

## **Québec's Intercultural Policy and History Teaching: a philosophical and qualitative study**

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### **What is Interculturalism? Cultural Context**

Interculturalism in Québec was officially adopted in 1971 as a direct response to Canada's multicultural policy. Multiculturalism was rejected in Québec because in this model the French language and culture were simply one of many minority cultures shaping the Canadian landscape (Juteau, 1993; Nugent, 2006). Interculturalism arose out of Québec's commitment to preserve the French language and to instate its identity as a minority nation within Canada. Globalizing trends combined with a low birth rates have meant that Québec is welcoming increasing numbers of newcomers of diverse origins (Bouchard & Taylor, 2008). The primary aim of the intercultural model is to shape a common Québécois culture that is informed by diversity. In this sense, supporters of the model believe that Québécois culture will be shaped according to incoming cultures; the expectation is that through the inevitability of interaction and supported by practices of harmonization, majority as well as minority cultures will be transformed to varying extents (Bouchard, 2011).

Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor, who have been primarily responsible for defining Québec interculturalism, have defined it 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" (2008, p. 287). The central role of Québec's intercultural model is to facilitate the dual action of maintaining French as the language of interaction within the public sphere and integrating newcomers of diverse ethnicities, religions, and cultural backgrounds. The model supports both cultural coherence and cultural diversity to create a space in which both are acknowledged as fundamental to Québécois culture.

## Overview of the Study

The objective of my study was to examine interculturalism as a vehicle of liberal-democratic citizenship education in the Canadian province of Québec. This policy has been at the center of many political debates, including discussions on the role of schools and curricula in preparing the students for the demands of citizenship in a diverse society. My research explored these debates, while also adding a perspective that has so far been missing from them — that of history teachers. To this end, I conducted qualitative research with three history teachers. I interviewed them and observed their classrooms with the aim of providing a concrete illustration of how (some) history teachers understand and enact the values and goals of intercultural citizenship in Québec. The questions that framed my project were: how are narratives of power and identity treated within Montreal classrooms? How are these narratives reflective of the implicit ethical tensions surrounding power and identity within the intercultural model?

My study focuses on history teachers because history education is widely regarded in the scholarly literature as instrumental for promoting the goals of citizenship education (Callan, 1994; Granatstein, 2007; Nash, 1970; Sandwell, 2006). The view that history classrooms are particularly relevant to citizenship education is further reflected in recently adopted curriculum reforms in Québec — most notably in the course “Geography, History and Citizenship Education.” Thus, my study focuses on history teachers because history classrooms are spaces that foster the kinds of knowledge, attitudes, and civic virtues central to “good” citizenship in liberal-democratic societies.

A second important factor in understanding the complexity of history classrooms and history teachers is grounded in scholarly disagreements about the nature of history education and its role in civic formation (Éthier & Lefrançois, 2012; Létourneau, 2011). Precisely because history education is viewed as instrumental to civic education the work of scholars and in official curricula, the role of history teachers is an important factor to consider in evaluating Québec interculturalism as a model of citizenship education. My project presented a concrete portrait of how citizenship education is being carried out in Québec in order to provide an understanding of how particular teachers (re)construct the notion of intercultural citizenship in their classrooms.

## Methodology and Study Design

Mine was a philosophically oriented project that made use of qualitative data.

For my methodological approach, I employed the normative case study (Thacher, 2006) that involved applying normative (and particularly ethical) philosophical ideals and principles to a

practical context — in this case, the context of history teachers' practice where the norms of intercultural citizenship are under negotiation. I used philosophical analysis as a means of teasing out the implications of normative concepts, such as Québec interculturalism, citizenship, identity, and power. Simply, the combination of philosophical inquiry with qualitative research is meant to provide a set of analytic tools to describe and analyze the practice of history teachers in their classrooms.

The qualitative component of the case study took place from January to April 2012 in three secondary school history classrooms in Montreal private schools. My participants were three white women history teachers in secondary three and four (equivalent to grades 9-10 in most other North American contexts), whose ages ranged from mid-thirties to mid-fifties. The tools that I used to collect my data were: open-ended interviews, classroom observation, photo-voice, field notes, and document analysis.

### Findings & Analysis

Through their descriptions of the intercultural model, the teachers revealed meaningful interpretations of the power relations ingrained within the model. Based on my observations and interviews with teachers, there are two sets of ethical issues that arise in the context of history education in Québec at the moment. The first is that pedagogical practices often slip into some form of multiculturalism, in which diversity is valued for its own sake and not in terms of cultural cohesion. In other words, the teachers' understandings of intercultural citizenship omitted the prickly realities associated with power struggles within Québec. The teachers discussed issues of inequality from a multicultural perspective, meaning that the specific tensions in Québec's history were often left out.

The second ethical issue is related to the teachers' interpretation and practice of Québec interculturalism as simply a tool to promote national identity with a thin conception of diversity, and therefore, a limited interpretation of inclusion. This reasoning, that diversity ought to be kept at a minimum in order to support coherent national values and the French language, is at the crux of many current debates. The view that Québec has remained a coherent and untouched culture and is now under threat of cultural loss, or homogenization, is the argument in favour of adopting more involved technologies of power (Foucault, 1980) that will reinforce the dominant narrative. Simply, the teachers, in some cases, used the intercultural model as a tool to reinforce cultural coherence, leaving out the component of the model that focused on acknowledging how diversity contributes to Québec society.

History teachers, as shapers of civic identities, are central to the process of uncovering what is currently being prescribed in and through the intercultural model to better consider what

ought to be. As my data revealed, teachers' varying perspectives on what cultural integration looks like are shaped by how they situate themselves in relation to existing power structures within the province. More specifically, these history teachers, in adopting many of the perspectives typically associated with their subject positions are reinforcing existing power hierarchies in the province and in their classrooms. These practices speak to the silence, or the gap, within the model surrounding the most complex and difficult issues dealing with integration. One of the results of this gap, for history teachers specifically, is that these complex issues remain moulded according to the unspoken nature of power dynamics. Supporters of the intercultural model view it as a framework in which newcomers and established citizens alike are empowered to contribute and participate in a common culture, however these intentions fall short when discussions of identity and power are neglected.

### Contribution to Research

In the final chapter of my dissertation, I offered an alternative discursive framework for history and citizenship education in Québec. Enabling a more inclusive discussion around how citizenship is constructed, *thinking interculturally* (McDonald, 2011) may provide the means to begin thinking about practical ways in which citizenship and history education might detract from the exclusive inclusion that currently resides in the intercultural model (and, consequently, in history classrooms). McDonald (2011) elaborates a conception of the "singular" writer (or history teacher for our purposes) who negotiates a new role: that of being neither immersed in, nor disconnected from, national discourses. This rejection of the binary between immersion and disconnection would allow history educators to provide a set of perspectives that take into account the nuances of how power dynamics shape historical narratives and therefore shape civic discourse (or, how the stories are told). Second, history teachers should view the national character of Québec as one that is constructed, thereby loosening the xenophobic tendencies that come along with teaching history from patriotic or nationalist perspectives.

I propose a means through which history and citizenship education might be approached more inclusively while also honouring an attachment to the French language. I have tentatively argued that in spite of multiple challenges to integration embedded within the model, we might still consider Québec interculturalism as a viable framework for civic education. Specifically, my contention is that *thinking interculturally* has the potential to subvert xenophobic tendencies entrenched in the model and consequently in the Geography, History, and Citizenship Education course.

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## ケベックのインターカルチュラリズム政策と 歴史の教育：哲学的定性的研究

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本論文は、著者がマギル大学に提出した博士論文でおこなった研究の一部に基づくものであり、「モンリオールの教室の中では、権力とアイデンティティのナラティブはどのように取り扱われているのか」が著者の基本的問題関心である。

本論文は、インターカルチュラリズム政策が、歴史の教育、とりわけ、インターカルチュラリズム政策の一環として導入された新科目「地理、歴史、市民性教育」をとおして、子どもたちがケベック市民というアイデンティティを形成するにあたってどのように反映しているのか、というテーマを掲げて、

(1) モンリオールの教室の中では、権力とアイデンティティのナラティブはどのように取り扱われているのか、

(2) このナラティブは、インターカルチュラリズムのモデルの中で、権力とアイデンティティをめぐる隠された倫理的緊張関係を、どのように反映しているのか、

という二つの論点を明らかにすることを目指している。

この目的のために、最初に、カナダのケベック州において、1970年代初頭に、どのような経緯でマルチカルチュラリズム政策に替えてインターカルチュラリズム政策が採用されたのかが明らかにされる。次に、本論文で採用された方法論、とりわけ、教師へのインタビューで使われた定性的研究法について説明される。続いて、定性的研究が明らかにした、インターカルチュラリズム政策をめぐる二つの倫理的課題が明らかにされる。最後に筆者は、上記の二つの倫理的課題への対応として、「インターカルチュラルに考える」ことを推奨している。