

**Whose Francophone Perspectives? The History, Meanings, Implementation and
Legitimacy of an Alberta Social Studies Curriculum Mandate**

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À Manon, Marlène et Mimi

Abstract

This thesis, through four articles, investigates the history, meanings, legitimacy and implementation of a curriculum mandate to value Francophone perspectives from kindergarten to Grade 12 in Alberta social studies classrooms. These four articles are a response to my encounter (den Heyer, 2009) with this government mandate, which disrupted my socialization as a Québécois Francophone taught to see Albertans as hostile toward French-speakers. Preliminary research revealed that the curriculum mandate provoked uncertainty and frustration amongst many Alberta social studies teachers who had not previously been asked to attend to Francophone perspectives and/or who were used to associating these perspectives with Québec, not Alberta (Gani & Scott, 2017). To deepen these preliminary insights, I conducted a historical examination of the curriculum mandate (Article 1), a secondary data analysis of research with teachers about the mandate (Article 2), a qualitative inquiry into the reported implementation practices of 19 Alberta social studies teachers (Article 3), and I gathered responses from 13 Franco-Albertans to often-used critiques about the mandate (e.g., why these perspectives and not others?) (Article 4). Various iterations of the social studies curriculum mandate published since 1999 (Article 1) and the 13 Francophone participants in my research (Article 4) focused on Francophone perspectives as represented through the metaphor of a Canadian pillar. Per contrast, many Alberta social studies teachers recognized Francophone perspectives as situated in Québec and one among many in Alberta (Article 2 & 3). In line with a reciprocal conception of recognition – that is, the fundamental need to be accepted by others (Taylor, 1994) – the way forward for the mandate, which will soon be included in six subject-matters (Alberta Education, 2020), is to take into account not only Francophone perspectives but also the unnamed and derecognized Alberta (Anglophone) perspectives that shape the ways in which they are interpreted and implemented.

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INTRODUCTION



“Bilingual stop signs in Mission have been vandalized in Calgary on Saturday, May 23, 2020. Photo by Darren Makowichuk” (Smith, 2020).

Introduction

*Perspective is a “frame of reference”
from which an individual views
what the world is like,
what it should be like
and how desired changes are to be achieved.
Although each perspective is unique
and has parts that are not consistent with one another,
“frames of reference” tend to determine
how individuals, groups and nations think and act.
(Alberta Education, 1978, p. 13)*

In October 2019, in consultation with local Francophone groups, the City of Calgary (in the province of Alberta) installed dual-language Stop signs in the city’s Mission District neighbourhood. The goal was to commemorate the city’s first settler groups, French-speaking Catholics. Those French-speaking settlers had established the parish of Notre-Dame-de-la-Paix on Indigenous lands in 1872 (Smith, 2020). The picture above depicts one of eight bilingual signs installed, seven of which were vandalized in May 2020. The vandals spray-painted black over the word “Arrêt” (i.e., “Stop” in French) while leaving “Stop” unpainted. Leaving “Stop” unpainted can be interpreted as a signature and a motive for the vandalism: we speak English here, let’s stop using the French language! The picture also illustrates the relevance of my thesis topic, which focuses on Alberta Education’s (2005) mandate to value Francophone perspectives in mandatory social studies courses. Similar to the bilingual Stop signs, this mandate from kindergarten to Grade 12 could also be interpreted as an act of commemoration to the presence of the French language in Alberta.

The picture of the vandalized Stop sign, albeit not necessarily representative of the general opinion of Albertans, reflects a degree of discontent in Alberta toward bilingualism (i.e., access to services in French and English). In fact, a 2019 poll found that Albertans were the least likely

among Canadians to be in favour of bilingualism (Brie & Mathieu, 2021, p. 47). A particular sense of disconnection with the French language in Alberta is understandable, since its public presence is minimal. For instance, 99.4% of Alberta's 2.6M workers use English at work, compared to 1.5% French, and 3.4% non-official languages (Statistics Canada, 2017). As a French-speaking Québécois, I too felt disconnected from the French presence in Alberta, having heard recurring stories about linguistic assimilation in that province (Aunger, 2005; Bérard, 2017; Frideres, 1998). However, inquiring into this vandalized sign also led me to realize my own unexpected connection with my research topic. The main problem addressed in this thesis is the perception of disconnection, particularly from Anglophone Albertans, toward a curriculum mandate that requires the teaching and learning of Francophone perspectives in social studies classes since 2005.

As a native French-speaker living in Québec, I wrote most of this thesis in the neighbourhood of Verdun in Montréal, thousands of kilometres from Calgary. Growing up in Québec, the only French-speaking majority province in Canada, I was socialized to view Albertans as hostile to Francophones. Alberta was portrayed to me as a place where people who speak French would go and assimilate to English. Inquiring into the picture of the vandalized stop sign confirmed my initial prior knowledge about the province. However, it led me to realize that I was connected to Alberta in unexpected ways. Verdun, Québec – where I lived – used to host a Notre-Dame-de-la-Paix Catholic parish, just like the Calgary parish that is now called Mission District. Understanding that connection led me to realize how I was made to feel disconnected from Alberta, despite evidence that the province's economic centre was (historically) connected to Verdun.

Personal insights and the literature that I explore in this thesis led me to argue that Albertans may have become disconnected from Francophones and their perspectives. I hypothesized that Albertans may have been socialized to see Francophones in particular ways. I argue that such

preconceptions about Francophones may impede some Alberta teachers' capacity to engage with the mandate to value Francophone perspectives in social studies. Such preconceptions emerge from stories, stereotypes, and ultimately, what I argue to be an Albertan perspective about Francophones. This Albertan perspective fosters disconnection among teachers and students toward Francophone perspectives. It does so via three facets highlighted throughout this thesis: 1) a vision of Francophones as a group mostly foreign to Alberta; 2) a way to teach and learn about Francophones as only one among many other groups in Alberta; and 3) through pedagogical activities that tend to enhance disconnection between Alberta and Québec, perceived to be *the* home of Francophones.

Alberta is an interesting site to study. The province has been categorized by scholars as institutionally unilingual (Aunger, 2005; Frideres, 1998). English is the province's only official language. Its education system was mostly built on the premise of linguistic assimilation to English (Anderson, 2005). In other words, it is not a place I expected to find a mandate valuing Francophone perspectives from kindergarten to Grade 12. Although Francophones with minority status (living outside of Québec) gained the rights to access and control French-speaking schools in 1982, the government of Alberta had to be indicted by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1990 (*Mahé v. Alberta*, 1990) to respect these rights more fully. The departure point of this thesis was therefore an apparent anomaly, or what curriculum theorist Kent den Heyer (2014) calls an "encounter" (p. 180). An encounter between my personal conceptions about Alberta and facts about the province's curriculum mandate to value Francophone perspectives. I simply could not explain why this curriculum mandate came to be *in Alberta*.

“Francophone” “Perspectives” in Alberta Social Studies?

“Francophone” is a polymorphous term. The term is “ascribed” by the federal and provincial governments to designate a group of individuals without necessarily considering their identification toward the term (Gutmann, 2003, p. 117). The commonality among Francophones are their rights to access French educational instruction for their children in primary and secondary schools in Canada (where numbers warrant outside of Québec). These constitutional rights, enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, are applied to Canadian citizens who have French as their mother tongue or language first learned and/or who have attended a school regulated by Francophones. However, some individuals who enjoy these education rights may refer to themselves as bilingual or by other hyphenated terms (e.g., Afro-Canadian) rather than Francophones (Ng-A-Fook, 2009; Thompson, 2008). Individuals who do not enjoy these rights may also refer to themselves as Francophones (Abu-Laban & Couture, 2010).¹ In this thesis, instead of reproducing the problem of ascribing a label to a group without their consent, I remain vigilant of the ways in which individuals living in Alberta endorse various definitions of the term “Francophone.” In doing so, I seek to not essentialize Francophone into a homogenous group of individuals. Instead, I seek to uncover various definitions of the term used in the *Charter*, social studies curricula, as well as in teachers’ and students’ parlance.

The term “curriculum” describes a document that outlines the learning outcomes students must meet at the end of each year. Teachers are bound by Alberta’s *Teaching Quality Standard* (Alberta Education, 2020a) to facilitate the attainment of these outcomes. Like other curricula, the

¹ As a case in point in Alberta, Francophone rights-holders represent two percent of the population (out of 4.3 M); five to seven percent of the province’s population can speak French; and 1/10 Albertans has French-Canadian origins (Boily & Vachon, 2018; Government of Alberta, 2018). For its part, the Alberta social studies curriculum described Francophone in the Grade 4 glossary as “a person for whom French is the first language learned and/or still in use; a person of French language and culture” (Alberta Education, 2006, p. 11).

social studies curriculum is produced and sanctioned by Alberta's Ministry of Education (von Heyking, 2019). This thesis focuses on one general learning outcome included in the social studies curriculum. I refer to it as the curriculum policy "mandate" and it reads as follows: "Social studies provides learning opportunities for students to ... appreciate and respect how multiple perspectives, including Aboriginal and Francophone, shape Canada's political, socioeconomic, linguistic and cultural realities" (p. 2). The requirement to learn about Indigenous perspectives has been studied extensively by other scholars (e.g., Donald, 2009; Prete, 2018; Scott, 2013, 2016; Solverson, 2018; Solvey, 2018). The goal of this thesis is to offer a new understanding of an under-theorized aspect of the mandate – the requirement to learn about Francophone perspectives – that, at first glance, appears to be out of place in Alberta.

The term Francophone is defined in the current Alberta social studies curriculum as "a person for whom French is the first language learned and/or still in use; a person of French language and culture" (Alberta Education, 2006, p. 11). However, the term "perspective" is left undefined (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011). Resources such as textbooks, which align themselves with the curriculum, and are often the *de facto* curriculum in classrooms (VanSledright, 2008), do provide a definition of "perspective." According to one textbook, "Alberta Education has defined 'point of view' as a view held by a single person. A 'perspective' refers to the shared view of a group or collective" (Hoogeveen, 2008, p. 2). This definition is not endorsed by social studies scholars in Alberta, who instead propose a more substantive definition. For instance, perspectives could be conceived as value-laden interpretations tied to present interests (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011).

Through my inquiry into past and present Alberta social studies curricula, the 1978 interim version was the only one to offer a substantive mobilization and definition for the term “perspectives.” The interim K-12 version describes perspectives as:

a “frame of reference” from which an individual views what the world is like, what it should be like and how desired changes are to be achieved. Although each perspective is unique and has parts that are not consistent with one another, “frames of reference” tend to determine how individuals, groups and nations think and act. (Alberta Education, 1978, p. 13)

Although two master’s theses have been dedicated to the production of that curriculum, neither reported the origin of this definition (Hidegh, 1996; Mawson, 1982). Further, research exploring the history of Canadian and Alberta social studies does not provide information about this definition (Osborne, 2012; Richardson, 2002; Tomkins, 2008; von Heyking, 2006). The 1978 interim version was, as Clark (2004) suggests, influenced by Hilda Taba’s spiral approach to learning about concepts like perspectives with increasing levels of sophistication across grades. I use the 1978 definition as a frame of reference to inquire into the ways in which individuals in Alberta categorize and envision terms like “Francophone” and “perspectives,” propose goals to teach about them, as well as the pedagogical means they apply to do so. I understand that social studies teachers may define perspectives as a collective opinion held by groups – encouraged in that sense by the Ministry of Education. Nevertheless, I have also kept in mind that a more encompassing definition is useful to understand the meaning attributed by individuals toward terms like Francophones and perspectives.

The term “Francophone perspectives” is also left undefined in the current social studies curriculum. Francophone perspectives could refer to a “shared view” held by a group of “person[s] for whom French is the first language learned and/or still in use; a [group of] person[s] of French language and culture” (Alberta Education, 2006, p. 11; Hoogeveen, 2008, p. 2). Using a more

encompassing definition, Francophone perspectives could refer to visions of the world, goals, and the actions of individuals who may share various characteristics (e.g., self-identification as Francophone, French language as a mother tongue, capacity to speak French, French-Canadian origins, and/or active participation in French-speaking institutions such as schools). By leaving significant room for interpretation, the current social studies curriculum provides fertile ground for inquiry. Teachers and students are left on their own to interpret what Francophone perspectives are. The goal of this thesis, however, is not to state definitively what Francophone perspectives are. Instead, my goal is to gain an understanding of what Francophone perspectives are according to various perspectives (e.g., the perspectives of social studies teachers). I have been primarily interested in understanding interpretations given to Francophone perspectives by individuals who do not readily identify as Francophone. Since they comprise most of the Alberta population, they may wonder why they are required to engage with the perspectives of groups they might perceive as disconnected from Alberta.

From Constitutional to Curriculum Recognition: The Path of Francophone Perspectives

For most of Alberta's existence, between 1905 and the 1980s, the provincial government neither subsidized nor gave fair value to French-speaking instruction or Francophone perspectives (Anderson, 2005; Hébert, 2004; Mahé, 2004). The history of Alberta social studies curricula reveals that some learning outcomes were designed to foster students' understanding about French-speakers in Canada, but not specifically those living in Alberta (Richardson, 1998; von Heyking, 2006). At the societal level, as with many other democratic governments (Bourdieu, 1982), the Alberta government sought mostly to homogenize its diverse population through a common educational language, English. Drawing on the work of historian and sociologist Bruce Curtis

(2012), I suggest that the Alberta government sought to *rule by schooling* its population in English, to equip them to understand and comply with policies designed to regulate their lives *in English*. However, the first settlers in the province spoke French. Since the creation of the province, French speakers have continued to advocate for their schools to be subsidized and for the needs of their students to be recognized in curricula (Mahé, 2004). As a result of this continuous advocacy, Francophone perspectives are now valued in the current social studies curriculum. This represents a crucial shift for the Alberta government and most social studies teachers.

In 1982, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* designated a group under the label “Francophone” to protect their education rights. The creation of these education rights is due to a confluence of factors, including the willingness of some Québécois to separate from Canada, as well as the federal government’s commitment to repair historical injustices done to French-speaking peoples within education across Canada and outside Québec (Martel & Pâquet, 2012; Normand, 2013; Russell, 2017). Including such rights within the Charter enabled citizens to contest provincial and territorial government policies that were discriminatory to Francophones, as attested by the Mahé case against the government of Alberta (Mahé v. Alberta, 1990).² The 1990 Mahé judgment on the province’s lack of support for creating a French-speaking school board – and specifically the clause concerning the right of Francophones in regard to curriculum-

² As interpreted by linguistic rights and regimes expert Linda Cardinal (2015), “in 1990, the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Mahé v. Alberta* ([1990] 1 SCR 342) demonstrated a positive interpretation of language rights. Invoking the need to interpret language rights in a liberal and generous manner, the court ruled that French-speaking minorities in Alberta had the right to ownership and management of their own schools, where numbers [students] warrant” (p. 36). Furthering the interpretation of the courts, Martel and Pâquet (2012), historians of Canadian language policies, added: “The judges determined that Section 23 played a remedial role because of the prejudices relating to education that francophone minority groups had been subject to in the past” (p. 233). In its decision, the judges stated that “Section 23 is also designed to correct, on a national scale, the progressive erosion of minority official language groups and to give effect to the concept of the ‘equal partnership’ of the two official language groups in the context of education” (p. 344). Even though Francophones increased their control over schools through this court case, political scientist Edmund Auger (2005) remarked that in Alberta, between 1988 and 2005, “The movement toward a more tolerant society was evident mainly in the area of French-language education. Ironically, this new tolerance was conceded under duress, often as a reluctant response to litigation” (p. 327).

making – may provide a plausible explanation for the appearance of the mandate to value Francophone perspectives in social studies. The Supreme Court stated that:

the management and control accorded to s. 23 [n.b., Section 23 on Minority Language Education Rights] parents does not preclude provincial regulation. The province has an interest both in the content and the qualitative standards of educational programmes. Such programmes can be imposed without infringing s. 23, in so far as they do not interfere with the linguistic and cultural concerns of the minority. (Mahé v. Alberta, 1990)

Gains made through this ruling from the Supreme Court of Canada have led, in recent years, to broader accommodations for French-speaking instruction and curricula across Canada (Behiels, 2004).

The creation of education rights for Francophones in 1982 appears to have eventually led to curricular accommodations in Alberta, through the social studies mandate to value Francophone perspectives. Evidence of this influence is found in the social studies curriculum statement that, “for historical and constitutional reasons, an understanding of Canada requires an understanding... of Francophone perspectives” (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 4). However, these “historical and constitutional reasons” are left undefined in the curriculum, much like the terms “perspectives” and “Francophone perspectives.” Therefore, teachers are not provided with a substantive definition of what these perspectives are, or any reasons to teach and learn them. Such omissions may impede the classroom implementation of the mandate to value Francophone perspectives.

Further historical inquiry is needed to assess more precisely the impact of such education rights on the creation of a mandate to value Francophone perspectives. For now, it is fair to say that such rights, and especially accommodations toward French speakers in education, have been contested for a long time in Alberta by a certain segment of the population. These Albertans tend to argue that it is unjust to accommodate Francophone if other groups do not receive similar privileges (Frideres, 1998; Friesen, 1999; Manning, 2005).

The mandate to value Francophone perspectives could be interpreted from a Québécois point of view (mine) as surprising. It does not fit prior conceptions of Alberta as an unwelcoming place for French-speakers. However, this thesis is more interested in investigating and documenting reactions toward the mandate by Anglophone Albertans (individuals who are Anglophone educational right holders: see next paragraph for a definition). They, like me, but possibly for different reasons, might find the mandate surprising, considering the history of language and education rights in the province. As political scientist Edmund Auger (2005) argued in his discussion of the history of language policies in Alberta:

repressive unilingualism, when successful, frequently sows the seeds of its own demise. Why legislate the use of English in a society composed overwhelmingly of English speakers? In Alberta, English is now universal and unthreatened: 99 per cent of the province's population is able to converse in English, and 94 per cent speak it in their homes. If there ever was a reason to forcibly impose a common language, it has long since disappeared. (p. 131)

Elliott and Fleras (1996) argue more generally that in most parts of Canada, “since [the English language] is a universally accepted *lingua franca* that is rarely threatened or challenged, English-speaking individuals, like fish in water, tend to be blasé about its value and power” (p. 240). Therefore, this thesis's population of interest might not self-identify as Anglophone. Yet, this population might not readily share the interests of Francophones in the mandate to value Francophone perspectives.

Consequently, I am primarily interested in the ways in which people who might not consider language important – or who might take their Anglophone Albertan status for granted – react, interpret, and mobilize against a mandate to value Francophone perspectives. This mandate challenges Anglophone Albertans' unmatched power as members of one of Canada's two official language groups, and in Alberta, the only one. The mandate calls upon Anglophone Albertans to conceive of Alberta *not only* in English-language terms.

Critical Race Theory's analysis of the law inspired me to understand deep power imbalances and its invisibility for those who benefit from it (Harris, 1995). It is important to note the unmatched power of Anglophones in Alberta and the likely invisibility of this power for most Albertans:

- Alberta's sole official language is English, which leads English speakers to be privileged in regulating Albertans' lives;
- The provincial law of education (2012) states that every student is entitled to receive instruction in English;
- Although the law may accommodate students to attend bilingual schools, these schools are still regulated by English-speaking authorities and one of the languages taught must be English;
- The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* grants Alberta students who attend schools regulated by English-speaking authorities (almost all schools in Alberta, including bilingual and French immersion schools), the right in Québec to be instructed in English as Anglophone rights holders (Bérard, 2017): in other words, most Alberta students are (or become through schooling) Anglophone education rights holders.³

The mandate to value Francophone perspectives suggests that the era of repressive unilingualism is mostly over in Alberta, particularly within education. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen how Anglophone right holders⁴ react to and implement a mandate that favours Canada's other official language groups, and Alberta's first settlers.

In the pages that follow, I describe the origin story of the thesis' four articles, with the intention of clarifying my position on the mandate and situating myself as the author of this thesis. In presenting the four articles, I seek to show how they connect to an ongoing intellectual conversation I had with the work of social studies scholar George Richardson (2002, 2006, 2009, 2015). Richardson's works significantly influenced me throughout this inquiry. This introduction

³ To be clear, even if individuals do not consider themselves to be Anglophone, as long as they are Canadian citizens, the fact that they attended schools in English in Alberta automatically grants them Anglophone status in Québec (e.g., the right to access and control instruction for the English-speaking minority).

⁴ For historical, constitutional, and treaty-related reasons, I do not include Indigenous peoples as members of the Anglophone or Francophone Albertan groups (Russell, 2017).

section does not present an extensive literature review, since each of the four articles includes its own literature review. Instead, I narrate the path that led me to a sequential analysis, through four articles, of the mandate to value Francophone perspectives. In disclosing the origin story, I respond to committee member Kent den Heyer's question: *who is asking the question in this thesis?*

Origin Story of the Thesis

In Québec City during the summer of 2013, I met David Scott at lunch time in the (mostly empty) Université Laval cafeteria. Having been awarded a Doctoral Travel Grant from The History Education Network, a pan-Canadian network for history education (Clark & Sandwell, 2020), Scott was visiting my master's supervisor at the time, historian Jocelyn Létourneau. He sought advice to explain his master's thesis results, which documented five experienced Grade 10 social studies teachers' responses to Alberta's mandate to value Francophone and Indigenous perspectives. As a former social studies teacher, Scott (2013) was particularly puzzled by the non-implementation of the mandate during the more than 50 classroom periods he observed. For me, at that time a master's student in history, what was puzzling was to come to terms with the mandate to value Francophone perspectives. From what I knew about Alberta, I could not understand how and why this mandate came to be in a province I had been socialized to think of as hostile toward Francophones.

David Scott encouraged me to research that mandate. He noted that previous research had focused primarily on the aspects of the mandate relating to Indigenous perspectives. They were also required to be learned about from kindergarten to Grade 12 in mandatory social studies courses. To explain this scholarly attention on Indigenous perspectives, den Heyer (2009) argued that, "With regard to teacher education, and in contrast to always present Franco-Anglophone tensions around any pan-Canadian question, few teacher educators or candidates have a significant

personal or formal educational background with any Aboriginal perspective” (p. 344). Two years later, den Heyer and Conrad (2011) would further define that claim by noting:

In Alberta, for example, many teachers and teacher candidates are experiencing stress about a new K-12 social studies program that requires teaching the story of Canada and Alberta from Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives. These perspectives are to be added to the dominant Anglo-Canadian historical and nationalist narrative unnamed in the program but from and about which content for the provincial standardized test is drawn. Setting aside the fact that there is no singular perspective for either group now added in the program, the stress is understandable. As successful students, the vast majority of teacher candidates (and their instructors) are ignorant about any perspective these communities themselves offer. This is the case despite the easy availability of immense resources in terms of books, people, courses, exhibitions, and so on from which one could learn. (p. 9)

Many themes highlighted by den Heyer and Conrad (e.g., stress, ignorance, absence of an explicitly named Anglo-Canadian narrative) surfaced during my meeting with Scott. As most scholars’ attention had been on Indigenous perspectives, we thought that inquiring into Francophone perspectives represented an opportunity for me to carve out a professional niche.

Cited by den Heyer and Conrad (2011), the theme of teachers’ ignorance about Francophone and Indigenous perspectives was also reported in Scott’s (2013) study. Based on a focus group discussion and classroom observations, Scott noted a particular conception of what constituted a “perspective” for five experienced Grade 10 social studies teachers working in one urban area. One of them, Doug, exemplified his lack of knowledge toward Franco-Albertans, underlined by his conception of what constitutes a “perspective”:

I don’t cover this [an Aboriginal] perspective all the way through [the course], even if there was a way; what is the Aboriginal perspective on the internet? You can come up with examples of a First Nation using the internet but that’s not really a perspective; what is the Franco-Albertan perspective on the world trade organization? (Scott, 2013, p. 38)

Scott interpreted this quote and others from his focus group as displaying a conception of “perspective” as a common view held by a group. Such a conception led Doug and the other four

teachers to bypass the mandate to value Francophone and Indigenous perspectives when they did not find a commonly held view:

During the focus group discussion, all five teachers agreed that teaching from an Aboriginal [or a Francophone] perspective meant providing a uniform group perspective around an issue. Based on this understanding, the research participants spoke to the difficulty, and even the impossibility of providing one uniform viewpoint from the perspective of Aboriginal [or Francophone] peoples. (Scott, 2013, p. 38)

In my meeting with Scott, we hypothesized that teachers experienced difficulties based on their conceptions (or what they already knew) of “perspectives” and “Francophone.” It was not simply a problem of knowing these perspectives. There was a problem with what teachers already knew about them.

Another comment from one of Scott’s teacher participants came to be central to our meeting. The comment illustrated not necessarily teachers’ *difficulties* with the mandate but rather their *capacities* to bypass it:

Yes, the Francophone perspectives and Aboriginal perspectives are written into the curriculum and that is what we are supposed to be doing, but what I am finding out is that it is possible to teach the course without dealing with that stuff at all if you don’t want to; some teachers won’t. I think there is another way of interpreting multiple perspectives; it could just be simply differences of opinion or points of view on particular issues and that offers you all kinds of opportunities to bring in different voices and different perspectives. (Tom, cited in Scott, 2013, p. 37)

Alberta teachers’ “professional autonomy” enables them to apply their “professional judgment and discretion about teaching and learning” (Gereluk et al., 2015, p. 3). Returning to Tom’s words, “it is possible to teach the course without dealing with that stuff at all *if you don’t want to*; some teachers won’t” (my emphasis). Understanding more precisely how teachers use their judgment to possibly bypass the mandate to value Francophone perspectives became a main goal for my thesis. Further, as reported in Berg’s doctoral thesis (2017), two (out of eight) Alberta primary teachers cited similar reasons to bypass the mandate:

- And there is a large French population in Alberta but we just don't happen to be one of those pockets. So it is harder around here I would think... It's very easy in Western Canada to forget the French perspective. (Johanne, p. 87)
- I always wonder about how pervasive that [Francophone] perspective even is in Alberta when you compare that to a lot of the changes in the, in our society and you talk about all the Muslim immigrants and things like that and their perspective is not a big piece yet of any of the texts that we use. (Owen, p. 160)

Rather than ignorance, preconceptions about who Francophones were (i.e., their presence is not felt closely enough to influence teachers' teaching) and who Francophones were not (i.e., Muslim) seemed to drive teachers' implementation of the mandate. Accordingly, I sought to test that hypothesis – that preconception about Francophones rather than ignorance drives teachers' opinions and practices – in relation to the mandate that I will now describe more fully.

I started this research both from a marginalizing and a marginalized standpoint (Harding, 1993). I am a person whose Francophone self could be considered devalued in Alberta. I am also a person who implicitly, for most of his life, was marginalizing Francophone Canadians living outside Québec – that is, I was not considering them as equally worthy of my attention as Québécois Francophones. Here was the intersection of the subject of knowledge in this thesis – me – and the object of knowledge – the mandate to value Francophone perspectives. Early on in my research, I reasoned that if my standpoint toward the mandate was shaped by my socialization in Québec, then the same could be said of individuals in Alberta. This acknowledgement led me away from wanting to defend the mandate to value Francophone perspectives. Instead, I sought to understand the process through which individuals are made to feel or are schooled to be disconnected from one another (e.g., Albertans and Québécois Francophones, in relation to Franco-Albertans). Accordingly, becoming aware of my own standpoint enabled me to take up an original inquiry into the mandate, its history, interpretation, and implementation in ways that researchers located and socialized in other contexts might not.

Describing the Curriculum Mandate to Value Francophone Perspectives

Education in Canada is determined by a complex relationship between provincial and territorial powers *as well as* federally inscribed constitutional education rights. As stated in the Canadian Constitution (*Constitution Act*, 1867, Section 93), provinces and territories have exclusive power over matters relating to education. However, federal intervention does occur, especially through financing post-secondary institutions and resource sharing (Wallner, 2009). The division of power was intended to allow, at the time of Confederation in 1867, French-speaking Catholics in Québec to have control over their education system (Couturier, 1996; Russell, 2017). It was conceived by some policymakers, including George-Étienne Cartier, that a regulation of education by a mostly federal English-speaking government would run contrary to the interests of French-speaking Catholics mostly situated in Québec (Bérard, 2017; Tomkins, 2008). Section 93 of the *Constitution Act* also includes rights for Catholics outside Québec and Protestants within Québec to secure funding from provincial governments. The goal was to secure government funding for their denominational schools when they hold minority status. Years later, in 1982, these education rights would be extended to Francophones living outside of Québec and Anglophones living in Québec. Consequently, in Alberta, as in other jurisdictions, the power to regulate education lies in the hands of the Minister of Education, according to the province's *Education Act* (2012). This *Act* also recognizes Catholics and Francophones' rights to education.

Curriculum, a focal point in my thesis, is defined in Alberta by the government as “legal documents that spell out what students are expected to learn and be able to do” (von Heyking, 2019, p. 11). The Alberta Minister of Education “authorizes and prescribes” a series of policies related to schools and their regulation. One such policy is the *Teaching Quality Standard* (Alberta Education, 2020a), which states that teachers must “address the learning outcomes outlined in

programs of study” (programs of study is synonymous with curriculum in the Alberta context). The *Teaching Quality Standard* in Alberta requires teachers to facilitate the attainment of the learning outcomes included in the curriculum (divided by subject areas, such as social studies). Teachers have some autonomy to define pedagogy – namely, *how* to teach (Gereluk et al., 2015). One main issue in curriculum planning and implementation as with other policies is one of “legitimacy” (Gagnon, 2021). A policy, or in the context of my thesis, a mandate, is legitimate when it is endorsed by a population such as social studies teachers, charged with its implementation. However, there is a possible gap between a policy crafted by the government and its endorsement and implementation by teachers (Aoki, 1981). I specifically attend to the gap between the mandate to value Francophone perspectives and its endorsement, interpretation, and implementation by various individuals (mostly non-Francophone Alberta social studies teachers). These teachers are bound by the *Teaching Quality Standard* to do so, but do they? Throughout the thesis, I refer to “the mandate” to signify the ways in which teachers are mandated, and not just encouraged, by the Alberta government to value Francophone perspectives.

Canadian social studies can be broadly defined as a school subject in which students inquire into human-related issues through time and space. The goal is for students to develop, among other things, their capacity to act as citizens (Case & Clark, 2013; Clark, 2004; Tomkins, 2008). Social studies was imported to Canada from the United States via Alberta in the 1930s to replace history (von Heyking, 2006). At the time, elite curriculum policy makers conceived that social studies, with its present-focused approach (i.e., learning about present issues through the lens of various disciplines such as history), would better equip students to face emerging challenges such as the Great Depression (Osborne, 2012). One of the recurrent issues inquired about in Alberta social studies is Canadian unity (Richardson, 1998; Thompson, 2004). This issue manifests in learning

outcomes that seek to create and sustain harmonious relations between Canadian citizens and Albertans separated by status, language, regions, and belonging to the land (von Heyking, 2006a). The current Alberta social studies curriculum published since 2005 follows a tradition of seeking to build harmonious relations between Canadians by requiring students to learn multiple perspectives, including Francophone and Indigenous (Hébert, 2004, 2010; Peck & Sears, 2016).

Social studies in Alberta is defined in the curriculum as “the study of people in relation to each other and to their world. It is an issues-focused and inquiry-based interdisciplinary subject that draws upon history, geography, ecology, economics, law, philosophy, political science and other social science disciplines” (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 1). Social studies specialist Susan Gibson (2012) gave a detailed account of the structure of the curriculum document:

The first ten pages of the Alberta Kindergarten to Grade 12 Social Studies Program of Studies, known as the ‘front matter,’ are the same for all grades. Here, the purpose of and vision for social studies in the province are outlined. The purpose of social studies is described as providing “opportunities for students to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge that will enable them to become engaged, active, informed and responsible citizens” who are “aware of their capacity to effect change in their communities, society and world” (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 1). The overarching knowledge, skills and attitudes considered essential to the development of Albertan students as citizens are also delineated here. These outcomes are considered to be cumulative, so that each year of schooling builds on the previous one so that Grade 12 graduates have what they need to be citizens who “effect change in their communities, society and world.” (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 1)

In the front matter, the government prescribes the learning outcomes for all grades (K-12) and various topics. One of the general learning outcomes, included in the “values and attitudes” section, is the mandate to appreciate and respect Francophone perspectives. This thesis interrogates primarily how this mandate found its way into these introductory pages, how social studies teachers interpret and implement the mandate, as well as how Francophones defend it. Since professional autonomy “requires teachers to reflect on why things ought to be taught” (Gereluk et al., 2015, p. 3), it is important to understand the origins of the “why” found in the front matter.

The aim of the Alberta social studies curriculum is to simultaneously develop students' identities and citizenship (Alberta Education, 2005). The articulation of these two core concepts is found in the following sentence: "Individuals need to feel that their identities are viewed as legitimate before they can contribute to the public good and feel a sense of belonging and empowerment as citizens" (p. 4). Students will be encouraged to develop their agency as citizens of their communities if they feel that their sense of who they are is validated. Accordingly, learning about Francophone perspectives can be understood as a measure to favour the validation of students' Francophone identities. The curriculum aligns itself with most, if not all, social studies in having the development of citizens as a goal (Clark & Case, 2013; Hébert, 2002). It could be argued that such citizenship is *differentiated* (Kymlicka, 2001, 2003; Peck, 2015) because the curriculum recognizes that Francophone and Indigenous peoples' perspectives, for "historical and constitutional reasons" (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 4), deserve distinct attention from kindergarten to Grade 12. Since those historical and constitutional reasons are undefined in the curriculum, a historical inquiry is warranted to uncover the ways in which the curriculum authors conceptualized these reasons. Also, since professional autonomy "requires teachers to reflect on why things ought to be taught" (Gereluk et al., 2015, p. 3), it is important to understand the origins of the "why" found in the front matter.

To obtain a high school diploma, Alberta students are required to pass Grade 12 social studies (Tupper, 2009). One way the government keeps teachers accountable to follow the curriculum is by imposing standardized testing. One third of a student's Grade 12 mark is determined by a provincial exam (Alberta Education, 2021b). This mandatory exam led Martha, a social studies teacher, to say: "When I start with the kids on the 30th of January, guess what I am focusing on? The 14th of June! Because that is when their diploma [exam] is" (den Heyer, 2017,

p. 8).⁵ However, the mandate to value Francophone perspectives is not linked with governmental standardized testing at any other level from kindergarten to Grade 11. Therefore, without clear accountability measures to assure the implementation of the mandate before Grade 12, teachers do have some professional autonomy in deciding whether and how to implement it. In that context, I seek to understand how teachers use their professional autonomy since preliminary research conducted from kindergarten to Grade 11 revealed that some teachers tend to bypass Francophone perspectives in their teaching (Berg, 2017; Scott, 2013).

One way this thesis seeks to explore more deeply the mandate to value Francophone perspectives is to investigate social studies teachers' interpretation and implementation practices in non-Francophone contexts. Since the curriculum aims partly at validating students' identities through their learning, it is easier to see how this could be done for Francophone students (Thompson, 2008). Since Francophone education represents only 0.01% of the student population in Alberta (von Heyking, 2019), it seems more pressing for now to inquire into non-Francophone contexts (predominantly English-speaking schools and French Immersion schools). Francophones' interpretation of the mandate plays a secondary role in the thesis, to understand how their interpretation converges or diverges from the mainstream.

The term "Francophone perspectives" appears three times in the front matter of the Alberta social studies curriculum:

1. "The program reflects multiple perspectives, including Aboriginal and Francophone, that contribute to Canada's evolving realities" (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 1);
2. "Social studies provides learning opportunities for students to: ... appreciate and respect how multiple perspectives, including Aboriginal and Francophone, shape Canada's political, socioeconomic, linguistic and cultural realities" (p. 2); and

⁵ "For the 2021-2022 school year, the weighting of diploma exams will be temporarily changed to 10% and the school-awarded mark will constitute 90% of a student's final mark" (Alberta, Education, 2021, p. 2).

3. “SOCIAL STUDIES AND FRANCOPHONE PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES [.] For historical and constitutional reasons, an understanding of Canada requires an understanding: ... of Francophone perspectives.” (p. 4)

These references illustrate that the curriculum was authored at least to some extent by Francophone individuals (Pashby, 2013), and that it aimed to reflect Francophones’ goal for social studies. Such goals may have involved learning about Francophones as well as other groups’ perspectives for “historical and constitutional reasons” and to foster “an understanding of Canada.”

The term “Canada” is interpreted in particular ways in the curriculum through the concept of “pluralism”:

Central to the vision of the Alberta social studies program is the recognition of the diversity of experiences and perspectives and the pluralistic nature of Canadian society. Pluralism builds upon Canada’s historical and constitutional foundations, which reflect the country’s Aboriginal heritage, bilingual nature and multicultural realities. (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 1)

In this sense, the curriculum highlights some facets of Canada aligned with naming some perspectives and not others. It justifies such choices by an undefined reading of the country’s constitutional and historical foundations. Inquiring into how social studies teachers define Canada and Alberta is necessary in order to observe whether they highlight similar facets of Canadian and Albertan life. In return, a gap between the ways that teachers and the curriculum define Canada could explain why teachers do or do not endorse the mandate they are required to implement.

Across the curriculum, Francophones are defined only once, in the glossary for Grades 4 and 5. They are described as people whose language is French and who are linked with Francophone culture and heritage. The definition echoes the one included in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and its interpretation in provinces like Alberta. Therefore, the constitutional reasons cited earlier seem to be related to the education rights outlined in the *Charter*, as demonstrated by a comparison of definitions of “Francophone” found in the curriculum (A), in the *Charter* (B), as

well as the definition from the Alberta Ministry of Education in relation to the beneficiaries of French language education (as primary language) in the province (C):

- A. *Curriculum definition*: A person for whom French is the first language learned and/or still in use; a person of French language and culture. (Alberta Education, 2006, p. 11)
- B. *The Charter definition*: Citizens of Canada whose first language learned and still understood is that of the French linguistic minority population of the province in which they reside, or who have received their primary school instruction in Canada in English and reside in a province where the language in which they received that instruction is the language of the French linguistic minority population of the province. (cited in Dodek, 2016, p. 113)
- C. *Alberta Education definition*: French language education is intended for a child: whose parent learned French as their first language and still understands it; whose parent received primary-school instruction in French in Canada; whose brother or sister has received or is receiving primary- or secondary-school instruction in French in Canada (as described in section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*); whose parent with Francophone roots wants to introduce their child to the French language and Francophone identity and culture; whose parent wants their child to retain their French-language skills and Francophone identity and culture (e.g., a Francophone immigrant who is a permanent resident of Canada). (Government of Alberta, n.d.)

These definitions all refer to an attachment to the French language, either as the language used or still understood. They also refer to access to instruction based on the attachment, and to a group whose experiences in schools has been regulated by Francophones. Since these definitions are ascribed to Francophones, this thesis seeks to understand the ways in which they are used by social studies teachers to define Francophones to investigate possible (mis)matches.

Taking the Alberta social studies curriculum as an example, education historian Ken Osborne (2012) argued that the inclusion of terms such as “perspectives” reflects a departure from the traditional approach to history and social studies education, in which students learn about “common values and shared experiences.” Instead, perspectives enable students “to learn to engage in continuing debate about the meaning of the present and the direction of the future” (pp. 163–164). In other words, the curriculum promotes an understanding of Canada as a question

to be resolved from multiple perspectives, rather than the fixed set of characteristics that plagued previous ways of doing social studies and history education (Sears, 1994). There are many examples in the curriculum of a willingness to encourage students to see how belonging to various groups shapes individuals' perspectives on local (A), provincial (B), national (C), and international issues (D):

- A. Grade 1 (My World: Home, School, and Community): appreciate multiple points of view, languages, cultures and experiences within their groups and communities (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 1, Grade 1);
- B. Grade 4 (The Stories, Histories and Peoples of Alberta): recognize how stories of people and events provide multiple perspectives on past and present events (Alberta Education, 2006, p. 5);
- C. Grade 7 (Following Confederation: Canadian Expansion): What were the Métis, First Nations, French and British perspectives on the events that led to the establishment of Manitoba (Alberta Education, 2006a, p. 5);
- D. Grade 10 (To what extent should we embrace globalization?): recognize and appreciate multiple perspectives that exist with respect to the relationships among politics, economics, the environment and globalization (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 23).

The primary focus of this thesis is the references to Francophone perspectives in the introductory pages of the curriculum, while remaining aware of the specifications for each grade. Since many of the learning outcomes grant an opportunity for teachers to choose the perspectives they want to highlight, I sought to inquire into whether (and how) they included Francophone perspectives, as mandated in the social studies curriculum's introduction.

In line with other curriculum theorists' work on Alberta social studies curricula (especially the Downey report, 1975, written by a team of researchers including Ted Aoki and Walt Werner), I seek to understand "the foundational presupposition, interests, and approaches" (p. 67) used to conceive the mandate to value Francophone perspectives. Curriculum theory has inspired this inquiry by orienting my goal of "making explicit ... the very stratum of presuppositions underlying

curriculum development [and implementation]” (Deng & Luke, 2008, p. 67). To do this work, I rely on curriculum history to understand the origins of the mandate, as well as focus groups and survey data to understand its meanings amongst teachers in Alberta. Further, I seek to compare ways to “frame” (Butler, 2009, p. 7) Francophone perspectives within various sites (e.g., curricula, focus groups, surveys).

Conceptual Framework: The Politics of (Curricular) Recognition

The term perspective and the learning outcomes related to the needs to learn from them are now commonly used in social studies curricula across Canada (Historica Canada, 2021). Consequently, the term and its mobilization provoke, I argue, a main conceptual tension. The tension arises when it is time to weigh the respective status of different perspectives associated with groups such as Francophones. Should all perspectives and their affiliated groups be valued equally? Or should some be valued distinctively or systematically when compared to others (St. Denis, 2011)? I contend that it is impossible to value all perspectives equally due to limits in time for learning, attention, and knowledge. The question then becomes how might we recognize perspectives unequally in social studies curricula and classrooms, and what criteria can be mobilized to justify those which deserve distinct attention?

In response to this question, the Alberta social studies curriculum distinctively values two perspectives, Indigenous and Francophone. By naming two perspectives and not others in the mandate, the curriculum offers a *differentiated* recognition based on two main criteria: historical and constitutional (undefined) reasons. My use of the term *differentiated* is inspired by the work of political philosopher Will Kymlicka (2001, 2003, 2007). Kymlicka argued that groups such as Québécois (Francophones) and Indigenous peoples deserve distinct types of accommodation by the Canadian state, for historical and constitutional reasons, compared to other groups (for a review

of his often-cited argument, see 2001, 2003, 2007). Proposing to value two sets of perspectives over others is a political act, and the role of my thesis is to uncover more fully the nature, origins, and consequences of acknowledging them distinctively. There is also a need to understand why some teachers might contest and/or question these choices (Berg, 2017; Scott, 2013) because it may lead to implementation problems.

The concept “politics of recognition,” coined by Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor (1994), has been used to make sense of political action whereby state governments acknowledge certain groups and not others. Such politics are defined by the interplay between marginalized groups’ (or their representatives’) demands to be valued, and the accommodation measures in response to these demands, usually granted by governments, their institutions (like ministries of education), and their representatives (like teachers). These demands stem from the fundamental need of humans to be accepted for who they are by others (Taylor, 1994). Ensuing accommodations by the state, in this case the Canadian state, originated from a larger trend in the creation and enforcement of human rights at the end of the Second World War (Ignatieff, 2000; Kymlicka, 2007). For instance, the politics of recognition drive the present-day needs of groups and individuals to be valued by institutions such as schools, after years of marginalization. In other words, individual and group representatives advocate, negotiate and often gain validation from (but not only) government institutions such as schools and within policies such as curricula. Accordingly, the mandate to value Francophone perspectives distinctively may be understood as a gain emerging from the politics of recognition.

Politics of recognition are bounded in the context in which they unfold (e.g., Alberta, Canada). They involve politically structured relations between recognizer entities, such as the Ministry of Education in Alberta, and recognized entities, such as Francophones. These relations

involve, for instance, pre-established rights that institutions must comply with. One way to understand the mandate to value Francophone perspectives distinctively is to consider the ways in which the politics of recognition are bounded by differentiated education rights in Alberta. In other words, since Francophones possess distinct rights to access education in French, the Alberta Ministry of Education must accommodate this group distinctively from other groups who do not possess such education rights. In Alberta, education rights provide leverage for certain groups to be distinctively valued.

Many scholars have critiqued the concept of the politics of recognition, including Nancy Fraser (2011), Judith Butler (2009), Cecil Foster (2014) and Glen Coulthard (2018). The common argument shared by these scholars, although each in their own distinct fashion, is that the politics of recognition is structured by unequal power relations between the recognizer entities (such as the settler-colonial context in Canada, see Coulthard, 2018) and the recognized ones (e.g., Indigenous peoples, Francophones). For instance, there is a power imbalance between the Canadian state and Indigenous peoples that compromises the recognition of the latter, even in light of gestures such as the acknowledgement of atrocities committed under the federal supervision of Indian Residential Schools. As argued by Dene philosopher Glen Coulthard (2018), a gesture of recognition toward Indigenous peoples from the federal government appears to provide due diligence for past harm (i.e., Indian Residential Schools). However, as Coulthard stressed, such gestures do not transform the roots of injustice that underlie the relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (i.e., land dispossession accredited by laws and jurisprudence). Criticizing the outcomes of the politics of recognition is important, as they do not necessarily lead to fairer relations between recognizer and recognized entities.

Based on scholarly conversations about the politics of recognition, I was able to formulate several guiding questions for my inquiry. These questions take into account the differentiated nature of recognition, which means to understand precisely why certain groups received distinct attention in a curriculum mandate. Critics of these politics have also led me to be vigilant about the ways in which unfair power relations are embedded and subsist within acts of acknowledgement, such as the mandate to value Francophone perspectives. With these parameters in mind, I formulated the following guiding questions:

- 1) *Where does the mandate to value Francophone perspectives come from?*
- 2) *How have Albertans, including teachers, interpreted and implemented the mandate through the years?*
- 3) *How are the origins, manifestations and results of the mandate be critically assessed?*
- 4) *What are the power imbalances at play in the mandate and its implementation?*

It is not enough to include perspectives in a provincially mandated curriculum. Difficult questions emerge about which perspectives should be recognized (or prioritized), in what context(s) and on whose terms.

Engaging with Curriculum Theorist George Richardson: A Thesis Presented in Four Articles

During the writing of the thesis, retired social studies educator from the University of Alberta George Richardson (2002, republished in 2006, 2009, 2015) occupied and provoked my thoughts more than the work of any other scholar. To my knowledge Richardson was the first person to outline in a scholarly publication the origins of the mandate to value Francophone perspectives. He did so in relation to an earlier draft version of the Alberta social studies curriculum published in 1999. He was also, to my knowledge, the only scholar who offered the

most recurrent critiques of the mandate in publications spanning a period of 13 years. Richardson's critiques involved important questions about the conceptualization of the mandate, its interpretation, and its implementation in classrooms, while also calling for a response. I will mobilize four facets emerging from Richardson's work (origins, interpretation, implementation, and responses) to illustrate how this thesis engages sequentially with each facet through four respective articles.

Where does the mandate to value Francophone perspectives come from? This question is not completely answered in the curriculum nor in published work on the matter. Part of the history is known, but not its full trajectory from 1999 to 2021 (Brown, 2004; Gillis, 2005; Scott, 2016; Stewart, 2002; Thompson, 1999; and brief descriptions in Clark, 2004; Hébert, 2010; Osborne, 2012; Shields & Ramsay, 2004; Thompson, 2004). Accordingly, **Article 1** engages with a curriculum story about the mandate (Davis, 1991). George Richardson's (2002) article provided examples of the first mention of that mandate. Article 1 seeks to extend the work of Richardson and other scholars to determine more precisely the story of that mention and subsequent references up until December 2021 (the date of the last available draft curriculum).

Richardson (2002) disclosed the origins of the mandate in discussing a policy initiative called the Western Canadian Protocol – an agreement signed in 1993 between the Ministers of Education in Western and Northern Canada to produce and share common educational resources such as curricula (Clark, 2013; Wallner, 2009). In describing the draft of the common social studies curriculum, Richardson (2002) observed that “the intent of the proposed social studies curriculum was to enable students to ‘appreciate and respect Aboriginal, Francophone, English language, and multiple cultural perspectives (Government of Alberta, 1999)’” (p. 3). Richardson critiqued the draft common curriculum for the way it implicitly ranked cultural perspectives:

The difficulty the Protocol had in ‘naming’ non-Anglophone ethno-cultural minorities as constituent elements of Canadian identity—they are variously referred to [in lower case] as groups representing “multiple cultural perspectives” (Government of Alberta, 1999), or “diverse cultural perspectives” (Government of Alberta, 2000)—suggests an implied national ranking structure when compared [to the] directness of language when the document refers to “Aboriginal, Francophone, [and] English language perspectives” (Government of Alberta, 1999). (p. 8)

Importantly for the origin story of the mandate, Richardson cited two versions of the same social studies curriculum (Government of Alberta, 1999, 2000; referred in this thesis as WCP, 1999; 2000). Upon reviewing these documents, I noticed that between 1999 and 2000, the mandate underwent a major change – it went from naming four entities (“Francophone,” “Aboriginal,” “English language” and “multiple” perspectives) to three entities (“English language” was removed). As he was focussed on the naming of groups and their ranking in the curriculum, I was puzzled by Richardson’s non-reporting of the removal of English language perspectives. Initially, I questioned whether I should mobilize his work to outline the origin story of the mandate.

Richardson’s (2002) critique also pointed to the abandonment of the Western Canadian Protocol’s common social studies curriculum due to major criticism against it. He stated that:

During the consultative process that followed the release of a draft document for the Social Studies Protocol, widespread opposition to the document emerged. In fact, this collective protest had sufficient force to result in the complete abandonment of the program in the Fall of 2001 despite the immense commitment of resources, time and money that completion of the Protocol had necessitated. (p. 2)

The other critiques against the common curriculum were mainly the same as Richardson’s (2002): “[i]n a more general sense, respondents also expressed the concern that narrowing the focus of national identity formation to specific groups was a retrograde step that ignored the fluidity and complexity of national identity formation in plural societies” (p. 3). However, while the common curriculum was cancelled, the mandate to learn about Francophone and Indigenous perspectives lives on in the current Alberta social studies curriculum published since 2005. Illustrating yet

another gap in Richardson's assessment published multiple times between 2002 and 2015, I was motivated to offer a different historical interpretation of the curriculum mandate. For that reason, **Article 1** documents the origins of the Western Canadian Protocol initiative and reviews the subsequent iterations of the Alberta social studies curriculum all the way to the present (March 2022).

How have Albertans, including teachers, interpreted and implemented the mandate through the years? Many scholars have studied the mandate, especially in relation to the addition of Indigenous perspectives, and mainly for reconciliation purposes (Berg, 2017; den Heyer, 2009; Donald, 2009; Prete, 2018; Scott, 2013, 2016; Solverson, 2018; Solvey, 2018). In doing so, some scholars have documented pre- and in-service teacher's interpretations of the mandate while mostly bypassing Richardson's theoretical argument against it (exceptions are found in the work of graduate students such as Pashby, 2013, and Thompson, 2008). Richardson's critique of the mandate, however, is reflected in the teacher discourse documented by these scholars. Some Alberta social studies (pre- or in-service) teachers have asked why it is necessary to focus on distinct perspectives and not others. As reported by one of the pre-service teachers cited by Donald (2009), "My students come from many backgrounds and I don't think it would be fair to teach one perspective if we can't teach them all" (p. 34). In Richardson's other articles, he offers a thorough argument supporting such a statement that may help to understand why teachers find the mandate unjust.

Richardson contested the way the mandate named some groups but not others. For him, in its original formulation in 1999 and 2000, the mandate "marginalized a large and growing number of other Canadians (non-Anglophone ethnic minorities) who did not enjoy constitutional protection of their cultural and linguistic identities" (p. 8; for similar critiques, see Bradford, 2008;

Brown, 2004; Pashby, 2013; Stewart, 2002). These un-named and therefore marginalized entities that Richardson (2002) included under the label “non-Anglophone ethnic minorities” were “Ukrainians, Japanese, Germans, Chinese [immigrants]—to name a few” (p. 7). From my standpoint, these groups were already named in the mandate and included within the English language or Francophone perspectives. Upon entering Canada, these groups integrate either in English or French to receive basic government services such as health and education as well as jobs (Kymlicka, 2001, 2003, 2011) as demonstrated by the fact that 99.4% of Albertans report working in English (Statistics Canada, 2017). Richardson’s preconception of the English language and Francophone perspectives (as excluding “Ukrainians, Japanese, Germans, Chinese [immigrants]”) contrasted with mine (English language as including immigrants): a contrast that called for an explanation.

Richardson emphasized the distinctiveness of immigrants by dissociating them from Francophone and English language groups. I emphasize the contrary (that immigrants integrate into Canada through one of its two official languages). While Richardson dissociated groups from one another, I understand them to be in hyphenated relation to one another (for example, a person might identify as a Francophone-Ukrainian-Canadian) (Ng-A-Fook, 2009). Richardson’s critiques relied upon post-colonial scholarship (such as Edward Said) that sought to provide a voice for the marginalized to be more fairly recognized in society and curricula. My work draws instead on insights from Charles Taylor (1994) and Will Kymlicka (2001, 2003), who argued that French- and English-speaking societies act as a container for diversity (what Kymlicka called “societal cultures”). This thesis is not the place to decide which conception of Canada is just, mine or Richardson’s. I aim instead to offer a different understanding of the curriculum mandate. Confronting Richardson’s ideas reminded me to be open to the ways groups are categorized or not

into one another in Canada (e.g., do Ukrainians need to be considered on their own, or as embedded in Francophone/English-language perspectives, or both?). It appears that the mandate can be understood distinctively based on individuals' preconceptions about who is Francophone or not.

A mandate to learn certain perspectives may be prescribed within a curriculum, but its implementation, which involves its actual enactment in a classroom setting, depends on much more than a governmental prescription. The gap between what is required and what is actually taught in classrooms is widely acknowledged in the education literature (e.g., Aoki's [1981] often-cited distinction between curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived is instructive here). The reasons for that gap are numerous and include teachers' own prior knowledge brought to any learning situation (Sears, 2014). This prior knowledge, or preconception of who Francophones are, for instance, can act to deflect new knowledge that does not fit pre-existing matrices of understanding (Létourneau, 2006). Richardson provided an example of that prior knowledge in categorizing immigrant groups outside the English language or Francophone perspectives and arguing that they were excluded from the mandate. Throughout my thesis, I encountered individuals making similar remarks to Richardson and accordingly, I sought to review these remarks via the secondary data analysis of research, surveys, and governmental consultations presented in **Article 2** (i.e., using previously gathered data sets as outlined by Turgeon & Bernatchez, 2010).

How are the origins, manifestations and results of the mandate to be critically assessed?

Richardson (2002) addressed the gap between the mandate and the public response by emphasizing that the 1999 consultation conducted with Alberta social studies teachers provoked such massive opposition to the Protocol's common social studies curriculum that it ultimately led to its "failure" (p. 1). Detailed in his articles, teachers' opposition was principally targeting the recognition

granted to Francophones and Indigenous peoples, for reasons outlined in previous paragraphs. Therefore, it is important to question the effect of critiques such as those formulated by Richardson or by social studies teachers (Scott, 2013) on the implementation of the mandate. There is most probably a gap between the mandate and its endorsement by teachers. Political philosopher Alain G. Gagnon's (2021) notion of legitimacy is helpful here to explore the gap between implementing a legal curriculum mandate and its endorsement by teachers.

Previously cited research by Scott (2013) or Berg (2017) described the low levels of implementation of Francophone perspectives in social studies classrooms. Like Richardson, some teachers found it unfair to attend distinctively to Francophone perspectives. Other research done with pre-service teachers has revealed difficulties in feeling adequate to teach about Francophones from a non-Francophone perspective (i.e., due to ignorance of the French language) (Abbott & Smith, 2013) or concern over homogenizing groups without inquiring into their inner diversity (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011). Here, as in Richardson's argument, conceptions resurface about who Francophones are (and who can teach about them) as well as preconceptions about perspectives (i.e., homogenizing and therefore exclusionary devices). In light of no positive or detailed examples of the teaching of Francophone perspectives, there is a possible link between these preconceptions and the implementation of the curriculum mandate. I sought to test that hypothesis in **Article 3**, by discussing the classroom implementation of Francophone perspectives with social studies teachers in Alberta.

How should one respond to Richardson's critique that the recognition of some group perspectives inevitably leads to the marginalization of others? Such a response is necessary if the curriculum mandate is to be implemented in any significant way. Responses could act to nuance claims that this mandate is unjust. Formulating such an answer is not easy, however, if I do not

want to reproduce the problem I am studying (Runia, 2014), that is, homogenizing Francophones or excluding other perspectives from being recognized in the curriculum. In researching and writing this thesis, I sought to distinguish myself from the zero-sum logic in Richardson's argument. I do not believe that acknowledging Francophones necessarily leads to the non-acknowledgement of other perspectives; simultaneous acknowledgements can and do exist – for instance, the acknowledgement of queer, French-language, multilingual, immigrant perspectives of Canada (Babayants, 2017).

Richardson (2002) claimed that naming some groups in the mandate offered “an invaluable service in redeeming the important role Aboriginal and Francophone Canadians played in the formation of Canada's national identity” (p. 3). Therefore, he did acknowledge the historical role of these groups and the ways in which these roles could justify the need to learn about their perspectives. However, he refused to endorse the legitimacy of constitutional or historical arguments – at the core of the justification offered in the current curriculum – to justify the *distinct* recognition of these perspectives. According to Richardson, such arguments created unjust hierarchies:

[the mandate] performed a significant disservice in effectively drawing lines between identity communities in such a way that it marginalized a large and growing number of ‘other’ Canadians (non-Anglophone ethnic minorities) who did not enjoy constitutional protection of their cultural and linguistic identities. And who, by virtue of their assigned “otherness,” assumed the status of decentred peoples on the fringes of the host society. (p. 3)

Richardson is not exempt from such exclusion, as he himself categorized, in very specific ways, the groups he cast as marginalized (e.g., Ukrainian immigrants), as if they were *de facto* and *in fine* excluded from the Francophone and English language perspectives. How might we then consider the extent to which social studies teachers find this specific curriculum mandate *just*

(Forsé & Parodi, 2020)? When a mandate is deemed to be unjust, as stated by Richardson, does it become impossible to implement in practice?

Richardson's critiques called for a response by leaving the terms Francophone and English language undefined, by assigning them exclusionary power, and by conceiving immigrants as dissociated from the language through which they came to integrate at least to some extent into Canadian society. Richardson's critiques and others uncovered throughout my research construct "significant boundaries of privilege and recognition between identity communities in Canada" (Richardson, 2002, p. 8). Such boundaries inevitably lead to excluding and dividing groups from one another (e.g., Chinese-Canadian vs. Francophone) as if those groups cannot coexist at the same time (e.g., Chinese-Canadian-Francophone perspectives).⁶ Although I was tempted to answer this question on my own, I instead sought guidance from Francophone Albertans, as presented in **Article 4**. As they are living the reality of Francophones in Alberta, I thought they were best equipped to inform me, Richardson, and other Canadians about the legitimacy of acknowledging Francophone perspectives distinctively in Alberta social studies.

Francophone organizations such as ACFA (Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta) have recently been advocating and publishing press releases (ACFA, 2021) that critique the new draft curriculum published by the Alberta government in March 2021 (Alberta Education, 2021). The draft was part of a much-criticized reform produced by the United Conservative Party

⁶ In a particular multicultural logic, groups are divided from one another as if recognizing one group inevitably leads to the marginalization of others. In the case of Chinese-Canadians for instance, it could be argued that they are also a group who, depending on their pathway into Canada, will come to live some part of their public life either in French or English, or both, depending on where they live. Therefore, acknowledging Francophone perspectives also means acknowledging Chinese-Canadians who live publicly in French and through French-speaking institutions. However, a certain multicultural logic frames Chinese-Canadians in opposition, or unrelated, to Francophone perspectives. In this logic, boundaries between these groups are then erected (between Francophones and Chinese-Canadians) which are in reality more flexible. By not acknowledging the juxtapositions in the ways in which individuals belong to multiple groups in Canada, usually one of them being Francophone, Anglophone or Indigenous, critiques such as Richardson's fuel less than smooth boundaries of privilege and recognition between identity communities.

government (Peck, 2021; Scott, 2021) who were elected in 2019 and promised to reverse previous reforms originally introduced by the Conservative government in 2010 and continued by the Alberta New Democratic Party (NDP) when it formed government in 2015. Francophones are just one among many groups (e.g., Hindus; McGarvey, 2021) who oppose the recent provincial curriculum drafts, which have been described as racist, age-inappropriate, plagiarized, and riddled with factual inaccuracies (French, 2021; for a detailed review of the critiques, see the website Alberta Curriculum Analysis, n.d.). For their part, representatives of Francophone organizations have argued that the draft curriculum is regressive compared to previous ones published under the NDP government in terms of reference to and inclusion of Francophone perspectives. In addition, the new draft appeared to be translated from English instead of being made in collaboration *with* Francophones. According to education experts, consultations with the French-speaking community were also deficient (Joly, 2020; Laboret, 2021). In sum, in a press release signed with other community organizations (e.g., Société historique francophone de l'Alberta), ACFA (2021) argued that “the proposed draft curriculum aims ... to assimilate Francophone students by focusing principally on dominant Anglo-Saxon perspectives” (para. 3). Accordingly, one of the aims of this thesis is to understand the origins of the inclusion of Francophone perspectives in social studies, as this inclusion is now being used to contest the recent curricular reform in Alberta.

Critiques of the recent curriculum draft have led Alberta's four Francophone school boards to withdraw from piloting the draft version (much like most other school boards in the province, 56 out of 61 of which have refused to pilot the draft) (French, 2021a). Many Francophone education stakeholders (school board representatives, advocates, heritage group members, and parent associations) oppose the current draft. However, little is known about Francophones' reactions to the opposition toward the mandate to value Francophone perspectives either in the

reform (Alberta Education, 2016, 2017) or in the current social studies curriculum published since 2005. My thesis offers a window of opportunity for these stakeholders to express their views on that mandate by putting them in conversation with questions such as “why learning these perspectives, and not others, is important?” As leading advocates for Francophone education have shown during the debates over the current reform, stakeholders usually seek to justify the need to learn about Francophone perspectives as an ongoing means of group vitalization and to foster more harmonious intergroup relations within Alberta and Canada (Le Café Show, 2021a, 2021b).

In summary, this thesis is about the curriculum mandate established since 2005 to appreciate and respect Francophone perspectives in Alberta’s compulsory social studies courses from kindergarten to Grade 12. Until now, this mandate has lacked a clear origin story, a depiction of its interpretation by Albertans, including Francophones, or examples of teachers’ reported implementation practices. Some aspects have been addressed in some scholarly research, particularly as they relate to Indigenous and multiple perspectives, but no overarching research projects have focused on the Francophone aspect of the mandate.

This thesis comprises four articles, each of which analyzes and synthesizes various facets of the mandate. Each of the four articles features an introduction containing a literature review, a methodology, a results section, and an interpretation of the results.

Overall Methodology

Attempting to depict an overall, succinct methodology for the thesis is complicated by the ways in which *bricolage* came to play an intricate part of my research endeavour. Hunter (2013) described bricolage “as an adept person who uses all the tools available to put things together to construct and complete a task” (p. 12). In this section, I draw on Pratt et al.’s (2022) *methodological bricolage* to explain how I designed and conducted my research. Three elements

underpin methodological bricolage. One element involves understanding and utilizing the research resources at hand. Such resources refer to *analytical moves* whereby the researcher makes decisions about the research design, data collection, and data analysis (e.g., the use of grounded theory). Another element entails combining resources, sometimes creatively, to align with the overall purpose of a study. *Bricoleurs* decide how to utilize existing analytical moves and/or apply combinations of such resources to address the purpose of the research. And finally, as a third element “making do,” the bricoleur competently “cobble things together” (Duymedjian & Ruling, 2010, p. 41), in effect, to connect the research question(s) to research answer(s) using a strong, coherent argument drawn from data and theory.

At the onset of my thesis, I did not begin with one methodological template in mind. In line with Gioia et al. (2013), I assumed a “flexible orientation toward qualitative, inductive research that is open to innovation, rather than a ‘cookbook’” approach that applies a formulaic template (p. 25-26). I conducted research largely based on grounded theory methodology. While I was amassing data and planning my next research steps, I relied heavily on available documents, participants, and analytic moves (such as the contextualizing analysis of Paillé and Muchielli, 2016). Each phase of my research was sequential, meaning that each phase and method emerged from the one previous (Schoonenboom & Burke Johnson, 2017). This thesis in four articles is the result of an iterative, interactive process, whereby one inquiry/article (and data collection method) informed (and complemented) the next.

I answered my research questions using a four-phased, progressive qualitative approach:

- 1) I started with a review of documents to analyze the origins of the mandate to value Francophone perspectives.
- 2) Next, I reviewed the scholarly literature to examine how teachers responded to the mandate.

- 3) Then, I interviewed selected teachers to understand their implementation of the mandate.
- 4) Finally, I sought feedback from selected French speakers about critiques of the mandate.

Inductive in nature and drawing on a range of techniques to analyze mixed qualitative data sets (document analysis, focus group, interview, survey), my methodology generates explanations (grounded theories, Thornberg, 2017) to account for challenges emerging in relation to the mandate. At the end of each phase new questions surfaced, necessitating subsequent stages of research needing distinct data sets, to provide a fuller story to explain the inclusion of Francophone perspectives in the Alberta social studies curriculum. According to Pratt et al. (2022), this iterative process was an intentional analytic move on my part as the researcher.

A pillar of my methodological approach is its inductive orientation (Lavoie & Guillemette, 2009). I did not start this research to confirm a theory, but to understand how a mandate came to be included in a curriculum, and how that mandate came to be legitimated by various education stakeholders. The inductive aspect led me to first historicize the mandate (where it came from), to then review how it was legitimated (via a literature review, original focus groups, and survey research). Relying on induction meant that I followed an overarching logic of curriculum making, starting from its conception by curriculum designers and stakeholders' reactions to the mandate, to the ways teachers appropriated the mandate. I included a fourth phase, a creative analytical move, to invite responses to findings from previous phases of my research, to create a dialogical loop between stakeholders who criticized the mandate and those who sought to respond to the critiques. One of the contributions of this inductive approach to my research is that each subsequent phase deepened the results and insights gathered previously.

Throughout the thesis I adopted a social-constructionist view on Francophone perspectives. Situated in the interpretive paradigm, this view posits that knowledge of reality is constructed socially (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Mishler, 1986). I wondered about what Albertans expressed toward Francophone perspectives and the place it ought to take in the curriculum. The research also encompassed my construction of what they report (Charmaz, 1990). I sought to render the realities, as a range of meanings, taking into account that it is also a reflection based on the social construction of my participants and the text into which I was inquiring. My approach enables inquiry into the meanings granted to Francophone perspectives instead of proposing a definite definition of what they are.

As a main contribution to the research, I seek to provide (or, according to Pratt et al., “cobble together”) an explanation as to why the curriculum mandate came to be, while also accounting for Albertans’ reactions towards the mandate. My reason for using this approach is “to move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory, a ‘unified theoretical explanation’” (Creswell, 2013, p. 83, cited in Douglas, 2019, p. 56). The sequential path of my research led me from one explanation to the next, in each of the four articles, as a means to deepen my “unified theoretical explanation” for the development and existence of the mandate, and the origins of the reactions elicited. For instance, finding that Alberta social studies teachers had difficulty understanding the mandate because they could not access a clear explanation in either the curriculum itself or the social reality of Alberta, I sought to ask Francophone education stakeholders in Alberta to propose such a justification (article 4). In doing so, I exemplify a social constructionist approach of knowledge by seeking to offer socially-constructed justifications, while exposing how such justifications may differ according to the group you belong to (e.g., Francophones, non-Francophones).

The reliability and validity of the interpretation of my study is dependent on corroboration across multiple articles, with various explanations (e.g., that teachers prefer engaging with multiple perspectives, instead of Francophone perspectives, in spite of a strong rationale to do so). The recurrence of some results, as well as my capacity to deepen initial insights into further stages of the research provide a strong yet limited basis for interpretation. The knowledge acquired is contextualized and applicable within a specific place (mainly Southern Alberta), time (1999-2022) and people (mainly social studies teachers working with Anglophone students) in relation to particular text (that of a reform of social studies curricula and the recognition of Francophone perspectives). My willingness to focus on a specific mandate excluded the possibility of extrapolating results to broader contexts, although it provides a firm ground to inquire into the ways in which particular groups came to be learned about in social studies education, amidst critiques of that recognition.

Acknowledgement of Dr. David Scott's Contributions

After introducing me to the mandate in 2013, David Scott became implicated from day one in the research reported in the thesis. His work with non-Indigenous individuals teaching about Indigenous perspectives in Alberta has intersected in many ways with my own. Accordingly, his involvement ranges from introducing me to the basic research on the mandate, to helping me conduct focus groups with social studies teachers, presenting the preliminary results of our analysis at conferences, and co-writing a first version of Article 2. For Article 2, together we reviewed the literature on Francophone perspectives in Alberta to come up with a typology of what we referred to in 2017 as “resistances” (refusal, reluctance, and/or critique toward the mandate to value Francophone perspectives). Although Scott participated in all aspects of the research for Article 2, in writing this thesis, I have re-analyzed all of our previous research together. I also rewrote the

article that we published in 2017 to make the analysis my own. Consequently, Scott's participation in the writing of Article 2 is now only 15%. I would also like to credit and thank him for hosting and conceptualizing the focus groups included in Articles 2, 3, and 4.

ARTICLE 1: A HISTORY OF FRANCOPHONE PERSPECTIVES

A History of “Francophone Perspectives” in Alberta Social Studies Curricula (1999–2021)

Abstract

The term “perspectives” is now in common use in social studies education. However, the story of its appearance in curricula tied to specific groups such as Francophones remains largely untold. It is important to tell the “curriculum story” (Davis, 1991) of its appearance, especially in Alberta. Researchers have found only low-to-medium levels of endorsement amongst teachers of the mandate to value Francophone perspectives from kindergarten to Grade 12 (Articles 1, 2, 3; Berg, 2017; Scott, 2013) – a mandate that will be extended to six subject matters (e.g., sciences, mathematics, language arts, arts, social studies, wellness) in years to come (Alberta Education, 2020). To explore the origins of the term “Francophone perspectives,” I analyzed draft and final versions of the Alberta curricula since they first appeared in 1999, as well as related government consultations and testimony from curriculum authors. I argue that “Francophone perspectives” emerged and kept their place in curricula, amidst criticism, as a result of 1) unprecedented partnerships between curriculum authors affiliated with Indigenous, Francophone and Anglophone groups; 2) the mobilization of James Banks’ (1989) transformative approach to the integration of perspectives in curricula; and 3) an underlying vision of Canada as a partnership between Francophones, Indigenous peoples, and English-speaking groups. The recent history of the mandate to value Francophone perspectives reflects a move away from Anglophone-centric curriculum-making practices and contains inspiration to make them fairer.

Introduction

The backdrop to this article is an ongoing and widely criticized curriculum reform in Alberta (Alberta Education, 2020). During an election campaign that he eventually won in 2019, Alberta's United Conservative Party leader Jason Kenney denounced the previous curriculum reform, which had been underway since 2010 (Alberta Education, 2010), with more intensive changes introduced to six subject-matters (language arts, arts, wellness, social studies, mathematics, and science) after 2016 (Alberta Education, 2016). Claiming that the reform was the "biggest scandal under the NDP government," in a Facebook post, Jason Kenney (2017) declared as evidence that the draft social studies curriculum included "zero mentions of Canada's military history, but plenty of room for every politically correct grievance imaginable. It's social engineering." However, the UCP's proposed curriculum reform published in 2021 has provoked strong opposition from academics, parents, teachers, school trustees, the official opposition party (the New Democratic Party), and Hindus, Japanese, Indigenous, and Francophone leaders, to name a few (for a review, see the website Alberta Curriculum Analysis, n.d.). Some criticisms of the latest draft of the social studies curriculum, for example, have categorized it as Eurocentric, racist, plagiarized, age-inappropriate, and misaligned with current educational knowledge (Peck, 2021; Scott, 2021).

The primary focus of this article is the term "Francophone perspectives," which has been used in Alberta's social studies curriculum from kindergarten to Grade 12 since 2005 (Alberta Education, 2005). It is now being used by critics in their advocacy against the UCP's curriculum reform (Le Café Show, 2021a, 2021b; Joly, 2020; Laboret, 2021). Indeed, four Francophone community organizations, including the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (ACFA), denounced the reform for its "lack of inclusion of Francophone perspectives" (ACFA, 2021, para.

3). Critics represented by ACFA (2021) argued that the reform was regressive because draft curricula for six-subject matters were not written in partnership with Francophones, and aimed “to assimilate Francophone students by focusing principally on dominant Anglo-Saxon perspectives” (para. 3).

Since the mandate to value Francophone perspectives in the current social studies curriculum was first introduced in 2005, the term “Francophone perspectives” has become increasingly common in the education parlance of Alberta. However, the history of how the term came to be included is not well-known and is found mostly in the work of graduate students (Brown, 2004; Pashby, 2013; Stewart, 2002; Thompson, 1999, 2004, 2008).

In light of the way the term “Francophone perspectives” is being mobilized to critique the new reform, it is important to understand its origins within curriculum history. Mention of these perspectives was rather unexpected in the current social studies curriculum, considering that Alberta is mostly known for being English-language-dependent (Aunger, 2005; Frideres, 1998) – a place where English-French bilingualism is criticized by a significant amount of the population (Brie & Mathieu, 2021; Hayday, 2005) and where anti-Québec (Francophone) sentiments are found in the discourse presented by some politicians and some members of the press (Boily & Epperson, 2014; Béland et al., 2021). To better understand “Francophone perspectives,” this article traces the history of the term’s appearance in Alberta social studies curricula since the end of the 1990s.

My primary goal is to understand why the term Francophone perspectives has appeared in three Alberta social studies curricula since 1999, including the current draft version that is not yet finalized. The term did not appear in any curricula published prior to 1999 (Richardson, 1998; Thompson, 2004; von Heyking, 2006). This article examines three aspects of the history of

Francophone perspectives derived from my conceptual framework inspired by the work of philosopher Charles Taylor (1994) on the “politics of recognition” (p. 25). The three aspects explored herein are:

- 1) *recognition* (i.e., what are Francophone perspectives and what ought to be valued about them?);
- 2) *presence* (who seeks to include these perspectives and are these individuals Francophone?) (Phillips, 1998); and
- 3) *redistribution* (the processes through which the perspectives have been included to contrast with other perspectives) (Fraser, 2011).

The term “politics” is a reminder that Alberta’s curricula – understood as “legal documents that spell out what students are expected to learn and be able to do” (von Heyking, 2019, p. 11) – are the results of political conflicts and negotiations between individuals who do not necessarily share the same interests (Levin, 2008; Tomkins, 2008).

Conceptual Framework: Politics of Curricular Recognition

In this research, the politics of recognition refers to conversations and negotiations about the best or fairest way to accommodate groups in curricula (Taylor, 1994). The term “identity politics” (Eisenberg & Kymlicka, 2011) can also be used to characterize the process through which group representatives advocate to government representatives to gain acknowledgement in curricula. These advocacy movements stem from years of marginalization and from ongoing barriers faced by such groups, including their depiction as ‘lesser-than’ other groups in curricula (Joshee et al., 2016; Peck & Sears, 2016; Potvin, 2015; Werner et al., 1977). Documenting such marginalization in curricula started in the 1970s, as observed by Osborne (2012), who noted that “more philosophically inclined curriculum specialists were ... pursuing Raymond Williams’s

observation that any curriculum was a selection from the culture of which it was part[:] they asked who did the selecting, using what criteria, and for what purpose?” (p. 155). I situate my historical investigation along that line of inquiry by asking who made the choice to include the term “Francophone perspectives” in Alberta’s social studies curricula, using what criteria, and for what purpose? I am specifically mobilizing the “politics of recognition” as a conceptual tool to make explicit “the very stratum of presupposition underlying curriculum development” (Deng & Luke, 2008, p. 67).

The conceptual framework of the politics of recognition enables me to focus on three facets of the transactional space that led to the appearance of the term “Francophone perspectives” in Alberta’s social studies curricula. Accordingly, this article investigates questions about who is valued in the curriculum (recognition), by whom (presence), and how (redistribution). These questions stem from the scholarship on the politics of recognition and seek to identify:

- 1) how a subject comes to be framed as worthy of acknowledgement (Butler, 2009);
- 2) whether the person who shaped that acknowledgement is representative of the group to be valued (Phillips, 1998); and
- 3) ultimately, how power is shared in the making of that decision (Fraser, 2011).

These three facets, albeit known by various labels, are regularly used in the history of social studies curricula and the politics underlying their creation (Clark, 1997; 2004; Osborne, 2012; Sears, 1994; Tomkins, 2008; von Heyking, 2006). For instance, social studies educator Ruth Sandwell (2006) stated:

many Canadians have experienced a heightened awareness of the problems associated with history [and social studies] and have asked key questions about the[se] discipline[s]: Whose history *counts*? What people, events, and issues get to be included in social studies and history classrooms? Who and what are left out? And who decides these things? (p. 3)

I choose these types of questions not only to investigate the history of Francophone perspectives in Alberta's social studies curricula, but also to problematize the meaning of the term Francophone perspectives and the work involved in producing it. The "curriculum story" (Davis, 1991) below focuses mostly on the ways in which curricula, curriculum authors, and social studies teachers in government consultations have defined, engaged with, and questioned the meaning of Francophone perspectives. The story follows a chronological path while problematizing along the way exactly what Francophone perspectives are, for whom and why.

Various characteristics have been ascribed (Gutmann, 2003) by governments as well as by Albertans to the term "Francophones." According to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982), Francophones are individuals who have distinct rights within the Alberta education system (*Education Act*, 2012, section 14), including 1) access to French-language education from kindergarten to university (in some parts of the province); 2) the right to regulate those schools in French; 3) the ability to become certified in French as a teacher; and 4) access to a curriculum produced in and/or translated into French. Although the Ministry of Education ultimately holds the power to regulate education in Alberta, it must comply with the *Charter*, as history has shown that a refusal to do so can result in indictment by the Supreme Court of Canada (Mahé v. Alberta, 1990). In a province known until the 1980s for its resistance to subsidizing French-speaking instruction (Mahé, 2004), these *Charter* rights led to the creation of a Francophone student population (.01% of the total student population) as a fully-fledged part of the educational system in Alberta.

Within the Francophone system, a large variety of students are educated in French, including many who may not identify as Francophone (Thompson, 2008). However, researchers have noted that in Alberta, and within social studies teachers' circles (Articles 2, 3), the term

Francophone is generally associated with Québec and that its use is often accompanied by negative stories about Québec-born Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau (Roquette & Neveu, 2021), political struggles involving constitutional negotiations in the 1990s (Manning, 2005; Russell, 2017), and federal programs such as equalization (i.e., the redistribution of taxation payments from “have” to “have-less” provinces, often interpreted in Alberta as transferring oil money to Francophone Québécois; Béland et al., 2021; Boily & Epperson, 2014). It is also interesting to consider that a significant minority, 10.5% of Alberta’s 4.3M inhabitants, have French-Canadian roots related to the province’s first settlers from the 19th century, including French-speaking Catholics (Government of Alberta, 2018) or Métis peoples (Dion et al., 2021). Although Francophone perspectives may appear at first sight to be foreign in Alberta, they are not, and the curriculum story told here reveals how they have returned to the picture.

Parameters of the Inquiry

This article presents the story of how, why, and in what ways references to Francophone perspectives have appeared in three Alberta social studies curricula since the 1990s. Spanning from 1993 to 2021, this is the first time this curriculum story has attempted to be told more fully and builds on previous research (Brown, 2004; Gillis, 2005; Shields & Ramsay, 2004; Stewart, 2002). The story recounts the process by which the three social studies curricula were developed, the context in which they were produced, the people involved, and the ideas they mobilized. Evidence for this story derives from an analysis of government policies (e.g., guidelines for curriculum development), draft and final versions of social studies curricula (developed between 1999–2001, 2001–2008, and 2009–2021), reports from government consultations (gathering Albertans’ views on these curricula), and published testimonials from curriculum authors (e.g., Gillis, 2005; LearnAlberta, 2007; Pashby, 2013). In sum, I aim to explain why Francophone perspectives

appeared in social studies curricula, why they remained acknowledged despite criticisms, and what conditions facilitated this acknowledgement (which may now be under threat, according to critics of the ongoing Alberta curriculum reform).

Research for this story relies on a variety of sources. The curricula and government consultation reports were retrieved from the University of Alberta's (*Digitized*) *Historical Curriculum Collections*. The testimonials of curriculum authors came from published media (Pashby, 2013) and webcast interviews (LearnAlberta, 2007), while previous research helped to fill in some knowledge gaps. I start in 1993, the year that marked the release of the *Western Canadian Protocol*, a partnership between Western and Northern Canada's Ministers of Education to produce a common curriculum for their respective provinces and territories (Wallner, 2009). It was in 1999, within a *Foundation Document* published by the *Protocol*, that the first mention of Francophone perspectives appeared (Richardson, 2002). I seek to understand the why and how of the origin of these mentions, while continuing the story up to December 2021, which is the publication date of the latest draft of the new social studies curriculum.

For the purposes of this article, I focus on the "Introduction" sections of these three curricula. These sections outline the rationale for social studies and its roles, while providing definitions of the groups students are supposed to learn about (and from) (Gibson, 2012). Focusing on these introductions allows me to compare similar portions of text, resulting in a manageable project for this article. These introductions are important because they guide the writing of grade-specific outcomes as well as explain the broader "why" of curricular choices. I outline possible reasons for *changes and continuities* in sentences containing the term "Francophone perspectives" across various draft versions of a curriculum. To explain these changes and continuities, I cite testimonies of curriculum authors, the research of other scholars, or suggestions from government

reports regarding Francophone perspectives. This inquiry into the introductions to the curricula paves the way for further research on Francophone perspectives in specific grades.

Partnerships and “Francophone Perspectives”

The 1990s were an unprecedented time for partnerships in Canadian education. There were agreements between parties (e.g., ministries of education) to jointly decide on common learning goals for students despite the Canadian Constitution, which granted provinces and territories the power to “exclusively make Laws in relation to Education” (*Constitution Act*, 1867, Section 93, cited in Dudek, 2016, p. 78). Advocacy for these interprovincial and territorial partnerships (Wallner, 2009) began in the 1970s, notably in response to student mobility across jurisdictions. As reported by curriculum historian George Tomkins (2008), a pan-Canadian study published in the 1980s by the Director of Curriculum in British Columbia estimated that 100,000 students moved among provinces annually.

In 1978, “the ministers [of Education] observed that all provinces, despite inevitable differences in curriculum policy resulting from regional diversity, were interested ‘in identifying common elements in the curriculum, sharing information systematically and increasing the coordination of their curriculum-related activities’” (Tomkins, 2008, p. 388). To meet the “common” educational needs of Canadians (CMEC, 1993, p. 1), as well as to protect their prerogative over education in the face of federal government intervention (O’Sullivan, 1999), all of Canada’s ministers of education signed the *Victoria Declaration* in 1993. Partnerships such as those outlined in the *Victoria Declaration* (e.g., the *Western Canadian Protocol*) opened up unprecedented opportunities for innovation in curriculum-making, which until then was mostly conducted in provincial-territorial silos.

As announced in the *Victoria Declaration*, two regional partnerships (for Atlantic provinces or for Western and Northern Canada) aimed to produce common curricula, including one for social studies. Building on pre-established ties among Western provinces (Clark, 2013; Wallner, 2009), the *Western and Northern Canadian Protocol* (WNCP) included Alberta as well as Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories, Yukon and British Columbia. The common social studies curriculum drafted for these jurisdictions aimed to permit resource sharing, to reduce the cost of these resources by providing incentives for publishers to produce them at a large scale (Clark, 2013), and to respond to the issue of student mobility. This common social studies curriculum was the first one to mention Francophone perspectives. Its production started later than other *Protocol* curricula (such as mathematics) due to differences between jurisdictions and the polemical nature of social studies and history in Canada (Gillis, 2005; Shields & Ramsay, 2004; Social Program Evaluation Group, 1995; Stewart, 2002). Collaboration among jurisdictions opened a path for curriculum innovation such as the inclusion of Francophone representatives at the curriculum table and in discussions about learning outcomes.

Political scientist Jennifer Wallner (2009) argued that the gains in the rights of Francophones through the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and enforcement of these rights by the Supreme Court in its 1990 decision (*Mahé v. Alberta*, 1990; see also the similar decision in Manitoba in 1991; Bérard, 2017) created an incentive to accommodate Francophones in the *Protocols* (including the one for the Atlantic provinces). One way that the *Western Protocol* responded to Francophone rights was to commission the production of a common curriculum in French (WCP, 1993). In response to the growing influence of the Francophone Bureau in many Ministries of Education since the 1970s (Behiels, 2004), the process of developing a common social studies curriculum started with the hiring of Francophone and Anglophone consultants, as

confirmed by Renée Gillis, who worked as a social studies consultant for Manitoba in the *Protocol*. The first two groups hired – Francophone and Anglophone consultants – then recommended the inclusion of Indigenous authors (Gillis, 2005). Fostered by a general climate of curriculum innovation, the unprecedented partnership approach to authoring the common social studies curriculum introduced new ways of elaborating learning outcomes.

The reason for the inclusion of Indigenous partners alongside the Francophone and Anglophone co-authors was explained by Linda Mlodzinski (2006), an Anglophone consultant from Manitoba:

It was not a case of senior management... Instead, from the very outset of the interjurisdictional project, there was a recognition among all team members that previous approaches to curriculum development in which dominant, mainstream Anglophone culture created the curriculum, could no longer work in current culturally diverse times. (p. 1)

In this climate of curriculum innovation, consultants were able to recommend authorship changes – and specifically the importance of including Indigenous authors. Such transformation was a response to the ways in which Indigenous peoples were negatively portrayed by institutions such as schools and to their lack of power to decide on education matters (Cardinal, 1999). Mlodzinski explained such transformation to *Globe and Mail* reporter Ray Conlogue (2000) for his article titled “The great war for our past”:

‘If we look for balance, it’s because the social tenor of the times cries out for it. We’re not making it up, it’s reality. The multicultural groups that were marginalized are mad as hell. We see that everywhere.’ Not too long ago, she says, anglophone programmers would make up a curriculum and then send it to native and francophone educators for comment. ‘But now we all sit down at a table together with blank paper in front of us and make a curriculum together. Is that bad?’

The transformation required new input from Francophones and Indigenous peoples, whose views were now considered as a means of disrupting “Anglophone” conformity in curriculum policy making.

In his article, Conlogue provided context for Mlodzinski's quote and its ending ("Is that bad?") by referring to the ongoing "Canon debates" that emerged in the United States during the 1990s. Those debates revolved around American universities' liberal arts curricula – which was also extended somewhat to Canadian literature (Lecker, 1993) – and asked whether there was an overemphasis on learning about the works of "Dead White Males" (Taylor, 1994, p. 89). According to their critics, including those in the multicultural education movement (e.g., Banks, 1989), these curricula were inconsistent with the increasingly diverse student population. Consequently, some already marginalized students could not see themselves or the groups to which they belonged in these curricula (Nieto, 2009). Conlogue also cited Canadian historian Jack Granatstein (1998), who represented a counterpoint to this critique by decrying the lack of emphasis on learning about a unifying group of Canadians in light of the increasing number of references to minority group perspectives in history curricula (e.g., for a review and critique of that stance, see Stanley, 2000). Accordingly, the production of the *Protocol's* common social studies curriculum reflected the tension observed in the Canon debates between fostering commonalities – a "Canadian spirit" (WCP, 2000, p. 4) – and acknowledging a "multi-perspectival" approach to social studies education (Osborne, 2012).

Ken Osborne (2012) demonstrated that the shift to multiperspectivity in history and social studies curricula after the 1970s was a consequence of "the rapid acceptance of multiculturalism as a fundamental principle of Canadian education" (p. 160). For his part, Tomkins (2008) noted that for the same historical period, "Social studies was central to the new emphasis on Canadian studies and multicultural studies" (p. 360). Beginning in the 1970s, and at an increased rate in the 1990s, curricula promoted a more dialogical approach – conceiving of Canada through multiple perspectives – in order to challenge the dominance of "white Anglo-Saxon Protestant"

perspectives from the 1930s to the 1970s (Francis, 1997; Osborne, 2012, p. 159; see also Peck & Sears, 2016; Sears, 1994). Partnerships between Anglophones, Francophones, and Indigenous authors to design the *Protocol's* common social studies curriculum framework were inspired in part by the gradual acceptance of multiculturalism and multiperspectivity, as well as developments in Francophones' (and Indigenous peoples') rights to education (Hébert, 2004, 2010; Kahane, 2000; Shields & Ramsay, 2004; Thompson, 1999). Multiperspectivity was not new and had existed in previous social studies curricula in Alberta, but what was new was how the authorship of the curriculum came to shape which perspectives to highlight and how.

At the outset, the authors of the *Protocol's* common social studies curriculum requested three literature reviews from Alberta Education to inform their work and to reflect the student population they were associated with (Gillis, 2005). These literature reviews focused on Francophone education (Stocco, 1999), "Aboriginal" education (Cardinal, 1999), and trends in social studies research written in English (McKay & Gibsay, 1999). In other words, the first two reviews focused on the needs of specific groups of students in social studies, while the third did not do so. Accordingly, some groups of students (i.e., Francophone and Indigenous students) came to be "marked" (Bougeault & Pietrantonio, 1994; Brekhus, 1996) as different but not others (i.e., Anglophone students). The common social studies curriculum would reflect such "marking" (Haque, 2014, p. 120) by dedicating much of its description to Francophone and Indigenous curriculum authors, perspectives, and students. A third group that was difficult to identify, which Mlodzinski marked as "Anglophone," thus became a silent partner to these proceedings.

The proposition to include learning outcomes related to "perspectives" appeared primarily in the literature review of "Aboriginal" education. The author of this review, Phyllis Cardinal (1999), cited James Banks, one of the pioneers of multicultural education, and his vastly influential

model for integrating content about marginalized groups into curricula (Nieto, 2009). Banks' (1989, 2012) model scaffolded the integration of minority perspectives from "The contribution" (through the inclusion of learning about a group's heroes) to "The transformative" approach (1989, p. 192). This latter level involved students learning about perspectives and groups and the ways in which they have transformed their society; unlike the superficial level, this type of learning was intended to take place every year. Since it reflected the ways in which the curriculum was conceived, according to Gillis (2005), the *Protocol's* authors chose to apply the transformative approach as a rationale for including mentions of specific perspectives. An American model of approaching curriculum was therefore imported but was Canadianized (an ongoing trend in Canadian social studies education, as noted by Clark, 2004) to reflect the particular needs of certain groups of peoples whose representatives were now, unlike before, sitting at the curriculum-making table (Hébert, 2010; Kahane, 2000; Shields & Ramsay, 2004).

For its part, the literature review of Francophone education mentioned the lack of content about Francophones in curricula across English Canada. The review author, Denise Stocco (1999), referred to this lack: "There is often not enough content available to cover the topic [of Francophones] adequately [in English Canada social studies curricula]" (p. 15). Content about French speakers was not integrated "throughout" these curricula, but rather it was included in a separate section as an addition. The review suggested including such content more systematically throughout the common curriculum to meet the needs of Francophone students. Francophone students had the right to learn about themselves as Francophones to secure their group vitality while also learning about the Western Canadian English-speaking culture in which they were embedded (Stocco, 1999). The Francophone review argued for the inclusion of more content about Francophones while presenting it mostly in isolation from others, such as content about Indigenous

peoples, which was largely left untreated in the review. Accordingly, rather than investigating and highlighting commonalities between Indigenous and Francophone perspectives, the two perspectives were treated predominantly as separate from one another in subsequent versions of the curricula.

The Foundation Document (1999)

The teams of Francophone, Indigenous, and Anglophone authors published their first text, the *Foundation Document*, in 1999. The *Document* revealed its authorship by stating that “Aboriginal and Francophone representatives” worked as “full and equal partners” for the “first time in Western and Northern Canadian history in the production of common school programming” (WCP, 1999, p. 4). The *Document* also mentioned, for the first time, the need for students to “appreciate and respect English language, Francophone, Aboriginal, and multiple perspectives” and to “understand how they have shaped Canadian society” (Mlodzinski, 1999, p. 96). The curriculum thus set out to highlight three groups distinctively by naming them, while collapsing others into the “multiple” category. This sort of presentation was criticized by scholars such as Richardson (2002) for creating a national hierarchy between named and non-named entities in Canada. In naming certain groups and not others, the *Foundation Document* reflected the power of the consultants to highlight the relevance of learning about the groups of which they were representatives.

The mandate to learn about multiple named and non-named perspectives reflected various influences. Required actions such as to “appreciate and respect” certain perspectives reflected the affective learning domain of Bloom’s taxonomy (i.e., learning goals related to value and attitudes), which had been present in Alberta’s social studies curricula since the 1970s (Ottmann & Pritchard, 2010). References to how these perspectives had shaped Canada replicated the language used in

Banks' transformative approach. However, the transformative approach did not propose to teach the same perspectives from one grade level to another, but rather to select those perspectives most appropriate to the topic being studied (Banks, 1989). By requesting a systematic acknowledgement of these perspectives (i.e., across grades), the authors of the *Protocol* Canadianized Banks' American approach. Historian Penney Clark (1997, 2004) noted that American approaches (such as Bloom's taxonomy or Banks' approach) and their Canadianization (e.g., in naming specific groups as requiring systemic appreciation across a curriculum) have been a constant influence in Canadian social studies curriculum development.

The *Document's* four-page description of "Aboriginal" peoples and Francophones highlighted the influence of the Indigenous education review in promoting the use of "perspectives." Despite the differences between First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, they were said to share "a similar perspective" which "describe[d] their place, knowledge, and skills in their world" (Mlodzinski, 1999, p. 102). For their part, Francophones were described as sharing their "immersion in a predominantly English language country leading to assimilation" (p. 104). Inspired by the 1994 National Council for the Social Studies' *Curriculum Standards* (Shields & Ramsay, 2004), reference to *perspectives* was made only in relation to Indigenous peoples, not Francophones. The *Document* prescribed the learning of "English language" perspectives but did not define the group to which they belonged. In its description of groups, the term perspectives was more closely tied to Indigenous groups, while the definitive feature of Francophones was their concerns about living in French in an Anglophone-dominant environment. Such descriptions reflected the ways in which Francophone and Indigenous literature reviews presented the term perspectives.

Finally, another influence of the literature reviews was the proposition to create “distinctive [Francophone or Aboriginal] outcomes” (WCP, 1999, p. 14). These outcomes were learning objectives designed only for Francophone or Indigenous students to meet their needs as outlined in the respective literature reviews (Cardinal, 1999; Stocco, 1999). The content to be learned was specifically about the histories and perspectives of these groups, considered separately from one another (Francophones were not required to learn the same distinctive outcomes as Indigenous students), which paralleled another theme that emerged from the literature reviews. These specific objectives were not aimed at non-Francophone and non-Aboriginal students, who were only required to pursue the general learning outcomes that Francophone and Indigenous students also had to learn. The learning needs of English language students were taken for granted as no specific outcome was designed for them. The curriculum thus made some groups of students appear to need distinct attention and particular learning outcomes, while the others were left unmarked and required fewer learning outcomes.

In 1999, feedback about the *Foundation Document* gathered by surveying teachers and other interested parties highlighted some criticisms of the acknowledgement granted to Indigenous and Francophone perspectives and students. In such consultations – “approximately 550 people attended one of 16 forums” in Alberta (Alberta Learning, 1999, p. 3) – one of the contentious issues was the inclusion of references to Francophone and Aboriginal education:

Specific references to Aboriginal and Francophone education and students in the Introduction, Vision, Role of Social Studies, and Guiding Principles have generated a negative response from many of the respondents. Suggestions range from deleting these, moving them elsewhere in the document or lessening the emphasis. (Proactive Information Services, 1999, p. 1)

This report for all jurisdictions advised the authors of the *Protocol* to be cautious of “being viewed as ... exclusionary” (Proactive Information Services, 1999, p. 8). Such comments fit into the logic

of a “zero-sum game,” in which gains for some groups are seen as losses for other groups (Bartal, 2007). Such logic was apparent in a synthesis of 36 comments cited in the Appendix to the Alberta report: “too much emphasis on Aboriginal and Francophone while ignoring or at the expense of others and Canadianism as a whole” (Alberta Learning, 1999, p. 26). Viewed through that logic, the gains for Francophone and Indigenous peoples within the *Foundation Document* were made at the “expense” of other groups and of “Canadianism” as a whole.

Accordingly, the consultation reports suggested that program authors “place greater emphasis on a multicultural view of Canada, and this should be made immediately clear in the document” (Proactive Information Services, 1999, p. 8). As part of his doctoral dissertation, J. Paul Stewart (2002) interviewed participants in the Alberta consultations who were requesting such a multicultural view. One stated: “I teach in a rural area where there are many Hungarians. We don’t have Hungarians in [the *Foundation Document*] ... why do we have Francophones?” (p. 90). Another participant stated that teachers were not endorsing the project proposed by the *Foundation Document* because they viewed it as privileging two groups over others: “If you bring the Aboriginal [peoples] and the Francophones into the curriculum, how do you sell it to teachers? How do you get them to buy into it? It’s almost a mini Charlottetown Accord” (p. 90). The Charlottetown Accord to which this participant referred proposed to acknowledge Francophones (especially Québécois) and Indigenous peoples in the Canadian constitution through references, respectively, to their distinct status and their rights to self-government (Mackay, 2002). Most Canadians rejected the Accord “for a wide variety of very complex reasons” (Behiels, 2008, p. 1): some rejected it because of a perceived injustice to other provinces and territories if Québec society gained distinct status (Langlois, 2018; Resnick, 1994; Russell, 2017; Webber, 1994). In that sense, the proposition to distinctively acknowledge Francophone and Indigenous perspectives, groups

and students in the *Foundation Document*, and the concurrent criticism it received, echoed larger Canadian constitutional debates of the time (Gillis, 2005).

The finalized *Document* published in 2000 revealed a reconfigured mandate to learn about multiple perspectives, including those of Francophones and Indigenous peoples. “Multiple perspectives” appeared in various forms in the mandate (see Table 1 below), signifying that they were now the focus of attention, as suggested by the consultation reports. The mandate did not include references to the English language group, possibly as a response to criticisms made during the consultations, such as this one: “while Aboriginal and Francophone reflect identifiable groups, the term ‘English language’ does not” (Proactive Information Services, 1999, p. 10). As noted in the Alberta consultation, “the use of the phrase ‘English language’ elicited ‘some discomfort’” (Alberta Learning, 1999, p. 6). The consultations seemed to have a profound effect on the mandate, although it upheld its acknowledgement of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives, which had been identified by the curriculum authors as non-negotiable (Gillis, 2005). The finalized *Foundation Document* mentioned in passing that the common curriculum “will reflect the historical context and importance of Canada’s First Peoples and founding nations” (WCP, 2000, p 4). It seems likely that the new mandate erased the presence of one of the “founding nations” (first by omitting the phrase “English language perspectives,” and then, in the final 2002 version, by omitting the reference to “founding nations”) in response to criticism. It continued to highlight the perspectives of multiple groups and retained references to Indigenous and Francophone perspectives.

Table 1. Comparison of the changes made to sentences using the term “perspectives” between the draft and final versions of the *Foundation Document*.

Draft <i>Foundation Document</i> (1999)	Revised <i>Foundation Document</i> (2000)
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[The Framework] will be reflective of Aboriginal, English language, Francophone, and multiple cultural perspectives.	The Framework will be reflective of diverse cultural perspectives, including Aboriginal and Francophone, that contribute to Canada's evolving realities.
The role of Social Studies is to enable students to appreciate and respect Aboriginal, Francophone, English language, and multiple cultural perspectives, and understand how these perspectives have shaped Canada's political and cultural reality.	Social Studies enables students to appreciate and respect diverse Canadian cultural perspectives, including Aboriginal and Francophone, and understand how these perspectives have shaped Canada's political and cultural reality.
In order to reflect Canadian diversity, Social Studies should focus on the roles, perspectives, and contributions of Aboriginal, English language, Francophone, and the many other cultural groups of Canada.	The Framework should reflect Canadian diversity, focusing on the roles, perspectives, and the contributions of the many cultures of Canada, including Aboriginal and Francophones cultures.

The addition of Nunavut in 2000, the departure of British Columbia in the same year, and the departure of Alberta in 2001 transformed the newly named *Western and Northern Canadian Protocol*. The remaining jurisdictions (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut) finalized the common program on their own in 2001 and released it in 2002. Due to timeline issues in the curriculum's delivery (Stewart, 2002), Alberta's representatives started to create their own provincial social studies curriculum, influenced by their experiences in the *Protocol* (Shields & Ramsay, 2004). That influence was reflected by hiring the Francophone, Indigenous, and Anglophone consultants who had participated in the *Protocol* to develop Alberta's new social studies curriculum (Pashby, 2013). These consultants also reflected the influence of the *Protocol* by importing its mandate to learn distinctively about certain perspectives. The departure of jurisdictions such as Alberta reflected the massive challenges inherent in the *Protocol's* attempt to foster a common vision for social studies. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the *Protocol's* innovative and long-lasting effects on Canadian curriculum-making practices and content.

Although it was never implemented, the *Protocol's* common social studies curriculum had considerable influence on the social studies programs in most of Western and Northern Canada (Shields & Ramsay, 2004). In the 2000s, most of the *Protocol's* jurisdictions implemented, in one way or another, the mandate to learn about Francophone and Indigenous perspectives (Alberta Education, 2005; Manitoba, 2003; Northwest Territories, 2009; Nunavut, n.d.; Saskatchewan, 2010). The authors of the common curriculum went on to propose innovations that were implemented in their particular jurisdictions (for example, in Nunavut, see McGregor, 2015). One such innovation was the mandate to learn about multiple perspectives, including Francophone and Indigenous perspectives. Another innovation was the partnership model through inviting Francophone and Indigenous partners to the curriculum-making table. Innovations developed during the *Protocol* negotiations went on to take shape locally and to be adapted to the needs of each jurisdiction, including Alberta.

The Development of the Current Social Studies Curriculum in Alberta (2001–2010)

Based on their previous experiences with the *Protocol*, Francophone, Anglophone and Indigenous authors began to write a new social studies curriculum in 2001 (LearnAlberta, 2007; Pashby, 2013). In their first version of the curriculum, they included a mandate to learn about different perspectives, albeit with a newly refined rationale. That rationale can be seen as defining in more detail the *Protocol's* stated goal to foster a “Canadian spirit” among students:

Alberta's new social studies program recognizes that Canada is a partnership between culturally diverse Aboriginal Canadians, culturally diverse English-speaking Canadians and culturally diverse Francophone Canadians. Each of these groups enjoys collective rights that are rooted in Canadian history, entrenched in Canada's constitution, and protected by Canadian law. To maintain Canadian unity, it is essential to promote mutual recognition, understanding and cooperation among these partners. One strategy to do so is to explore topics and issues from diverse perspectives. The new Social Studies program will do this by integrating Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives with those of other Canadians. By exploring divergent visions of Canada's national story, the various partners in the Canadian federation can maintain a dialogue with each other, learn from one another,

and work together to build a Canada in which all citizens feel a strong sense of belonging. (Alberta Learning, 2002, p. 84)

This paragraph reflected a vision of Canada as a tri-pillar partnership (Saul, 1998), and suggested that the goal of social studies was to foster mutual recognition (Taylor, 1994) among these partners, the means of which was learning about the partners' perspectives. However, much like in the *Protocol*, the authors experienced difficulty in naming the need to learn about the perspectives of the (silent) partner, English-speaking Canadians. The Alberta curriculum authors reflected their power by configuring a curriculum that focused on the groups they represented as well as others (Pashby, 2013).

The next two drafts of the curriculum, published in the summer of 2002, also reflected the influence of the *Protocol* in the definition of Indigenous and Francophone groups. Each draft described Francophones as “multicultural” and as coming from “different traditions and histories” but sharing “common concerns about the vitality of their language, culture and identity in the North American and global context” (Alberta Learning, 2002a, 2002b, p. 3). Similar to the *Protocol*, and compared to Indigenous peoples, it is not Francophones' common perspectives that are emphasized but rather their concern for the collective vitality of French-speaking peoples.

The major change from the *Protocol*, however, is the description of English-speaking Canadians in a section that prescribed students to learn about Canadian Peoples (including Indigenous peoples and Francophones). Linked with 22 cited countries of origin, English-speaking Canadians' commonalities are described in the following terms: “Common to these Canadians is their use of English as their everyday language in public space” (Alberta Learning, 2002a, p. 4). These drafts mirrored a new vision of Canada as founded by three partners, a new goal for social studies (mutual recognition) and a now-old means for doing so – learning about the partners' perspectives as well as the perspectives of other groups.

The section titled “Recognizing Canada’s Peoples” (Alberta Learning, 2002a, p. 2) and the three subsections respectively dedicated to “Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples” (p. 3), “culturally diverse English-speaking Canadians” (p. 4) and “culturally diverse French-speaking Canadians” (p. 3) lasted in the curriculum for one season.

In the August draft, the authors replaced references to English-speaking Canadians (ESC) with a section titled “culturally diverse groups of Canada” (CDC) (Alberta Learning, 2002b, p. 4). The authors used almost identical definitions for these two groups (ESC and CDC), except for one sentence depicting their commonalities as sharing “English as an everyday language in public space”: that sentence was erased. More broadly, the deletion of one half of Canada’s “bilingual character” undermined the conceptual framework of the curriculum. It nullified the possibility of fostering “mutual recognition” between English and French-speaking Canadian (and Indigenous) “partners.” The changes made in the summer of 2002 remain mysterious and unexplained, but were strangely similar to changes previously made in the *Protocol* (i.e., erasing mention of English language perspectives).

In the fall of 2002, the government held a consultation on the August draft, which involved more than 1,400 people and mirrored the 1999 consultation on the *Protocol*. As a legacy of the *Protocol*, Francophone and Aboriginal peoples attended sessions specifically designed for them during these consultations (Alberta Learning, 2003). Like the *Protocol* consultations, the first point noted in the report on the 2002 consultation concerned the presentation of distinct perspectives in the draft program: “Respondents supported the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives, Francophone perspectives, and multiple perspectives” (p. 2), but criticized the program which “lacked a sense of recognition for multiple perspectives” (p. 2). Two “representative written comments” (p. 12)

reflected this tension, one of which noted the lack of recognition of more than three heritages, while the second celebrated (in French) their recognition, as follows:

- 1) “Respect for diverse heritage is stated in the text, yet only three heritages are mentioned” (p. 13).
- 2) “Bonne idée de parler de la diversité et des trois peuples fondateurs” (p. 13).

The first comment suggested that the recognition of three peoples was made at the “expense” of others, while the second comment displayed satisfaction with the text. Much like the *Protocol*, the 2003 consultation report advised authors, in the context of criticism of acknowledging specific groups, “to ensure that the concept of multiculturalism was being included in the program of studies” (p. 25).

Instead of mobilizing the concept of multiculturalism, the August draft mobilized the concept of pluralism to justify the need to learn about Francophone and Indigenous perspectives. It stated, “By exploring Canada’s pluralism, partners in Canadian society will maintain a dialogue with each other, learn from one another and work together to build a Canada that celebrates its partnerships and enables all citizens to feel a strong sense of belonging” (Alberta Learning, 2002b, p. 3). In subsequent drafts, pluralism superseded multiculturalism (named but not in the same manner) as the organizing concept to legitimize the presence of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives. This emphasis on pluralism was a major shift from the days of the *Western Canadian Protocol*, when this concept was only one of three (“multiculturalism, pluralism, bilingualism”) (WCP, 2000, p. 3). Pluralism, then, can be understood as a specific vision of Canada that favours a particular categorization of its peoples (within Indigenous, Francophone, and English-speaking groups), a goal (to foster mutual recognition) and a pedagogical means (to learn about their perspectives). However, much like in the *Protocol*, English-speaking Canadians were extracted

from pluralism and replaced with reference to diverse Canadians (unbounded by specific commonalities other than being multiple, and not being Francophone or Indigenous).

In response, but also in opposition, to the consultation report's recommendations, the curriculum authors changed the title of the section on "Canada's peoples" to "pluralism: diversity and cohesion" (Alberta Learning, 2003a, p. 4). This change reflected a need to highlight the many features of pluralism more efficiently (these features being described as "First nations, Inuit, and Métis cultures, official bilingualism, immigration, multiculturalism"; p. 5). It enabled the authors to justify the need to learn from multiple perspectives, including Francophone and Indigenous perspectives, each of which represented a pillar of pluralism. The replacement of the conception of Canada as based on partnerships by one based on pluralism is well expressed on the first page of the 2003 (and subsequent versions of the) curriculum:

Central to the vision of the Alberta social studies program is the recognition of the diversity of experiences and perspectives and the pluralistic nature of Canadian society. Pluralism builds upon Canada's historical and constitutional foundations, which reflect the country's Aboriginal heritage, bilingual nature and multicultural realities. (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 1)

This major shift (from Canada's peoples to pluralism) has remained in place through to today's version of the curriculum. It is now the pluralistic nature of Canada that justifies the need to learn about multiple, Francophone and Indigenous perspectives.

The overall goal of the current social studies curriculum is to support the development of students' identity and citizenship through learning about multiple perspectives. The intersection of these two concepts (identity and citizenship) provides a strong rationale for learning perspectives: "Individuals need to feel that their identities are viewed as legitimate before they can contribute to the public good and feel a sense of belonging and empowerment as citizens" (p. 4). In other words, through learning perspectives, students and schools validate group identity in ways that contribute

to their agency. This goal is coherent with earlier references to identity and citizenship in the *Protocol*, and with a core premise of multicultural education for students to see themselves in curricula (McKay & Gibson, 1999). However, contrary to multicultural education, pluralism as defined here specifically mentions certain perspectives. The new rationale also included mention of undefined “historical and constitutional reasons” (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 4), supporting Francophone and Indigenous education, and the need to learn these groups’ perspectives to understand Canada.

The 10-page introduction of the 2005 Alberta social studies curriculum cited explicit reasons for learning about Francophone perspectives. These included reflecting the bilingual nature of Canada, understanding Canada, respecting historical and constitutional reasons, supporting Francophone education, and operationalizing the core concepts of the program (identity and citizenship). These reasons contained a specific conception of Canada (as a bilingual country with historical and constitutional prerogatives), goals to be achieved (understanding Canada, supporting Francophone education), and the means to do so (reflecting, requiring, understanding, appreciating and respecting Francophone perspectives). In keeping with these means, the words “Francophone perspectives” appeared three times in the opening pages:

- “The program reflects multiple perspectives, including Aboriginal and Francophone, that contribute to Canada’s evolving realities” (p. 1);
- “Social studies provides learning opportunities for students to: ... appreciate and respect how multiple perspectives, including Aboriginal and Francophone, shape Canada’s political, socioeconomic, linguistic and cultural realities” (p. 2); and
- “SOCIAL STUDIES AND FRANCOPHONE PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES[.] For historical and constitutional reasons, an understanding of Canada requires an understanding: ... of Francophone perspectives” (p. 4).

These three statements referred to a definition of the program (it “reflects” Francophone perspectives by conforming to Canadian “realities”), a goal for learning about those perspectives

(understanding Canada), and a means of doing so (providing “learning opportunities”). Like earlier versions of the curriculum produced since 1999, the reasons for acknowledging Francophone perspectives portrayed them as an integral part of Canada, the curriculum, and the needs of Francophone students.

The glossary for Grade 4 Alberta social studies defined a “Francophone” as “a person for whom French is the first language learned and/or still in use; a person of French language and culture” (Alberta Education, 2006, p. 11). This definition echoed the one provided in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. It highlighted the influence of constitutional reasons in justifying the need to learn about Francophone perspectives and experiences. Unlike earlier versions, however, broad definitions of the groups and the reasons why all students should learn about them, were no longer provided (the 2002 version did include some reasons, such as to “[i]ntroduce and instill an appreciation of the multi-ethnic and intercultural nature of the Canadian Francophonie”; Alberta Learning, 2002, p. 4). The main benefit of learning about these perspectives and experiences was now mainly stated only for Francophone students. While Francophones were defined in a constitutional manner, perspectives were not defined anywhere in the program, although one textbook author reported that “Alberta Education has defined ‘point of view’ as a view held by a single person. A ‘perspective’ refers to the shared view of a group or collective” (Hoogeven, 2008, p. 2).

The Future Social Studies Curriculum (2010 to 2021)

Successive reforms since 2010 have led to the current heavily criticized attempt of the Alberta government to revamp its social studies curricula yet again. The most recent reform started under the auspices of a Progressive Conservative government “as a response to the changing needs of students in the 21st century” (Bohachyk, 2015, p. 5), and via the Alberta Ministry of Education’s

2010 report titled *Inspiring Education*. The arrival of the NDP government in 2015, after several decades of conservative regimes, accelerated the reform and writing of these curricula (French, 2016). In 2016, the NDP announced a more specific schedule for the rewrite, with a 2020 target for the K-4 curricula in six subjects: arts, science, math, language arts, wellness and social studies (French, 2016). Then-Minister of Education, David Eggen, justified the reform in these terms: “[t]he current curriculum used by students is between eight and 30 years old. Some material predates the introduction of the internet. ... The world is changing” (CBC News, 2016). Successive reform attempts that were unparalleled in scope (i.e., the concurrent reform of six subject matters) created, much as in the *Protocol*, a hub for curriculum innovation that favoured (for a time) an expansion of the acknowledgement granted to Francophone and Indigenous perspectives.

According to the framework for ongoing reform since 2016 (Alberta Education, 2016, 2020), the new curricula were required to include references to Indigenous and Francophone perspectives due to constitutional obligations, but also in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s *Calls to Action* (Solverson, 2018). Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the aligned educational rights of Francophones were now more specifically defined as a rationale for the acknowledgement of Francophone perspectives. The Alberta government’s biggest commitment may have been to develop these programs simultaneously in French and English, a project already at the heart of the social studies curriculum developed by the *Protocol* but now applied to several other curricula. Henri Lemire, a French school board superintendent, was pleased with this commitment:

“Developing a replacement in French and English together is great news for francophone and French immersion students and their parents,” he said. “In the past, it took as long as two years to translate new curriculum into French... Alberta’s been trudging with this far too long. The minister, this morning, wants to correct something,” Lemire said. (French, 2016a)

The NDP government released the first drafts of its curricula in 2017–2018 in both French and English, each with an introductory section dedicated to Francophones and Indigenous peoples.

However, the new Alberta government elected in 2019 altered the NDP reform. During his 2019 election campaign, the United Conservative Party (UCP) leader Jason Kenney made the following promise:

We will stop the NDP's ideological rewrite of the school curriculum, and we will consult with parents and experts ... to develop a modern curriculum that is focused on essential knowledge and skills instead of political agendas and failed teaching fads. (Bennett, 2019, para. 6)

Shortly after his election, Kenney followed through on this promise. His government's reform of the curriculum developed under the NDP has since been widely criticized by Alberta's teachers and education experts (Alberta Curriculum Analysis, n.d.). Part of the reform under the UCP government made a series of moves that affected the status of Francophones in the curriculum. Anglophone-centric ways of doing curriculum, which had been denounced during the days of the *Protocol*, resurfaced under the auspices of the UCP, particularly in the case of social studies.

Many actions undertaken by the UCP decreased the acknowledgement of Francophones in the curriculum. First, Education Minister Adriana LaGrange hired an advisory committee to review the reform which did not include any Francophone education experts; unsurprisingly, they produced a report that failed to mention Francophones (Joly, 2020). This committee issued a new draft of the *Ministerial Order for Student Learning* to guide the reform, which also omitted any reference to Francophones (Alberta Education, 2020a). Criticisms ensued, which attempted to re-secure the place of Francophones in the curriculum (ACFA, 2021). The Minister of Education responded that the Francophone community “continues to be a precious partner for the Alberta educational system” (LaGrange, 2020). Decreasing attention to Francophone matters has led, as it

did prior to the *Protocol*, to resurgent advocacy by Francophones to re-include their perspectives at the curriculum-making table.

The UCP has responded to some of these criticisms. A reference to “Alberta’s Francophone history” (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 6) appeared in the final *Order* published in December 2020. The guide for the new curriculum also contains similar references to Francophones as the one produced by the NDP, although the rationale for including those references is more focused on Francophones’ presence in Alberta, such as “the first European language spoken in the land that is now Alberta” (p. 20). For social studies, the framework for reform prioritized the perspectives of “local Indigenous and Francophone communities,” but also those of “Albertans of European, African, Asian, and Middle Eastern descent; and newcomers from various parts of the world” (p. 10). This formulation reflects a positive response to a long-lasting request by many Albertans during previous government consultations (the most recent ones being in 2016 and 2017) to include more perspectives in that curriculum mandate (Alberta Education, 2016, 2017). It also shows a move to localize Francophones in Alberta, instead associating them with their status as a pan-Canadian group.

Many criticisms of recent actions of the UCP-led government have emerged in regard to the development of the social studies curriculum. C. P. Champion and Paul Bennett, the consultants who coordinated the writing of the first version of the curriculum in 2020, had no affiliation with either Francophone or Indigenous groups (French, 2021). Critics have argued that the new draft social studies curriculum and others are racist, age-inappropriate, plagiarized, and lack Francophone perspectives (ACFA, 2021; Scott, 2021). As a result, many Alberta school boards (56 out of 61), including the four Francophone boards, refused the government’s request to pilot the reform in schools (French, 2021a). The omission of Francophone perspectives, a term

that has now entered common parlance in Alberta, serves in the advocacy movement to delegitimize the reform. Since the curricula did not include such perspectives, it was argued that they could not be considered representative of Alberta's education landscape (Faculté Saint-Jean, 2021).

Currently, for the year 2021, some signs of collaboration are beginning to emerge in response to critiques of the Alberta educational reform. The Alberta government has just announced a rewrite of some of the curricula, including social studies, with new and more sustained partnerships, including with Francophones (French, 2021a). Reported discontent from many Albertans, as well as the Northwest Territories' decision to abandon its use of Alberta's curriculum, have forced the government to reaffirm the reform's legitimacy. Again, this backlash creates new opportunities for Francophones and the recognition of their perspectives. Many commentators now use the term "Francophone perspectives" to reclaim their presence in the curriculum: a new "blueprint" (Alberta Education, 2021a, p. 1) for the social studies curriculum revealed that the government was seeking partnerships and listening to stakeholders, according to the president of Alberta's Francophone school boards (Le Café Show, 2021a). Collaboration against the reform and the recent government response to it have enabled Francophones and their perspectives to remain in the curriculum conversation.

Discussion

References to Francophone perspectives in the Alberta curriculum reflect, in part, "elitist policy-making" (Tomkins, 2008, p. 387). In the case of the *Western Canada Protocol*, elite Anglophone and Francophone consultants played a key role in the inclusion of Indigenous curriculum authors. This team of consultants (Anglophone, Francophone and Indigenous) worked as full and equal partners for the first time in Canadian history to create a common social studies

curriculum that included a mandate to learn about the perspectives of their groups. Ultimately, it was the inclusion of Francophone and Aboriginal representatives at the curriculum-writing table that allowed these groups to influence the shape of the curriculum, in line with what political philosopher Anne Phillips (1998) has called the “politics of presence.”⁷ These representatives were the ones who included, and defended against criticism, the mandate to learn about Francophone, Indigenous and “multiple” perspectives. Recent reforms of social studies and history education in various provinces have revealed the importance of these partnerships at the elite level of curriculum writers. Without these partnerships, curricular reforms tend to be contested, as is happening currently in Alberta and Québec (EMSB, 2019, 2021; Laboret, 2021). More widely accepted reforms have resulted from curriculum writers teaming up with Indigenous partners in British Columbia (Miles, 2020) and Ontario (St-Pierre, 2018).

Some important insights have emerged during the telling of this curriculum story, including an understanding of who counts as Francophone and why Francophone perspectives matter. I summarize these primary learnings below.

Who are Francophones?

It is interesting to note that the definition of Francophones changed from one version of the curriculum to the next, between 1999 and 2021. These definitions exemplified the changing

⁷ Political philosopher Anne Phillips has argued for a crucial change in the ways just policy could be enacted in liberal democracy, namely from politics of ideas to politics of presence. For this article, a politics of ideas means that curriculum designers would have committed to the idea of including Francophone perspectives, but these designers would not have come from Francophone groups per se. Because of the unsatisfactory response to injustice of the first politics – who should make the commitment and on behalf of whom? – politics of presence slowly gained traction in social movement as exemplified in the *Western Canadian Protocol* by the specific hiring of a Francophone curriculum designer. Although commitment toward the inclusion of Francophone perspectives may be a necessary first step in their recognition in curricula, this article highlights that this is insufficient. Faced with multiple criticisms, and several rounds of revision to the mandate to value these perspectives, Francophone designers, by their presence, were able to secure the recognition of the perspectives of their groups and ensure continuity between versions of curricula. In this sense, exposure and detailing politics of presence within social studies curriculum-making practices in Western and Northern Canada, over 20 years specifically in Alberta, is an original contribution of this article.

nature of what ought to be recognized in Francophone perspectives across curricula. The *Foundation Document* focused on the “increasing rate of assimilation [leading] to a sense of cultural ambiguity” (Mlodzinski, 1999, p. 104). Since 2002, curricula have focused more on the rights and status of Francophones in a bilingual Canada, while the latest draft published in 2020 and 2021 also referred more specifically to the contributions of Francophones to Alberta. Over the years, curriculum writers have gradually de-recognized the Anglophone-dominated environment in which Francophones live, while erasing any mention of Anglophone groups in the introductions to these curricula. While this Anglophone-dominated environment remained acknowledged within scholarly research, it was no longer part of the conversation within the curriculum itself (den Heyer, 2019). Francophones are now recognized in the curriculum as rights holders, but the reasons they acquired these rights in the first place have mostly disappeared from the introductions. An Anglophone-dominant environment still exists in Alberta (Aunger, 2005; Frideres, 1998; Gillis & Takam, 2020) and it is for this reason that Francophones must continue to be acknowledged in the social studies curriculum (Stocco, 1999).

Why Do Francophone Perspectives Matter?

Acknowledging Francophones and Indigenous peoples provides an alternative to the domination of Anglophones in the writing and content of the curriculum. This dominance can be understood as the ability of Anglophones, with or without British ancestry, to govern the writing process of curricula in most places in Canada (Kahane, 2000; Mlodzinski, 2006). Such acknowledgement of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives signals a profound reconfiguration of what political philosopher Nancy Fraser (2011) termed the “politics of redistribution.” These politics of redistribution take place when it is time to allocate attention and power to certain groups in curricula and their design. Acknowledging Francophone and Indigenous groups provided an

alternative to the dominance of Anglophones by redistributing power to marginalized groups in curriculum-making practices. In that sense, this acknowledgement opens the door and sets a precedent toward fairer redistribution of power in Canadian social studies curriculum development.

Francophone groups have recently argued that the current curriculum reform reasserts Anglophone domination (ACFA, 2021). The naming of two predominantly Anglophone curriculum makers to supervise the curriculum-making, albeit contested, reflects that dominance in a way that is reminiscent of pre-*Western Protocol* days (Scott, 2021). This dominant Anglophone group is difficult to define, however, as compared to Francophone or Indigenous groups, which are marked entities in the curriculum. The research has revealed several attempts to make this group disappear (or invisible) from social studies altogether, the latest being in the new Framework for the reform, which names Anglophone perspectives in arts and language arts but not in social studies (Alberta Education, 2020).

The partnership that supported the integration of Francophone perspectives into the Alberta social studies curriculum is no longer involved in the most recent reform. Anglophone consultants coordinated the revisions to the curriculum and then sent their drafts to Francophones, Indigenous peoples and other consultants for comment. This approach replicates the old way of reforming curricula, as described by one of the *Protocol's* developers: “Not too long ago ... anglophone programmers would make up a curriculum and then send it to native and Francophone educators for comment” (Conlogue, 2000). It is not surprising, then, that Francophone and Indigenous groups, as well as many others, are refusing to endorse the draft curricula published in 2020 and 2021 by the Alberta government. The acknowledgement of Francophone perspectives now provides firm ground on which to contest provincial curricula that were not conceived

collaboratively and therefore replicated old Anglophone-centric ways. Francophone perspectives are a reminder that it is possible to produce curricula differently in Alberta, elsewhere in Canada, and in the world.

ARTICLE 2: WHY THEM, NOT OTHERS?

This article was originally published with David Scott as co-author in the *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research* [IJHLTR], Volume 15, Number 1 – (Autumn/Winter) in 2017. The article was produced by both authors, who separated the tasks equally (around 50% each) for its completion. Even though I was the first author of the article, we were both responsible for every part of the argument presented. For this thesis, I re-worked the article entirely, although approximately 30% of the original text remains in this revised article: this means that around 15% of the text included in this chapter is attributable to David Scott. In this sense, up to 85% of the chapter can be attributed to me. Although the first article was co-authored with David Scott, this chapter should be considered an original contribution on my part, in collaboration with David Scott. In the present article, I assume responsibility for every part of the argument presented.

Questioning Why Francophone Perspectives Matter in Alberta Social Studies

Abstract

Since 2005, Alberta's social studies curriculum has required students in K-12 to learn about Francophone perspectives (Alberta Education, 2005). According to the curriculum, the mandate is justified for "historical and constitutional reasons," which are left undefined. However, a close reading of the history of the mandate reveals that many Albertans, including teachers, do not endorse or understand the curriculum mandate or its justification (Article 1). Accordingly, this article employs a secondary data analysis (Turgeon & Bernatchez, 2010) to explore Albertans' feedback toward the mandate since it was first introduced in 1999. Contextualizing analysis (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2016) of the feedback gathered through government consultations, surveys, and academic research reveals that many Alberta social studies teachers associate the notions of Francophone perspectives with Québec and the past – not with present-day Alberta. They have criticized the need to learn their perspectives distinctively compared to others. Teachers and other Albertans suggest that such distinct recognition toward specific groups is unfair. It is important to understand and interpret these comments and critiques in light of the recent contested curricular reform in Alberta (Scott, 2021), which plans to extend the mandate to six subjects (arts, language arts, science, mathematics, social studies and wellness). As of now, the mandate lacks "legitimacy" (Gagnon, 2021) because it runs counter to many Albertans' conceptions of who Francophones are and what sort of recognition they deserve.

Introduction

Provincial and territorial governments in Canada have historically used social studies to educate students about the country in which they live (Clark, 2004; Gereluk & Scott, 2014). They did so to foster allegiance and understanding to the state – Canada – by seeking to foster unity among citizens through learning about each other (Osborne, 2012). Social studies courses have been a main vehicle to foster such belonging and unity as it offers a site where students learn about who they are in relation to others and issues that provoke divergent opinions among the citizenry (Clark & Case, 2013; Hébert & Wilkinson, 2002; Tomkins, 2008). Influenced by the realities of immigration and research on multicultural education published since the 1970s (Banks, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1992; McKay & Gibson, 1999), educational jurisdictions in Canada have introduced curricular initiatives that seek to make the curriculum more sensitive and relevant to the culture and perspectives of minority groups such as Francophones and Indigenous peoples, but also a host of other groups previously underrepresented in curricula (Joshee et al., 2016; Peck & Sears, 2016; Werner et al., 1977). Public acceptance is one of the main challenges faced by these inclusive initiatives, since they tend to disrupt the status quo in Canada, but also elsewhere (Tamir, 1993, 2003), such as in Europe (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2000). Educating students about both the country and the educational jurisdiction in which they live (such as Alberta) invokes questions about how to define the country from multiple perspectives (Osborne, 2012; von Heyking, 2006), and more specifically, whose perspectives should be prioritized to favour such understandings.

Citing the Alberta social studies curriculum published in 2005 as an example, historian of Canadian social studies Ken Osborne (2012) stated that “to learn history [and social studies] is not to be inducted into an established national tradition, but to learn to engage in a continuing debate about the meaning of the present and the direction of the future” (p. 164). The Alberta social

studies curriculum exemplifies these trends according to Osborne and other scholars (Hébert, 2010; Joshee et al., 2016; Peck and Sears, 2016; Sears, 2010). Its “most noteworthy feature,” as described by curriculum theorist Kent den Heyer (2009),

is its call for teachers to take up citizenship and identity through the multiple perspectives of Aboriginal and Francophone readings of Canada’s past and contemporary issues (ranging from the story of Canada as a nation-state in Grade 9 to globalization in Grade 10 to nationalism in Grade 11 and to ideologies in Grade 12). (p. 343)

Crafted through an unprecedented collaboration between Indigenous, Francophone and Anglophone curriculum designers (Article 1), the general K-12 curriculum mandate requires that students learn to “appreciate and respect how multiple perspectives, including Aboriginal and Francophone, shape Canada’s political, socio-economic, linguistic and cultural realities” (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 2). The Ministry of Education has defined perspectives as a “the shared view of a group or collective” (Hoogeven, 2008, p. 2). For their part, the inclusion of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives were premised on undefined “historical and constitutional reasons” (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 4). Learning outcomes related to perspectives and to variously named Francophones and Indigenous peoples are found across the K-12 social studies curriculum. The mandate to learn about two specific sets of perspectives across grades reflected a major shift from previous curricula that did not attend consistently to them.

Researchers such as Aoki (1981) and Smith (1999) have noted that the introduction of an innovative curricular mandate (i.e., the mandate to learn about Francophone perspectives in Alberta social studies) does not necessarily mean that it will be adopted or implemented in a meaningful way by teachers in the field. As curriculum theorist David Smith (1999) observed, “the relationship between the [curriculum] documents and what happens in actual practice is tenuous at best” (p. 94). One reason why teachers may not implement directly what Aoki (1981) called the curriculum-as-planned (by the government) is their capacity to do so through their professional

autonomy, which empowers them to adapt learning outcomes to fit their students' needs (Gereluk et al., 2015). Reflecting this reality, a growing body of research suggests that some pre- or in-service teachers in Alberta question the legitimacy and sometimes bypass the mandate to learn Francophone perspectives (e.g., Berg, 2017; den Heyer & Abbott, 2011; den Heyer & Conrad, 2011; Scott, 2013). As Peck and Sears (2016) put it, challenging the unitary vision of Canada through engaging with multiple perspectives provokes many challenges to the status quo and creates conflict. "Approaches that recognize and attempt to include multiple understandings of identity and nation often get subverted because they are complex, difficult to deal with and have the potential to generate conflict" (p. 70). The gap between the curriculum-as-planned and the curriculum-as-lived in the classroom (Aoki, 1981) can be generated by an innovative mandate that requires teachers to consider groups and perspectives that disrupt or run counter to teachers' own understanding of their locality, province and/or country. In terms of this article specifically, reading Alberta from a Francophone perspective may disrupt social studies teachers' understanding of the province in which they work.

French-speakers were the first settlers of the province and French was the first colonial language spoken in Alberta. In that province, 99.4% of workers now speak English on the job (out of 2.6M), compared to 1.5% who speak French (Statistics Canada, 2017). Linguistic assimilation was not a random occurrence but rather a planned event produced through the establishment of a unilingual English-speaking school system when the province was created in 1905 (Anderson, 2005). In 1982 Francophones gained the right to state-funded access and control to their schooling in minority contexts in Canada. However, the government of Alberta had to be compelled through a ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada to respect these rights (*Mahé v. Alberta*, 1990). In the Canadian province least supportive of bilingualism (Brie & Mathieu, 2019), and where linguistic

assimilation policies created opportunities for the vast majority of teachers to work in and benefit from the English language, it is understandable that a curriculum mandate to value Francophone perspectives causes discomfort. These perspectives are a reminder of what had to be done and what is still being done – linguistic assimilation – to create the (English) terms under which most social studies teachers work and pass on knowledge.

In Alberta, scholars such as den Heyer (2009) and Donald (2009a, 2009b) have theorized that many educators are resistant to engage with multiple perspectives, and in particular, Indigenous perspectives. Researchers' focus on Indigenous perspectives is understandable given the historical legacy of colonialism, Indian residential schools, ongoing land claims, "and in contrast to always present Franco-Anglophone tensions around any pan-Canadian question" (den Heyer, 2009, p. 344). According to some scholars, the resistance to learning about Indigenous perspectives in Alberta, which is also found elsewhere in Canada (Côté, 2019; Dion, 2007; Kanu, 2005; St. Denis, 2011), is partly the result of the particular ways in which non-Indigenous Canadians have come to learn about the country in which they live. As Indigenous scholar Dwayne Donald (2009) argued, "[t]he socio-spatial separation of Canadian (insiders) and Aboriginal (outsiders) is a naturalized idiosyncrasy of Canadian society that has been passed down generation by generation in the form of an authoritative national historical narrative" (p. 23). Anti-racist, anti-essentialist scholar Tim Stanley (2006) has observed more broadly that Canadians, in general, "are dealing with a cultural pattern of exclusion, part of our taken-for-granted understanding of the categories that frame who and what is Canadian and who and what is not, and hence whose history counts and why" (p. 36). In the Alberta context, David Scott (2013) has synthesized the theorization of den Heyer, Donald and Stanley to postulate the effects of a "grand narrative" – a "common sense representation" of Canada and its history (Stanley, 2006, p. 34) – in the resistance

expressed by five experienced Grade 10 social studies teachers toward teaching both Indigenous and Francophone perspectives: “Because the grand narrative creates an architecture of insiders (Canadians) and outsiders (Aboriginal peoples), many educators have come to see Aboriginal ways of knowing and being as existing completely outside of Euro-Western civilization and therefore unknowable” (Scott, 2013, p. 35).

Less studied, the curriculum mandate to value Francophone perspectives in Alberta social studies may pose similar but also distinct challenges for many Albertans than attending to Indigenous, or more generic “multiple,” perspectives. One study highlighted that “many teachers and teacher candidates are experiencing stress about” the mandate because “the vast majority of teacher candidates (and their instructors) are ignorant about any perspective these communities [including Francophones and Indigenous peoples] themselves offer” (den Heyer & Conrad, 2011, p. 9). However, anecdotal evidence, such as the number of publications on Indigenous perspectives (Donald, 2009; Scott, 2013, 2016) or the results of a doctoral study (Berg, 2017) exploring eight primary teachers’ preference for teaching multiple perspectives or Indigenous perspectives (perceived as closer to Alberta than Francophone perspectives), have suggested that Francophone perspectives are marginalized in particular ways. According to political scientist Edmund Aunger (2005), the historical marginalization and linguistic assimilation of Francophones has made it difficult to envision their present-day relevance for English-speaking Albertans. According to political scientists Boily and Epperson (2014) as well as others (Béland et al., 2021), Francophones may also be readily associated with the province of Québec (where the majority of French-speakers live) due to various strands of conflicts between the two provinces (e.g., equalization, constitution, pipeline). In line with prior scholarship on Indigenous perspectives, it could be argued that Francophones are positioned outside the realm of understanding of many social studies teachers –

as existing either in the past or in Québec, and therefore irrelevant to present-day Alberta – even though Francophone communities in Alberta continue to thrive (French is the second most-spoken language in the province) and one out of ten Albertans has French-Canadian ancestry (Government of Alberta, 2018).

The study presented in this article was designed to understand Alberta social studies teachers' feedback on the curriculum mandate to value Francophone perspectives. Many academic studies, government reports and surveys have detailed Albertans' feedback about the mandate. Yet, these results have never been synthesized in relation to Francophone perspectives. In light of the extension of Francophone perspectives into six subject matters as part of the ongoing contested curriculum reform (Scott, 2021), this article synthesizes previously unrelated data sets. This study is timely since that curriculum reform lack a clear synthesis of the research on the mandate to plan for learning outcomes that would consider trends, similarities and differences emerging from feedback on the mandate.

Methodology

There exists more than 20 years of scholarly research, reports, and surveys on Albertans' views about the mandate to learn about multiple perspectives, including Francophone and Indigenous ones, in social studies. Many of the studies highlighted the considerable stress the mandate has generated among Albertan teachers and educators (den Heyer, 2009). However, the studies also revealed a gap in that literature, as many researchers do not cite each other – a gap notably observable between scholars in the field (e.g., Donald, Peck, den Heyer, Scott, Richardson) and doctoral studies (Berg, 2017; Brown, 2004; Stewart, 2002; Tupper, 2005; Windrim, 2005), government reports (Alberta Education 2016, 2017; Alberta Learning, 1999, 2001, 2002), and surveys (ATA, 2016). By bridging the established scholarly work, and especially the data they

report, with doctoral studies and other research materials, including government reports, I aim to show previously unreported patterns. The non-synthesized body of literature that I attend to, published from 1999 to 2016, offers the possibility to observe recurrent patterns, including similarities and differences in the ways in which the mandate to learn about Francophone perspectives has been engaged by social studies teachers.

A secondary data analysis (Turgeon & Bernatchez, 2010) consists of re-evaluating the quotes made by social studies teachers across various venues (master's and doctoral theses, surveys, government consultations, and reports) to understand the logic behind their feedback on the mandate. This analysis focused on quotes gathered in the various data sets, which consist of teachers' statements about Francophone perspectives. This secondary data analysis is possible because many of the studies did not cite the results of the others while nevertheless citing quotes toward the same object (here statements about the mandate) that therefore act as the unit to be compared. To complement previously gathered research, I also analyzed the results of three unreported Alberta Teachers' Association focus groups conducted in 2016 to deepen the results of a survey (ATA, 2016) as well as survey data about the ongoing reform in Alberta obtained in 2018 through a request for information. My goal was to re-evaluate quotes from teachers from various parts of Alberta, who participated in distinct feedback sessions, yet possibly expressed similar responses toward the mandate over a 17-year period – that is, before and after the implementation of the mandate in 2005.

The data used in this article are quotes from Alberta social studies teachers found during keyword searches in Academic Search Complete, ERIC, Google Scholar, Education Research Complete, and ProQuest Dissertation. The data sets composed of surveys, research, and thesis comprised quotes that mobilized keywords such as “francophone,” “French,” “Francophone

perspectives,” “perspectives,” “social studies,” and/or “Alberta.” These quotes are the primary unit of analysis, although I also focused on their context of enunciation. Accordingly, I employed a secondary level of analysis that involved not only reading quotes, but more generally, understanding the argument that was being presented in the paragraphs in which they were used. Analyzed in their context of articulation and presentation, these quotes provided a window (albeit an imperfect one) into Albertans’ understanding of Francophone perspectives.

I also analyzed what teachers said during three, one-hour focus groups conducted in 2016 to qualitatively enlarge the quantitative results of a survey conducted by the Alberta Teachers’ Association in 2015 (ATA, 2015). These three focus groups, each of which was moderated by a different scholar, centred on teachers’ opinions about the Alberta social studies curriculum, citizenship education, historical thinking, and teaching perspectives, including Francophone perspectives. A total of 23 social studies teachers participated in these focus groups. The discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed, which provided the means to extract quotes on Francophone perspectives. These quotes were then put in relation to the other data set to extract similarities and differences. These three focus groups, whose results until now have not been reported, offered complementary and in-depth feedback on the mandate.

Finally, I analyzed quotes from a 2016 survey conducted by the Alberta Department of Education about its ongoing reform of six subject-matters (science, mathematics, social studies, wellness, arts, and language arts). More than 15,000 responses were gathered from various segments of the Alberta population, including reactions to the following question about Francophone perspectives: “Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum should include and respect the unique perspectives and experiences of Francophones living in Alberta, Canada and the world”

(Alberta Education, 2016a, p. 4, q. 5). Since this question was related to the extension of the mandate to six subject matters, I have included a sample of the responses in this analysis.

My analysis focused on a subsample of these responses: the first 500 pages of transcripts (out of more than 2,000 pages) obtained, and among these, answers that contained explicit mention of Francophone perspectives (N=147; 3.6% of 4,069 responses). These responses extended the range of opinions collected to three social studies curricula between 1999 and 2016. Many responses were from teachers. However, responses also came from a range of education stakeholders including students, parents, and other interested parties. Although most of the data reported in this article comes from social studies teachers, data from that survey, from Stewart's (2002) doctoral thesis, and from government consultations includes other education stakeholders. I refer mainly to social studies teachers in my reporting of the results while remaining aware of the feedback from the broader population.

I grouped the quotes into themes (Merriam, 2009) to extract what I perceived were similarities and differences in words used and the meaning ascribed to them (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2016) in relation to Francophone perspectives. Primary themes such as "ignorance about Francophone perspectives" offered a first category of analysis through broad commonalities and differences shared by quotes gathered from social studies teachers, as well as school administrators, other teachers, students, and parents (note that the stakeholder roles were not always clearly identified in the responses). A second round of coding within these primary categories offered ways to inquire into nuances in the quotes that did not appear in the first round of coding, in order to categorize and analyze them more precisely (e.g., feeling disconnected from Francophones in Alberta). I considered the many limitations of analyzing data collected in different contexts for different purposes (Barbour, 1999). Wherever possible, I situated quotes in

the context in which they were expressed and in relation to others with similar and dissimilar meanings (Weston et al., 2001). The consistency of the themes and subthemes across the years indicates that beyond the diversity, the classification of quotes served a purpose of establishing previously unreported patterns in the feedback.

Results

According to three doctoral theses (Brown, 2004; Richardson, 1998; Tupper, 2005), teachers placed minimal value on Francophone perspectives until the mandate to learn about them was introduced in 2005. As Greg attested, there was little-to-no diversity in the pre-2005 Alberta social studies curricula: “you literally learn very little about the Francophones or the Aboriginals or the Japanese or the Ukrainians, especially here in Alberta” (cited in Brown, 2004, p. 149). Again talking about the previous curriculum published between 1988 and 1991, Sunita explained her low interest in the topics of bilingualism and Francophones since there were few mandates to do so: “After we teach the fur trade and the Riel Rebellion, there’s not much else [about bilingualism and Francophones more generally] until you get to Quebec and what’s happening today and frankly, my students just aren’t that interested anymore” (cited in Richardson, 1998, p. 142). In response to this quote, curriculum theorist Hans Smits (2004) observed that “one might worry both about the view of history that is advanced to students, and the way in which certain events are simply ignored, or not taken up in terms of students’ own lives and understandings” (p. 481). Growing up and living in Alberta is one possible explanation for students’ (and teachers’) lack of interest in learning about Francophones, as noted by John who said, “the French fact in the West was so limited that for us [western Canadians] there’s no real reason to focus on it” (cited in Richardson, 1998, p. 142). Prior to the current curriculum published in 2005, few mandates targeted learning

about Francophones, which made it difficult for teachers who had begun their teaching career before that time, to teach about the perspectives from this group after 2005.

The few opportunities to learn about or focus on Francophones in Alberta prior to 2005 provoked questions from teachers when draft versions of the current social studies curriculum were released in 1999 and after. A certain “consternation” arose, as reported here:

[H]ighlighting Aboriginal, Francophone and Other as a sort of organizational conceptual tool. I think that’s really different, that’s probably what’s causing most of the consternation out there. People that you never thought of before all of a sudden have a very special place and that’s shaking some folks, you know. (Brent, cited in Brown, 2004, p. 162)

According to Brent, this “consternation” emerged as a result of educational innovation (the mandate to value Francophone and Indigenous perspectives) which transformed the status quo (“People that you never thought of before”). However, the innovation was not solely responsible, as a sense of injustice also emerged in Brent’s articulation of “a very special place.” A comment from Lois, who participated in a government consultation on the draft version of the current curriculum exemplified and corroborated the “consternation” reported by Brent:

we got onto ‘well, what are we giving all these French guys all this stuff’? And it became alarming really, I saw this real entrenchment of, the only thing of value is what we’re currently doing and why would we move away from that? (Tupper, 2005, p. 199)

In line with the use of the word “stuff” associated with the implementation of minority perspectives (here Francophones), social studies scholar Jennifer Tupper (2005) commented on Lois’s answers by stating that “culture (outside of the dominant culture) is reduced to the status of discrete pieces of information or ‘stuff’ allocated to certain grade levels and certain topics rather than integrated throughout social studies” (p. 120).

When confronted with the mandate to learn about Francophone perspectives, some teachers questioned the definition of the peoples identified as Francophones. When asked to comment on the first version of the social studies curriculum, a research participant in Stewart’s (2002) doctoral

study commented, “I’m not sure what is meant by Francophones in the context of the western provinces” (p. 96). Sharon, a social studies teacher interviewed by Brown (2004) made a similar comment:

[W]ith the um Francophone presence in Canada, [the program] states, ‘an appreciation of how their presence and influence contribute to Canada’s foundation and identity.’ But what... I don’t know what it is that we’re supposed to appreciate about them. (p. 167)

This quote points either to ignorance or such a negative attitude towards Francophones that the teacher could not come up with any positive attributes to value them. Both teachers seemed to be asking why they should be granting attention to people who are not considered “insiders” in Alberta. The lack of a clear definition of what to value about Francophone perspectives may certainly provoke questions about the mandate’s legitimacy (i.e., its endorsement as valuable by teachers).

Some research participants did have a certain definition in mind of the terms Francophone and perspectives, but those conceptions appeared to conflict with one another. A participant in Stewart’s (2002) study commented, “Francophones from the Maritimes, Francophones from Quebec, Francophones from Alberta, Métis Francophones are all different from each other. How can we get a common thread for all these different groups?” (Voice 13, p. 98). The underlying conceptions of what constitutes a Francophone (diverse groups of individuals without commonalities) and a perspective (“the shared view of a group or collective”) (e.g., Hoogeveen, 2008; Scott, 2013) conflict with one another. And yet, the participant seemed to argue that the mandate was asking them to engage with *one* rather than multiple Francophone perspectives, or that Francophones were so diverse that they could not possibly share common perspectives. As one pre-service teacher participating in den Heyer and Abbott’s (2011) action research declared, in corroboration with “Voice 13” cited previously, “the Québécois ... are huge groups of people

of all economic, social and political backgrounds, with varying beliefs. To lump them in a group and give their collective perspective seems to diminish their individual complexities” (p. 627). Teachers also reported significant diversity even amongst Franco-Albertans, making it difficult to “lump them” together as sharing “collective perspectives,” as noted by one teacher in Scott’s (2013) focus group, who asked, “what is the Franco-Albertan perspective on the World Trade Organization?” (p. 38). The definition given to “Francophones” as a diverse group or to “perspectives” as a shared opinion by a group, did not help teachers to engage with the plurality of Francophone perspectives. Instead, it led teachers to question the feasibility of teaching a unifying perspective that would apply to a diverse group of individuals whom they perceived to be lacking in commonalities.

Since the implementation of the current Alberta social studies curriculum in 2005, researchers have not reported examples of the mobilization of Francophone perspectives in classroom settings, except for Berg (2017; see also Smith, 2007, p. 163, for a practicum experience). Such mobilization seemed to be rather infrequent and/or tied to Québec (for example, see Dale cited in Abbott, 2014, p. 166). As a case in point, of the eight elementary social studies teachers who participated in Berg’s (2017) doctoral study, the only examples a teacher provided of including Francophone perspectives were celebrating the Carnaval de Québec and serving ‘tourtière’ in the school cafeteria once per year (p. 86). The perception seemed to be that Francophones were not in Alberta, or if they were in Alberta, they were far from teachers’ reality, which explained the low levels of implementation. As reported in the following two comments in Berg’s study:

There is a large French population in Alberta, but we are not part of those pockets. So it’s more difficult around here, I think... It’s very easy in Western Canada to forget the French perspective. (Johanne, p. 87)

I always wonder about how pervasive that perspective [Francophone] even is in Alberta when you compare that to a lot of the changes in the, in our society and you talk about all the Muslim immigrants and things like that and their perspective is not a big piece yet of any of the texts that we use. (Owen, p. 160)

These comments echoed similar ones made by a teacher 20 years earlier (cited in Richardson, 1998, p. 142) as well as by one participant in a 2016 focus group:

I don't know if you're noticing this but in my classes they're saying where are you going to put French stuff? We've got other people coming in, you know, that, people from outside that we should be focusing on that, and so these Muslims, you know whatever the case may be, Syrians, that's all I'll say. (M1, cited in ATA, 2016, C. Focus group)

A particular conception surfaces in this comment about who Francophones are not (Muslim) and what their perspective is ("stuff"), which complements other comments describing Francophones as either too diverse or distant to implement their perspectives in teachers' classrooms.

Québec is the centre of attention for some teachers when they do indeed implement Francophone perspectives. In a 2016 focus group, a social studies teacher shared that "when I look at Francophone perspectives in my class it's usually from a Québécois perspective and not necessarily from [an] Alberta Francophone perspective" (M3, cited in ATA, 2016, C. Focus group). Another colleague agreed, "That's a really common view: 'Well they speak French in Quebec so that's where the Francophone perspective is coming from,' which I don't agree with but I think that's the truth" (M4, cited in C. Focus group). Even though teachers might know that Francophones live not only in Québec, they seem nonetheless caught in wrestling with that prevalent super fiction or false representation (den Heyer, 2021). By casting Francophones as living outside their Albertan reality, teachers established a "frontier logic" (Donald, 2009a, p. 9) that denied the French-speaking presence in Alberta, which, in return, could serve as an alibi to not teach about their perspectives. This reduction of Francophones to Québec was contrasted with

other teachers' quotes about a group so diverse that it would be reductive to assign them one collective perspective.

There seem to be underlying prerequisites to teach about Francophone perspectives, according to some in- and pre-service teachers. A concern about knowing (or not knowing) the French language was expressed by a pre-service teacher interviewed by Abbott and Smith (2013), who reported that "Every time I tried to speak directly from a Francophone perspective I felt like a fraud. How could I purport to speak for the people I knew nothing about, whose language I did not even understand" (p. 13)? Interestingly, that pre-service teacher had had the opportunity to learn about Francophone perspectives during a university session by doing a research project on them, but that opportunity was not enough for her to overcome her feelings of being a "fraud." Distances in geography (these perspectives are in Québec) as well as in understanding (I do not know them) can also be coupled with an historical distance (they are part of the past). As one teacher attending a focus group in 2016 pointed out:

With Francophones I find it's sorry because it's not here and it's just, it doesn't resonate in the same way and I use it as an almost like a historical piece of showing it's why multiculturalism exists because Canada has always had many people living in this house. (M2 cited in ATA, 2016, C. Focus group)

The prerequisite to teach Francophone perspectives appeared implicitly (and unmet) in some of the answers gathered. These perspectives would need to be in Alberta, understandable in the official language of the province (English), and relevant for the present-day reality to be mobilized more often.

A sense of disconnection from the current-day Alberta reality plagued the mobilization of Francophone perspectives and led teachers to question the need to do so. One teacher touched on several sub-themes analyzed thus far in a lengthy but honest testimonial:

I've got to be honest like I consider myself to be much more empathetic to the perspectives of Francophone Canadians than probably your average southern Albertan, but even I myself feel geographically and culturally quite distant. Like, I encourage all my students if you ever have a chance to [visit] Quebec, do it because it opens your eyes to that reality, but while they're not in that reality it's kind of hard to just tell them about that reality and I find myself thinking that you get the kind of the hardened, you know, the generation that was probably raised by the people who hated our current prime minister's father. Um there's the, you know, kind of residue of that but then there's also the kids that are super open and like 'Yeah! Politics, great! Quebec's another province, and I know being Francophone is not the same [as] being from Quebec but I think it's kinda like they're just another province and we accept it and it's great we're bilingual.' But that's kind of the end of it. It's like no longer a big story. It's a great thing the way that we have this one province that's different, but you know, even those kids would bring up the fact that we don't spend a lot of time talking about the Manitoba perspective or the Nunavut perspective. And I think, and I mean there's a place in Canada that's linguistically and culturally very different. We don't, you know, really speak a lot to that, so I don't know it, it's just, maybe my Albertan is showing right there (laughter). (M6 cited in ATA, 2016, D., Focus group)

This teacher's testimony revealed that many (southern) Albertans' views about Francophones are shaped by stories that have circulated in the province about former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau (1968–1979, 1980–1984) (Boily & Epperson, 2014), who continues to be held accountable for a perceived injustice to Albertans through the implementation of the National Energy Program, which redistributed Alberta's oil profits to all Canadians (Orwan, 2005; Roquette & Neveu, 2020). This narrative emphasized the redistribution of profits to Trudeau's home province of Québec and persists today in the opposition of most Albertans to equalization (a federal policy of wealth redistribution between provinces and territories that many people in Alberta believe offers particular benefits to Québec) (Béland et., 2021). No longer a "big story," Francophones are not rejected by all students, but "even those kids would bring up the fact that we don't spend a lot of time talking about the Manitoba perspective or the Nunavut perspective." Over and above ignorance, and geographical and historical distance, stories about who Francophones are in relation to Alberta and a certain sense of justice (to spend more time studying other perspectives) act as a "kind of residue" to filter the mandate.

Albertans seemed most concerned about the matter of justice they perceived to be involved in the obligation to learn about Francophone perspectives. Given the diverse nature of Canadian and Albertan society, some researchers have argued that Francophone perspectives should not be privileged over those of other groups (Bradford, 2008; Brown, 2004; Pashby, 2013; Richardson, 2002). Researchers have also cited teachers with similar concerns, such as an opinion letter written by two Alberta university professors, Barry Cooper and David Bercuson, who reported attending a meeting in which a teacher qualified a draft of the current curriculum as “a politically motivated document aimed at pleasing interested groups rather than supporting good learning for students” (para. 12). According to Cooper and Bercuson (1999), teachers in the meeting argued that the curriculum needed to be rewritten “so that it does not give the impression that only French and native groups matter” (para. 12). In these quotes from more than 20 years ago, the interests of what constituted “good learning for students” were pitted against those of Francophone and Indigenous peoples – as though “good learning” was incompatible with learning about Francophone and Indigenous perspectives. In other words, recognizing two groups distinctively from others was perceived as unjust for Albertans then and afterward.

Perceived inequity between the perspectives to be learned has been a consistent theme throughout the government consultations on different versions of the curriculum over the years (Alberta Education, 2016, 2017; Alberta Learning, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003). For example, the authors of the report on the 1999 consultations synthesized 36 respondents’ answers as follows: “too much emphasis on Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives while ignoring or at the expense of others and Canadianism as a whole” (Alberta Learning, 1999, p. 26). In this same consultation, 27 people offered an opinion grouped under this theme: “All cultural groups should be promoted not just the Francophones/too much emphasis on Francophones and Heritage” (p. 26).

Recognizing Francophone perspectives was equated to division and disunity – a theme reported by Cooper and Bercuson (1999) – according to 63 participants: “Curriculum is set up to meet the needs of two special interest groups. Emphasis on Francophone and Aboriginal will result in negativity and divisive rather than inclusive and uniting” (Alberta Learning, 1999, p. 59). In the year following the publication of these initial drafts, Ronald Windrim (2005), a doctoral student and teacher, discussed with colleagues the advent of the new social studies curriculum:

When I asked teachers if they had any sort of things they’d like me to write as a system response to the proposed new program of studies, two people gave me responses. One was ‘take out the First Nations and Francophone strength in the high school program.’ The other one was, ‘where’s Asia?’ (p. 215)

In other words, the curriculum was unbalanced, and the solution was to add more groups to the recognized pool.

A participant in a 2002 government consultation commented, “I think that the Francophone, Métis and Aboriginal components are very important. There are also a number of other cultures that need to be recognized” (Alberta Learning, 2003a, p. 22). That version of the curriculum, and others, did require teachers to engage with “multiple perspectives.” In that sense, the comment could be read as advocating that more groups should be recognized *similarly* to Francophones and Indigenous peoples to be fairer.

In the 2016 survey conducted by the Alberta government about its new reform, a main theme that appeared in the 141 responses (out of 4,067) that mentioned Francophone perspectives was the need to include other perspectives:

- (12) While including Aboriginal and Francophone (and other perspectives) is important, sometimes, in pursuit of a laudable goal, artificial or redundant content is mandated;
- (45) student learning should not be limited to FNMI and Francophone groups - should be inclusive of student backgrounds;

- (134) there is a definite bias for FNMI and Francophone. Those perspectives are important, however, I question how they are chosen, clearly, political hot buttons but what about groups in our province who are not politically important? Low German Mennonites, Hutterite students etc.?
- (425) I think that there should be a focus on numerous cultures, not specifically Francophone, there are many other cultures that have shaped Alberta more significantly than the Francophone culture;
- (1102) I believe in learning about diversity but I struggle with focusing on specific groups (such as Francophones in Alberta) when there are so many other immigrants with different languages and backgrounds in Canada who should then also be respected and considered. Learning about the history of the French in Canada is important, and I do believe that should remain part of the curriculum, but I'm not convinced that this people group's perspective on other aspects of life outranks the perspectives of other people groups within our country.

Although most Albertans who commented on Francophone perspectives noted their relevance, they disagreed with the distinct recognition granted to them compared to other perspectives. According to this logic, group perspectives should not be treated differently from one another – a zero-sum logic appeared in which the acknowledgement of some perspectives was perceived to be made *at the expense* of others.

The question of justice also arose in terms of who should decide which perspectives deserve recognition in social studies. Many responses to an Alberta Teachers' Association (2015) survey reaffirmed the prerogative of teachers in choosing whose perspectives matter. The following comment represented this line of thinking: "Allow teachers to choose which multiple perspectives. The FNMI and Francophone perspectives are overtly political and sometimes seemed forced" (#45, cited in ATA survey, 2015, Q6; see also #49, #90, #102, #121, #132, #296, and #404 out of 423 answers). Forcing perspectives was perceived as a major barrier to authentic teaching, as reflected in the following comment: "The constant concern about teaching multiple perspectives and the need to incorporate Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives on every topic. Sometimes it's inauthentic, and the students know it!" (ATA, 2015, Q8, #64). Through these comments,

teachers became an integral part of a particular politics of (de)recognition in which they promoted their power to choose the perspectives to teach over the ones chosen by the government. Justice for some teachers will be attained when teachers, and not only the government, have the power to choose which perspectives count in their classroom (e.g., it could also be argued that teachers were asking the government to be fairer in choosing the mandated perspectives).

Some Albertans, although a minority compared to the general opinion, agreed with the need for consistent learning about Francophone perspectives in Alberta social studies. At the 1999 government consultation, eight attendees used the following themes to comment on an early version of the draft: “Impressed with Aboriginal and Francophone components” (Alberta Learning, 1999, p. 58). In the 2002 consultation, a respondent said, “The inclusion of Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives is a major step in the right direction” (Alberta Learning, 2002, p. 153). Expressions such as “it’s, it’s tremendous” (Greg, cited in Brown, p. 163) encapsulated the joy some people felt about the recognition of these perspectives. More recently, in response to *Edmonton Journal* columnist David Staples’s (2018) critiques of the 2017 draft version of the social studies curriculum (Alberta Education, 2017a), a Grade 3 teacher argued:

[S]ome would see it as a just act of restitution to devote attention to groups like the French or First Nations, whose stories had previously been explicitly censored by educators (consider the residential schools or the historical opposition to separate schools). Moreover, there is nothing novel about judging a society by how it treats its most marginalized. (Fawcett, 2018)

However, support for this program mandate seemed overall quite thin, since support was hard to find compared to the concerns expressed by many Albertans toward including Francophone but also Indigenous perspectives.

There are also subtle distinctions in Albertans' appreciation of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives. While many consider both perspectives to be overly privileged, they were not equally valued by some Albertans. This teacher explained why:

I know in northern Alberta there is a large Francophone population but it seems that for the curriculum, First Nations is much easier. The perspective is much more distinct where with Francophone you still get a lot of Western Europeans. It's tough growing up in somebody else's house, I get that. But with First Nations it's much easier to bring in speakers. The community is much more organized now and working for itself to promote itself. So I find that there are good resources when you're teaching residential school. I've been fortunate enough that I can bring in survivors and they sit and they talk with the kids and that is, that is fantastic. However, when we talk about Francophones, it's really tough. Can we bring someone in to talk about Bill 101? Right? Or can we talk about the generational effects of what it means to be a Francophone? I think it's different, it's muddier where First Nations are much more distinct and I think that the perspective is, it's easier to find. Or maybe I understand it better. I think I can teach it better. (M2, cited in ATA, 2016, C. Focus group)

This teacher argued that Indigenous perspectives are easier to teach than Francophone perspectives because the Indigenous communities are more involved in transmitting them in English. Indigenous perspectives become, as a result, better understood because they are available “to the ‘instantaneous uptake’” (Aoki, 2000, p. 354, cited in den Heyer, 2009, p. 347) of their recognition – more so than Francophone perspectives. Indigenous peoples and Francophones often appear side-by-side in opinions criticizing the mandate to learn their perspectives, but subtle nuances need further documentation because it seems that teachers feel more supported in teaching Indigenous perspectives; that is perhaps one reason why Indigenous perspectives are more mobilized by teachers (Berg, 2017) and more researched by scholars.

Discussion

Through a synthesis of the evidence from peer-reviewed research, reports from government consultations, survey results, and unpublished theses, I have outlined teachers' and other education stakeholders' general concerns about the mandate for learning Francophone perspectives in

Alberta social studies. Pedagogical innovations (Gitlin & Margonis, 1995; Knight, 2009) such as those included in this mandate generally raise concerns because they challenge the status quo. As related by social studies teachers over a 20-year period, the status quo in Alberta consists of not having to think about Francophones, not encountering their perspectives on a regular basis, and indeed perceiving Francophone perspectives as existing outside the realm of present-day Alberta – that is, as existing only or mainly in history and in Québec. Forced to question their “non-thinking” (Butler, 2009, p. 137) about Francophones, a certain “consternation” (Brent, cited in Brown, 2004, p. 162) emerged.

In these results, Albertans generally viewed Francophone perspectives as foreign or “other” to (English-speaking) Alberta. The national and/or provincial narratives told to students across generations (Donald, 2009; Létourneau, 2006; Stanley, 2006; VanSledright, 2008) in Alberta seem to effectively position Francophones as “Others.” In teachers’ testimonies, Francophones were primarily situated as figures from the past and associated with Quebecers. Accordingly, they are easy to forget because of their disconnection from the Alberta demographic, linguistic, and symbolic landscape. Binary notions of insiders (Albertans) and outsiders (Francophones) seem to “act as a basic matrix of understanding” (Létourneau, 2006, p. 79) to frame Francophone perspectives outside the realm of what is knowable. This perception of Francophones is “stereotypical” (Iguarta, 2008, p. 107) to say the least, echoing other research on Francophone representation in history and social studies education (Francis, 1997) and more broadly, in Alberta (Boily & Epperson, 2014) and Canada (Bouchard, 2019).

In the underlying narratives exposed through the quotes analyzed, Francophone minorities remain mostly invisible (Francis, 1997; Osborne, 1997; Thompson, 2004). Québec receives attention as the home of Francophones. It is not only easy to forget about Franco-Albertans in

Alberta, as some teachers have stated, it is also possible to do so in Québec (Bérard, 2017; Lévesque & Croteau, 2020). In a sense, minority Francophones living outside of Québec, such as Franco-Albertans, experience (and are often aware of) double marginalization. The stories that circulate about Francophones in Alberta and Québec mostly excluded the presence of Canadian French-speaking minorities (for Alberta, see Leonard, 2021; for Québec, see Charbonneau, 2021). This double marginalization makes it difficult for educators in Québec and Alberta to understand the historical and ongoing “presence and participation” (Donald, 2009, p. 10) of Francophone minorities as “insiders” of their province (in Alberta) and of their group (Francophones).

Individuals carry narratives into any new learning situation (King, 2015). These narratives function to filter and shape new learning (Sears, 2014). Since they use these stories to make sense of the world, a new mandate may challenge established matrices of understanding. In times of challenge, “learners will often distort or discard the information presented rather than do the hard work necessary to restructure their frameworks” (Sears, 2014, p. 16). The social studies mandate asks Albertans to conceive of Francophones as ongoing partners in the construction of the province and of Canada (Article 1), but Albertans’ prior knowledge does not prepare them for that task. Ironically, the stories that some Albertans carry about Francophones – one could say, within Anglophone Albertans’ perspectives – is not a topic that is studied in the Alberta social studies curriculum (den Heyer, 2019), leaving them mostly uncriticized, while other perspectives are criticized for being unjustly privileged. Could it be that a privilege to not be named also exists in this context?

Dwayne Donald’s (2009) reflection on the “cultural disqualification” (p. 32) argument used by some teachers to disqualify themselves from teaching Indigenous perspectives in Alberta is useful to interpret my results. The underlying logic of this argument was cited by a pre-service

teacher in Donald's study, who stated, "You would have to be an internal element of a particular society in order to perpetuate their corresponding views" (p. 32). Some teachers in this analysis did see themselves as qualified to teach about Francophones, albeit a specific kind of Francophones whom they perceived as existing mostly in Québec, disconnected from Alberta, and therefore, mostly irrelevant in their everyday lives. "Their" Francophones were not the ones proposed by the curriculum (multicultural, pan-Canadian groups also present in Alberta), but rather the ones storied within a particular Alberta "cultural curriculum" (Wineburg et al., 2007) that has been transmitted from generation to generation (Gani, Article 3). In their minds, it was that "kind of residue" – stories about Francophones – which acted to filter new teaching. Meanwhile, some other teachers disqualified themselves from teaching Francophone perspectives simply because they did not identify as Francophone.

It is logical to think that teachers' level of knowledge about Francophone perspectives would increase over the years, after the implementation of the mandate. However, the lack of legitimacy toward the mandate remained fairly constant across the years. Compared to teachers interviewed before and around the implementation of the mandate in 2005, those who participated in focus groups conducted in 2016 mostly knew some details about Francophone perspectives. Yet, similar to their peers interviewed before and around the implementation of the mandate in 2005, teachers in 2016 still questioned the legitimacy of focusing on Francophone (and Indigenous) perspectives distinctively over others. As one 2016 focus group participant argued, echoing logic found in quotes gathered since 1999:

I think that is why we advocate for multiple perspectives. Recognizing that we do explicitly take on Francophone and Aboriginal in our program. *But what about* [emphasis added] the immigrant perspective, what about the LGBTQ perspective? Why do we highlight those two perspectives, but what about others? Like you said we want students to see themselves in the curriculum. (F1, cited in ATA, 2016, H. Focus Group)

Contesting the inequality between perspectives remains the central feature of teachers' opinions expressed over a period of more than 20 years about the mandate to recognize Francophone perspectives. Could it be that increased knowledge about Francophone perspectives does not significantly impact teachers' assessment of their legitimacy as distinctively recognized entities in the social studies curriculum?

Conclusion

The scholarly community needs to develop a better understanding of the dynamics at play that make it difficult to teach perspectives outside the dominant one. Educational jurisdictions around the world continue to undergo curricular reforms that seek to recognize and help students appreciate the perspectives and experiences of groups (Banks, 2012). These perspectives, like Francophones in Alberta, have traditionally been positioned outside the imagined community, which makes a mandate to learn about them difficult to endorse for many Albertans. This research suggests that professional development work cannot be based on a flawed discourse that treats in-service and pre-service teachers as empty vessels lacking knowledge about the "Other." As the research and quotes included in this article illustrate, Albertans conceive of Francophone perspectives through established matrices of understanding. It is these departure points that now require further attention, as they shape what Francophone perspectives appear to be, more so sometimes than the official curriculum.

ARTICLE 3: DEPARTURE POINTS TO TEACH FRANCOPHONE PERSPECTIVES

A shorter version of this chapter (6000 words) will appear in French, in the edited book (in press) *Enseigner les objets difficiles en sciences humaines et sociales*.

Gani, R. (in press). Quelles perspectives francophones en Alberta? In S. Moisan, M.-A. Éthier, S. Hirsch & D. Lefrançois (Eds.), *Enseigner les objets difficiles en sciences humaines et sociales*. Fides.

Whose Francophone Perspectives? The Case of 19 Alberta Social Studies Teachers

Abstract

This article investigates the Alberta government's curriculum mandate for social studies courses to teach appreciation and respect for "Francophone perspectives" (Alberta Education, 2005; Article 1). Some social studies teachers have trouble defining, relating to, and justifying the need to teach Francophone perspectives in Alberta because they perceived them as being confined mainly to Québec and/or to the past, and as unjustly privileged in comparison to other perspectives (Article 2). Indeed, a literature review offered very few examples of teaching practices that attempt to implement the mandate (Berg, 2017; Scott, 2013). To provide such examples in light of a curriculum reform that now seeks to extend the mandate to six subject matters (i.e., arts, language, science, mathematics, wellness, and social studies), this article examines the results of three focus groups with 19 Alberta social studies teachers about their practices related to implementing the mandate. Results from a thematic analysis of their conversations indicate that teachers point mainly to a disconnection between their "Anglophone" students and Francophone perspectives to explain difficulties in implementing the mandate. Close analysis of their reported teaching practices reveals a possible link between such disconnection and the ways in which most teachers defined these perspectives (as Québécois rather than Albertan or pan-Canadian), engaged with them in class (through the study of social and political conflicts), and justified their presence in the curriculum (by invoking multiculturalism). Driven by an Albertan "cultural curriculum" (Wineburg et al., 2007), which dictates what is learned about Francophones outside Alberta's schools, many teachers' practices called for a connection with more local Franco-Albertan perspectives. When that connection was made evident, some teachers did indeed increase their level of endorsement for the mandate.

Introduction

Today, teaching and learning “perspectives” is a common mandate for social studies and history courses across Canada (Historica Canada, 2021). Such curriculum policy mandates arose in response to traditional approaches that emphasized the teaching and learning of a “single-best story” about Canada. These mandates offer opportunities “to learn to engage in a continuing debate about the meaning of the present and the direction of the future” (Osborne, 2012, p. 164). Mandates to teach perspectives are most common in social studies and history courses because they are sites where students learn about the main constituents of their locality, province, and country (Peck & Sears, 2016; Tomkins, 2008; Werner et al., 1977). Teaching (and learning) perspectives in social studies and history classrooms usually entails several tasks. Students are taught to define and understand the worldview and values held by certain individuals, groups, institutions, or texts, corresponding goals in transforming and sustaining the world around them as well as the means to reach these goals (Barton & Levstik, 2004; den Heyer & Abbott, 2011; Seixas & Morton, 2013; Werner, 1977; Wineburg, 1999; Yelle & Dery, 2017). Mostly consensual in the social studies and history education scholarly communities, such mandates become controversial when they require teachers and students to value certain perspectives systematically, as attested by the case of Francophone perspectives in Alberta (Articles 1, 2).

Alberta’s social studies curriculum calls on teachers to teach and students to learn Francophone perspectives from kindergarten to Grade 12 (Alberta Education, 2005). The curriculum justifies the need for ongoing learning about these perspectives by citing “historical and constitutional reasons” (undefined) as well as the need to understand Canada, and the support it provides for Francophone education (p. 4). A history of Alberta social studies curricula reveals the key role of Francophone, Indigenous and Anglophone consultants in crafting this mandate in

partnership (Article 1). The question is whether teachers follow the curriculum mandate to teach Francophone perspectives since a review of the literature indicated that they have encountered difficulties in doing so (Article 2). Research on the implementation of the mandate is so minimal that there have been no significant examples of teaching practices related to Francophone perspectives. Accordingly, there is a significant gap that requires further attention between the curriculum-as-planned (in line with the government's mandate to value Francophone perspectives) and the curriculum-as-lived (the endorsement and mobilization of the mandate by teachers in classrooms) (Aoki, 1981).

The goal of the present article is to inquire into the implementation of the mandate to value Francophone perspectives in social studies classrooms in Alberta. This is an important topic of study in relation to the Albertan government's plan to extend the mandate's reach to six subject matters as part of an ongoing and criticized reform (Alberta Curriculum Analysis, n.d.; Peck, 2021; Scott, 2021). According to a literature review on the mandate (Article 2), there is also a need for Albertans to connect with the perspectives of Francophones, who are mostly perceived as being foreign to Alberta, even though the province has hosted Francophone communities since its colonization in the 19th century. In fact, French was the first language spoken in the land now called Alberta, while 10.5% of its population (of 4.6M) has French Canadian ancestry (Government of Alberta, 2018). I seek to address issues raised by the mandate to teach Francophone perspectives in order to gather evidence about teaching practices that are currently lacking, but also to propose solutions that may be helpful in implementing the mandate and its extension. One way to improve the implementation of the mandate would be to offer ways for teachers to connect with local Francophone communities in Alberta, since their presence is mostly overshadowed by the communities in Québec (Article 2). Studying the implementation of the

curriculum policy mandate offers an entry point into understanding the difficulties that teachers experience when required to teach perspectives that are perceived as disconnected from the localities in which they live and work (Toledo, 2020).

The “Perspectives” of “Francophones”?

According to a literature review, many Alberta social studies teachers define “Francophone perspectives” in ways that seems to interfere with their capacity to teach about them. Teachers appear to accept curriculum guidelines which define perspectives as “the shared view of a group or collective” (Hoogeveen, 2008, p. 2; see also Berg, 2017; Scott, 2013). Accordingly, some teachers have questioned the possibility of teaching about the perspectives of Francophones, a group they perceive as too diverse to hold common opinions (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011; Scott, 2013; Stewart, 2002). The only definition of “Francophones” in the curriculum exists in the Grade 4 and 5 Glossary, which states that Francophones are “persons for whom French is the first language learned or still used; persons of French language and culture” (Alberta Education, 2006, p. 60). However, evidence from focus groups with social studies teachers, as well as other research, reveals a sustained association between Francophones and Québec, rather than a pan-Canadian conception of Francophones (Article 2). A mix of prescriptions and preconceptions about the definitions of “Francophones” and “perspectives” may therefore play a part in the ways in which they are taught in the classroom.

Testimonies from Alberta’s social studies teachers often converge toward a feeling of disconnection from Francophone perspectives (Article 2). Teachers have reported that these perspectives are difficult to define and relate to, and their presence in the curriculum mandate is hard to justify (Abbott & Smith, 2013; ATA, 2016; Brown, 2004; Tupper, 2005; Windrim, 2005). In response to the low mobilization of Francophone perspectives in the classroom at the primary

level, Johanne, a social studies teacher, explained, “It’s very easy in Western Canada to forget the French perspective” (Berg, 2017, p. 87). As her colleague Owen corroborated, the arrival of other groups now in Alberta has made the presence of Francophones less “pervasive”:

I always wonder about how pervasive that perspective [Francophone] even is in Alberta when you compare that to a lot of the changes in the, in our society and you talk about all the Muslim immigrants and things like that and their perspective is not a big piece yet of any of the texts that we use. (p. 160)

This sense of disconnection, coupled with the conflation of Francophones with Québec, results in a powerful Albertan narrative that counters the need to teach Francophone perspectives. Exemplifying that narrative, the following teacher testimony was gathered in a focus group under the auspices of an Alberta Teachers’ Association (2016) survey:

I’ve got to be honest like I consider myself to be much more empathetic to the perspectives of Francophone Canadians than probably your average southern Albertan, but even I myself feel geographically and culturally quite distant. Like, I encourage all my students if you ever have a chance to [visit] Quebec, do it because it opens your eyes to that reality, but while they’re not in that reality it’s kind of hard to just tell them about that reality and I find myself thinking that you get the kind of the hardened, you know, the generation that was probably raised by the people who hated our current prime minister’s father [Pierre Elliott Trudeau]. (M6 cited in ATA, 2016, D., Focus group)

The influence of the Albertan narrative about Francophones (embedded in themes such as disconnection, Québec, and political conflict) is important to document. Research shows it affects the capacity to filter teaching and learning about Francophone perspectives in Alberta (Article 2; den Heyer & Abbott, 2011; Scott, 2013). Such research illustrates the ways in which Francophones are positioned as outsiders in Alberta, which in turn affects teachers’ ability to find legitimate reasons to teach this group’s perspectives. My research (Articles 1, 2, 4) shows that the mandate to teach Francophone perspectives in social studies lacks “legitimacy” (Gagnon, 2021) in Alberta. There is a gap between the mandate and its endorsement by many teachers. Teachers have some professional autonomy (Gereluck, et al., 2015) to adapt curriculum mandates, and it appears that

they do so in particular ways with Francophone and Indigenous perspectives (which are also mandated to be learned in Alberta social studies from K-12). As Tom, a teacher interviewed by Scott (2013), stated, some teachers use that autonomy to bypass the mandate:

what I am finding out is that it is possible to teach the course without dealing with that stuff [Francophone and Indigenous perspectives] at all if you don't want to; some teachers won't. I think there is another way of interpreting multiple perspectives; it could just be simply differences of opinion or points of view on particular issues and that offers you all kinds of opportunity to bring in different voices and different perspectives. (p. 37)

In this testimony, a certain definition of perspectives surfaces (they are differences of opinion), as does a goal for teaching about them (bringing in different voices and points of view) and a means to do so (using professional autonomy). Since it is possible for teachers to propose their own version of perspectives without implementing Francophone ones, Tom noted that some, and possibly many of them, do so. Without a clear endorsement by many teachers, the mandate to value Francophone perspectives may well find its niche mostly in the curriculum-as-planned and not in the curriculum-as-lived (Aoki, 1981).

Conceptual Framework

The challenges raised thus far are reminiscent of what Garrett and Segall (2013) call “difficult knowledge,” as inspired by the work of Deborah Britzman (p. 2). The mandate to learn about Francophone perspectives triggers not only rational but also emotive reactions, including feelings such as doubt, disconnection, and frustration. Such emotions arise since teaching difficult knowledge often means confronting one's implicit yet difficult-to-acknowledge participation in injustices (den Heyer & Conrad, 2011; see Garrett, 2011, p. 344, cited in Sheppard et al., 2015). The teachers are involved in an English-speaking system of education (and in an Albertan society) which, until the 1980s, was constructed on the premise of the linguistic assimilation of Francophones (Alberta's first settlers) (Anderson, 2005; Aunger, 2005; Leonard, 2021). Although

they may not feel personally responsible for these injustices, teachers in Alberta nevertheless face the contentious task of educating students to deal with the consequences of such injustices, exemplified in stereotypes circulating about Francophones in Alberta (Boily & Epperson, 2014). These “stereotypical representations” (Iguarta, 2008, p. 107) are well described by Francophone students living in Alberta via the following discussion:

Lucas: My friend’s brother, he always says, ‘The French are so different from the English. He always says things about the French that have nothing to do with them.’ So it annoys me.

Laura: Yeah, well, it’s getting flat.

Rose: It’s boring because it happens so often. Anglophones think they are really superior to us. ...

Brian: Like me, instead of calling me *Frenchie* or something, me and my mom, they’re gonna say, ‘Go back to your country. Go back to Québec. This is our province. You have no right to be here.’ (Thompson, 2008, p. 341–343)

Confronting difficult knowledge means swimming against the tide of socialization processes (by media, family, etc.) that amplify and popularize these unfavourable judgments.

Teaching and learning Francophone perspectives are difficult because their acknowledgement tends to bring out, by contrast-effect, unfavourable Albertan perspectives about them. Socio-constructivist theory is built on the premise that learners (and teachers) filter new knowledge presented to them through pre-existing perspectives or knowledge (Jonnaert & Vander Borgh, 2009; Sears, 2014). In the review of the literature presented above, a certain conception of Francophones and their perspectives emerged which acts to filter the discussion and implementation of these perspectives in classrooms. As Létourneau (2006) observed, such a “matrix of understanding” (i.e., the one used to engage with Francophone perspectives) acts as a powerful deflector of new forms of (ac)knowledge(ment), as it distorts the subject to be learned about (here Francophone perspectives) to fit with previously known representations of them. This is why curriculum theorist Kent den Heyer (2014) has called for an educational question that would

not interrogate what teachers must teach and how, but how they can re-cognize (or re-learn/unlearn) what they have been socialized to know (here about Francophones perspectives) to make space for new teaching and learning opportunities. How, then, considering the difficulties identified above, can social studies teachers create opportunities for students to connect with Francophone perspectives in predominantly non-Francophone contexts such as Alberta?

One way to connect Alberta students with Francophone perspectives would be to mobilize local Franco-Albertan testimonies. The testimonies that I have gathered through research on the history of the mandate to value Francophone perspectives (Article 1) can act as a powerful incentive to include local Francophone perspectives in curriculum. Being local, such perspectives are more connected to the lives of Albertans, who may have been socialized to think that these perspectives are mainly related to Québec (Béland et al., 2021). In my research with social studies teachers described below, I use these Franco-Albertans' testimonies as prompts to interrogate the need to engage with more local Francophone perspectives. These testimonies acted as bridges in the context of a powerful narrative that disconnects Alberta(ns) from Francophone perspectives. Providing opportunities for Albertans to learn about the perspectives of Franco-Albertans may be a first step towards building a connection with Francophones.

Methodological Framework

This qualitative study examines the reported teaching practices of 19 social studies teachers working with “Anglophone” students – which is how some teachers described their students – living in or around a city in southern Alberta. These reported practices specifically target Francophone perspectives and my inquiry aims to understand the teachers' conceptions about them, the ways in which they connect them to their own lives and those of their students, and how they justify the need to do so. Researchers have shown that teaching these perspectives may be

impeded by teachers' prior conceptions about them, their perceived lack of connection to Alberta, and teachers' difficulties in justifying these perspectives' presence in the curriculum. However, these insights have not yet been examined in detail in relation to actual reported teaching practices. The qualitative framework of this study offered an opportunity to gather a thick description of teaching practices while the focus group format enabled the possibility to examine the rationales underlying these practices. This study offers a circumscribed yet rich portrait of what teaching about Francophone perspectives looks like in Alberta, one that may be helpful in light of the scant examples of teaching practices in the literature.

In 2016, I recruited a sample of teachers using the "snowball effect" (Beaud, 2010) with the help of four teachers who had shown interest in my research at conferences. Having gained information about my ongoing research, these teachers recruited teachers in their schools to participate in the study. This recruitment method resulted in the formation of three groups of interested parties who had been introduced to the basic premise of the study by one lead teacher. In total, 19 teachers from three English-language public schools ($n=7;7;1$) and one French immersion school ($n=4$) participated. The sample consisted of six men, two of whom were people of colour, and 13 women, all with various levels of teaching experience in social studies at the junior- and senior-high-school level (Grades 7–12; from a pre-service teacher to one with more than 20 years of experience). The snowball effect was quite effective in gathering three groups of teachers, but a recruitment challenge (an inability to recruit colleagues) led me to conduct one semi-structured interview with one teacher (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

The focus groups and the interview followed the same protocol. Each started with an activity whereby teachers shared their teaching practices in relation to Francophone perspectives on a conceptual map (Kruger & Casey, 2015). The conceptual map was useful in encouraging

teachers to speak together (which they did in subgroups) and in allowing their knowledge on the topic to emerge. In the focus groups, these maps were drawn on a board during the meetings so that all teachers could refer to it and the moderator could use it to prompt further questions about the rationale behind choices and teaching examples. Two of the three focus groups were moderated by David Scott and me (the other focus group was moderated by me) and all three lasted around 50 minutes; the interview I conducted lasted 30 minutes. Through discussion, I was able to gather instances of teaching practices, underlying conceptions about “perspectives,” “Francophones,” and “Francophone perspectives,” as well as students’ reactions to these.

The focus group sessions and the interview were audio-recorded and transcribed, then analyzed following a contextualizing analysis sequence proposed by Paillé and Mucchuelli (2016). Several rounds of reading the texts and listening to the audio files served to code revealing excerpts into four main categories (Merriam, 2009): 1) teachers’ conceptions of Francophone perspectives; 2) teaching practices; 3) rationales for teaching Francophone perspectives; and 4) students’ reactions. These four categories were then re-analyzed to discover nuances and subthemes (Weston et al., 2001) such as disconnection, links to Québec, and multiculturalism. Rounds of rewriting the results section and a synthesis of the themes led to a portrait of the main talking points. To get a better grasp of what participants were saying, I used the “ghostwriting” method, in which I rewrote the participants’ themes in my own words (Rhodes, 2000, p. 511). The coding structure used through the three phases (main categories, subthemes, and ghostwriting) led me to identify both commonalities and differences between the French-speaking focus group (with four French immersion teachers) and the rest of the sample. Such insights and the results section were then subjected to expert advice in a round of revisions to this article toward ensuring an alignment between the quotations and my interpretation.

Results

The 19 social studies teachers' answers converged in stating that their students seem to be disconnected from Francophone perspectives, although differences appeared between the French immersion group and the rest of the sample. The four French immersion teachers more strongly valued Francophone perspectives in their reported practices than their colleagues working in English. Much like their colleagues, the immersion teachers described their students as Anglophones, disconnected from Francophone perspectives. However, presumably because three of the four identified as Francophone, the immersion teachers themselves felt more connected to these perspectives. The teachers' self-identification as Francophone appeared to play a role in their valuing that group in their teaching. Nevertheless, the main convergence in the teachers' discussions across all focus groups supported the approach of reporting and analyzing their comments together.

For many teachers, the word "perspectives" meant an opinion shared by the members of a group. Perspectives were distinct from points of view, which were seen more as individual features. As a case in point, one French immersion teacher stated, "Perspective means that it comes from the group, not just from you personally"⁸ (F1, I). Another teacher reported that one reason for this characterization is the textbook definition of the concept: "the definition in the Grade 10 textbook is that a perspective ... belongs to a group and a point of view belongs to an individual... I'm not saying I agree with that, it's just in the textbook" (W1, T). Even though she did not necessarily accept this definition, that teacher nevertheless emphasized its effect on her teaching practice:

with the word perspective too we're blanketing a group, right, the use of you within that group like you're right there so many different extremes of beliefs and values within a

⁸ All quotes from the focus group conducted with immersion teachers have been translated from French to English.

group that we don't explore so we kind of impose that perspective on a group, all of the members of that group. (W1, T)

Assigning large numbers of individuals to a group's perspective was problematized by some teachers. They expressed difficulty in teaching multiple Francophone perspectives, as mandated by the curriculum, and focused their teaching mainly on common opinions shared by the whole group. In other words, the ways in which "perspectives" are defined created difficulties in valuing Francophone perspectives.

Teachers who criticized the term perspectives tended to target the deficiencies of official resources such as the curriculum or the textbook. They argued that these resources did not offer an accurate conception of perspectives. Suggesting that the curriculum presented stereotypes rather than a realistic depiction of groups, one French immersion teacher stated:

Social studies is really about opening students' minds to understand the world around them, since we have prejudices, preconceptions, so this is a place where we should challenge them. But I think it's really interesting that our curriculum then puts individuals into stereotypical groups to do a stereotypical study from a stereotypical perspective, which to me closes the minds of students. You're Francophones, you believe that, Aboriginals believe that; it's an Anglophone perspective, and then it's almost teaching students to put people in boxes. (F4, I)

That teacher implicitly encouraged her colleagues not to put people into boxes through stereotypical representations of their perspectives. Most teachers did not manage to avoid such stereotypes, however. Even though official resources were criticized for their stereotypical representation of Francophones, the cultural curriculum of Alberta (what Albertans learn about Francophones outside of school) also seemed to play a large role in placing Francophones in the "box" of Québec.

The teachers' main source of inspiration for defining Francophones and their perspectives came not from the official curriculum alone, but from "stereotypes" (Iguarta, 2008, p. 107)

circulating in Alberta. One teacher explained the influence of the Albertan cultural curriculum as follows:

Every time we talk about Francophone perspectives, Quebec largely overshadows the conversation. In Alberta, it seems to be, we say Francophone and everybody jumps to Quebec like that's the only place there's Francophones in Canada. It shapes a lot of the conversations and where it can go from there. Our students often don't have experience or connect with that Francophone perspective in Alberta: even recognize that it is here. The other assumption is they are just English-speaking people that speak French at home. There's no identity around that and the terms or [that is] the assumption that students make and even though we have time, I have thought it that way. It's not just a statement of these awful students. This is how I teach it, yeah. (M4, T)

These powerful stereotypes – “everybody jumps to Quebec” – are seen as caricatures (“like [Québec is] the only place there's Francophones in Canada”) yet difficult to circumvent (“this is how I teach it”). The stereotypes act as a cultural curriculum guiding the practices of some teachers. In turn, such practices are likely to foster a sentiment of disconnection between Albertans and Francophone perspectives, since the teacher observed, “It shapes a lot of the conversations and where it can go from there.” Reproduced stereotypes may be one of the core reasons for the reported feelings of disconnection, which was the main theme in the teachers' answers.

The teachers unanimously reported that their (Albertan Anglophone) students felt disconnected from Francophone perspectives. More accurately, the students indeed felt disconnected, but from Québec:

when we talk Francophone perspectives a lot of students say ‘oh that's in Quebec like that doesn't really affect me’ but it could be affecting their peers, it could be affecting maybe someone in that class and you're not really aware of it as much. (W1, T)

According to one immersion teacher who self-identified as “Anglophone,” Francophones are “not already part of the collective consciousness of Alberta” (F4, I). She asked, “where will they [her Anglophone colleagues who do not speak French] start with all this [Francophone perspectives]”

since it “doesn’t affect them at all?” As a case in point, some teachers seemed to prefer teaching about other perspectives more relevant to their lives, as related in the following conversation:

(W1, M): And we don’t really have a lot of Francophone kids that’s what we were talking about. Kids in Alberta don’t have a context even just the language.

(W2, M): Which makes Aboriginal perspectives kind of a little bit more on the forefront, ’cause we have a large ethnic community, not a large one but more evident than our Francophones and it makes it easier for things like when we talk environment in Grade 9.

(W3, M): It’s hard to talk about something that doesn’t apply directly to your own personal life too. So like I don’t speak French but my family does so that’s about as deep as my connection goes, whereas I think living in southern Alberta I have a vested interest in the community around me so First Nations people, whereas I’m not constantly surrounded by Francophone people who are influencing my everyday life, and so that is hard to convey to kids that a perspective you need to consider when it’s not surrounded by them. I think I agree with her on that like we, I personally don’t have enough information to confidently help kids define their own opinion on the matter when I can’t even define mine because it’s not it, and it wasn’t presented in university classes either as “Oh, by the way, you might want to consider this,” right, it’s that generalization.

These three teachers echoed, in a way, the students’ statements previously cited (“that doesn’t really affect me”) through a particular conception of Francophones as an invisible minority, pointing also to gaps in knowledge and training. These conceptions, in turn, shaped their willingness to engage with the perspectives of other groups perceived as being closer to the teachers’ lives.

In sum, many teachers perceived that there was no real starting point in Alberta for addressing Francophone perspectives. As one otherwise quiet teacher ably summarized the problem:

For us in Alberta, the lack of experience and knowledge is really, that’s the big issue here. How do we teach two perspectives [Francophone and Indigenous] that students haven’t... If they have no starting ground, then you have to create a starting point for them to be able to access it. And if they don’t even have that, or if they have some sort of negative perspective, then how do you get to a place where, you know, I mean the idea would be that they’re empathizing with the multiple perspectives. Like, to me, the multiple perspectives is the goal here. Like, to be able to, and I’ve said that a bit to students, is like that idea of being able to put yourself in another person’s shoes. (M2, T)

Neither having a French-speaking family nor attending a French immersion school seemed to suffice to conjure a natural desire to learn about Francophone perspectives. As attested by another teacher, “Immersion students are Anglophone, so they don’t naturally have the desire to maintain that [the link with Francophone perspectives]. It’s really an apprenticeship of a culture, an apprenticeship of the language” (F2, I). The source of the problem was explained, in part, by an experienced teacher with a doctorate in education: “I think understanding that there is this other culture that we really, we in western Canada, we really don’t know that much about” (M2, M). This lack of knowledge does not mean that Albertans are ignorant about Francophones. Rather, the discussions point to stereotypical knowledge (e.g., reducing Francophones to Québécois) as the driver of teaching and learning practices. These teachers’ conceptions of Francophones (they are not here) shaped their teaching practices (about a group presented as over there) that in turn fostered the students’ reported sense of disconnection (“oh that’s in Quebec like that doesn’t really affect me”).

Most teachers were aware that they made choices in privileging certain conceptions of Francophones over others. Their practices reflected a choice not imposed solely by the curriculum. For instance, one teacher acknowledged the detrimental effect of her choice of case studies on students’ “negative reactions”:

It’s just a choice of case studies, we talk about Oka and the separation of Quebec and FLQ and the Bloc. Like, there are things that definitely contribute to a more negative kind of reaction to this Francophone perspective. Like we’re not really emphasizing enough like cultural enrichment and multiculturalism and bilingualism and the benefits of that. The choices are interesting of the case studies that we are given to present yeah. (W2, T)

It is easy to imagine a sense of disconnection from Québec among students subjected to these choices related to conflictual political events (e.g., the separation of Québec) and personae (e.g., FLQ). It is unclear from her testimony whether that teacher was criticizing the curriculum for

imposing such choices or whether she was observing her unwillingness to use these case studies and her professional autonomy to go over and above these cases to build connections between Francophones and her students. Reported reactions from students in that school corroborated this sense of disconnection that may be fostered by teachers' choice of particular case studies:

You know, what came up today was- someone asked me in my Social 30 was like, "Did they try to pass a law last year where they were banning the burka?" And, I mean, as far as I know, the law was passed, then it was reneged, right? It was passed and then went into effect, and then was it not the government, the federal government that intervened and said that's a violation of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, you can't have that law? That's my understanding of it and I'm not an expert on Quebec's laws but that's what I understood from the media what happened - it was passed in the legislature and then repealed by the federal court who said you can't do that, and the girl said, "Well what is this? Can Quebec just do whatever they want? Are they a little toddler who throws tantrums when they don't get what they want?" And I said they view themselves as a unique entity within Canada where they can go – 'cause they didn't sign, and then there was the Meech Lake, the failed Meech Lake and the whole like... We don't teach that, but they had such a hard time understanding, "Well why are things different for them, why are they getting a different treatment?" (M2, T)

This teacher invoked lack of knowledge to explain students' reactions ("we don't teach that") toward a law in Québec. However, the structure of his depiction of the law (e.g., Québec's unjust demands had to be contained by the federal government) and the comments heard in that teacher's focus group showed quite the opposite – it was precisely a representation of a conflictual and overtly privileged Québec that was used in schools to engage with Francophone perspectives, over and above a more nuanced or realistic depiction (e.g., the event discussed by that teacher and the student did not occur in reality).

One teacher reported more precisely the ways in which he taught about Francophone perspectives:

I often bring it up as the introduction as the FLQ and the Quiet Revolution, which isn't the nicest political means to achieve an end. It leads to violence and it leads to the War Measures Act, and when they see that, unfortunately, then it's sort of tarnished the whole perspective of the identity, the original loyalties, the contending loyalties, they, I feel like I don't do anything justice to the division that may be growing there in their minds, their

Western identity versus what is this Eastern identity. I don't help, I don't really help bring it together by starting with that. I think if we, if we were to acknowledge, like [another focus group teacher] said, there are Francophone communities across the country. And they're thriving and growing, and they're contributing to the multiculturalism of Canada, and we can learn a lot from each other- start with that. Unfortunately we don't. (M5, T)

This teacher's admission of powerlessness and/or unwillingness ("I don't do anything justice to...; I don't help") spoke volumes about the difficulties encountered. Even though he knew better ("there are Francophone communities across the country. And they're thriving and growing"), the teacher could not help but use the conflict and division in Québec to teach about Francophones. His interpretation of the Quiet Revolution and the FLQ ("which isn't the nicest political means to achieve an end") seemed to guide him to emphasize certain historical aspects and ignore others ("It leads to violence and it leads to the War Measures Act"), which, in turn, was likely to fuel the "division" already present in the minds of students between their "Western and... Eastern identity." As he observed, "it's sort of tarnished the whole perspective." That teacher's report of the way he taught provided a clear example of the consequences of using stories about a conflictual Québec to discuss the Quiet revolution, when other stories are available (Létourneau, 2020). This way of teaching seemed to reinforce the divisions that were already present in the minds of students (and teachers, it seems).

One anecdote provided further details about the division between Alberta and Québec present in some students' and teachers' minds. A teacher remarked in her interview that every year her students came to class with preconceived stories about the identity of Francophones and their relation to Albertans:

Every year, the majority of my students hate [Pierre Elliott] Trudeau. They don't know why. They just know that he was bad and that he was the worst prime minister in Canadian history. That's the story they learn from grandpa: Trudeau is a bastard. I was raised to believe that Trudeau was pro-Québec and did everything for Québec at the expense of Albertans because of the National Energy Program [a federal program to redistribute profits from Alberta oil to all Canadians; Orwan, 2005]. What Albertans remember is that

Trudeau cheated us out of our oil. Even today, there are people who hate Justin Trudeau because of his father. (W1, A)

This narrative of caricatures helped to reveal the origin of the “negative perspective” that some students already hold about Francophones. The perspective is shaped by a story, familiar even to children, that stereotypically associates Pierre Trudeau with (Francophone) Québec, and Québec with overly privileged and antagonistic interests (Trudeau “did everything for Québec”). It is due to such stories that this teacher and her colleagues (as she put it) “don’t understand or have empathy for Francophone perspectives” (W1, A). The teacher continued, “there was never a mandate to teach them [Francophone perspectives]. Rather, the idea was to teach history from an Anglophone perspective or from an historian’s perspective” (W1, A). In that Anglophone perspective, Francophones and Albertans are divided from one another. The teacher realized that she was not exempt from that “Anglophone” perspective and she questioned its influence on her teaching: “I’m always wondering... Am I teaching what happened or a story that was passed down, passed down, passed down” (W1, A)?

Anglophone Albertan students may feel disconnected from Francophones, but that does not mean that they feel the same about other minority groups. This was attested to by one teacher’s anecdote:

So ironically today I did *Idle No More* and *Black Lives Matter*. So what I did with the kids was introducing the Francophone perspective into it - a lot of them don’t care. A lot of them don’t know about it. And my reasoning behind it, and I asked them. They said, well “Media,” for example, “My parents don’t know,” “I don’t care.” But they know more about *Black Lives Matter*, and the *Idle No More* - Aboriginal point of view. Then I’m looking at it and I ask them: Francophone and multiculturalism is equal? Is it the same thing, do we see Francophones in the same light as we do *Black Lives Matter* and Aboriginal lives? My point is that what if my kids are wanting to be able to respect everybody around us first? Don’t you look at the content- respect all our individuals, then let’s go into these different points of view – or perspectives. That’s the way I see it. I feel that our kids don’t respect, not only the content, but the individuals within the content. I think that’s where I need to come from, and that’s what I’m doing. (M1, T)

The lack of interest in Francophones was partly due to a lack of knowledge or interest in the subject, which does not translate, for example, to Black (*Black Lives Matter*) or Indigenous (*Idle no More*) groups. To explain the cause of the students' preference for certain minorities over others, the teacher pointed to a deeper lack of respect, probably fuelled by family and the media, for the "individuals" (here Francophones) rather than for the content of their perspectives. For that teacher, it was therefore necessary first to re-cognize Francophones – to re-acquaint students with them beyond their preconceived notions – before students could understand Francophone perspectives.

Multiculturalism was a way for that teacher to promote equal consideration of groups. However, multiculturalism could also be used to question the mandate to learn *distinctively* about Francophone perspectives as compared to other perspectives.

Different conceptions of multiculturalism exist in Canada (Bouchard, 2019; Foster, 2014; Kymlicka, 2003), but most of the 19 teachers favoured a popular iteration that is prevalent in Alberta (Dorion-Soulié, 2013; Harder, 2005; Manning, 2005). For many teachers, multiculturalism mainly promoted equal treatment between each citizen, their group of belonging and, consequently, their perspectives. Three teachers commented as follows:

F2, I: I don't understand why they put [Francophone perspectives in the program]. Because there's everybody here. You need everybody's perspective. You're not doing your job well if you don't, if you don't show the other perspectives.

F1, T: In Canada we consider ourselves to be multicultural and I think that the Francophone perspective plays a large role in that multicultural identity that Canadians like to take on. I think that depending on like where you are born or like which context you grow up in, maybe not necessarily the Francophone perspective would be pretty prevalent in that multicultural idea that we have of Canada. So including not just the Francophone perspective but multiple perspectives when we talk about multiculturalism. I think it's very important in the Social Studies.

M4, T: It's, if we're going to talk about multiculturalism, you know, everybody needs to be included, right?

With this conception of multiculturalism, a mandate that specifically names Francophones and Indigenous peoples but not other perspectives could be equated with fostering discrimination. As attested by this discussion, naming some perspectives but not others is perceived as unfair: “Because there’s everybody here” – “not just the Francophone perspective.” Or again, “if we’re going to talk about multiculturalism we have to include everyone, right?” Underlying this logic is a way of distinguishing groups from each other that assumes that teaching the perspectives of some (e.g., Francophones) might inevitably lead to the downplaying of others (e.g., women):

I think we need to acknowledge that there are multiple perspectives, and that includes not just, you know, minority groups, but all groups have perspectives and trying to sort of have more breadth of – I feel like we have the group that we talk about, and then we have these add-ons and I think we’re better to just say, you know all of these issues there’s such a diversity of perspectives and we need to look at – um, you know, we don’t even mention women in here, and I think that’s been critical throughout history, um, exploring, um, what the role of women has been and their perspective in a lot of these issues, and it’s unmentioned. (M5, T)

In this teacher’s comments, multiculturalism acts to favour equal treatment of perspectives by dissociating groups that are connected (Francophones and women). Within the particular zero-sum logic presented by this teacher, gains for some groups appeared to be made at the detriment of other groups, instead of thinking about the ways in which these groups are interconnected (e.g., mobilizing Francophone perspectives also means mobilizing Francophone women’s perspectives).

One area where there was a clear understanding of the mandate to teach Francophone perspectives was history. Two examples, in which teachers testified to their sustained engagement in implementing this part of the mandate, came from Grade 7, where the curriculum focuses on “Canada: Origins, Histories and Movement of Peoples” (Alberta Education, 2006a, p. 1). The learning outcomes articulated in the curriculum seemed to drive this Grade 7 teacher to consistently include the experience of Francophones:

Well for Grade 7 history, it's just everywhere and you know even we rarely get past 1900 but you know all the way up to 1900 we're talking about Francophones' contribution and I think we're talking about a perspective. (M2, M)

Upon closer analysis however, this teacher was addressing “experiences” rather than perspectives:

I'm not sure that the French had a different perspective than Anglophones when settling the west or in the fur trade. They have different experiences but their perspective ... probably wasn't significantly different. (M2, M)

A dissociation between “experiences” and “perspectives” emerged in these remarks, as though having different experiences did not influence the “French” of the time to develop a distinct perspective from the “Anglophones” about the colonization of the West. Interestingly, that teacher noted that Francophones were settlers of the West, and therefore, an integral part of the history of Alberta – indeed, that they are not only situated in Québec.

The curriculum for Grade 7 social studies offered the possibility to tell a narrative of Canadian history through multiple perspectives. The opportunity helped one French immersion teacher to embed the perspectives of Francophones consistently in her teaching:

We're going to look at Canadian history more as a series of stories, seen from different Canadian perspectives. So, instead of having one long timeline, we're going to do units of perspective from different groups, including ... elders, immigrants, founding fathers, Francophones, Aboriginals.... Our big question is: What is the history of Canada? It depends on who you talk to... (F1, I)

It was by reconceptualizing her course via an essential question – “What is the history of Canada?” – that this teacher distinguished herself, as well as by orienting students to the continuous mobilization of perspectives, including those of Francophones. This approach emphasized the need to add perspectives to an existing course, but also to reconceptualize Canadian history by challenging and problematizing the traditional one-story approach (Banks, 1989; Osborne, 2012).

By redesigning her whole course (in collaboration with her colleague), this teacher was able to offer more sustained engagement with Francophone perspectives than other teachers in this study.

Need for Authenticity, Proximity and Legitimacy

In general, the teachers shared three concerns with respect to Francophone perspectives. Specifically, they observed that Francophone perspectives appear to be 1) stereotypical, 2) related to stories about political conflict, and 3) disconnected from the lives of Albertans. Powerful preconceptions about Francophones, inspired by multiculturalism and other stories circulating in Alberta (e.g., the widely shared idea that Francophones reside only in Québec), influenced the teachers. It was concerning that many of the teachers were aware of these preconceptions but seemed unable to bypass them to teach about Francophone perspectives in more meaningful ways. In light of the need to teach about perspectives in ways that connect more directly to students' lives, Franco-Albertan perspectives appear to offer a "*passage*" (Létourneau, 2010) to addressing the difficulties identified. At the end of each focus group and the interview, I presented testimonies from Franco-Albertan students to counter and nuance teachers' representations of Francophone perspectives, and to suggest that teachers become more attentive to the voices of Franco-Albertans.

Francophone Albertan perspectives were not a topic of discussion during the focus groups or the interview, which were mostly concerned with Québec. This invisibility, alongside claims that students are disconnected from Francophone perspectives, calls for an initiative to foster more localized connections with Franco-Albertan communities. Their perspectives deserve to be respected, as maintained by a Grade 12 Franco-Albertan student in a survey conducted at Maurice Lavallée Francophone High School (Edmonton):

As a Francophone, I believe that Anglophones need to know that we are here [in Alberta]. That we share this land with them. And that we are not from France or Québec, but that we are descendants of here. I think they need to know some of the towns and some of the facts about the Francophone population in each [of the regions of Alberta]. And how we have

pushed and worked (and continue to do so) to get what we have. Not only in the past, but also in the present. So that they will admire our great pride, and support us, through our thoughts, instead of thinking we are inferior. (Alberta Learning, 2002, p. 172)

I suggested that the teachers read testimonies like the one presented above that ask Anglophones to show more appreciation and respect towards local Francophones (e.g., “we are not from... Québec”), in contrast to the mobilized stereotypes and a depiction that mostly focused on history. Not engaging with Franco-Albertan perspectives creates a missed opportunity to understand the ways that teaching stereotypically about Francophones might impact Franco-Albertans’ lives and more generally, broaden students’ appreciation of the French-speaking presence in Alberta. The fact that it is a Franco-Albertan student asking that Francophone perspectives be taught and learned is perhaps more meaningful to teachers than a request or mandate from the Ministry of Education.

These testimonies from Franco-Albertan students that were presented at the end of the three focus groups and one interview elicited mostly positive comments. Some teachers saw in them a more authentic way to engage with the curriculum mandate. One teacher commented, “I really like the idea of including a Franco-Albertan perspective because like [another teacher] was saying, it really puts it into a more clear perspective for our students” (W1, T). The authentic aspect of the student’s testimony is what stood out as another teacher demonstrated:

I would like to see more of this in our actual textbook. It also takes that authentic voice or the need to have the authentic voice out of our hands, which where it might seem unauthentic and put it actually in the hands of a Francophone. Like this is an actually Francophone perspective on this, “Have you considered this?” “Has anyone in this room considered this?” Let’s talk about why this is gonna be different or why this might be a different perspective on things than you have or I have. It kind of – I think these types of additions to our textbook would be helpful for me. (W1, M)

For these teachers, hearing the authentic voices of Franco-Albertans helped to justify the curriculum mandate and the need to teach Francophone perspectives: “hearing from students who are living in Alberta, like Franco-Albertans, what they think is important, is much more meaningful

to our students than to say: ‘well it’s in the curriculum, it’s in the program of studies’” (W3, T). Although limited in scope, these comments and others point to a possible pathway to fostering connections at the local level between Albertans and Francophone perspectives.

Interpretation of Results

Asking Alberta teachers to teach Francophone perspectives from kindergarten to Grade 12 was a risky gamble on the part of the Alberta Ministry of Education. Studies on the implementation of this request, as well as a review of the literature on teachers’ opinions of this issue, have demonstrated several difficulties (Article 1, 2; Berg, 2017; Scott, 2013). My research suggests that Francophone perspectives may be difficult knowledge because they elicit not only rational responses (e.g., “I do not know these perspectives”), but emotional reactions of helplessness, disconnection, and frustration. This study calls for a different type of engagement than simply providing teachers with more information on the matter. What may be needed, this study concludes, is to provide teachers with alternatives such as Franco-Albertan perspectives that respond to their need for connectedness, authenticity, and legitimacy. Proposing that Franco-Albertan perspectives be studied first, instead of generic Francophone ones, seems to be more connected to teachers’ priorities about reflecting Albertan realities.

The focus groups revealed that when they were mobilized, Francophone perspectives were mostly taught in relation to the past, not the present. The most significant mobilization of these perspectives occurs in Grade 7 history, which is dedicated to Canadian history. The Grade 7 learning outcomes are consistent with teaching of these perspectives. However, from Grade 9 onwards, the curriculum focuses increasingly on Québec, which seems to influence teachers to

present a dichotomous view of Francophone perspectives as unconnected to present-day Alberta.⁹ In fact, the ways that the curriculum is designed seem to foster teaching practices related to Québec and its social and political conflicts. A curriculum with a more sustained emphasis on Francophone issues across Canada, instead of one focused solely on Québec, may be fruitful, especially in light of my findings about the extent of negative preconceptions of Québec in Alberta. One way to re-think Francophone perspectives is to consider them as influencing not only the past, but also present-day Alberta.

Another type of curriculum – what Wineburg and his colleagues (2007) called the “cultural curriculum” – seems to play a major role in causing the difficulties encountered by teachers and students when learning about Francophone perspectives. Specifically, as a body of learning that takes place outside school, the cultural curriculum circulates conceptions about Francophones that influence many teachers and contains negative stereotypes of the “French fact” (Aunger, 2005; Béland et al., 2021; Boily & Epperson, 2014). Francophones are usually represented as living in Québec, as embroiled in social and political conflicts, and as demanding and receiving special treatments compared to other Canadians. The Alberta Social Studies curriculum mentions that “students who take the social studies course already have their views, culture and experiences” (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 6) and that teachers need to take students’ backgrounds into account. It is also true that teachers have prior views about Francophone perspectives and that these partly modulate or influence what is taught and learned. Naming Alberta’s implicit cultural curriculum (e.g., stereotypes circulating in Alberta about Francophones) in the official curriculum, professional development sessions, and in classrooms might help Albertans to acknowledge some

⁹ In Grade 9, two specific learning outcomes require engagement with Québec, while only one with “Francophones in minority settings” (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 4). In Grade 11, there is no mention of these minorities; however, there are 4 references to Québécois nationalism. Grade 12 has one mention to the Québec’s *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, though no mention of a French-speaking minority.

of their points of departure when they engage with Francophone perspectives. In doing so, teachers may find that it is not true, as some claimed, that Albertans “have no starting ground” to engage with Francophone perspectives.

I interpret Francophone perspectives as “difficult knowledge” based on the teachers’ concerns about their lack of authenticity, proximity and legitimacy. This finding also reflects the results of my literature review in Article 2 and reveals an underlying Albertan perspective that shapes the ways in which Francophone perspectives are conceived in Alberta. Therefore, I conclude that there is a need among teachers to learn about Francophone perspectives that are more authentic (held by actual Francophones, not a caricature of them), more local (to Alberta), and more legitimate (that engender respect rather than resentment) (Resnik, 2000). In this sense, the testimonies of young Franco-Albertans can act as a pathway to fostering connections by initiating a dialogue between Albertans at the *provincial level*. The proposition that the reformed social studies curriculum will focus more on Franco-Albertans is encouraging (Article 1). Ultimately, the belief that there is no starting ground to consider the “French fact” in Alberta may stem from the invisibility in the curriculum of the Albertan perspectives used to interpret them. For now, the social studies curriculum only names Francophones as having perspectives, while neglecting to mention that Albertans have perspectives as well on Francophones.

Valuing more precisely Franco-Albertan perspectives, which are closer than Québécois perspectives to the reality of teachers and students, points to an alternative path forward that also contains flaws. For example, there is the problem of the representativeness of the testimonies chosen to illustrate Franco-Albertan perspectives. Franco-Albertan communities have been significantly reconfigured through immigration, which means they, too, are riddled with stereotypes and power relationships between their original and immigrant members (Abu Laban

& Couture, 2010; Frenette, 1998; Thompson, 2008). Questions arise about which testimonies should be selected to represent such diversified communities. Therefore, any attempts to engage with local Francophone perspectives must also be accompanied by challenging the common notion of what a perspective is and what shapes its interpretation, and also how that perspective might not represent the only way members of that community view the world. Perspectives may be more aptly conceived as a vision of the world, embedded in goals to change and preserve it as well as the means to do so, which are *plural* within a group. There is no *single* Francophone perspective, but rather there are many perspectives whose common denominator may be to propose a viable alternative to living in Alberta in English.

There is a need for the Francophone communities in Alberta to implicate themselves in the learning of their perspectives in non-Francophone settings. That might be difficult for community leaders who may be tempted to protect the vitality of their own groups, as attested by the following testimony:

Let's not ask the question of whether the others, the majority can come to know us. But it is absolutely imperative that our youth learn that they are a linguistic minority, that is the great gap in the curriculum. This is the reason for the existence of our [Francophone] schools. If our teachers can't teach our kids who they are, I don't know what the point is with our schools. (Le Café Show, 2021a)

This possible, but not necessarily generalized, lack of concern among Francophones about being studied by non-Francophones may explain why a Francophone historical society recently commissioned the production of activities dealing with Francophone perspectives for Francophone schools, without proposing the same for non-Francophone schools (SHFA, 2021).¹⁰ The pioneering work of Indigenous leaders may be a model to follow in that regard (e.g., providing speakers to visit schools, pedagogical activities, and, at the scholarly level, theorizing about the

¹⁰ Recently, they provided a workshop for Anglophone teachers. (<https://nctca2022.sched.com/event/tWSd/the-francophone-perspectives-in-alberta>)

need for non-Francophones to learn about Francophone perspectives) (Donald, 2009a, 2010; Prete, 2018; Solvey, 2018). Valuing Franco-Albertan perspectives implies a willingness on the part of Franco-Albertan communities to make a connection with other Albertans (see Article 4).

The proposition to teach more local, authentic and legitimate perspectives can serve as a springboard for rethinking a more meaningful path toward engaging with the difficult knowledge of Francophone perspectives. Research illustrates that students need local and authentic connections with perspectives perceived as legitimate to engage in meaningful learning (Toledo, 2020). Resorting to the local, including ideally local Albertan Anglophone perspectives, also fulfills a basic tenet of socio-constructivism, which is to depart from prior conceptions learned in one's cultural environment in order to engage with "disconfirming" knowledge (den Heyer, 2014; see also Sears, 2014). As with other studies aimed at improving cohabitation between official language groups (for Québec, see Zanazanian, 2015; Zanazanian & Gani, 2021) or between other groups in Canada (Peck & Sears, 2016), this study offers a typology (proximity, authenticity, legitimacy) through which to deconstruct and reconstruct preconceived ideas and to foster more equal relationships between individuals of various ancestries who speak French and/or English in Canada. Future research may inquire further into the ways in which Albertans can be supported in connecting with Franco-Albertan perspectives, especially in the context of reforms that seek to significantly increase the teaching of Francophone perspectives in six subject areas (arts, science, mathematics, wellness, social studies, language arts). Learning about Francophone perspectives may well mean more than learning about Francophones; it may require learning about the departure points through which we perceive one another.

ARTICLE 4: DEFENDING FRANCOPHONE PERSPECTIVES

Defending Francophone Perspectives in Alberta

Abstract

According to several studies (Articles 1, 2, 3), some Alberta social studies teachers perceive an injustice in the curriculum mandate to value Francophone perspectives from K-12 because many other perspectives are not similarly valued. This perception is understandable given that the social studies curriculum refers to vague and undefined “historical and constitutional reasons” to justify the mandate. In that context, I argue that Francophone education stakeholders (e.g., teachers, heritage group representatives, education consultants) could offer the necessary rationale in response to the prevalent question about why Francophone perspectives should be distinctly valued compared to others. Accordingly, I developed an online survey and created a focus group to ask 13 Francophone education stakeholders to respond to social studies teachers asking why Francophone perspectives should be distinctly valued in the Alberta social studies curriculum. The survey and focus group responses offered a vision of Canada (as founded by diverse Indigenous peoples, Francophones, and Anglophones), a goal for education in Alberta (to foster mutual recognition among these groups), and a means to do so (to distinctively learn about the perspectives of these groups). The rationale provided by these Francophone living in Alberta contrasts with the one offered by many other Albertans. Accordingly, the article reveals tensions between *distinct* perspectives on Francophones perspectives.

Introduction

Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom* grants education rights to Canada's two official (settler colonial) language groups, Francophones and Anglophones. These rights aim to protect each group's access to schools within their own language when they hold minority status in a province (10) or a territory (3) in Canada. For instance, in Alberta, Francophones needed those *Charter* rights to secure access to schooling in French from kindergarten to Grade 12, because the English-speaking government had refused to fairly subsidize their education system since the creation of the province in 1905. A Supreme Court of Canada judgment against Alberta (*Mahé v. Alberta*, 1990) ruled that the provincial government needed to fairly subsidize the Francophone school system, to grant Francophone school boards control over that system, and to take into consideration the needs and concerns of official language minorities when designing school curricula. One way the Alberta government has accommodated Francophones' education rights since 2005 is by prescribing in the social studies curriculum that students need to learn about Francophone perspectives from kindergarten to Grade 12 (Article 1). Although Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* grants educational rights to Francophones, and while these rights have led to specific curriculum accommodations, questions about the public acceptance or legitimacy (Gagnon, 2021) of these accommodations remain for social studies teachers (Articles 1, 2, 3).

Provincial or territorial governments in Canada have responded variously to Francophones' education rights in relation to the design of school curricula (Wallner, 2009). In provinces with concentrated Francophone populations (Ontario) or in which Francophones are constitutionally recognized (New Brunswick), Francophones have access to *distinct* curricula designed specifically for the needs of their education system (Brunet & Gani, 2020). In provinces where they are

numerically and constitutionally less recognized, such as Alberta, Francophones usually have access to specific mandates within *common* curricula designed for all students. These curricula outlining what students ought to learn contain mandates such as the need to value Francophone perspectives in social studies (Alberta Education, 2005; Manitoba, 2003, Saskatchewan, 2010). Requiring all students to learn about Francophone perspectives poses various challenges in non-Francophone educational contexts, as in the case of Alberta (Articles 1, 2, 3). Here, a question of legitimacy surfaces between the curriculum-as-planned by the government, and its public acceptance or level of endorsement by teachers in the curriculum-as-lived within classrooms (Aoki, 1981).

Based on “historical and constitutional reasons” (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 4), K-12 students are required to learn about both Francophone and Indigenous perspectives in Alberta’s mandatory social studies courses (Alberta Education, 2005). The Alberta government included this mandate in its social studies curriculum published between 2005 and 2010 as a result of a series of innovations that began in the late 1990s (Article 1). These innovations involved an agreement between the Ministers of Education from Western and Northern Canada to design a common social studies curriculum (WCP, 1993), the hiring of Francophone, Anglophone, and Indigenous authors to design it (Gillis, 2005), and these authors’ depictions of Canada as a partnership between three diverse groups – Anglophones, Francophones, and Indigenous peoples – to justify the need to learn about the perspectives of these “partners” (Alberta Learning, 2002, p. 84). Having to learn about Francophone and Indigenous perspectives, defined as “the shared view” held by members of these respective groups (Hoogeveen, 2008, p. 2), was a novelty and challenged the status quo in Alberta. That challenge generated many questions from teachers (Article 2), such as this one articulated in a focus group:

I think that is why we advocate for multiple perspectives. Recognizing that we do explicitly take on Francophone and Aboriginal in our program. *But what about* [emphasis added] the immigrant perspective, what about the LGBTQ perspective? Why do we highlight those two perspectives, but what about others? Like you said we want students to see themselves in the curriculum. (F1, cited in ATA, 2016, H. Focus Group)

The main question raised by this teacher has to do with the fairness of requiring teachers to distinctively value Francophone and Indigenous perspectives compared to other perspectives.

Naming group perspectives in the Alberta social studies program as needing distinct acknowledgement has fuelled a perception that they are being unfairly “privileged” (Richardson, 2002, p. 8; see also Brown, 2004; Pashby, 2013; Stewart, 2002). This perceived unfairness reflects a popular “sense of justice” (Forsé & Parodi, 2020) in Alberta but also in Canada more broadly (Bouchard, 2019; Kymlicka, 2001, 2003): the idea that every citizen, regardless of their group of belonging, should be treated equally (Dorion-Soulié, 2013; Harder, 2005; Manning, 2005). This idea is derived from a particular conception of the government as a neutral regulator that should not privilege any type of citizen over others, to preserve their autonomy to become who they want to be (Kymlicka, 1995, 2003a; Taylor, 1994). Translated into education, this idea becomes, as stated by the teacher cited above, “we want students to see themselves in the curriculum” (ATA Focus Group, 2016; for similar ideas in multicultural education, see Nieto, 2009). In stating that students should see themselves in what they learn, teachers become neutral arbitrators who seek not to privilege any groups of students over others *present in their perceived environment* (here, the classroom). This notion of justice used to question the mandate to value Francophone perspectives has been corroborated by a range of studies (Alberta Education, 2016, 2017; Alberta Learning, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003; ATA, 2016; Berg, 2017; Brown, 2004; Donald, 2009; Scott, 2013; Stewart, 2002; Tupper, 2005; Windrim, 2005). Since many teachers do not perceive Francophones to be part of their classroom communities, let alone to be part of the Alberta

landscape, they question the mandate that seeks to value Francophone perspectives more distinctively than the perspectives of other groups perceived as closer to their environment.

In arguing that other perspectives deserve similar treatment in the curriculum to those of Francophones and Indigenous peoples, Alberta social studies teachers have proposed a particular logic that requires further attention. Within that logic, groups and the relationships between them are defined in particular ways, which then affects the goals involved in teaching those groups' perspectives. In other words, teachers themselves proposed a *particular perspective* on the teaching of perspectives. They offered a particular vision of who groups are, the goals for teaching their viewpoints, and the means to do so. Using a particular logic, the teacher in the example cited earlier defined Francophones, Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ, and immigrants as groups fundamentally distinct from each other, as though valuing Francophone perspectives, for instance, excluded the recognition of LGBTQ groups. Within that zero-sum logic (Bar-Tal, 2007), the gains of acknowledgement for some groups (Indigenous peoples and Francophones) leads inevitably to a loss for other groups, instead of thinking about these groups as variously hyphenated together (i.e., instead of understanding that valuing Francophone perspectives also means recognizing immigrants and individuals from LGBTQ communities *who speak French*) (Babayants, 2017; Baril, 2017). In this logic, since groups are perceived as fundamentally distinct from one another, the goal then becomes to attend to each of these groups *on their own* so that students who belong to them will have an equal opportunity to see themselves in the curriculum taught.

That particular perspective on the teaching of perspectives (i.e., defining immigrant, LGBTQ, Francophone, and Indigenous perspectives as disconnected from one another within a zero-sum logic) can be refuted on many grounds. For example, identifying as Francophone does not exclude a person from identifying as an immigrant and/or a member of the LGBTQ

community. The relationship between these groups is interrelated rather than dissociated. For instance, LGBTQ immigrant students do attend Francophone schools and are being socialized to adopt Francophone perspectives.

Indeed, the argument put forth by some teachers is implicitly stating that the various perspectives of different groups need to be treated similarly *in English*. Such logic or perspective, which could be called “multiculturalist,” has been noted and contested by a vast array of scholars in education and other social sciences (Bouchard, 2019; Mackay, 2002; St. Denis, 2011; Webber, 1994). This multiculturalist logic argues that citizens (and perspectives) should be treated as equals, but that this needs to be done in English (Resnik, 2000). Therefore, it reproduces the power of English-speaking groups (Kymlicka, 2001, 2003, 2011) to oversee “who gets what” in education (Levin, 2008). This is a power that Francophones and Indigenous peoples have historically contested, and in some instances have gained rights to be protected from (Sections 23 and 35 of the Charter).

However, criticizing some teachers’ perspectives about the mandate to value Francophone (and Indigenous) perspectives in K-12 social studies in Alberta does not get us very far. In the last 20 years in Alberta, and in Canada more generally, some groups have stated their disagreement with the need to treat Francophones distinctively compared to others (Brie & Mathieu, 2021; Frideres, 1998; Hayday, 2005; Taylor, 1994). Criticizing the critics, however, has had little effect in Alberta, especially in light of teachers’ professional autonomy to adapt curriculum mandates to fit their classroom needs. Accordingly, to provide an alternate view on the importance of learning Francophone perspectives in Alberta social studies, I invited Francophones living in Alberta to do so through an online survey or a focus group.

The justifications to juxtapose Francophones' views with teachers' questions about the mandate are manifold. In particular, the curriculum does not provide a substantive rationale to implement the mandate, but rather states vague and undefined "historical and constitutional reasons" for doing so (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 4). The problem is not only curricular but also involves a broader contestation about what Canada is and how its citizens should be treated. I was also inspired to do this research by my prior discussions with social studies teachers in Alberta. As described in Article 3, some teachers confirmed that they sought to better recognize Francophone perspectives but found that what they perceived to be the singular perspective offered in the curriculum was inauthentic. Based on these discussions, I hypothesized that the curriculum offers a rationale based on the broader Canadian reality while most teachers' discourse revolves around Alberta's reality. Excerpts from Francophone-Albertan students' testimonies about the need to learn Francophone perspectives were successful to some extent in convincing (at the surface level) some teachers about the need to study these Franco-Albertan perspectives distinctively (Article 3). Accordingly, I sought to continue that experience by gathering more evidence and testimonies from French-speaking education stakeholders in Alberta, who could provide a more substantial rationale than vague and undefined constitutional reasons. It was also important to do so in the context of Alberta's curriculum reform that will include the mandate to value Francophone perspectives in six subject matters (sciences, math, arts, language arts, social studies, wellness) (Alberta Education, 2020).

Methodology

Online Survey and Focus Group

A mixed-method, qualitative methodology (Barbour, 1999) structured the gathering of 13 Francophone education stakeholders' responses to a frequently asked question about the mandate

to learn Francophone perspectives in Alberta social studies (i.e., “but what about other perspectives?”). The initial study sample contained a set of eight respondents, whose answers were gathered through an online survey. Since no teachers were included in that first sample, a focus group with five teachers was set up using similar questions. All participants were Francophone educational stakeholders who speak French and who work in education or services related to the vitality of the French-speaking community in Alberta (mostly university employees, teachers, and community group members related to education). All participants displayed a willingness to promote Francophone perspectives. Each provided a rationale to learn about these perspectives in response to a teacher’s question (“*but what about others?*”). To spark discussion amongst the focus group participants, two additional quotes were included and responded to, including “there’s too much emphasis on Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives, while ignoring or at the expense of others and ‘Canadianism’ as a whole” (Alberta Learning, 1999, p. 26).

Study participants were recruited in two ways. The first recruitment site was a 2018 symposium held and organized by David Scott and Sylvie Roy (both University of Calgary scholars) and me to report in French about research on teachers’ reactions toward the mandate to value Francophone perspectives in Alberta social studies (Gani & Scott, 2017). Secondly, an email was sent to a list of teachers who work in Francophone schools in a southern Alberta town inviting them to participate in a focus group. The goal of the focus group was to corroborate the survey results with the first cohort of Francophone educational stakeholders. Because the backgrounds of these two cohorts of participants differed significantly, it is important to describe them in more detail.

The eight online survey participants were recruited during and after their participation in a one-day symposium on Francophone perspectives. During that symposium, they learned about

research on teachers in Alberta questioning the mandate to learn about Francophone perspectives. Accordingly, this cohort constituted an informed sample who also occupied a key role in the community (e.g., public servant, curriculum consultant, heritage group representative). The answers gathered in the online survey displayed a level of formality that reflected their educational background (e.g., most had university degrees), the time they had to formulate their answers (limitless), and the means of data collection (online survey). In contrast to the answers obtained during the focus group, the survey answers did not contain personal experiences or anecdotes detailing the life of Francophones in Alberta. Additionally, their responses were collected after a symposium on Francophone perspectives, which equipped participants to explain, in their own words, the rationale to learn about them in response to a question frequently asked by teachers.

Hosted online through Survey Monkey, the survey contained 15 questions related to information participants had learned during the symposium. One question sought answers to a teacher's query about the need to include immigrant and LGBTQ perspectives in the social studies curricula alongside Francophone (and Indigenous) perspectives. Respondents had unlimited space and time to answer the questions. Gathered during the span of one week, survey responses were then retrieved in PDF files for analysis. Moreover, these responses were aimed directly at explaining why Francophone perspectives needed to be learned *distinctively*, which addressed one of the main concerns of Alberta social studies teachers (Article 2).

One year after the Symposium, in 2019, a 45-minute focus group with five Francophone teachers was held at the University of Calgary, using the online questionnaire as its basis. One set of questions had to do with the need to learn *distinctively* about Francophone perspectives compared to other perspectives. Two moderators presented the quotes from the question, but in contrast to the online survey, the focus group participants could elicit different types of responses

and were also able to ask for clarification when necessary. Compared to the online survey responses, focus group participants shared more personal anecdotes, perhaps due to the similarity of their status (teachers in Francophone schools), the commonalities of their experiences as French speakers in Alberta, and the more informal focus group format. After signing the same consent form used for the online survey, the focus group participants (five female teachers working in Francophone schools with various degrees of experience) justified the mandate to value Francophone perspectives.

The total sample of 13 participants included individuals affiliated primarily with Francophone education and leadership elites in Alberta. These elites provided a rationale about the necessity to teach about Francophone perspectives, informed by their implication in education, their high levels of education, and their interest in the curriculum mandate. However, I acknowledge that many opinions exist in the pluri-vocal Francophone communities in Alberta inhabited by individuals with conflicting interests and various origins (Abu Laban & Couture, 2010). The 13 opinions may not be representative of the entire Franco-Albertan community. Despite their differences, participants in the survey and focus group offered relatively similar answers, which might thus be considered a Francophone perspective (among others) on Francophone perspectives. Tracing the link between Francophone educational stakeholders and the curriculum mandate helps to expose possible convergence and divergence in the ways in which the mandate is justified.

To make sense of the data, I drew on the contextualizing analysis method proposed by Paillé and Mucchielli (2016). This type of analysis pays attention to the data itself (its meaning) and its context of enunciation (what connects the meaning to a larger purpose and stream of thought). This first level of analysis then serves as the basis for coding the data, which was read

multiple times and then annotated and classified (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009; Weston et al., 2001). One criterion for classification is the similarity of utterances, including the occurrence of the same words (e.g., founders) or the same context of enunciation (e.g., valuing history).

Consequently, three main themes emerged from the analysis:

- 1) rights;
- 2) language; and
- 3) history.

Contextualizing analysis also helped bring coherence to answers collected through different means of data collection by revealing underlying patterns of opinions through a search for similar utterances in both sets of data (i.e., survey and focus group).

Several citations were used to support, detail, and specify these three themes (Weston et al., 2001). Nuances appeared in the way participants described Francophones – for instance, as a relatively homogenous group or an intersectional group (e.g., someone who is Francophone could also be an immigrant and/or a member of the LGBTQ community). Focusing on the underlying conceptions of terms like Francophone helped define different types of justification for Francophone perspectives that did not appear at first glance. Numerous revisions and rewrites of the results section also revealed many subtleties in the analyzed statements. All responses and statements, however, converged in defending Francophone perspectives, in linking them to history, rights, and fostering better intergroup relations, especially among the trio of perceived Canada's founders. The quotes then served as evidence to exemplify the main codes and sub-codes identified.

Results

All respondents agreed that Francophone perspectives deserve distinct attention in Alberta's curricula. According to six out of 13 respondents, such distinct attention is needed in line with Francophones' distinct status in the creation of Canada, alongside Anglophones (named in one response as "hegemony," #4)¹¹ and Indigenous peoples. Such conceptions of Canada were elicited by a now-retired public servant who noted that the country's existence is "based on a foundation of three pillars that include Indigenous citizens, English-speaking citizens and French-speaking citizens" (#2). Therefore, some respondents' arguments rested on a hierarchy of status based on an interpretation of Canada's history and its "founding peoples" (#1).

The Constitution was also mobilized to corroborate Francophones' distinct status: "the constitution ... recognizes three groups in particular. Francophones in a minority situation, Anglophones in a minority situation and Indigenous" (#7). In that sense, one way to argue in favour of the mandate is to state that it reflects Francophones' distinct historical and constitutional status in Canada.

A trio of founders – Francophone, Anglophone, and Indigenous peoples – appear to have distinct status that legitimizes the need to learn specifically about their perspectives. However, within the six answers that cited this trio, Indigenous peoples occupied an ambiguous place. They were not deemed to hold the same status as the Francophone and Anglophone "founders," notably because their languages are not put on the same pedestal as French or English. The power dynamics between the trio of founders are apparent in a response from a retired federal government official, who distinguished the power of two founders (Francophones and Anglophones) to linguistically assimilate the third founding people (Indigenous peoples):

¹¹ All quotes have been translated from French to English.

The founding nations of French and British have evolved over time in Canada to become French-speaking and English-speaking linguistic communities [while] the Indigenous peoples who are also multicultural ... belong to one or the other official languages groups. (#2)

One teacher's justification also cast Indigenous peoples as *the other founder*, not equal to the first two: "to interest young people and then make them understand that there are two peoples. That's where we come from, then with the Indigenous" (F5). In that sentence, the allusion to "then with the Indigenous" appeared to place Indigenous peoples as an afterthought rather than on the same footing as the other "founders."

On the other hand, this difference in status between founders did not lead the teacher or the retiree to advocate for less recognition of Indigenous peoples. Both the teacher and the retiree, along with four other participants, emphasized the need to learn the perspectives of the founding trio equally to "understand how we are three peoples now" (F5).

Many respondents suggested that learning about the founders' perspectives provided a better understanding of the Canadian reality, both past and present. Knowing the perspective of these founders helped to situate Canada's origins, its constitution and its present, through a "domino effect" (F3). In conversation with one another, teachers stated that it is "important to situate the founding of Canada" (F4); "how Canada was founded, [so] we can understand how the constitution was founded. It's like a 'domino effect'" (F3). Similarly, an employee of the Faculté Saint-Jean at the University of Alberta argued that teaching the founders' perspective is not only important, but constitutes a responsibility for Canadians: "Indigenous peoples and Francophones are the founding peoples of Canada and schools have a responsibility to convey this reality to all their students" (#1). Learning about these founding perspectives may even help redress the uneven relations between them, since one teacher stated that "by valuing the Francophone perspective, even Anglophones would see Francophones as founders" (F3). Participants directed their

responses primarily towards an Anglophone audience, which is perhaps evidence of the perceived distinct status between the founders' groups (it is noteworthy that participants did not address their answers to Indigenous peoples). It seems worth considering that the way I framed the questions in the survey and focus group also may have led participants to specifically address an Anglophone audience.

Canadian History

In general, Canadian history was the main topic mobilized to justify the mandate to value Francophone perspectives. All five teachers in the focus group and six of the eight survey respondents mobilized history, which was usually the first theme to come up in discussion. For example, when asked by the focus group moderator, "What criteria should be used to justify the asymmetrical recognition given to Francophones in the curriculum?" the first response was "History" (F1). Mobilizing history meant explaining why Canada existed, and therefore, why learning Francophone perspectives explains, by association, why Canada is a country today: "Yes, Canada would not exist without the Francophones. Yes, historically it is" (F2). A veteran education consultant with 24 years of experience corroborated and synthesized the previous two comments: "The reason we have these two perspectives [Francophone and Indigenous] in our current social studies curriculum is historical" (#3). Participants' responses therefore proposed a particular reading of Canadian history to support the learning of Francophone perspectives.

What history, specifically, was mobilized in these answers? Very few respondents specified the historical narrative to which they were referring; indeed, most stated history as a reason without further outlining the specific story. However, an expert working for a heritage group did specify one such narrative:

The great Canadian conflicts (the constitutional crises, the referendums, the deportation of the Acadians, the act of union, the school crises, the residential schools) have all been

caused by a separation between the perspectives of a minority and a hegemony.¹² More often than not the disparity is between Francophone perspectives and hegemony or Indigenous perspectives and hegemony. Given that these communities have rights under the constitution, failure to understand these perspectives can lead to further conflict. (#4)

This respondent's narrative resulted in an ultimatum – the choice between learning Francophone perspectives and preventing conflicts, or not learning about them and risking reproducing past conflicts. Further, a particular teleological reading of history appeared in this narrative, suggesting that history is doomed to be repeated if nothing is changed.

One teacher in the focus group also provided a certain narrative of Canadian history. For her, it was important to learn about Francophones to understand how they have safeguarded Canada's existence. Her account of Canadian history emphasized the protective role played by Quebecers (Francophones) in the face of American invaders:

The United States wanted to incorporate Québec with them, with Maine and everything. And if Québec would have accepted to go with them, we don't know if Canada would exist now ... I think that Canada would not have existed without this resistance. (F3)

For this teacher, learning about Francophone perspectives was also about honouring Francophone Quebecers who have kept Canada intact. Québec occupied a special place in the focus group, as teachers talked for several minutes about the ways in which many Albertans reduce Francophones to Québécois.

Connections between the past and the present of Canada, but also between Québec and Western Canada, were another argument used in several answers. One teacher paid particular attention to the links between Anglophone Albertans and Québec due to their perceived geographical distancing:

Often in the West especially, we feel really separated from Québec. The Anglophones in general think that Francophones are in Québec all alone.... I think that because Canadian Anglophones consider themselves so distinct from Québec, there is a tendency to ignore

¹² For this expert, the "hegemony" refers to English speakers: "English speakers are not a minority in Canada. They form the hegemony."

the fact that we have contributed so much, that Francophones have contributed so much to history. (F2)

Her comment revealed an ignorance of Franco-Albertan history among Albertans, and a perceived conflation of Francophones with Quebecers. Paradoxically, the teacher's point of view also illustrated the importance she placed on Québec to represent Francophones. Indeed, she advocated for a better understanding of Québec in Alberta:

Not teaching a Francophone perspective perpetuates the separation that we have between Québec and the rest of Canada. And I think we should fight that. It just makes us richer to incorporate all perspectives of the culture. Québec is such a big part of our history and geographically, and in terms of the population of the country, it seems clear that we need to put that first. (F2)

Learning the contributions of Francophones could bridge not only the past with the present, but also provinces with antagonistic relationships, such as Québec and Alberta.

Hierarchies and Intersections

After highlighting the respondents' main theme – history – and subthemes (distinct status, founders, and historical narrative), it is important to place the quotes in their context of enunciation. Participants responded to citations from social studies teachers in Alberta who questioned the need to learn about Francophone and Indigenous perspectives distinctively compared to those of other groups, such as immigrants and LGBTQ communities. Asked to respond to such quotes, respondents specifically addressed the difference between these groups and Francophones. All participants prioritized learning about Francophone perspectives over those of immigrants and LGBTQ groups, because they argued that these groups have unequal status. However, they did so in distinct ways:

- I. Eight individuals prioritized the historical and foundational status of some groups over others to support their argument (*the status argument*).
- II. Three respondents favoured, for pedagogical purposes, the presentation of certain perspectives first to students, to then introduce other perspectives later (*the pedagogical sequencing argument*).

- III. Finally, two individuals argued that different perspectives can be learned at the same time because they are not mutually exclusive (*the intersectional argument*).

To specify the sub-themes presented earlier, the next three sections respectively outline the arguments in which they are embedded.

The Status Argument

Respondents who mobilized the status argument emphasized the place of Francophones within Canadian history and its Constitution to justify the need to learn about their perspectives. Therefore, the unequal status of some groups compared to others (immigrants or LGBTQ) justified that Francophone and Indigenous perspectives need to be prioritized. For example, one respondent indicated that immigrant and LGBTQ perspectives need to “be addressed” (#5) in the curriculum, while Francophone and “Aboriginal” perspectives need to be “highlighted” because they are “part of the Canadian Constitution and constitute its memory.” A university lecturer’s response might be understood as a synthesis of this and similar comments: “it’s about respect for Canadian diversity but it’s not written into the Constitution as specifically as [Francophone and Aboriginal] perspectives” (#8). The Constitution was interpreted in a certain way that gave primacy to collective over individual rights to justify the needs of groups who have been granted collective rights to have their perspectives learned about distinctively. A law student stated the need to “go back to the constitution” (#7) to emphasize the distinct status of some groups (“minority Francophones, minority anglophones and aboriginal peoples”) as compared to others (immigrant and LGBTQ groups). The latter groups had attributes related to “diversity” (#3; #8) or “sexual orientation” (#6) while Francophones and Indigenous peoples have “constitutional” (#7) and “historical” (#3) statuses that need to be valued distinctively. As another university lecturer synthesized in the survey, “I think that cultural identity and sexual orientation are not part of the same basket. They are two important but distinct realities” (#6). Here, again, a distinction was

made between the protection of diversity (i.e., against discrimination) and the protection offered to Francophones by the Constitution (collective rights to access and regulate education in minority settings). Therefore, within the status argument, a particular reading of the Canadian Constitution was emphasized as giving primacy to collective rights that should be mirrored in the curriculum by focusing distinctively on the perspectives of collective rights holders.

Respondents who used the status argument maintained concurrently that their claims were not exclusionary. An employee of the Faculté Saint-Jean specified that, “It doesn’t preclude including the many other perspectives that exist in life, but we need to make sure that the Canadian reality is at the heart of our education” (#1). Therefore, according to some participants, specifying distinct statuses of groups did not lead to the exclusion of other groups, but rather to establishing priorities. A heritage group representative (#4) described such logic at length:

1. He started by defending the need of all “youth to see themselves in the program and value their perspectives. We want them to understand how their languages, personal histories, sexual orientations, cultures, religions, etc. influence them through their identities.”
2. Yet, within three separate paragraphs, he also stated that:
 - a. “Canada is a country with two official languages”;
 - b. “The great Canadian conflicts ... have all been caused ... more often than not by the disparity between Francophone perspectives and [Anglophone] hegemony or Aboriginal and [Anglophone] hegemony”; and
 - c. “The perspectives of LGBTQ or immigrant people are important, too, so that individuals in these groups feel valued. However, their rights are individual rights under Article 15, not collective rights [afforded to Francophone and Indigenous peoples].”
3. He concluded by reasserting that prioritizing does not mean excluding: “This is not to say that they [other perspectives] should not be treated, but they are not part of the minimum necessary to navigate political, economic and social systems.”

In sum, a series of hierarchies emerged in the responses of participants who used the status argument. This series involved a particular reading of Canadian history, collective rights, and the linguistic features of the country. In this logic, since groups do not have the same status, their

perspectives should not be treated equally by curricula – although participants specified that the existence of these hierarchies does not mean to exclude other groups from curricula.

The Pedagogical Sequencing Argument

Three teacher participants drew on pedagogical sequencing to make sense of the need to learn Francophone perspectives. They asserted that it is essential to learn some perspectives first to learn others later. Conversely, one teacher suggested distinguishing between the need to learn fundamental perspectives before moving on to other learning:

And I think like touching on other perspectives, like LGBTQ, and other countries and stuff, I think that can be incorporated kind of everywhere, if teachers can use when they teach. Even talking about the news, it takes like five minutes in the morning, discussing, pushing students to see each topic using a ... a new lens. But I think understanding the foundation of Canada, as you said, the three, those three perspectives specifically, it's very important. (F3)

For this teacher, learning about Francophone, Indigenous, and Anglophone perspectives did not preclude learning about others. Yet, she reduced other perspectives to “discrete pieces of information or ‘stuff’ allocated to certain grade levels and certain topics rather than integrated throughout social studies” (Tupper, 2005, p. 120). Her colleague emphasized the importance of “really understanding ... three perspectives” as well as LGBTQ and immigrant perspectives, “but not without having a clear foundation of where we are coming from” (F4). The pedagogical sequencing argument, which was only used by (three) teachers, served as a reminder that many perspectives should be learned about, although their order in the sequence requires choices to be made.

The pedagogical sequencing argument proposes a certain implicit developmental model of learning perspectives. Certain perspectives had to be learned first for students to understand others. A specific teleology emerged in these three teachers’ responses, as though “where we are coming

from” leads to a better understanding of where we are now. Here, the term “we” is used to describe Francophone, Anglophone, and Indigenous peoples from the past, and a multitude of groups today. The pedagogical sequencing model places a specific interpretation of Canada’s foundation at its centre, then extrapolates it to groups that have more recently come to define the country.

The Intersectional Argument

The two respondents in favour of the intersectional argument asserted that recognizing Francophone perspectives also meant learning about LGBTQ and immigrant perspectives *at the same time*. These respondents observed that the same person can belong to all three communities (LGBTQ, immigrant and Francophone) and thus may possess different perspectives related to each group simultaneously. This argument was contrasted with earlier responses, which seemed to homogenize Francophones as founders of Canada, for instance, but also a group that was somewhat detached from immigrant and LGBTQ communities (i.e., as if this belonging could not coexist in the same person). In reference to a comment about the possibility of excluding certain perspectives when learning about Francophones, one teacher responded:

I don’t know who said that but that, that’s not exclusive, it’s not like wanting to teach Francophone perspectives, and Indigenous perspectives, it prevents us from teaching other perspectives. Like you said LGBTQ, I’m sure that’s the case, but, of course, Francophones and Indigenous people are part of the LGBTQ community. Why not kill two birds with one stone? (F2)

Here, the teacher was highlighting the possibility of imagining Francophone-LGBTQ perspectives, rather than compartmentalizing groups into entities to be recognized separately. Multiple perspectives can and do intersect within the same person, and that is why learning about Francophone perspectives does not necessarily involve excluding others. They could be learned about simultaneously.

Another example of the intersectionality argument was observed in a retired public servant's proposed conception of Canada:

If you consider Canada to be built on a foundation of three pillars that include Indigenous citizens, English-speaking citizens, and French-speaking citizens, you will likely realize that all other perspectives, including immigrant, multi, LGBTQ are found in each of the three pillars. (#2)

Recognizing Francophone groups therefore also means valuing the diversity within those groups. Within Francophones, for example, there are “the Swiss, the Belgians, the Senegalese, the Acadians... The same would apply to Aboriginal peoples who are also multicultural” (#2). This response made clear that the term Francophone encompasses an overall group of people who speak French, which then includes multiple diversities. Responses like this, however, were the minority, compared to most participants who tended to compartmentalize groups to better assess who deserved attention in curricula. Only two participants acknowledged in a concrete way that other perspectives could receive attention at the same time as Francophone perspectives – because they reside in the same individuals.

Explaining the Resistances Toward Francophone Perspectives

Although respondents made an argument for the need to learn about Francophone perspectives distinctively, teachers suggested that these arguments may not be enough to convince Anglophones to do so. As one teacher noted, “buy-in” (F5) was still needed. The teachers unpacked this challenge in the following focus group exchange:

F5: I think the challenge is buy-in.

Moderator: The what?

F5: Buy-in, we need buy-in.

Moderator: Oh, buy-in, okay.

F3: They have to believe in it, yes.

F5: If they embrace it, if they are open-minded.

F2: And the parents.

F5: The parents.

F1: I was going to say also, how do you reduce the threat? I think when you want to add another perspective, I think about... So here with the group, we said that the curriculum and all of that is the English perspective. So to come in and say this is your perspective, we want to add the Francophone, Aboriginal perspective, I really think that for them, it's a threat. It's a threat to my beliefs, my culture, so how do I explain that it's not to take anything away from you, it's really to add to the perspective and really to tell the real story of Canada, not just one point of view. So I think that's the challenge.

These teachers suggested that the challenge of teaching Francophone perspectives in Alberta involves a perceived threat that by following this mandate, teachers might be losing or “taking something away.” It is as if learning about group perspectives is a zero-sum game in which the acknowledgement granted to some groups takes away or undermines the recognition of others (Bar-Tal, 2007). In many answers, respondents sought to make it explicitly clear that granting distinct attention to Francophones did not mean the exclusion of other perspectives. They did so to convince what they often described as their main interlocutor: “they,” the “English perspectives,” and those who feel threatened by Francophone perspectives. Teacher participants in this study worked to express the following message to Anglophones: they (Anglophone teachers) need to see the “value” (F5) in teaching about Francophone perspectives to tell a truer story of Canada. Anglophone Albertans needed to “believe in it” (F3).

Discussion

The 13 Francophone research participants supported the mandate to attend distinctively to Francophone perspectives in the Alberta curriculum based on historical and constitutional reasons. Their responses mirrored but also specified the reasons that are outlined (but not specified) in the

social studies curriculum. To summarize, according to participants in this study, the reasons to grant distinct attention are based on:

- 1) The idea of Canada as a country established by a trio of founders (Francophones, Indigenous peoples, and Anglophones);
- 2) The idea of Canada as a country whose Constitution and history reveal the distinct status of Francophones, Indigenous peoples and Anglophones; and
- 3) The idea that groups with unequal status deserve unequal attention in school, which does not mean, however, that some groups should be excluded at the expense of others.

These responses offer a particular sense of what is just (Forsé & Parodi, 2020), in which “justice consists of treating equals equally and unequals unequally” (Smiley, 1992, p. 284, cited in Laforest, 1993, p. x). Their responses also revealed a rationale that was at one time included in a draft version of the social studies curriculum to justify the need to learn about Canada’s three peoples: culturally diverse Indigenous, French-speaking, and English-speaking peoples (Alberta Learning, 2002). In this way, Francophone respondents were echoing the core reasons conceived by the curriculum authors in the early 2000s about why Francophone perspectives needed distinct attention.

Article 1 illustrated that the rationale to include Francophone and Indigenous perspectives as a subject to learn about in Alberta social studies derived from a particular vision of Canada. It is worth revisiting and citing the full rationale (erased for unknown reasons from the finalized version), as it is similar to the rationale discussed by the participants in this study:

Alberta’s new social studies program recognizes that Canada is a partnership between culturally diverse Aboriginal Canadians, culturally diverse English-speaking Canadians and culturally diverse Francophone Canadians. Each of these groups enjoys collective rights that are rooted in Canadian history, entrenched in Canada’s constitution, and protected by Canadian law. To maintain Canadian unity, it is essential to promote mutual recognition, understanding and cooperation among these partners. One strategy to do so is to explore topics and issues from diverse perspectives. The new Social Studies program will do this by integrating Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives with those of other Canadians. By exploring divergent visions of Canada’s national story, the various partners

in the Canadian federation can maintain a dialogue with each other, learn from one another, and work together to build a Canada in which all citizens feel a strong sense of belonging (Alberta Learning, 2002, p. 84)

The reference to Canada's three partners, the need for mutual recognition, and the means to do so by learning about Francophone and Indigenous perspectives were all reflected in respondents' answers. It is unlikely that respondents had access to the original rationale included in the 2002 draft curriculum, which I obtained from the University of Alberta Library's curriculum archives. What is more likely is that respondents' answers reflected the power of Francophones to shape that rationale in 2002. After all, the main curriculum authors for that draft included one Francophone, one Indigenous and one Anglophone writer (Pashby, 2013). In that sense, the rationale to include Francophone perspectives, although removed from the current curriculum for reasons that are unclear, still lives in the Francophone cultural curriculum (what is learned outside schools by Francophones about themselves and reproduced in various comments gathered within my study).

Francophone participants' responses also reflect comments collected during the government consultations on the 2002 draft curriculum. During those consultations, a Francophone teacher asked to comment on what the social studies curriculum of the future would look like said:

It is essential that students be familiar with the general history of Western Canada. There would be a better understanding of the founding groups (J. R. Saul's tripod image) if everyone had a better understanding of the relationship of Francophones and Aboriginal people to the development of the country. (Alberta Learning, 2002, p. 171)

Such comments revealed the influence of intellectuals such as John Ralston Saul (1998), who popularized the three pillars metaphor at the end of the 1990s (see also Gillis, 2005). In another comment from the 2002 consultations, a Francophone student synthesized the need for a three-pillar approach to social studies:

We need to rewrite all history books; we will need to combine the French version with the English version and also the Native version. Heroes will no longer be heroes and criminals will no longer be criminals (as each story has its own list of heroes). They will all be parts of the story told in an objective way (different perspectives on the story) so that students can form their own opinions. (Alberta Learning, 2002, p. 173)

The three-pillar approach also resurfaced in responses to a synthesis of stakeholders' feedback, which reflected hope that the inclusion of Indigenous and Francophone perspectives would lead to a reconciliation of the "'three solitudes' and a more unified Alberta/Canada" (Alberta Learning, 2002, p. 71). As already noted, most of the participants in my study, which was conducted 16 years later, replicated the themes outlined in the above-cited quotation (e.g., Canada as a partnership between three pillars, the need for mutual recognition, and distinct attention to the pillar groups' perspectives).

Three "Founding peoples": Really?

Some people might argue that it is misleading to describe Canada as resting on three founding peoples. Indeed, it is a foundational narrative with many flaws. A participant in a recent government consultation about the ongoing reform of Alberta's curriculum argued that "Much of our social studies curriculum perpetuates the myth of the British, French and Aboriginal founding nations. It was British colonialism that divided people by language. Aboriginal peoples were not 'founding nations.' They were colonized" (#272 cited in Alberta Education, 2018, p. 407). It can be argued that the idea of Canada as a country that is built on three pillars is more of a myth (Bouchard, 2014, 2019) or "mythistory" (not totally true, not totally false; Turgeon, 2015) than an accurate representation of history. The function of these mythic origin stories is not to accurately represent reality. Rather, these stories establish principles that unite members of a polity under the same regime (Russell, 2004, as cited in Dubois & Dubois, 2018; see also Létourneau, 2021).

Concurrently, it might also be argued that it is misleading to insist that all students can and should see themselves in a curriculum that is taught predominantly in English. The teacher who posed the original question taken up in this research study (“but what about others?”) and the Francophone participants who responded to this question may have provided concurrent and misleading representations of what Canada is. Their representations of Canada propose different (and perhaps mythical) conceptions of equality.

Two versions of equality are presented in this study, first in the quote of the teacher arguing that more perspectives need to be valued in the Alberta social studies curriculum, and in the quotes from my study participants. In the first version of equality, the teacher was saying that students should be considered equal to each other in their opportunity to see themselves in the curriculum. In the Francophone version of equality, what counted was equality among the *founders’* groups, which meant recognizing their contributions as equally valuable while also distinct from other groups. The political philosopher Will Kymlicka (1995) pointed to this principle of equality, defined in a particular way: “when... Francophones in Canada ask for language rights, they are not asking for some kind of special ‘group rights’ that are not accorded to Anglophones. They are simply asking for the same kind of rights that the majority culture takes for granted” (p. 10). This view comes into conflict with many individuals who might define students outside the boundaries of their allegiance to linguistic groups; even some Francophones do not define equality as such (Thompson, 2008). Accordingly, these two visions of equality clash. It seems that when a person is a proponent of one, they are critiquing the other using zero-sum game logic.

This articulation between two divergent visions for equality within Canada (ranking groups vs. granting them equal opportunity) leads into what Charles Taylor (1993, 1994) identified in the 1990s as a fundamental tension of Canadian life. That is, the incapacity of Canadians to agree on

a common perspective about justice and whose groups deserve what kind of attention, for instance, in schools (Kymlicka, 2020; Levin, 2008). As political scientist Alain G.-Gagnon (2021) recently remarked about Canadian life:

The most difficult challenge facing a country like Canada is the political obligation to balance the claims of the founding peoples (English, French, Aboriginal and Acadian) with those of the many emerging cultural minorities who settled in the country after its founding in 1867.¹³ (p. 99)

The two perspectives of justice outlined in this study (the perspective of the study participants and the perspective of the teacher to whom the study participants were responding) define equality differently. One searches for an equal-to-equal relation between three societies or “founders’ groups,” each of which became diversified over time and now integrates immigrants and various other communities such as LGBTQ. In the other vision of justice, equality is sought for an almost infinite number of groups whose status as members of three societies or within founding groups is taken for granted. Accordingly, in one vision, it is groups that contain diversity that need to be addressed as equals, while in the other, there is an almost infinite number of groups that constitute *a Canadian society*.

The central takeaway from this study is that participants provided responses that exemplified and made the case for understanding a Francophone perspective of Canada, equality, and curriculum. That perspective is based on an interpretation of Canada that led them to deduce that founders’ groups have distinct status that is unequivocal. Equality is sought among the founders’ groups, more so or distinctively from between these founders and what Gagnon (2021) called the “emerging cultural minorities” (p. 99).

¹³ It should be noted here that the argument made by Gagnon, although referencing post-1867 minorities, could be extended, in my view, to pre-1867, as the creation of the Dominion of Canada did not mark the arrival of such minorities and others.

The participants' responses offered a counterpoint to the perspective that compartmentalized groups as equal in status, and therefore, as deserving of similar attention for their perspectives. It is possible to refute the metaphor of the three founding pillars of Canada or to characterize it as romantic (Saul, 1998). After all, this metaphor is a founding narrative (Dubois & Dubois, 2018) that does not fully embrace reality. However, that metaphor is shared among several cohorts of Franco-Albertans. This study has provided insight into *a* Francophone perspective distinct from the one used to criticize the mandate to learn Francophone perspectives. In that sense, the study revealed the need to engage not only with different perspectives on Canada, but with different perspectives on the recognition of perspectives in curricula.

One blind spot that appeared in the responses of Francophone stakeholders was equity between French and Indigenous languages. Although the stakeholders considered Indigenous peoples to be founding partners of Canada, and while language was a central element in many of their responses, they did not adequately recognize Indigenous languages. Like the quotes to which they were responding, the participants disassociated Indigenous peoples from Indigenous languages, equated the need to recognize Indigenous peoples with other (founding) groups, and compartmentalized Indigenous peoples from Francophones mostly without addressing their shared resistance to assimilation in English. In this sense, a limitation of the Francophone perspective on recognition presented in this study is that it recognizes Indigenous peoples in an egalitarian manner without reflecting on their distinct needs. Respondents' logic partly reflected the proposals of individuals arguing for an equivalence between the recognition of Francophone perspectives and other groups. As it is important to say that a Francophone perspective on Canada may be endorsed by non-Francophones, it is also important to note its limitations within its own logic of portraying Canada as a partnership between three unequal founding groups.

A final limitation of this study is that participants experienced difficulties articulating precisely why it is necessary to learn about Francophone perspectives across curricula, in every grade, on a variety of topics, as proposed in a recent reform of six subject matters in Alberta (Alberta Education, 2016; 2020). Constitutional rights, the bilingual nature of Canada, and the founding status of Francophones do not automatically lead to the conclusion that their perspectives must be recognized systematically throughout the areas of arts, language arts, social studies, sciences, math, and wellness. The respondents' arguments are not necessarily convincing when transposed to pedagogy. It can be argued that a broad recognition of these perspectives is needed in some parts of some disciplines and less so in others, or in relation to some topics more than others. By limiting their arguments to the distinctive characteristics of Francophones *in Canada*, and not in Alberta, respondents left the door open to resistance. As many people in Alberta argue, such as social studies teachers, it is the diversity found in Alberta classrooms that deserves distinct recognition.

Concluding Remarks

Overall, the 13 research participants focused more on Canada than Alberta, which may make it difficult to use their responses to convince most Albertans of the need to learn distinctively about Francophone perspectives. While some scholars argue that Canada's history and constitution were built around three pillar groups (Bouchard, 2019; Gagnon, 2021; Russell, 2017; Webber, 1994), this is not the case for Alberta (Anderson, 2005; Aunger, 2005). Regionalism is also a pillar of Canadian history (Savoie, 2019), but regionalism was notably absent from the respondents' arguments. Thus, their arguments for an affirmative vision of Canada based on its founding pillars ran counter to the more regional approach that is often taken in Alberta, which seeks to promote equality between individuals and provinces, not founding partners (Dorion-Soulié, 2013; Harder,

2005; Langlois, 2018; Manning, 2005). Striking a balance between the three-pillar approach and the call to respect equality among the citizens of provinces and territories remains one of the most important challenges in Canadian politics (Gagnon, 2021) and, I would argue, in Alberta politics as well, which are not always the same thing. This challenge also applies to the curriculum and will be an important topic in future research, especially in light of the current hotly contested curriculum reforms occurring in Alberta (Alberta Curriculum Analysis, n.d.; Scott, 2021) that extend the mandate to learn about Francophone and Indigenous perspectives to six subject matters.

CONCLUSION

Whose Francophone Perspectives?

The purpose of this thesis was to offer an understanding of the curriculum mandate to value Francophone perspectives in Alberta's K-12 social studies classrooms. Many Albertans have questioned this mandate since the publication of its first draft version in 1999 (WCP, 1999), its official implementation in 2005 (Alberta Education, 2005), and its planned extension into six subject matters starting in autumn 2022 (Alberta Education, 2016, 2017). However, neither the current social studies curriculum nor researchers have offered a satisfactory answer or thorough understanding of the mandate's history, and its interpretation by social studies teachers and by Francophones in Alberta. By covering these gaps in the knowledge, the thesis can support an ongoing educational reform that plans to recognize Francophone perspectives across six subject matters, while also providing an understanding of the antecedents and the consequences of the now-common requirement to value perspectives in Canadian social studies (Historica Canada, 2021).

Over the course of four articles, I have argued that the mandate to value Francophone perspectives: 1) challenged and transformed Anglophone-centric curriculum-making practices in social studies; 2) provoked many social studies teachers to question the relevance of recognizing certain perspectives more distinctively than others; 3) elicited the disclosure of sentiments of disconnection between Albertans and Francophones, based notably on a cultural curriculum that framed Francophones as living in the past or in Québec, and as being unjustly privileged compared to Albertans; and 4) offered opportunities to Francophones to respond to one frequently asked question (e.g., why value their perspectives and not others?), which provided a much-needed example of what a Francophone perspective on Canada may look like in the context of vague definitions offered by the curriculum and social studies teachers.

I have also argued that the mandate to value Francophone perspectives in Alberta social studies lacks legitimacy for many reasons, including a gap between many Albertans' perceptions of who Francophones are and the perceptions of Francophones presented in the curriculum and by Franco-Albertans themselves. Henceforth, the question "whose Francophone perspectives?" – what they are, for whom, and why – deserves closer attention in this conclusion.

The thesis has offered an original contribution to the literature on Canadian and Alberta social studies education by sequentially documenting:

- 1) the trajectory of the social studies curriculum policy mandate initially destined for provinces in Western and Northern Canada, which challenged pre-existing methods of writing curriculum (by and for English-speakers);
- 2) the challenge posed by the curriculum mandate to pre-existing ways of imagining and teaching about Francophones and their perspectives in Alberta; and
- 3) the ways in which 13 Francophone education stakeholders legitimized the importance of teaching Francophone perspectives.

I did so firstly because as a Québécois Francophone, I was socialized to see Alberta as a hostile place for French. I could not readily understand that province's decision to impose a curriculum mandate to value the perspectives of French-speakers. I continued this research after finding what I considered to be a relatively unknown turning point in the history of social studies education in Canada – that is, the story of the creation and implementation of the mandate to value Francophone perspectives. That mandate initially destined for Western and Northern Canada disrupted Anglophone-centric curriculum-making practices, which until then had given little to no opportunities for Francophone and Indigenous curriculum developers to have a voice at the curriculum-making table. Further, the mandate opened the door for the unprecedented extension of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives into six subject matters, which, if realized, will constitute the largest acknowledgement of minority groups' perspectives in the history of Canadian

education. Although the reform is highly contested and might turn out to be less groundbreaking than advertised, the fact that “Francophone perspectives” is now a term referenced within the common Alberta parlance about education demonstrates a major shift in mindset, particularly considering the province’s past (and to some extent ongoing) practices of repressive unilingualism (Aunger, 2005) and its resistance toward the gains in recognition granted to Francophones (Anderson, 2005; Brie & Mathieu, 2021; Frideres, 1998; Friesen, 1999; Hayday, 2005; Hébert, 2004; Kahane, 2000; Thompson, 1999).

In sum, this thesis has attended to one of the main problems in Canadian social studies and history education through investigating Alberta’s curriculum mandate to value Francophone perspectives. These problems are described by historian and social studies educator Ruth Sandwell (2006):

many Canadians have experienced a heightened awareness of the problems associated with history [and social studies] and have asked key questions about the[se] discipline[s]: Whose history *counts*? What people, events, and issues get to be included in social studies and history classrooms? Who and what are left out? And who decides these things? (p. 3)

Although focused heavily on Alberta, this thesis also aimed to provide insights and answers to these important questions that shape the future of social studies education within Canada more broadly. Moreover, I contend that answers to these questions depend on the departing perspective, as attested by the results of my four articles. In other words, Francophone perspectives are defined differently from within different perspectives. The curriculum itself and my 13 Francophone education stakeholder participants reflected a particular perspective on Canada and the relevance of Francophone perspectives. Meanwhile, for most social studies teachers in Alberta, Francophone perspectives reflected the past (not the present), Québec (not Alberta), and undue privilege (not fair reparation). Accordingly, the goal of this conclusion is to summarize the four articles by highlighting the origins of the two meta-perspectives from which the mandate can be understood.

Synthesis of the Four Articles

Drawing on a historical inquiry, Article 1 documented the origin story of the curriculum mandate to learn about Francophone perspectives in Alberta social studies classrooms. Some researchers and the curriculum itself have offered part of that history, but no complete narrative existed to explain the mandate's path from the time of the first appearance of "Francophone perspectives" in the Alberta curriculum (in 1999) to today (March 2022). Article 1 tells that "curriculum story" (Davis, 1991) through an analysis of draft and/or final versions of three sets of curricula, reports from government consultations, and testimonies from curriculum designers. I demonstrated that the mandate to value Francophone perspectives appeared as a result of a confluence of factors including a partnership between Francophone, Indigenous, and Anglophone curriculum authors, the mobilization of Banks' (1989) transformative approach, and a vision of Canada as a country based on a partnership between Francophone, Indigenous and Anglophone peoples. The mandate reflected deep transformation in the ways in which:

- 1) curricula were designed in Western and Northern Canada (a move away from Anglophone-centric towards partnership-centric curriculum design);
- 2) variously called perspectives were presented and sometimes erased in different curricula since 1999, as in the case of English-language perspectives, which were removed from drafts in 1999 and 2002; and
- 3) the definition of Francophones changed over the years (from being described in an Anglo-dominant environment to being associated with Canadian history, bilingualism, and the constitution).

The origins of the mandate stemmed from deep transformation in Canadian social studies education toward a multi-perspectival understanding of Canada, as already remarked by some scholars (Osborne, 2012; Peck & Sears, 2016). My curriculum story offers a more detailed depiction of how we got here in order to provide a template to better define these perspectives, their relevance, and their relations with one another within various social studies and history

curricula across Canada, which now widely include mandates to value different perspectives (Cutrara, 2020; Historica Canada, 2021; Miles, 2020).

Drawing on secondary data analysis of research, theses, government reports and surveys published between 1999 and 2016, Article 2 revealed the reactions and questions raised mainly by Alberta social studies teachers about the mandate to learn about Francophone perspectives. This data, which until now was unsynthesized, offered various ways to inquire into how the mandate might be understood, questioned, and ultimately, what Francophone perspectives mean from the perspectives of Alberta social studies teachers. Such feedback from teachers offered evidence to explain why, according to preliminary studies (Berg, 2017; Scott, 2013; see also Article 3), there has been a gap in legitimacy between the mandate as written in the curriculum and its implementation in the classroom. I revealed how social studies teachers categorized Francophone perspectives as mostly disconnected from themselves and their students in Alberta, since they perceived these perspectives to exist mostly in the past, in Québec, and/or as unfairly privileged over other perspectives. Further, the mandate appears to be interpreted through a provincial “cultural curriculum” (Wineburg et al., 2007), which reflects what Albertans learn about Francophones outside of school through powerful narratives that portray them in mostly antagonistic and backward-looking terms. Accordingly, the mandate’s gap in legitimacy may be partly due to a disconnection between the official and cultural curriculum in relation to the portrayal of Francophones. This gap requires further attention, considering that the Alberta curriculum does not encourage teachers or students to interrogate their own Albertan perspectives or the cultural curriculum that serves as the departing point from which they interpret other perspectives.

Via three focus groups and one semi-structured interview conducted with a total of 19 Alberta social studies teachers, Article 3 reported on their teaching practices vis-à-vis Francophone perspectives. There is no sustained description in the literature that reveals what teaching about Francophone perspectives may look like, and the studies that have explored this topic have shown little to no implementation (Berg, 2017; Scott, 2013; see also, den Heyer, 2014). Articles 1 and 2 indicated that many social studies teachers, particularly those informed by the Albertan cultural curriculum that defined Francophones as primarily Québécois, expressed serious concerns about teaching Francophone perspectives. They found these perspectives difficult to understand or they viewed Francophones as one group among others that did not deserve distinct attention. In Article 3, I found that the main commonality amongst the responses of the 19 teachers was the depiction of their “Anglophone” students’ sense of disconnection with Francophone perspectives. Their teaching practices, which sometimes borrowed from Alberta’s cultural curriculum related to views on Québec, conflict, and the past, revealed the possible origins of the disconnection. Teachers needed more support to teach Francophone perspectives and it was my belief that this support could be provided by hearing testimonies from Franco-Albertans that exemplified the reasons why their perspectives matter – that putting these testimonies in relation with teachers and the voices of some Francophone students in Alberta would provide fertile ground for some teachers to realize the relevance of the mandate.

Through responses collected from 13 Francophone education stakeholders gathered in an online survey (N=8) and a focus group (N=5), Article 4 provided a window to describe a Francophone perspective on Francophone perspectives. Stakeholders were asked to respond to a commonly asked question formulated by social studies teachers, as reported in Articles 1, 2, and 3:

Why do Albertans need to specifically recognize Francophone perspectives consistently across grades and topics in social studies?

I hypothesized that Francophone educational stakeholders may be able to provide a more substantive and personal rationale to learn about their perspectives than the undefined “historical and constitutional” reasons found in the social studies curriculum (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 4). Overall, the 13 Francophones presented a rationale similar to the one found in an earlier draft version of the curriculum (Article 1), which emphasized: 1) a particular definition of Canada (based on a trio of Francophone, Indigenous, and Anglophone founders or partners); 2) a goal for education (to foster a better understanding of these founders or partners without excluding others); and 3) a means to do so (to learn distinctively about the founders’ perspectives). This Francophone perspective, which emerged from the responses of 13 education stakeholders, might be criticized for its mythical portrayal of Canada. Yet, that portrayal links to what appears to be the Francophone cultural curriculum that stands in contrast with the Alberta (Anglophone) cultural curriculum. Article 4 corroborated and extended insights gathered in earlier articles by displaying more clearly the disconnection between an Albertan (Anglophone) perspective and a Francophone perspective on the mandate to value Francophone perspectives in Alberta K-12 social studies classrooms.

Interpretation of the Four Articles: Two Meta-Perspectives

Through inquiring into the history of the curriculum mandate, I encountered a definition for the term “perspectives” that stuck with me throughout my research and writing of the thesis. Indeed, the term perspectives was defined only once, in an interim version of the 1978 Alberta social studies curriculum, as follows:

Perspective is a “frame of reference” from which an individual views what the world is like, what it should be like and how desired changes are to be achieved. Although each perspective is unique and has parts that are not consistent with one another, “frames of reference” tend to determine how individuals, groups and nations think and act. (Alberta Education, 1978, p. 13)

This definition is important, especially since some scholars have noted the absence of a definition for that term in the current curriculum (Abbott, 2014; den Heyer & Abbott, 2011; Scott, 2013, 2016) while other scholars such as Werner (1977; see also Downey, 1975) have argued that perspectives are an efficient conceptual tool to analyze curriculum and teachers' practices. The 1978 definition of perspectives afforded me a way to analyze:

- 1) what kind of vision of Canada and Francophones are proposed in the curriculum, by social studies teachers, and by 13 Francophones;
- 2) their goal for social studies; and
- 3) the means they used to promote and attain their explicitly or implicitly stated goals.

Through contrasting, for instance, the vision of Canada found in different curricula (Article 1) and the responses of the 13 education stakeholder participants (Article 4), I uncovered a similar perspective in defining the country as built on pillars that include Francophones and the French language. However, the vision of Canada and particularly Alberta, found amongst the comments of social studies teachers (Article 2, 3), defined the country and the province as populated by a variety of groups, only one of which was Francophones. Through the workable and useful 1978 definition, I can now interpret the results of my four articles by distinguishing at least two meta-perspectives on the mandate to value Francophone perspectives. In doing so, I situated my interpretation in the tradition of curriculum theory by "making explicit ... the very stratum of presuppositions underlying curriculum development [and implementation]" (Deng & Luke, 2008, p. 67).

In order to make sense of my study results, I now present similarities and differences between what I call an Albertan meta-perspective and a Franco-curriculum meta-perspective on the mandate to value Francophone perspectives. The Albertan meta-perspective is a synthesis of what I consider to be the core commonalities of social studies teachers whose testimonies were analyzed in Articles 2 and 3. To define the Franco-curriculum meta-perspective, I rely instead on

my analysis of various curricula and of the 13 Francophone education stakeholders' responses to a frequently asked question about the mandate (Articles 1 and 4, respectively). These meta-perspectives are prototypical representations and I recognize the significant variety of ways in which they were enunciated, endorsed, named, and mobilized. Presenting each of these meta-perspectives, what distinguishes them, and what they hold in common is a tribute to the mandate's original goal, which was to foster mutual recognition among perspectives and the people who endorsed them at various levels (Alberta Learning, 2002a, 2002b). My goal now is to inquire into the conditions necessary to create a dialogue between them.

Finally, it is important to distinguish between these meta-perspectives and the concept of a cultural curriculum, as they overlap, though not entirely. A meta-perspective is an agglomeration of views, goals, and means to attain these goals on a topic, such as Francophone perspectives. A cultural curriculum contains views, narratives, and stereotypes that circulate in a society like Alberta about a topic, such as Francophones and their perspectives. Although the cultural curriculum offers ways to interpret Francophone perspectives, I am ultimately interested in the ways in which individuals and curriculum appropriate these views and transpose them either in a mandate or responses toward this mandate. It is to say that many frames of reference exist in Albertan society to interpret Francophones through the cultural curriculum. Yet I postulate that social studies teachers and social studies curriculum endorse them at various levels. While the cultural curriculum is a source of inspiration difficult to circumscribe, my thesis offers evidence of the ways certain meta-perspectives, and not others, are expressed by social studies curricula designers and teachers. Such appropriation is a reminder of their agency to pick and choose from available options, their definition, goals for, and means to attain them, regarding Francophone perspectives.

Departing from an Albertan Meta-Perspective

From a particular Albertan meta-perspective, Francophones exist not so much in Alberta but mainly in Québec. Further, those French-speakers who are in Alberta are not close enough to social studies teachers' workplaces and their classrooms to require significant attention to their perspectives. Some teachers attributed the belief that Francophones are mainly in Québec to "what everyone thinks" in Alberta. By way of further explanation, some teachers cited stories about 1) the ways Albertans hate former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, 2) the absence of Francophones in their classrooms, and 3) the need to focus on other perspectives they see more regularly compared to Francophone ones. Since teachers described not *seeing* Francophones in their workplaces or the areas in which they lived, they questioned the mandate's requirement to attend to them. The criteria used to decide if a student was Francophone was primarily their capacity to speak French or as coming from Québec. Since few, if any, students in their classrooms and in the areas in which they worked spoke French or came from Québec, teachers explained that this group was not close enough to, or was disconnected from, their students. In that context, teachers sought instead to focus on the perspectives they perceived as being closer to their students' lived experiences.

The goal for teaching perspectives from an Albertan meta-perspective was to create the conditions for every student to see themselves in the curricula, or to attend to perspectives that were seen as being close to teachers' workplaces. Many teachers argued that they seek to include more perspectives in their teachings to reflect the diversity of their students and the broader Alberta population. They rejected the mandate to repetitively and distinctly value Francophone perspectives across topics and grades because in their view, Francophones are either in Québec or are one group among many that deserve attention in multicultural Alberta. Since they wanted to value many perspectives, teachers tended to bypass the mandate to teach Francophone perspectives

or taught it in ways consistent with their pre-existing beliefs that extended from Alberta's cultural curriculum. The goal to teach many perspectives, mostly decided by the teachers or determined by the classroom composition, is encouraged by the mandate, which stipulates that multiple perspectives need to be valued. Many social studies teachers reported focusing heavily on "multiple perspectives" by stressing the need for equality or equivalence of status among the groups they perceived as close to their classrooms.

One means used by teachers to attain their goal to teach multiple perspectives was to use zero-sum logic in their interpretation of the mandate to learn Francophone perspectives. Many teachers argued that valuing Francophone perspectives marginalized other perspectives (for a similar standpoint amongst scholars, see Richardson, 2002). Many teachers criticized the distinct attention received by Francophones within the mandate. They contended that specifically naming Francophone (and Indigenous) perspectives is unjust because other groups are not similarly named. This critique was expressed in light of another ideal, sometimes named multiculturalism. That ideal could be defined as granting equal opportunity to be valued for a host of perspectives, namely those emerging within teachers' classroom contexts. In that logic, granting distinct attention to certain perspectives was equated with discrimination against others. If distinct attention was needed, teachers argued that it should be up to them (in line with their classroom composition) to decide whose perspectives to teach and learn about, rather than being mandated to do so by the government in the curriculum.

Departing from a Franco-Curriculum Meta-Perspective

In contrast to the above-stated Albertan meta-perspective, the three social studies curricula that I studied and the 13 Francophone education stakeholders who participated in Article 4 considered Francophone perspectives to be one of the *ongoing* pillars of Canada. Across various

drafts and iterations of Alberta's social studies curricula published since 1999, Francophones are associated with "founders" and "partners," and/or are valued as a reflection of the country's "bilingual nature." Similarly, some of the Francophone stakeholders articulated that their group is associated with Canadian "founders," pillars of the country's constitution, and/or its history. According to these stakeholders, Francophones' distinct status in these three areas (foundation, history, rights) legitimated distinct attention to their perspectives in Alberta's curricula. However, as noted by most Francophone participants, and to some extent by the social studies curricula as well, this privileging of Francophone perspectives does not inevitably exclude or marginalize others. Rather, within this Franco-curriculum meta-perspective, Canada was perceived as a country populated in the past and today by groups with unequal status who deserved, accordingly, unequal attention in curricula.

The goal of the Alberta social studies curricula since the end of the 1990s and for most of the 13 Francophone education stakeholders, although stated in different terms, was to foster mutual understanding between Canada's pillar or founding groups. The current version of the curriculum published in 2005 seeks to foster an understanding of Canada based on the pillars of bilingualism, while some drafts and versions have more explicitly stated that recognition is needed between the distinct "partners" in Canadian society: culturally diverse Francophones, Indigenous peoples, and English-speaking Canadians. Francophone stakeholders sought to foster mutual recognition or understanding with Anglophones, while Indigenous peoples were mostly considered distinctively from the other two founders. Social studies curricula published since 1999, with rare exceptions, and the 13 Francophone stakeholders in my study sought for students to learn about the founders' or partners' perspectives to foster better relations among the constituents of the country. In doing so, attention was given to including many groups in the conversation, although they named them

in distinct ways and granted them distinct statuses. Within this view, the goal for teaching perspectives was not only to understand Canada, but to unite Canadians through learning about and mutually recognizing the perceived core pillars of their country.

One means used by the Alberta social studies curriculum and most of the 13 Francophone education stakeholders was the ranking of groups by granting them distinct status, either implicitly or explicitly. The curriculum does grant distinct status to Francophones and Indigenous peoples by naming them in its introduction; no other groups are given the same attention. Some Francophones also categorized groups in Canada according to their historical and constitutional status, noting that some groups have specific constitutional status, thus privileging collective rights over individual rights. Both the curricula and some Francophones ranked groups by providing a substantive definition of Canada that affirmed certain characteristics and groups distinctively, while other characteristics were not similarly named. In sum, the Franco-curriculum meta-perspective proposed a non-relativist goal for education, refusing to grant equal value to groups with unequal status in Canada. Ranking groups was a way to argue that groups with unequal status deserved unequal attention in the curricula, without excluding unequals.

Similarities, Differences, and Explanations

Three social studies curricula, 13 Francophone education stakeholders, and many social studies teachers have relied on a similar definition of perspective. Perspectives are, for them, a difference of opinion held by a group. Along that line of thinking, perspectives (such as Indigenous and Francophone) are distinct from one another because they reflect the opinions held by members of distinct groups. In other words, most texts and testimonies featured in my thesis propose that Francophone perspectives are not Indigenous perspectives, and vice versa. That definition of perspective, and its implications about groups' relations with one another, are exemplified by the

curricula's presentation of separate sections dedicated to Francophones and Indigenous peoples, or when the Anglophone teachers and Francophone stakeholders in this thesis presented various perspectives as fundamentally detached from one another. Such definition of perspectives and groups seems to underlie a particular zero-sum game logic in which belonging to a group leads individuals to be disconnected from one another. In that logic, an individual does not simultaneously adhere to multiple perspectives or groups, such as women, LGBTQ, immigrants and Francophones, because these groups are perceived as disconnected from one another. Although in some instances, it was noted that perspectives are multiple or that it is possible to belong to various groups at the same time, these constituted an exception outside the norm for both the Albertan and the Franco-curriculum meta-perspective.

Some but not all social studies teachers, three social studies curricula, and 13 Francophones essentially distinguished themselves through their focus on either Alberta or Canada. Teachers mostly focused on Alberta, the classroom, and the region in which the teachers lived (e.g., southern Alberta). Meanwhile, most statements in the curricula's introduction and in some of the Francophone participants' responses referred to Canada, its constitution, and history. Therefore, it is possible that teachers, curricula and some Francophone stakeholders were embroiled in a "depth dialogue" (Angenot, 2008) since they were not speaking about the same level. One group favoured the provincial level, while the other focused on the federal level. This differentiation is understandable since teachers work in classrooms attuned to Alberta's reality, while the policy makers who created the mandate had their eye on Canada (in line with the *Western and Northern Canadian Protocol*, which sought to bridge many jurisdictions to build a common program and therefore adopt a more Canadian and less regional approach). A Canadian-inspired curriculum and

rationale to learn Francophone perspectives collided with an Albertan-infused view on the mandate and the need to recognize more local perspectives.

To address the similarities and differences articulated about Francophone perspectives, I sought to create the conditions for mutual understanding amongst social studies teachers, curricula, and some Francophone statements. In Article 3, to provide a more nuanced view of the notion that Francophones are only in Québec, I suggested that teachers include Francophone Albertans' perspectives in their teachings. In Article 4, I brought together 13 Francophone Albertans to explain why learning about their perspectives is necessary. In these attempts, as well as in my review of the history of the mandate and opinions about it, I sought to provide new data that would allow Albertans to reflect more deeply about Francophone perspectives. I also sought to provide a new departure point from which Albertans could engage, define, and ultimately teach and learn these perspectives – that is, their own Albertan meta-perspective. Ultimately, rather than depicting Francophones in and of themselves, the goal of this research was to reveal the underlying influence of the perspectives from which curriculum designers, social studies teachers and Francophones departed, and how those perspectives influenced how they read and talked about Francophone perspectives.

Reconceptualizing Politics of (De)Recognition

Many philosophers (Coulthard, 2018; Eisenberg & Kymlicka, 2011; Fraser, 2011; Kymlicka, 2011; Leroux, 2016; Tamir, 2003; Taylor, 1994) have reflected on the vast transformation in democratic countries like Canada that has involved the “recognition” of the rights of specific groups. Recognition is a concept that reflects the need of individuals and group members to be accepted by others (Taylor, 1994). Accordingly, recognition is a useful concept through which to situate the mandate to value Francophone perspectives as a response arising from

the need to be recognized, alongside the education rights of Francophones, which led to deep transformation in the ways curricula were produced in Alberta. Recognition is also significant, I argue, to understand that Francophones' need for acceptance stems from a lack of acceptance by Anglophones. Therefore, throughout the thesis, I sought to attend to the ways in which recognition is not only about learning and valuing Francophones, but also implies a dialogical relation (Taylor, 1994) between Francophones and Anglophones (and Indigenous peoples). The fact that English language perspectives were erased from the curriculum, for instance, disrupted the possibility to study Francophone perspectives *in conversation* with its "significant others" (Laniel & Thériault, 2021) – that is, Anglophone perspectives.

Critics of the concept of recognition, such as Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2018), have pointed to the vacuity present in seeking to acknowledge groups like Indigenous peoples without a reconsideration of the relations they have with their recognizers (e.g., the Canadian government). Critiques such as this one have led me to question whether the mandate to value Francophone but not Anglophone perspectives was fundamentally flawed. Questioning and reviewing teachers' comments made me realize that teachers were framing Francophones as privileged, without recognizing their own privilege as Anglophones. Since the curriculum focused on minority perspectives, and not the relationship between a minority and its significant others, it gave the appearance that the perspectives being privileged were those of the Francophones, not the Anglophones. By erasing any mention of Anglophones from the curricula, teachers were not required to question the departing meta-perspectives from which they critiqued and questioned Francophone perspectives. This resulted in leaving the unequal power relations between Francophones and Anglophones fundamentally unaltered and unattended, despite the fact that it was these unequal power relations that led to the naming of Francophone perspectives in the first

place. The politics of (de)recognition performed in relation to Anglophone perspectives (e.g., their appearance then disappearance from curriculum documents) is an interesting phenomenon that requires further attention, in line with studies on whiteness (Harris, 1995). These studies (e.g., Carr, 2015; Chien, 2017) have postulated that groups who benefit from power imbalances (here, Anglophone Albertans in relation to Francophones) reluctantly seek to address their (legal) privilege and status in order to keep these privileges unaltered and outside the gaze of critics, and instead target groups who seek to gain recognition (here, Francophones and Indigenous peoples).

In line with critics of the concepts of recognition, it is important to note the impacts of the *derecognition* of English-language (or Anglophone) perspectives from the 1999 and the 2002 social studies draft curricula. In presenting the perspectives of English-language groups in relation to those of Francophones and Indigenous peoples, these curricula had first embedded the concept of “perspectives” within a political frame. Clearly, seeing these three perspectives aligned one after the other demonstrated, to knowledgeable Canadians, that one of these perspectives had more power than minoritarian ones. That is why a dominant group needed to acknowledge right-holder minorities. However, by *derecognizing* the English language perspectives on two occasions, what was left in the mandate was only the perspectives of the minorities, who therefore appear to be dominant, compared to other non-named perspectives. By subtracting themselves from the political equation that gave rise to the mandate (a partnership approach to conceive curriculum), the silent (Anglophone) partners did indeed transform the notion of perspectives as if only minorities could have them, not dominant groups. The *derecognition* of English language perspectives reveals, as highlighted by my thesis, how the choices of who appears and who does not appear in curricula are not only a contest between minorities, but also involves dominant groups that dare not speak their name (Resnick, 1994; Rivest, Moreau & Negura, 2017).

Pluralist and Multiculturalist Approaches to Education

Aside from the tension between the politics of recognition of Francophone perspectives and the *derecognition* of Anglophone perspectives, another tension traversed the four articles in this thesis. This tension involved the distinction between pluralist and multiculturalist education, which requires further attention, since it emerges as a main point of contention between the Albertan meta-perspective and the Franco-curriculum meta-perspective. While many Anglophone teachers favoured a multiculturalist approach, the 13 Francophone participants and the social studies curricula favoured a pluralist approach (see below for an explanation distinguishing these approaches).

The main feature of pluralist education is to delineate the parameters by which a society can be conceptualized and categorized, in order to distribute acknowledgement in fair and non-relative ways:

The primary concern of pluralism is to find out how far openness to diversity can go without compromising the viability of institutions and public life itself, and without accepting as legitimate an absolute cultural relativism that would require that values be considered equally within the political community. (Gagnon, Mc Andrew & Pagé, 1994, p. 14)

The curricula and Francophone participants delineated a certain vision for Canada, which informed their goals for education and the means to attain these goals – mainly, to recognize the core pillars of Canadian life, which they considered in distinct fashion compared to other features of Canadian life. This non-relativist approach (i.e., not all groups are equal in status) conflicted with the multiculturalist vision put forth by many teachers, who sought to provide each and every student with a chance to see themselves in the curriculum by learning about the perspectives of the group(s) to which they belong.

The multicultural approach to education is reflected in many teachers' argument for the recognition of multiple perspectives in the Alberta social studies curriculum. In that logic, groups are perceived as equal in status and therefore as deserving equal, similar or equivalent recognition. This approach explained why a teacher might place on equal footing, for example, the need to acknowledge Francophones' and women's perspectives (Article 3). However, I argue that this vision, which was presented as equal because it privileged no one group in particular, actually privileges a particular vision of equality over others, since it is mostly performed in English in Alberta. As Eva Mackey (2002) argued for Canada in general:

Multiple cultures – as long as they are properly managed, institutionalised and hierarchised – are not a problem so long as these cultures are loyal to the Western project of nation-building, a project which entails creating unified totalities of governable populations according to progressive principles (Asad 1993: 12, 17). This project gains its authority and reinforces its power through its ability to construct itself as *not cultural* (in that it is not presented as the project of one cultural or ethnic group), but as *universal*, and *rational*. (p. 162)

In the context of this thesis, Mackey's observation lends awareness to the way in which the management of differences by teachers is in itself a *particularism* that presents itself as a universalism. This aligns with my depiction of an Alberta meta-perspective, per contrast to the Franco-curriculum meta-perspective. Depicting all groups as equal in status is just *one way* to conceive the recognition and the management of differences but is neither the only nor the fairer way to do so. Critics of the multicultural approach to education (e.g., Carter & Goodwin, 1994) have also pointed out ways in which favouring equality between groups leaves the power of some groups fundamentally unattended, such as the taken-for-granted power of Anglophone Albertans to define the terms upon which recognition is discussed and redistributed in Alberta (den Heyer & Conrad, 2011).

Alberta: Past and Present of Repressive Unilingualism

Finally, this thesis highlights a tension between Alberta's past, as a province favouring repressive unilingualism (Aunger, 2005), and what Alberta has become today, through the acknowledgement given to Francophone perspectives. Including Francophone perspectives in the curriculum mandate was both a response and an alternative to repressive unilingualism. The mandate effectively transformed the production and content of Anglophone-centric curricula (made in English by and for English-speakers). Partnerships among more than just English-speakers are necessary to determine what Alberta students need to learn. Being English-language dependent makes Alberta a counterintuitive site to have implemented a mandate to learn about Francophone perspectives. However, the acknowledgement of Francophone perspectives opened the door for many other groups, Indigenous peoples being the first, to claim that the curriculum also needed to be developed for and by speakers of non-official languages.

As Alberta political scientist Edmund Aunger (2005) has argued:

Of course, repressive unilingualism, when successful, frequently sows the seeds of its own demise. Why legislate the use of English in a society composed overwhelmingly of English speakers? In Alberta, English is now the universal and unthreatened: 99 per cent of the province's population is able to converse in English, and 94 per cent speak it in their homes. If there ever was a reason to forcibly impose a common language, it has long since disappeared. (p. 131)

In this logic, the erasure of references to Anglophones in the curriculum modified the mandate's goal "to foster mutual recognition among French-speaking and English-speaking" peoples. As observed by den Heyer & Conrad (2011),

This un-named [Anglo-Canadian] perspective is the norm and, like all examples of the type, manifests its privilege in its invisibility; a perspective that requires no name but to which the legitimacy of others (beyond a cadre of fellow travelers) must make an appeal to be heard or considered. (p. 14)

Testimony by Daniel Buteau (LearnAlberta, 2017), the Francophone curriculum designer for the *Western and Northern Canadian Protocol* and for Alberta's current social studies curricula, was insightful to replace such theorization in a more personal manner, through a short curriculum story:

I got here and was told 'Well, you are leading an interprovincial project. We want to meet the needs of Francophone students and you have to write a program of studies and write outcomes. Write a database of learning outcomes with other provinces. And we are going to reflect Aboriginal perspectives, and Anglophone perspectives, and Francophone perspectives. Okay so I took that on and one day I heard 'No, we are not Anglophones'. So... Ok. Anglophones don't exist. Ok. [on video]

Conceptually, the mandate is now disconnected from its original rationale because one partner, for various reasons, decided to remain silent.

The curriculum mandate to value Francophone perspectives in Alberta runs counter to one of the vital pillars of the country: regionalism. As political scientist Donald Savoie (2019) argued, "Tout ce qui est canadien est régional" (p. 174), which translates into English as "Everything Canadian is regional." Much like language, regions within Canada shape perspectives about who deserves what kind of recognition in curricula, and more broadly in the Canadian constitution. A particular limitation of this thesis, then, is that it is regionally bounded in a particular province, Alberta. That province has its own particular history, with its own flow of immigration, its own enforcement of the English language, and an accommodation of diversity through respect for differences in English that shaped the ways in which a mandate to value Francophone perspectives was interpreted and implemented. Time and time again, I have noticed how Alberta became the object of the thesis, more so than the mandate itself, through stories about Western alienation, a collective dislike for Trudeau (father and son), and a certain conception of Canada that surfaced in social studies teachers' interpretation of the mandate. I sought to focus mainly on Alberta, at the expense of making comparisons with other jurisdictions, in order to respect the ways in which that

place shaped, as some social studies teachers reported, how Francophone perspectives are discussed and taught.

One additional limitation of the thesis is the possible essentialization of Francophones and their various perspectives. First, the curriculum definition of “Francophones” is by no means reflective of the many individuals who compose the group (e.g., not all Francophones have as a priority, the maintenance of the vitality of the French language and French-speaking groups). Secondly, in Article 4, the definition ascribed to Francophones by elite educational stakeholders may not conform to the porous shape of the group they describe as a founder of Canada (Thompson, 2008). In their discussion of “identity-politics,”¹⁴ Canadian political philosophers Avigail Eisenberg and Will Kymlicka (2011) discuss the potential pitfalls of politics that aim to recognize groups – such as the mandate to value Francophone perspectives – in terms of essentialization:

To motivate identity-based claims and to persuade a skeptical dominant society, groups have a natural tendency to insist that a particular practice is essential to their way of life. They support this claim on either historical grounds (that the practice has been part of the group’s culture since time immemorial) or on religious grounds (that the practice is sacred). The result, in either case, may be to encourage especially narrow, stereotypical, and nostalgic understandings of what constitutes a given group’s identity. Rather than protecting practices that function to enhance living and vibrant communities, it is not uncommon for public decision makers to endorse nostalgic cultural practices as emblematic of what constitutes the distinctiveness of a group’s identity. Communities thereby become imprisoned by static and eventually constricting understandings of their identity or, at least, they enjoy cultural protections only as long as they adhere to the narrowly defined and potentially anachronistic practices that receive legal protection. (pp. 5-6)

¹⁴ Defined similarly as politics of recognition by Eisenberg and Kymlicka (2011): “The past thirty years are often described as an era of identity politics, in which a diverse array of identity groups have become politicized and mobilized on the basis of gender, race, language, ethnicity, indigeneity, religion, and sexuality. Of course, identity politics is not a new phenomenon. Western history is full of political struggles between religious groups (e.g., between Catholics and Protestants in the Netherlands), between linguistic groups (e.g., between Flemish and French in Belgium), between racial groups (e.g., between whites and blacks in the United States), and between European settlers and Indigenous peoples (e.g., between British colonizers and Aboriginal peoples in Canada), to name just a few of the more obvious examples from the past three hundred years. All of these conflicts involved the political mobilization of identity groups to contest the terms under which they had been incorporated into the state” (p. 1)

In this sense, the notion of Francophone perspectives may be problematic, especially when interpreted as a shared view among a group. A unity of views among Francophones may not necessarily exist. However, valuing that unity may nevertheless work to protect their interests based on the group's definition by some of its elites and the Canadian Constitution. The ways in which elite educational stakeholders in Article 4 mobilize criteria of rights, history, and official language to defend the distinct recognition of Francophone perspectives is especially evocative in this logic, because such criteria “provides the most leverage within the larger legal and political system” (p. 3). Francophones and their perspectives are *at the same time* so plural as to be difficult to define, *and* united under variously endorsed interests of group members such as the protection of the French language in Anglophone-dominant contexts within North America.

Social Studies (Null, Planned, Lived, Cultural) Curricula

Social studies education, and especially its history, has shown a gradual progression toward the inclusion of perspectives to acknowledge the stories, experiences and views of previously (and still) marginalized groups. Social studies is the discipline in which students learn about the country in which they live, resulting in hotly debated visions of that country, and accordingly, debates about whose perspectives should be taught and learned (Sandwell, 2006).

Scholars such as Clark (2004), Tomkins (2008), Osborne (2012), von Heyking (2006) and Pashby (2013), and more recently Miles (2020) and Pollock (2017) among others, have highlighted the ways in which the inclusion of perspectives in social studies stemmed from political pressure. Through a case study, my thesis sought to bring light to the trajectories undertaken by Francophone perspectives' access to the curriculum. This thesis revealed that social studies was profoundly transformed by the arrival of group perspectives, which resulted in new debates about “what people, event, issues [and perspectives] get to be included in social studies and history classrooms”

(Sandwell, 2006, p. 3). Social studies education is a particular terrain of contestation that now has to grapple intensely with issues that some have called identity politics (Eisenberg & Kymlicka, 2011), especially since the naming of particular groups for historical reparation purposes may provoke negative reactions and perceptions that they are overly privileged compared to others, as shown by the case of Francophone perspectives.

Alberta social studies curricula, like other curricula, were designed through negotiation processes that involved deciding who has the power to choose what students learn in schools. Even though a curriculum may be presented as neutral by concealing its authorship, curriculum designers are carefully chosen in ways that may or may not be viewed as legitimate by teachers, who are charged with implementing the curriculum. Inquiring into different types of curricula, from the null – “the curriculum that is not, was not, but could have been” (Kridel, 2010, p. 614) – to the official (the curriculum-as-planned) to the lived (in the classroom) to the cultural (what is learned outside schools) revealed many gaps, changes and mismatches. This thesis exposed such gaps by detailing discrepancies:

- 1) between the draft and final versions of social studies curricula (respectively, the null and official curriculum);
- 2) between the official and lived curriculum (in the implementation practices of teachers toward the mandate); and
- 3) between the official and cultural curriculum via contrasting official and lay representations of Francophones in Alberta.

These gaps showed that it is not enough to craft an official mandate to learn Francophone perspectives if it is not considered to be legitimate by teachers. Social studies curriculum studies may benefit from a closer examination of these gaps, and especially the ones between the draft and final versions of curricula, which until now have been less researched and revealed interesting policy choices to determine whose perspective *counts* (Lemieux, Anne & Bélanger, 2017).

The term perspective is now widely used in social studies. However, its definition, although many scholars have provided one, is less than consensual. A perspective can be reduced to being a collective opinion or may be more deeply conceived as a value-laden interpretation of the world with the present and the future in mind (den Heyer & Abbott, 2011). Such varying definitions for perspective outline the simplification or complication invoked by using this term. A simplistic interpretation of perspective leads to stereotypical representations, while a complex definition of perspective is not proposed in curricula. Or if it is, by scholars, it seems to not be engaged with by teachers. Such a definition must now be clearly outlined, possibly on a continuum, to reflect how the term could be mobilized to its fullest potential. The aforementioned 1978 definition offers a template to establish a definition.

The definition of Francophone provided by various texts and individuals in this thesis has varied greatly, thus highlighting the polysemic nature of the term. Francophones are right holders, but some Canadians also perceive them to be attached only to a particular site (Québec), era (the past), and event (conflict). Associating Francophones with the French language is also problematic, because students in Alberta, for instance, could be from a French-speaking background but no longer speak the language (according to the Government of Alberta [2018], 10.5% Albertans have French-Canadian ancestry). By attending to Francophone perspectives, this thesis has offered ways to think about what Francophone means and, especially, for whom. The question of its dialogical relationship with the term Anglophone is also in question, as using the word Francophone makes little sense without its significant others (Thomson, 2008; Taylor, 1994). As I uncovered during my research, providing in curricula a more porous and especially localized definition for who is Francophone in Alberta could disrupt stereotypical representations.

The mandate to value Francophone perspectives poses a problem if it is not aligned with the learning outcomes defined for each grade level. Such a mandate contains specific words that ought to be defined (e.g., “perspectives”) and engaged with at each grade if the aim of the curriculum is to truly value Francophone perspectives. It was proposed to do so, for “perspectives,” in the 1978 social studies curriculum, through a spiral approach inspired by Hilda Taba (Clark, 2004). The conception of this mandate requires a sustained rationale, since it can be contested, as evidenced by changes in its formulation across drafts and teachers’ feedback. By focusing on a precise mandate, this thesis revealed that mandates are not static across time, and that they require both clear definition and rationale. Requiring teachers to engage with a particular set of perspectives is challenging enough, especially if the definitions (of “perspectives” for instance) and the rationale (for undefined “historical and constitutional reasons”) are either unconvincing or too brief to provide a template for understanding. The crafting of a learning mandate, especially one that challenges the status quo, requires careful outlining of what the mandate is, what it entails, and why it is needed if teachers (and students) are to be convinced of its legitimacy.

Up to March 2022: Recent Developments for Francophone Perspectives in Alberta

Recent curriculum debates in Alberta highlight how old ways of doing curricula are resurfacing. The marginalization of Francophones in the recent reform of six subject matters has been denounced by a leading Francophone community organization (ACFA, 2021). The Association canadienne-française de l’Alberta (2021) has argued that the new curricula for six subject-matters, in their draft version, tried to assimilate Francophones within Anglo-Saxon perspectives. These new draft curricula were not designed in full partnership with Francophone stakeholders, in contrast to what this thesis has shown was the case for the current social studies curriculum. Lack of partnerships, and representation of content about, from and for Francophones,

has led Alberta's four Francophone school boards to decline to participate in piloting the new reform. It is important to note that the recent debate over the curriculum reform goes beyond Francophone concerns and involves deep criticisms by many parties and scholars; however, the lack of partnerships – which was, as I have outlined, a main feature of past social studies curricula – remains one of importance for many, if not all, groups concerned.

The term Francophone perspectives is now used by a variety of actors in Alberta to criticize the curriculum. Not only the sole property of Francophones, critics have used the lack of Francophone perspectives to reveal that the reform is not representative of the Alberta population. The withdrawal of the four Francophone school boards has led critics to argue that efficient pilot testing of the reform is not possible, since no Francophones were involved (French, 2021a). The inclusion of Francophone perspectives, a term not used before in public debate in Alberta, may be one of the positive outcomes of the social studies mandate. By showing that it is missing from the new draft curricula, the term has offered a viable template to reflect not only Francophone concerns but the many concerns that exist against a much-criticized reform. The social studies mandate published since 2005 and elaborated since the end of the 1990s has now made its way into the new draft of the social studies curriculum, but also, to some extent, into common educational parlance in Alberta.

Comparing Francophone Perspectives with...

An area of future research involves the comparison of Alberta with other Canadian jurisdictions in relation to the acknowledgement of Francophone perspectives. As this thesis has focused on Alberta, much remains to be researched and written about the ways in which distinct versions of the same curriculum (one in French, one in English, which are different to some extent; Brunet & Gani, 2020) came to be in Ontario, how two separate curricula (one for Francophone

students, one for Anglophone students) came to be implemented in New Brunswick, or how a curriculum that is criticized as excluding Anglophone perspectives was implemented in Québec (Zanazanian & Gani, 2021). The exclusion of Anglophone perspectives from the Québec curriculum provides another interesting case to research the ways in which an official mandate to value official language minorities may be necessary to help them gain recognition in curriculum-making circles (Bouvier, 2021; EMSB, 2019, 2021). Since the Canadian system of education at the provincial and territorial levels is required, in part, to take Francophone and Anglophone rights into account, the ways in which curriculum accommodations are made in relation to these “charter groups” (Cairns, 1992) offers a sparsely researched area in the academic terrain.

The case of Anglophone perspectives in Québec offers a particularly interesting site in which to extend the results of my thesis. Evidence highlights the marginalization of Anglophone partners at the curriculum-making table, which has resulted in the exclusion of many facets of their experience from the *History of Québec-Canada* curriculum (EMSB, 2019, 2021). The resistance of many Francophone teachers and educators (Bouvier, 2021) to advocate for Anglophones to reclaim their fair share in the curriculum is also interesting, since it parallels the curriculum story and insights gained from social studies teachers in Alberta. Links between majority and minority official language relationships around curriculum development are an interesting area of inquiry, especially in comparative fashion, since, to my knowledge, this has not been done in social studies and history education. One could start by assessing the logic of the argument of social studies teachers in Alberta and history teachers in Québec, who have sought to counter the acknowledgement of the official language minority in their respective provinces. Relationships between official language groups in relation to curriculum production will remain an interesting research topic, including the problematization of issues of equity that involve many groups who

do not seek to be reduced to their linguistic status (Joncas, et al., submitted; Bélanger & Dulude, 2021).

Recommendations

In light of recent curriculum reforms in Alberta, this research has formulated several specific recommendations in relation to Francophone perspectives. The partnership at the origins of the mandate may be a solution to the problem of participation in the curriculum-making process. Many groups have complained about being excluded from the decision-making table, such as the Alberta Teachers' Association, which has sparked a significant amount of protest and criticism (Scott, 2021). As this thesis has revealed, curricular reform needs to include multiple parties working together as full and equal partners. Representation of Indigenous and Francophone partners needs to be considered and implemented, as well as a host of other groups in a transparent manner (by disclosing the partnership model at the roots of the collaboration). Curriculum innovation stems from innovative partnerships, as exhibited in the story of including Francophone perspectives in the Alberta social studies curriculum.

One of the key lessons of this thesis is the importance of disclosing to stakeholders not only the partnership model at the roots of the curriculum design, but also its history. Many changes can be made to a curriculum and explaining them to readers may bring more clarity to the final text's configuration. On some occasions, Alberta did disclose some changes in the curriculum (French, 2021, 2021a). Such disclosure might help teachers see the curriculum as a contested document that represents many interests or perspectives. A paragraph outlining the history and decisions could render the curriculum less authoritative, making it appear in its truer political form and also more authentic. Teachers are the principal users of the curriculum, and it is crucial that they understand why they are being asked to take up certain mandates (Gereluk et al., 2015).

Accordingly, outlining the history of the curriculum might provide an adequate template to then discuss the legitimacy of the mandates included therein.

Recognizing Francophone perspectives within the curriculum without also recognizing Albertan (Anglophone) perspectives might be detrimental. Francophone and Indigenous perspectives appearing on their own in the mandate has often been conceived as overtly privileging those views compared to others. If they were put in relation with Albertan (Anglophone) perspectives, there could be a more “relational” (Donald, 2009) conversation about the standpoint from which some teachers depart in their judgment of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives, as well as to question the legitimacy of Albertan (Anglophone) perspectives. If Albertan (Anglophone) perspectives are instead taken for granted, this may not enable students to question their own departure point from which they understand other perspectives, and therefore, reproduce unintended stereotypical judgments about others who are portrayed as disconnected from the self. However, there may be some resistance to recognizing Albertan (Anglophone) perspectives – as they are mostly taken-for-granted. In that sense, favouring the recognition of *relations* instead of stand-alone perspectives (such as Alberta Francophone-Anglophone relations, or in-between Anglophone and Francophone groups) may help de-essentialize the portrayal of these groups as either disconnected from one another in Alberta, or as homogenous entities. Recognizing some perspectives and not others is inevitable, but it could be done in ways that acknowledge not only minorities but also relationships between groups that live in the real world in relation to one another, rather than as disconnected entities.

The Dean of Education at the Faculté Saint-Jean, the only Francophone university campus in Alberta, has proposed that Francophones in Western Canada could have a separate curriculum (Radio-Canada, 2021). She did so in relation to recent critiques levelled against the new draft

curriculum. The adjustments subsequently made to the draft version, which include an increased representation of Francophone perspectives, might dampen such ambitions. However, asking all teachers in Alberta to study the same amount of Francophone perspectives, whether they are teaching in Anglophone or Francophone schools, is a risk that may end up, as I attested, simply existing in the curriculum-as-planned, and not in the curriculum-as-lived. It seems somehow illogical to argue that Francophone students have specific needs, but then to require on the basis of those needs, that all students in Alberta must learn the same amount of Francophone perspectives as Francophone students. Devising ways of including distinct learning outcomes for Francophone schools might be a way forward, while adapting the rest of the outcomes to the needs of non-Francophone students.

Defining what a perspective is, outside the realm of a shared opinion, must be done.

Some Final Thoughts

This thesis started at the Université Laval, when I met with David Scott to discuss Francophone perspectives. At the time, I did not know what they were and why they were in Alberta. What I knew about Alberta derived mostly from Québec's cultural curriculum. Similarly, many Albertans seem to view Francophone perspectives from their own cultural curriculum. I realize now that although I thought we were dissociated, all of us, Québécois and Albertans alike, have to work together to deconstruct and reconstruct our cultural curriculum. At the Université Laval, I did not know that I would one day consider myself as having anything in common with Alberta Anglophones. I do now.

I finished writing this thesis in an apartment on Avenue Laval in Montréal, and have lived in an English-speaking household for the last year. Having completed this thesis in English, I now question my choice of the working language. When I first started this research, opening myself to

English to be heard by an audience of social studies educators in Alberta made sense, particularly since the specialists in my field spoke English, not French. However, I came to discover much more about the English language in writing this thesis. I discovered an Albertan (Anglophone) perspective, and how it has been shaped, at least to some extent, by the English language. I hope that readers will see those perspectives, too, such as Black perspectives and Indigenous perspectives, take a certain shape when enunciated in a specific language. Writing in English has led me to realize that language itself is never neutral in its naming of the world, our goals and the means to attain them. From Université Laval to Avenue Laval, I now question our connections to the people and places that insert themselves in our lives without us knowing or realizing it, like perspectives derived from the use of language; or love (den Heyer, 2009).



(“Personal image”, https://www.reddit.com/r/Calgary/comments/dl9151/the_stop_signs_in_mission_are_bilingual_now/)

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APPENDIX A: Ethic Certificate

Data for this thesis (articles 3 and 4) were obtained through focus groups or interview with participants who signed an ethic form. The ethic application was produced by David Scott as part of a larger research project. The endorsement of the ethic form, and its renewal, was assured by the University of Calgary's *Conjoint Faculties Research Ethic Board*.

2022-03-02, 9:45 AM



Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board
 Research Services Office
 3rd Floor MacKimmie Library Tower (MLT 300)
 2500 University Drive, NW
 Calgary AB T2N 1N4
 Telephone: (403) 220-4283
cfreb@ucalgary.ca

May 29, 2016

Ethics ID: REB16-0656

David Scott

Dear [David Scott](#) :

RE: Helping Students Engage Francophone Historical Perspectives: Towards a New Pedagogical Approach to Teaching History

The above named research protocol has been granted ethical approval by the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board for the University of Calgary. Please make a note of the conditions stated on the Certification. In the event the research is funded, you should notify the sponsor of the research and provide them with a copy for their records. The Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board will retain a copy of the clearance on your file.

Please note, a renewal or final report must be filed with the CFREB within 30 days prior to the expiry date on your certification. You can complete your renewal or closure request in IRISS.

In closing, let me take this opportunity to wish you the best of luck in your research endeavor.

Sincerely,

[Christopher R. Sears, PhD, Chair](#) , CFREB