens, it clarifies the parameters of integration from a specifically intercultural perspective. However, the policy outlining the moral contract offers a very different perspective on who is responsible for integration; the policy explicitly places the onus on newcomers. This is indicated in the title of the document itself: *Le Québec une société ouverte: Contrat moral entre le Québec et les personnes qui désirent y immigrer* which can be translated as, *Québec is an open society: Moral contract between Quebec and persons wanting to immigrate*. Currently, the discourse around this contract reflects the policy’s perspective on integration, pinpointing newcomers as its target audience (as exemplified by Bertelsen’s statement above). This accepted misunderstanding reifies the perception that the responsibility of integration falls only on those from outside Québec. The moral contract reinstates a pervasive belief that there is, and can be, a strict delineation between identity categories: Québécois/other.

The narrative thread that runs through these moments (leading to the implementation of the intercultural policy) is the construction of a fixed and exclusive identity, which necessarily creates and constructs others. The concept of the other, made famous by scholars such as Edward Said (*Orientalism*) and Simone de Beauvoir (*The Second Sex*), refers to an opposition of the same. The other implies that there is a core (same) set of values, assumptions, physical characteristics, or epistemologies that are legitimate, relegating all divergences to other. The repercussions of being othered include being confined in one’s life choices (Frye, 1983), being silenced, or being cast in specific and always derogatory lights. Othering depends on having an established core against which to determine and define those who are not situated within this core. The narrative of the intercultural model is a narrative of othering. The tacit assumptions that inform the narrative of the Québécois identity rely on fixed constructs of ethnic identity as well as religious affiliation, instilling cultural beliefs and practices that (re)create others. Needless to say, all attempts at cultural integration are significantly inhibited by the continual defining against what many view as integral to Québec’s identity. This is because, paradoxically, Québec has existed as the other within Canadian social and political landscapes, living under the constant fear of being subsumed, silenced, and then vanishing. One of the many effects of this fear is that policies and practices focused on integration have actually focused on differentiation (preserving nationhood) rather than the complex power dynamics involved in cultural integration. The moments that informed the implementation of the intercultural policy also informed its approach to integration and, as a result, the intercultural model has a particular approach to reconciling similarity with difference within a nationalist framework. In the following section, I interrogate some of the assumptions embedded in the expectations surrounding integration. To do this, I explore three central premises upon which the model is constructed: harmonisation, reconciliation, and dialogue.

¹ newcomers

Harmonisation from an Intercultural Perspective

Bouchard and Taylor (2008a) defined harmonisation as a set of practices that seek “to promote purposes and collective ideals such as equality, cooperation and social cohesion” (p. 51). It also promoted “the creation of new forms of solidarity and the development of a feeling of belonging to an inclusive Québec identity” (p. 51). Harmonisation refers to the procedures designed to include, integrate, and accommodate various identities within the dominant Québécois cultural community. Dialogue constitutes the basis of harmonisation practices in Québec; it is described as a practice to be honed by individuals and institutions. As a means of heightened interaction, rather than mere coexistence, dialogue is forwarded as a distinguishing component of Québec’s intercultural model. It “refers to a tenet of interculturalism according to which the process of constructing a common political culture takes place through encounters, democratic interaction, and cultural exchange among citizens of various cultural origins and values perspectives” (Maxwell, Waddington, McDonough, Cormier, & Schwimmer, 2012, p. 433). In this sense, dialogue frames civic participation as an essential component of integration within the intercultural framework.

Dialogue, in its ideal form, reconciles the majority/minorities (Québécois/newcomers) duality. This limiting construct situates citizens in one of two categories. According to Bouchard (2011), this dichotomised construct of citizenship must simply be viewed as a point of departure, and that through practices of integration an increased culture of *mixité*¹ will emerge. Maxwell et al., (2012) have argued that interculturalism “focuses on identifying and implementing means by which to encourage cultural and religious groups to enter into a national dialogue” (p. 432). Dialogue is the process through which citizens encounter themselves within the Québécois culture, rather than apart or even alienated from it². As Jones (2004) pointed out, “[i]n its ideal form, dialogue between diverse groups dispels ignorance about others, increases understanding, and thus potentially decreases oppression, separation, violence, and fear” (p. 57). From an intercultural perspective, the “common culture” occurs *in and through* dialogue; it (re)affirms individual identities while encouraging exchange of social and political perspectives. Ideally, dialogue lessens the perceived gaps between cultural groups, facilitating encounter from less prejudicial positions. Integration, harmonisation, and dialogue comprise the unique civic demands of how diversity ought to be theorised and negotiated within Québec. For proponents of this model, its implications for citizenship require a complex and nuanced appreciation of cultural diversity as well as the ability to negotiate multiple, at times competing, values. Accordingly, intercultural values are viewed as essential to the promotion of the French language while inclusive values are encouraged throughout the province. The question of effective inclusion, however, is a subjective one that deserves further discussion.

In 2008, Bouchard and Taylor encouraged the people of Québec to begin working towards resolving the political conflicts that continue to plague the province; “Let’s move on,” they urged (Québec intellectuals promote wave of 'interculturalism,' 2011). They were confident that recognition of difference is possible through the promotion of shared histories and a common language. The next section consists of two components. First, I question this optimism on the basis that the intercultural model discusses inclusion of diversity without offering a significant analysis of the implications of existing linguistic, religious, and cultural inequalities. Essentially, I consider Québec’s intercultural model in light of its treatment of otherness, identity, and recognition. Following this, I raise the possibility of the intercultural model as a product of a long and complex relationship with colonialism. Specifically, I argue that these deeply engrained colonial dynamics are being (re)produced in and through the intercultural model; this is evidenced by exclusion of the violence caused by Québec’s residential schools from the provincially mandated civic education program.

¹ entanglement

² Borrowing from Taylor’s *Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition* (1994), Meer & Modood (2012) discuss identity formation in and through dialogue, specifically within an intercultural context.

Exclusive Integration: Dialogue in Québec's Intercultural Model

Debates on what constitutes reasonable accommodation and discussions around how to support a healthy intercultural society converge upon the concept of integration. As Bouchard and Taylor (2008a) explained, “the theme of integration in a spirit of equality and reciprocity will guide our analyses and proposals. This concern will imbue the entire debate on accommodation and all of the questions stemming from it” (p. 12). My interest here is on their use of *equality* as a guiding premise. Their reliance on the assumption of equality as being possible, and in fact optimal, leads them to a flattened appreciation of the deep social and political crevasses that have shaped the history of this province. For example, the Quiet Revolution¹ offers a meaningful example of how intensely the people and province of Québec believed that protection from otherness was essential to preserve their linguistic heritage. It was a provincial ethos that, to this day, has symbolic remnants, including the crucifix on Mount Royal and in L'Assemblée Nationale. The fierce intent to preserve Quebec as a cultural relic remains etched in the minds of many Québécois. The expectation that the citizens of Québec will buy in to a model of integration that requires a response/ability towards the other seems to overlook the deep seeded and unequal power dynamics that have defined Québec for centuries and that, in many ways, remain. A more careful consideration and analysis of historicised power dynamics and how they shape attachments to social and political communities would allow a more complex appreciation of how to overcome historical tensions that may continue to isolate these communities from one another. Such an analysis might also call into question the very language of equality to discuss issues of power and identity, and how this language reifies divisive power dynamics.

From critical and social justice perspectives, dialogue is championed as a tool for social change (Boler, 2004; Freire, 1993). As a practical strategy and philosophical framework, dialogue is often theorised as an effective tool in mediating and negotiating difference. However, within these literatures, these discussions also emphasise dialogue as a source of disruption, conflict, and tension. Dialogue, as a political act, involves shifts in perspective and is therefore an act of antagonism. Participants in dialogue are required to listen, to discern, to critique, and to analyse from different perspectives, thus potentially (probably) causing fundamental disorientations. Despite the messiness of the process, Bouchard and Taylor (2008a) theorised it largely as an act that contributes to, rather than potentially detracting from, harmony. They described the process of dialogue in sanitised and sanguine terms: “Through the deliberative dimension, the interveners engage in dialogue and the reflexive dimension allows them to engage in self-criticism and mend their ways when necessary” (p. 52). It is not that dialogue cannot contribute to more informed and therefore harmonious relations, but rather that the process must be entered into with an understanding of the complexity involved. Accounts of dialogue, specifically within a context that is working through historical discord, must offer a more critical and nuanced depiction of it as an uncomfortable and even antagonistic practice; it must engage with the complexities of how unequal relationships continue to shape these conversations to avoid reinforcing the Québécois/other dynamic. My critique of the intercultural model's reproduction of otherness can be further elaborated using the work of post-colonial author Albert Memmi (1991). His writing is both applicable and relevant here because he offers a nuanced analysis of how colonial undercurrents continue to re-emerge in political spaces, particularly around issues of diversity. In the following section, I draw out some of Memmi's insights to elucidate how the intercultural model in Québec echoes hundreds of years of unresolved psychic violence as a result of colonialism, particularly in its treatment of otherness.

Albert Memmi and the Colonial Mind

Albert Memmi's (1991), *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, offered an elaboration of the psychic dynamics of colonisation, detailing the inner worlds of the coloniser and the colonised. The section that is of relevance

¹ In 1960, the election of Liberal premier Jean Lesage ushered in a period of social and political transformation in Québec. Previous to this, Conservative politics, deeply entwined with the Roman Catholic Church, secured Québec's resistance to social and technological modernization. Within the context of the Quiet Revolution, a number of interventionist governmental practices designed to insulate Québec from Anglicisation were implemented.

here is his writing on how colonised populations respond to their histories of degradation and loss. Memmi (1991) argued that there are two manifestations that are most likely to occur, either “in succession or simultaneously” (p. 120). The colonised’s response is “either to become different or to reconquer all the dimensions which colonisation tore away from him” (p. 120). In other words, the colonised is likely to attempt to erase or engage more deeply with his or her lost past. While parts of Québec, certainly Montreal, have become increasingly multicultural and multilingual, the intercultural policy is a prime example of its attempts to reassume or reassert its linguistic heritage. In Québec’s intercultural discourse, “reconquering” is forwarded as cultural maintenance and/or preservation. In this sense, what might be considered oppressive overreactions are viewed as essential practices for the preservation of the French Québécois culture.

Memmi (1991) pointed to how xenophobia is engrained in the consciousness of the colonised, reinforcing distinctions between perceptions of self and other. “Considered *en bloc* as *them*, *they* or *those*, different from every point of view, homogenous in a radical heterogeneity, the colonized reacts by rejecting all the colonizers *en bloc*” (p. 130). The forces of colonisation reinforced categorised notions of identity and otherness. As a perpetual other, the colonised would have difficulty moving past the structural accounts that have defined their encounters for so long. Echoes of this understanding of identity reverberate within the intercultural model. Interculturalism places significant emphasis on self/other, as illustrated by the majority/minorities duality discussed above. The intercultural model does not theorise this duality as an end in that it advocates agreement and mutual understanding; the general inattention to power imbalances renders these attempts suspect. As Memmi (1991) has articulated, peoples who have endured cultural loss and threat of assimilation cling to their heritage with a heightened fervour, which impedes more complex and nuanced considerations of who they are in relation to others. The intercultural model makes gestures toward reconciliation, but does not take on the lingering undercurrent of emotions and resentments that play a significant role in shaping the ethos of the province, particularly as it relates to cultural integration. Nowhere are these undercurrents as striking as within the Geography, History, and Citizenship Education program and its treatment of others, specifically Aboriginal populations. Québec’s Geography, History, and Citizenship curriculum offers a meaningful example of how the model overlooks significant social and political inequalities that are entrenched in Québec’s history, specifically those of Indigenous voices. I will argue that, as a product of the intercultural policy, Québec’s curriculum actually limits possibilities for inclusive civic participation by further silencing the histories of already marginalised populations in the province.

Quebec’s Geography, History, and Citizenship Education Program: (re)producing otherness

The role of schools in an intercultural context is to encourage a space in which students *enter into* intercultural ways of understanding themselves in relation to diverse social and cultural populations. Schools are integral to the intercultural project because they are significant to both students’ enculturation and also as social institutions. Education, then, might be viewed as a midwife to the intercultural model in that it is necessary to the manifestation, or the embodiment, of the intercultural ideal. This process of negotiating diversity requires a language and a set of dispositions. However, because it is precisely in the context of education that intercultural ideals are manifested and revealed, so its limitations are also brought to light. In the next section, I elucidate how Québec’s Geography, History, and Citizenship curriculum does indeed reflect intercultural ideals and consequently does not pay sufficient attention to the undercurrents of power that shape past and present politics. Specifically, I argue that the omission of the atrocities of residential schooling of Indigenous populations in Québec’s Education Programs (henceforth QEP) exemplifies a deeply complex relationship to colonialism. In its treatment of Québec history, the absence of this set of Indigenous histories provides an explicit illustration of how Québec’s colonial past continues to play a more important role in today’s social and political realities than is often acknowledged.

The QEP is made up of traditional field-specific disciplines, such as English, math, and science. However, it moves away from the traditional model, in which subjects are taught in isolation, toward a more holistic model of education. As Morris (2011) pointed out, “each subject area in the QEP was elaborated with reference to overarching objectives, a set of cross-curricular competencies, and what the Ministry referred to as ‘broad areas of learning’” (p. 191). There are three overarching aims in the QEP: to construct a worldview, to structure an identity, and empowerment. The Ministry is explicit about how the general aims of the QEP ought to focus on promoting civic ideals. For example, the ministerial document introducing the curriculum indicates that schools are responsible for preparing students “to contribute to the development of a more democratic and just society for the purpose of understanding their roles as constructive citizens” (as quoted in Morris, 2011, p. 191). A significant facet of the civic worldview that the curriculum aims to advance is an intercultural approach to facilitating and negotiating diverse perspectives and cultural practices.

Geography, history, and citizenship, clustered as a single course within the curriculum, includes interrelated and discipline-specific competencies that promote civic engagement. This course is premised upon these three guiding competencies that thread throughout the curriculum as does intercultural policy: first, to perceive the organisation of a society in its territory; second, to interpret change in a society and its territory; third, to be open to the diversity of societies and their territories (Ministère de L’Éducation, du Loisir, et des Sports, 2006). The civic values that shape the QEP reflect intercultural civic values in that they focus on interrelationships between groups, theorise culture as perpetually shifting, and promote the recognition of diversity; they deal with the organisational structures of territories, how they shift, and the power dynamics associated with these shifts. The rationale is that through learning about land, how it is organised and why, students will gain an important account of the social, political, and cultural dynamics that establish these shifts (Ministère de L’Éducation, du Loisir, et des Sports, 2006); this supports the notion of continuity through historical thinking and the historical method. In a general sense, the history curriculum requires that students contextualise historical events to better understand how they shape today’s social and political landscapes, and to view identities as shifting and contingent upon various dynamics. There is therefore a clear link between learning history and the construction of identity in a democratic context. “The study of history . . . helps students to understand and accept difference by making them realize that . . . similarities exist within differences” (Ministère de L’Éducation, du Loisir, et des Sports, 2006, p.186). This inter-subjective approach to history education, in which similarities are emphasised and differences are celebrated, is designed to disrupt strict categorisations and othering. However, these intentions are undermined by the significant gap, or silence, in the curriculum surrounding Québec’s treatment of Aboriginal populations. Despite its claims to inclusivity, Québec’s Geography, History, and Citizenship Education program renews entrenched power dynamics by enforcing silence around Québec’s atrocious treatment of Indigenous populations.

Residential Schooling: A forced gap in Québec’s curriculum

Residential schooling for Aboriginal peoples became compulsory in 1920; the last residential school in Canada closed in 1996. The history of residential schools, in which First Nations children were taken from their homes, confined to dormitory-style living conditions, and subjected to physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, has left deep scars on these populations. This government-led initiative extricated Aboriginals from their communities for the purpose of extinguishing their language and culture. In Neeganagwedgin’s (2011) discussion of the effects of residential schooling on women, she articulated how these institutions reified the dominant construction of Aboriginal as other:

While ideologies about the inferiority of Aboriginal people become more and more rampant, the opening of residential schools in Canada . . . reinforced that perceived inferiority of the ‘Other’ in the treatment of many of the children who attended these schools. (p. 19)

Residential schooling in Canada was the manifestation of hundreds of years of dominance over Aboriginal peoples and indeed this mindset continues to reverberate.

In May 2013, the Québec Native Women Inc. published a *press release* and petition requesting that “the history of Aboriginal peoples and residential schools be included in high school curriculum” (Arnaud, 2013). In this statement, they contend that the violent histories of Aboriginals in Québec continue to be perpetuated in Québec, though in different forms. The following articulated the crux of their argument, *“The ignorance of the history of Aboriginal peoples in which Québec and Canada is maintaining their peoples only perpetuates the racism we have to cope with too often,”* said Viviane Michel, president of Québec Native Women. *“The stigma and discrimination that our people have to face daily continue the cultural genocide that began with the Indian Act and residential schools. We need understanding to embark on a healthy voice of cooperation between nations”* (Arnaud, 2013).

Their position is that the lack of education about residential schooling has enforced an unconsciousness surrounding the realities facing Indigenous peoples, thereby renewing racist social and political patterns. The omission of these histories from Québec’s curriculum presents us with a logic of how these cycles are sustained: gaps in the curriculum feed into gaps in perception and understanding (perhaps even compassion), thereby opening up opportunity and permission to re-commit acts of othering. There is currently an imposed silence on the histories of Aboriginals in Québec and Canada, which, according to Michel, perpetuates legacies of racism and maintains deep imbalances of power.

The absence of education on residential schooling in Québec’s Geography, History, and Citizenship Education program is one example of the province’s internal and deeply complex relationship with colonialism; indeed, one of the effects of this relationship is the hesitation to discuss the ways in which (colonial) power shapes identity¹. It also provides an illustration of how the complex layers of colonialism unfold. The ways in which Memmi (1991) described the responses, justifications, and mindsets common to a colonised people resembles the social and political ethos cultivated within the intercultural policy. This is illustrated in two primary ways. First, interculturalists embrace only the Francophone identity as the Québécois identity, which stabilises a Québécois/other power dynamic. Othering includes, among other things, systemic processes of silencing, as illustrated by the lack of Indigenous histories told in the curriculum. These processes also involve clinging to constructed notions of who “I” am to point the finger at who “they” are. As Memmi (1991) argued, it is the pattern of colonised people to cling to what distinguishes them; these processes of differentiation reify, reinforce, and in fact, construct difference. He clarified, “what makes him different from other men has been sought out and hardened to the point of substantiation” (p. 132). The substance of what is perceived as difference is a reaction, or a coping mechanism, to deal with the years of living within a culture under threat.

Secondly, the absence of histories of residential schools in Québec’s curriculum offers a concrete example a problematic relationship with colonialism. The province’s identity has very much been constructed in and through its position of minority status in Canada. Its politics have often been centred on necessary self-legitimation and protection against dominant Canadian values. Memmi (1991) shed some light on this dynamic: “The colonized’s self-assertion, born out of a protest, continues to define itself in relation to it. In the midst of the revolt, the colonized continues to think, feel and live against and, therefore, in relation to the colonizer and colonization” (p. 139). This relationship to power, as a marginalised nation that needs to persist to have its voice heard, is troubled when the issue of indigeneity, land, and certainly residential

¹ It is worth noting here that in Bouchard and Taylor’s final report on reasonable accommodation (2008b), Aboriginal issues were not broached. They state, “It is with regret that we had to remove from the out [sic] mandate the aboriginal question. . . . First, we feared that we would compromise our mandate by appending to it such a vast, complex question” (p. 34). They go on to explain that, despite their exclusion from the final analysis, various groups representing Aboriginal voices were invited to attend the public consultations.

schooling in the province arises. This could be what Memmi (1991) has labelled, “assuming the identity of the colonizer” (p. 136). Adopting the identity of the coloniser can take on many forms, one of which could be to become a coloniser, reproducing patterns of violence and humiliations. The recognition and acknowledgment of a history in which Québec exerts western imperial power does not fit into the self-conception of Québec as marginalised, disempowered. Within a framework that attempts to stabilise the construct of Québécois, its own history of attempted cultural genocide is particularly difficult to metabolise. However, since this pattern has been left relatively unexplored in the province it is, in many ways, doomed to repeat these cycles of xenophobia and alienation.

Conclusions

The study of history is the study of power. History education, therefore, ought to engage students in the complexities of power so that they can gain a sense of how these continue to play a role in contemporary societies. The acknowledgement of asymmetry does not delve into deeper conversations around why certain newcomers might face more obstacles than others (for example, why a Caucasian Parisian and a Haitian may have very different experiences of the immigration process to Québec). Québec’s historical legacies have shaped its current relationships with certain cultural and religious groups. These relationships are complex and continually shifting. The intercultural acknowledgment that newcomers are disadvantaged in some ways only speaks to a very superficial understanding of identity, power, how these have been enacted historically, and how they appear today. Civic education provides a necessary space to engage with these questions.

The catalysts for the implementation of intercultural policy are all marked moments in the history of Québec. Their combined significance is that they sought to create a well-articulated distinction between Québec and the rest of Canada for the purpose of preserving the French language and, indeed, Québécois culture. The issue here is that the policy promotes openness toward inclusion and the understanding that the Québécois culture itself will shift with increased immigration within the borders of its own society. While the understanding is that the French language will constitute the “frame” that will contain (and maintain) the Québécois culture, the nature of the frame itself is exclusionary. The historical moments that produced the policy were reactions against increased diversity and exclusion, thereby creating a difficult problematic to negotiate when it comes to instilling and enacting the policy.

My questions surrounding the adequacy of interculturalism as a framework for civic education arise out of an analysis of how power is treated with this model or, more precisely, how it is not sufficiently considered. Diversity, at its very core, assumes multiple and competing power plays over who has access, who has less, and the means through which this access might be distributed more equally. To understand the nuances of diversity, in theory and in practice, the question of power is an essential one. Relatedly, to consider the civic implications of diversity in a meaningful way, educational practices need to (re)consider the social construction of boundaries (societies, nations, etc.) in and of themselves so as to avoid engaging with only the veneer of difference. In considering Québec’s intercultural model on cultural diversity (and its pedagogical implications) I question if diversity can be approached meaningfully without being entrenched in discourses on power and difference, particularly within a colonial context.

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