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The "Social Frameworks" of Teaching High School History: Teaching as Part of the Modernization of Québec Society[1]

The teaching of academic subjects does not constitute an enclave within society; nor can it be reduced to the initial training teachers receive, training which is, in Quebec, primarily psychoeducational, disciplinary, didactic, curricular and practical. Teachers do use justifications for their teaching that proceed from the disciplinary, didactic, curricular and even professional logics that predominate in their initial training, as well as "extra-professional" justifications that refer more broadly to a changing society and culture, to a vast movement modernizing Western societies with which the empowerment of the subject can be associated. History teachers get professional training that prepares them to teach. However, their teaching is, perhaps even more fundamentally, shaped by social frameworks that are external to that training, suggesting that how history is taught is heavily influenced by extra-academic social and cultural structures. Based on remarks from history teachers, we will see that how they justify what they teach relates directly to these structures.

L'enseignement des matières scolaires ne forme pas une enclave dans la société et ne se laisse pas réduire à la formation initiale des enseignants qui est principalement psychopédagogique, disciplinaire, didactique, curriculaire et pratique. En effet, les enseignants donnent de leur enseignement des justifications qui procèdent certes de logiques disciplinaire, didactique, curriculaire et même professionnelle qui sont prépondérantes dans la formation initiale, mais également des justifications autres que «professionnelles» et qui renvoient plus largement à une société et à une culture en mutation, à un vaste mouvement de modernisation des sociétés occidentales auquel peut être associée l'autonomisation du sujet. Les enseignants d'histoire reçoivent donc une formation professionnelle qui les prépare à enseigner, mais leur enseignement se laisse structurer, peut-être plus fondamentalement encore, par des cadres sociaux qui, eux, demeurent étrangers à cette formation. Comme quoi, la manière dont s'enseigne l'histoire serait largement influencée par des structures sociales et culturelles extra-scolaires. Nous verrons, d'après les propos des enseignants d'histoire, que la justification qu'ils donnent de leur enseignement renvoie directement à ces structures.

Keywords
History teaching, curriculum, modernity, social transformation, autonomy of the subject

1 Introduction

For many years, and particularly since 2006, history teaching has been the subject of a range of polemics within Québec society and intellectual circles (Cardin and Bouvier, 2009; Bouvier, 2007; Dagenais and Laville, 2009). To simplify the terms of the debate, we could say that there are two opposing

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perspectives: a political, nationalist view of teaching history which emphasizes the transmission of a strong, predetermined collective identity and memory, and a view of history that gives a dominant place to the subject's construction of his or her own representation of history (LeVasseur 2012a, 2008). The debate is characterized by overlapping political, cultural, social, cognitive and didactic elements which must be disentangled. Our interest here focuses on the social and cultural legitimation that educators give to their teaching of history. We hypothesize that such legitimation is part of a vast cultural movement that is transforming Western societies, institutions, culture, school itself, pedagogy, and the teaching of academic subjects, including history. Would it not therefore be appropriate to speak of the "social frameworks" of teaching history, that is, the structures that encompass the representations and social practices of individuals and institutional agents such as teachers?

The goal of this article is to unpack the teaching of history to show that, not only is it embedded in a government program that prescribes its general orientations as well as, more broadly, in the Québec Education Program, which covers all disciplines and guides the work of teachers in terms of curriculum and pedagogy, but such programs are also embedded in a three-fold dynamic: modernity with respect to the emancipation of the subject; the transformation of a society with respect to the production of the subject; and the weakening of the institutional model (Dubet 2002), which leads to the subject's social experience (Dubet 1994). How, then, do these three dynamics influence the teaching of history, or how history fits into a broader social whole that is in the process of being transformed? More fundamentally, how does history teaching "reflect" a vast sociocultural movement that is converging toward the autonomy of the subject?

This paper intends to link history teaching with what could be called an education for critical thinking and for citizenship, insofar as the teachers engage the students' reflexivity for understanding their insertion in history and the world, and thus favour the subject's empowerment.

2 Teaching History in a Changing Culture and Society

In times of rapid change, all academic subjects seek justification (Forquin 1989, 1991). History teaching does not evade the imperative to justify, especially as contemporary culture is characterized by a delegitimation of its own roots and society itself is undergoing profound change. Given the uncertain status of our society's cultural references, what is the symbolic, cultural, and axiological foundation of community life (Gauchet 2002)? This question was one of the greatest and most recurrent concerns of the Ministère de l'Éducation (MÉQ, Québec's department of education) in the 1990s (MÉQ, 1999, 1997a, 1997b, 1996), and of its advisory body, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (1993, 1998). The permanence of the "cultural crisis" in Western societies (Dumont 1987) poses a challenge to the school's cultural and political functions (Blais, Gauchet, Ottavi 2002), one that reaches teachers at the very core of their professional identity. In view of this issue in contemporary culture, what social function and legitimation do history teachers assign to what they teach?

Why should we be concerned with such a legitimation of history teaching? Because it is important to show that the teaching of academic subjects does not constitute an enclave within society; nor can it be reduced to the initial training teachers receive, training which is primarily psychoeducational, disciplinary, didactic, curricular and practical. Teachers do use justifications for their teaching

that proceed from the disciplinary, didactic, curricular and even professional logics that predominate in their initial training, as well as "extra-professional" justifications that refer more broadly to a changing society and culture, to a vast movement modernizing Western societies with which the empowerment of the subject can be associated (Taylor 1992; Touraine 1992). History teachers get professional training that prepares them to teach. However, their teaching is, perhaps even more fundamentally, shaped by social frameworks that are external to that training, suggesting that how history is taught is heavily influenced by extra-academic social and cultural structures. Based on remarks from history teachers, we will see that how they justify what they teach relates directly to these structures.

3 Nesting Dolls: Illustrating the Ambient Individualism of Western Societies

Our hypothesis is that history teaching is embedded in structures that fit into each other, like a set of nesting dolls. From smallest to largest, we have the History and Citizenship Education program, the Québec Education Program, the institution (or more specifically what Dubet calls the "institutional model"), society and modernity. These structures are all characterized by dynamics that variously lead to the production of the subject or the autonomous individual. As part of these structures, history teaching makes an equal contribution to producing the autonomous subject, and these may even be one of its primary justifications. Thus, when history teachers explain why they do what they do with students in the classroom, their discourse is an expression of social structures. These proceed from broader and more universal registers, which orient what they do (Payet and al, 2011; Derouet, 1992; Boltanski and Thévenot, 1991).

Emphasizing the structures that determine the teaching of history does not mean that we are returning to a form of structuralism that considers teachers as automata animated by external cultural and social forces. Rather, we take an epistemological position that lies between the most stringent structuralism and the most subjectivist phenomenology. We conceive of teachers as producing a discourse that is included in a broader social and cultural context, while postulating that this discourse stems from teachers' analysis of that very cultural context. We also postulate the idea of social and cultural production insofar as educators justify their teaching with the values of subjectification. This intervening epistemological stance has two appeals for us: firstly, it sees the teacher as the author of "autonomous" discourses that are nonetheless part of broader social and cultural contexts and structures; secondly, as a result, it does not reduce these discourses solely to institutional and pedagogical elements such as official program [2]. In short, we wish to access educators' social construction of the legitimation of history teaching while not limiting this legitimation to strictly pedagogical or institutional considerations. Let us now turn to the social and cultural structures that encompass the discourse of history teachers.

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[2] Note that the programs also provide a reading of society and explicitly situate themselves in the interpretation of the society that they put forward.

3.1 Modernity as the Emancipation of the Subject and the Critique of Modernity

One of modernity's main features consists in reason's omnipotence in the natural order and the order of values. Modernity is thus a period in Western history that seeks its own guarantees within itself (Habermas 1988) while rejecting any religious or cosmological basis for man's action in the world. It is therefore characterized by the gradual liberation of man from the "multiple aspects of the principle of tradition, the principle of belonging, the principle of authority, hierarchy and duty" (Gauchet 2002, 14). We will provide two of the most decisive examples of this emancipation effort in the advent of modernity.

In his 1637 *Discourse on Method*, Descartes undertakes to use reason to sift through any opinions he may have assumed were truth. In doing so, the subject takes a step back from culture, and emancipates himself from it:

> "As far as all the opinions I had hitherto accepted were concerned, I could do no better than to set about ridding myself of them once and for all, with a view to replacing them afterwards either with better ones, or even the same ones, once I had tested them with my reason and ensured they were set straight" (Descartes, 1637/2006, 91).

In his essay "*An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment*", Kant continues with the Cartesian project to emancipate humanity through reason. In 1784, he writes: "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. (...) The motto of enlightenment is therefore... Have the courage to use your own understanding!" (Kant 1784/1991, 54). Kant assigns education the primary task of shaping judgement and leading the subject to act independently. The entire problem of education therefore consists in the difficult transition from a state of nature, characterized by independence from moral law, to a state of culture, characterized by a conscience of duty and reasonable liberty, a transition through which all of humanity reaches a state of perfection (Kant, 1993, 74-75). What is involved, therefore, is awakening in man the faculty of understanding, of judgement, through which man is able to formulate his own maxims (Kant, 1993, 117). As we will see, this objective has key pedagogical implications, particularly for official history programs.

Modernity can therefore not be dissociated from an autonomous subject who, thanks to reason, has the power to impose his will on the world of nature and values, to put an end to tradition so as to enlighten all of humanity. However, modernity thus conceived had its failures in the 20th century and the critique is now engaged in a process of self-reflection, taking the great narratives used to legitimate it as its focus. Could the grand promises of emancipation made by liberalism and communism be simply a sham, given the wars, concentration camps, and growing inequities worldwide? Could progress be no more than an illusion due to the poor performance of many sectors of industrial societies (Illich 1973)? Did the Enlightenment truly triumph over ignorance in its myriad forms and foster the emergence of a better and more just world? Clearly, modernity, erected on a critique of tradition, needs a critical examination in its turn; it generates disillusionment and disengagement, but also a necessary reshaping of the world, society and culture. What remains once modernity's great narratives have collapsed but an autonomous and reflexive subject, burdened with the task of assigning a local meaning that is shaped to fit his own condition?

Here, it would be appropriate to highlight at least two periods of modernity referred to earlier. In the first, which we could call classical, the modern subject

belongs to a social whole that determines him. The paradox here implies that the subject's hypersocialization leads to independence (Dubet 2002). Durkheim (1989) defines a "social being" who acts rationally and autonomously, but in keeping with values, institutions and social apparatus. In this sense, his individualism is universal and abstract, in contrast with the more personal individualism (Martuccelli, de Singly 2009) studied by contemporary sociologists (Lahire 2001; Dubar 2000; Dubet, Martuccelli 1996), which characterizes the second period of modernity, or "late" modernity.

These two forms of individualism belong to different times, and different ways of being in community. The dividing line between classical modernity and the second period of modernity – "late" modernity – is located in how autonomous the subject is. The modern subject receives his identity from institutions and major structures. A worker at the end of the 19th century interiorizes a way of thinking that conforms with that of men of his degree. Social roles do not have to be invented. Social agents inherit them without necessarily questioning them. In contrast, today, the most conformist behaviour has to be justified by the individual (Beck 1998). Classical socialization thus gives way to the idea of social experience that the subject must construct (Touraine 1992; Dubet 1994). It is in this way that Dubet and Martuccelli (1996) assert that, currently, the major fact of socialization is the separation between integration and subjectification, which tends toward self-empowerment. This is why contemporary sociology has a great interest in seeing how individuals construct their social experience, weave together the disconnected components of the reality to which they belong. And, following the same reasoning, the interest in seeing how history teachers deal with the demands of a traditional teaching tied to a collective identity and individuals' increasingly marked assertion of identity.

Charles Taylor (1992) noted that the production of the autonomous subject was the primary vector of modernity; in it, he saw one of the fundamental values of our civilization. We all have a unique way of being in the world, and an essential part of who I am cannot be reduced to what others are. But do the issues that structure societies not remain "independent" from individual consciences? Are they not partially defined by "independent" social frameworks?

3.2 Social Transformation, Domination and Subjectification

To say that Western society is changing at a faster and faster pace is a truism. The challenge actually consists in theorizing the change. Connected with our analysis of the theme of the subjectification of culture, behind the change, we can glimpse a tension between the constraints upon the individual, and the individual's striving for freedom. Here, modern societies operate according to a dual register. On one hand, there is the productive world; on the other, the subjective world. Here, Touraine (1984) speaks of the system and the actor, Marcuse (1980) of civilization and culture, Habermas (1973) of instrumental rationality and intersubjective rationality that is specific to the social world as experienced. Others, like Québec sociologist Fernand Dumont, speak of the instituted and the project (1968). These dichotomies point us to a dual social dynamic in which domination and individual liberty are permanently opposed.

The Marcusian dichotomy is apropos here. Civilization constitutes the world of production and the world of the instituted, both of which reproduce existing social forms. Production makes it possible to create the surplus that, in material terms, ensures man's survival. Institutions then enshrine the values and norms that structure trade and discipline the forces of labour. They play a social control

function, without which individuals would refuse to engage in an alienating industrial work process. However, Marcuse tells of the existence of another world, that of culture, Eros, desire, Utopia, of aesthetics, the project and emancipation, liberation from constraints that repress the instincts of man channelled for productive purposes (1968, 1963). Inasmuch as institutions play a role of critique, a role that consists in defining the primary aims of society and denouncing civilization's failings and dysfunctionalities, they belong to the culture that allows the individual to escape from his immediate condition, transform the world, and thus attain complete liberty.

In the end, Touraine (1997, 1992, 1984) picks up a similar analytical scheme. The system is composed of the forces of industrial production, and the subject refers to the individual who, at the margins of the economic system, the vagaries of globalization, instrumental rationality and even at the margin of his sometimes stifling culture of origin, "forges" an identity through which he expresses his belonging to the world and society and refuses to be reduced to the status of a cog in an alienating economy or reproducer of norms in his community of affiliation.

In short, in response to the world of civilization, the economy, instrumental rationality and the instituted, there is an insistence on individualism as a salient fact of modernity which, without necessarily leading to revolution, enables the individual to assert his identity.

3.3 Weakening of the Institutional Model and Creation of an Area of Freedom for the Subject

Western society is changing, along with its primary structures, including its institutions. The way institutions work is no stranger to the idea of the production of an autonomous subject, that is of core importance in the "educating for" projects. Here, we can look to Dubet's work on the institutional program (Dubet 2002). It is a method of socialization, dominant until the 1960s or 1970s, in which the values passed on by the institution defined the roles that individuals took on (including the role of student), modelling their behaviour and marking their personality (Dubet, Martuccelli 1996). There is a correspondence here between the institution and the individual, with the latter getting some of his identity from the former.

Yet sociology instead tends to show that, currently, the social actor does not simply passively interiorize a set of values that makes the social cohere, but constructs his own experience by making connections between registers that stem from logics of social action in tension which the actor must endow with some unity (Dubet 1994).

May we consider that history teaching illustrates such a social transformation, in which the logic of subjectification runs up against the logic of integration? Is students' construction of their own representation of history compatible with teaching's traditional function, which is to constitute collective identity by getting students to interiorize symbols (events or figures) that serve as social bonds? Our analysis of educators' discourse will make it possible to take a stand on the issue of history teaching's potential function of subjectification or incorporation, and of how it is inscribed in an education in critical thinking that fosters the development of reflexivity in the student.

3.4 Educational Reform and the Québec Education Program

From this point on, our theoretical investigation changes course. It will deal less with our civilization's structures and social and cultural shifts than with the Québec school, in particular the official texts that define its curricular and pedagogical objectives. The educational reform that began in 1997 (MEQ 1997b) was the occasion of an in-depth look at what education should be at the dawn of the 21st century.

Of the reform's many provisions, let us focus on the overhaul of the curriculum and the desire to make some breaks with prior programs. A little history is in order here. One of the adversaries reformers openly targeted was the behaviourism that led to the over-atomization of educational content into a large number of very hierarchical objectives (MEQ 1997b; Legendre 2002; Inchauspé 2007). The pedagogical corollary to the curriculum reform involved a confirmed desire to conclusively substitute active methods for the transmissive methods that, though challenged by the objective-based programs of the 1980s, had remained in teachers' practices. Under the reform, a student's cognitive activity is considered to be the determining factor in constructing knowledge (declarative and procedural), thanks to the teacher's guidance. However, it would be false to claim that the only things resisting the reform were behaviourism and transmissive methods. Prior to 1997, school culture did include objective-based programs, but it was also characterized by psychological humanism, inspired by the currents of open pedagogy (Simard 2012; Mellouki 2010) geared toward personal development (LeVasseur 2012b; 2010). Yet the advisory and prescriptive reports behind the 1997 reform openly denounced the whole-person development approach for having neglected the student's cognitive development (MEQ 1997a). The 1997 reform's cultural orientation thus involves a synthesis between a kind of humanism and a kind of cognitivism, here used very broadly to refer to the development of intelligence and information processing. The reform promotes educational content that focuses on superior capacity for abstraction as part of a philosophy of education that makes the person and his freedom of thought one of the fundamental values of the Québec school system. According to the Québec Education Program (MELS 2007):

> "The Québec Education Program draws on several theories of learning that share a recognition that learners are the main architects of their competencies and knowledge (...) cognitivism, because it describes the processes enabling individuals to incorporate new knowledge into their knowledge system and use it in new contexts; constructivism, because it presents knowledge as the result of actions (originally concrete and subsequently internalized) that are taken by individuals in relation to objects, representations or abstract statements; social constructivism, because it stresses the social character of thought and learning, and views concepts as social tools that support the exchange of viewpoints and the negotiation of meaning" (MELS 2006, 16).

Clearly, students must be the centre of learning activities and the authors of the meaning with which to endow knowledge. Learning is defined with reference to complex processes and knowledge that foster the development of a subject that is here more cognitive than ethical.

3.5 The New History Program and Citizenship Education

The Québec Education Program, introduced above, certainly guides the work of history teachers, but less so than the new History and Citizenship Education Program. In this program, the Ministère de l'Education stresses the student's action, which is highly articulated around the program's three competencies. The first competency, the examination of social phenomena from a historical perspective[3], must allow the student to better understand the past in relation to contemporary social debates. The second competence consists in the student's acquisition of a historical method with which to interpret the past. As with the earlier objective-based programs, the student must play an active role in this methodological investigation process, but the fact that he must tackle it by means of the "competence", which is what is evaluated, reinforces the objective. In keeping with the QEP's constructivist orientation (cf. 2.4), it is not solely up to the teacher to provide the student with a prefabricated vision of history and society. Teachers must often plan learning situations that get students to slowly acquire the historical method (over the course of four years), which ensures that students construct their own representation of history. It is thus students who, equipped with the understanding of social debates enabled by the historical method, engage in the world and in citizen action, which corresponds to the third competence. The priority given to students' historical representations, compared with a unitary, collective vision of history that is imposed on a student, shows that the program is highly influenced by individualism and is in line with a pluralist vision of society and culture:

> "One of the challenges facing a pluralistic society like that of Québec is to reconcile the diversity of identities with shared membership in a community. All students must develop a sense of who they are relative to other individuals characterized by numerous differences and must define themselves in relation to others, by relating to others. Taking otherness into account is thus an essential element of identity development. This process enables students to observe that the diversity of identities is not incompatible with the sharing of values, such as those related to democracy" (MELS 2006, 22).

The new program does deal with intellectual training and provides teachers with a pedagogical orientation but, at the core, it still contains an idea of what the social bond must be. All education programs harbour a vision of society, how it works, the transformation that is needed and the role students will have to play (Forquin 1989; Durkheim 1990, 1989; LeVasseur 2010, 2002, 1999). Now, what vision of society and more specifically of the social bond is actual history teaching (differentiated from its official program) aligned with? In other words, even though the QEP and the History and Citizenship Education program seem to focus on educating students who are morally and intellectually independent, it remains to be seen whether teachers buy into such a vision of education and a function of history that favours the independent training of a student over the transmission of an inherited, unitary historical narrative.

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[3] The program's core concept is that of "society." A "social reality" refers to a specific society in a given era.

4 Methodology

The data on which this article is based come from a research program that focuses primarily on the connections between school culture, society and culture. Below are the key methodological elements.

4.1 Research Purpose and Premise

In the course of our research, we pursued a primary objective, which was to determine how high school teachers manage to reconcile a) the Ministère's history education program, b) the Québec school's socialization mission and c) the challenge of carrying out this mission in the context of a plural society (particularly in terms of ethnicity) and a culture that is highly individualistic and critical. In other words, what is involved is deciding on history teaching's potential social function as perceived by teachers. At the outset of the study, influenced by social debate on the subject of history teaching, we hypothesized a teaching of history that would be divided between partisans of the transmission of a unitary collective memory, and partisans of a more constructivist kind of teaching, in which students equipped with the historical method constructed their own representations of history. However, the fact that our study was conducted mostly in Montréal's public high schools prompted us to set aside that hypothesis. For a variety of reasons that we will set out in the next section, teachers who work in high-density multi-ethnic environments think that passing along a collective memory can no longer be justified in such a context. What, then, are the social purposes of teaching history? If the Ministère de l'Education's 1997 policy statement made socialization one of the three core missions of Québec schools, along with instruction and qualification, how can history teaching that is no longer focused on transmitting collective memory play a role in socialization?

4.2 Data Collection Tools

To answer these questions, we developed a questionnaire designed to determine the social function teachers assign to history (its links with the common culture, identity formation of communities, ethnic and religious groups, and individuals), how teachers appropriate the government program, the legitimation of teaching depending on contrasting social settings and teachers' years of experience. The questionnaire was primarily based on a pilot study on the contribution of academic subjects to shared culture (LeVasseur 2007-2010). In the context of the study, we met with teachers in all subjects on the program in primary and secondary school, including three high school history teachers, with whom we explored the issue of the purposes and the social context of history education.

In a later study that focused specifically on the teaching of history in relation to the formation of the common culture (LeVasseur 2008-2012), we did 22 semi-structured interviews of about an hour designed to achieve the goals we had set: determine the links teachers establish between history, government programs, Québec schools' socialization mission and the features of contemporary culture (critique, nihilism, individualism, pluralism, cultural and epistemological relativism, etc.); identify the impact of the establishment's cultural make-up on the legitimation of teaching, as well as the impact of years of teacher experience.

Our 22-teacher sample was composed of 15 men and 7 women. For reasons pertaining the physical organization of the research and a variety of administrative constraints, 20 of the 22 teachers worked in establishments in the Greater Montreal area, with only 2 establishments located elsewhere (in Quebec City and its surroundings), in social settings that differed both economically and ethnically (clienteles that are mono-ethnic Francophone, Italophone, Anglophone, multi-ethnic with people of French-Canadian descent forming a large or small majority or a minority). These institutions had students who were "strong," "average" or "weak" in terms of learning. A few teachers (2) worked in anglophone establishments in French-immersion programs. In terms of years of experience, there were just as many teachers who were at the start of their careers (5 years of experience or less) as there were in mid-career (6 to 15 years of experience) and late career (15 or more years of experience). In short, the sample is characterized by a sizable number of variables which we did not isolate in the present analysis, although we are aware of the importance of taking Montreal's geographic, ethnic and social variables into consideration.

The data were subjected to content analysis (Grawitz 2001). This is intended to identify themes that emerge from a reading of the interviews, and group the themes so as to identify the social function associated with the teaching of history. In other words, we read the interviews based on our research questions. We paid particular attention to all elements teachers mentioned that evoked the relationships between the individual and society, the transformation of the social bond, the issue of memory, students' personal identity and collective identity, the development of critical thinking in students, including students' ability to step back from their identity, culture and social allegiances, without seeking to give a stamp of approval to any given orientation for the teaching of history.

5 What Teachers Say About the Sociocultural Function of their Teaching

An analysis of our data essentially shows that teaching that focuses on transmitting an inherited, unitary collective narrative no longer mobilizes Montreal teachers. In fact, the transmission of a historical narrative focused on the origins of French Canadians or Québecois of French Canadian origin[4], on the events that catalyse community life, historical figures likely to galvanize the nation and cement collective identity is being replaced by the production of a subject who is an independent thinker. In what follows, we will start by showing that history teaching aimed to marry knowledge of history with a moral project, one of collective survival or collective emancipation. We then show that, as of the start of the 2000s, teaching takes a more critical turn, in which students need to take a step back from any prefabricated representation or historical discourse.

5.1 Collective Identity as a Reference for History Teaching

From the end of the 19th century and during the 20th, in French Canada, history teaching was highly nationalistic, in the sense that the content was designed to make students aware of what differentiated them, in terms of a

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[4] In this text, as in the language in current use by French-speaking Quebeckers, we will use the term "Québécois" (and its derivatives) to refer to Quebeckers of French-Canadian origin. We will provide additional details where necessary. Also note, however, that prior to the 1960s, francophones from the province of Québec referred to themselves as French-Canadians; after the 1960s, with the dawn of a modern nationalist sentiment, they referred to themselves as Québécois.

nation, from English Canadians and Americans[5]. In the classical colleges that dominated high school education from the 17th century until the second half of the 1960s, all subjects had to serve moral ends that were heavily tied to the religious and social thinking of the Catholic Church. Although, administratively, education was under the jurisdiction of the Québec government, for all intents and purposes, the Catholic clergy controlled the content of education for French Catholics, including languages, science, history and philosophy. Of course, history teaching could not evade such a moral orientation and the essentialization of the "character" and "genius" of the "French-Canadian race", to use the terms of the time:

> "Follow in the path of the explorers, founders, missionaries; enter parliaments to hear Papineau, Lafontaine demand our rights. Put the heroes on pedestals, in beautiful grandeur; discover big religious, patriotic and moral lessons. Our youth will be filled with enthusiasm and want to reproduce, in their own lives, some of the virtues admired in national history" (Conseil de la Faculté des arts 1937, 523-524).

The history taught in the classical colleges was less concerned with objectifying events than in defending and illustrating the main elements associated with the clerics' nationalist thinking, i.e. language, religion, and French-Canadian mores. Knowledge articulated around a normative ideal was unable to separate itself from morality. History disseminated French-Canadians' ideology of survival through panegyric and the evocation of the founding fathers' exploits. In the mid-1960s, the public high school history program was as follows:

> "Our history lessons will therefore work to illustrate the miracle of our people's survival and growth, while cultivating a healthy, strong, sympathetic and conquering patriotism that will primarily manifest itself through the concern for giving a full measure of work, effort, dignity of life, living faith" (Government of Québec 1963, 196).

History teaching thus took the form of a moral prescription intended to forge the collective identity of a people who were defined as agricultural, French-speaking and Catholic.

At the end of the 1960s and in the 1970s, the traditional French-Canadian nationalism yielded to a kind of more modern "neonationalism", with French still at its core, but in which morality and a religious vision of the world were replaced by the modern values of secularism, scientific rationality, progress and pluralism. With respect to history teaching, the Parent Commission report, "Inquiry on Education in the Province of Québec," published from 1963 to 1966, hotly denounced the above-described national and religious predication and recommended a more scientific, methodological approach to the teaching of history, described as a tool in educating the citizen in critical thinking (Cardin, 2010). However, in fact, history teaching continues to be based on a nationalist outlook and convey the discourse of survival in an Anglo-Saxon continent (Létourneau 2010). On this issue, here is a statement from a history teacher with more than thirty years in the classroom. In 2007, he was about to retire.

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[5] Here, this teaching of history was consistent with what was being done elsewhere in the world: forming a citizen of the nation.

According to this teacher[6], the purpose of teaching is to transmit a national narrative, to convince students that the Québécois are oppressed in the Canadian constitution, and to awaken the nationalist fibre of the younger generation:

> "I've always been a nationalist. In teaching Québec and Canadian history, I explain how the political system developed, at least until 1982. The message I give them is something I'm passionate about and you don't pass along a passion without reference to who you are. One of my students asked me, once: "Given how long you've been a teacher, how many of your students will vote for the Parti Québécois?" I've probably influenced a few... We have all been influenced by teachers. Today's young teachers don't think about being a "master." Being a master means controlling a certain kind of truth, having the ability to pass it along, to sway. That's being a master" (Subject 1, history 2007).

Here, teaching comes from an intellectual engagement in a political cause that is presented to students, not necessarily in a doctrinaire manner, but in such a way as to raise some awareness. The fact remains that this teaching is an extension of a reading of history that treats the Québécois as a nation that is endangered. Insofar as it gives Québécois a certain vocation, and is articulated around a certain type of morality, it is no different from the teaching delivered by the religious at classical colleges, about which Québec historian Galarneau said: "Religion saturated and shaped every moment of daily life, provided the argument for any proof, and furnished the answer to every question" (1978, 215).

5.2 The Figure of the Subject as the New Reference for the Teaching of History

This teaching of history, which essentially aims to put forward an inherited and unitary narrative intended to consolidate French-Canadians' collective identity prior to the 1960s, and that of Québécois as of the 1960s, to give a reading of a people's destiny and vocation in North America or in the context of the Canadian constitution, this teaching, shall we say, is being replaced by a teaching that is designed to put a distance between any a priori representation of history, and the representation students must construct for themselves.

5.2.1 Teaching as Intellectual Self-Defence

A number of teachers in our sample stressed the fact that teaching must lead to developing in students a critical stance or distance arising from the need to challenge discourse (Boltanski, Thévenot 1991). A teacher we encountered during our first study (LeVasseur 2007-2010), responding to a teaching that was overly "ideological" or politicized, asserted the importance of working first and foremost toward the development of independent minds:

> "The final end is to create free individuals, free thinkers, 'unmanageables', people who cannot be manipulated by any ideology. My strength is that I provide all the guidelines for that and I don't see history as an instrument, for example, for molding a

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[6] This teacher, who is part of the 1st enquiry and not representative of the 2nd one, had started his career in the 1960's. In comparison, the majority of the other teachers of our research had started their career in the late 1990's or year 2000's.

student who is not from Québec. The idea is to provide students with points of reference" (Subject 2, history 2007).

In our second study, which focused specifically on the teaching of history and its social function, teachers' discourse was essentially in line with what the teacher above said. Everyone stressed the need for a teaching that abides by the principle of distance and critique with respect to various normative, ideological or political visions of history:

"For a very long time, history teachers were seen as separatists, sovereignists, Parti Québécois supporters[7], and very strongly pro-union. People would talk to me, realize my stance was a little federalist, a little anti-union, and say it didn't make any sense. So, since I started teaching, I've paid careful attention to the impact we can have on students. This is why I put so much effort into developing their critical thinking abilities. I try to get young people to say: 'Well, that's nice. The teacher says that and that's okay. But is that what I think?'" (Subject 4)

Other teachers note that students are exposed to a variety of discourses which they must be equipped to face. The media, somewhat short-sighted views of the world, parents' prejudices must be treated with caution, at least in the interim, until students have been able to do their analysis:

"You need a critical distance." "Why do you say that? Show me the evidence!" Some [students] will say anything. "I saw that on television!" "Yes, okay, but show me the proof." They are frequently sponges, but they'll pick up information anywhere." (Subject 21)

"The kids are 12, 13, 14 years old and, sometimes, things come out of their mouths that apparently come from comments the parents have made, who are watching the news on television. I have trouble believing that students, at their age, are already making remarks like they sometimes do. Yes, September 11 happened, and there is some hatred toward Muslims... Because the nineteen hijackers were Muslims. So, of course, all Muslims are terrorists! Stereotypes, prejudices, they soak them up and sometimes cannot explain why" (Subject 10)

"I think that, at least at our school, most of the ideas that our students have about history are not actually ideas about history, but are just opinions they have, and then they make up stories to fit those opinions. And it would be horrible to leave them with that view alone. It's the main part of our job, in a way. It's to find a way of bringing those views without invalidating them necessarily – some of them need to be invalidated. But to try encourage the sharing of different historical perspectives and then... In the dialogical way, to present different ideas about how things can be understood and to also present information that they don't have access to otherwise. To help them understand, appreciate, where their own view comes from and where other views come from and why." (Subject 14)

The next teacher criticizes a lack of independent thinking among students who, in her view, bought into the most conformist thinking:

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[7] The 'Parti québécois' political mission is Quebec's independence. Many partisans want the teaching of history to stress Quebec's political, economic, social and cultural dependence in the framework of the Canadian confederation.

"We're such an individualistic society, but we aren't individualists. We're sheep, we follow the prevailing thinking, the trends... I don't know, what do they identify with? With fads? No, they don't really have an identity. Sometimes, they even reject their own identities to fit into a mould or follow a trend. They're conformists. But they're very 'individualistic.'" (Subject 8)

The interview excerpts we quoted above show that teachers make an effort to get students to create their own ideas of history and the events in the headlines. This is quite remote from a vision of history constructed as the national dogma. It can also be seen as supporting the development of a self-critical attitude, by distancing from the commonplaces supposed to be the basis of the students' view of the world.

5.2.2 The Desubstantialization of Individual and Collective Identities

Aside from this orientation of teaching which looks like a kind of intellectual self-defence, other teachers focus their analyzes on the existentialist challenge that forces everyone to construct their own identities and representations of things, the world, and history:

"Our affiliation is primarily our decision, and it's also multiple, it's varied; it isn't something that is dictated to you. It's a choice you make. My sense of nationalism is rooted in James Joyce. To be an artist or a true individual, you leave nations, religions and language behind you, to discover yourself. Who am I? That's something that I teach, obviously." (Subject 7)

Here, we are closer to the sociological phenomenon we attempted to pinpoint in the theoretical section of this article. The institutional functioning of classical modernity, which prevailed in the first half of the 20th century, is fading. Institutions have lost the ability to enlist that made the social system cohere and gave the individual a strong impression that he lived in a world that was an extension of himself. The individual adhered to social values, governed his conduct according to standards passed along by institutions, and the social roles he took on marked his personality profoundly. This type of socialization was best theorized by Durkheim, for whom the individual bore the characteristics of the society to which he belonged. What the individual is as an abstract social being is more real than what he is idiosyncratically. However, the teacher we just quoted essentially says that socialization is now less a matter of integration than of taking a step back from values, standards and social roles that previously governed collective behaviour, as well as from the collective narratives that structured identities. To put it in the manner of Dubet and Martuccelli (1996), social modernity is currently characterized by a separation between integration (as defined by Durkheim) and subjectification. Subjects no longer allow themselves to be reduced to the set of social roles they take on; similarly, history students do not allow their identities to be reduced to the interiorization of an essentialist national narrative. Particularly, as the next teacher points out, the plural identity of societies – and individuals – (Lahire 2001) makes the idea of a substantified, inherited historical narrative obsolete. How can a foundational vision of history be transmitted in a context in which meanings are labile, fleeting, plural and likely to be amalgamated by students into complex and unique identity arrangements?

> "There are many different collective identities, different people have different collective identities, and they have different individual identities. I don't think there is a singular one. And I think that it doesn't mean it's not important to dialogue about what those identities are, and to maybe work towards a negotiation of a collective identity, where people can be invested in one another and each other's well being. But I don't think there is a single one." (Subject 14)

In other words, here, the teacher is proceeding with a very pointed critique of a rationalist vision of identity. There is no necessary fit between history, a collective identity, and all Québécois of all origins. Identity pluralism in no way allows itself to be reduced to a single category; teaching must not seek to reduce it but rather aim for intersubjectivity and dialogue. In exchange, it is then appropriate to let the history class allow a conflict between interpretations and set aside the "right answer syndrome":

> "They are of course going to say: "I want the teacher to give me the right answer." That's what they tell us: "Sir, what's the right answer?" I tell them: "There isn't one. Or there are 33 right answers and mine's the 34th. You have to take your own stance. It's part of your job as a future citizen to take a stance. If you're followers, never mind." (Subject 4)

In short, we have seen that it is students who construct their knowledge and representation of the past. As a result, for the teachers in our sample, teaching that focuses on interiorizing a unitary national discourse seems evanescent. What, then, is the cultural reach of this kind of transformation of the teaching of history? How does the transformation lead us to see that the history teacher's social function has changed?

Conclusion

In light of the interview excerpts cited above, teaching seems to be oriented toward recognizing students' independence from history and thus following the movement identified by sociology in which modernity is characterized by the gradual emancipation of the subject with respect to the social whole. In concrete terms, this is expressed by teachers' break from the imposition of any normative referent or *a priori* vision of history and, consequently, by the freedom accorded students to construct their own representation of history. This way of teaching history is, of course, aligned with didactic considerations, a "contemporary" way of teaching history that is centred in particular on the student's acquisition of a method of historical analysis that is tied to historical thought. In this article, however, we have argued that the importance teaching places on students' construction of their own representation of history derives just as much from a movement of civilization characterized by the empowerment of the subject. A didactic orientation and this sociocultural movement are not necessarily incompatible; however, what we have primarily sought to demonstrate in this article is that the teaching of history proceeds from structures (social and cultural) that encompass it and go well beyond the spheres of didactics and curricula. This is why we refer to the social frameworks of history teaching, so as to unpack it and demonstrate that it can be apprehended from a sociological perspective. In other words, the didactics of history could very well see in the sociology of knowledge, which maps school knowledge to social and cultural contexts, an ally in giving teachers in training a broader view on their discipline and its development.

If teaching history could contribute to an empowerment of the subject, clearly it contributes also to an education for critical thinking, insofar as it is apparently based on a reject of the prefabricated views of the past and of what Lyotard (1979) called the "great narratives of legitimacy". This is far from a teaching by passing on knowledge.

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