FRANCO-QUÉBÉCOIS HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE "FRENCH-ENGLISH CONFLICT": TOWARDS TWO RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTEGRATING ANGLOPHONE REALITIES AND EXPERIENCES IN QUEBEC'S NATIONAL HISTORY CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

The author's views in this article emerge from a talk given on the place of "Anglophones" in Quebec national history classrooms that were presented at a one-day seminar that he co-organized at Concordia University on February 11th 2011 entitled, "What Place should Anglophones have in Quebec's Collective Narrative?". In what follows, the author reviews the overall findings of his past and current research on the workings of historical consciousness in Franco-Québécois teachers' and students' structuring of group boundaries toward Quebec's Anglophone minority. He then proposes two recommendations for better integrating the realities and experiences of the Anglo-Québécois in Quebec national history classrooms.

INTRODUCTION

For several years now, one of my main research activities has consisted of better understanding the role of historical consciousness in the structuring of group boundaries between Francophones and Anglophones in Quebec.[1] Concentrating primarily on the workings of this dynamic in the national history classroom among teachers and students from both language communities, I have specifically sought to grasp how these social actors, from two historically distinct groups, make sense of the common past and, based on these interactions with the past for knowing and doing, structure group boundaries toward each other (Zanazanian, 2008, 2011, In Press A, In Press B). To these ends, Quebec's context of group duality, where both Francophones and Anglophones variously compete for their own maintenance and development as autonomous and distinct entities (McAndrew, 2003, 2010), has offered fertile ground for not only theorizing the links between historical consciousness and ethno-cultural agency, but also for contemplating on different strategies for enhancing intergroup dialogue and comprehension.

Within Quebec's ongoing scenario of identity politics, my fascination for this subject has however drawn me to closely examine the historical consciousness of the Franco-Québécois of French Canadian descent, wondering about the extent to which memories of past intergroup antagonism – between a previously French-speaking subordinate majority and a former dominant English-speaking minority (Schermerhorn, 1978; McAndrew, 2003)- impact the manner in which they interact with

the past for knowing and acting toward today's Anglo-Québécois. Such an interest becomes all the more pertinent given the Ministry of Education's unsuccessful attempts over the past two decades to fully incorporate the realities and experiences of Quebec's English-speaking communities in the province's national history program, which till this day, due to public opposition to any such changes, largely continues to configure the dominant storyline of the Francophone majority's collective memory (MEQ, 1998; MELS, 2003; Zanazanian, 2008; McAndrew, 2010). If one were to view the Anglo-Québécois as a historic community in its own right, that has greatly contributed to the province's development, one would undoubtedly be concerned with the negative effects that such a common but non-consensual program may have on mutual group perceptions and attitudes, particularly in terms of its potential promotion of stereotypical images of Anglophones as antagonists to Quebec's national aspirations (McAndrew, 2010). It is thus in this logic that I continue to be keen on grasping the role "Anglophones" play in Francophone constructions of (past) social realities, seeking to discover stumbling blocks that may hinder intergroup rapprochement, to then develop strategies for building bridges between the two communities.

Based on my research, I have come to believe that the key to finding such solutions lies in evaluating the overall impact of the "French-English Conflict" on the workings of Franco-Québécois historical consciousness. Such *shared historical memories of often-unequal intergroup power relations* press heavily on how teachers and students make sense of the Anglo-Québécois, effectively leading to an overwhelming disregard of the realities and experiences of Quebec's English-speaking communities in their constructions of social reality. In forming an integral part of Francophone collective memory, the weight of the "French-English Conflict" generally contributes to both viewing the Franco-Québécois as historical victims of an oppressed past and "Anglophones" as one of the main "culprits" for their group's negative historical experiences (Létourneau, 2006, 2010). While most Francophone teachers and students seemingly rely on these shared memories for guidance for knowing and acting toward Anglophones, it is also important to keep in mind that a smaller number of them nonetheless question their current-day relevance and seek alternative significations (Zanazanian, 2001, In Press B).

In what follows, I briefly describe the main findings of my past and current research on the effects of historical consciousness on the structuring of group boundaries among Franco-Québécois teachers and students. I then develop the contours of two recommendations that I believe constitute a first step for initiating debate on the potentials of fostering comprehension of Quebec's English-speaking communities in Quebec history classrooms. Given the short space allocated here, I however invite readers to refer to my other publications for better understanding the conceptual links between historical consciousness and ethno-cultural agency as well as for detailed accounts of the qualitative studies that I have led and continue to lead.

ASSESSING THE PLACE OF "ANGLOPHONES" IN QUEBEC HISTORY CLASSROOMS

My prior and ongoing research on the effects of historical consciousness on the structuring of group boundaries has been quite revealing of how the historical memories of the "French-English Conflict" weigh heavily on the manner in which Francophone national history teachers and students give meaning to the common past to then make sense of the Anglo-Québécois.[2] The main outcome of my work suggests that, despite sometimes being curious to better understand the Other, a vast majority of these respondents use the past as a means of differentiating and distancing themselves from the latter. They clearly do not know the history of the Anglo-Québécois from the "Anglo" point of view and in large part do not necessarily display openness to their realities and experiences. Instead, by generally basing understandings of the past on their own community's collective memory, many history teachers and students tend to largely remember a power structure of often-unequal intergroup relations in which Anglophones play the role of the antagonist. Consequently, group boundaries between the two communities are preserved, as are stereotypical images that do not necessarily portray the "English" in a positive light. In this process, Anglophones seem to be confined to a category of *otherness*, in an exclusive, largely atemporal and sometimes rigid manner. They are thereby seen as forming a monolithic entity, rather than understood as a diverse community with different realities, experiences and perspectives on the past. In all, Anglophones seem to be inadvertently excluded from forming an integral component of a common and sentimental "sameness" or a *nous collectif* (Zanazanian, 2011, In Press A, In Press B).

Of importance, these teachers and students seemingly use the memories of the "French-English Conflict" in two different ways. On the one hand, most of them rely on these memories as a guide for orienting their actions toward the Other, which they do so by completely adhering to their messages and lessons, and by without really questioning their simplicity and essentialized content matter. These respondents base themselves largely on their collective memory for either repeating or justifying what their group knows of the common past, to then orient their ethno-cultural agency accordingly. Memories, feelings, and or wounds of perceived past injustices committed by Anglophones as well as imperatives of righting the wrongs

of the past seem to persist in time, despite improvements in the power structure governing inter-group dynamics. In this logic, Anglophones are undoubtedly perceived as a continuous threat to the identity and autonomous development of their community (Zanazanian, 2011, In Press A, In Press B). In comparison to teachers, students seem to rely on their group's collective memory in larger numbers when structuring boundaries with the Other.[3] Demonstrating at times a more romanticized understanding of the "We" than teachers, a vast majority of these youths seem to still incarnate past intergroup power struggles with Anglophones in the present. This struggle for the rights of French Canadians can today be seen as a struggle for the survival of their ethno-cultural grouping (Nation), and more often than not for the independence of Quebec.

On the other hand, a smaller number of teachers and students seem to instead interact with elements of pre-established narratives of their group's past as a means of negotiating their own personal stance toward the implications of the meanings of these memories for the construction of intergroup realities. In turn, particularly in the case of teachers, this either leads them to simply resist these memories in terms of their authenticity for guiding action or to possibly adapt them, to varying degrees, to their own understandings of current social reality (Zanazanian, 2011, In Press B). These teachers seem to be aspiring to attain rather plausible-like understandings of the common past for making sense of the Anglo-Québécois and, as such, seem to be trying to understand the past in the manner of professional historians, without necessarily possessing all the required tools and skills (Zanazanian, 2011, In Press B). Consequently, some of them are generally open to learning about Quebec's English-speaking communities and on transmitting such information to their students. Despite this keenness, these teachers however do not have access to information and resources about Anglo-Québécois realities and experiences, and even if they believe themselves to be capable of filling such voids on their own, much needed information and time is not readily available (Zanazanian 2011). As for the even smaller number of students who also somewhat "resist" or at least question the significance of elements of pre-established narratives for making sense of Anglophones, it is clear that most of them do so explicitly, either by demonstrating a disdain for politics or for nationalism or even by chastising their group for pointing fingers at Anglophones, especially when their own ancestors also possessed colonizing attitudes and behaviors. On the whole, it would not be wrong to believe that this latter group of teachers and students are possibly open to variously contradicting and altering some of the traditional norms that exist for making sense of and engaging with the Other (Zanazanian, 2011, In Press B).

TOWARDS TWO RECOMMENDATIONS

My ongoing research on historical consciousness and the structuring of group boundaries thus far highlights the centrality of the "French-English Conflict" in how Franco-Québécois teachers and students give meaning to the past, to then make sense of the Anglo-Québécois. Today, even if the balance of power relations with Anglophones has titled in the favor of the Francophone majority in Quebec, the weight of these *shared historical memories of often-unequal intergroup power relations* undoubtedly renders negotiations with elements of pre-established narratives, delicate, even sometimes difficult. When interacting with the past for developing their stance toward the Other, these respondents may surely feel torn between respecting moral obligations to their ancestors, by possibly righting the wrongs of the past, and acknowledging improved changes in how they are perceived and treated by the Anglo-Québécois (Zanazanian, In Press A). It is because of such torn allegiances, which border on emotions, that I believe one has to be prudent when looking for ways to foster the integration of Anglo-Québécois realities and experiences in the teaching of national history in Quebec. Since the "French-English Conflict" forms an integral part of the Franco-Québécois collective memory (and hence identity), one cannot oblige group members to push it aside, especially since it is more rooted than previously thought (Létourneau, 2006, 2010). Whatever solution one seeks to build bridges with the Anglo-Québécois, it would need to respect the shared historical memories of the Franco-Québécois as a foundation stone of their group's overall identity.

In what follows, I propose two recommendations for democratically encouraging openness to Anglo-Québécois realities and experiences in the teaching of national history. In offering Francophones a win-win situation, where they can value their collective memory, while also appreciating different potentials for change in improving common future life, these recommendations consist of providing the necessary tools for raising awareness not only of the Other's contributions to Quebec, but also of the consequences of how one gives meaning to the past for ethno-cultural knowing and doing. The first – an "Anglo-Québécois" information resource book – seeks to fill the void in teachers' and students' content knowledge regarding the history of Quebec's English-speaking communities, while the second – workshops on the workings of historical consciousness – attempts to offer teachers (and by extension students) greater understanding of the different ways in which humans interact with the past for living life and for engaging with ethno-cultural others. Although useful for history teachers from both of Quebec's main language groups, it is hoped that these recommendations

will nonetheless assist those Franco-Québécois educators who seek to make independent decisions for interacting with the past without any feelings of guilt or recrimination for abandoning moral obligations to ancestors and group peers.

RECOMMENDATION ONE: AN "ANGLO-QUÉBÉCOIS" INFORMATION RESOURCE BOOK[4]

Given Francophone teachers' and students' overwhelming unfamiliarity with the different realities and experiences of Quebec's diverse English-speaking communities, I think there is an urgent need to develop an "Anglo-Québécois" information resource book that configures such details and that is moreover readily available in the province's history classrooms. Generally speaking, such a document should inform and sensitize teachers and students on Anglo-Québécois identity, past and present, so that they can hopefully come to both appreciate this minority group's shared historical memories as a historic Quebec community in its own right and acknowledge its contributions to the province from the group's own perspectives. In terms of content, this document should offer a chronology of main events, characters, and time periods that are important for grasping the Anglo Quebec past. Aspects of daily life, of interpersonal and social relationships, as well as of economic and political developments and of civil society movements and institutions should be available, as should extracts of primary and secondary sources that can complement such information. Reflecting Anglo-Quebec's rich diversity, close attention should also be paid to the many realities and experiences that exist in the community along ethno-cultural, religious, gender, and socio-economic lines. Of importance, I believe that such a document should showcase prime examples of overall Anglo-Québécois desires for common life with Quebec's Francophone majority, thereby highlighting English-speakers' willingness to participate in common societal projects of the future.

As a product of a potential partnership between the MELS (Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport du Québec), historians, educationalists, English-speaking community organizations and interest groups, as well as other concerned citizens, the development of this resource book should not be viewed as a sort of political imposition of a particular view of the past, but rather as an initial attempt to jumpstart a process by which occluded memories of the past, that concern the Anglo-Québécois minority and that have been pushed aside for socio-political reasons over the years, can be brought to light and appreciated for what they are. The document should simply be seen as an informative guide for those history teachers who are open to learning and teaching about Anglophone experiences, but who do not always have the time, skills and motivation to research relevant information on their own.

RECOMMENDATION TWO: WORKSHOPS ON THE WORKINGS OF HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS[5]

To complement the aforementioned information resource book, my second recommendation seeks to provide a space for teachers (and by extension students) to develop the necessary tools for engaging with the past for purposes of eventually restructuring group boundaries with the Anglo-Québécois, if they so desire. Fundamentally, this would involve developing an appreciation of the usefulness of history for living life as well as an understanding of the different workings of historical consciousness in negotiations of human identity and agency. Offered through free and accessible workshops -ideally sponsored and monitored by the MELS-, the aim would be to foster participants' autonomous and conscientious engagements with the past, to then hopefully encourage openness to new possibilities for change. Without a doubt, the greater number of intellectual tools group members possess for theorizing temporal change and for historicizing relevant aspects of the past, the more they may be capable of appreciating and benefitting from the various possibilities of improving the quality of common future life. While not seeking to impose any particular means of engagement, such workshops would simply emphasize the underlying ethical, political, or practical implications of interacting with the past. For it is by taking these different options for knowing and doing into account that important moments of dialogue and exchange may arise.

In more concrete terms for overcoming group differences, workshop participants would come to appreciate both the benefits and shortcomings of either relying on their group's collective memory or seeking plausible-like understandings when giving meaning to the past for knowing and acting Québécois. If they choose to rely on their collective memory for engaging with the Anglophones, they will be aware that their identity and agency are thereby based on essentialized and simplified forms of knowledge, that can ultimately be understood differently. If they decide to instead seek possibilities for change when using the past to develop plausible-like understandings of inter-group reality, the potential consequences of such problematizing and complexifying on group formation and cohesion will also be known. They may moreover be able to justify why they seek to adapt elements of their group's collective memory to changing circumstances of inter-group power relations. Of importance, through attending such workshops, teachers would come to recognize both their active involvement in the making of history and the consequences of their interactions with the past on how students know, feel, and live the past in the present. By ideally grasping the many ways in which humans develop particular rapports with pre-established configurations of the past for constructing social reality, educators may

recognize their own insertion in time and space, and may thus appreciate the consequences of their actions

After having followed these workshops, it is clear that not all teachers would willingly embrace emerging possibilities for change, possibly due to ethical, political or practical reasons. In possessing the appropriate tools for making conscientious decisions when engaging with the past, they would, however, in the very least, be consciously answerable for their choices if they were to refuse to promote group commonality with Anglophones when socializing students in the national history classroom.

CONCLUSION

As discussed above, my past and current research interests on better understanding the impact of historical consciousness on the structuring of group boundaries in Quebec demonstrates how the historical memories of the "French-English Conflict" weigh heavily on the manner in which Francophone national history teachers and students give meaning to the common past to then make sense of the Anglo-Québécois. Irrespective of whether they completely adhere to these memories or rather seek plausible-like understandings of the complex and fluid past, it is clear that teachers and students in my ongoing work cannot not escape taking such *shared historical memories of often-unequal intergroup power relations* into account. On the contrary, they have to negotiate their own personal stance toward the implications of such elements of pre-established narratives for the ultimate purposes of ethno-cultural knowing and acting when faced with the Anglo-Québécois. Torn between moral obligations to ancestors and changes in the ways they are perceived and treated by Anglophones, teachers and students may sometimes have a hard time in deciding how to know and act toward the latter.

In proposing my two suggestions of developing an information resource book and workshops on the workings of historical consciousness, I have basically sought to promote, without imposing anything from above, a variety of tools that would permit teachers (and students) to develop the necessary mindset and skills for appreciating the possibilities of change that the teaching of history can offer. The motivational force behind these two recommendations has been the aim of both respecting the Franco-Québécois majority's historical memories of the past, while also acknowledging the importance of respecting Quebec's English-speaking communities' various realities and experiences, past and present. Undoubtedly, this latter diverse community would identify more intimately with the Quebec nation, if members felt that their contributions to societal projects were "taken seriously," or were serious enough to at least be included in the teaching of national history. In the provincial government's interests of promoting a democratic and pluralist society with French as its language of public use (MIIC 1990), Quebec Anglophones would need to feel appreciated and not as some sort of pariahs that continuously threaten the overall French identity of Quebec. It is thus in the spirit of respecting differences, while also promoting intergroup dialogue and harmony between two of Canada's historic communities in Quebec that I believe that the contours of the two recommendations presented here are an initial step towards developing more debate and reflection on different strategies for improving the quality of common future life between the province's Francophones and Anglophones.

NOTES

[1] In this article, Anglophone and Anglo-Québécois refer to Québécois of British heritage or others assimilated by this group, whereas Francophone and Franco-Québécois denote those of French-Canadian descent. While these understandings do not adequately cover the rich cultural diversity of Quebec's English-speaking communities as well as that of the French-speaking ones, they nonetheless generally reflect what was understood as "Anglophone" or "Francophone" for participants in the three qualitative studies under discussion here

[2] The following reflections are based on the findings of three qualitative studies, two of which are already completed, while the third was in the process of being finalized during the writing of this article. One of the first two studies aimed to acquire a general understanding of intergroup attitudes and mutual in-class treatments between Francophone and Anglophone national history teachers. I looked at teachers' pedagogical practices when dealing with non-consensual historical issues common to both groups. The second in-depth study sought to grasp the manner in which Francophone national history teachers (of French Canadian descent) mobilize their historical consciousness when structuring group boundaries with the Anglo-Québécois. I identified the manner in which respondents historicize the presence of the Anglo-Québécois past, to then examine the degree to which they recognize the moral and historical agency of the latter. The third study looks at how young Francophones and Anglophones, in Secondary Five, interact with temporal change for defining the other community and for structuring intergroup boundaries. I examine the manner in which these youth deal with the other community when remembering and reciting the history of Quebec, from the very beginning till the present day. Please refer to the following articles: Zanazanian, 2008, 2011, In Press A, In Press B.

[3] During the writing of this article, the interpretation of students' analyzed discourses was not completely finalized. My reflections here are based on those aspects of my interpretation that can definitely be seen as clearly evident, without any chances of committing mistakes. Since I have not yet published work on this study, readers can refer to the writings of Jocelyn Létourneau to get a better understanding of the context of my study, especially since the findings of his research greatly complement those of mine: Létourneau & Moisan, 2004; Létourneau & Caritey, 2008; Létourneau, 2010.

[4] The arguments justifying the need for an Anglo-Québécois information resource book as well as more profound reflections on its content and structuring can be found in Zanazanian, 2011.

[5] For a more developed description of my views regarding the contents of the workshops on historical consciousness, particularly in terms of the logic behind transmitting the workings of historical consciousness to teachers and students, please refer to Zanazanian (In Press A).

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