

## **How should citizenship be integrated into high school history programs? Public controversies and the Québec *History and Citizenship Education* curriculum: an analysis**

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### **Introduction**

From 30 July to 2 August, 2009, over 2,000 North American tourists had prepared to go to Québec City to re-enact an episode of the Seven Years War: the battle of the Plains of Abraham in Québec City, where two European colonial powers had clashed on 13 September, 1759. As is usual for this type of lay gathering, everything that has fascinated 20<sup>th</sup> century history scholars was excluded from the planned spectacle, such as issues of family, material culture, and the social structures of the people involved. Such an event illustrates the interest a number of people have, worldwide, in a particular approach to the past, based on what Barton and Levstik (2004) call the *exhibition stance*. According to Rosenzweig and Thelen (1998), Létourneau (2008), and Conrad, Létourneau and Northrup (2009), such activities are widespread, and might illustrate the centrality of the past for the re-enactors' identities. This particular event especially encapsulates the popular appeal of this kind of relation to the past, inasmuch as the re-enactors devote considerable time to learning their re-enactment roles and spend significant financial resources to buy the accessories they need.

The purportedly inconsequential project planned in Québec City nevertheless led to a verbal altercation, with some opposition members of parliament (at both the federal and provincial levels) taking offence upon noting that the commemoration was bestowing a festive character upon a morbid event (there were 1,200 deaths), with some among them suspecting that a federal plot had also led to this “commemoration” of the defeat of the French – or “our defeat”, as Bernard Drainville, a member of the provincial legislative assembly declared (Lessard, 2009) – by the English, and to the revision of the 2006 Québec high school history program (Robitaille, 2009a, 2009b). The re-enactment was eventually cancelled.

This controversy constitutes a manifestation of what Pascal Blanchard and Isabelle Veyrat-Masson (2008) have named *memory wars*, referring to a phenomenon which has generated widespread analysis since Nora published his article on collective memory (1978) and edited the first volume on the realms of history (1984) that it has become trite in public debate and in the academic world. Similar discussions have persisted in other countries. Indeed, a continuous public debate in Australia relating to post-1788 European colonization has involved well-known historians (Macintyre & Clark, 2004). Throughout the world, memory, commemoration, past and history have become major political and media issues. Using history for political purposes, however,

is nothing new – the idea of *history* itself most plausibly owing its inception to political purposes. While it remained for a long time an instrument of states, political parties and their leaders, history used for political ends has moved to the periphery and to the people.

The debate regarding the Québec history curriculum, which raged on through 2006, is but another manifestation of such a memory war. It began with the 27 April, 2006 publication of misleading excerpts of a draft version of the *History and Citizenship Education* program by a *Le Devoir*<sup>1</sup> journalist who claimed it would promote Canadian unity (Robitaille, 2006). Many French-speaking Québec historians and indeed, members of the public at large participated in a fight against the supposedly new excessive focus placed on the cultural plurality of their society and on the influence of “British thought” in developing parliamentary institutions, as well as against the alleged concealment of events (the British conquest of New France), or institutions (French language and culture, Catholicism, etc.) that have shaped Québec (Bouvier, 2007). History educators countered that such hand wringing was unfounded, because the program would cover the development of critical skills rather than the consumption of a single narrative, itself historically and socially defined (Cardin, 2007; Dagenais & Laville, 2007). The protesters’ arguments prevailed, leading to the ministry’s resolve to publish an unexpectedly amended program by June (MÉLS [ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport du Québec], 2006) listing events and characters familiar in popular historiography, as well as an additional chapter on the Conquest. This appeared to have put an end to the debate, without, however, fully calming the critics (Angers *et al.*, 2007; Courtois, 2009).

In spite of the weakness of the arguments against the program, and in spite of our own uncertainty about how real the influence of school subject content might be on society, this debate serves as a reminder of how much the national question weighs on perceptions of history education. Despite Robitaille and Bouvier’s misinterpretation, the implementation of *History and Citizenship Education* program is not an attempt to indoctrinate students in Canadian nationalism. This article demonstrates this point, mainly through an analysis of the national high school history program in Québec and of the actual nature of this program.

This article is divided into two sections. The first section reviews the national high school history programs in Québec from 1905 onward. It focuses on the national and civic identity developed through the programs, as well as on political wrangles over their identity-building goals. Because the Québec public school system was denominational, and because French-speaking Catholics constituted approximately 86% of the province’s population at the time (these figures still stand today, although their meaning has changed), we will only examine history taught in the French-Catholic public school system, headed by the Roman Catholic Committee of the Council of Public Instruction. Although the system became increasingly secular from 1966 onwards, Article 93 of the

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<sup>1</sup> This daily newspaper occupies a political position comparable, in Montréal, to that of the *Guardian* in London because it is the only large-circulation newspaper in Quebec that is not owned by a media conglomerate and because it is often regarded as having a left-of-centre political stance.

1867 British North America Act prevented Québec from abolishing the denominational system. A secular system was finally established in 1997 when a constitutional amendment was promulgated.

The second section of this article continues with an analysis of the actual nature of the current program and looks at its claim to be promoting an autonomous, critical citizenship focused on social justice. Through the use of a descriptive typology, this part of the article seeks to provide an answer to the question: What kinds of citizens is the *History and Citizenship Education* program aiming to educate in Québec's schools? Finally, it reviews the program's limitations and the gap separating the goals of the programs from teaching practices.

This article thus constitutes a modest attempt at describing and analyzing a specific case of educational aims and discourse – namely the Québec history curriculum. It does not attempt to compare it to other cases, nor to situate it in relation to empirical or theoretical research regarding the relationship between history and citizenship. Such an enterprise could not fit within the constraints of a single article.

### **The school history program in Québec**

This first section is divided in two parts. To begin, we outline the evolution of school history in Québec, and the social and political context from which the history programs arose. We then examine the discussions that preceded the creation of the most recent curriculum, by analysing the values it conveyed, as well as how it was received by the Habermasian identity-building ideology at its core.

#### ***The teaching of history from 1905 to 2003***

This era can be divided into four distinct periods: 1905-1965, 1966-1968, 1969-1981, and 1982-2003. Between 1905 and 1965, the history “catalogue program”, which identified as a list of items the content to be taught at each school level (Charland, 2005) sang the praises of the trinity of family, church, and land. It dwelt on the “glorious past” of New France, while skimming over the following centuries. “The teaching [of history] should highlight... both the apostolic and national goals pursued by the discoverers, the founding fathers, the leaders of our country; the purity of our French-Canadian origins; the religious, moral, heroic and idealistic nature of our ancestors.” (DIP [Département de l'Instruction Publique], 1959, p. 481-482). It was centred on the *telos* of an unchanging and homogeneous nation of French-Catholic farmers who resisted acculturation, and propagated Catholicism throughout America. It considered the pupil a vessel, and learning a receptive process, where students were “filled” with knowledge, and tamed. It should be noted, however, that French-Catholics were not the sole bearers of such indoctrinating practice: Anglo-Catholic and Anglo-Protestant programs also vested the social sciences with a similar mission, as was the case elsewhere during this period (Lenoir, 2002, p. 138).

As the province entered a period of massive social upheaval between 1966 and 1968, there was a reversal in the official discourse on education in Québec. This can partially be explained by the fact that average personal income in Québec was low in the 1960's, far below Ontario's, even though it was increasing significantly, albeit unevenly. Indeed, the Abitibi and Gaspé Peninsula regions remained quite poor and average income varied considerably throughout Québec, depending on ethnicity. The average income of First Nations people, Italian immigrants and French-Canadians represented from 42 to 64% of the average income of English Canadians. Moreover, merely 6.7% of the 985 men comprising the Canadian upper bourgeoisie were Francophones, though the latter represented about 25% of the total Canadian population (Linteau, Durocher, Robert, & Ricard, 1989, *passim*). This period of social effervescence coincided with the intensification and success of the student movement, as well as Québécois' marked sympathy for labour, and anticolonial, revolutionary and civil rights struggles in the United States, France, Algeria, Cuba, Chile, and Vietnam.

It was in this context, from 1969 to 1980, that a "framework program" dominated by Carl Rogers' humanist psychology, proposed a pedagogical state of mind rather than specific subject content (Martineau & Gauthier, 2002, p. 8). From 1969 to 1974, the history program was not compulsory. This flexibility – which reflected the winds of social and national change sweeping through Québec in the 1960's and the first half of the 1970's – gradually and partially vanished at the beginning of the 1980's. At the end of an acrimonious debate fed by social and national ferment in 1974, an early target of the new rigidity in education was history: its teaching once again became mandatory. Nonetheless, while this sometimes reduced students' choices in selecting the courses they wished to take, teachers still benefited from a great deal of leeway, as the curriculum remained flexible. In addition, and for the first time, the same curriculum applied to all students regardless of which school system (Catholic, Protestant, Anglophone or Francophone) they attended, which meant that there would no longer be "separate but equal" history programs, but a single common (flexible) history program for all.

Following a vast public consultation, the Québec government formulated a new educational policy, which led to another curricular reform in the early 1980's. The programs published in 1982 and 1984 instituted a history curriculum characterized by the intent to lessen a double historiographical and educational gap (Cardin, 2006). On the historiographical front, curriculum designers had hoped to put an end to an event-centred approach to history, which often focused on political facts pertaining to the formation of nation-states or the life of the elite, who were most often dead white men. The historiographical gap was bridged threefold by connecting with daily life, mentalities and socio-economic structures, by studying the world and the contemporary period, and by tracking anti-Irish, -Black, -women, -worker, -Native biases. In so doing, the program was actually more in keeping with what historiography had more or less become worldwide between the 1930's and 1980's, in curricular prescriptions as well as in academic historical writings.

Despite this new curricular approach, classroom practice still straggled, with most history teachers continuing to concentrate on political facts pertaining to the nation (Laville, 1984). The educational gap in the program was closed by proposing – once more (Cardin, 2009) – to replace teaching practices focused on students’ memorizing the narrative provided by the teacher with relatively new methods, then considered by a majority of educational researchers to be good practice: teaching by objectives, giving prominence to high-order thinking skills, handling of first-hand sources, and modifying course packaging (dialogue in lecture courses, use of audio-visuals, etc.). These pedagogical propositions did not, however, substantially improve teaching; most history teachers still focused more on *their* account of the “grand narrative” than on their *students’* skills development (Coron, 1997; Lenoir, 2002; Martineau, 1999).

The 1980’s brought sharpening inter-imperialist economic competition, growing depression-like, and deflationary conditions worldwide, as well as unrelenting but weakened resistance by labourers throughout the world. This contradictory context resulted in the international ideological backlash associated with the election of the Thatcher and Reagan governments in the United Kingdom and the United States (Apple, 2004; Berthelot, 2006). This international backlash was translated in Québec by policies such as budget cuts in public services and salaries, aimed at decisively weakening the trade unions and raising the profit margins of the ruling capitalist families.

***The values promoted by the 2004 history program and how it was received: politico-legal patriotism and other conceptions of national identity in Québec society***

By the end of the 1990’s and through the first years of the next decade, these policies were followed by an ambivalent educational reform (MÉQ, 1997; MÉQ, 2001) combining socio-constructivist and cognitivist approaches, and entrusting history with two conflicting missions.

On the one hand, the new history program aimed to prepare students “to assume [their] responsibilities as citizen[s]” (MÉQ, 2004, p. 297) and realize “the need to make any decision on a critical basis” (p. 298). Therefore, they should learn to formulate questions about contemporary society, to doubt ready-made answers, to investigate facts, to question sources, and to deliberate respectfully and tolerantly, rather than yielding to prejudice, hasty generalizations or the interpretations of others (p. 337-338, 344, 348). This view of history education, inspired by Dewey (1933) and Dalongeville (2001), amongst others, reaffirms some tenets of the 1982, and 1984 programs, and rejects the type of political socialization with which history teaching was traditionally loaded: “teaching citizens about their national identity, as well as the validity of the social and political order” (MÉQ, 2004, p. 337).

On the other hand, paradoxically, school is also to play “... the role of agent of cohesion by contributing... to the development of a sense of belonging to the [Québec] community” (MÉQ, 2001, p. 3) and the study of the past should support this role, because it helps “... to discover the foundations of identity” (MÉQ, 2004, p. 348). In fact, history

participates in "... structuring the student's identity by giving him or her access to points of reference allowing him or her to grasp his or her belonging to a community sharing common values, notably those related to democracy" (p. 295). Official program documents go on to specify that: "... the challenges to be taken up, under a pluralistic society, are those searching for shared values based on shared reasons ..." (MÉQ, 1997, p. 33). Therefore, it must be insisted that "a set of shared values be promoted and a sense of belonging [to this 'pluralistic society'] developed" (MÉQ, 2004, p. 28). So, while students must determine for themselves the historical roots of their social identity (p. 341), they ought not, however, to develop any values other than those designated as the basis of Québec society, leading them to exercise their "... role as citizen[s], in [their] immediate community, school, and within the larger community" (p. 295-296).

The history course must therefore fulfil a mandate of social integration. In other words, "the disciplines of the social sciences offer multiple opportunities to enrich the activities involving the development of an 'integration into Québec society'" competency, which immigrant students must develop (p. 150). School must explain to these students that they must respect public institutions and the democratic values upon which they are based, such as gender equality, etc., as if no immigrant prized democratic values, and all Canadian-born did (p. 156-157).

All students should consequently identify with provincial public institutions and the democratic values which they embody. The Groupe de travail sur la réforme du curriculum [Curricular Reform Work Group] (MÉQ, 1997, p. 34) explicitly identified these values (equality, justice, freedom, tolerance, civility, solidarity, responsibility, respect for the law and institutions), which were subsequently ratified by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, the independent public advisory body mandated with the critical analysis of education-related issues ([CSÉ], 1998, p. 24). Such a specific statement of civic identity underscores the type of social reproduction at work in this program and the previous ones: it is the state (or its territory) that is to be respected, not ancestors' common historical experiences or cultural and ethnic origins.

This comes indirectly from Habermas' political-legal patriotism (Dufour, 2001). Because one of the principal themes of the representation of Québec identity is linked to paradoxical constitutional options, we believe it is more sensitive to avoid the consecrated term (*constitutional patriotism*), which, in the Québec environment, might be construed as prejudiced in favour of a particular cause (in this case the federal constitutional status quo), and being unfairly unfavourable to another cause (Québec sovereignty). In addition, the term patriotism is currently often associated with a love for homeland for which patriots are ready to sacrifice themselves, whereas in the Québec program, this political-legal patriotism is somewhat more akin to Habermas' conception, and is a matter of integrating and promoting universal and political principles concerning democratic institutions, and participating in them to make them more rational. It is in fact derived from the liberal constitutionalist model based on the belief in the neutrality of the state relative to individual or community concepts (Rawls, 1993/1995). All memories can thus converge on the "imaginary political community" (Anderson, 1991/1996) of

Québec, defined on the basis of Québec's democratic institutions, because this "imaginary" community emanates from a concept of the constitutional state intended solely to protect the abstract civil liberties of individuals who are linked only by their respective interest in preserving their person and properties (Marx, 1843/1968).

In short, history education is limited to transmitting shared liberal values. Citizens' adhesion to these values should enable them to perceive themselves as parties to a supposedly just social contract, motivating them to assume their enlightened responsibilities for social participation (MEQ, 2004, p. 338). Identifying with the French Canadian ethnic group then becomes optional for becoming part of the Québec nation. Nonetheless, patriotism by any other name is still patriotism. Striving for political-legal patriotism might comfort the will of citizens to fight for a righteous bourgeois state under the illusion of its defending universal principals of liberty, equality, solidarity, justice, peace and love.

As the 2006 debate on immigration and national identity showed, a majority of Québécois of French-Canadian origin have considered politico-legal patriotism insufficient, even irreconcilable with their self-assigned national identity. In 2006, for instance, the management at a Montréal gymnasium agreed to frost the windows of an exercise room, at the request and expense of a Hasidic group wanting to prevent their young boys from seeing women wearing workout outfits. The management later reversed their decision out of respect for the equal rights for women. It nevertheless triggered a debate over immigration in every region of Québec, a debate which took on a particularly xenophobic and racist (particularly anti-Muslim) tone. The media sensationalized both the Montréal gymnasium story, as well as other isolated incidents of the same nature. Some politicians framed the debate over what allowances should be made for immigrants' religious and cultural practices, and even set women's rights against immigrants' rights or attributed a hypothetical extinction of "Québécois of French Canadian culture" to immigration.

Against a pre-election background, the party PLQ, then in power in Québec, referred the matter in February 2007 to a commission headed by two established academics, Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor. The commission's mandate was to hold a public consultation on what place to give practices accommodating cultural differences, within the public sphere. Particular attention was to be paid to "reasonable accommodations," since such accommodations are covered by case law and aim to relax the application of a norm which favours an individual threatened by discrimination due to individual characteristics protected by law (Baillargeon, 2007; Simms & Prairie, 2007).

The debate stimulated the emergence of various, and sometimes irreconcilable, conceptions of Québécois identity. In spite of such variety within a single referenced territory, many views on national identity expressed during the April 2006 debate appear to share the notion that the nation consists of the descendants of the French settlers, notwithstanding their current social differences, and that any underestimation of this French Canadian essence is evidence of a federal, anti-Québec, national identity. The

traditional view of Henri Bourassa (1866-1952), and, to a lesser extent, that of Lionel Groulx (1878-1967) – considered all Catholic descendants of the French settlers to be a people, wherever they lived within the Canadian territory. Eventually, the reference territory was reduced to Québec. Furthermore, according to the results of a study by Létourneau and Moisan (2004), students' narration of the history of the Québec region insisted – as was the case for several historians whom Rudin (1995) and Bouchard (2004) studied – on the status of the French Canadians as *objects* of exploitation and oppression.

This ethnic nationalist viewpoint differs from the “official” civic nationalist conception, which is a more inclusive, less tragic, though more romanticized, narrative leading to a happy and grandiose conclusion. For example, the provincial PQ [Parti Québécois], which is a self-proclaimed bulwark against federal nationalism, promotes a territorial citizenship on the sovereignty section of its' website which includes all inhabitants of the national territory such as French Canadians, Anglophones, immigrants, etc. It also celebrates heroes closer, in some cases, to a conqueror-type figure than to the colonized or to the dissident figure: “The cultural success of Cirque du Soleil, Robert Lepage, Céline Dion, Marc-André Hamelin, Denys Arcand, Arcade Fire ... are a source of pride and international influence for our people ... This culture of which we are all so proud epitomizes our national identity” (PQ, 2007). In the 1970's, the PQ's program already professed a form of territorial nationalism, at the time accompanied by affirmative action measures (Lévesque & Parizeau, 1970/2007).

Some have attributed the ambiguity of the recent high school history program to tensions between different ethnic points of view (Zanazanian, 2009). This means that while the province includes some 700,000 Allophones, 600,000 Anglophones, and 6.4 million Francophones, this latter group would constitute a minority, considering the role that speaking English plays in individual upward socioeconomic mobility in North America. Consequently, Anglophones and Francophones both feel they are the oppressed minority of the other. Others have attributed it to tension between competing social interests camouflaged by the independentist and social-democratic discourse of a fraction of the Francophone elite, which is consolidated by the reinforcement of the Québec state, concomitant with the social struggles in the 1960's-1970's to improve the lot of the Francophones. This analysis assumes that elites normally seek to maintain the stability or promotion of their hegemony rather than social justice, but that this stability would be better guaranteed in a cohesive political “community.” In turn, this cohesiveness is stronger when, as Bourdieu has shown, no one realizes that the corresponding educational system is promoting social cohesion and stability, while the social system is in fact based on social, political, and economic injustice. This false vision of the “self” divides the oppressed: the numerous French-speaking workers do not see their common interest with English-speaking workers or those of any other language (and vice versa), while they imagine having common interest with their oppressors who they happen to speak French (Dugré & Penner, 1991). Still others see the effect of a social representation of history teaching as the transmission of a true cultural heritage narrative, which students should learn by rote, instead of learning historians' heuristics, concepts and attitudes (Laville, 1984). This representation echoes the attitude of the student who, in Ionesco's *The*



*Lesson*, memorized the results of mathematical operations rather than learning how to perform the actual operations, as though it was better to teach *what* to think than to teach *to* think.

### **From the issue of nationhood to fostering citizenship focused on justice: educating critical, competent citizens through the teaching of history**

On what grounds is citizenship education connected with the means and the ends attributed to history learning? Educators such as Dewey (1916/1976) have argued that successful citizenship education is dependent on the relationship between teaching, school experiences, and social life experiences (Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, 1998, p. 46), which is to say that one can only become a citizen through the practice of citizenship. Anyone can get to know his or her particular interests, and can learn to defend and express them so that they are understood by others. On an academic level, this leads to considering the advantages of implementing a pedagogical approach that will open a dialogic and participative sphere, which will actively integrate students to the normative management of the educational institution. "Enlightened political engagement is not easily achieved, and it is never achieved for all time; one works at it continually (path), in concert with others (participation), and intentionally with others who are of different ideology, perspective, or culture (pluralism)" (Parker, 2008, p. 68).

As a matter of fact, it would be incoherent to conceive of a pedagogical approach aimed at the development of future citizens' collective deliberation without simultaneously offering the concrete conditions that allow, in a class of student-participants, the exercise of argumentative deliberation when it comes to the common resolution of what should be mutually requested, allowed and prohibited. Such an exercise is the occasion to really put forth one's needs and particular interests, which will be clearly explicated to others, and to oneself, during the deliberative exercise. In what follows, we examine the links between citizenship education theories and history teaching in Québec. First, we briefly explore the theoretical setting of the problem, that is, we look at the debate about the way to approach citizenship models, and explain why we have opted for Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) analytical tool for describing and categorizing types of citizens. To determine which citizenship models, social and political practices history programs are promoting, we then adapt Westheimer and Kahne's taxonomy based on their study of various kinds of citizens educated by the schools to ensure what the latter consider to be the right direction for democracy. Next, we expressly consider the competencies prescribed by the Québec program, with special emphasis on the third competency, which refers explicitly to citizenship education and justice-oriented deliberation. Finally, we ask whether what is done in school is consistent with the convictions that the decision-makers claim they are including in it, whether the teaching of history and its tools truly allows for the development of citizens focused on justice and reciprocity.

***From the complexity of the current citizenship debate to Westheimer and Kahne's analytical tool***

The notion of citizenship is embedded within a polemic debate about its predominant conceptions (Habermas, 1998, p. 259; McGrew, 1992, p. 22). Moreover, since citizens can find their greatest contentment in the so-called “apolitical” sphere (such as family, art, or religion), a liberal democracy must respect a large spectrum of conceptions of good (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 296-300, 328; Strike, 1994, p. 8; Rawls, 1980, p. 540). These conditions inevitably have an impact on the complexity of an educational project for citizenship, but in the restrained perspective of this article, we should make clear that our intention is not to review in detail conceptions of citizenship such as have shaped the history of modern and post-modern politics. Other authors have already done this work brilliantly and thoroughly; we leave those concerns to historians, sociologists, and other experts in social studies education to continue their pursuits. We refer, for example, to domestic or international anthologies or studies on citizenship education (e.g.: Arthur, Davies & Hahn, 2008; Jutras & Duhamel, 2005; Sears, Clarke, & Hughes, 1997) or on youth political and community activism (e.g.: Avery, 2007; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Kassimir, 2006; Torney-Purta, 2002), and to the work of sociologist Schnapper (2000), who traces the principal developments of the concept of citizenship through the study of the historical transformation of nations, while also presenting the great texts of the founders of political theory, past and present.

What attracts our attention in citizenship literature is the centrality of education in general, and of history teaching in particular. “Political scientists subsume education within the concept of political socialization, and therein are concerned with unconscious social reproduction; educators are concerned to intervene in history and to intentionally shape society’s future (Gutmann, 1999) – that is, with conscious social production” (Parker, 2008, p. 69). In fact, all sanitized, uncritical and edifying versions of history in the service of civic education (Galston, 1991, p. 244) are antithetical to the recommendations of the great majority of history education specialists (e.g.: MacMillan, 2008), who consider history as a means for allowing citizens to understand and, if need be, to criticize the way their social institutions, justice system, legislative and executive procedures, democratic regime, or universal suffrage work (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 310). The political order should not depend on deception, whether it is based on historical illusions or other erroneous beliefs which, along with the ideological biases of those who interpret them (MacIntyre & Clark, 2004), would rely on the pretence of institutions’ democratic functioning (Rawls, 1993/1995, p. 99). While this type of critical analysis is certainly taught in the schools, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) have revealed two other predominant types of citizens promoted in public education.

***A tool for describing and categorizing: what types of citizens are being educated in school?***

To determine which citizenship models secondary school history programs are promoting, we have adapted Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) taxonomy which is derived

from their study of various kinds of *citizens* are educated by schools to ensure what their administrators consider to be the right direction for democracy. Westheimer and Kahne studied the civic goals of ten United States school programs. They observed how these schools operated and how their administrators and personnel subscribed to the stated goals (p. 240). They then distributed the latter into three non-mutually exclusive categories. The goal of the first category is to train “personally responsible” citizens. Personally responsible citizens conform with what society asks of them: they are charitable, polite, placid and sober, give blood, recycle, obey the Highway Code, pay their taxes, work assiduously, vote in elections, enlist in the army, carry groceries in an organic jute tote bag, consume fair-trade coffee, etc. This conception of a “responsible citizen” would still be welcome in several undemocratic societies, including Duplessis’ Québec (under whose leadership school history programs were to educate personally responsible citizens) or Salazar’s Portugal, for instance.

The purpose of the second category is to educate “participatory” citizens who engage in social and community life by running for office, do volunteer work, coordinate a campaign in their neighbourhood to collect recyclable waste, or to raise awareness about responsible consumption, ecological commitment, prevention, effort, respect for others, cooperation and so forth.

The third category seeks to educate “justice-oriented” citizens, that is, citizens who collectively attempt to identify the social factors behind abusive individual experiences and behaviours and who, by organizing an election campaign, petition drive, strike, or other event, try to reform society to counter injustice. Such citizens regularly perform large and small deeds aimed at saving the planet, building union solidarity, helping the poor living in neo-colonial countries, defending freedom of the press, gender equality and so on. Most importantly, citizens of this category characteristically share a focus on the general causes of injustice and on taking disinterested initiatives towards establishing justice.

This typology, however, does not include a separate category for citizens who would fight in a revolution to overthrow the established order, whether it relied on or generated exploitation and oppression. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that establishing justice would be in the best interest of a majority of citizens and require, if need be, their involvement in actions of a collective nature aimed, for instance, at changing the form of ownership of the means of production and rendering power and social relationships reciprocal at various levels. In short, this taxonomy seems to somehow downplay the category of the socialist revolutionary citizen.

Having briefly described the competencies prescribed in the Québec program, we will use the above typology to analyze whether the Québec education system can educate citizens capable of transformative praxis.

***Do the competencies of the History and Citizenship Education programs contribute to educate students for justice and reciprocity?***

Putatively participating in this deliberative movement, one of the major educational aims of the Québec curriculum for junior high school students (MÉQ, 2004, p. 4) focuses on the training of autonomous individuals capable of acting as engaged, critical citizen. In the same breath, it asserts that this task falls, first, to *History and Citizenship Education*, although the latter, as it adds later, needs the help of other subject-areas to train “responsible citizens, capable of using their minds and competencies to serve the common good” (MÉQ, 2004, p. 21). Indeed, the junior high school curriculum’s 612 pages mention the basic word *citizen* or its derivatives (*citizens*, *citizenship*, etc.) 247 times; half of these occurrences concern the history program. The same is true of the high school program (MÉLS, 2006).

The *History and Citizenship Education* title in fact represents two courses which, with minute differences, both include the same three competencies. As previously stated, the first program is taught in grades seven and eight. While it strives for “universal” history, it specifically focuses on Western European and North American history. The other program is taught in grades nine through eleven and focuses on the history of Québec in particular.

The first competency involves formulating problems and questions in a historical perspective, about past and present social phenomena (MÉQ, 2004, p. 344), such as the *American and French revolutions*. The second is titled *Interpreting social phenomena using the historical method* (p. 346). It implies that students need to actively research documents to establish facts. This involves occasionally finding, and classifying documents, analyzing and assessing relevant data, comparing the points of view and interests of actors, witnesses and historians, and exposing and criticizing frames of reference, assumptions, and ideological underpinnings of texts (p. 347). Students are expected to develop an active relationship with knowledge and become gradually involved in deconstructing the discourses of global cultural narratives and notions of objective truth. Of course, the program does focus on the idea that the history course allows for historical events to be contextualized by considering the various perspectives of the actors involved, but there is no statement about the historical approaches to be used to identify and assess the biases or prejudices of the authors of the documents which students will have in hand.

The third competency, *Building one’s civic awareness through history* (p. 348) which for grades nine to eleven becomes *Consolidating the exercise of one’s citizenship through history* (though both versions of this competency are viewed here as complementary), is closely connected with the practice of deliberation, as a constraints-free, structured discourse founded on well-reasoned arguments: “To develop his or her competency, the student should learn how to reason based on facts and to justify his or her interpretation through argumentation” (p. 346). For one of the authors to whom the programs refer, the history class can and should accomplish this by offering students occasions for theoretical, complex reconstructions, called problem situations:

The situation is complex, because it brings into play several [historical] points of view, which may be concordant, divergent, or strictly contradictory, so resolving the problem does not reside in the simplistic victory of one of the points of view, but rather by stepping outside the dialectic, to integrate several of the points of view. (Dalongeville, 2001, p. 276, authors' translation)

This would allow students to participate in social debates, which would be seen as “problems” to be solved (MÉQ, 2004, p. 360). Deliberation would be all the more important, because students need to debate the issues confronting values and putting social behaviour into question.

***Are history classes really entrusted to prepare students to focus on justice and reciprocity?***

Considering the magnitude of the mandate given to the history class, and the fact that the optimal developmental level of these competencies cannot be reached in only four years, the Québec history program aims to educate citizens capable of arriving at their own opinions and building their own identity rather than indoctrinating them into a specific ideology by subverting history. History should not be submitted as such to citizenship education. According to the authors of the program, there would be no such indoctrination of students. In fact, the civic competency would depend on two other competencies (the historical competencies), to the extent that “... as students learn about the contribution of past social phenomena to democratic life today, they ask questions that, in turn, contribute to new interpretations of social phenomena” (MÉLS, 2006, p. 23). In this spirit, each student should methodically examine and interpret various social phenomena, while establishing his or her opinion and civic consciousness on historical bases, grasping the impact of human actions on the course of history and becoming aware of his or her responsibilities as a citizen (MÉQ, 2004, p. 337-338). Finally, the study of social phenomena should provide students with “... the opportunity to decontextualize the concepts studied and to transfer them appropriately” (p. 350) to their lives as citizens.

According to the *History and Citizenship Education* program, good citizens should necessarily express their competency by choosing to adhere to predetermined principles (“such as the constitutional state or universal suffrage”, MÉLS, 2006, p. 22), by prioritizing certain values (“such as justice, freedom or equality”, etc.) and by adopting behaviours (“such as participation, commitment or taking a position”, etc.) nominally consistent with the established order (even though the program’s authors may be unaware of it).

While the *History and Citizenship Education* program at the junior high school level does not define the term *common good*, it nonetheless uses it 152 times in association with the reciprocity of social, political and economic bonds. It mentions these unambiguously in sentences such as: “... the shared values of Québec society ... are equality, justice, freedom and democracy” (MÉQ, 2004, p. 156) and students must

identify “... human actions which prove to be economically equitable, respectful of the environment, socially just and adapted to the culture of the societies occupying the territories” (p. 312). Similarly, the use of terms associated with asymmetry in social, political or economic relationships such as “poverty,” “racism,” “sexism,” “discrimination” and “exclusion” further indicates a favourable disposition towards reciprocity. Such words appear 26 times.

When debating a social issue, the MÉLS expects that students who have completed the upper grades will grasp the benefits and drawbacks of each position (MÉLS, 2006, p. 24). Yet, it rarely formulates students’ recognition of the socially and historically situated dimension of discourse. The MÉLS (2006) states only one expectation in this regard, that the student’s depth of questioning is revealed when he or she “displays a critical sense of sources and interpretations” (p. 13). This aspect can determine, in whole or in part, the favourable or unfavourable nature of the positions expressed in more or less regulated contexts of deliberation, whether in or out of the classroom. For example, racist discourse might not have the same validity in the eyes of people who profit from the effects of racism as it does for those people who suffer from it.

A “sense of mutuality” and a “desire to justify to others” are described as elements of the deliberative reciprocity principle (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, p. 52-53). Such an ideal supposes that citizens are seeking an agreement concerning rights which can be justified by mutually acceptable reasons, under deliberative conditions of equality and inclusiveness. Those implications are translated into pedagogical requirements, whereas a dialogic practice which transforms students from submissive objects into active subjects of their citizenship and their history allows for the development of truly critical citizens capable of transformative praxis. The Québec *History and Citizenship Education* curriculum implicitly and partially draws on deliberative theory, which conceives of democracy as a self-correcting, historical process.

This idea at times reaches Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) third category of citizenship. However, McAndrew (2004) points to the perceived ambiguity of the curriculum’s citizenship components with regards to the critical approach needed to study its concepts. Such ambiguity might perplex teachers and other actors who may wish to avoid social debate on non-consensual dimensions of citizenship, or it might lead them to a “common sense” interpretation which is incompatible with the demands of democracy, pluralism, and social solidarity. Citizenship education could hence be reduced, in its application, to memorizing grand legal principles and how public institutions work (p. 34).

Whatever one might think of notions of legislative democracy, what could it possibly mean to students who have no say on the limits of freedom of expression in school media, for example? What could judicial and executive democracy mean to those without the power to affect the definition and the application of rules and sanctions? Indeed, the history sections of the curriculum submit the institutions of the Québec parliamentary system as the very measure of liberal democracy, which as a political

system cannot be surpassed. The competency titled *Strengthens his/her exercise of citizenship through the study of history* presents students with the opportunity to reinvest historical knowledge in order to “recognize”, “identify”, “grasp”, “make connections between”, and “examine” institutions, values, issues, and societies. Being a citizen thus boils down to having rights and institutions which protect them, participating in any process which may have an impact on the life of the community, belonging to a political community, and behaving in a way which conforms to values promoted by the community (Marzouk, Kabano, & Côté, 2000, p. 31). These values themselves are not objects of deliberation, and do not guarantee social justice; the expectation of conformity prohibits their being questioned, and their injustices to be corrected. This can be partly explained by the fact that while the Québec secondary curriculum insists on the importance of applying principles of democracy to managing the classroom and the school, its designers remain reluctant to integrate in class real issues of a political or socioeconomic nature, whose scope far exceeds the framework of the school (McAndrew, 2004).

In the Québec *History and Citizenship Education* program, students can nevertheless be made aware that “... that in spite of a democratic egalitarian discourse, real inequalities endure which he or she will have to face and on which he or she may have to take a position, ... that social change depends on human action” and that the role of responsible citizen demands “... involvement in the debates on social issues” (MÉQ, 2004, p. 348). We can nonetheless wonder, as previously mentioned, whether the history being taught will truly lead students to transform and improve their community. In any case, it appears that the 21 verbs used to define the components of the third discipline competency might, in fact, have described the behaviour of Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) first category of citizens, which is identified as the personally responsible. In the pages devoted to history, we notice a reverence toward Québec’s current parliamentary system, elevated as the model of liberal democracy. The omission of some verbs from the program will no doubt distress some and hearten others; absent are such ideologically slanted verbs as *assessing* the consequences of social organization modes on social differentiation, *fighting* for the interests of the disenfranchised, or *influencing* the trajectory of the world of adults and youth.

On the one hand, as would be expected, the Québec curriculum *in theory* favours critical thinking and consciousness of the diversity of cultural perspectives. On the other hand, the danger of such a focus is to render other types of conflict or division insignificant, such as is the case of socioeconomic divisions.

Further exploration of the logic underlying the institution of school demonstrates, however, that it is perfectly coherent with the superstructure under which it was conceived, and which is entrusted with the mission of social selection. Regulated as they are by the hierarchical structure of school, interactions in the classroom cannot easily be reconciled with education for democracy and egalitarian relations (Allman, 1999; Giroux, 1981; McLaren, 1999). While the twentieth century saw a vast movement toward pedagogical projects based on active learning, their impact on the political socialization

of students has been minimal and cognitive and affective gains difficult to measure in this regard (Palonsky, 1987, p. 509). Even in school contexts referred to as deliberative, notions of democracy may constitute nothing more than a diversion which exacerbates differences, rather than an exercise in analyzing oppression as the tool of the powerful, who dictate norms against all others by dividing and setting them one against the other (Éthier & Lefrançois, 2007; Lefrançois & Éthier, 2008).

It is undeniable that the superstructure of schooling reproduces and reifies social and economic infrastructures as material conditions of social existence such as competition, consumption, coercion, subordination, impacts of economic crisis, absence of independent, coordinated action of labour unions working in solidarity – in short, all forms of habitus, frame individual and collective mentalities and ethos. If these observations are correct, why would students then desire, indeed, why *should* they desire, to become agents in the regulation of their own individual behaviour, especially considering that they have little or no control over their school and social environment, in spite of what the institution of school may claim to be democratic practice (Howden & Marguerite, 2000, p. 124)? This leads to questions about the ability of schooling, through the deliberative practice and learning of history in the social sciences and humanities curricula in particular, to create the relational dynamics among students likely to promote the collective development of norms and actions to compensate for inter-subjective inequality and allow for the resolution of problems of community life.

The citizenship education program implemented in the United Kingdom since 2002 claims to be founded on principles of participatory democracy, that is to say on the search for compromise between the interests and values of groups through democratic institutions, with the goal of achieving a more inclusive citizenship (Crick, 2007). However, as Leighton (2004) points out, the British program seeks to increase participation in the established system rather than put into question the inequalities it creates. Using Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) typology, it can be concluded that the absence of challenges to the structure and of critical examination of the forms of power that sustain it make the possibility of correcting and reforming it in favour of social justice improbable. As school is but a link in the chain of social reproduction, there is reason to believe that the matrix of power outside of it is inherent to it, such as language, content selection, etc., and that it is therefore reproduced by the oppressed who are unaware of their contribution to the status quo. By reproducing hierarchical power relations while promoting an official curriculum favourable to social justice, schools may be condemned to systemic incoherence. Overcoming the limits of the school structure may consequently require that the roots of hegemony in schools such as teachers' authority, assessment, etc., and beyond its walls, such as social selection of students, relations of production, etc., be uncovered.

## Conclusion

Although the educational objectives for training Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) "personally responsible" and "participatory" citizen are present in the Québec *History*



*and Citizenship Education* program, its claim is to be promoting the “social justice” citizen. It explicitly identifies the education of “justice-oriented” citizens as its goal, and rejects moralistic, instrumentalist, mechanistic or static views of knowledge and politics. It also emphasizes reasoning and debate as the social factors of individual problems, as well as for practices which might render social, economic or political structures more just. In spite of its ambiguities and contradictions, therefore, the program appears to be in line with educational research on the importance of historical thinking (e.g.: Barton, 2008; Lee, Ashby, & Shemilt, 2005; Seixas, 2010; Wineburg, 2001).

Curricular objectives cannot, however, be seen to translate the reality of the classroom or of school in general, as fifty years of research into the sociology of education have shown. For at least twenty years now, researcher’s observations have consistently shown that teachers rarely adopt what research has revealed to be “best practices” (Barton & Levstik, 2004). On the contrary, most teaching practices at the middle or high school levels, including that of some otherwise excellent teachers with strong pedagogical content knowledge and a refined conception of historical thinking, focus first on discipline and behaviour management or on ensuring that all the subject-area content has been covered, even if those classroom practices contradict the approaches to inquiry that were discussed in their methods course (Barton & Levstik, 2004; van Hover & Yeager, 2007).

Why teachers do not apply these best practices in class is the subject of much speculation. Barton and Levstik (2004) provide three concurrent answers to this question. For some researchers, such a situation would indicate that teachers are doing what they can, with whatever available means, to survive under difficult teaching conditions. For others, the rejection of innovative practice reflects the influences of expectations of parents, colleagues, media and decision makers, whether or not they are openly stated, as the effect of social determinants. For others yet, it means that teachers’ university education has not convinced them of the legitimacy of the educational aims and epistemological positions of academics, even though they may have adopted the vocabulary of the latter’s dominant theoretical discourse. While the analysis of the curriculum’s official documentation is necessary to evaluate the foundations of this discourse, it remains insufficient. Further study of the social contexts, manner and conditions in which the curriculum is transposed is required to glean a greater understanding of the processes through which curricular aims are selected, enacted or (mis)appropriated by the social agents of school.

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