

Metamorphoses of the University and the Pathways of Indigenous Students in Quebec: Issues of Accessibility to Studies and Academic Persistence from a Perspective of the Decolonization of Education — A Secondary Publication

Jean-Luc Ratel¹, Annie Pilote^{2*}

¹Faculty of Education, Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada

²Faculty of Education, Université Laval, Canada

*Corresponding author: Annie Pilote, Annie.Pilote@fse.ulaval.ca

Copyright: © 2024 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: In connection with the historical context of social segregation and the assimilative aim of formal education imposed on them, the Indigenous Peoples of Québec have long been excluded from higher education. Today, even if their graduation rates are increasing, a persistent gap with the non-Indigenous population is maintained. The data in this article are drawn from 23 interviews with students and university graduates of the First Nations of Québec, as part of a thesis in educational sciences. Our paper analyzes how these students manage to combine the contributions of Indigenous education with those of Western education by developing paths that are part of the decolonization movement of education. Their relationship to Indigenous identity and cultures clearly influences their educational background and is analyzed taking into account power relations with the dominant culture. Our paper emphasizes more particularly the relationship to studies, the adaptation to the student profession, and the balance between studies, work, and family among Indigenous students, in a context of transition from university to multiversity which contributed to the increase of Indigenous university attendance.

Keywords: Educational inclusion and exclusion; Higher and university education; Educational inequalities; Canada

Online publication: April 30, 2024

1. Introduction

The university has undergone profound changes since the end of the Second World War, leading it to become more open to populations that were historically excluded ^[1]. This openness has resulted in a phenomenon of massification, with the increased arrival of students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds who contrast with the traditional model of the university student. This openness has manifested itself in increased

efforts to recruit students from marginalized ethnocultural groups. In the case of indigenous students, the United States ^[2] and Canada ^[3] have seen the creation of colleges specifically for them, either in the form of independent institutions or colleges affiliated with established universities.

More specifically in Quebec, we note the development of Manitou College and teacher training programs in Indigenous environments, which existed briefly in the 1970s ^[4]. However, it is mainly since the 2000s that efforts have been made to promote access for a greater number of Indigenous students, in particular with the creation of service centers specifically for them and the opening of two Indigenous colleges, one for pre- and post-secondary education and the other for Native studies for the First Nations (Kiuna Institution) and the Inuit (Nunavik Sutu), respectively (located in the Abenaki community of Odanak, in the Centre-du-Québec region) and the Inuit (Nunavik Sivunitsavut, located in Montréal). Despite all this, the gap in graduation rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations remains ^[5], so this partial decolonization of education has done little to reduce inequalities in terms of access to education.

In this article, we will look more specifically at the relationship between studies and the reconciliation of studies, work, and family among Indigenous students, in relation to the changes in the way the university has been organized and the influence of initiatives aimed at the decolonization of education. We shall see that, despite the criticism leveled at the university institution and the systemic discrimination they face [which combines direct and indirect forms of discrimination and “is based on the idea of an interaction between seemingly neutral practices, preconceptions, rules, or norms (evaluation, classification, diagnosis, etc.) that create a circular effect of discrimination for certain groups”] ^[6], the Indigenous students who attend it manage to develop study projects that focus closely on improving living conditions for Indigenous people.

2. Conceptual framework

While the sociology of education focuses more specifically on formal education ^[7], it should be remembered that control of the education system by Indigenous people in Canada is still limited ^[8-10]. It is for this reason that we also use the concept of the decolonization of education ^[11], which calls into question the values and practices of an education system developed with a colonial aim. This decolonization also makes it possible to take account of the links between schooling and experience, where informal education takes place, with a view to “creating a new space where the knowledge, identity, and future of indigenous peoples are taken into account in the global and contemporary equation.” It is linked to the questioning of an institution that has developed by privileging Western knowledge over that from other cultures, decolonization also takes shape in the study projects developed by students, which we have previously analyzed ^[12] in terms of the concept of the “life project” ^[13].

We are also inspired by the critical pedagogy of Henry A. Giroux, whose theory of reproduction and transformation emphasizes that school also contributes to questioning the established order and the dominant culture. In this way, the educational inequalities that persist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous are also a reflection of the hegemonic nature of schools in Indigenous environments, particularly in relation to the curriculum defined by the dominant culture and the limited power of Indigenous within post-secondary institutions. Giroux ^[14] defined hegemony as “the successful attempt by a dominant class to use its control over the resources of the state and civil society, particularly through the media and the education system, to establish its view of the world as inclusive and universal.” This movement can be seen as part of the model of the university as a democratic public sphere advocated by Giroux ^[15], helping to improve the quality of life of those who attend it and of society as a whole, but more particularly of marginalized groups such as Indigenous.

The conceptual framework also borrows from Juteau's theory of ethnicity^[16], which considers that participants' relationship to their indigenous identity develops as a social rapport in which relations between dominant and dominated ethnic groups come into play. According to Juteau's theory, each group defines itself internally, but it is primarily through the way other groups define it externally that a group is defined. In Quebec society, for example, ethnic groups can be defined on a linguistic and colonial basis, where membership of the Indigenous or non-Indigenous group is combined with membership of the Francophone or Anglophone group. We also note that the Indigenous group itself includes different nations, communities, languages, and cultures, but is defined primarily in opposition to the group that settled its territory. What's more, this identity may refer to a local, regional, national, or international scale.

Our conceptual framework is based on Lahire's sociology of education^[17], in relation to the ways in which cultural capital is transmitted, for a population whose parents have mostly not attended university. Following on from the theory of reproduction developed by Bourdieu and Passeron in a neo-Weberian approach^[18], Lahire also emphasized that pupils whose parents have a high level of cultural capital do better at school. However, his analysis focused more on the exceptions, studying the cases of success among pupils whose parents have low cultural capital and the cases of failure among pupils whose parents have high cultural capital. Lahire therefore emphasized the "work of appropriation and construction" necessary for pupils to acquire this cultural capital from parents who are highly endowed with it. He also stressed the influence of conditions favorable to this work on pupils whose parents have little cultural capital, insofar as these pupils can be encouraged in their educational success when the parents value the school and their child's place as a pupil, even if they have little cultural capital to pass on^[17]. It may also be the influence of a key person who takes part in the work of appropriating and building the child's cultural capital, for example in the extended family. Finally, the concept of relationship to studies^[19] defines the meaning given to the projects of Indigenous students according to whether they are part of an instrumental or expressive relationship. The expressive relationship is associated with the values of individuality, a spirit of independence, and a capacity for initiative: students in this relationship "are focused on self-fulfillment and self-realization through their studies"^[20]. The instrumental relationship, for its part, is based on the values of hard work, compliance with rules, and a spirit of achievement: students in this relationship "value usefulness and use means to achieve an end"^[20].

3. Methodology

The aim of the research was to contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon of university studies among members of the First Nations of Quebec and to understand the meaning they give to their university careers. Despite the limitations of this division, three groups are recognized as Indigenous under the Canadian Constitution: the First Nations (formerly known as "Indians" or "Amerindians"), the Inuit, and the Métis. More specifically, we were interested in their relationship with Indigenous identity and cultures, the factors that explain their transition to university, the course they follow, and their projects and achievements related to their studies. We also looked at the influence of institutions and public authorities in the integration of Indigenous students into the university community.

Our article is based on data collected from 23 First Nations students and graduates who attended university in Quebec, as part of a doctoral research project^[12]. We used the focused semi-structured interview^[21], which allowed us to answer predetermined questions without neglecting the exploration of a theme less familiar to the researcher thanks to the new insights provided by the participants. Our research design was based on a multi-case comparison^[22], using a sample that is sociologically representative in terms of sociodemographic

characteristics (community of origin, language, gender, student or graduate status)^[23]. These interviews enabled us to gain a better understanding of the participants' "social worlds"^[24] and thus to produce a thematic analysis based on their educational pathways, their relationship with identity and native cultures, and their background.

The qualitative analysis therefore followed the three flows defined by Miles and Huberman^[25]: condensation of data, presentation of data, and elaboration/verification of conclusions. Miles and Huberman^[25] pointed out that these conclusions are verified "as the analyst works" in different ways. For our part, we have drawn conclusions in the form of typologies concerning the participants' relationship to Indigenous identity and cultures, their educational backgrounds, and their plans and achievements following their studies. These conclusions can be found in the second part of the thesis^[12] entitled "Results and interpretations." The teacher-student mentoring meetings then enabled us to gradually arrive at an "intersubjective consensus," as described by Miles and Huberman^[25] regarding these conclusions. A summary sheet was produced after each interview to include, in the first part, sociodemographic data, education (initial training and post-secondary courses), work and voluntary experience, and future projects. In the second part, we reorganized the diachronic structure of each story into a biographical pathway, separating the academic from the non-academic elements. We then carried out a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts using mixed coding^[26].

The 23 students and graduates interviewed come from 12 rural and urban Indigenous communities; 17 are women and 6 are men. Their mother tongue is French (13), Indigenous languages (8), and English (2). 14 were parents during their studies and 13 had started university after interrupting their previous studies. 12 participants began their university studies between the ages of 18 and 21 (none with children), 4 between the ages of 22 and 25 (two with children), and 7 between the ages of 30 and 51 (all with children). 16 studied mainly in French and 7 in English, at 12 Quebec universities and, in part, at 3 universities elsewhere in Canada.

4. Presentation of results

The data collected from the participants enabled us to make some enlightening observations about the relationship to study developed during their university careers and the issues associated with balancing study, work, and family.

4.1. A more expressive relationship with studies, oriented towards the group to which they belong

Analysis of the interviews conducted with the participants shows that the study programs attended correspond closely to the fields most popular with Indigenous students, in line with the needs expressed by the communities for teacher and administrator training. In addition to administration and education, just under half of the participants are from the humanities and social sciences, as well as the arts, humanities, and communications. The programs were grouped into fields of study in order to preserve participants' confidentiality while taking into account their disciplinary interests. We took our inspiration from the UQAM faculty division, which corresponds more closely to the fields in which the participants are enrolled. In fact, there are no participants from the health sciences, as this weak presence has been observed for several decades among Indigenous post-secondary students in Canada, despite measures intended to increase it^[27,28].

The analysis also shows that most of the participants considered going to university at an early stage, even though some were aware that they did not have the right conditions for such a project. For example, Valérie (pseudonyms) lost interest in her secondary studies and had a short break at college, but this did not lead her to give up on the university studies she had developed very early on: "Even as a teenager, I said I was going to do a master's, but I did not know what a master's was!" It should also be noted that the cases of participants

who did not envisage university studies at an early age illustrate the flexibility offered by the Quebec education system, which allows for academic and professional reorientations ^[29].

At the undergraduate level, we can see that the reasons and interests in study expressed by the participants vary depending on whether they entered university immediately after their college studies or after interrupting their studies. In the first case, it was the intellectual aspect that stood out, with the interest in pursuing a program that met their intellectual curiosity, as H  l  ne put it: "I like it, and I went with my passion, and I am going to continue so as to have as many doors open to me as possible afterward." In the second case, participants who had interrupted their studies had parental and professional experiences that had a greater influence on the motives and interests of these students, who had had the opportunity to take a step back from academic imperatives. In these cases, it is an interest more associated with a professional goal that tends to emerge, as in the case of Daniel: "I am a hard worker too, so... I know where I am going after this; I am going to find a job because that is what I would like to do. I like to work." That said, whether the motives and interests are more intellectual or professional in nature, most of them remain closely associated with the feeling of belonging to the Indigenous group, as we can see from H  l  ne: "I am aware that in my field, it would not be easy to find a job at all. [But if I had the chance to work to promote my culture, that would be great.] I am going to try to do everything I can to work for my culture."

At the postgraduate level, our data indicate that studies are generally aimed at understanding a phenomenon stemming from an initial interest developed at the undergraduate level. When returning to study, motives and interests may also be influenced by a professional experience that inspired a research question. Whether or not this is a return, we note that interest in Indigenous issues is clearly reflected in the choice of subject for Masters and PhD, as in Martine's case: "My thesis is at the heart of a process [...] that allows me to come into contact with [Indigenous] [...] to do things related to the Indigenous environment."

Most of the participants developed a more expressive relationship with their studies, combined with a strong sense of belonging to the Indigenous group, in line with the desire to contribute to the well-being of Indigenous people, as described above ^[30]. In most of the discussions, we note the development of an Indigenous identity strongly influenced by the power relationships exercised over them by non-Indigenous people (Francophones and Anglophones). We can thus see, in line with Juteau's theory ^[16], that the identity of the Indigenous group is also defined for the participants in relation to the non-Indigenous group. For example, Annabelle points out that one of her motivations for completing her doctorate was to be able to say: "I am an Indian, I am capable. My mother is Indian and she is capable of bringing up children who have common sense. And they still have so much common sense that they are part of the 1% of the Quebec population who have a doctorate and the 0.6% of Indigenous in Canada who have a doctorate. My mother did it!"

However, among our sample there are some cases of students who are returning to study having a more instrumental relationship with their studies, such as Alexander: "I have been through a lot of labor work, so I am kind of tired of labor work now. I just want to move on, get an education, and try something new. And working in an office would be a new thing for me. So I would like to get up there with my education and find myself, you know, a good job for my family and all that." Among the participants who had made an immediate transition from CEGEP to university, we see that while the expressive relationship to studies predominates, the instrumental relationship can nevertheless develop later during the university career. For example, after completing her bachelor's degree with a more expressive approach, Christine decided to pursue a 2nd cycle program that would improve her job prospects by adopting a more instrumental approach: "After sending out 60 CVs and other visits of this kind [...] You know, we were told: 'You are going to get jobs! [...]' I said to myself: 'Well, it looks like I will have to do something extra.'"

Like participants who have developed an expressive relationship with their studies, those who have developed an instrumental relationship generally combine it with a contribution to the development of well-being among Indigenous people that is firmly anchored in their study projects. This is not an instrumental relationship that is limited to an individualistic conception: the aim is to improve the situation of the group to which they belong, whether in their own community, in another community, or among urban Indigenous. In the cases we have encountered, it is possible to maintain the altruistic nature of the study project by combining parts of the course where the expressive relationship predominates with other, more 'instrumental' parts. The participants' relationship with their studies was analyzed on the basis of interviews conducted both during and after their university studies, thus necessitating the reconstruction of the diachronic structure of each narrative^[24]. In this way, the changes in their relationship to their studies may have been reinterpreted by the participants in relation to other subsequent biographical events and a certain 'official model of official self-presentation,' a warning already underlined by Bourdieu^[31]. There are also a few cases where the identity dimension based on contributing to well-being in an Indigenous environment is not at the heart of the study project, as in the case of Mathieu: "I do not need or like to have something group-based, Indigenous, in a university and all that. It is not even that important to me. Despite this relationship with Indigenous identity developed during his studies, he went on to pursue a career in Indigenous organizations.

For her part, Isabelle would have liked her professors to make more room for indigenous perspectives, as part of an approach to decolonizing the university^[11]: "It was the same old routine: white people explaining business to us [...]. [...] That is what really turned me off..." Other cases also testify to a form of resistance to this hegemony^[14], linked to the movement to decolonize education, as Monique explains: "Maybe I bring a different perception of things, maybe I can bring a contribution as an Indigenous [graduate professional] to the world of [her field of study]. Maybe we can decolonize [her field of study] a bit more." In this respect, the cases of racism and discrimination in the university context raised by the participants refer more specifically to the invisibility of Indigenous cultures and the lack of awareness of their realities among other students and staff, as H el ene explains: "There were professors at one point who did not know that I was Indigenous and then said, 'Oh well, there are no Indigenous at university anyway!' [I would hold up my hand and say, 'Sorry, but there are a few anyway. They are not all on their reserves!'"

The people we met also said that their parents had a positive relationship with the school (The interviews were conducted with students and graduates, who were asked to describe their parents' relationship with the school). This is despite the legacy of residential schools and criticism of the Eurocentrism of the school system, as Monique explains: "He was a trapper, then a hunter, then a fisherman, then my grandfather, then my great-grandfather, and they lived... and the generations before them had experienced prejudice because they were not educated. My father always had this philosophy in the family: 'Study, my daughter, then get an education! Go and get a university degree so that you know what is going on and that is what counts.'"

This last case illustrates the profile of the sample, which includes a majority of first-generation students, i.e. whose parents did not attend university. As mentioned by Pierre Canisius Kamanzi^[32], the concept of first-generation students (FGS) can be defined in terms of parental attendance or graduation. We have chosen to refer to the parents' university attendance, insofar as this experience testifies to a definite interest in higher education and concerns a population with a low graduation rate. They also have in common the fact that their parents have developed a positive relationship with school, while at the same time being critical of the educational institution. While it is true that children whose parents have a high level of cultural capital tend to do better at school^[18], we can also look at the exceptions that we find among most of the participants, as Lahire^[17] suggested. The decisive factor is for parents to "give a symbolic place (in family exchanges) or an effective place to the 'schoolboy' or

the ‘literate child’ within the family configuration [...] even if these parents do not understand everything their children do at school and are not ashamed to say that they feel overwhelmed”^[17]. However, the fact that they were not first-generation students tended to favor a linear education, speeding up the transition to university, as Martine illustrates: “My parents really valued studies, even higher ones: you know, not just going to secondary school (level of education preceding college studies) [...] My parents’ expectations were very high.” She, therefore, describes her path to university as “already mapped out in [her] mind,” since she had “fairly high goals,” adding: “I knew I wanted to go to university.”

4.2. The challenges of balancing study, work, and family

The “traditional” profile of university students in Quebec, whatever their origin, has undergone profound changes as a result of the massification of higher education^[33]. Although inequalities in access are still strongly marked according to parental education, income, and language of schooling^[32], there is nonetheless a marked increase in access to higher education.

The number of college and university students has increased in recent decades^[34]. As a result, issues relating to the work-study-family balance have gradually become a higher priority for higher education institutions. For example, student-parent committees have been set up to offer services to students in such situations or to ask institutions to expand their services to meet the needs expressed by the community. In terms of study-work-family balance, we note the offer of evening and weekend courses and a degree of flexibility in terms of part-time study arrangements, in line with the greater flexibility offered by the Quebec school system. It should also be noted that the campuses of the Université du Québec have a higher proportion of part-time and first-generation students^[35]. The Université du Québec comprises a number of campuses affiliated with the network, such as the Université du Québec à Montréal, while the other Quebec universities, such as Université Laval, are “chartered.”

The paths taken by the Indigenous university students we met are also part of this growing trend in Quebec to move away from the model of the full-time, single, childless student living at home. This phenomenon is amplified among Indigenous students and has been noted since the first Canadian publications on the subject^[36-41]. The literature review shows that the profile of the Indigenous student in her thirties returning to school after a period of motherhood and work experience in her community is predominant, and even more so in programs aimed specifically at Indigenous students. Our analysis shows that this situation is also closely linked to the cultural dimension, insofar as the family is an important factor in the decision to continue studying. The issues involved in balancing study, work, and family differ greatly between undergraduate and postgraduate study because of the greater flexibility offered in time management.

While none of the student-parents we interviewed mentioned any significant difficulties in balancing their studies with their families, some necessary adjustments were made, resulting in quite busy schedules for several of them. We can see, however, that the traditional profile is broadening to include younger students who grew up in urban areas, as Rodon^[42] has already pointed out, which also corresponds to a significant proportion of our sample. Often childless, these students have no family responsibilities, and it would not be surprising to see this phenomenon continue to rise, given the increase in graduation rates among the native population; although the gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous graduation rates persist. Taking all cycles together, our data show that the birth of children before the start of studies also has a major influence on the age of entry to university, insofar as student-parents start their studies later. Sometimes it can even be a factor in why parents go back to school, for example when they want to act as role models for their school-age children, as Alexander does: “I want to be a role model for my kids and whatever I do, I know my kids are going to follow [...]

watching me closely [...] When I go to school and everything I do [...] I am hoping that they will do it earlier.” When a child is born during their studies, this influence is felt more in terms of financial constraints.

All the participants we met received financial support from their communities during their studies, although some were unable to obtain it for the entirety of their course. These allowances enabled the participants to devote less time to paid work during their studies, but the support programs vary greatly from one community to another and their criteria do not necessarily correspond to the characteristics of Indigenous students, as Paquette and Fallon ^[8] had pointed out with regard to First Nations post-secondary students in Canada. For example, some participants did not receive financial support for the entire duration of their studies due to a change of program or a temporary interruption. Still others received insufficient amounts, forcing them to work long hours to meet their needs, to the detriment of their studies and their health. We can therefore say that this measure certainly helps to make post-secondary education more accessible to a population that has historically been excluded and whose socioeconomic status remains unfavorable, but it does not meet demand. Some of the participants are also experiencing difficulties due to burnout and insufficient funding, as Valérie did: “I thought it was [a pity] because it was always the same classic every month and then, you know, when your rent goes down and then you already have [little] a month and then you struggle to pay your rent and then on Fridays, you wait for it and then you are hungry and then you know you have got nothing and then you know you cannot count on your parents to help you...”

Finally, our results indicate that the option of beginning university studies with a certificate offered several participants greater flexibility in terms of their undergraduate pathway (a program of study is generally equivalent to one-third of a regular bachelor’s degree, completed in one year when the course of study is full-time, but frequently continued on a part-time basis). They were able to choose to continue their studies, after obtaining their first certificate, to obtain a bachelor’s degree by accumulating three different certificates. This option is even more attractive when the training is offered directly in an Indigenous community. As Emily explains: “It was an adjustment but I was there, I was in my home. I did not have to go outside; I did not have to go anywhere. I was there [...] It was less stressful because I did not have to worry about anything, they had brought it to us, which was... I really appreciated it. I really appreciated it.” However, this type of training is geared towards specific needs expressed by the communities and is more rarely offered on a regular basis. As a result, participants looking for a broader training offer had to study outside the community, which entailed more constraints when they came from outside the major urban centers.

5. Discussion

We found that the Indigenous university students we met had a more expressive relationship with their studies, rooted in their identity and with an end goal of improving their well-being in an Indigenous environment. These findings are consistent with those of Rodon ^[42], Joncas ^[40], Dufour ^[43], and Lefevre-Radelli ^[44], who reported that Indigenous university students in Quebec are strongly rooted in their Indigenous identity. Although the typology developed by Doré *et al.* ^[19] is not used by the authors of these other publications in the analysis of their data, they find that Indigenous university students develop a relationship to their studies that is more closely related to the expressive pole.

As far as our own participants are concerned, our analysis shows that their relationship with studies can also be described as ‘altruistic’ for most of them, insofar as this aspect is closely associated with the motives and interests related to the pursuit of university studies for a majority of participants. They generally seek to combine their personal interest in a field of knowledge with the needs of the group to which they belong,

whether in their community of origin, in other communities, in an urban environment, or even without any local roots. However, this altruistic approach to studies is not specific to Indigenous students; it can be compared to the situation of Canadian francophone students in a minority setting (outside Quebec) with so-called “articulated” careers ^[20], whose paths are strongly rooted in their sense of belonging to the minority francophone community. It should also be noted that while Doré *et al.* ^[19] noted that the expressive approach to studies predominates in the Quebec student population as a whole, this relationship has not been studied specifically in relation to the cultural identity of students in the majority group.

What’s more, our analysis shows that balancing study, work, and family is more difficult for participants who are returning to study, because of the strong tendency towards parenthood and moving away from the community of origin. In this respect, the significant proportion of participants returning to study in our sample illustrates that the pathways to university frequently deviate from the linear model. While this phenomenon has already been raised for all Quebec students ^[33], its heightened acuity among Indigenous students makes us wonder about the measures deployed by universities to promote their inclusion. We also found that a number of participants were critical of the university institution in terms of the invisibility of their Indigenous cultures, but that most of them were developing study projects closely associated with their cultures.

Our research thus highlights the influence of the university institution on the accessibility of studies among Indigenous, given the greater flexibility offered in terms of returning to school and changing programs ^[29]. The transformations undergone by the university institution, which began in the aftermath of the Second World War, gave rise to a reorganization of the institution under the influence of the welfare state model and the industrialization of the economy towards what Kerr ^[45] and Fallis ^[1] have defined as the multiversity model. It was also in this context that the first schools of Native Studies were developed in some Canadian universities ^[3], and more recently in Quebec. Today, the pursuit of university studies by a group that has historically been excluded from this institution represents a clear reversal in the history of an institution that was originally developed to train a certain male elite from the dominant social classes ^[1].

As Lefevre-Radelli ^[44] recently pointed out, this still tentative openness on the part of the university community towards Indigenous students does not make up for the systemic discrimination they suffer on campus as a result of the invisibility of their cultures and the preponderance of Western knowledge. Despite the greater space given to Indigenous cultures on campuses and an increased concern for cultural security on the part of Indigenous students ^[43], the invisibility of these cultures at university and their lack of awareness among students and staff noted by participants remain phenomena that have persisted for the past few decades ^[42,46-48]. Power relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are therefore at the heart of interactions between students and members of staff. Moreover, Lefevre-Radelli ^[44], Dufour ^[43], and Joncas ^[40] highlighted the lack of interest among Indigenous students in requesting services offered by institutions that do not promote their cultural safety. Like Loiselle ^[39], a critical mass of Indigenous students in an institution is essential for the institution to take an interest in their particularities.

6. Conclusion

In short, an analysis of the career paths of indigenous students reveals the changes that have taken place in the university system since the collapse of the traditional model of the university in favor of the multiversity. This increased openness to students from historically excluded groups, including indigenous, does not, however, erase the systemic discrimination to which they are still clearly subject, and which is reflected in attendance and graduation rates that are still far from those observed among non-indigenous. In this context, an analysis of their

backgrounds reveals difficulties of an educational and extracurricular nature to which the institutions manage to respond unevenly, depending on the services actually offered and used in each of them. Nevertheless, we are seeing increased interest and efforts in Quebec universities to include Indigenous students, with a view not only to increasing their graduation rates but also to reviewing values and practices within the institutions themselves. This movement to decolonize education, while still timid, is helping to provide greater cultural security for Indigenous students and thus improve their educational success. In doing so, we would like to emphasize that Indigenous students and graduates make a major contribution to the well-being of Indigenous communities and that universities and public authorities can help them to do so by providing them with appropriate support.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Fallis G, 2007, *Multiversities, Ideas and Democracy*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- [2] Benham M, 2003, *The Journey of the Native American Higher Education Initiative and Tribal Colleges and Universities*, in Nee-Benham M, Stein WJ, (éds.), *The Renaissance of American Indian Higher Education*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, 3–23.
- [3] Stonechild B, 2006, *The New Buffalo: The Struggle for Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada*, University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg.
- [4] Dufour E, 2017, *From Manitou College in La Macaza to the Kiuna Institution in Odanak: The Genesis of Postsecondary Institutions by and for the First Nations in Quebec*. *Review of the History of French America*, 70(4): 5–33. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1040572ar>
- [5] Statistique Canada, n.d., Table 37-10-0099-01. *Distribution of the Population Aged 25 to 64 (Total and with Aboriginal Identity), by Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree and by Age Group*, viewed March 20, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.25318/3710009901-fra>
- [6] Potvin M, 2017, *Anti-Racist, Inclusive and Rights Education in the Development of the Professional Skills of School Staff and the Capabilities of Students*. *Ethics in Education and Training*, 2017(3): 97–121. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1042939ar>
- [7] Cherkaoui M, 2004, *Sociology of Education*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.
- [8] Paquette J, Fallon G, 2010, *First Nations Education Policy in Canada: Progress or Gridlock?* University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- [9] Kanu Y, 2011, *Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into the School Curriculum: Purposes, Possibilities and Challenges*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- [10] Bellier I, Hays J, (éds.), 2017, *What Education for Indigenous Peoples?* L'Harmattan, Paris.
- [11] Battiste M, 2013, *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*, Purich Publishing, Saskatoon.
- [12] Ratel JL, 2019, *From Study Project to Life Project: An Analysis of University Careers Among First Nations Students in Quebec*, Doctoral thesis, Université Laval (Canada).
- [13] Blaser M, 2004, *Life Projects: Indigenous Peoples' Agency and Development*, in Blaser M, Feit H, McRae G, (éds.), *In the Way of Development: Indigenous Peoples, Life Projects and Globalization*, Zed Books, London.
- [14] Giroux HA, 1981, *Ideology, Culture and the Process of Schooling*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia.
- [15] Giroux HA, 2002, *Neoliberalism, Corporate Culture, and the Promise of Higher Education: The University as a Democratic Public Sphere*. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72(4): 425–463. <https://doi.org/10.17763/>

- [16] Juteau D, 2015, *Ethnicity and Its Borders*, Presses de l'Université de Montréal, Montréal.
- [17] Lahire B, 1995, *Family Paintings. School Fortunes and Misfortunes in Working-Class Environments*, Le Seuil, Paris.
- [18] Bourdieu P, Passeron JC, 1970, *Reproduction: Elements for a Theory of the Education System*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris.
- [19] Doré G, Hamel J, Méthot C, 2008, *Studying, a Means or an End? Analysis of Student Values, Youth and Society* Observatory National Institute of Scientific Research, Urbanization Culture Society Center, Montreal. <http://espace.inrs.ca/id/eprint/10028>
- [20] Pilote A, Garneau S, 2011, *The Contribution of Biographical Interviews in Studying the Heterogeneity of Female Student Experience and its Evolution over Time*. *Recherches Sociologiques et Anthropologiques*, 42(2): 51–74. <https://doi.org/10.4000/ras.717>
- [21] Grawitz M, 1996, *Social Science Methods*, Dalloz, Paris.
- [22] Lessard-Hébert M, Goyette G, Boutin G, 1990, *Qualitative Research: Foundations and Practices*, Agence d'ARC, Montréal.
- [23] Hamel J, 1997, *Summary of the Epistemology of Sociology*, L'Harmattan, Montréal. <http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1522/cla.haj.pre>
- [24] Bertaux D, 2010, *The Life Story: The Investigation and its Methods*, Armand Collin, Paris.
- [25] Miles M, Huberman M, 2003, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, De Boeck, Bruxelles.
- [26] Van Der Maren JM, 2004, *Search Methods for Education*, De Boeck/Presses de l'Université de Montréal, Bruxelles/Montréal.
- [27] Krause RG, Stephens MCC, 1992, *Preparing Aboriginal Students for Medical School – Manitoba Program Increases Equality of Opportunity*. *Canadian Family Physician*, 1992(38): 1187–1193. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2145830/>
- [28] Edgecombe N, Robertson A, 2016, *The Nunavut Nursing Program: A Retrospective Reflection*. *Northern Review*, 2016(43): 83–103. <https://thenorthernreview.ca/index.php/nr/article/view/594>
- [29] Charbonneau J, 2006, *Reversibilities and Educational Paths in Quebec*. *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, 2006(120): 111–131. <https://doi.org/10.3917/cis.120.0111>
- [30] Ratel JL, Pilote A, 2017, *University Careers and Indigenous Identity Among First Nations Students in Quebec*, in Kamanzi PC, Goastellec G, Picard F, (éds.), *Behind the Scenes. Massification of Higher Education and Social Justice*, Presses de l'Université du Québec, Québec.
- [31] Bourdieu P, 1986, *The Biographical Illusion*. *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 1986(62–63): 69–72. <https://doi.org/10.3406/arss.1986.2317>
- [32] Kamanzi PC, Doray P, Bonin S, et al., 2010, *First-Generation Students at Universities: Access to and Perseverance in Studies in Canada*. *Revue Canadienne d'enseignement Supérieur*, 40(3): 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.47678/cjhe.v40i3.2012>
- [33] Higher Education Council, 2013, *Because the Ways of Carrying Out a University Study Project Have Changed...*, Notice to the Minister of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, Superior Council of Education, Quebec, viewed March 20, 2020, <https://www.cse.gouv.qc.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2013/06/50-0480-AV-projet-detudes-universitaires.pdf>
- [34] Chenard P, Doray P, Dussault LE, et al., (éds.), 2013, *Accessibility to Postsecondary Studies: An Unfinished Project*, Presses de l'Université du Québec, Québec. http://extranet.puq.ca/media/produits/documents/2450_9782760536654.pdf
- [35] Bonin S, 2013, *Profile and Perseverance of First Generation Students at the University of Quebec*, Université du

Québec, Québec. http://www.quebec.ca/dri/publications/rapports_de_recherche/etudiants_premiere_gen_uq_2011.pdf

- [36] Read EJ, 1983, Education Programs for Disadvantaged Adults A Case Study – Project Morning Star. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 10(2): 19–28.
- [37] Adebayo AB, 1995, Characteristics, Employment Status, and Scope of Duties of Community-Health Representatives - A Survey of Graduates. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 86(1): 16–19. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41991234>
- [38] Cazin A, 2005, Results of Two Surveys of Native English-Speaking Students Admitted to a Full-Time Program at UQAT in Fall 2004, Community Support Research Laboratory, Rouyn-Noranda, https://www.uqat.ca/telechargements/info_entites/enq_autochtones.pdf
- [39] Loïselle M, 2010, An Analysis of the Determinants of Perseverance and Success of Indigenous Students at the University of Quebec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, University of Quebec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Rouyn-Noranda.
- [40] Joncas JA, 2013, Contribution to Understanding the Academic Experience of Persevering First Nations University Students in Quebec: The Case of Students from the University of Quebec in Chicoutimi, Master’s thesis, University of Quebec in Chicoutimi (Canada). <https://constellation.uqac.ca/2739/>
- [41] Lefevre-Radelli L, Jérôme L, 2017, Experiences, Policies and Practices of Integration of Indigenous Students at University: The Case of UQAM, Cercle des Premières Nations / UQAM Community Service, Montreal, <https://sac.uqam.ca/18-projets-et-publications/publications/communautaire/338-experiences-politiques-et-pratiques-d-integration-des-etudiant-es-autochtones-a-l-universite-le-cas-de-l-uqam.html>
- [42] Rodon T, 2007, Indigenous Students at Laval University. Analysis of Needs and Evaluation of Reception and Support Strategies, Université Laval, Québec.
- [43] Dufour E, 2015, Cultural Safety as a Driver of Postsecondary Success: Survey of Indigenous Students at the Kiuna Institution and Adapted Spaces Within Non-Indigenous Establishments, Master’s thesis, Université de Montréal (Canada). <http://hdl.handle.net/1866/13638>
- [44] Lefevre-Radelli L, 2019, The Experience of Indigenous Students at University: Systemic Racism, Coping Strategies and Hope for Social Change, Doctoral thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal (Canada). <http://archipel.uqam.ca/id/eprint/13631>
- [45] Kerr C, 1967, *Metamorphosis of the University, Économie et Humanism*, Paris.
- [46] Beaudoin J, 1977, *Manitou College: A Project. Sociological Dimensions*, Master’s thesis, Université Laval (Canada).
- [47] Archibald JA, Bowman SS, 1995, Honoring What They Say: Postsecondary Experiences of First Nations Graduates. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 21(1): 1–247. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED399100>
- [48] Shankar J, Ip E, Khalema E, et al., 2013, Education as a Social Determinant of Health: Issues Facing Indigenous and Visible Minority Students in Postsecondary Education in Western Canada. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2013(10): 3908–3929. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph10093908>

Publisher’s note

Bio-Byword Scientific Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.