

**The Others Among Us:
How Experience Informs Post-Secondary
Faculty's Preparedness for Cultural Diversity in the
French Linguistic Minority Classrooms of Manitoba**

by

Robin L. Rooke

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
The University of Manitoba
in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Department of Education, Foundations and Psychology
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg

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Abstract

Due to the ten-fold increase in international students matched with a stronger participation of French immersion graduates in the last eight years, the *Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface* now includes a wider diversity of Francophones in its learning community. This thesis set out to identify the awareness of cultural diversity and to examine the education, training and preparation of post-secondary faculty members at Western Canada's oldest educational institution. The approach was inductive, qualitative and phenomenological, using an interview method. Tacit knowledge of the experiences of 13 interviewed faculty members was drawn out from stories as well as those shared by the teacher/researcher. Professors and instructors demonstrated awareness of the new cultural diversity through experiential learning experiences both formal and informal. Many stated that their comfort and ease of working with a heterogeneous group was because of their own identity as a cultural and linguistic minority within Manitoba.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

This section presents the issue to be examined in this research project. Following an overview of the current environment with respect to the student population and faculty of the *Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface (Collège)*, relevant details concerning Manitoba's French community and its history are examined. As a faculty member, my personal background relevant to the study is also shared. Finally, the thesis question is introduced along with its subsections.

General Statement of the Problem

As people from far flung parts of the world are brought closer together, educators find the groups of learners they work with becoming more and more culturally diverse. Students may want to learn about other parts of the world first hand. Some may choose to pursue their post-secondary studies in a foreign country or in another region. Students travelling abroad to further their education may generally expect various degrees of culture shock during their period of adaptation (Berry, 1989, p.206). Do faculty members experience this same shock when confronted by a classroom of foreign students? If they are native to the region where the institution is situated, do these faculty members necessarily expect to encounter difference in their own place of work?

Missing from the discussion of global educational exchange is the perspective of faculty members at the post-secondary level in the host country. In part due to public policy encouraging multiculturalism after the last few decades, Canadian society, as well as the student body of *Collège universitaire*

de Saint-Boniface, has become more culturally diverse (Canadian Heritage, 2004). The result of this evolution of diversity is that now these professionals are often working with students from backgrounds far different from their own without the benefit of specific training in pedagogical strategies that meet diverse student learning needs. It is unsure how they prepare to manage such a situation. The reaction of faculty members when confronted with such a situation may vary depending on their experience. A new part of their role is to adapt to the different values, work habits and expectations of foreign students.

Recent (April 2005) effects of demographic change in the student population of *Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface* on the faculty's class management habits and skills is the impetus for this research project. As in any other institutions, *Collège* has its own micro-culture. This study will examine the education, training and preparation of the *Collège's* teaching staff as they relate to cultural diversity.

Socio-Cultural Perspective

Vygotsky outlined his "socio-cultural theory" with an emphasis on "the importance of context in relation to learning" (1987, p.7). He wrote, "context, also known as 'activity setting' provides the medium in which students discover meaning through social encounter" (McDrury and Alterio, 2003, p.28). For him, "the mechanism of individual developmental change is rooted in society and culture" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.7). One of his key points regarding the development of higher functions of human beings is that "an individual has the capacity to

externalize and share with other members of her social group her understanding of their shared experience” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.132). This is seen in the *Collège’s* new-found heterogeneous state, the latest metamorphosis of its development. Knowledge and appreciation of the “Others” by the staff, those different from them, is crucial to the understanding of this new reality.

Members of minority groups in Canada often label themselves as a function of their identity and can thus more easily be identified. Francophones in this country are one such example. Currently in Manitoba, the terms Francophone of Manitoba, Franco-Manitoban, French-Canadian, Francophile and French-speaking Manitoban are all used to describe groups with characteristics and affiliations that look similar from the outside. The terms describe those members of the population who are of French descent, including those who live and work in French in Manitoba. Therefore, it is interesting to note how the participants identify themselves when asked to explain their cultural origin. Some participants are from families that have been here since the 1600s. Other families have only been in Manitoba a short time. All have varying levels of French due to different exposure and experience with the language. Because of the socio-political implications, labels of self-identification vary among French speakers in this country.

Institution

The *Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface*, founded in 1818 by Oblate fathers, has traditionally been a French-language post-secondary institution with

the main objective of training Manitobans in a wide variety of fields. The *Collège* was incorporated in Manitoba in 1871, becoming “the first university-level educational institution in Western Canada” (Industry Canada, 1996).

Although the Jesuit Fathers took over running the institution in 1885, the Archdiocese created a new board of directors consisting “of laypeople representing francophone organisations in Manitoba” (Industry Canada, 1996). The institution offers training at both the college and university levels. Degrees offered in education, science, business administration and the humanities are conferred by the University of Manitoba. Diplomas are offered in areas such as information technology, early childhood education and tourism. In the last few years, *Collège*, as it is known in the community, has been actively recruiting students from around the world.

The institution has grown and adapted as the country has. During the period of policy changes at the federal level (Official Languages Act, multiculturalism policies and immersion school systems) in the early to mid 1970s, both the federal and provincial governments became active supports of the *Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface* (Industry Canada, 1996).

The number of students attending *Collège* as sojourners increased from the 12 students registered for the 1996-1997 academic year to 100 in 2004-2005 (*Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface*, 2005). Sojourners are defined here as temporary immigrants who reside for a specific purpose and time period and intend to return eventually to their country of origin (Berry, 1989, p.214). During the 2004-2005 academic year, 189 international students (both student visa

holders, sojourners, and immigrants) were among the student body. Immigrants refer to first generation arrivals into the population by way of migration from some other part of the world (Berry, 1989, p.214). These foreign nationals accounted for 15% of the student population (*Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface*, 2005a). This represents more than a ten-fold increase in eight years. The college stream at the *Collège*, also known as *École technique et professionnelle*, has been particularly affected by the influx. In 2004-2005 enrolment, a total of 109 students (55 permanent residents and 54 sojourners) accounted for 43% of their student body (*Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface*, 2005). Furthermore, at the *École technique et professionnelle* graduation ceremony held in June 2005, 60 of the 103 diploma recipients were international students (*Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface*, 2005b).

This increase may be attributed partly to the fact that, since 1998, the French community of Manitoba has been the destination for a higher number of French-speaking immigrants than in decades past. The local advocate for the Francophone community, the *Société franco-manitobaine inc*, has been supporting a plan to increase the number of French-speaking people immigrating into Manitoba's communities called "Expanding our Francophone Milieu" (*Société franco-manitobaine*, 2001). Whether new students arrive in response to the *Société franco-manitobaine's* campaign or that of the *Collège*, many of these new Canadians are choosing to further their post-secondary training within Western Canada's only French university -- the *Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface*.

Faculty Members

With such a radical change in the make-up of the student body in such a short period of time, a question arises as to the preparedness of the faculty to address this new reality. This study identifies the effects of these changes by conversing with faculty members representative of both the university and college levels of this institution. Eight men and four women were interviewed for this study.

The Purpose of the Study

In recent years, the *Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface* has increased recruitment efforts abroad in other French-speaking countries. The positive results have impacted the institution and, of course, its teaching staff.

The student body is more diverse than ever before. Students come from not only a wider array of countries but also from different high school systems, both domestic and foreign. The once monocultural, homogenous, predominantly Roman Catholic postsecondary school is now more multicultural, non-denominational, even secular, and more heterogeneous than in any other time in its history. How has the teaching staff reacted to this change in the make-up of the student body? How do the personal experiences, perspectives and attitudes of the staff assist or hinder reactions? What further action does the institution need to take to meet the demands on the professoriate so that it, in turn, may meet its own mandate as educators? This study has focused on the experiences and attitudes of in-service post-secondary educators. Whereas the *Collège* was

founded and has operated from a Christian perspective, the beliefs held in this regard by the subjects of this study were not specifically examined.

Thesis Question

Research Problem and Sub-Questions

How do intercultural and intracultural experiences of the professors and instructors as well as their professional experiences inform their ability to manage a multicultural post secondary classroom effectively?

- What are their experiences in culturally diverse classrooms?
- What training do they have in working with diverse groups?
- How does their own cultural identity inform their teaching?
- What strategies have they implemented in their teaching?
- Have they changed their strategies as the demographics in their workplace have changed?
- How do they feel about working with students from a different culture than themselves?
- Could they share how they have resolved some of the difficulties based on cultural diversity that they have encountered in their classroom?
- What is yet to be done for/with them to help them prepare for this new reality in their classrooms?
- Have they felt supported by the administration and colleagues in their adjustment to this new reality?

This research project and its ensuing questions began from my own perspective as a member of the teaching staff at *Collège*. I am particularly affected by these demographic changes in the student body as the need for English-as-an-Additional-Language classes is vital for success of the students in their foreign environment. My classrooms consist of almost exclusively immigrant and sojourning students. Their cultural backgrounds are vastly different from my own. I wondered how my colleagues were being affected by the changes. Cochrane-Smith and Lytle (2001) refer to the “knowledge-in-practice” (p.47) of teachers, practical knowledge “embedded in practice and in teachers’ reflections on practice” (p.47). Therefore, I have included my own experiences along with those of my colleagues in hopes of providing a greater picture of the “new” reality within the institution.

The Researcher

Raised by third and fourth generation Canadians of British origin in Winnipeg, Manitoba, I was educated among French-Canadians in a French school and later, in the newly developed French Immersion program. Depending on the setting, I was part of either the French-Canadian minority or the English-Canadian majority. In effect, I always had a foot in both worlds of the “Two Solitudes” (MacLennan, 1945). These two perspectives of reality illustrated the benefits of each. I developed into someone who is bi-cultural with the role of a go-between. As an “Other”, I have always believed that if only all “Others” could understand the perspective of “Another”, the world would be a better place.

When I began my schooling in the mid-1970s, the effects of Canada's new policies in diversity were making their way into society. With the *Official Languages Act* adopted by Parliament in 1969, the official policy at the national level was to create a new, solid bilingual future for this country (Department of Justice, 2004). Two years later, in 1971, Canada became the first country to adopt an official policy pertaining to multiculturalism. It was called the *Multiculturalism Policy of Canada* (Canadian Heritage, 2004a). My parents prepared me for this unique future by enrolling me in an experimental new curriculum termed French Immersion. The Government provided funding and rhetoric to encourage families to educate their children in the country's other official language.

One of my biggest dreams in life was to better understand the "Other" that had always been a part of my school life. Consequently, *Université Laval* in Quebec City became my university of choice. The experience was so rewarding that I stayed for seven years, studying and working. While simultaneously working as an English-as-an-Additional-Language (EAL) instructor, I again sought to promote understanding between Canada's two solitudes (MacLennan, 1945).

I began my teaching career at the age of 19 in Quebec City, Quebec, while studying in the Faculty of Arts at *Université Laval* without any formal training in English-as-an-Additional-Language (EAL) or cultural pedagogy. I was hired to teach EAL to small groups of French-speaking professional adults. This career path continued both part and full time for the next 7 years and led me to

pursue studies in Adult Education and go on to earn a certificate in the program. I then taught EAL for a year in the Patagonian region of Argentina.

There in Argentina, I was confronted by another "Other". Again, the instruction of EAL became part of my life. Exchanging different ideas and realities with people culturally and linguistically different from one's own self was always mutually rewarding. I again sought to find common ground with people from a background distinct from my own. One year later, I returned to my starting block in Winnipeg. However, I immediately sought out people native to other countries.

I did not earn a teaching certificate to teach English-as-an-Additional-Language through formal study. The 6,000 hours of logged classroom experience with adults from different walks of life have allowed me to develop the experience I have today. More recently, in the spring of 2005, the Canadian chapter of TESL (Teaching of English-as-a-Second-Language) compared my professional experience to their credentials criteria. I was awarded the Professional Certificate-Level 3 according to TESL Canada National Professional Certification Standards, the second highest level. Nevertheless, I recognize that there are gaps in my skill set and therefore, part of the motivation to undertake a Master's degree in Adult Education was to acquire theoretical knowledge to complement my experience in the classroom. After completion of the Masters, I can apply for the highest level of certification.

What attracted me to this profession was the opportunity to bring people closer together by learning to function in another language and culture. I have learned a great deal about myself and the world over the years, more than I

believe I have ever shared with others. I have always sought out heterogeneous environments in which to work and play. My latest career move has put me in a unique position full of contradictions: a French-speaking Anglophone Manitoban hired to teach English-as-an-Additional-Language to French-speaking international students and Spanish to local students within a Francophone institution in a predominantly English-speaking province.

With searching for a culturally diverse environment (both personally and professionally), I accepted a position teaching EAL to foreign French-speaking students at *Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface*. I am confronted with “Others” on a daily basis. Being an Anglophone partially raised in the French community, I knew what to expect as a member of the English-speaking majority within the French minority community. But there is a new demographic reality in French Manitoba these days; the Francophones studying in Manitoba are not only from Manitoba. It seems they are “Another Other”.

When I joined the staff at *Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface*, the contradictions became more salient with the institutional mandate to increase the number of international students. How was I, the professors and other instructors on staff, being mostly French-Canadians in a minority situation, handling this new teaching reality? Classrooms at *Collège* have become quite multicultural in recent years. How are we educators dealing with this change? How have our personal or professional experiences assisted or hindered us in our daily duties?

Introduction to French Manitoba

Manitoba, as a society of a million people, is very multicultural. Its make-up is diverse and it is reflected in many aspects of our daily lives (Statistics Canada, 2005). But the French people of Manitoba have special status due to their contribution to local history. It was the French Métis, Louis Riel who established a provisional government in 1869 when the land still belonged to the Hudson's Bay Company (Viaud, 1999, p.79). Riel was also responsible for writing the Act of Manitoba (Viaud, 1999, p.79) that allowed this province to join the Dominion of Canada in 1870 on its own terms.

Bishop and missionary, Monseigneur Alexandre-Antonin Taché had a vision of creating a sister province to Quebec, French-speaking and Catholic. But as the lands were transferred by the Hudson's Bay Company to the Government of Canada in 1869, Taché's plan was overshadowed by the Government's new policy of the colonisation of the country with non-French-speaking Europeans (Viaud, 1999, p.79). The extent of Taché's dream exists today in the form of the community of St. Boniface and other small rural francophone villages throughout the southern and western parts of Manitoba.

The French of Manitoba currently rely on their own institutions and associations to assist in the preservation and continued development of their francophone community (Aunger, 1999, p.300). These entities receive public funds to support their endeavours. Of relevance here are the graduates of the Franco-Manitoban school division, the *Division scolaire franco-manitobaine*. This school division was created in 1994 to allow children of French descent to study

in their heritage language within the public school system. This year's enrolment is 4,545 students (*Division scolaire franco-manitobaine*, 2005). To be eligible to attend one of these schools, found throughout the south, east and west of the province, a child must fulfill one of three criteria:

- be a resident of Manitoba whose first language learned and still understood is French;
- be a Canadian citizen residing in Manitoba and have received at least 4 years of instruction at the elementary school level in a French program in Canada;
- be a Canadian citizen residing in Manitoba and have a father or a mother who received instruction at the elementary or at the secondary school level in a French program in Canada or who received such instruction for a period of at least four years.

(Division scolaire franco-manitobaine, 2005)

Multiculturalism

"Cultural pluralism is the very essence of Canadian identity" (Trudeau, 1971). Since the federal policy on multiculturalism was passed in 1971, it has been woven into the Canadian psyche and identity. From Volume IV of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which looked at cultural and ethnic pluralism in Canada (Trudeau, 1971), the government passed the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988. Canada was "the first country in the world to pass a national multiculturalism law clearly reaffirming multiculturalism as a fundamental value of Canadian society" (Canadian Heritage, 2006). Will Kymlicka

(1998) writes about Canada's unique use of federalism to deal with its aboriginal people and its diversity. He even suggests that Canada's success in diversity management is taken as a model by other nations (Henry, 2002).

As one of the two colonizing groups of Canada, the French community is one of many found in the cultural mosaic characteristic of the multicultural make-up of Canada. For the first time in a long while, there is significant growth to the French community of Manitoba, which serves to increase the diversity within this small, historic minority.

Since the mid 1990s, the local French-speaking community has found itself confronted with a new reality. Newcomers, both immigrants and sojourners, have arrived from various parts of the world. They speak French but they do not necessarily share the same culture as the existing French community in Manitoba. Many are from French-speaking Africa and bring with them a variety of other local dialects and languages along with different religious beliefs and practices. The French linguistic minority has always seen itself as one of the founding communities of the country. This community is now changing. Multiculturalism and bilingualism policies have helped shape and protect the community's identity over the years. This demographic shift can now affect their identity as a cultural community.

Canadian Heritage (the federal government department) describes multiculturalism in Canada as affirming "the value and dignity of all Canadian citizens regardless of their racial or ethnic origins, their language, or their religious affiliation" (Canadian Heritage, 2004a). Among the many definitions and

interpretations of multiculturalism are the terms, pluralistic multiculturalism and interculturalism. The former is used in the United States to promote “a broader interpretation of the common American culture and seeks due recognition for the ways that the nation's many racial, ethnic, and cultural groups have transformed the national culture” (Ravitch, 1990, p.2). The latter is used primarily in Quebec, and more recently in Ireland, to promote the sharing and meshing of many different cultures living together. The spirit of interculturalism, also espoused by Quebec, is best described below by the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) in Ireland:

Interculturalism is essentially about interaction, understanding and respect. It is about ensuring that cultural diversity is acknowledged and catered for. It is about inclusion for minority ethnic groups by design and planning, not as a default or add-on. It further acknowledges that people should have the freedom to keep alive, enhance and share their cultural heritage. (NCCRI, 2004)

Demographics of Manitoba

The demographic picture of the French community of Manitoba is unique. According to the 2001 census, the number of Manitobans who claimed French as their mother tongue numbered 44,340 (4.2%). The census also states that 63,215 (5.7%) Manitobans indicated German to be their first language spoken and still understood, 26,540 (2.4%) stated that it was Ukrainian and 18,385 (1%), Tagalog (Pilipino). At the time of the census, the total population of the province

of Manitoba was 1,103,700 inhabitants (Statistics Canada, 2005). In 2001, the Aboriginal population in this province reached 13.6% of the total population (150,040 people). This number is incomplete as some reserves did not participate in the census (Statistics Canada, 2005). Within Winnipeg, the numbers are equally surprising. French was declared a mother tongue by 28,660 (2.6%) residents, German by 22,865 (2.1%), Tagalog by 18,235 (1.7%) and Ukrainian by 15,315 (1.4%) (Statistics Canada, 2005).

Table 1

Mother tongue spoken in general population – 2001 Census

Mother tongue	French	German	Ukrainian	Tagalog
Manitoba	44,340 (4.2%)	63,215 (5.7%)	26,540 (2.4%)	18,385 (1%)
Winnipeg	28,660 (2.6%)	22,865 (2.1%)	15,315 (1.4%)	18,234 (1.7%)

(Statistics Canada, 2005)

Exogamy (Marrying Out)

According to the *Société franco-manitobaine inc.* (2001), since 1971 fewer Manitobans of French heritage are speaking French at home and consequently, fewer are passing the language on to their children. The primary cause for this change is exogamous marriages. According to the 1996 census, 67.9% of children of French descent in this province are of mixed heritage. It is also noted that 85.8% of children with two French-speaking parents learn the language. If one parent is from a different background, this number plummets to 15.9% (*Société franco-manitobaine*, 2001). Therefore, there is an assimilation rate of 61.7% among children of French heritage due to exogamy.

Immigration (Moving In)

Immigration statistics since 1998 conclude that the principal mother tongue of a vast majority of immigrants to this province has not been French. Nor is French among the top 10 languages spoken by immigrants. In 1998, 1999 and 2000 respectively, Tagalog (396, 502, and 673 persons respectfully) and German (235, 410 and 559 persons respectfully) were first and second on the list of languages spoken by new immigrants. In 1998, only 91 of the new immigrants to the province spoke French. This figure rose to 94 in 1999 and to 149 in 2000 (Manitoba Labour and Immigration, 2000). Since that time, the number of immigrants arriving with prior knowledge of French is over 100 persons. (Data shows that in 2001, it was 146; in 2002, 103, and in 2003, 159 persons) (Manitoba Labour and Immigration, 2004).

Table 2

Mother tongue spoken by immigrants to Manitoba – 1998-2004

Mother tongue of immigrants To Manitoba	Tagalog #1	German #2	French (unranked)
1998	396	235	91
1999	502	410	94
2000	673	559	149
2001	651	536	146
2002	751	542	103
2003	1182	932	159
2004	1462	997	234

(Manitoba Labour and Immigration, 2000, 2001, 2004)

French Immersion Schools

Another of the cultural groups found among the student body at the *Collège* is the graduates of French Immersion programs from across the province. The clientele of the *Collège* cannot be demonstrated wholly unless the French Immersion graduates are included. This innovative language program began in Manitoba in the 1970s. Its main objectives were to provide quality bilingual education, in French and in English, to prepare children for a harmonious future in the Canadian bilingual workforce. This idea, and its program, was widely accepted in Manitoba. Today, there are more than 17,000 students studying in French in 24 school divisions throughout the province (Manitoba Education and Training, 2002).

A 2002 report by Manitoba Education, Training and Youth claims that “the ability to resist stereotyping, both intellectually and personally” is among the advantages of second language study (p.2). It goes on to say that “second language students are better able to develop strategies for assessing human behaviour and separating it from language and cultural stereotyping” (p.2).

One citation in particular reflects my personal experiences in the program. “It becomes a way of life and of working which provides students the opportunity to live the language and acquire the ability to negotiate and navigate between two or more languages and cultures” (p.2). I feel like the guide leading people to discover and learn from the “Other”. In the same report, the president of the University of Victoria is quoted as saying that