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## Relation to Culture and Cultural Education on Students in High School French-as-a-First-Language Courses

*To enhance the cultural content of the curriculum, several governments are increasing the presence of cultural education in schools. How do high school French-as-a-first-language teachers perceive this education? To answer this question, we relied on the relation to culture theoretical framework and analyzed 32 questionnaires answered by high school French-as-a-first-language teachers. Our results suggest that the teachers' main role is to bring students to appreciate the cultural objects and practices associated with fine arts and literature and to develop their ability to distance themselves from their surroundings.*

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*Pour mettre en valeur le contenu culturel des programmes d'études, plusieurs gouvernements augmentent la présence de l'éducation culturelle dans les écoles. Comment les enseignants de français langue première au secondaire perçoivent-ils cette éducation? Voulant répondre à cette question, nous avons analysé 32 questionnaires complétés par des enseignants de français langue première en prenant appui sur un cadre théorique de rapport à la culture. Nos résultats portent à conclure que le rôle principal des enseignants est d'amener les élèves à apprécier les pratiques et les objets culturels liés aux beaux-arts et à la littérature, et de développer la capacité des élèves de se distancier de leur environnement.*

In a context characterized by “accelerating change, intense compression of time and space, cultural diversity, technological complexity, national insecurity and scientific uncertainty” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 3), what should be taught to students and how to teach the subject matter become major educational challenges. Many countries are increasing the presence of cultural education in their curriculum (Sharp & Le Metais, 2000). The government of Quebec is part of this movement and states that in order to augment the cultural content of the curriculum, teachers must teach from a cultural perspective (Quebec Government, 1997). How do teachers define teaching from this perspective? Why do they engage in the cultural education of their students? And how do they define culture?

Recent works in the field of education have targeted answering these questions. They can be grouped into two main categories: analyses of the meaning of teaching from a cultural perspective (Chéné & Saint-Jacques, 2005; Côté & Simard, 2006, 2007; Falardeau & Simard, 2007; Gauthier, 2001; Mellouki & Gauthier, 2003; Monférier, 1999; Saint-Jacques, Chéné, Lessard, & Riopel, 2002; Simard, 2002; Simard, Falardeau, Emery-Bruneau, & Côté, 2007) and the theoretical works on the relation between culture and education (including Bruner, 1996; Gallagher, 1992; Giroux, 2000, 2005; Kerlan, 2004; Lorvellec, 2002). The first group of studies suggests that introducing students to culture requires not only teachers who are knowledgeable, but who also reflect on their culture and have developed their own sensitivity to their students' culture. However, few of these works examine how teachers define culture (except for Saint-Jacques et al.), and most do not analyze the reasons that lead teachers to get involved in the cultural education of their students.

The second group of studies reflects the plurality of meanings that culture can have and their implications on teaching. Whereas some researchers suggest that culture is mainly related to the arts and esthetics (Kerlan, 2004), others associate it with the Western canon (Lorvellec, 2002). Several writers define culture as a *tool box* that enables one to become efficient (Bruner, 1996); others propose that it is composed of symbols that one interprets in the light of one's tradition (Gallagher, 1992). Many authors suggest that there are as many cultures as there are human groups and protest “how imperial centers of power construct themselves through the discourse of master narratives and totalizing systems” (Giroux, 2005, p. 12). If these works clarify the various conceptions of culture, they do not study teachers' practices or their definition of culture. For a more thorough review of the theoretical works on culture and education, see

Côté and Simard (2007), a work based on an analysis of the main studies on the relationships between language, culture, and education.

In this article we seek to describe, analyze, and understand the meaning that high school French-as-a-first-language teachers give to the cultural education of students. Attaining this objective requires examining how these teachers define culture and the reasons that lead them to be involved in such education. This inquiry is important especially in relation to first-language teaching because language is “central not only in the production of meaning and social identities but also as a constitutive condition for human agency” (Giroux, 2005, p. 11). Also, studying how teachers perceive culture and the cultural education of students is necessary to help future and current teachers develop their comprehension of culture and its complex relation to education. This understanding will enable them to guide their students through the process of understanding the world and of creating their social identity as well as their agency. Therefore, the examination of the case of Quebec high school French-as-a-first-language teachers can contribute to the reflection of teachers who wish to contribute to the cultural education of their students.

First, we present the theoretical framework we relied on and the methodology we employed. We then follow with a description and an interpretation of our results. We conclude with a short presentation on the limitations of our study and on the further research we intend to conduct.

#### *The Relation to Culture Theoretical Framework*

To describe, analyze, and understand the meaning that high school French-as-a-first-language teachers give to culture and to the cultural education of students, we have relied on the relation to culture theoretical framework. This framework is based on a specific definition of culture and on the works of the ESCOL team on the relation to knowledge. The Research Team on Education, Socialisation and Local Collectivities of the University of Paris 8 was created by Bernard Charlot in 1987 and is now the responsibility of Elisabeth Bautier and Jean-Yves Rochex.

Given the diverse meanings that culture can have, we have chosen a definition that encompasses this multiplicity and allows us to organize it. Like Geertz (1973), we consider culture to be “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (p. 89). According to this definition, culture is not limited to a single meaning; it is composed of all patterns of significance that humans create to make meaning of their lives. Culture as a tool box and culture as the Western canon then intertwine in the historically transmitted scheme that constitutes culture. At the core of this definition lies the idea that the mediation of objects of culture, namely, symbolic forms, enables human beings to reflect on their environment. Through this mediation an individual relates to himself or herself to the world and to others, as symbolic forms enable him or her to communicate and develop his or her knowledge of and attitudes toward human existence. Thus culture may be viewed as a reflexive movement nourished by the symbolic forms organized in coherent, historically transmitted patterns. The encounter with these symbols gives birth to the process that brings people to distance themselves from their

immediate surroundings and to make meaning of them. For example, learning the rules, techniques, and strategies of tennis changes our comprehension of the game when we watch it on television. Studying Spanish may modify our perception of Hispanic culture or our understanding of our own first language. Inasmuch as there are conceptions of culture, there are theoretical frameworks to study people's relation to it. Indeed, Bourdieu's (1979) analyses of a given population's cultural activity through its social classes have generated a wide array of approaches to describe and understand human beings' relation to culture. Whereas many sociologists continue to study cultural practices with socio-demographic categories and statistics (Donnat, 1994, 1998; Gagnon, 1997; Garon, 2004), others seek to understand people's relation to culture through the perspective of individuals and rely on qualitative methods (Dubet, 1994; Lahire, 2004). However, these various works do not always examine people's subjectivity, and when they do, they limit it to the sum of an individual's social learning instead of considering the person as someone who can distance himself or herself from his or her social identity in order to define himself or herself (Charlot, 1997). Because we seek to analyze the meaning teachers give to the cultural education of students and the reasons that lead them to partake in this experience, we need a theoretical framework that will allow us to study teachers' subjectivity. This is one reason why we have chosen the work of the ESCOL team on the relation to learning among the wide array of theoretical frameworks designed to study people's relation to culture. According to Charlot, the relation to learning is "the (organized) totality of connections one subject has with everything associated to learning and knowledge" (p. 94, our translation). Learning is understood "as a specific human activity among the whole of human activities (to learn and to know), or as the result of this activity" (Charlot, Bautier, & Rochex, 2000, p. 31, our translation). When it refers to an activity, learning becomes a dynamic movement that contributes to a person's development. Like culture, learning is thus conceived as a process through which an individual relates to himself or herself, others and the world, and as an object, which is the result of this process.

This proximity between the representation of learning suggested by Charlot (1997) and Geertz's (1973) definition of culture has led us to base ourselves on the relation to learning theory to delineate the relation to culture, namely, the (organized) totality of dynamic connections that a situated subject has with cultural knowledge, people, objects, and cultural practices. Every individual has a relation to culture, which is created by contexts, practices, relationships, knowledge, and values. It is this complex relation that we seek to understand by examining its components, namely, three spheres and two facets (Falardeau & Simard, 2007; Simard et al., 2007). The three spheres are as follows.

*The subjective sphere.* This sphere concerns people as subjects of culture, their (more or less) reflexive activity, their representations of culture, their cultural practices and projects, the value they give to culture, and the desires and feelings that animate them in their relation to culture (Falardeau & Simard, 2007; Simard et al., 2007). The subjective sphere refers to the motives that bring one to engage in cultural activities and projects and the importance one gives

to this involvement. For example, a person may visit museums because he or she enjoys it.

*The epistemic sphere.* This designates the nature, place, and roles of knowledge in a person's practices, representations of culture and projects, and one's representations of knowledge (Falardeau & Simard, 2007; Simard et al., 2007). This sphere is about knowledge as an object that must be learned and can be named either precisely or vaguely (Charlot, 1997). What is the nature of knowledge? What is its role in one's cultural activities? Examination of the epistemic sphere may answer these questions. A person could consider that history enables him or her to understand the books he or she reads or that no knowledge is involved in the meaning that he or she makes of a movie.

*The social sphere.* The social sphere pertains to the sphere of one's relationships to others (family members, friends, teachers, employers, colleagues, etc.) and to institutions (Falardeau & Simard, 2007; Simard et al., 2007). Social relationships shape one's relation to culture, and culture influences one's relation to one's social environment. To take the social sphere into account implies acknowledging the influence of a person's family, friends, and colleagues on his or her relation to culture. For example, a teacher's passion for drama may lead him or her to have the students watch plays and share this interest.

The interrelations between the three spheres give birth to a person's relation to culture. Teaching entails initiating the young generations to the symbolic forms valued by their society. This mission brings teachers to develop a representation of their students' relation to these forms. Hence examining the relation to culture in the context of teaching requires distinguishing two facets of teachers' relation to culture: the individual facet and the pedagogical facet (Falardeau & Simard, 2007; Simard et al., 2007), the latter referring to the representations teachers have of their students' relation to culture. Therefore, we can assume that a teacher's relation to culture will influence his or her representation of the cultural education of his or her students.

How can we analyze high school French-as-a-first-language teachers' relation to culture and their representation of a cultural formation with this framework? This requires relevant data and a specific method.

#### *Methodology*

To describe, analyze, and understand how high school French-as-a-first-language teachers conceive of culture and the cultural education of students, we examined a two-page questionnaire answered by 32 high school French-as-a-first-language teachers ( $n=32$ ) who participated voluntarily in our research. These teachers work in the southern part of Quebec, mostly around Montreal and Quebec City. The participants had to answer the following questions with no instructions other than to write answers of about one page in length: "Describe what culture means to you" and "What is the teachers' role in students' cultural development?" With these data, we aimed to identify recurring patterns in the participants' discourse. Teachers' writings on their representation of culture and on their role in the cultural education of students informed us about what information they chose, consciously or not, when they thought about culture and the cultural education of students.

To analyze the participants' texts, we used content and discourse analyses, both methods being adequate to identify the meaning of given data. Because

French is participants' first language and they are French-as-a-first language teachers, the answers to the questionnaires were written in French. We have translated all excerpts from the participants' texts. We followed the steps identified by L'Ecuyer (1990) when we accomplished our content analysis. First, we divided the texts into meaning units, that is, units the length of which is determined by the researcher based on the main questions of his or her study, the theoretical framework he or she is relying on, and the sense of the participant's answers. We classified these units among the three spheres and the two facets of the relation to culture. To do this we created categories in advance that were based on the results of the earlier work of Falardeau and Simard (2007) and Simard et al. (2007). We also formed ad hoc categories during the analysis. We define each category as we present the results.

Once the classification of the meaning units was completed, we submitted the content of each category to discourse analysis in order to understand how teachers write about their relation to culture and the cultural education of their students. Although there are various types of discourse analysis (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, & Vetter, 2000), we chose the method used by Charlot et al. (2000) as it is designed to examine not only what a research participant says, but also how he or she says it. This was of special importance when studying the meaning teachers give to culture and to the cultural education of their students, because it enabled us to gain a more thorough understanding of how teachers talk about culture and the cultural education of students and of how their subjectivity creates their relation to culture. According to Charlot et al., discourse analysis implies considering the presence or the absence of the writer of the text, the text's organization, mood, and so forth. For example, a teacher who writes text using the third person singular does not seem as concerned by culture and as involved in the cultural education of students as would a teacher who uses the first person singular.

Once this second analysis was completed, we counted the number of units in each of our categories and described their content. We then interpreted our data by examining the relations between the three spheres and the two facets of the relation to culture. Here we focus on the subjective sphere of this relation as it refers to the meaning and role that one individual gives to culture in his or her life and to why he or she engages in the cultural education of students.

#### *The Individual Facet of the Subjective Sphere*

The most important category regroups units associated with one's representations of culture: in other words, the definitions, analogies, and metaphors one uses to define culture or the cultured individual. All teachers mentioned their definition of culture, and most (136 of 250 units) described culture as a society's inheritance or as the sum of a community's knowledge, productions, values, and habits, which according to several participants, has to be taught and learned. The first question was about their representations of culture, which explains the importance of this category. One teacher suggested, "There is also the culture belonging to a group of people, a civilization, a nation. This is what we may call the francophone, French, Québécois, French-Canadian, American, etc. culture." This representation of culture as the sum of a community's inheritance is associated for most participants with culture as

Table 1  
Individual Facet of the Relation to Culture

	<i>Distribution of Units</i>	
	<i>Number of Units</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Representations of Culture	250	63.8%
Axiological Aspects	48	12.2%
Psycho-Affective Aspects	40	10.2%
Reflexivity	26	6.6%
Cultural Practices	16	4.1%
Cultural Projects	12	3.1%

what makes one knowledgeable and civilized, as the totality of a person's learning (82 units). According to another teacher, "The culture of the individual is defined as the sum total of the knowledge we have of the world." Thus most teachers thought of culture as a community's knowledge that has to be learned in order to enable a person to understand the world in which he or she lives.

In second position for the individual facet are the axiological aspects that refer to the meaning or value (ontological or social) that an individual gives to cultural practices and knowledge. Seventeen teachers of 32 mentioned these aspects. Most considered that a specific part of culture was central to an individual or a society's existence (26 of 48 units). One participant wrote: "It [the humanities] does more than adorn my existence (although this role is not trivial); it enlightens it in a thousand ways, discloses me to myself and helps me understand aspects of life, of my life and of my kindred's." Moreover, several teachers suggested that although culture comprises many objects, domains, and practices, not all these components are of equal worth (13 of 48 units). One participant mentioned, "It is infuriatingly sad that the culture of mass media—the culture of belching and flatulence—takes such an importance [in our society]." Even if most teachers acknowledged a hierarchy among the symbolic forms constitutive of culture, not all agreed that some forms were better than others. "Sometimes people will talk about subcultures. According to me, there is no such a thing. Who can tell when culture ends and when a subculture begins?" Hence although participants agreed that culture is valuable, debate arose when it came to determining the value of cultural objects, domains, and practices. Several participants thought of culture as worth knowing and cherishing of the humanities, although a few preferred to think of cultural objects as being of equal value.

Sixteen high school French-as-a-first-language teachers mentioned psycho-affective aspects, namely, the emotions, desires, interests, and negative or positive feelings that they associated with culture. Most (18 of 40 units) suggested that it was interesting that someone in the cultural practices related to the fine arts and literature required meeting one who already liked them, whether this be a teacher, a librarian, or their parents. In this sense, the emotions and feelings that one has for culture are hard to separate from the social sphere of the relation to culture: in other words, the social influences that affect one's cultural practices and tastes. Moreover, the first person was used in 20 of

40 units. This leads us to believe that several participants were driven by feelings and emotions in their relation to culture, for example, "Nevertheless, I must admit that I have an inclination for all writings that have a social scope!"

In fourth rank comes reflexivity, defined as the (more or less) reflexive activity of a person toward cultural practices and objects. This activity comprises a process of comprehension and of distancing. Most of the 12 participants who mentioned reflexivity associated it with critical thought and judgment (10 of 26 units) as they considered that culture allowed the development of one's faculties and one's ability to understand one's surroundings. To describe this distancing process, the 12 teachers who wrote about it suggested that it was more an ideal to reach than an actual skill as they employed the subjunctive mood, the future tense, or verbs like *ought to*, *enables one to*, or *should* when they mentioned the ability to judge critically, to comprehend, to question, to analyze, to interpret, to contextualize, to put in perspective, or to establish connections. "Our critical judgment will then be developed and reveal our personal cultural profile." Also, the first person appeared in only six of 26 units. Hence most participants did not evoke themselves when writing about the ability to comprehend the world. They preferred to use the third person, which gives a more impersonal tone to their answers. "This knowledge enables him [the individual] to apprehend more efficiently the situations he is confronted with and to criticize events of all nature." Consequently, when teachers wrote about reflexivity, they treated it as an ideal to reach or something belonging to the cultured individual rather than talking of it as if it were part of their daily existence (which would have been suggested by the use of the present tense and the the first person).

The category about the person's cultural practices, his or her effective activities in culture, is in fifth position. The 10 participants who mentioned such practices referred to reading, traveling, listening to music, going to theaters and museums, and watching informative television shows. "It is this culture that I see in theatres, that I admire in museums, that I devour in novels." Hence the teachers mainly evoked cultural practices associated with the humanities (arts and literature). The first person singular appears in 11 of 16 units, which implies that the teachers were mainly describing their own practices, for example, "Even though I do not have any disposition for scientific studies, I love to glance at periodicals like *La Recherche*, *Science et Vie*, *Science et Avenir*" (scientific periodicals published in French).

The final category for the individual facet of the subjective sphere regroups units in the cultural projects that a person undertakes for his or her cultural development. The seven teachers who brought up these projects suggested that they led them to continue learning throughout their lives. Also, because the first person singular appeared in eight of the 12 units in this category, it seems that most teachers were describing their own lifetime cultural projects. One teacher suggested, "It [the humanities] always reveals to it [my curiosity] new fields that I hope I will keep on exploring until death."

The examination of the individual facet of the subjective sphere suggests that these high school French-as-a-first-language teachers saw themselves as



inheritors of their society's knowledge, which had allowed them to develop their faculties. Thus they considered that culture was of special importance both in their lives and in their community's existence. They realized that culture had a specific worth through the encounter with a significant person, whether a teacher or a parent, who initiated them to several cultural practices and objects associated with fine arts and literature. Teachers emphasized a specific array of symbolic forms, namely, those pertaining to the humanities. Moreover, it is possible to organize our categories in a continuum stretching from the collective (culture as the sum of a society's productions) to the individual (culture as the totality of one's knowledge and as one's faculties, which one keeps on enriching throughout one's life). Reflexivity seems to be at the center of this continuum, as it enables people to distance themselves from their immediate surroundings in order to understand and criticize them. Consequently, for high school French-as-a-first-language teachers, a person is never completely determined by his or her social inheritance. Through the mediation of culture, he or she can, or rather ought to (because reflexivity appears to be thought of as an ideal to reach), dissociate himself or herself from his or her world in order to reflect on it. In this sense, the collective inheritance that is culture nourishes an individual's subjectivity and enables him or her to make meaning of the world, himself or herself, and others. To do so, meeting someone who already likes culture seems to be essential, as it is this encounter that leads the individual to involve himself or herself in cultural practices that enable him or her to continue learning throughout his or her existence. These practices belong to a precise part of culture, that of the fine arts and literature.

If the analysis of the individual facet of the subjective sphere helps us to understand how teachers think of their personal relation with culture, it does not indicate how they perceive the cultural education of their students. To clarify this conception, we examine the pedagogical facet of the subjective sphere.

#### *The Pedagogical Facet of the Subjective Sphere*

The psycho-affective aspects of students (their emotions, interests, desires, and positive or negative feelings toward cultural practices and objects) are in first position (21 teachers of 32 evoked these aspects). Awakening students' interest in cultural objects and practices appeared to be an objective for some teachers (28 of 59 units), who mentioned that their role was to give students a taste for culture. Other participants described students' feelings toward the cultural objects introduced in the French-as-a-first-language class (14 of 59 units). For example, one teacher said, "This year, I saw a student read almost all of Michel Tremblay's (a well-known Quebec author) books because she said that I was able to communicate my passion for him to my students." Nine units referred to pupils' actual feelings towards cultural objects and practices. "When they [students] adopt a 'culture,' for example, a singer or an author that they like, they often find it hard to open up to something different. They tend to dwell on what they already know." Teachers considered that they had a major role in bringing students to like cultural objects and practices associated with the fine arts and literature. This idea was suggested by the words they used when writing about their roles regarding teenagers' desires for culture as their sentences comprised verbs such as *must*, *have to*, and *can develop*. This mission

Table 2  
Pedagogical Facet of the Relation to Culture

	Distribution of Units	
	Number of Units	Percentage
Psycho-Affective Aspects of Students	59	38.1%
Reflexivity of Students	45	29%
Cultural Practices of Students	26	16.8%
Axiological Aspects of Students	14	9%
Cultural Projects of Students	6	3.9%
Representations of Culture of Students	5	3.2%

appeared to be a concern for several teachers, who employed the first person singular when they mentioned students' feelings for culture. Hence teachers have to arouse their pupils' interest for cultural objects and practices or to modify their negative feelings toward them.

Students' reflexivity comes in second position, with 17 teachers writing about it. The main idea associated with this category (22 of 45 units) is that teachers must develop students' critical judgment and help them to analyze, understand, and interpret. When teachers took into account students' reflexivity, they seemed to assume that students were not able to distance themselves from their surroundings when they entered the French-as-a-first-language class as they mostly employed verbs like *learn to*, *develop*, *become*, and *enable*. One participant wrote, "It [poetry] also enables them [students] to become gradually aware of their ways of acknowledging and of perceiving the world they live in." Hence teachers considered that they had to enhance teenagers' reflexivity by introducing them to poetry, literature, and knowledge about the French-as-a-first-language course.

Fourteen high school French-as-a-first-language teachers reflected on students' cultural practices. Most thought that teenagers already had cultural practices (10 units of 26), as they mentioned the music to which students listen and the books that they read. According to a small number of participants, these practices can be used in class in order to introduce students to other aspects of culture (9 units): "Thus, Loco Locass' (a music group popular among teenagers in Quebec) texts may enable them [students] to appreciate Baudelaire's poetry." Also, teachers seemed to consider that most of their students' practices belonged to the culture promoted by the mass media rather than to the fine arts and humanities, as they evoked Harry Potter, Nintendo, and *Scary Movie* when they wrote about what their students read or watched. Therefore, teenagers' cultural activities are thought of as stepping-stones to be used in the high school French-as-a-first-language course so that the cultural objects and practices taught in school appear less remote from the symbolic forms that teenagers encounter outside the school walls.

When teachers wrote about students' axiological aspects (the meaning or value, ontological or social, that students give to cultural knowledge or practices), they suggested that they had to bring teenagers to acknowledge that the symbolic forms related to the humanities play a fundamental role in their lives:

"[Culture is] what brings my students to make sense not only from what they learn, but also of their life." Teachers wish students to realize that not all cultural objects and practices are of equal worth. However, because only nine teachers mentioned students' axiological aspects, it seems that to have students value cultural objects and practices or determine their worth are not priorities among the 32 teachers who participated in our research.

In fifth position are students' cultural projects. The units associated with this category suggest that the projects that teachers organize in class enable their pupils to develop their autonomy: "[We must give the student the taste for culture] so that he may become autonomous in this path towards the appropriation of his personal culture." Not all teachers sought to attain this long-term objective, and only six evoked students' cultural projects. None wrote about projects created by teenagers; all six units referred to projects carried out by teachers.

The units associated with students' representations of culture led us to believe that the teacher's role was to help students broaden their vision of culture. "[To base one's teaching practices on culture] is a way to demonstrate that Earth is not limited to a student's village, small environment." However, only four teachers addressed students' perceptions of culture. This result suggests that this is not often introduced in the French-as-a-first-language course.

Analysis of the pedagogical facet suggests that the main role of high school French-as-a-first-language teachers is to have students cherish the cultural objects and practices that are associated with fine arts and literature. Teachers can help students understand and criticize the cultural objects and practices that they encounter outside the school in the light of the symbolic forms pertaining to the humanities. To do so, teenagers' cultural practices can be used as stepping-stones, for it is through their mediation that the cultural content introduced in the French-as-a-first-language class may seem less foreign to students.

These results allow us to clarify how teachers define their role in the cultural education of students and to identify some of the means that they use to introduce teenagers to specific parts of culture. How do high school French-as-a-first-language teachers conceive of the cultural education of students? Why do they involve themselves? These are the questions we address in our interpretation.

#### *Interpretation*

The teachers who answered our questionnaire characterized culture as a collective aspect that has been bestowed on them by someone significant. This person brought them to like valuable cultural objects and practices, namely, those associated with the humanities. Yet we wonder what place they give to these objects and practices in their current lives as only a few mentioned their cultural practices or projects. To think of culture as something to be bequeathed and to emphasize the encounter with a significant other who cherishes cultural objects and practices may explain why high school French-as-a-first-language teachers engage in the cultural education of students. They can become this significant other for their pupils, who will begin through teachers' educative action to love the objects and practices associated with fine arts and literature. Contact with these worthy symbolic forms enables them to develop their

reflexivity. This role is of special importance to teachers because it is this part of culture that students may not encounter outside school, as many of the participants relate teenagers' culture to the objects and practices promoted by the mass media. In a context characterized by accelerating change, the expansion of the media and cultural diversity, the teachers we interviewed seem to share Arendt's (1968) view of the role of education in the cultural teaching of students, namely,

that conservatism, in the sense of conservation, is of the essence of the educational activity, whose task is always to cherish and protect something—the child against the world, the world against the child, the new against the old, the old against the new. (p. 192)

Therefore, according to the research participants, cultural education must rely on the culture that they cherish and wish to conserve, the culture that they have come to love and value through meeting with a significant individual, that is, the culture associated with the humanities. It is this culture that will protect teenagers from the world by developing their reflexivity, their capacity to distance themselves from their surroundings, and make meaning out of them.

#### *Limitations and Further Research*

Although these results provide valuable insights into teachers' representations of culture and of the cultural education of students, they remain limited because they are based on the sole questionnaire that high school French-as-a-first-language teachers answered and the analysis of one sphere. The examination of the complex relations between teachers' relation to culture and the cultural education of students requires going beyond these data and exploring how the three spheres of the relation to culture intertwine to structure one's relation with culture and one's teaching practices. We will do this in the years to come, as we will analyze the content of semistructured interviews conducted with 18 teachers selected from the 32 who participated in the first part of our research. We will also film participants while they are teaching in order to study the cultural education generated by a high school French-as-a-first-language teacher's relation to culture. To describe, analyze, and understand the complex relationships between education and culture is essential, especially to nourish teachers' reflection on their cultural role, "because it is in the realm of culture that identities are forged, citizenship rights are enacted, and possibilities are developed for translating acts of interpretation into forms of intervention" (Giroux, 2000, p. 25).

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