

# ***Bilingual School Teachers' Cultural Mission and Practices in Alberta Before 1940***

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**ABSTRACT:** This socio-historical paper explores how bilingual school teachers in the past responded to competing Francophone and Anglophone ideological cultural reproduction discourses in their curriculum practices. An in-depth study of the cultural curriculum of 265 teachers who taught in public schools in French-speaking communities in Alberta during the period 1934 to 1939 sheds some light on how the exercise of power can influence teachers' decisions to either give legitimacy or resist reproducing in their classrooms certain forms of knowledge and cultural orientations.

**RÉSUMÉ:** Cette étude socio-historique explore comment les enseignantes bilingues dans le passé ont répondu dans leurs pratiques aux discours idéologiques de reproduction culturelle avancés par deux groupes en compétition, les Francophones et les Anglophones. C'est en examinant en profondeur le curriculum culturel de 265 enseignantes qui ont oeuvré dans les écoles publiques situées dans les communautés Franco-Albertaines entre 1934 et 1939 que nous avons pu discerner comment les enjeux de pouvoir peuvent influencer les décisions des enseignantes de légitimer ou de résister à reproduire dans leurs classes certaines connaissances et orientations culturelles.

In 1993, Francophones in the Canadian prairie provinces obtained the right from their provincial governments to manage their own schools. Since then, there has been an abundance of discourses on the mission of French schools in a minority situation. Although there is general agreement in French

communities that the purpose of these schools is to teach the French language and transmit culture, a number of researchers argue that in a pluralist, postmodern, and global society French schools should also act as agents of socio-cultural change (Baril, 1992; Bernard, 1997; Cazabon, 1993, 1997), or of cultural transformation (Gérin-Lajoie, 1993; Y.M. Hébert, 1994; Lafontant, 1995). Researchers who acknowledge in their discourses that French schools are no longer homogeneous milieus like they were in the past propose that teachers' cultural practices should reflect their students' linguistic and cultural pluralism (Baril, 1992; A. Cloutier, 1994; Gérin-Lajoie, 1993; Laforge, 1993). Divergent cultural discourses on the mission of French schools in a minority situation imply that there is no consensus in French communities as to what kind of cultural knowledge, values, and beliefs teachers should promote, reproduce, or reinterpret in their classrooms. Such was not the case in the past as the Francophone elite had clearly articulated the cultural mission of bilingual school teachers, that is of teachers who taught in Anglo-controlled public schools in French-speaking communities.

The intent of this paper is to help us to reflect on past competing ideological discourses which defined the role of bilingual school teachers in cultural reproduction or resistance as these discourses could provide present day Francophone educators with valuable insights on how a teacher's curriculum practice may be affected by the exercise of power in society. In this paper, culture refers to what Zais (1976) describes as an "interlocking fabric of ideas, ideals, beliefs, values, assumptions and modes of thought that individuals in the social group adhere to," (p. 157) and which govern not only their world-view, but also their behavior and actions.

Francophone linguistic and cultural continuity in the prairie provinces was threatened in the 1890s when the English Protestant majority replaced the dual system of confessional schools with national schools and legislated English as the language of instruction in public schools (Huel, 1969; Jaenen, 1984; Mahé, 1992; Titley, 1990). After the Catholic Church lost the power to govern its schools, French-speaking members of the Catholic clergy, in collaboration with Francophone professional

elites, founded l'Association Catholique franco-canadienne de la Saskatchewan in 1912, l'Association d'éducation des Canadiens-français du Manitoba in 1916, and l'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta in 1926 to defend and promote their religious and national interests. These groups developed a course of action to use state-controlled schools in French-speaking communities as sites to carry on an exercise of power over the curriculum. Francophone leaders subsequently entrusted bilingual school teachers with the mission of resisting Anglo-goals of schooling (Kach, 1986; McDonald, 1982; Patterson, 1979) by preserving the child's French mentality and maintaining his Catholicism (Beauchemin, 1938; Chaput, 1977, pp. 122-128; Huel, 1969; Mahé, 1989, 1992; Routhier, 1938). Over the years, bilingual school teachers were bombarded by two competing cultural discourses, Francophone cultural survival and resistance discourses, and the dominant group's Anglo-reproduction discourse. In this exploratory socio-historical paper we attempt to shed some light on how bilingual school teachers responded to competing cultural discourses in their curriculum practices.

Curriculum theorists stipulate that teachers can give legitimacy in their classrooms to forms of knowledge, values, belief systems, cultural orientations, and ways of behaving and acting emerging out of the dominant ideology, or they can resist reproducing the dominant world-view in their curriculum practices. In either case, a teacher's curriculum decisions with respect to cultural transfer generally reflects social control over the curriculum and the distribution of power in society (Apple, 1982, 1990; Bernstein, 1971; Dandurand, 1983; Forquin, 1989, 1991; Giroux, 1985; Kanpol, 1991; Laliberté, 1983; Trottier, 1983). Resistance theorists see rejection of the dominant world-view as a subversion of dominant aspirations regarding the purpose of schooling. In this study a resistance approach to cultural reproduction helped the writer to understand how the form and content of curriculum can be shaped by ideological interests and power relations (Morrow & Torres, 1995).

Mallea's (1984) conceptual framework for analyzing multicultural education influenced the organization of an analytical framework for this study. Mallea's framework, located within conflict theory, combines theories of culture, cultural

hegemony, cultural capital, cultural legitimation, and cultural resistance. For the purpose of this study, the writer adopted Mallea's view of culture as a terrain for contestations, and of state-controlled schools as sites for power struggles over what constitutes the legitimate culture to reproduce. From this viewpoint, religious and ethnic minorities are perceived as seeking to protect and maintain their distinct values, beliefs, world-view, and language by resisting dominant interpretations of schooling.

By the end of the 19th century, the dual power relationship between the French and the English in Western Canada shifted as a result of changing demographics. Francophones therefore found themselves in an asymmetrical relationship vis-à-vis Anglophones. Dandurand (1977) explains that in an asymmetrical power relationship the capabilities of the agents who have control over the resources affecting schooling allows them "to prevail over those of another" agent, even in spite of the resistance of the latter (p. 63). But, as Mallea (1984) points out, we know that French Canadian minorities outside of Quebec have consistently resisted Anglo-dominated institutions and their policies and practices which did not meet their linguistic and cultural needs (p. 8). However, studies showing how the exercise of power between Francophones and Anglophones affected bilingual school teachers' cultural reproduction practices in the past are lacking.

There are indications in the literature on Francophone schooling outside of Quebec that a number of teachers in the past resisted Anglo-norms of schooling whereas others acquiesced. It is common knowledge that French-speaking female and male religious orders acted as cultural gatekeepers in their convents and colleges (Gagnon, 1989; Joyal, 1938; Moreau, 1980; Stanley, 1983; Trottier & Fournier, 1986). In addition, there are some writings which mention that lay teachers expanded or resisted laws governing the teaching of French in public schools (Chaput, 1977, p. 122-129; M. Hébert, 1997, 1998; Huel, 1969, 1983; Jaenen, 1984; Mahé, 1997; Stanley, 1983). In Manitoba, for example, when M. Hébert (1997) interviewed 19 Francophone women who had taught in French communities before 1947 she found that they had resisted language laws and transmitted the French Canadian heritage. According to these women, their

transgressions were supported by the Francophone community, but certainly not by Department of Education inspectors (p. 68-74). There is evidence to the contrary, however, which suggests that a number of bilingual school teachers neglected their national and patriotic duties because of pressures from school inspectors or non-Francophone trustees and parents to stress the teaching of English (Chaput, 1977, p. 120-121; Cléroux, 1912; W. Denis, 1993, p. 90; M. Hébert, 1997, p. 68-69; Huel, 1969, 1983, p. 22, 43; Mahé, 1997). What these writings fail to mention are the dynamics of resistance or conformity imbedded in bilingual school teachers' cultural curriculum.

### ***A Case Study of Bilingual School Teachers' Cultural Curriculum, 1934-1939***

In order to discover how bilingual school teachers in the past responded to competing cultural discourses in their curriculum practices, a case study approach was selected. Finding information on bilingual school teachers' cultural practices was a challenge, but I did find 390 inspection reports completed by Reverend Father Joseph Fortier, S.-J. between 1934 and 1939.<sup>1</sup> In 1932, l'Association Canadienne-Française de l'Alberta appointed Father Fortier "Visiteur des écoles bilingues" for Alberta. His role was to unofficially inspect the teaching of French and Religion in bilingual schools. In a five year period he inspected a total of 265 teachers (48% or 126 were lay female teachers, 38% or 102 female religious orders, and 14% or 37 males) who taught in 97 rural bilingual school districts.<sup>2</sup> Each year he visited between 64 (1935-1936) to 74 (1934-1935) schools and inspected an average of 129 teachers.

Fortier's reports contain a rich data source on bilingual school district trustees, the student population, teachers' salaries and working conditions, teacher ethnic and cultural background, and their cultural curriculum. In this paper we report only the data which pertains specifically to teachers' cultural curriculum and their preparation to act as agents of cultural transfer. Teacher preparation was viewed as an important component for making

sense of data on teachers' cultural practices as curriculum theorists have found that teacher ethnicity, schooling, and professional training are constructs which influence their curriculum decisions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Eggleston, 1977, p. 8; Nespor, 1987).

Two interrelated objectives guided the content analysis of the 390 inspection reports. The first objective was to uncover data which revealed how teachers who taught in bilingual schools between 1934 to 1939 organized their curriculum to give legitimacy to the French language and culture. The second objective was to seek out data which suggested that teachers' cultural practices were affected by external pressures to emphasize the teaching of English and to reproduce the Anglo-dominant world-view. Constructs generated from data drawn from Fortier's reports were cross-checked between teachers, and were then validated by comparing them to other archival materials such as Department of Education and bilingual school district correspondence files, French language newspapers, Francophone cultural and educational association documents, and studies on Francophone education.

### ***Teachers as Agents of Cultural Reproduction or Resistance***

In this section we begin by examining Francophone elite discourses which describe their conception of the cultural and religious mission of bilingual school teachers. These discourses provide important criteria for assessing whether or not teachers' cultural practices reflect community expectations. Based on an analysis of data drawn from Fortier's reports on 265 teachers, we then attempt to establish relationships between teacher ethnicity and educational background, and their cultural curriculum. It must be pointed out that in his reports Fortier did not always provide similar types of data for all 265 teachers, therefore the numerical data reported in this section on number of teachers will

vary from one category to the other. In the conclusion which follows a description of teachers' cultural curriculum we reflect on the impact which competing cultural survival and reproduction discourses may have had on teacher practices. We then discuss why some of these past discourses should be maintained by Francophone educators, and why others should be rejected.

### ***Bilingual School Teachers' Cultural Mission***

After the French Canadian Catholics lost their monopoly over schooling at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the clerical and professional elites set in motion an ideological campaign to pressure teachers to combat Anglo-norms of schooling and to instill in their students cultural orientations grounded in a clerico-nationalist perspective of reality. Needless to say that their cultural survival discourses centered on the socialization of the young and on teachers as key players in this process. It is well documented in educational literature that schooling constitutes one of the most effective and suitable ways to socialize each new generation so they can learn about their culture and become integrated in their social group (Taylor, 1994; Trottier, 1983).

Francophone elites promoted the view in French-speaking communities that the teacher was the soul of the school, the Apostle of the Church, the guardian of the cultural heritage, and if students had a patriotic teacher to emulate, they would be overcome with feelings of pride in their cultural heritage (Fortier, 1933; *La Survivance*, 1936a; Yelle, 1938, p. 232). Elites described the ideal teacher as someone who possessed a love of her or his faith and of the French language, who had catholic and nationalistic pride, and who believed French Canadians had a providential mission in North America (*La Survivance*, 1933a; Lavallée, 1934; Racette, 1928a, 1928b). The Francophone community therefore expected teachers to inculcate in the young the knowledge, values, beliefs, and ideologies which would help them to develop a devotion to God, an attachment to the Church, a love of their religion and glorious past, and a sense of national pride (Association Canadienne Française de l'Alberta, 1926; Chaput, 1977, p. 118, 128-129; R. Denis, 1920, pp. 1-2; *Le Canadien-Français*, 1916).

According to members of cultural associations, it was a teacher's duty to expand the law and teach as much French as possible, to have students write the yearly Concours de français (a French exam administered by Francophone cultural associations), to teach Catechism and have students recite their prayers in French, to teach French Canadian History and traditional French Canadian songs, to involve students in the Avant-Gardes (a Catholic Social Action activity), and to subject them to textbooks from Quebec with a nationalist and religious interpretation of French Canadian society (Chaput, 1977, p. 124; Huel, 1969, p. 41, 47; Mahé, 1993, 1994). "Visiteurs d'écoles" and parish priests supervised the implementation of the cultural agenda in bilingual schools thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of the Catholic Church in Francophone communities.

A document entitled, "Le Crédo de l'institutrice" published in a French newspaper in 1931 insinuated that the soul of teachers who had zealously carried out their nationalist and religious mission would be saved, "Je crois que si j'ai rempli ma mission avec zèle, dévouement et esprit surnaturel "je brillerai," comme dit Notre Seigneur, dans le firmament et je sauverai mon âme" (*La Survivance*, 1931, p. 2). However, teachers who diligently responded to the Francophone cultural and religious mission were faced with the formidable task of defying Anglo-norms of schooling which were guarded by Department of Education school inspectors (M. Hébert, 1998, p. 68-70; Huel, 1969, p. 54-62 ; Jaenen, 1984, p. 14-15; Mahé, 1997).

### ***Teacher Preparation to Act as Agents of Cultural Transfer***

In this part of the paper it will be demonstrated that because Anglo-dominated provincial Normal Schools did not prepare teachers to teach in a language other than English (Department of Education, 1936a, p. 17; M. Hébert, 1998, pp. 306, 310-312; Patterson, 1979, pp. 197, 200), teachers who taught in Alberta's



bilingual schools between 1934 and 1939 had to depend upon their own cultural background experiences to guide them in their role as agents of Francophone cultural transfer. To begin with, we identify the ethnicity of the teachers involved, then we examine their early schooling and professional development.

### ***Teacher Ethnicity***

At least 83% (N=131) of the lay male and female teachers for whom data was available were French Canadian Catholics and the remaining 17% (N=131) were of diverse ethnic origins (10% were Irish, English, and Scottish, and 7% were Belgian, German, Polish, Italian, Russian, and Ukrainian). Fortier did not specify the ethnicity of the 102 religious orders, but we can deduce from other data that they belonged to teaching orders founded in France and in Quebec.<sup>3</sup>

The finding that at least 17% (N=131) of the lay teachers between 1934 to 1939 were non-Francophones is not unusual. For a number of years school trustees in French-speaking communities in Western Canada complained of an on-going shortage of bilingual teachers. These shortages were a result of a lack of bilingual teacher training institutions and teacher certification policies which did not recognize credentials of French Catholic teachers from Quebec, unless they had completed studies in an English institution (Chaput, 1977, p. 81; Huel, 1969, pp. 10, 48, 56, 121; Mahé, 1997).

### ***Teacher Schooling***

While cross-checking teacher ethnicity with primary and secondary schooling it was noted that 80% of the French Canadian male and female lay teachers, and the religious orders for whom data was available (150 teachers, N=187), had attended schools in cities and in French-speaking villages in Western Canada which were staffed mainly by male and female religious orders. The majority of these teachers (119, N=187) had been educated in Alberta. Out of the remaining 20% of the French-speaking teachers (37 teachers, N=187), 25 had been educated in Catholic institutions in Quebec, six in France, and six in convents in the eastern part of the United States. Data from Fortier's reports indicated that at least 19%, or 50 of the lay male and

female teachers out of a total teacher population of 265, had completed their studies in English-speaking communities where they had studied French as a foreign language.

In his reports Fortier makes several references to French Canadian teachers who were weak in French. Over the years other Francophones had made similar observations, and they attributed teachers' French language deficiencies to language laws which had limited their opportunity to study French at school. At that time, trustees were permitted to offer French instruction for no more than one hour per day beyond the early elementary grades (Belhumeur, 1933; Chaput, 1977, p. 1; Laplante, 1929).

### ***Professional Development***

To obtain an Alberta teaching certificate teachers had to be graduates of an English Normal School. However, very few bilingual school teachers had completed studies beyond their initial teacher training program. Based on Fortier's reports, only 20 teachers (8%, N=265) had obtained a B.A. degree (seven female lay teachers, seven females from religious orders, and six males), and one from the religious order was completing an M.A. degree. Twelve teachers had obtained their B.A. degree in French-speaking universities (seven from the University of Laval, four from the University of Montreal, and one from the University of Paris). The remaining eight teachers had been awarded a B.A. degree from English Canadian universities (three teachers out of this group had studied at the University of Alberta).

Members of Francophone cultural associations in the prairie provinces recognized that teachers in bilingual schools were experiencing problems teaching French as they lacked formal training in the language. Beginning in the mid-1920s and early 1930s, provincial associations organized summer courses in the teaching of French, French Canadian History, and Religion. Most of these courses were taught by members of the Catholic clergy

(Jesuits and Oblates), and a few other religious orders. In Alberta, one lay teacher, M. Marcel Denault, offered a course on the pedagogy of teaching French (Chaput, 1977, pp. 126, 128; Denis, 1993, p. 86; Huel, 1969, p. 24; Mahé, 1993). According to Fortier's reports, only 36 teachers (N=265) had taken these courses between 1934 and 1939.

### ***Discussion on the Relationship Between Teachers Cultural and Educational Backgrounds***

So far, the data generated from Fortier's reports on teacher ethnicity and educational background seems to suggest that the majority of the French Canadian teachers who were taught by the religious orders probably imitated, reproduced, or reinterpreted in their cultural practices forms of cultural and pedagogical knowledge they had experienced in their own early schooling. Perhaps this might be the case, but when we examine in more depth their cultural curriculum in the section which follows, we will get the impression that their experiences in Anglo-dominant schools and teacher training institutions also had an influence on their cultural curriculum. Connelly and Clandinin (1988, p. 25) would agree that a teacher's curriculum can be made up of an amalgam of personal practical knowledge. And, from a similar viewpoint, Barrow (1984) explains that the school curriculum is usually the product of various competing individuals or groups who adopt, accept, or change "what they can of the tradition they inherit, in the light of ideas they have acquired" (p. 26).

### ***Teachers' Cultural Practices***

Curriculum theorists advocate that constructs such as classroom climate, time spent on teaching subject matter, textbooks used for such teaching, and learning activities bring to light the processes of cultural transfer in schools and reflect the knowledge and values deemed worthy of being legitimated (Apple, 1982; Cloutier, 1983; Esland, 1971, Forquin, 1991). These constructs provide the framework for presenting the data available on cultural practices in 89 out of the 97 bilingual schools inspected by Fortier.

### ***Classroom Climate***

According to Tremblay (1990), classroom environments represent not only a physical and social milieu, but a microcosm of the image teachers have of the real world and its values and ideals. In his reports Fortier described a variety of religious symbols and nationalistic representations of French Canadian culture which decorated classroom walls in 80% of the schools (N=89). We can assume that these cultural artifacts typify the kinds of knowledge and ideals teachers were attempting to instill in their students.

Most classrooms had a crucifix, a flag of the Drapeau du Carillon du Sacré-Coeur, and images of the Sacred Heart, Jesus Christ carrying a cross, the Holy Family, the Virgin Mary, the child Jesus, St. Joseph, St. Jean-Baptiste, and the Gardien Angels. In a few classrooms there were statues of the Sacred Heart and the Virgin Mary. In diminishing order of their popularity there were representations of historical personalities such as George-Etienne Cartier, Jacques Cartier erecting a cross when he set foot in North America, Champlain's arrival in Quebec, the foundation of Montreal and Quebec, Father Brebeuf, Joan of Arc, the Ursulines of Trois Rivières, Mother Youville, Maisonneuve, Montcalm, La Salle, Louis H. Lafontaine, Madeleine de Verchères, Dollard, La Salle, Joliette and Marquette, La Verendry, Riel, and Lagimodière. Fortier also mentions that four schools had pictures of English Kings and Queens, one had a flag of the Union Jack, and that half of the classrooms had English calendars.

Religious inspirational phrases and mottos written on pieces of cardboard or on blackboards surrounded students. Phrases such as, "Mon Dieu, je vous aime," "Dieu Veille sur nous," were probably used to strengthen students' faith and love of God, whereas mottos such as "La langue est l'âme d'une nation," "Je défendrai toujours la pureté de la langue française," "Soyons défenseurs de la langue française non seulement contre les autres, mais contre nous-mêmes," likely served to instill in students the importance of continuing ancestral linguistic struggles.

Portrayals of ancestors who fought to preserve the French language and culture placed next to religious images and mottos suggest that the main objective of the hidden cultural curriculum

was to inculcate in students a nationalism founded on the notion that French Canadians had to defend their language and propagate the providential mission in North America, a mission also promoted in other Francophone schools in Canada and in the United States (Quintal, 1990; Routhier, 1938).

### ***Time Spent Teaching French, Subject Matter in French and Religion***

Francophone cultural survival discourses before 1940 were based on the premise that faith and language were inseparable, therefore to be effectual, religious and moral education had to be taught in the child's mother tongue (*L'Étoile de St. Albert*, 1913). School legislation, however, limited the teaching of French and religion, but these laws did not deter the majority of French Canadian teachers from creating religious and national learning environments, although the data from Fortier's reports suggest that some of them placed a greater emphasis on religious teaching than on the teaching of French language skills.

### ***Primary French (Grades 1 & 2)***

School law permitted the teaching of a primary course in French during the first two years of schooling,<sup>4</sup> but teachers in only 36% of the schools (N=89) took full advantage of this law and taught French most of the day. In 44% of the schools teachers offered a bilingual program, that is, they taught half a day in French and the other half in English, or they started their school year in French then switched to English after Christmas. In eight percent of the schools only one hour per day of French was offered, and in 12% of the schools, under the direction of non-Francophone teachers, French was not taught.

There are indications in Fortier's reports that the teachers who neglected French instruction were influenced by Anglo-reproduction discourses. For instance, some teachers told Fortier that parents or trustees wanted the children to successfully pass grade one in English, whereas others told him that inspectors did not want to see students fall behind in English. A previous study of the correspondence between the Department of Education and bilingual school districts in Alberta before 1940 confirms that

teachers in certain school districts were pressured by school inspectors, trustees, or non-Francophone parents to place a priority on the teaching of English (Mahé 1997).

### ***French Beyond the Primary Grades***

Trustees were permitted by school regulations to offer French instruction from grade 3 onwards for no more than one hour per day.<sup>5</sup> In 66% of the schools (N=89) teachers took full advantage of this law, and in 11% of the schools they taught more French than was allowed by law. However, in 19% of the schools French was taught less than one hour per day, and it was not offered in four percent of the schools because teachers were either non-Francophones, or Francophones who were forced by non-Francophone trustees and parents to diminish or discontinue French instruction. In mixed ethnic milieus cultural conflicts resulted when non-Francophones questioned whose language should be legitimated at school (Mahé, 1997).

### ***Subject Matter Taught in French***

As Tosh (1991) points out, "history is probably a stronger force than language in the molding of national consciousness" (p. 3). Likely as a result of pressures from the Francophone community to transmit the cultural heritage, teachers in 75% percent of the schools (N=89) disregarded the law which stated that all school subjects had to be taught in English,<sup>6</sup> (with the exception of the French courses already mentioned), including French Canadian history. In addition, in 53% of the schools students learned traditional French Canadian songs. Also, Geography and Mathematics were taught in French in 20% of the schools. Teachers who taught these subjects in French informed Fortier that they wanted their students to be bilingual.

### ***Religious Studies***

The School Act permitted the teaching of Religion for half an hour a day at the end of classes, and the recitation of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of the school day.<sup>7</sup> In 87% of the schools (N=89) Catechism and Holy History (Histoire Sainte) were taught for at least half an hour a day, generally at the end of the day in 90% of

the schools, in the morning in six percent of the schools, and after lunch in four percent of the schools. Students recited prayers in French in the morning, after lunch, at the end of the school day, and in a few schools before or after recess. It is evident that religious and moral education played a significant role in teachers' cultural practices as they devoted more time than allowed by law in helping students develop a filial attachment to the Catholic Church. In a prior study of correspondence between the Department of Education and bilingual school districts it was found that over-zealous teachers were reprimanded by government agents for devoting too much time to religious teaching (Mahé, 1997).

### ***Textbooks for Teaching French, French Canadian History, and Religion***

del Pozo Andrés and Braster (1994) establish in their work on cultural transfer that textbooks are important vehicles for transmitting nationalistic values and historical perspectives of the glorious past. Likewise, Apple and Christian-Smith (1991) explicate that the way knowledge and cultural values become socially legitimated in schools is reflected in the textbooks used.

To ensure transmission of a uniform French Canadian world-view in bilingual schools, members of Francophone associations in Western Canada developed an unofficial French Program of Studies and recommended textbooks written from a clerico-nationalist perspective for teaching French, French Canadian History, and Religion (Chaput, 1977; Jaenen, 1984; Mahé 1993). In Alberta, l'Association canadienne française de l'Alberta and l'Association des instituteurs bilingues de l'Alberta prepared their first French Program of Studies in 1933 (*La Survivance*, 1935a, 1936b), and Fortier distributed this program to teachers when he visited schools. In this section we list the textbooks which Fortier reported were being used in bilingual schools for teaching French, French Canadian History, and Religion.

### ***Textbooks for Teaching French***

In 76% of the schools (N=89) there were textbooks by Mironneau, and Brunot et Bonny which the Department of Education had

prescribed for teaching French.<sup>8</sup> However, the majority of the teachers told Fortier that they did not like them because the vocabulary was too difficult for their students, there were not enough grammatical exercises, and the content of the books did not reflect a French Canadian Catholic point of view as stories took place in France. Instead, teachers in 61% of the schools made use of grammars and exercise books from Quebec written by Les Frères des Écoles Chrésiennes, E. Robert, Augé, l'Abbé Roche Magnan, Les Frères de l'Instruction Chrétiennne, Les Frères du Sacré Coeur, and Les Soeurs de la Congrégation. A number of these books were also popular in other Francophone schools outside of Quebec, and in Franco-American schools (Blanchard, 1938; Chartier, 1991; Comeau, 1937; Huel, 1969).

### ***Textbooks for Teaching French Canadian History***

Francophone elites expected teachers to develop students' nationalist sentiments, and to achieve this goal 76% of the teachers (N=89) exposed them to history books which reflected a form of Quebec nationalism promoted by Lionel Groulx (1878-1967). Groulx's nationalistic ideologies were based on the miracle of "la survivance," the cult of ancestors from the French Regime, the primordial role of the Church in French Canadian life, and the notion that French Canadians had a providential mission to carry out in North America (Bonenfant & Falardeau, 1971; Johnson, 1979, pp. 16-17). History books most frequently referred to by Fortier as being used in bilingual schools were those written by the Clerics de St-Viateur and Les Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes. A number of teachers also had books by Toussaint, Desrosiers and Bertrand, Farley and Lamarche, and Les Frères Maristes. Teachers informed Fortier that their history texts were useful for teaching reading and spelling, and for selecting topics for compositions and drama presentations.

In 50% (N=89) of the schools teachers involved their students in the Avant-Gardes, a patriotic activity whose goal was to promote Catholic Social Action. Avant-Gardes groups were named after historical and religious figures. For example, le Cercle Langevin, le Cercle La Vérendry, le Cercle Youville. These groups met on Friday afternoons under the guidance of the parish priest, a religious or a lay teacher. Their meetings began with prayers



followed by readings of stories on the lives of historical and religious figures such as Champlain, Jacques Cartier, D'Iberville, and Mother Youville, to name a few. Students then read compositions they had written on these personalities and discussed customs and traditions. During these sessions, older children debated national and religious issues. In 1932, *La Survivance* featured a section in its newspaper called the "Coin des Avant-Gardes" which reported on Avant-Gardistes activities across the province (*La Survivance*, 1936c).

### ***Textbooks for Teaching Religion***

Lacking a Department of Education Program of Studies for religious education, teachers used a variety of Catechisms. For example, Catéchisme du Québec, and those written by Charlebois, Charbonneau, Bélanger, and the Congrégation Notre-Dame. Their Histoires Saintes had been published by Les Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes. During his visits to bilingual schools, Fortier questioned students on their knowledge of religious dogma and he recorded class averages in his reports.

### ***Textbooks and Conflicting Realities***

To counteract the dominant world-view imbedded in the Official Program of Studies, and in History textbooks which promoted Anglo-Protestant cultural and ideological orientations (for example, Baghot's, *The English Constitution*; Symes & Wong's, *English History*; Mowat's, *A History of Great Britain*), Francophone elites and the "Visiteur d'écoles" pressured teachers to use textbooks from Quebec to shape and mold students in a version of French Canadian History and reality which depicted language as inseparable from Catholicism.

The problem with Quebec textbooks was that they presented French Canadian society as a static, agrarian, folkloric, gender biased, and unequal society in which the Church and its hierarchy dictated cultural norms and mores. They neglected to show that Francophones in North America lived in a pluralist and changing society, that they had contributed to nation building, that they had ventured outside of Quebec where they established dynamic communities in Anglo-milieus, and that women played a key role

in the economic maintenance of the family unit and also acted as cultural gatekeepers. In a content analysis of textbooks by Augé, Robert, Les Frères Maristes, and Les Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes which had been used in bilingual schools, Godbout (1994, 1995) found only a few lines on Alberta and Saskatchewan. He also noted that religious events and values were the central focus of these books. Flinders, Noddings, and Thornton (1986) refer to this kind of curriculum as the null curriculum, as what is not taught "throws into relief the fact that curriculum practice is intimately concerned not only with the nature of learning, but also with the nature of valuing and of schooling" (p. 41). Bibeau (1982) explains that it is quite common for a linguistic and cultural community to remain insular and not want to change or modify its ways of thinking and living (pp. 156-157). Berger and Luckmann (1967) would add to this view that this is the situation when a particular definition of reality comes to be attached to a concrete power interest (p. 123).

In the case of Francophone education before 1940, the symbols, cultural representations, Social Catholic Action activities, and textbooks from Quebec confirm that the Catholic Church had a vested interest in Francophone cultural maintenance, and that teachers felt compelled to legitimize the role of the Church in their cultural practices. Findings showing that slightly more than three-quarters of the teachers expanded laws respecting religious and moral education, and taught French Canadian History in a clandestine manner substantiates the view that the main goal of the hidden cultural curriculum was to instill in students a form of defensive nationalism based on the premise that their ethnic identity was inseparable from Catholicism.

### ***Social Control Over the Cultural Curriculum***

Francophone elites questioned teachers' sincerity in reproducing the collectivity's linguistic and cultural goals in state-controlled schools (*La Survivance*, 1933b). Therefore, to compel teachers to stress the teaching of French and to help students develop a pride in their cultural and religious heritage, cultural associations instituted a yearly exam, the "Concours de français." Results obtained by Concours participants were published in French language newspapers and prizes were distributed to Laureates

during community events (Huel, 1969, pp. 41-43; *L'Union*, 1928; *La Survivance*, 1935b). This strategy, a form of social control over the curriculum, allowed the public to scrutinize attainment of cultural goals in each bilingual school. Data from Fortier's reports indicated that 81% of rural bilingual school students (N=3,707) wrote this yearly exam between 1934 and 1939.

Concerted actions of Francophone elites to persuade teachers to resist Anglo-conformity in their practices were not always successful. Data from Fortier's reports suggested that in more than half of the bilingual schools teachers were pressured by school inspectors, trustees, or parents to ensure that children learned English. We have no evidence as to what happened to children who were submerged in the English language, but we can assume that they were marginalized. A study by Ouellette (1990) on Franco-Albertan illiteracy shows that individuals, schooled before 1940 who had problems learning to read and write at school because they did not understand what the teacher was saying in English, abandoned school at an early age.

### *Conclusion*

In this paper we sought to establish a relationship between Francophone cultural survival and resistance discourses and bilingual school teachers' curriculum practices. An in-depth analysis of 390 inspection reports of 265 teachers completed by the "Visiteurs d'écoles bilingues" in Alberta between 1934 and 1939 strongly indicated that the majority of French Canadian teachers responded to their collectivity's religious and nationalist mission. However, the finding that some of them neglected to teach the amount of French allowed by school law, particularly at the primary level, denotes the power of the dominant group over the curriculum.

Assuming that education is "a conscious undertaking," as Dandurand (1977, p. 67) proposes, then bilingual school teachers' linguistic practices could be interpreted as reflecting their struggle to create workable and realistic complimentary cultural alternatives to Francophone and Anglophone competing ideological discourses in order to prepare students to live in a pluralistic society where the normality of English prevailed. Bibeau (1982) would probably agree with this view as he writes

that natural economic needs dictate the necessity for integration in the dominant linguistic community (p. 157). With respect to cultural transfer, the finding that the majority of Francophone teachers exposed students to forms of knowledge, values, and modes of thought which gave legitimacy to a Catholic world-view suggests that they were conscious of the necessity of preparing them to live in French communities where religion still played a dominant role.

French textbooks from Quebec formed the basis of teachers' hidden cultural curriculum. These textbooks were undoubtedly powerful instruments for transmitting a clerico-nationalist version of French Canadian culture. Although, as Apple (1990) explains, we cannot assume that what is in textbooks is actually taught by teachers and learned by students, the reason being that students also bring their own biographies with them and can "accept, reinterpret and reject what counts as legitimate knowledge" (p. 30). From this viewpoint, we can surmise that Francophone students, products of a pluralistic and progressively changing society, may have rejected traditional conservative portrayals of French Canadian society which did not reflect their lived-reality. Godbout (1995), who analyzed a number of the textbooks used in bilingual schools from a hermeneutic and phenomenological perspective, concluded that the religious values imbedded in these books probably contributed to developing in students an attitude of submission and a sentiment of inferiority vis-à-vis Anglophones, rather than helping them to develop a sense of pride necessary for the flourishing of an authentic and viable culture (pp. 146-147).

Three major insights, gleaned from this study, may be relevant to Francophones involved in defining the cultural role of teachers in French schools in minority milieus. The first insight is that past cultural survival discourses exemplify how Francophones collaborated to develop strategies to combat Anglo-goals of schooling. Because Francophones outside of Quebec live in Anglo-dominant milieus, and their schools are publicly financed and under the control of the dominant group who has access to the capital resources they strive for cultural reproduction, and they must continue their cultural survival and resistance discourses. However, Francophone linguistic and

cultural continuity will depend on the willingness of diverse French-speaking communities to cooperate in order to construct definitions of culture which will assist teachers in helping students develop what Godbout (1995) refers to as an authentic and viable culture. The second insight is that past discourses based on religious and national interests, and the forms of social control used by elites to pressure teachers to give legitimacy to the Catholic Church should be avoided in the future as teachers in a pluralist, postmodern, and global society can no longer respond to specific interpretations of Francophone culture unrelated to students' social and cultural reality. Bocquel (1990) reminds us that French is not a heritage language but an official one, therefore if French is associated to an ethnicity its future is condemned (p. 118). A third insight is that textbooks, symbolic representations, and learning activities which promote specific notions of patriotism should be avoided in French schools as they promote a blind attachment to specific cultural values and uncritical conformity. Instead, Francophone school pedagogy should allow students to critically examine what Zais (1976) refers to as the submerged bases of our beliefs (p. 158) so that they will not become detached from their cultural heritage and community but will be freer to shape and construct their own authentic culture.

### NOTES

1. Rev. Father Joseph Fortier, S.-J., «Rapports, 1934-1939» are available at the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Association Canadienne-Française de l'Alberta collection, 80, 226.
2. Rural bilingual school districts visited by Fortier were located in the following regions of Alberta: 90% (N=97) were situated north of Edmonton. An estimated 24% of the schools situated north of Edmonton were located in communities such as St. Albert, Morinville, and Legal, 66% in remote areas (34% in the St. Paul and Bonnyville regions, 18% in the Falher, Girouxville, and McLennan regions, and 14% in the Lac la Biche and Athabasca regions). The remaining 10% (N=97) were located in farming communities south of Edmonton. Out of the 97 school districts, 93 districts were public school districts and four districts had been erected as separate school districts. For additional information on bilingual school districts see,

Yvette T.M. Mahé (1989), *School districts established by French-speaking settlers in Alberta: 1885-1939*. Vol. I, Identification of bilingual school districts. Edmonton: Faculté Saint-Jean.

3. The 102 members of religious orders who taught in seven bilingual village school districts in Alberta belonged to the following orders: 28 Soeurs de Ste Croix; 24 Soeurs de l'Assomption; 16 Filles de Jésus; 11 Soeurs Grises; 10 Soeurs de la Charité d'Evron; seven Filles de la Sagesse, and six Soeurs de la Providence de St-Brieux.

4. School law stated:

In all schools in which the board by resolution decides to offer a primary course in French, in accordance with Sec. 146 of the School Ordinance, French shall be for the French-speaking children one of the authorized subjects of study and may be used as a medium of instruction for other subjects during the first school year. Oral English must, however, from the beginning be included in the curriculum as a subject of study. During the second year after the child has learned to read in the mother tongue, the formal teaching of reading in English shall be begun. (Department of Education, 1936b, p. 1)

5. School law stated: "From Grade III on, a period not exceeding one hour each day may be allotted to the teaching of French. The term "French" as herein used shall include reading, language study, grammar, analysis, dictation, and composition" (Department of Education, 1936b, p. 1).

6. School law stated:

In all grades beyond Grade II, the programme in all subjects other than French shall be that regularly authorized by the Department of Education, and the text-books shall be the English editions authorized for general use throughout the Province. Teachers, may, however, offer explanations in the mother tongue when necessary. (Department of Education, 1936b, p. 1)

7. Section 147 (1) Chapter 32, of the *Statutes of the Province of Alberta, 1931*, "Religious Instruction" stated that:

Except as hereinafter provided, no religious instruction shall be permitted in the school of any district from the opening of such school until one half-hour previous to its closing in the afternoon, after which time any such instruction permitted or desired by the Board may be given. (2) It shall, however, be permissible for the Board of any district to direct that the school be opened by the recitation of the Lord's Prayer. (p. 133)

8. Textbooks identified by the Department of Education for teaching French were as follows:

Grades 1 and 2: Mironneau-Philippe, *Méthode de Lecture, par l'observation et l'analogie*; Mironneau, *Lectures enfantines*. Grades 3 and 4: Mironneau, *Premières Lectures*; Brunot et Bonny, *Méthode de Langue Française, Premier Livre*. Grade 5 and 6: Mironneau, *Deuxième Lectures*; Brunot et Bonny, *Méthode de Langue française, Deuxième Livre. Premier Degré*. Grade 7 and 8: Mironneau, *Troisièmes Lectures. Recueil de Textes littéraires*; Brunot et Bonny, *Méthode de Langue Française, Deuxième Livre, Deuxième Degré*. (Department of Education, 1936b, p. 14)

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