

**MONOLOGUES FROM THE MARGINS: VOICES AND EXPERIENCES OF
RACIALLY MINORITIZED FRENCH IMMERSION STUDENTS**

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Abstract

This doctoral study investigated race and racism in French immersion (FI) programs in Ontario and Canada. Much research in the field of FI prioritizes efficacy of language learning and the studies that do consider equity speak to English language learners, immigrants, socioeconomic status, and special education needs. Meanwhile, racial identity is frequently overlooked entirely or simply not researched, despite long-standing evidence FI is dominated by White people. Despite the racial diversity of the French-speaking world, race has only recently started to be considered in FI. This study investigates racially minoritized students' experiences in FI to find ways to improve their experiences.

This exploratory sequential mixed method study aimed to better understand how racially minoritized students experience FI. Stage 1 engaged racially minoritized FI student participants (n=3) in modified Playbuilding (Norris, 2016) to create autoethnographic counter-stories and monologues about their experiences in FI. Participants in Stage 1 also created a list of suggestions and needs to improve FI. Stage 2 of the study employed a qualitative and quantitative online questionnaire. FI Stakeholders across Ontario and Canada (n=39) read and watched the stories and monologues, then reacted to them via the online questionnaire. Stakeholders rated and expanded on the suggestions from Stage 1. Stage 3 included one follow-up interview with a participant from Stage 1.

Thematic analysis, critical discourse analysis, content analysis, and descriptive statistics revealed three major findings: 1) there was very little cultural learning—let alone racially and culturally diverse learning— in FI; 2) participants experienced racism in FI and FI teachers and administrators needed to address antiracism; 3) participants in Stage 1 were more concerned about improving their French proficiency than addressing racism. Disturbingly, some participants

accepted racism as a foregone conclusion, but could not accept that their French had not improved in years. Findings reveal that there is a pressing need for diverse, culturally responsive and sustaining intercultural teaching in FI as well as training on anticolonial and antiracist pedagogy for teachers. Given the small participant size, this study serves as a launching point for future research into diverse intercultural teaching and learning, and antiracism in FI.

Dedication

To all the students who have made teaching the greatest joy of my life.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

An Introductory Narrative: Where are all the People of Colour?

As a core French¹ student, I always wished that I had the experience of French immersion (FI) because I thought that being in immersion would not only make me bilingual but make me excellent at speaking French. I remember being very jealous of FI students while I plunked along in core French, learning the same grammar points year after year and never improving my speaking abilities. Core French was so undervalued at my school, that my Grade 12 French class was a 3-year split (Grades 10/11/12) with about 20 students. I dropped this course because, according to the teacher, I would only be learning one new grammar tense and everything else would be review. Passionate about French and language learning (and wanting a job as a teacher), I carried on studying French in university to become an intermediate/senior (secondary school level) FI teacher. As many beginning French teachers experience, I was quickly placed in a Long-Term Occasional position soon after graduating due to the (ongoing) French teacher staffing crisis (Masson et al., 2021). So, my dream of being in the FI program was realized, only it happened as a teacher instead of as a student.

As a teacher, I gained a new perspective of the program and realized that my rose-coloured glasses had a lot to do with the elitist perception that immersion students were very smart (since they were learning in another language) and excellent at French (since they had been studying for so many years entirely in French). These assumptions were coupled with my own deficit view of the core French program which my peers and I saw as useless due to repetitive learning throughout the years. In my mind, at least immersion students could converse in French, whereas my core

¹ See “French Language Instruction” section in this chapter for more information on the different French language instruction programs in Ontario.

French peers could not. Becoming an immersion teacher, I realized that while FI students did have strong comprehension skills and “good” accents (another notion that has taken many years to fight against), they also had issues with their language proficiency and confidence. As an educator, I was disheartened that my students who spent over a decade learning French felt like they knew nothing or lacked the confidence to use their French within and beyond the classroom. However, something else stood out to me when it came to my concerns about the immersion program: the suspicious lack of racial and gender diversity in my classrooms.

When I was teaching all the Grade 12 sections of the French language class for immersion students, I remember looking around my classroom and thinking “where are all the Black people? Where are all the people of colour?” At the time, I was teaching in a downtown area school that had a somewhat racially diverse population, albeit a White² majority. Yet, in the entire Grade 12 immersion cohort (about 75 students), there were only two Black boys in FI. One of these students said to me, “well, I’m the only Black guy in immersion, so I’ll be fine at *x* University³ where I’ll be the only Black guy as well!” We both shared a laugh about this, but as someone who has been the only Black person in the room countless times, I often wonder how he felt about being in immersion and how it went for him in university.

I noticed the lack of Black students first because I identify as Black, but as I looked around more, I noticed that there were very few people of colour in the class at all. One of the Grade 12 classes that I taught was all girls except for three or four boys and almost every girl was White. But, when I looked around in the hallways and during assemblies, the students were not all

² White is capitalized throughout, as is Black when referring to racial categories. This is to distinguish between the colour white and black, and the racial groups; White and Black.

³ Anonymized.

White—there were many different races in the school. How was this racial discrepancy possible? Why was I one of the only people of colour in the room? And, why was no one talking about it?

I have always occupied spaces where I am the minority. I completed half of my public schooling in a rural town and was one of five Black people at my school. During my French undergraduate degree, while there were more people of colour, I was one of the few who was not a Francophone. When it came to starting as a teacher in a racially diverse city, I did not expect to once again be the minority. I (naively) assumed that all schools would be equally diverse simply because I was in a racially diverse city. Perhaps if I had participated in FI, I wouldn't have been so shocked that I was one of the only Black people in the room. But perhaps if I had known, I would not have wanted to be an immersion teacher.

A good friend of mine who is also an FI teacher brought up the lack of racial diversity one day while we were talking about our respective jobs. He noticed this racial discrepancy and commented that immersion was the “White girl program” and that he had five Megan's across his three sections of immersion French language arts, and they all had different spellings and pronunciations (see Kunnas et al., 2023). There was a certain ‘look’ that signalled the immersion student, the Megans, of the White middle-class. I investigated the very question of who the typical FI student was during my master's degree. I examined documents and policies related to immersion programming in Ontario. The findings are available in my thesis: *Inequities in black et blanc: Textual constructions of the French immersion student* (Kunnas, 2019; see also Kunnas, 2023). While my critical examination of French documents and policies revealed a bias toward Eurocentric representations and to some extent supported the inclusion of White students over others in immersion programs, I was still left with many questions about where all the people of

colour were. Further, what about the people of colour who *were* in the program? What about those two Black boys? What were their experiences like?

I had an idea of what Black students' experiences were in immersion because of rumours from students, passing comments in the hallways, or even teachers talking about their days in staff rooms. I've heard students claim teachers are racist, I've heard them recount very racist incidents, and I've heard those teachers complain that students skip their classes, and they cannot figure out why. Throughout many of my different teaching posts at different schools, I have been warned about "problem kids" by fellow teachers. These students were almost always, unsurprisingly, the Black ones. I would be warned by well-meaning teachers who were trying to prepare me for the reality that I would face in the classroom. Nine times out of 10, these warnings were ineffective because the students never posed much of an issue for me. In fact, it often stumped the teachers who warned me when I would report back that we never had any issues, and that student was always in class and behaving "well". I was left wondering what was happening in those classes that I was not in. Why were these students labelled as a "problem" for other teachers? Knowing that racism is real and embedded in our thinking, even (and especially) in those with the best intentions, I hypothesized that these students were victims of racism. I postulated that these well-meaning teachers were in fact excluding and discriminating against their racially minoritized students. I wanted to know more. Were racially minoritized students having racist interactions with their teachers? What were their experiences? If they were negative, as I assumed, why were they *still* in FI after all these years? These are the key questions that provoked my doctoral dissertation study.

French Language Instruction

After my introductory story, you may be wondering, why French? Due to the impact of ongoing colonialism, French language and culture are key to the imagined Canadian identity (Haque, 2012). With the *Official Languages Act* of 1969 declaring Canada an officially English-French bilingual country (to the detriment of all Indigenous and other languages spoken on this land; see: Haque & Patrick, 2015; Ricento, 2013), French language teaching and learning became essential to maintain our bilingual country and identity. Students are taught from a young age that we live in an officially bilingual (not necessarily multilingual) country and that French is an important language to know. Perhaps my desire to learn this colonial language and to continue to teach it even as I embrace and learn more about anticolonialism comes from the nation-building doctrine of official bilingualism. In the face of colonialism and racism, I struggle to answer the question: “Why French?” Teaching and researching colonial languages continue to weigh on me. Alongside fellow additional language teachers and researchers, I am in the midst of completing an (auto)multiethnography exploring the question of colonialism in language research and education. However, this question is not the focus of this dissertation. The focus of this dissertation is the exploration of racially minoritized students’ experiences in FI programs. Thus, herein I begin with an outline of the different French language programs.

Official bilingualism has given rise to a variety of French language programs in Ontario. In every province and territory, all children who are not Francophone⁴ are encouraged or even required (e.g., Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, etc.) to study French as a second official language. Education in Canada is regulated provincially instead of federally, meaning that across the country there are different requirements and different French programs available. Focusing on

⁴ I define Francophone as a person whose first, dominant, or home language is French.

Ontario, there are three Ministry governed French as a second language (FSL) (or French as an additional language—FAL⁵) programs: core French, extended French, and French immersion (FI).

Generally speaking, when people think of additional language learning, they imagine a program like core French where one takes a class to learn a language (and perhaps a culture). Core French is where the vast majority of Ontario students (about $\frac{3}{4}$) complete their required French language education (Ryan & Sinay, 2020). Core French students are required to have 600 hours of French instruction by the end of Grade 8 in addition to one credit in Grade 9 French (Ontario Ministry of Education (OME), 2013b; 2014⁶). Students generally receive instruction from Grades 4-8 during 40-minute periods. In Grade 9, classes are 75 minutes a day during one semester. Despite being the most common way for students to learn and interact with French language and culture, core French programs are not held in high regard by students, parents, or teachers (Sinay et al., 2018).

FI is a Canadian invention where non-Francophones are taught in French for the majority of their day. Many variations of this program exist across the country with different entry years (usually Grade 1 or senior kindergarten) and required hours of instruction in French. In this program, students complete content area or subject courses in French in addition to a French language course. For instance, students will learn History in French (instead of in English) while following the History curriculum. In Ontario, FI students are required to complete 3800 hours of instruction in French by the end of Grade 8. To qualify as an FI program, students must spend at

⁵ While FSL is the official title for these programs, I move away from FSL as an overarching term since it reifies the notion that French must be someone's second language, after English. However, given the rich linguistic diversity of Canadians, French is many people's third, fourth, or even fifth language. FAL instead indicates that the person learning does not have French as a dominant or home language and does not imply English as a first language. I use FAL to speak broadly but refer to FSL when quoting others or citing resources with FSL in the name.

⁶ All references to program requirements are from the OME (2013b, 2014) curricula and for brevity will not be cited more than the first time in this section.

least 50% of their day in French. Students must complete 10 courses at the secondary level in French to successfully graduate from the immersion program and receive a certificate of bilingual studies (offered by some boards).

Extended French is very similar to FI and is often referred to as “immersion lite” by FI teachers. Instead of at least 50% of the day in French, extended French has between 25% - 49% of the day in French. Extended French students must complete 1260 hours of French by the end of Grade 8. Students must complete seven courses at the secondary level in French. Extended French programs generally start in Grade 4 or Grade 7, depending on the school board, so students may already have some knowledge of French when they start the program. Extended French is less common and being phased out in some boards.

While FI is a unique Canadian program situated in our specific history, it is not the only immersion program in the world. Many other programs pre-date the Canadian model of immersion, despite it often being viewed as the place where immersion was invented (Johnson & Swain, 1997). Bilingual/immersion education programs outside of Canada have their own structures (some more similar to Canadian FI than others) with the broad goal of bilingualism. In Europe, immersion is called “content and language integrated learning” (García et al., 2021). In the United States (US), immersion programs are called “dual-language programs” or “two-way immersion” (Palmer, 2010; Valdez et al., 2016). Commonly, the day is split 50-50 between English and the target language (usually Spanish in the US context). US programs developed from grassroots activism by Latinx communities who wanted their children to maintain their home language while simultaneously learning English (Flores et al., 2021). Unfortunately, many of these programs are

now populated by White middle-class Anglophone⁷ students in lieu of racially and linguistically minoritized students for whom such programs were initially designed (Palmer, 2010; Valdez et al., 2016). The gentrification of immersion programs will be expanded upon in the literature review.

French Immersion History

FI developed in Quebec, Canada during *la Révolution tranquille* (the Quiet Revolution) in the 1960s when French became the official language of the province and as a result, more valued (Heller, 1990; Roy, 2020). Before this point in time, English was the language of the economy in Quebec, despite the population being largely Francophone (Bourhis & Sioufi, 2017; Genesee & Gándara, 1999; Ruth, 2014). French was suppressed by the dominating English and the refrain “Speak White!” was thrown at Francophones who refused to speak in English (Makropoulos, 2004). Further, it was hard for Francophones to obtain senior and managerial level jobs which were controlled by Anglophones (Bourhis & Sioufi, 2017; Heller, 1990). The French Quebecois lobbied hard for the preservation and revitalization of the French language because their identity and culture were so entwined with their language (Heller, 1990). They worried that the continued dominating presence of the English language threatened their own culture. To address these concerns, in 1977, Bill 101 required all newcomers to Quebec to attend French language schools, as opposed to English language schools (Ruth, 2014). The Quiet Revolution also brought about many other societal changes, like the distancing from the Catholic Church and francophone representation in the government (Genesee & Gándara, 1999).

While Francophones lobbied in Quebec, the Montréal Anglophones were worried. Middle-class parents did not want their children to be left out of the Quebecois job market when French

⁷ Those whose first, dominant, or home language is English.

became the official language in Quebec (Heller, 1990). Fearing the loss of their social standing, the middle-class leveraged their economic power and social networks in a search for a better way for their children to learn French (Heller, 1990). This led to the St. Lambert experiment in the 1960s. This experiment was the first iteration of FI; students learned curricular content in French instead of only doing rote language learning—the preferred form of instruction up to that point (Johnson & Swain, 1997). The experiment was hailed as a success and anglophone families were able to maintain their economic capital by becoming bilingual in both of Canada’s official languages. Anglophone bilingualism was to the detriment of Francophones who are less likely to be hired to bilingual positions than Anglophones (Heller, 2008); this outcome contributed to linguistic tensions between the two ruling groups of Canada (Olson, 1983; Roy, 2020).

Given its linguistic and capitalist successes, FI became popular across the country. As more parents heard of it, they enrolled their child(ren) in the hopes of giving them a competitive edge in the job market (Makropoulos, 2009). FI programs are now available across Canada in different iterations. Most programs in the province of Ontario are not able to accommodate the growing demand for FI (Brown & Bennett, 2017; Durham District School Board, 2021; Waterloo Region District School Board, 2018) and the lack of qualified French teachers makes filling this demand difficult (Arnott et al., 2019).

Benefits of French Immersion

Those with a high level of linguistic competence in English and French are said to have many benefits, such as: increased level of focus and general cognitive ability (OME, 2013a), metalinguistic awareness, divergent thinking, communicative sensitivity (García, 2009), higher engagement in school (Sinay, 2010), higher test scores (Yoon & Gulson, 2010), better job opportunities, higher salaries, and upward mobility (Makropoulos, 2010). While these benefits are

attractive, it should be noted that simple attendance in FI does not guarantee high linguistic competence and as Cummins' threshold hypothesis states (discussed in Lazaruk, 2007), high linguistic competence is necessary to reap these benefits. Participating in immersion also gives students the ability to speak both official languages of Canada, which serves as significant cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) for them later on in life (Yoon & Gulson, 2010). Many parents cite the benefits above as reasons for enrolling their children in FI (Sinay et al., 2018). It is worth considering whether or not social selection (Roy, 2020) plays into these benefits because many students who do not display these positive characteristics are counseled out of the program; for instance, if a student is not achieving high grades, they may be encouraged to drop out of FI (Makropoulos, 1998; Roy, 2020). Nonetheless, FI is hailed as the most effective way to learn French (Genesee, 2007) and remains very popular throughout the country (Canadian Parents for French Ontario, 2022).

Apart from students themselves, FI benefits parents, teachers, and society at large. Parents are able to give their children more educational opportunities and job opportunities (potential economic benefits). They are also able to brag about their child being in a demanding program (social clout). Further, parents like when their children learn other languages because the child can serve as an interpreter/translator when the family travels abroad (Adatia, 2023). FI students also saw French as useful for future travel opportunities (Vanderveen, 2015). The idealistic goals of FI are beneficial to society at large, as one of its goals is to decrease tensions between the English and the French and make a more united nation (Olson & Burns, 1983). However, to what extent these goals have been achieved is debatable.

Issues in French Immersion

FI has many challenges, despite its wide popularity. One of the main issues is the ongoing FAL teacher recruitment and retention crisis (Arnott et al., 2019; Masson et al., 2021). There are, simply put, not enough (qualified) French teachers and those who teach tend to leave the profession or stop teaching French after a few years (Durham District School Board, 2021; Upper Grand District School Board, 2017; Waterloo Region District School Board, 2018). Teacher retention mirrors student retention in FI programs, which tends to be low, particularly between Grades 8 and 9 (Durham District School Board, 2021; Ryan & Sinay, 2020; Upper Grand District School Board, 2017; Waterloo Region District School Board, 2018). Additionally, there are often not enough resources for teachers and students to effectively teach or learn the language (Sinay et al., 2018). Students and teachers alike complain about low French language levels of immersion students (Roy, 2020) and students often have low linguistic confidence when they graduate from the program (Durham District School Board, 2021; Sinay et al., 2018). Students leave FI programs in part because they feel unwelcomed by/within French communities (Roy, 2020).

Rooted in a history of preserving (or raising) one's social standing, it is unsurprising that, for decades, FI has been critiqued as an exclusionary program for elite students (Olson & Burns, 1983; Ryan & Sinay, 2020), in other words, White, middle-class, anglophone students with high academic achievement. Conversely, students with learning exceptionalities, racially minoritized students, lower-income students, culturally and linguistically diverse students, and boys are often excluded from FI. Uneven social demographics are obvious in the classroom to students and teachers alike who have noticed and commented as much to me. In recent years, there have even been news articles pointing out this elitism (CBC News, 2019; Hutchins, 2015; Hyslop 2021; Maharaj, 2017).

Wise (2011) explains how exclusion is by design, seeing as various stakeholders want FI to remain an elite program. Politicians and administrators want FI to remain elite because of its international status which raises their own status. Parents want their children to attend an elite program to receive the reported cognitive (OME, 2013a), academic (Yoon & Gulson, 2010), and socioeconomic benefits (Makropoulos, 2010) of FI. Lastly, teachers want to have only ‘good’ students in their classes, here meaning high achievers with few behavioural issues—which in and of itself is a racialized and gendered construction. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) problematize the notion of “good students” showing how when we say “good” what is often left unsaid is “White” (p. 29). This is all to say that FI has many issues from staffing to language outcomes, elitism, and exclusion. Immersion education remains on a pedestal, albeit a precariously teetering one.

Purpose and Research Questions

I aim to explore the experiences of racially minoritized students in FI in Ontario and to identify needs within the program for these students. This exploratory study is essential to see the challenges and successes of racialized experiences in FI. Without knowing how racially minoritized students experience immersion, it is impossible to know how to better support them and improve the program. It is also impossible to know how race intersects with other identities and oppressions in immersion without explicitly investigating race. Given the lack of research on this topic, this study serves as an empirical base for future research, like how to increase racially minoritized enrolment and retention.

Racially minoritized student voice is uncommon in the field of FI (Masson et al., 2021). As a result, this study employed qualitative methods to prioritize the voice of students. The first stage of this study employed arts-based research to inductively develop common themes in racially minoritized students’ experiences and suggestions to improve FI. A follow-up semi-structured

qualitative interview expanded upon findings from the first stage of the study. The second stage of the study invited FI stakeholders from across the province of Ontario and beyond to respond to the themes and needs developed in Stage 1. The final stage brought back participants from Stage 1 to reflect on and add to the analysis and findings. The research questions for this study are:

1. What are the experiences of racially minoritized students in FI programs in Ontario?
 - a. What common themes and needs emerge from these experiences?
 - b. What suggestions for improvement do racially minoritized students have for FI programs?
2. How do FI stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, administrators) react to these experiences and suggestions?

This study is framed by critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 2011; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), critical antiracist theory (Dei, 2013), raciolinguistics (Rosa & Flores, 2017), and critical language and race theory (Crump, 2014). I expand on these frameworks and key concepts like race, racism, and culture in Chapters 2 and 3. With this framework, race is the key entry point into the research. Very little research addresses or even considers racial identity in FI programs. Equity and inclusion research in the FI field investigates students with learning exceptionalities, middle-class students, and English language learners and immigrants⁸ (who may be racially minoritized). For this reason, I wanted to better understand racially minoritized students' experiences in FI classes. Given the lack of research into race in FI, there was a need to investigate how/if race impacts students' experiences of FI in Ontario. What are their needs? How can we

⁸ These constructs will be defined in the literature review.

make immersion programs better and more racially diverse? This study seeks to answer these questions.

Context of the Study

This study took place in Ontario, Canada, from July 2022 – June 2023. The global COVID-19 pandemic was in its third and fourth year during this study, which impacted how the research was conceptualized and conducted. Virtual methods and video conferencing software were well integrated into society by this point in the pandemic and many students were used to learning and engaging online. Because of COVID-19, many societal ills and injustices became visible to privileged people around the world. We saw issues of housing insecurity, job insecurity, racism (especially anti-Asian and anti-Black racism), classism, and a growing apathy toward a government that refused to protect the most vulnerable during unprecedented times. Many people lost family members to the virus and lost their jobs and livelihoods because of poor COVID-19 management. In February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, further exacerbating the economic depression and contributing to an overall loss of faith in humanity.

During the early years of the pandemic, particularly the summer of 2020, the world saw a global reckoning around racial justice, particularly through the Black Lives Matter movement and through Indigenous protestors. This was a time when the murder of George Floyd by a police officer sparked ongoing racial justice protests in the US and beyond. Indigenous rights and decolonization efforts reached an all time high in Canada through protests over oil pipelines in Wet'suwet'en territory in British Columbia and ongoing conflicts with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police force. The discovery of thousands of unmarked graves at former residential “schools” in Canada sparked outrage, sorrow, and calls for justice. In addition, the social climate

was more aware of issues of gender and sexism than ever due to the #MeToo movement and increased awareness of sexual violence on behalf of big-name perpetrators in Hollywood.

At the point of writing this dissertation, the war in Ukraine continues to rage on, Israel is at war with Palestine, political divides continue to deepen, inflation and cost of living is on the rise, and antiracist efforts remain contentious in the US and more increasingly in Canada (Bedecarré, 2022; Kachanoff et al., 2022). To say that this work was completed during turbulent times would be an understatement. Participants' perspectives were coloured by a chaotic, violent world that was becoming more aware of the various societal issues that had been previously ignored.

Dissertation Outline

In this first chapter, I outlined my personal history and connection with FAL, FI, teaching, and interest in antiracism. I narrated how the desire to conduct this study emerged from my own lived experiences and racial identity. I then presented the history of FI education in Canada, considering the unique socio-political moment where it arose and how the ethos of its time remains today. Briefly, I considered the turn toward social issues in the field of additional language research and where my study fits into this field. I highlighted the need and purpose of this study and presented the research questions. I briefly summarized the methods I employed while carrying out this research.

In Chapter 2, I conduct a review of the literature relating to FAL and racial identity. This chapter is broken into four main sections: French, Whiteness, and colonialism; erasing race in the literature; research related to race; and (inter)cultural teaching and learning. Section 1 starts by discussing the historical and continued connections between the French language and colonialism, considering how the language is inextricably tied to colonialism, France, and Whiteness. I bring

Canadian bilingualism into this colonial and racialized construction. I then question how and if it is possible to teach a colonial language without continuing the colonial project. I also highlight the ways that being racially minoritized and teaching a colonial language is a unique intersection of oppression and privilege that contributes to feelings of illegitimacy. Next, while there has been a turn toward social issues in additional language research, race has been ignored or erased in many studies. For this reason, I consider the documented exclusions in FI programs: students with learning exceptionalities, culturally and linguistically diverse learners (English language learners), lower-income students, boys, and diverse sexualities. Section 3 summarizes the research that has been conducted about race and anticolonialism in relation to French as a first language, FAL, and FI. This section highlights how little research has been done until the past 5 years or so in relation to race, racism, or antiracism. I include research related to anticolonialism because of its connection to and intersection with antiracism, especially when it comes to inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum. Here, I include a short summary of the different approaches and types of research in FI, pointing to the uniqueness of my study. I conclude by considering the importance of (inter)cultural teaching and learning in FAL classes. Culture becomes an important question when it comes to race, as culture is often used as a proxy for race (i.e., multiculturalism). In this section, I outline critical considerations to teaching culture as well as culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies.

Chapter 3 outlines the philosophical and theoretical frameworks of this study, as well as defines the key concepts that I use. The philosophical framework of this study is transformative philosophy (Mertens, 2007) which aims to use research to transform society for the better. The theories framing this study are based in critical race theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995): critical antiracist theory (Dei, 2013), critical language and race theory (LangCrit; Crump, 2014) and

raciolinguistics (Rosa & Flores, 2017). These theories highlight the importance of race in understanding society, how race and language are intertwined, and that racism is prevalent at all levels of our society. I compare LangCrit and raciolinguistics to highlight the similarities in these theories that grew out of different contexts. Instead of choosing one theory, I employ a both-and approach. I briefly consider the connection between the Negritude movement and critical race theory. I finish the chapter positioning myself in my research.

Chapter 4 summarizes the research design of the study. It first outlines the methodologies of arts-based research (including Playbuilding; Norris, 2016), youth participatory action research, and online focus groups. Next, I provide a detailed description of each stage of the study: Stage 1) Playbuilding; Stage 2) online questionnaire; Stage 3) member-checking. For each stage, I describe the recruitment methods, the participants, and the data collection and analysis (thematic analysis, content analysis, and critical discourse analysis). For Stage 1, I explain in-depth how I modified the arts-based method of Playbuilding to be adapted to a more individual, online experience as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The findings are presented in the next three chapters. In Chapter 5, I present the profiles of the three participants from Stage 1 of the study. These profiles include demographic information like their age, race, gender, religion, etc. I also present each participants' overall perspectives on FI as a program, their experiences related to race and racism, and their suggestions for changing the program. Their own perception of their identities as French speakers are included. These profiles show the major differences between the participants to allow for a deeper understanding of the thematic findings in the following chapters. I include the written transcription of participants' monologues and an in-depth analysis of each monologue. Lastly, participant profiles and thematic findings are compared to one another.

Chapter 6 discusses the thematic findings related to diverse racial and cultural representations in students' learning experiences. The chapter first considers participant learning about the cultural groups outlined in the OME (2013b, 2014) curricula. Two of three participants were not aware they were supposed to be learning about culture and they reported learning almost nothing. One participant said he studied all required cultural groups but was unable to articulate any details. Instead of learning about culture, there was a strong grammar focus. Unlike Stage 1 participants, Stage 2 participants were divided in terms of the importance of cultural learning over linguistic development. Next, the chapter considers what diverse cultural and racial groups were present in participants' learning. Findings reveal that there was an emphasis on White people and White history. The few and far between examples of diverse cultural and racial identities are considered next. Participants studied more about Indigenous peoples than other racially minoritized groups. Although only one participant felt that she learned a lot about Indigenous peoples, and what she did learn was lacking depth. Next, I present the racialized construction of the stereotypical French speaker, according to the Stage 1 participants: a White man. Finally, I consider the racial representation in school demographics of participants from both stages.

Chapter 7 deals with two major thematic findings: the presence of racism and the pressing need to improve French proficiency. Starting first with racism, the chapter summarizes the racist experiences that participants were subjected to or heard about. Findings are grouped by demographic of student or teacher/administrator. Briefly, I outline how Stage 1 participants dealt with racist peers and teachers through either confrontation or ignorance. The lack of antiracist efforts is presented, with a few examples of teachers who were attempting to integrate antiracism into their FI classes. I point out that not all participants experienced racism, and some even had teachers who stopped racism in its tracks. Next, the shocking lack of repercussions for racism are

summarized. Despite the clear presence of racism in all Stage 1 participants' schools, their main concern when it came to FI was their own perceived low French level. Stage 1 participants placed the blame for their low French levels firmly on their teachers. I demonstrate how French confidence and racialized ideologies impacted participants' linguistic identities. Teacher proficiency and francophone hierarchies are considered.

Chapter 8 discusses the findings from Chapters 5 to 7. First, I discuss the findings related to cultural and racial representation. Here, I consider the role of diverse representations in the construction of the French speaker, the difficulty of defining and teaching about culture, the ongoing debate amongst stakeholders about the importance of culture in language learning, and the importance of culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies. Next, the findings related to racism are discussed as follows: the casual acceptance of racism; racism as a Black and White issue; the impact of racial demographics on overt versus covert racism; racist perpetrators and power dynamics; jokes as a means to avoid consequences; and the need for antiracist education and interventions. After racism, I discuss French proficiency, who is to "blame", and the role of native speaker and raciolinguistic ideologies on identity formation.

In the final chapter, I summarize the study, its findings, and the discussion. The limitations of the study are discussed: small sample size (both stages); and participants from southern Ontario only and only two races represented (Stage 1). Despite these limitations, the study points to many different avenues for future research within the realm of race, racism, and culture in FI. I present some research questions to be investigated in the field in a more systematic way, informed by my findings. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the need for a paradigm shift within FI (and beyond) that aims to critically transform education through an antiracist framework.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Race has been an overlooked subject in FAL research until recent years. During the period when I completed this dissertation study, key research about race in FAL was published or in progress; to name a few: Adata (2023), Bouamer and Bourdeau (2022a), Kunnas et al. (2023), Kunnas et al. (2024), Masson (2021), Masson and Cote (2024), Masson et al. (2022), Meyer and Hoft-March (2022), Wernicke et al. (in press). They add to this review, but still reveal how much work needs to be done in the FAL field.

This literature review is broken into four sections: 1) French, Whiteness, and colonialism; 2) making race visible: documented exclusions in FI; 3) research related to race; and 4) (inter)cultural teaching and learning. I first demonstrate how the French language (internationally and nationally) is still strongly associated with Whiteness and colonialism and that these ideologies contribute to exclusion and feelings of illegitimacy. From here, I argue that equity and inclusion research in the field of FI has intentionally invisibilized race. I endeavour to make race explicit through its intersections with other systemic and structural exclusions and oppressions, such as students with learning exceptionalities, lower-class families, English language learners and immigrants. Next, I look directly at where race has been reported in French first language and FAL contexts. Demographic statistics are outlined here. The review concludes with an overview about intercultural and culturally sustaining pedagogies within additional languages and more specifically within FAL. Here, I consider how culture is often a couched term for race and could be one way in which racial representation is realized within FI programs.

French, Whiteness, and Colonialism

French as a Colonial Language

The French language is widely spoken across the globe due to colonialism and colonization. Historically, the French viewed their language and culture as superior to others and went on a “civilizing mission” to “improve” the rest of the world through establishing colonies and forcing others to learn and speak French (Kasuya, 2001; Spiegelman, 2022b; Vigouroux, 2017; Wakerley, 1994). The French believed in the myth of “*la clarté française*” (French clarity) that claimed that French was “the language of universal human reason and intrinsically superior to any other language; therefore, French has the power to civilize people who speak it” (Kasuya, 2001, p. 242). Colonization was justified as an ethical and moral act:

France’s imperial expansionism was articulated as a political and moral act whereby ‘backward’ African and Indochinese populations would be saved from barbarianism and primitivism. Colonization was therefore an instrument for spreading the ‘enlightenments’ of French civilization, a ‘duty’ to humanity”. (Vigouroux, 2017, p. 8)

In France’s view, “not only is colonization warranted, but it is constructed as a benevolent and noble endeavor” (Spiegelman, 2022b, p. 58). In France in 2005, *la loi Marekecha* (the Marrakech law) was passed (although overturned a year later) that explicitly called for teaching about the “positive aspects” of French colonization in public schools (Bedecarré, 2022, p. 33). Given the violent realities of colonization, “moral” justification and colonization as benevolence are an insult to those who experienced atrocities at the hands of the so-called “civilized.” It would be naïve, however, to say the only reason the French colonized was to “civilize” others and not to steal resources, make themselves rich, and grow their influence on the global stage (Vigouroux, 2017). Bedecarré (2023) demonstrates how teaching French to Africans was a political tool of oppression

to turn Africans from “savages” into “*hommes utiles* [useful men]” who “would loyally submit to and serve” the colonizers (p. 45).

Colonial languages remain colonial despite the “end” of the colonial period⁹ (Detwyler, 2022; Kasuya, 2001; Madibbo, 2021). Though French is not viewed as a *lingua franca* like English (Suzina, 2021), the French language is still globally valued and has a strong influence over diplomatic relations (García, 2009). Furthermore, the continued hierarchization of colonial languages above other (Indigenous) languages (Haque & Patrick, 2015; Ricento, 2013) easily proves the valorization of French. Some might say that while colonization was bad, it happened, and colonial languages now allow us to interact with those who we would not have been able to before (Corradi, 2017; Kotzé, 2015). However, simply asserting that colonial languages are widely used makes invisible their past and present domination in the world (Kasuya, 2001). Kasuya aptly points out that while the colonial period may be over, the French coincidentally instituted *la francophonie* at the end of this period to maintain their position of power over their former colonies:

the end of French colonialism coincides with the beginning of the Francophonie. In fact, we could suspect rightly that the Francophonie is unconsciously imbued with colonial motives – not, of course, in the military and political sense, but in the cultural and linguistic sense – and that France tries to compensate for its lost international status with the “*défense et illustration*” of the Francophonie. (p. 248)

Bedecarré (2022) echoes this claim, stating that the “Francophonie is an idea that was invented at a specific moment (colonization)” (p. 41) and through *la francophonie*, neo-colonialism continues

⁹ It is argued that the colonial period has not ended, but has simply shifted (Heller & McElhinney, 2020). Most former colonies still have strong ties to their metropole, strong trading relations (that benefit the metropole), speak the colonizer’s language, continue to displace and steal Indigenous land (especially in the case of Canada), and some countries are still actively colonizing others: Canada, Australia, the United States, etc.

(Biers, 2022). García (2009) extends their argument beyond the French language: “decolonization ... led to rejection of colonial languages [and] was quickly followed by *globalization* which renewed the need for colonial languages, with English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese being the most popular” (p. 265, emphasis added).

French colonialism is evident in FAL classes across the globe (Bouamer & Bourdeau, 2022b). Bedecarré (2022) argues that maps and statistics in popular French textbooks in the US emphasize France’s colonial empire while de-emphasizing the reality of colonization. *La francophonie* is presented as something “natural” or even “ahistorical”:

The use of French is for the most part presented in an unproblematized fashion with little to no mention of the violent history of the French empire that brought the French language to North and South America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania. (Bedecarré, 2022, p. 37)

Spiegelman’s (2022b) study of French textbooks concludes that “each textbook overwhelmingly paint[s] colonization as neutral, passive, and justified” (p. 57). In fact, textbooks present the French language as a way to enter the global market or to travel (Biers, 2022), which is a form of neo-colonialism. Adatia (2023) discusses how, as an FI student of colour, she learned of “colonialisms only in a positive light” (p. 13). In my master’s thesis (Kunnas, 2019) I demonstrate how the FAL curriculum present the colonial encounter as neutral or positive for all involved. Through the French language, students become colonial consumers of food, culture, people, and places (Masson et al., 2023; Spiegelman, 2022b).

The standardization of French in teaching and learning is another example of its connection to colonialism. The French were the first to impose a standard language on its speakers, further cementing an imperialist ideal for the language (Kasuya, 2001; Vigouroux, 2017). Linguistic purism (Reaves, 2022) is entrenched in the French language, particularly when considering

L'Académie française, a France-based institution that governs how to use the language “correctly.” Fronsman-Cecil (2022) critiques the academy as follows: “L’Académie Française, a hegemonic institution, is an instrument that delegitimizes Francophone and regional dialects, slang, creoles, patois, and loanwords from immigrant communities, obfuscating white, colonial, bourgeois values and language behind a smokescreen of ‘neutral correctness’” (p. 119). The academy acts as colonial gatekeepers to the language, holding all French speakers to an imperialist standard.

It must be noted that colonial languages replaced Indigenous languages, often through political or physical force, as was the case in residential “schools” in Canada (Fontaine, 2017; Masson & Cote, 2024; Vowel, 2016). Fontaine (2017) calls this process linguicide: the French destroyed Indigenous languages and changed how Indigenous languages are viewed both by settlers and Indigenous peoples. As Kasuya (2001) posits, “Language shift never happens without modifying speakers’ attitudes toward their own language and the language of the Other” (p. 243). Not only did French replace Indigenous languages on this land, but it also made many Indigenous peoples ashamed of their own languages (Vowel, 2016). This is all to say that, even (or rather, especially) today, French is a language imbued with colonial ideologies.

French as a White Language

Racializing ideologies operate alongside colonial ideologies within languages (Rosa, 2019; Rosa & Flores, 2017; von Esch et al., 2020). Languages¹⁰ are associated with particular racial identities based on history, politics, and geography (Rosa, 2019), or, in other words, languages are

¹⁰ Throughout this dissertation, when I refer to “language”, I am referring to the idea of a normalized or standardized language, most often found in textbooks or taught in language courses; that is, the language as defined by those who hold power, in this case, France. In this way, I am only speaking of one variety of French language, not the multiple varieties and dialects that exist. For instance, the standardized French language is associated with Whiteness, but Patois is associated with Blackness.

racialized (Sterzuk, 2015)¹¹. Raciolinguistic ideologies surrounding a language determine who is and is not seen and heard as a legitimate or authentic language user (Rosa & Flores, 2017). These ideologies affect who can claim a linguistic identity and who is legitimated as a language user.

On a global scale (Vigouroux, 2017; Wernicke et al., in press) and in Canada (Madibbo, 2021; Masson 2021; Masson et al., 2022), the French language is racialized as White. The Whiteness of French is only logical given that France was historically very White (although it should be said that no place is monoracial, especially a European metropole). Bouamer and Bourdeau (2022b) contend that “the French foreign language curriculum [in the US] continues to present a very narrow and specific model of a French speaker—the white, monolingual native speaker with a Parisian accent” (p. 9; see also Benaglia & Smith, 2022). However, today, most French speakers are from countries and regions populated by Black, Brown, and Asian people (Quéméner & Wolff, 2019). This reality/diversity means that most French speakers around the world are in fact people of colour. Moreover, half of French speakers in Canada outside of Quebec are racially minoritized (Houle et al., 2014). These racially minoritized French speakers are associated with *la francophonie*, not with French identity, which remains White. Racially minoritized people who identify as members of *la francophonie* exist in opposition to the White French identity (Bouamer & Bourdeau, 2022b; Spiegelman, 2022b). Only the White listening and speaking subject (Rosa & Flores, 2017), who is rooted in a colonial worldview, is legitimated, no matter the language that is being spoken (Flores & Rosa, 2015). This concept is premised on Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) idea of the *locuteur légitime* (legitimate speaker): one’s discourse is only accepted by someone viewed as “legitimate” by the majority or those in power. While the

¹¹ While my focus is race, it is important to recognize that languages are not just racialized, but gendered, associated with certain socioeconomic groups, geographies, religions, and so on. All of these elements make up the stereotype of a language (or a variety of a language).

legitimate speaker may change on a case-by-case basis and is context specific, globally, the legitimate French speaker is White. Looking at African French speakers, for instance, they have been historically—and continue to be—viewed as “bad” at French, or as illegitimate French speakers (Madibbo, 2021; Vigouroux, 2017). Following this line of thought, Rosa and Flores (2017) show how Whiteness in the US is always privileged: when a White person is learning Spanish, they are viewed as more legitimate and praised for their language learning, whereas when a Latinx person is learning Spanish, they are criticized for not learning/focusing on English. Extending this thinking to a French situation, when a White person is speaking French (even as an additional language), they will be viewed as more legitimate than a racially minoritized person whose first language is French. This could also be attributed to the fact that White people are more readily given linguistic capital than others, especially in former British colonies (Yoon & Gulson, 2010).

Canadian French and Whiteness

The Canadian identity is also associated with Whiteness (Sterzuk, 2015): “The imaginary of Canada as an English-speaking white-settler nation persists, despite dramatic changes resulting from increased immigration from non-European countries over the past 50 years” (Ricento, 2013, p. 480). Kubota and colleagues (2021) extend this White Canadian identity construction to include French. French being associated with Whiteness is relatively new in Canadian history. Previously, the French and English were considered different “races” based on their different languages, cultures, and religions (Haque, 2012; Madibbo, 2021). Quebeckers were often told to “Speak White” by their anglophone peers (Makropoulos, 2004), or in other words, speak English. Over time, the French became White because of their lobbying for official bilingualism and the increased diversity of immigrants (who they distinguished themselves from). The passing of the

Official Languages Act in 1969 declared the French and the English to both be “founding races”¹² in Canada (Haque, 2012), which brought the French into the imagined White Canadian identity. Official bilingualism then, is a racializing discourse (Wernicke et al., in press). The *Official Languages Act* created a linguistic hierarchy with English and French (in that order) on top (Haque & Patrick, 2015; Ricento, 2013). This Act further ignores the plurilingual history and reality of the land because of the Indigenous peoples who still inhabit these lands today.

As the Canadian population became more racially diverse, the government moved to “Bilingualism within a Multicultural Framework” in 1971 (Haque, 2012). This reinforced the fact that the country, while “culturally” (i.e., racially) diverse, still operated within the domain of Whiteness: the English and the French (Haque, 2012). As Haque (2012) argues,

The shift from overt racial distinctions between founding and other ethnic groups onto the terrain of language and culture meant that racial exclusions could be disavowed even as they were smuggled back in through the contradictory operation of language and culture. This strategy emerged just as obvious, biologically based racial exclusions became increasingly politically and socially disreputable; therefore, particular cultural forms – especially language – became essential ascriptions for the constitution and exclusion of various groups along racialized lines. (p. 6)

The official languages commissioner of the time even admitted that the multicultural framework was conceptualized to “calm down the insecurities of the ethnic groups” who felt excluded from

¹² Without even considering the total erasure of the Indigenous peoples on this land by using language like “founding”, both Indigenous and other racially minoritized people were present in Canada both before and during its “founding”. Black people have been in Canada for centuries: Mathieu da Costa, a Black man was one of the first French “explorers” of the land and (formerly) enslaved peoples have lived here for centuries (Madibbo, 2021). Chinese and Asian immigrants were integral to the unification of the country through building the Canadian-Pacific railway (Madibbo, 2021). Madibbo (2021) highlights the Métis presence during the founding of the country. Lastly, racist exclusionary policies limited non-White immigrants from coming to Canada for decades, and despite this, they still were integral to the founding of the country.

official bilingualism (Kim et al., 2020, p. 329). Sterzuk (2015) argues, “As a discourse, ‘multiculturalism’ both unites and reassures us. This shared belief functions as a stabilising factor in a heterogeneous settler society like Canada” (p. 56). Thus, multiculturalism became a way to ignore racial realities and to instead espouse liberal ideals of equality and inclusion without addressing inequalities.

The White French were included into the national identity at the exclusion of all other Francophones and other language groups (Haque, 2012; Ricento, 2013). As Madibbo (2020) explains, White Francophones used “exclusionary nationalism” to distance themselves from Black Francophones for their own gains. Madibbo (2021) contends that the multicultural framework only works/worked for White European immigrants (and not their darker peers) who were able to assimilate into Canadian society. The French struggle for linguistic rights at the expense of racially minoritized people mirrors feminist movements where White women lobbied for and gained rights at the exclusion and expense of women of colour (Hill Collins, 2002). While French speakers in Quebec are becoming increasingly racially diverse (Institut de la statistique du Quebec, 2023; Madibbo, 2021), the French-Canadian imaginary remains White.

In 2019, the *Indigenous Languages Act* in Canada was adopted. While this appears to counter English-French linguistic domination in Canada, the Act unfortunately falls short. As Eve Haque discussed in her conference presentation (2023), the *Indigenous Languages Act* is unlike the *Official Languages Act* because the latter guarantees equal status to English and French in the country. Even the full name of the *Indigenous Languages Act* proves its unequal status; it is called *An Act respecting Indigenous languages* (2019, emphasis added). The Act does not guarantee equal status, equal rights, nor equal funding. Haque (2023) contends that this Act is more lip service to appease a liberal voting base than anything else. The Act falls within what scholars

Midzain-Gobin and Smith (2020) call “reconciliation lite” which “makes settlers feel good about themselves while maintaining life as usual” (p. 480). In other words, English-French domination continues.

Teaching, Learning, and Researching Colonial Languages

As demonstrated above, colonial languages are still wrapped up in colonial ideologies (Kasuya, 2001; Vigouroux, 2017), they are heavily racialized (Rosa & Flores, 2017; von Esch et al., 2020), and they are often used to oppress other languages (Fontaine, 2017; Kasuya, 2001). Indeed, as Carroll (2023) contends, “Language is always interconnected with relations of power” (p. 4). The simple fact of teaching a colonial language, at least somewhat—even inadvertently—continues the colonial project through linguistic and ideological oppression, even if the language is taught from an anticolonial, anti-oppressive, or antiracist lens. Because official bilingualism maintains raciolinguistic hierarchies (Haque, 2012; Haque & Patrick, 2015; Ricento, 2013), I argue that any form of teaching a colonial language upholds linguistic supremacy. While we continue to teach and learn colonial languages, Indigenous languages continue to be de-valued and underfunded, especially in comparison to French and English (Haque, 2023). In fact, official bilingualism was a way to push away the need to address Indigenous language use and revitalization (Haque, 2012; Ricento, 2013). Conversely, Madibbo (2021) believes that language can be used to counter ongoing colonialism:

Colonial languages are oppressive, but people’s agency can turn them into decolonial instruments of defiance ... English is not the property of white/Western people; it is the language of all its speakers. Conversely, French is not only the language of white French Canadians, it is the language of La Francophonie, and thus of all French speakers worldwide. (p. 25)

In other words, how one teaches and uses a colonial language, can transform the language from colonial oppression into a “decolonial instrument of defiance” (Madibbo, 2021, p. 25). In an op-ed, Coraddi (2017) agrees that *how* languages are used is paramount, not just their colonial associations. We need to find a way to teach, learn, and use colonial languages *for defiance*, for recreating a better world. I am left questioning: is it ever possible to learn or teach a colonial language without furthering the colonial project?

On another note, I posit that being racially minoritized teacher of a colonial language creates a unique and perhaps uncomfortable position between power and oppression. Colonial languages are steeped in colonial ideologies of oppression, which emphasize the exclusion and delegitimization of racially minoritized people (Kasuya, 2001; Madibbo, 2021; Vigouroux, 2017). As von Esch et al. (2020) articulate:

The racialized nature of teacher identities is particularly noticeable in the teaching of languages whose history of transmission has followed clear racial patterns, such as under conditions of colonialism. However, the mere act of teaching any language carries within it racial ideologies, such as ideologies shaping meanings of teacher/learner and native speaker/non-native speaker. (p. 404)

Benaglia and Smith (2022) discuss the fact that learners who do not fit into the White monolingual native-speaker (Parisian) norm experience insecurity in the language. Returning to the question of the legitimate speaker (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Rosa & Flores, 2017), the racially minoritized French teacher may never be legitimized, despite being the “expert in the room” (Masson & Cote, 2024). As Rosa and Flores (2017) demonstrate, being racially minoritized means that we cannot be (or are rarely) seen as legitimate speakers or teachers of the language. Elsewhere (Kunnas et al., 2023), I have outlined the ways in which being a person of colour in a White program (as a

student, teacher, and researcher) contributed to feelings of illegitimacy and isolation. Adata (2023) further reflects on the cultural isolation and lack of representation that she felt as an FI student. Kubota et al. (2021) discuss how an East Asian French teacher was delegitimized as a French teacher while his White-passing colleagues were not questioned on their French speaking abilities. Even standing in front of a Quebecois and France flag wearing a name tag that read “Monsieur” during a parent information night, “his bodily appearance dissociated him from the normative image of a French teacher” (Kubota et al., 2021, p. 11). Racially minoritized teacher candidates from Masson and Cote’s (2024) study encountered issues of identity and belonging as both French teachers and French speakers. Given that “racism manifests in language education” (Anya, 2021, p. 1055), racially minoritized French teachers may not only be illegitimated, but even worse, victims of racism within their field. One example of this racism is presented in Masson et al.’s (2022) article where a racially minoritized teacher candidate speaks about the racism they experience in their FAL teacher preparation program.

Conversely, being a speaker of a colonial language grants linguistic capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) on the local, national, and global scale; it allows you to access places and spaces of privilege and power. Moreover, being a teacher places one in a position of authority, in this case over the language itself. In Stern’s (2022) words, teachers become the “police” of the language, deciding what is and is not correct. Schools are sites where linguistic insecurity/illegitimacy is often developed due to “promoting an inaccessible and mythical model of French” (Bengalia & Smith, 2022, pp. 20-21) which harkens back to imperialistic linguistic purism. Conceptions of “standard French” are based in the belief that “only native speakers can be expert language teachers” and speakers (Wernicke, 2017, p. 209). Education plays an active role in perpetuating raciolinguistic and colonial ideologies. Adopting and/or imposing colonial/raciolinguistic

ideologies could create tension or uneasiness within racially minoritized teachers given their own relationship to colonialism—as I discuss (Kunnas et al., 2023). Teachers might even be unaware that they are (and to what extent they are) perpetuating colonial ideologies in their own practice (Masson et al., 2022). Despite a proximity to power, one’s racial identity can still preclude legitimization as a colonial language teacher, learner, or researcher. Hence, the tricky ground on which racially minoritized teachers, learners, and researchers of colonial languages may find themselves.

Making Race Visible: Documented Exclusions in French Immersion

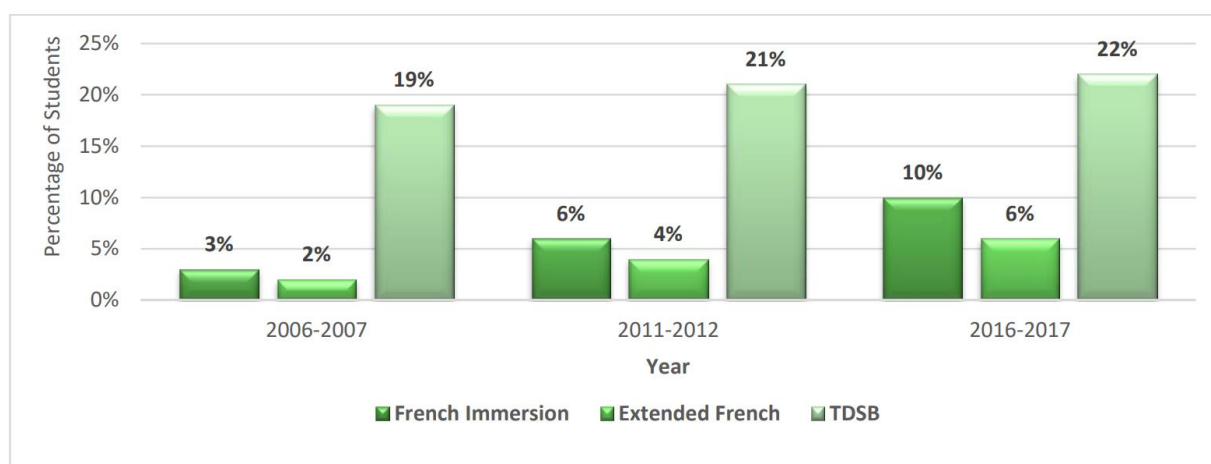
In this section of the literature review, I outline where exclusions have been documented within FI programs. Some exclusions are overtly or covertly related to racial identities while others are not. For those that are linked to racial identity, I highlight how research into FAL and FI has intentionally ignored or erased race for decades. The ignoring of race is also a denial of race (Dei, 1999), commonly done by those in positions of privilege (Madibbo, 2021). As Kubota and Lin (2009) propose, “The lack of discussion [of race] could stem from the stigma attached to the term race. It evokes racism which is often interpreted as overt forms of bigotry, rather than structural or institutional inequalities, and this undertone tends to prevent open dialogs” (p. 1). I contend that racial identity provides an important intersection into understanding exclusion in FI. The literature review draws heavily from Toronto District School Board (TDSB) statistics because of the readily available information from the TDSB and the presence of race-based data.

Learning Exceptionalities

FI is considered an elite program and is even referred to as a private education within public schools (Cepin, 2012). Unfortunately, students with learning exceptionalities¹³ are thought to be unintelligent or under-achievers (Wise, 2011) and therefore, FI is simply too hard for them (Arnett & Mady, 2017). As a result, students with learning exceptionalities are rare participants in the program (Cobb, 2015; Wise, 2011), representing about 10% of the FI population, but 22% of the overall TDSB in Grades 7-8 (see Figure 1) (Sinay et al., 2018).

Figure 1

Grades 7-8 Students with Learning Exceptionalities in the TDSB



Note. Sinay et al., 2018, p. 81. Figure used with permission. © Toronto District School Board.

Students with learning exceptionalities are often counselled out of entering immersion or advised to leave once they run into difficulties (Arnett & Mady, 2017), despite encountering the same issues in an English-stream program (Wise, 2011). In fact, until the past decade or so, it was

¹³ This label includes: students labelled as having “special needs”, students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs), modified or accommodated curricula, mental and physical disabilities or general difficulties in learning. Within this dissertation and similar to Sinay et al. (2018), students identified as gifted will not be considered—even though they often fall within the special education category—because being gifted marks the elite end of special education while all other designations are seen as deficit.

common practice to exclude students with learning exceptionalities from FI systematically (OME, 2013a) or even require IQ tests for entry (Olson & Burns, 1983; Swain & Lapkin, 2008). Despite being a public program, there are no guarantees of admission at the provincial level, and it is instead a local, school board issue.

Interestingly, students with exceptionalities are often successful¹⁴ in FI programs (Bruck, 1978), as long as they receive support to meet their needs (Wise, 2011). Unfortunately, special education support is rarely offered in FI. Some principals regard FI as an enrichment program, and, therefore, do not offer support to students who are struggling (Arnett & Mady, 2017; Mady & Arnett, 2009). Cobb (2015) suggests that lack of support may be due to funding or misconceptions about language learning. Black parents in Munroe et al.'s (2022) TDSB study expressed fatigue, anger, and being gaslit when it came to trying to secure support for their child(ren). Mady and Arnett (2009) present a case study of one Ontarian mother's struggles to get her son identified as having special needs. Teachers were reluctant to recommend testing for her son since "Problematic behaviour is often cited as a sign that a child is struggling in the classroom" (Mady & Arnett, 2009, p. 39) and her son did not exhibit this behaviour. The mother was able to leverage her economic capital to pay for testing instead of waiting the 1.5+ years for a free school-based test. Even once identified, her son was denied support in FI at multiple schools. Cobb's (2015) study also shows how two girls had to leave the FI program in order to find learning supports. So, parents of students with learning exceptionalities must make constrained choices—between bilingualism and academic support through special education programs. These case studies illustrate how FI is a "special education loophole" (Cobb, 2015, p. 170). Further, research

¹⁴ "Successful" throughout this literature review means that achieve at the provincial standard or above (70%+). Success also means that students feel that they are learning.

is lacking into how to support students with invisible learning needs (i.e., autism, attention deficit disorder, chronic illness, etc.) in FAL classrooms (Fronsman-Cecil, 2022).

Fortunately, there is a move toward inclusion in FAL, evidenced in the publication of the document *Including students with special education needs in French as a second language programs: A guide for Ontario schools* (OME, 2015). Additionally, DeWiele and Edgerton (2020) argue that inclusion of students with learning exceptionalities is on the rise across Canada. Comparing Sinay's 2010 and 2018 (Sinay et al., 2018) reports also confirms that inclusion is increasing: in 2009-2010, on average 4% of FI students had learning exceptionalities (versus 15% in the TDSB) and in 2016-2017, 10% of FI students had learning exceptionalities (versus 22% of the TDSB).

Connecting race to perceived intelligence, Connor (2017) speaks of a racial pyramid of intelligence wherein "People of European descent [are] at the pinnacle of the pyramid, and people of African descent [are] placed at the bottom, with all others on a continuum between" (p. 277). I would argue Indigenous peoples are also placed at the bottom of the pyramid as well, given that colonization was justified by their inferiority (Smith, 2012). Vigouroux (2017) demonstrates how this intellectual hierarchy was particularly prevalent in France in how they viewed Africans as unintelligent and incapable of complex or civilized thought. Vigouroux goes on to demonstrate how the closer to Whiteness one is, the more intelligent they are perceived to be and the more able they are to access spaces of privilege. This is not to say that racially minoritized people with lighter skin do not experience racism, but rather that they are more privileged on the basis on their proximity to Whiteness. The ideology of racialized intelligence continues today: Black students in the greater Toronto area have been disproportionately streamed into applied level courses and less academically demanding programs, are more often identified as having learning exceptionalities,

and are almost never identified as gifted (James & Turner, 2017). Similarly, a British Columbia Ministry of Education (2020) report demonstrates how Indigenous students are rarely designated ‘gifted’. To further complicate the matter, culturally and linguistically diverse learners and immigrants are over-represented in special education programs (Cobb, 2015; Danforth et al., 2006). Given the overlap between race and special education, it is possible that the many studies cited above not only speak to ableism, but also racism. However, the intersection between race and learning exceptionalities is, as of yet, unknown and worth further investigation.

Middle-Class Families

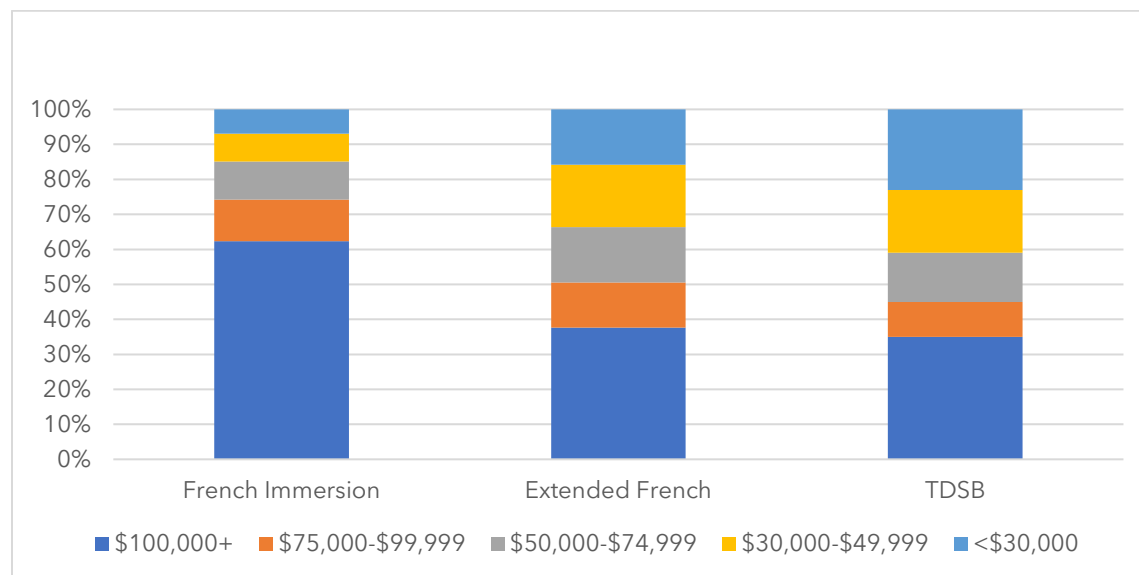
In light of middle-class parents’ role in founding FI (Heller, 1990; Olson & Burns, 1983), it is unsurprising that “for the most part, French immersion in Canada has served the economic, political, and social aims of the middle- and upper-middle-class English-speaking majority” (Johnson & Swain, 1997, p. 4). The middle-class are more likely to take advantage of specialized programs (Collins & Coleman, 2008), know about FI in the first place (Heller, 1990; Olson & Burns, 1983), and have more easily accessible program locations¹⁵ (Cepin, 2012; Heller, 1990; Kunnas, 2019). Regarding the latter, one’s catchment area determines their home school, meaning that some students are entitled to attend a school with a specialized program based solely on where they live whereas others must apply through optional attendance—a process that does not guarantee placement nor transportation (Kunnas, 2019, 2023). As Parthi Kandavel, a TDSB school board trustee, states, “A beneficial program shouldn’t be predicated on your postal code”

¹⁵ Program locations changes from school board to school board. In the TDSB, programs are mainly in middle-class neighbourhoods (Kunnas, 2019). However, Durham District School Board (2020) highlights that they have ensured that programs are located evenly throughout their board. Conversely, the Waterloo District Region School Board (2018) states that senior level FI school locations are problematic for students.

(Alphonso, 2021). See Figures 2, 3, and 4 for a summary of TDSB FI students based on family income in Grades K-6, 7-8, and 9-12 in the 2016-2017 year.

Figure 2

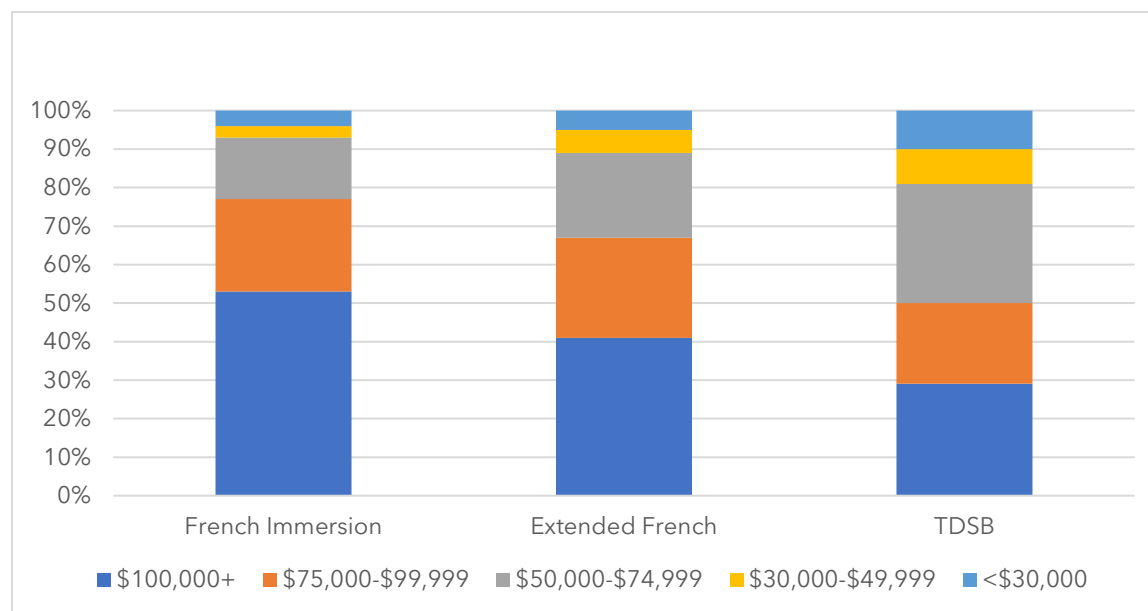
Percentage of Students based on Income in the TDSB (2016-2017) – Grades K-6



Note. Figure based on Sinay et al., 2018 report, p. 134.

Figure 3

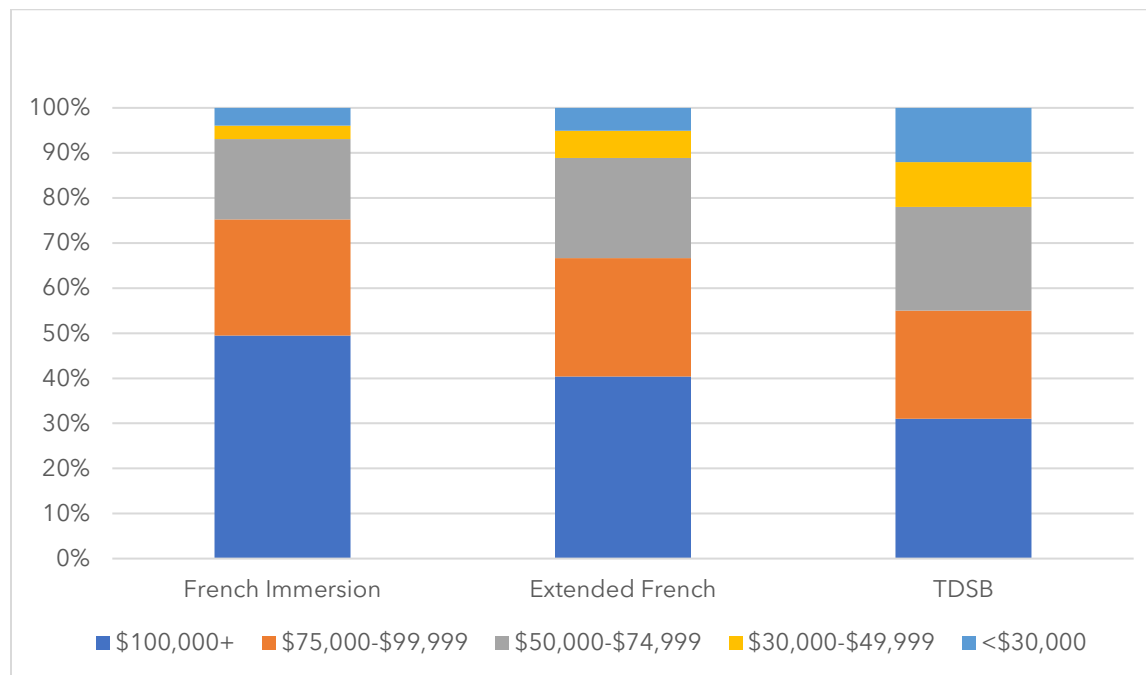
Percentage of Students based on Income in the TDSB (2016-2017) – Grades 7-8



Note. Figure based on Sinay et al., 2018 report, p. 134.

Figure 4

Percentage of Students based on Income in the TDSB (2016-2017) – Grades 9-12



Note. Figure based on Sinay et al., 2018 report, p. 135.

Conversely, very few low(er) income students attend FI in Toronto (Parekh et al., 2011). In Sinay's (2010) report, 23% of students' families were from the highest income bracket, while only 4% were from the lowest (data was not separated based on elementary or secondary panel). Sinay et al. (2018) highlight that there is still a low presence of lower-income families:

[Elementary] students whose family income was at the professional/senior management level (\$100,000+) had much higher representation in the French Immersion program (63%), in comparison to the Extended French (38%) and TDSB baseline (35%). In contrast, students with a family SES [socioeconomic status] of the unskilled clerical/trades work (\$30,000–\$49,999) tended to be underrepresented in the French Immersion program (3%), compared to the Extended French (6%) and TDSB (10%) representation at the Grade 7–8 level. (p. 86)

At the secondary level, this over-representation continued: 50% of FI students' families earned \$100,000+, versus 40% in extended French, and 31% in the TDSB as a whole (Sinay et al., 2018). On the other end, those who fell under the unskilled clerical/trades and non-remunerative were 7% of the FI population versus 22% of the TDSB (Sinay et al., 2018). Evidently, there appears to be few gains when it comes to inclusion of lower income students in TDSB FI programs. Further, Adatia (2023) reveals when she reflected on the racially minoritized parents in her study, "it is undeniable that these participants were from middle- to upper-class, English- and/or French-speaking families" (p. 173). According to Adatia, family social class was evident in parents' "wealth, time, and knowledge to fully support their children's access to, and success in, FI" (p. 173). Parents were advocating for courses for parents to take after regular work hours, seemingly not realizing that not all parents would be able to attend such a course.

A middle-class over-representation is echoed across the country and has been a persistent problem for decades (Dagenais, 2003; Heller, 1990; Olson & Burns, 1983; Statistics Canada, 2008; Wise, 2011; Yoon & Gulson, 2010). The gentrification of immersion education is not limited to Canada or FI. In the US context, two-way immersion programs are also increasingly gentrified despite their grassroots history (Palmer, 2010; Valdez et al., 2016). In fact, even when programs are located in racially diverse and poor neighbourhoods, principals will often seek out White middle-class families and encourage them to enrol in two-way immersion to raise their school's average scores on standardized tests—pointing to an assumed racialized and economized hierarchy of intelligence (Marcus & Williams, 2021). Around the globe, socioeconomic elitism is present in immersion programs (Johnson & Swain, 1997). Anya (2021) and Benaglia and Smith (2022) critique foreign language education as conceived for middle-class White people who have the means to travel to access the colonial metropole and enhance their own learning. According to

Anyia (2021), Whiteness in foreign language education is supported by: the raciolinguistic ideologies that valorize the White elite for learning additional languages and criticize racially minoritized people for the same thing (see also: García et al., 2021; Rosa & Flores, 2017); the erasure of people of colour and other non-dominant groups in language education; and, through representing the White middle-class as the target language speakers (see also: Benaglia & Smith, 2022).

Middle-class over-representation should not be understood to be a simple coincidence. Middle-class families pushed hard for FI in order to maintain their children's socioeconomic status in a changing linguistic landscape in Quebec (Heller, 1990). Today, "Parents and guardians ... revealed an acute awareness of the power and privilege associated with FI" (Adatia, 2023, p. 172). FI is a place for families to access power and privilege and to maintain or raise their social and economic capital. FI programs go hand in hand with the neoliberal ideology of "school choice" where privileged families are able to exploit their privilege in order to guarantee their child's success at the expense and exclusion of others (Yoon & Gulson, 2010). As Yoon and Gulson (2010) argue, "Parental school choice is not a random, individualistic choice, but rather needs to be understood as a choice to maintain advantageous social positions through the accumulation of pertinent symbolic capital" (p. 715). Chami Lindsay (2023) explicitly critiques the concept of FI and school choice: "school choice initiatives exacerbate academic inequity by creating elite opportunities. Canadian studies identify how specialized schools and programs are comparable to private schools in a public system" (para. 9). Specialized programs are exclusion by design, and the middle-class flock to them, hoping to reap their benefits.

Building on the hierarchy of intelligence presented earlier, wealth and perceived intelligence are related in our society. Poor people are thought to be lazy, not value education, and

be less intelligent in general (Gorski, 2012). These stereotypes mean low(er) income students could be considered unsuited for an academically demanding program like FI. Additionally, immersion requires a lot of resources for students' language development, with the OME (2013b, 2014) suggesting that FI students attend French camps, read French books in their spare time, and attend French movie nights. As I argue (Kunnas, 2019, 2023), these activities and resources are more attainable for the middle-class than the lower-class. Personally, I have always felt/looked poorer than most of my FI students. Admittedly, this is only anecdotal and how a student outwardly presents does not necessarily reflect their actual socioeconomic status.

Interestingly, social class and race are frequently associated in the literature with researchers reporting that immersion is White and middle-class often one right after the other (Heller, 1990; Makropoulos, 2010; Olson & Burns, 1983; Palmer, 2010; Sinay, 2010). Because we live in a racially stratified and organized society (Crump, 2014; Dei, 2000; Smith, 2012), race and social class intersect with one another (Herring & Henderson, 2016; Traub et al., 2017). However, it cannot easily be assumed that everyone who is middle-class is White or that everyone who is a racially minoritized is lower-class. It is worth investigating where race and socioeconomic status intersect and where they do not in FI. In Gerbrandt's (2022) discussion of systemic barriers to FI in New Brunswick, the author concludes that "Racialized or not, students ... tend to be sorted along socioeconomic lines" (p. 76). In other words, socioeconomic status has a huge impact on exclusion in FI. A question that sits with me is: Are middle-class students (regardless of their race) more likely to be in FI than lower-class students (regardless of their race)? This may be true based solely on the comparison between the TDSB enrolment statistics where racial representation is becoming more equal whereas socioeconomic status has not changed much (Sinay, 2010; Sinay et al., 2018).

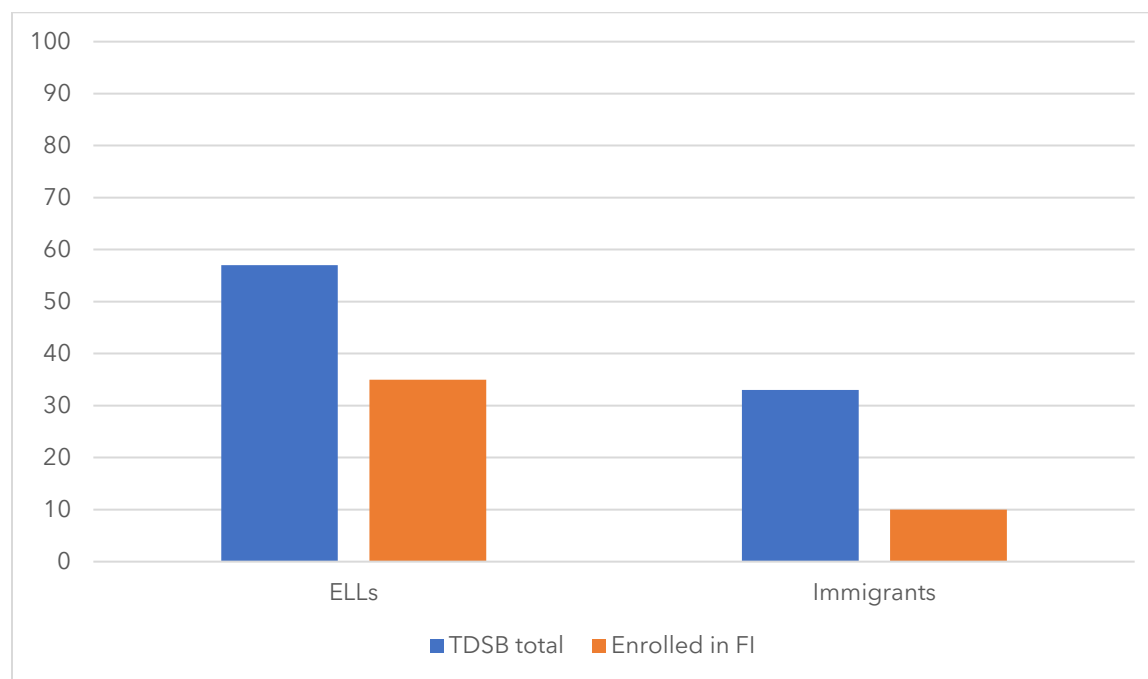
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners

Prior to the early 2000s, little attention was given to culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD)¹⁶ students in FAL programs. Mady's (2007) work in FAL with immigrants in core French and Dagenais' (2003) work with immigrant families in FI mark a change in FAL research toward including CLD students. While almost no research into FI considers racial identity, countless studies address teachers' and administrators' perspectives on the "suitability" of multilingual students in FI (e.g., Mady & Masson, 2018). The term "suitability" in and of itself reveals elitism and bias since certain students are deemed to be appropriate or not. Here, the question lies not with the suitability of FI for White students, but for linguistic and cultural minorities.

In general, immigrants and CLD learners¹⁷ are not a large population in FI programs (Mady, 2013; Sinay, 2010; Sinay et al., 2018; Yoon & Gulson, 2010). Of the 57% of TDSB secondary students who are English language learners (ELLs) only 35% are in FI, and of the 33% of TDSB immigrant students, only 10% are in FI (Sinay et al., 2018). (See Figure 5 for a visual summary.) FI is believed to be too hard for immigrants who are already adjusting to an entirely new environment (Mady, 2013) and, worse, their home language(s) is seen as an impediment to their learning (Mady, 2017; Mady & Masson, 2018), despite the fact that it has been known and proven that languages are interdependent and knowing more than one helps to better develop all languages (Cummins, 2014). Further, the plurilingual turn in additional language learning (Beacco

¹⁶ I use the term CLD learners to describe the group of learners whose first/home language is not English nor French (Canada's official languages). Much research refers to this group as English language learners (ELLs). Prasad (2012) advocates for the term CLD to highlight the diversity of ELLs and to view them from an asset lens. Multilingual learner is an emerging term (Yankelowitz, 2023) used in opposition to ELLs much like Prasad's CLD. I use the terms CLD or multilingual learner the most while ELL is used rarely, only in reference to specific literature.

¹⁷ Immigrants and CLD learner identities are often grouped in the literature, so they are reported on together here. However, these identities are distinct groups (Schroeter & James, 2015) and worth considering separately in future research. There has been some research that shows that CLD immigrants perform even better than CLD nationals in FI (Knouzi & Mady, 2017).

Figure 5*CLD and Immigrants in FI*

Note. Figure based on Sinay et al., 2018, p. 82.

et al., 2016; Lau & Van Viegen, 2020) emphasizes the fact that all students have a linguistic repertoire from which they can pull to help them learn and communicate across languages (Byrd Clark et al., 2014; García et al., 2021; Kubota & Bale, 2020). Considering the interconnectedness and interdependence of languages, it is unsurprising that CLD students often do as well as or even outperform their anglophone peers (Davis, 2023; Knouzi & Mady, 2017; Mady, 2013, 2015, 2017). Yet, the ideology persists that CLD students should concentrate on English, not learn French (Davis, 2023; Roy, 2020). Regrettably, because most Ontario FI programs start in senior kindergarten or Grade 1 (Durham District School Board, 2020; Makropoulos, 2009), many recently landed immigrants miss the enrolment timeframe (Mady, 2013) and cannot enrol later. Even worse, CLD families are discouraged from attending FI by kindergarten teachers (Mady,

2016). Principals equally serve as gatekeepers to FI programs, many espousing the belief that CLD learners should focus on English first (Davis, 2023). Davis (2023) states,

Whereas such educators might believe that they are acting in the best interests of students and families, the discourse of the ideal language learner and the enduring myth of English language proficiency being a prerequisite for success in FI are entirely unsubstantiated by research and result in the inequitable exclusion of multilingual learners from bilingual education opportunities in Canada. (p. 167)

CLD families may also be unaware of the program, particularly if none of the programs are in their immediate area. Given that promotion (in Toronto) is often only in English (Kunnas, 2019, 2023), it may be hard for CLD students and families to access information on FI.

As Davis' (2023) critical literature review of multilingual learners in FI demonstrates, most research related to CLD learners in FI does not consider inclusion or personal experiences, but rather, policies, educators' perspectives, family motivation for participating in FI, and achievement. Adatia's (2023) dissertation study investigated how CLD students, parents, and teachers experienced inclusion in FI. Adatia reflects on her own experiences, saying that "Apart from the occasional assignment where I had to introduce myself using a personal artefact", "never did I see myself—a Brown, Canadian, Ismaili Muslim girl—reflected in the curriculum" (p. 12). She goes on to reflect, "Rarely were there opportunities to share my cultural and linguistic diversity, but when these did arise, there was a familiar tone of performativity" (p. 108). While some of her participants were excluded in their FI programs, by and large, most participants spoke about how they were included or made space for themselves in FI. Inclusion happened through learning about other cultures, integrating their own culture, feeling linguistically supported by teachers, and so on. Adatia concludes, however, that "CLD learners weren't always seen in their

full complexity,” despite strides being made for CLD learners in FI programs (p. 213). Prasad’s (2014, 2020) research investigated CLD French learners and their plurilingual identities through the use of collage. These collages served as identity texts to make “explicit both learners’ conscious and unconscious representations of language, of themselves as language learners and users, and of the language learning process” (Prasad, 2020, p. 904). Through their collages, participants expressed their linguistic (in)securities, and viewed plurilingualism as more than language skills, “but also as cultural practice and a form of personal development” (Prasad, 2020, pp. 913-914).

Anglophone students are the presumed audience of FI (Davis, 2023). For instance, when I teach immersion, I often make connections between English and French to help strengthen students’ grammar and vocabulary (see “bridging”: Auger, 2005; Beeman & Urow, 2012). They are often very grateful for this as many/most FI teachers outright ban the use of English in immersion courses (Ballinger et al., 2017; Roy, 2020). Yet, I always assume that an English translation or example will help *all* students, even when I know that there are students whose first language is not English and the examples that I give may not help them. While this is but one example, it is a common practice amongst several teachers I have spoken with and further exemplified in the plurilingual studies that Davis (2023) critiques. Ballinger et al. (2017) also highlight how immersion teachers tend to only draw on English as a home language and no other languages. Moreover, even the curriculum (OME, 2013b, 2014) relies on French-English examples and translations and ignores all other languages, despite advocating for multilingualism (Kunnas, 2019, 2023). Through plurilingual instructional strategies, students are likely to develop their French alongside their English and first language skills (provided their first language also receives explicit support) (Byrd Clark, 2012; Cummins, 2014; Duff, 2007). However, most teachers continue to see CLDs as problems or hurdles within their classrooms (Mady, 2016).

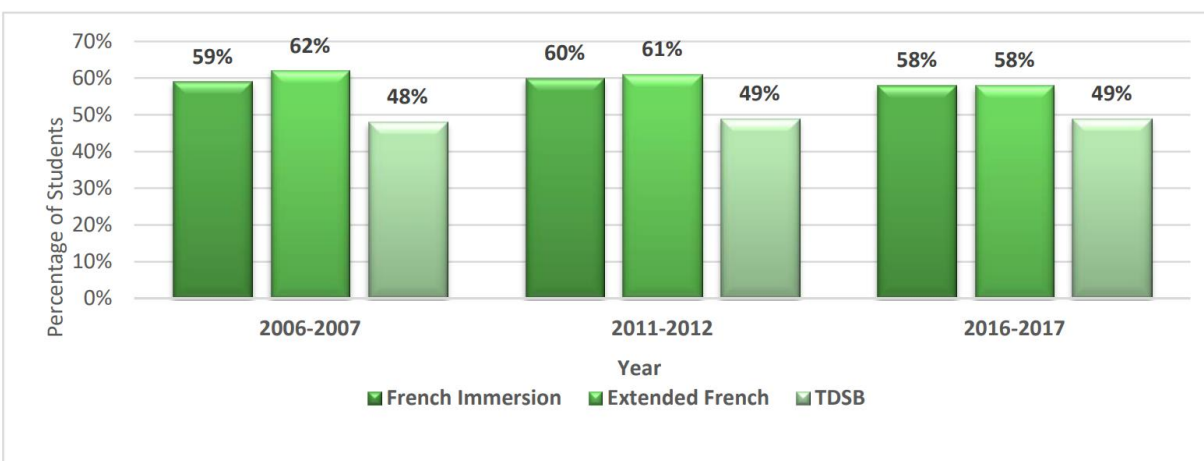
Since the 1970s, immigration has increasingly diversified, with most immigrants coming from racially minoritized countries (Mady, 2013; Masson, 2021). In other words, CLD learners are overwhelmingly racially minoritized. It warrants questioning the role of race in CLD students' experiences of FAL/FI. It is also worth questioning why race has been excluded from the study of a group that is so obviously racialized. Further complicating the issue, "the lack of precision around student populations and definitions has limited our understanding of the experiences" of multilingual learners in FI (Davis, 2023, p. 171), particularly when it comes to race and nationality. What might an intersectional study reveal about racially minoritized CLD people in FI?

Gender Diversity and Queerness

Until very recently, gender, sexuality, and queer identities have been virtually absent from FAL research. Briefly, I will highlight that immersion programs and foreign language programs are often populated by more girls than boys (Kissau, 2007; Munroe et al., 2022). Figure 6 shows the percentage of female students in the TDSB.

Figure 6

Percentage of Female Students in the TDSB



Note. From Sinay et al., 2018, p. 80. Figure used with permission. © Toronto District School Board.

Kissau (2007) shows how girls are encouraged more than boys to continue in core French past Grade 9 in Ontario. Boys are neither discouraged nor encouraged to continue in French, but they are encouraged to enrol in other courses such as science and math. Boys also thought French to be a feminine or “sissy” subject and were pressured by other boys to not pursue it after the required Grade 9 credit (Kissau, 2007). Kissau concludes that French needs to be more valued as a subject, boys need to see the benefits of learning French, and toxic masculinity needs to be addressed. Kissau’s findings are confirmed by an FI parent in Munroe et al.’s (2022) study:

Girls are more likely to be enrolled than boys. I can count the Black boys in my daughters’ program and my friend’s son’s program. They all know each other because they are a few of them. They get kicked out early you know...very...very early. (p. 31)

In this way, gender is also racialized within FI with Black masculine identity resulting in push out from the program.

As Bouamer and Bourdeau (2022b) state, “Despite a proliferation of general resources, a paucity of training and materials for French language educators [around diverse genders] persists” (p. 11). In two recent edited volumes (Bouamer & Bourdeau, 2022a; Meyer & Hoft-March, 2022), gender diversity, trans identities, and queerness are brought into conversation with FAL pedagogy. These volumes are geared toward teachers and offer various strategies and resources for teaching about and with queer people, although some chapters are more heavily based in research than others. I highlight a few teacher-oriented chapters from the edited volumes and research studies related to queer identities below.

Within Meyer and Hoft-March’s (2022) edited volume, three chapters explicitly speak to including diverse genders and sexualities in French classes: Gomolka’s chapter: Queer pedagogy for a queer(er) francophone classroom; Kinsley’s chapter: A starter kit for rethinking trans

representation and inclusion in French L2 classrooms; and Kosnick’s chapter: Inclusive pedagogy for (un)teaching gender in French. Beyond this volume, Spiegelman (2022a) discusses the case of a non-binary teenager in French class negotiating the use of gendered pronouns and adjectives. The teenager in the study feels constrained to using “elle” because they used it once and there was no turning back once they had established their identity. Also, “At no point did discussions of *écriture inclusive* [inclusive writing], non-binary French, or gender-related activism occur during their six years of learning French” (Spiegelman, 2022a, p. 7). Hakeem (2022) discusses how to queer the French curriculum through the use of webcomics by trans artist and activist Sophie Labelle. Knisley (2022) advocates for the inclusion of trans affirming queer based inquiry pedagogies in French courses and shows how it can successfully be included in French teaching. The question of *écriture inclusive* and the feminization of professions in French points to issues with the gender binary especially prevalent in romance languages (Reaves, 2022). These scholars and teachers emphasize that teaching explicitly about language politics and heterosexism, and giving space for students to affirm their own identities in French language education are essential.

While racial identity is less obvious in its intersection with gender, sexuality, and queerness, it can be said that Black boys and men are pressured to exist within a hypermasculine, hypersexualized (heterosexualized) persona (Spates & Slatton, 2014). Within this persona, they should not pursue anything that is not masculine, like the study of languages. Black boys need to assert a toxic masculinity, including compulsory heterosexuality (Spates & Slatton, 2014). So, while girls are more frequent in FI, so too are White girls (i.e., the Megans) who align more readily with the imaginary feminine body within a Eurocentric space which centres Whiteness.

All of the exclusions summarized above have traces of race in different degrees and they intersect with one another in unique ways. As the participants in Munroe et al. (2022) suggest, “the

attitudes and ideology in the French programs created a division along the lines of race, gender and class” (p. 31). However, race has been ignored and erased within all this research. As race continues to be a hot button issue in society, research will continue to grow in the field. Next, I will show where race, racism, and anticolonialism have been explicitly researched.

Research Related to Race and Anticolonialism

Much of the research related to race in French education is about racially minoritized Francophones (Madibbo, 2021; Vigouroux, 2017; Wernicke et al., in press). This research reinforces that only White French speakers are seen as legitimate Francophones (Madibbo, 2021). As Madibbo discusses, French Africans are often delegitimized by their White peers, teachers, and White francophone society (see also, Vigouroux, 2017). Prasad (2012) outlines how CLD learners in francophone school boards are doubly minoritized based on their non-dominant cultures and non-dominant language (French). Additionally, CLD learners are seen as a problem within francophone school boards (Prasad, 2012).

FAL research that considers teachers’ and students’ race is becoming more common. We will look first at teachers and administrators. French teacher candidates in Masson and Cote’s (2024) study revealed that their race was a factor in how they identified (or not) as French speakers. Additionally, two racially minoritized teacher candidates worried that their racial identities would cause issues of legitimacy for them as French language teachers. Kubota et al.’s (2021) study with racially minoritized graduate students and teachers at one Canadian university revealed that one East Asian teacher was delegitimated as a French teacher due to his race. His fellow White-passing colleagues were never questioned on their legitimacy as language teachers; however, he was. Masson’s (2021) study summarizes a racially minoritized teacher’s experiences using culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy in their FAL classroom with racialized students. While this study

did not directly focus on race, Masson concludes that employing an antiracist lens through a culturally relevant and sustaining model in FAL programs can raise awareness of racism and oppression in French and FAL. In another study, Masson et al. (2022) outline the experiences of teacher candidates in relation to developing an antiracist, anti-biased approach to teaching FAL. The study revealed that when it came to antiracism and anticolonialism, professors were teaching as much as interested them, with some completely ignoring it and others embedding it throughout their courses. Despite a few professors claiming to teach with an anticolonial lens, teacher candidates did not report learning about anticolonialism. The authors conclude that racially minoritized teacher candidates were experiencing racism in their FAL programs and overall, teacher candidates were not being trained to effectively integrate anticolonial or antiracist perspectives (Masson et al., 2022).

Adatia's (2023) dissertation study on inclusion of CLD learners in FI speaks to race both implicitly and explicitly. Adatia interviewed students, a teacher candidate, teachers, and an administrator. The teacher candidate showed ways in which they disrupted Whiteness and integrated Indigenous ways of knowing. Conversely, two teachers either showed evidence of uncritical approaches to antiracism (e.g., all lives matter), felt unprepared to engage in discussions of race (despite attending professional development workshops), or felt it was not appropriate to do so because speaking of difference was thought to increase divisiveness. The administrator from Adatia's study felt that she could not engage in meaningful conversation around culture and racial issues in the school because the other staff were not interested. Despite these barriers to antiracism, all teachers in Adatia's study thought that cultural and racial diversity was essential in learning materials of their courses. Black FI students felt that teachers are underprepared to teach diverse students:

Students from both French and English programs discussed the importance of teacher education programs in training teachers to confront their biases and prejudices towards Black people before they are placed in schools and have authority over Black students. Many participants alluded to the *irresponsibility of teacher education programs* and according to one student, “*it is dangerous to send them into such a position of power as new teacher without most of them ever checking their own privilege, especially white teachers.*” (Munroe et al., 2022, p. 30, emphasis added)

There is still much work to be done on training FAL teachers in antiracism.

I now turn to research on racially minoritized students and families in FI. Munroe and colleagues (2022) conducted a study in the TDSB with Black students and families, a portion of this study worked directly with FI students and parents. Munroe and colleagues show the importance of Black representation in the teaching and administrative staff as well as the learning materials in FI schools and classes. Participants in the study spoke about “push out”, showing how administrators and teachers “continue to find ways to keep Black families out of French Immersion” (Munroe et al., 2022, p. 31). Unfortunately,

many participants found that Black children are robbed of the opportunity of being successful at learning French. Notably, participants suggested that this type of exclusion demonstrates how racism has an impact on enrolment practices and sense of belonging in the French programs. For many that shared their experiences, it confirmed that little has improved in terms of Black student representation and retention, or positive interactions with Black families in French immersion and extended programs. (Munroe et al., 2022, p. 32)

So, anti-Blackness is alive and well in TDSB schools, including FI programs specifically, to the point where parents will remove their children from FI because they are “tired of fighting” with teachers and administrators (Munroe et al., 2022, p. 32). Furthermore, parents and students critiqued FI for not being racially representative or responsive and for emphasizing pain narratives of Black history (Munroe et al., 2022). In Makropoulos’ (2010) work, there is a brief mention to racism experienced by a racially minoritized FI student. Makropoulos details how a participant “felt ‘pushed out’ of the French immersion programme as a result of the discriminatory treatment she encountered in the classroom” (p. 8).

Adatia (2023), a Brown woman, narrates her personal learning journey in FI. She notes how French was steeped in White supremacy. It was only later in life as she began to study critical race theory that she realized “the extent to which [her] own experiences in FI had been marked by (c)overt racism” (p. 110). One of Adatia’s Black participants spoke about how he had to change himself to fit into his FI school which was very White: “due to a lack of representation of POC [people of colour], Kofi had initially felt as though he had to hide his authentic self— a ‘survival tactic’ in a White space” (p. 130). Despite having to distance himself from his Blackness, her participant was eventually included and felt as if “he was ‘changing the narrative,’ as he was ‘normalizing the fact that a person of colour can speak many languages, converse, and still be very intellectual [and] sociable’” (p. 134). Kofi made space for himself in FI.

I (Kunnas, 2019, 2023) investigated race explicitly in FAL and FI documents, policies and curricula. While the focus of my thesis was not race, but rather equity, race was the entry-point into the study and was extensively reported on. In my thesis, I looked at Ontario and Toronto school boards’ documents related to FAL and FI programming to see if exclusions in FI programs were supported by policies. This was done through examining who was supported and talked about

in the documents, which revealed who FI was aimed at. The policies revealed that there was a racial bias in a few ways, however most were implicitly—not explicitly—biased toward White students. Implicit bias included: highlighting middle-class families (e.g., middle-class homes in promotional materials, assuming a wealth of time and resources); program locations in middle-class neighbourhoods; and generic language around inclusion and racelessness which reinforced the status quo. Explicit bias toward White students was found in the curricula and some promotional materials which features more White people than any other race. In fact, one teacher candidate from Masson et al.'s (2022) study claimed, “Our French programs – and I’m just gonna say it, are White, they’re very White. They're based on Eurocentric norms. It is literally White supremacy in the lessons” (p. 400). Additionally, I argued that colonization was presented in a neutral or positive light in the curricula, buying into the imaginary belief of Canada as postcolonial and ignoring the past and present realities of colonialism (Kunnas, 2019, 2023).

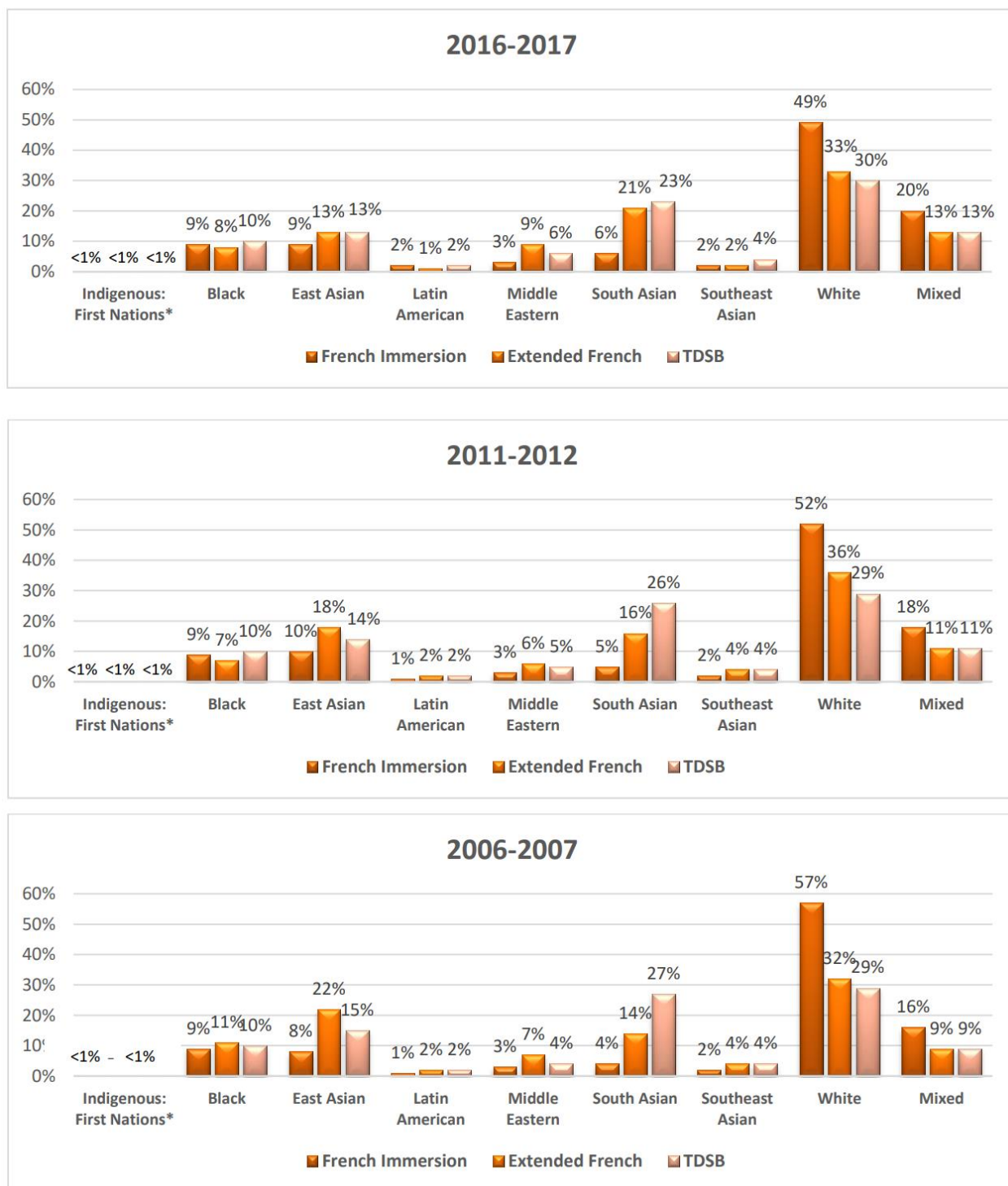
Research related to Indigenous peoples and Indigenous inclusion in FAL is rare (Masson et al., 2021), however it is starting to emerge. For example, Côté (2021) presents findings related to the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in FAL programs in British Columbia. The new British Columbia curriculum calls for this inclusion and Côté shares four best practices when it comes to successfully including Indigenous peoples: curricular competence; appropriate literature; experiential learning; and, interactions with Indigenous people. Côté (2019) also considers the challenges related to integrating Indigenous perspectives into both English and French programs: limited historical/colonial knowledge; difficulty in critical reflection and discussion; artificial addition of Indigenous perspectives; and lack of materials, resources, or time. From this, Côté emphasizes the importance of creating and maintaining relationships with Indigenous communities and the power of literature in the classroom. Lesongeur's (2017) study explored three elementary

FI teachers' use of Indigenous education and Indigenous perspectives in FI. Teachers' own knowledge and worldviews contributed to their desire and ability to teach through a decolonial lens. Lesongeur considers challenges to implementing Indigenous perspectives (e.g., board policies around invited guests) and presents different strategies that FI teachers can use to integrate Indigenous perspectives (e.g., stories, short films). Fortier-Fréçon and Laing (2019) summarize activities used in a Saskatchewan FI high school to teach about Indigenous treaties. Bouamer and Bourdeau's (2022a) anthology *Diversity and decolonization in French studies* brings together works from various researchers and practitioners examining how to bring an anticolonial lens to French studies. These essays came from the "Diversity, Decolonization, and the French Curriculum" virtual conference (<https://ddfcollective.weebly.com/>) and cover colonial intersections with race, gender, queerness, assessment, and more. Likewise, Meyer and Hoft-March (2022) explore different ways to teach diverse learners in French classrooms, speaking to race and anticolonialism less directly. These two books are geared toward teachers, rather than researchers, but they do show how the field of FAL is adapting a more critical, antiracist, anticolonial stance.

Lastly, there has been a fair amount of research into race and racism in dual-language programs in the US. Studies such as Rosa and Flores (2017), Flores et al. (2021), Valdez et al. (2016), and Palmer (2010) emphasize the role of Whiteness in gentrifying dual-language programs and pushing out racial minorities, especially Latinx people. These studies may overlap with issues that are occurring within Canadian FI programs, given their similarities in program structure and neo-liberal background. Generally speaking, teachers and researchers are calling for better antiracist, anticolonial teaching strategies and research (Farooq, 2021; Masson, 2021; von Esch et al., 2020).

Racial Demographics in French Immersion

In this section, I highlight statistics from the TDSB about racial identity and enrolment in FI programs in the school board. Figure 7 shows the racial background of elementary FI students over the span of 10 years in the TDSB. White students represent 26%-31% of the TDSB population (depending on grade range), but 48%-51% of FI students (Sinay et al., 2018). South Asian students are consistently the least present in FI programs across all grades, while mixed race students are over-represented across all grades (Sinay et al., 2018). All other racial categories (Indigenous, Black, East Asian, Latin American, Middle Eastern, Southeast Asian) are only slightly under-represented in comparison to the TDSB baseline population (Sinay et al., 2018). Anecdotally, my fellow teachers call FI a “White girl program” (see the “Introduction” or Kunnas et al., 2023 for a deeper discussion). That being said, Sinay and colleagues (2018) demonstrate that racial inequality in the FI program is slowly improving. For instance, in the 2006-2007 school year at the elementary level, 29% of the student body was White whereas 57% of FI students were White. In contrast, in the 2016-2017 school year, 30% of the student body was White and 49% in FI were White. In Munroe et al.’s (2022) report, two Black parents were happy with FI because that was where they found Black teachers and where their child(ren) could see themselves represented. Evidently, FI is becoming more racially diverse, albeit slowly.

Figure 7*Racial Background of Students in TDSB Elementary School Intensive French Programs*

Note. From Sinay et al., 2018, p. 84. Figure used with permission. © Toronto District School Board.

In a nearby school board, Durham region, one report (2021) states that 44% of FI students (who completed their census) were White, while the rest identified as other races. According to Durham region's 2019 census, 57% of students in the board are White (Durham District School Board, 2020), meaning that White students might be under-represented in FI (given that these reports were not published together, this is only an assumption). Despite some evident progress, news media outlets continue to critique the racial disparity in FI programs (Alphonso, 2021; Maharaj, 2017).

TDSB findings echo the White majority cited across the country (Wise, 2011; Yoon & Gulson, 2010) and an increasingly White majority in bilingual education globally (García, 2009; Messay, 2022). In Vancouver, Yoon and Gulson (2010) explain how White middle-class parents use FI (in part) to avoid racial and linguistic minorities found in mainstream programs. Again, it cannot be simply understood as a coincidence that racialized minorities are less common and White students are far more common in FI, there is something at play behind these enrolment trends. This could be, as suggested throughout the literature review, the intersections of learning exceptionalities, CLD students, socioeconomic status, gender/sexuality, and racial identity.

(Inter)Cultural¹⁸ Teaching and Learning

This final section of the literature review summarizes cultural and intercultural teaching and learning (ICTL) in additional language learning and FAL. I outline cultural teaching, the shift to *intercultural* teaching, and challenges and success in ICTL. I conclude with a brief discussion of culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies. Culture is important to this study because, while culture is distinct from race, in our neoliberal society, the two are often conflated (Dei, 2007;

¹⁸ When intercultural is written as “(inter)cultural” this is to signal that I am referring to both approaches to teaching culture at once. This arises because the literature is vague on its approach to teaching culture or may not fully embody the principles of intercultural teaching, despite claiming as such.

Haque, 2012). So, we cannot talk about race without considering culture or multiculturalism. Additionally, culture is one “authentic” way that diverse racial representations can be included in language learning. Though, authenticity has its own problems drenched in colonial, capitalist ideologies (for a more detailed discussion, see Heller, 2010). Nonetheless, cultural learning is an avenue for diverse racial representation which can be used to disrupt the perceived Whiteness of the Francophonie. Moreover, intercultural understanding is an overall expectation in the Ontario FAL curriculum (OME, 2013b, 2014) and each course is supposed to focus on different cultural groups (grouped geographically, see below).

In 1968, Brooks posited that part of why culture has not been adequately taught in additional language learning is due to the difficulty in defining it. I define culture as the beliefs, customs, practices, and products of a group of people. It includes ways of living and artifacts. Culture is both historical and contemporary and is ever-changing. Surface culture is what is visible and obvious: historical facts and figures, celebrations, food, music, fashion etc. Deep culture includes harder to classify cultural elements like beliefs and perspectives, values, etc.

Culture in the Ontario Curriculum

In the Ontario FAL curriculum, there is an “Intercultural Understanding” expectation in every strand (listening, speaking, reading, writing) of each course. The overall expectations state that students must “demonstrate an understanding of information in oral French texts about aspects of culture in diverse French-speaking communities and other communities around the world, and of French sociolinguistic conventions used in a variety of situations and communities” (OME, 2013b, p. 54). Within each strand, there are geographically determined cultural groups that must be studied each year, for example, Franco-Ontarians. Table 1 shows which cultural groups are the focus per year.

Table 1*Ontario FAL Curriculum Cultural Groups of Study*

Grade	French Immersion	Core French	Extended French
Grades 1-2	Local French speaking communities	--	--
Grade 3	Local & Ontario-wide	--	--
Grade 4	Franco-Ontario	Franco-Ontario	Franco-Ontario
Grade 5	Quebec	Quebec	Quebec
Grade 6	Canada	Canada	Canada
Grade 7	The Americas & the Caribbean	The Americas & the Caribbean	The Americas & the Caribbean
Grade 8	France	Europe	France
Grade 9	Europe	Africa & Asia Canada (Open-level course only)	Europe
Grade 10	Africa & Asia	Worldwide	Africa & Asia
Grades 11-12	Worldwide	Worldwide	Worldwide

Note. All cultures are taken from the OME, 2013b and 2014.

In the curriculum, there are calls for *diverse* cultures, even if there are issues with how cultures are presented and essentialized (Masson et al., 2023). The cultural diversity in the FAL curriculum situates itself within Canada’s bilingualism within a multicultural framework, explicated by Eve Haque (2012; Haque & Patrick, 2015). Here, we are still reinforcing the French language, but allowing diverse cultures to appear without speaking to race.

Cultural Teaching and Learning

Depending on the period, culture has either been hailed as exceedingly important to language learning or completely separate (or unnecessary) (Brooks, 1968; Byrd et al., 2011). Historically, language was studied through literature in order to make one “cultured”, not to study

the culture nor to become bi/multi/pluricultural (Brooks, 1968; Byrd et al., 2011; Chevant-Aksoy & Corbin, 2022; Maurice, 2010). Given that additional language acquisition has gone through many different methods over the decades (for a more detailed history see: Byrd, 2014; Byrd et al., 2011), how culture has been taught (or not) has and continues to change. Within the direct method of language teaching (1890s to 1930s), “superficial” culture was taught in language classes, primarily through pictures (Byrd et al., 2011, p. 6). In the audio-lingual method, culture was considered the “fifth skill” of a language (after reading, listening, speaking and writing) (Byrd, 2014; Chevant-Aksoy & Corbin, 2022; Grim, 2014). Here, teachers aimed to train students for specific cultural situations to “avoid social blunders” (Byrd et al., 2011, p. 6). In the 1980s, the communicative approach became popular with the integration of multiliteracies and trans/cross-cultural learning (this would later evolve into intercultural learning) (Chevant-Aksoy & Corbin, 2022). Cultural teaching before the 1990s often followed the “four Fs approach: Food, Fashion, Festivals, and Folklore” (Byrd, 2014, p. 77), which has been critiqued for being superficial (Banks, 2008) and as reinforcing neoliberal myths of multiculturalism which perpetuate inequities (Adatia, 2023; Schroeter & James, 2015). In most approaches to cultural teaching, culture is seen as an object, something external to the individual, fact-based, and unchanging (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

Intercultural Teaching and Learning

Cultural teaching transformed into *intercultural* teaching throughout the 1990s and early 2000s with foundational work by scholars such as Byram (1997; Bryam & Zarate, 1994) with his cultural competencies (*savoirs*), and Kramersch (1993, 1995, 2014) with her work on symbolic competence. Here, culture and cultural understanding became paramount to language learning and comprehension (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Intercultural competence is the ability to navigate

new and diverse cultures (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Kramsch (1993) speaks of the “third place” that is between one’s culture and the additional culture(s) they are studying. Within this third place (the *inter*), one is able to reflexively question not only the additional culture, but their own culture (Marshall & Bokhorst-Heng, 2018). Another move toward interculturality in language learning was the development of three documents (Byrnes, 2010): the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2014) *Standards for foreign language learning* (now, *world-readiness standards for learning languages*) which emphasizes culture in language teaching; the *Common European framework of reference for Languages (CEFR)* by the Council of Europe (2001, updated in 2020) which emphasizes plurilingualism and pluriculturalism; and, the Modern Languages Association report (2007), *Foreign languages and higher education: New structures for a changed world*, which advocated for the integration of translingual and transcultural competence in language learning.

Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) outline an intercultural *perspective* to language teaching which operates as a framework that can be used across many different language methods. An intercultural perspective involves reflection, interaction, and engagement with cultures. Within this framework, culture is fluid, changing, and multiple. Liddicoat and Scarino also advocate for the de-centering of students in order to create a new space and study the other (Kramsch’s third place):

An intercultural orientation focuses on languages and cultures as sites of interactive engagement in the act of meaning-making and implies a transformational engagement of the learner in the act of learning. Here, learning involves the student in a practice of confronting multiple possible interpretations, which seeks to decenter the learner and to

develop a response to meaning as the result of engagement with another culture. (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 49)

In this orientation, the learner is active and is the focus of the learning. Liddicoat and Scarino enumerate five principles to guide intercultural teaching: 1) active construction, 2) making connections, 3) social interaction, 4) reflection, and 5) responsibility (that is, developing learner's sense of social responsibility within the new culture(s)). ICTL goes beyond simple cultural facts and requires a deep understanding of cultural elements like beliefs, values, societal practices, and so on.

Challenges in (Inter)Cultural Teaching

Despite it being a few decades since the beginning of ICTL research and theories, teachers still struggle with how to teach (inter)culture (Furstenberg, 2010; Marshall & Bokhorst-Heng, 2018; Meyer & Hoft-March, 2022), cultural learning in language classrooms has been critiqued as “problematic” (Schiffman, 2022, p. 230), and new FAL teachers feel under-prepared to teach culture (Gour, 2017). In additional language classes broadly, very little culture is taught (Byrd, 2014; Byrd et al., 2011; Dema & Moeller, 2012; Kearney, 2010; Marshall & Bokhorst-Heng, 2018) and when it is, it is often only in intermediate and advanced classes (Furstenburg, 2010; Maroun, 2022). Marshall & Bokhorst-Heng (2018) show how culture in New Brunswick FAL programs is avoided for fear of indoctrination. Indeed, FAL students are distanced from local francophone cultures in New Brunswick in favour of a “global” French culture (Marshall & Bokhorst-Heng, 2018). In the US, foreign language curricula ignore local linguistic communities and instead default to the colonial metropole (Benaglia & Smith, 2022). As Biers (2022) claims, language education aims to develop “effective cross-cultural communicators for global capitalist purposes” (p. 246). As a result, intercultural learning is not a priority.

Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) and Maurice (2010) demonstrate how the textbooks for many additional language classes present surface-level culture and essentialize culture. Biers (2022) discusses Mohanty's concept of tourism education in textbooks "where students observe diverse perspectives but do not critically reflect on them and their own perspectives" (p. 247). Masson et al. (2023) critique tourism education within the Ontario FAL curriculum. Spiegelman (2022b) further critiques textbooks for presenting the Francophonie as "consumable" (p. 58) through travel, products, and food. Likewise, Gour (2017) speaks of culture being "'packaged' into portable booklets, posters, and films so that it can be easily 'transported' from classroom to classroom and from floor to floor" (p. 2608). When culture is easily packaged, as Gour describes, it does not allow for a deep engagement or an intercultural perspective.

At the teacher education level, Byrd's (2014) analysis concludes, "Too often the linguistic elements of L2 teaching overshadow the area of culture" in language teacher education (Byrd, 2014, p. 76; see also Biers, 2022). In another study, Byrd et al. (2011) surveyed additional language teachers and teacher educators who confirmed that culture was rarely taught, and when it was, it was surface culture. Generally speaking, teachers need better and more training (Byram & Kramsch, 2008), precise guidelines on teaching culture (Göbel & Helmke, 2010), and to better understand how language ideologies impact (inter)cultural teaching (Marshall and Bokhorst-Heng, 2018).

Chevant-Aksoy and Corbin (2022) point to a major barrier that affects all language teachers: teachers need a strong cultural knowledge base—which takes time to build, and potentially requires extensive travel—, including strong historical and contemporary cultural knowledge, and culture is always changing. Byrd and colleagues (2011) report that the main barriers for language teachers integrating culture were: lack of funds and time, and (to a lesser

extent) a lack of pedagogical resources. Another barrier is interpersonal conflict. Byram and Kramersch (2008) discuss how German teachers struggled to implement intercultural teaching because it is tricky when working with students from very disparate cultures; students may feel judged and disconnect from peers who seem too ideologically different from them. Teachers need clear guidelines on how to navigate intercultural teaching (Göbel & Helmke, 2010).

In Canada we operate within official bilingualism in a multicultural framework (Haque, 2012), meaning that, on paper, cultural diversity is seen as a strength. Haque (2012) delivers an incisive critique of our national framework, demonstrating how multiculturalism is used as a way to not engage in real racial equity. Lei and Guo (2022) likewise criticize multiculturalism as follows: “Multiculturalism that does not engage with anti-racism can at best achieve tolerance of cultural diversity and at worst, reproduces a Eurocentric racial hierarchy and white domination” (p. 16). Considering our backdrop of uncritical multiculturalism, it is worth questioning how intercultural competence is taught in FAL: is it superficial and used to silence complaints about representation or is it used to meaningfully engage with others across cultures?

Successes in (Inter)Cultural Teaching

While there does not appear to be any sort of systematic approach or integration of (inter)cultural teaching in additional languages or FAL specifically, there have been some successes. First off, many scholars have pointed out (Brooks, 1968; Byram & Kramersch, 2008; Kunnas et al., 2024; Myers, 2012) that teachers value cultural teaching, so it is less a lack of desire to teach, and more a deficiency of knowledge and training. There have been several successful university-level courses based on an intercultural perspective with the goal of developing intercultural competence (e.g., Biers, 2022; Furstenberg, 2010; Genç & Bada, 2005; Mauron, 2022). There exists some intercultural information for French teachers: Crozet (2003) and Crozet

and Maurer (2003) present a detailed guide to understanding some key elements of culture from France; Maurice (2010) provides a free cultural portfolio for French language teachers; the OMLTA (2021) has an online webinar entitled “Reflecting on Identity, CRP, and Intercultural Awareness”; the Modern Language Council of Ontario’s (n.d.) resource document offers a few activities and lessons for French teachers; the internet and technology are excellent resources to learn about and access cultures (Dema & Moeller, 2012; Devonish-Mazzotta & Quintal, 2021). Culture is becoming more integrated into FAL; Meyer and Hoft-March’s (2022) edited volume features a section titled: “Embracing Cultures/Extending Contexts” which highlights many ways to integrate intercultural competence into French language classrooms. Similarly, ICTL is embedded throughout Bouamer and Bourdeau’s (2022a) edited volume. While there are far more challenges than successes in ICTL, resources exist and are becoming more and more available.

Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Pedagogy

Briefly, I will outline culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy (CRSP) and how it intersects with ICTL. Culturally relevant pedagogy was first proposed by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) in response to the exclusion and alienation of Black students in their learning. Ladson-Billings created a grounded theory based in teacher practices where Black students succeeded in schools. This theory included integrating elements of students’ cultures into their learning. CRSP has been widely used and adapted in classrooms, proving beneficial to many students’ learning (Ladson-Billings, 2014, 2021). There are many variations of CRSP, including culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy (McCarty & Lee, 2014) which looks specifically at Indigenous students and language revitalization. I use the term CRSP to historically situate culturally relevant pedagogy within its current theorization: culturally *sustaining* pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Paris & Alim, 2014). No matter the specific iteration, CRSP has three goals: 1) high student

achievement; 2) maintaining/sustaining students' own cultural competence; 3) critiquing culture and social inequities/raising critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Paris and Alim (2014) propose culturally sustaining pedagogy to specifically highlight and address cultural critique which has been left out of many different approaches to CRSP.

CRSP overlaps with ICTL because both focus on culture and use culture as a means for learning. See Table 2 for a comparison.

Table 2

CRSP versus ICTL

Culturally and Relevant and Sustaining Pedagogies	Similarities	Intercultural Teaching and Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural critique - High expectations for all students - Maintaining students' cultural competency - Integrating cultures in the classroom - Use cultural practices as form of pedagogy (ex. hip hop) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Culture as a means of learning - Reflect on students' culture and in relation to others' - Integrating student cultures increases engagement - Increase ability to navigate new culture - Reflection, interaction, engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing students' cultural competency in the target culture - Integrating the target culture(s) - "inter" space to navigate cultures

Both CRSP and ICTL emphasize the importance of (reflecting on) students' culture in relation to others. Kunnas, Masson, and Carroll (2024) demonstrate how FAL teachers think that the integration of students' cultures into their learning will result in students being more engaged. In this study, integrating students' cultures was linked with success in French. That being said, as both Paris and Alim (2014) and Ladson-Billings (2014, 2021) caution, simple cultural integration is not true CRSP. While some FAL teachers may think that students' cultures do not belong within the FAL curriculum (Kunnas et al., 2024), CRSP and ICTL demonstrate how the integration of all

students' cultures helps better understand and navigate diverse French cultures. It can also situate students in relationship with the francophone world. It is only through first understanding the self that we can then move to understand the other (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; OMLTA, 2021).

Summary: The Need for Race in French Immersion

This chapter has shown how the French language is associated with Whiteness and colonialism. As a result, teaching French in our colonially and racially structured society that makes great claims of equity through its multicultural framework is complex. I have demonstrated how research into race and racism is rare in FAL studies, even when those studies peripherally include race (e.g., immigrants, CLDs). I discussed how social issues are a recent focus in the field of FAL studies and are only now questioning social identities and how they manifest in and interact with FAL programs in Canada. I summarized where research related to race and anticolonialism is present in FAL. Anticolonialism is included due to the link between race and colonialism and because an emerging body of research on Indigenous perspectives in FAL is presented. The racial demographics of FI in the TDSB and beyond reveal that White people are still the most dominant in FI programs, even though racial disparity is improving. This chapter also briefly investigated ICTL and called for a clear integration of diverse cultures in teaching French. Race needs to be included, investigated, and problematized in FI research and beyond.

Chapter 3: Philosophical and Theoretical Frameworks

Philosophical Framework: Transformative Paradigm

A research paradigm is “a worldview that includes a set of philosophical and methodological assumptions and beliefs” (Tashakkori et al., 2020, p. 5). Tashakkori and colleagues (2020) explain that Western research usually falls within one of the five major paradigms: positivism, postpositivism, constructivism, pragmatism, or transformativism. Post/positivism largely works with quantitative methods and views itself as objective and empirical. It seeks to make universal claims about one objective reality. Constructivism, developed in opposition to positivism, primarily draws on qualitative methods. Constructivism is highly subjective, and reality is understood to be socially constructed. Pragmatism is a middle ground between the two extremes of post/positivism and constructivism. Pragmatism uses both qualitative and quantitative methods and uses any method or source that will help answer the research question at hand (Tashakkori et al., 2020). The transformative paradigm is a newer paradigm as compared to the other four and is mainly preoccupied with transforming society for the better. However, it should be noted that the paradigms are not strictly separate (Romm, 2015) and that they exist on a continuum (Tashakkori et al., 2020).

This study is designed within the transformative paradigm wherein research is conducted to examine oppressed groups and better their situation in life (Mertens, 2007, 2012; Tashakkori et al., 2020). Mertens is recognized as the founder of the transformative paradigm (Romm, 2015; Tashakkori et al., 2020). According to her, the transformative paradigm is concerned with social justice; research must be done to improve the lives of those involved, not simply because the subject interests the researcher (Mertens, 2012). This paradigm is “emancipatory, participatory, and inclusive” (Romm, 2015, p. 412). The transformative paradigm is needed so that research does

not simply document or even misrepresent those who are studied, but instead is used to advance social justice (Mertens, 2007).

Epistemology in a transformative paradigm is both subjective, intersubjective, and objective (Tashakkori et al., 2020). Mertens (2007) emphasizes the importance of an “interactive” relationship between the researcher and the participants of a study (p. 216). What constitutes knowledge is directly related to who is in power in a given situation (Mertens, 2012). Mertens also states that “Knowledge is socially and historically located within a complex cultural context. Respect for culture and awareness of power relations is crucial” (Mertens, 2007, p. 216). The transformative epistemological framework contends that the researcher is not neutral (Mertens, 2012) and I do not claim to be. I understand that my positionality influences every decision I have made throughout the research process. From the beginning of this study, I did not present myself as anything other than who I am: a human who essentially has certain biases and viewpoints. I did not see myself as separate from the participants, but as a researcher-participant in this process. I know that how we completed the research and the findings from this study are impacted by who I am and how I interpret the world. While I consulted as much as possible with the participants, this research was interpreted through my own reality and knowledge. As with critical race theory, the goal here is not to be neutral, but instead to present the lived realities of the participants.

Transformative axiology calls for three basic ethical principles:

respect, beneficence, and justice. ... Respect is critically examined in terms of the cultural norms of interaction within a community and across communities. Beneficence is defined in terms of the promotion of human rights and an increase in social justice. An explicit connection is made between the process and outcomes of research and furtherance of a social justice agenda. (Mertens, 2007, p. 216)

Throughout this study, I sought to establish a strong relationship with participants, to be open to learning about them and their cultures, and I looked to them as experts of their own experiences. I endeavoured to not judge or misinterpret their experiences and to always centre their voice. The Stage 1 participants and I took the position of “an agent of prosocial change” (Mertens, 2012, p. 806) by not only investigating experiences, but questioning how we can improve FI and make it more inclusive of racially minoritized students. Participants from Stage 1 were also prompted to think and reflect on how to improve FI. In this way, they may have also been pushed toward prosocial change.

From an ontological viewpoint, the transformative paradigm posits that while multiple realities exist (Tashakkori et al., 2020), the reality established by those in power needs to be challenged (Mertens, 2007; Romm, 2015). This means that this study accepted that there were many possible realities even within the participants themselves. While valuing and acknowledging this plurality, I sought to connect these realities to the dominant one. I recognize that everyone’s reality is inherently unique as well as socially constructed. I did my best to not assume that my reality was the only one in the room and encouraged participants to reflect on how their own experiences were unique, even when they were similar to others’.

When it comes to methodological considerations, this paradigm can be linked to pragmatic research given that it advocates for using all methods that support advancing social change (Tashakkori et al., 2020). Transformative research encourages mixed methods research to allow for an accurate understanding of the research phenomena (Mertens, 2007). Mertens (2012) proposes cyclical research, starting with qualitative research then bringing in quantitative research to enrich the findings and give voice to those who have been oppressed. Data collection and analysis needs to be tied to social action; it is not simply collection for collection’s sake (Mertens,

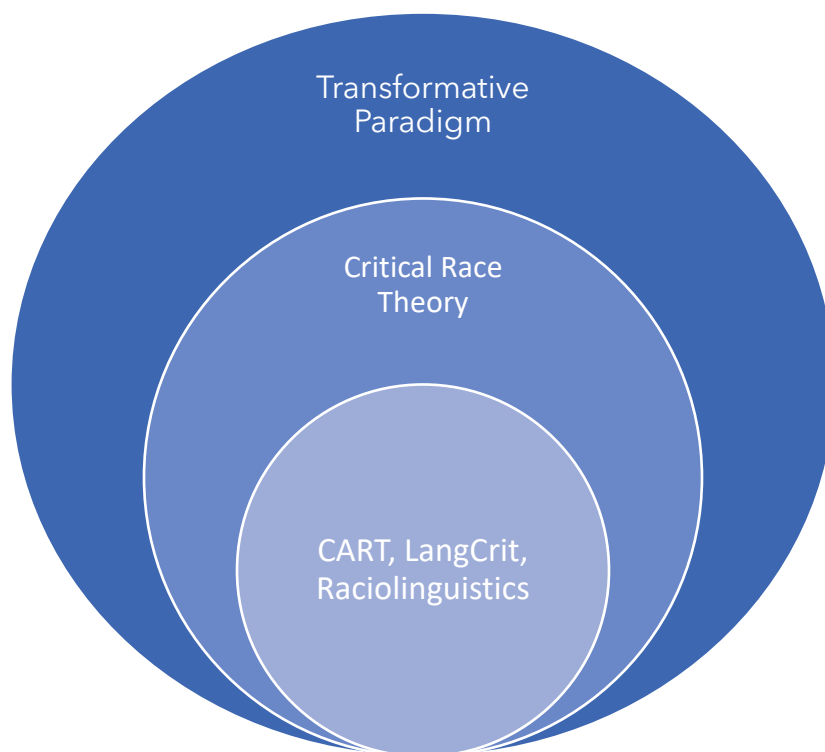
2007). Likewise, participatory action research aligns well with the transformative paradigm because it calls for active involvement of participants in the research process (Mertens, 2007).

Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory

Figure 8 summarizes the relationship between the theories framing this study. The overarching theoretical framework of this study is critical race theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Figure 8

Research Frameworks



CRT aligns with the transformative paradigm of research (Romm, 2015) due to its emphasis on social(/racial) justice. CRT first developed in the late 80s in the field of critical legal studies in the US with lawyers and scholars investigating the racial injustices in the legal system, particularly in

relation to Black people (Crump, 2014; Ladson-Billing, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). At its inception, CRT was based in three principles:

1. Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States.
 2. U.S. society is based on property rights.
 3. The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity.
- (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 48)

Critical legal studies posited that racism is endemic, challenged legal neutrality, emphasized subjectivity over objectivity, and advocated for the review of civil rights laws. Critical legal studies used counter-stories (Delgado, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2023) to demonstrate how the justice system was failing racially minoritized people, especially Black and Brown people. Unlike CRT in education, critical legal studies focused more on the problem of property rights when it comes to trying to fight for a just society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

CRT quickly travelled beyond critical legal studies into several other fields (Anya, 2021) with sub-theories like: LatCrit, AsianCrit, QueerCrit, Critical Race Feminism, and TribalCrit (Crump, 2014; Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). With obvious parallels between racist legal institutions and racist educational institutions, CRT became widely taken up in education (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). For instance, CRT-framed research has questioned the efficacy of educational reforms like multiculturalism (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Chan & Coney, 2020), and demonstrated its failures (Lei & Guo, 2022). CRT has been used as a framework in the development of antiracist pedagogy (Anya, 2021; Dei, 1996a; Kubota, 2015). CRT has been used in a variety of educational research, including language research (e.g., Schroeter & James, 2015). CRT made its way to additional language education in the mid 2000s (Kubota & Lin, 2006) and continues to grow in popularity.

First, it is important to define race as a concept. Research (Dei, 2000; Lopez, 1994; Omi & Winant, 1998) has proven that we are all one human race and the distinctions that we believe to be absolute and genetic are in fact nowhere near as defining as we believe. In fact, someone who is Black may be more genetically related to someone who is White than another Black person (Lopez, 1994). In other words, we are one race. But anyone who has experienced racism or who believes in racial supremacy of one group over another (e.g., White supremacy) would be quick to argue that we are not one race, but several different ones. While race is not an inherent biological difference that separates us, race is a societal construct that separates us based on (perceived) difference (Lopez, 1994; Omi & Winant, 1998). Race is both internal (how one view's oneself) and external (how others view you), individual and collective (Crump, 2014). Despite being a construct, race has material and immaterial consequences like being afforded or denied certain privileges (Dei, 2007). In fact, race is made real through these consequences, or, in other words, through racism and White supremacy (Dei, 2013). I define race, then, as the grouping of similar physical characteristics (skin colour, hair, etc.) and/or geographical origins (Africa, Caribbean, Europe, China, etc.). Many races exist with overlapping and different labels like: Black, White, Brown, South Asian, Asian, Indigenous, etc. Racial identity is the race that a person identifies with. Racially minoritized people or people of colour¹⁹, then, are people who do not represent the racial identity in power of a given space—in this case, all races who are not White.

¹⁹ Since every person is racialized into their race(s), I use the term racially minoritized to distinguish between White and non-White people. I prefer the term racially minoritized because it emphasizes that even in situations where one is part of the racial majority (e.g., Black people in Cameroon), they may still be minoritized by those in power locally and globally (e.g., White people). I occasionally use the term people/person of colour as a synonym for racially minoritized because of its wide use in society and research. However, I recognize that, as with any identity label, there are debates around this term, largely because all people have a colour. Moreover, racially minoritized and people of colour are the terms I use now, though I acknowledge that my terminology will likely change and evolve over time.

Within this framework, critical race theorists know that race and racism are integral to the functioning and organization of our society. Racism is real and prevalent in every aspect of society, whether we are consciously aware of it or not (Crump, 2014). There is overt (e.g., hate speech, violent acts) and covert (e.g., microaggressions, missing out on promotions, unspoken privileges and consequences) racism, macro- (ideological), meso- (sociocultural institutions), and micro-racism (social activities) (Douglas Fir Group, 2016). CRT speaks directly to race instead of shying away from it or using euphemisms like ‘ethnicity’ and ‘culture’ (Dei, 2007). CRT considers the many intersecting oppressions (a.k.a., intersectionality) that people of colour can experience and how these create unique ways in which we experience the world (Crenshaw, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1998). In CRT, participant voice is encouraged, particularly since many racialized minorities have been silenced and spoken for in research (Dei, 2000). Giving voice aligns with the transformative paradigm which advocates for fostering a space for those who have been historically oppressed to express themselves (Mertens, 2012). Further, the goal of CRT is transforming society (Dei, 2013), which echoes the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2012).

Given the wide use of CRT, there are many different tenets and foundational concepts. I draw upon Anya’s (2021) six tenets of CRT which are articulated in relation to additional language education and thus frame this study. Anya (2021) argues that “racism manifests in language education” (p. 1055) and additional language researchers must situate our work within CRT to counter racism. Anya calls for the integration of critical race pedagogy into world language education. According to Anya (2021), the tenets of CRT are:

1. **Racism is real and everywhere in society:** “the preponderance of racism, so deeply and invisibly enmeshed into thinking, interactions, systems, practices, and institutions,

- that disparities between Whites and people of colour are assumed part of a natural and inevitable order.” (p. 1056)
2. **Liberal myths uphold racism** (i.e., meritocracy, objectivity, race neutrality): CRT shows how liberal beliefs are in fact myths that continue to keep racial minorities oppressed when they fail in a supposedly post-racist/racial society.
 3. **White privilege is real**: White identity affords privileges and authority within our society, whether they are visible or not. Society is structured around White supremacy.
 4. **Interest convergence is necessary for change**: If change is to happen to better racial minorities, White people must also benefit from that change; their interests must converge.
 5. **Elevate voice and experiential knowledge of those who are racially oppressed**: racially minoritized voices are seen as “as legitimate, authoritative sources of direct evidence, and theory generation through their personal stories—or counternarratives—that challenge the dominant paradigm of White, upper class, male voices as standard knowledge.” (p. 1056)
 6. **Intersectionality makes experiences of racism unique**: experiences of racism are linked to other forms of intersecting oppression, like sexism, homophobia, classism, etc.

CRT continues to be an important framework for understanding, interrogating, and transforming our society. Simply ignoring race will not do away with racism, in fact, it will allow racism to continue unchecked. Debates around CRT and claims about it being oppressive persist in the US (Bedecarré, 2022; Kachanoff et al., 2022; Shwartz, 2023), largely due to misinformation and disinformation campaigns. These debates are not contained to the US and are also present in

Canada (Boyd, 2022). While we know that racism in Canada exists, it is often shrouded by our multiculturalism policy which claims everyone is accepted and ignores the oppressive reality of racism (Haque, 2012; Lei & Guo, 2022). In a Canadian context, where CRT has not yet reached a place of controversial infamy, now is the time to take action for racial justice, before divisive rhetoric takes even deeper root.

Critical Antiracist Theory

Critical antiracist theory (CART) (Dei, 2013) was developed in relation to CRT with the similar tenets to CRT. CART centres antiracism and calls researchers to action for social change more explicitly than CRT does (Dei, 2013). Similar to CRT, CART acknowledges that society is racist and as such, it looks for ways to integrate antiracist theories and practices into society to counter racism. While CART exists within academia and advocates for CART scholarship, it also emphasizes the necessity of activism (Dei, 2013). In this framework, antiracism goes hand in hand with anticolonialism because colonialism established and upholds the constructions of race (Smith, 2012). Dei (2013) calls for the integration of spirituality (i.e., connections to or understanding of the world/universe beyond the self) within academia in order to combat colonial scholarship and bring the whole self to the research and activism process.

The body matters in CART since who we are and how we are perceived impacts what we know (see Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006 for a discussion of geo- and body-politics; see Dei, 2016 for a discussion of embodied knowledge) and how we move through the world (Dei, 2013). Understanding how one's positionality impacts one's reading and experiencing of the world is an important consideration in CART and echoed in feminist standpoint theory (Simpson, 2003). As with the transformative paradigm, CRT scholars do not try to distance themselves from the

research and do not shy from using the personal or narratives in their work. For this reason, I will locate myself within this study at the end of this chapter.

Raciolinguistics

Until 2006, race was rarely considered in language teaching and learning research (von Esch et al., 2020). Kubota and Lin (2006) and Curtis and Romney (2006) were some of the first scholars to explicitly link race and language teaching. Since, several theoretical frameworks have emerged that foreground race in language teaching and learning. This study is framed by raciolinguistics and critical language and race theory (LangCrit). See Table 3 for a comparative summary of these theories. These two theories grew out of CRT, focusing on language, race, and inequalities (Crump, 2014). Raciolinguistics developed in the US in relation to racially minoritized bilingual students and has been applied to the critique of dual-language programs which share some similarities, as well as important differences with FI programs (as discussed in the literature review). In the Canadian context, Crump (2014) presents LangCrit (to be discussed below) and Kubota (2015) highlights the importance of integrating antiracism into language education and research.

While raciolinguistics is from the US, it offers a critical lens for examining the dynamics of Canadian FI. Rosa and Flores (2017) present five components of raciolinguistics:

- (i) historical and contemporary co-naturalizations of race and language as part of the colonial formation of modernity;
- (ii) perceptions of racial and linguistic difference;
- (iii) regimentations of racial and linguistic categories;
- (iv) racial and linguistic intersections and assemblages; and
- (v) the contestation of racial and linguistic power formations. (p. 623)

The first component shows that race and language have a colonial history in which English has been used as the dominant and dominating language (in the US). The White listening and speaking subject (Flores & Rosa, 2015) is the authority of the language and non-White speakers of the language are viewed as illegitimate (Rosa & Flores, 2017) or deficient even when saying/doing the exact same things as White people (Flores et al., 2021). This connects almost directly to Makropoulous' (2004) article and Madibbo's (2020, 2021) research which discuss the illegitimation of racially minoritized Francophones. Race and language are associated with one another in such a natural and hegemonic way that people do not question it. How does this manifest itself in FI?

Next, racialized language practices are different from and deficient to the “unmarked white norm” (Flores et al., 2021, p. 6). Accordingly, White people are celebrated for learning an additional language like Spanish while Latinx people are admonished for speaking Spanish and not knowing English (Flores et al., 2021). As such, White people may be encouraged to attend FI, whereas racially minoritized people may be discouraged from attending FI because it is seen as too difficult for them (as was the case for immigrants and CLD learners; Mady, 2016; Mady & Masson, 2018). On another note, the White subject position can be occupied by White people, non-White people, systems, and institutions (Flores et al., 2021; Rosa & Flores, 2017).

The creation of racial and linguistic categories that firmly associate language practices with specific racial groups creates a dichotomy between the affluent White English speaker and everyone else; for example, the low-income Spanish speaker. Flores, Tseng and Subtirelu (2021) explain that while this dichotomy is present within two-way immersion and the broader US society, it is not always so simple to separate these two groups. For instance, middle-class Latinx families associate themselves with White affluent families in two-way immersion instead of with the lower-

class Latinx families in the same program (Flores et al., 2021). Intersecting identities impact social segregation.

The fourth component, racial and linguistic assemblages, considers how race, language practices and other identities intersect; or, in other words, intersectionality. Many raciolinguistic studies consider the overlaps of race, language, and social class, particularly in the marketing of dual-language programs to White affluent families (Flores et al., 2021). In the US, more studies are starting to consider the intersections of race, language, and disability (Flores et al., 2021). Flores, Tseng, and Subtirelu (2021) mention that race, language, and religion have not been adequately addressed and religion is an emerging area of focus. Religion should be investigated in the field of FI given the Christian association with French in Canada (Makropoulos, 2004).

The final component of raciolinguistics is contesting racial and linguistic power formations. In other words, raciolinguistics calls for the dismantling of White supremacy. There is the assumption that in two-way immersion White students will, over time, become more accepting “agents of social change” (Flores et al., 2021, p. 12). Unfortunately, the opposite is often true: White linguistic hegemonic norms are reinforced in these programs and students do not challenge their thinking (Flores et al., 2021). We cannot simply talk about multiculturalism and equality but need to critically examine colonialism, White supremacy, and how White people historically and presently benefit from these structures and ideologies (Anya, 2021). Without considering structural and systemic issues of inequality, “these programs will benefit class-normative white people more than racialized populations both in the US and abroad” (Rosa & Flores, 2017, p. 641).

LangCrit

LangCrit, or critical language and race theory, is very similar to raciolinguistics, however it was developed in a Canadian context. Crump (2014) defines LangCrit as “ways in which race, racism, and racialization intersect with issues of language, belonging, and identity” (pp. 207-208). Crump situates LangCrit more explicitly within the realms of CRT, critical sociolinguistics, and identity than raciolinguistics does. Crump touches on what I have noticed throughout my studies, the hesitation for language scholars to address race head-on. It is often referred to in other less explicit and overlapping ways (e.g., nationality, home language, learning exceptionalities, socioeconomic status, etc.). Crump (2014) suggests that “The hesitation among language researchers to theorize about race likely stems from the historical, political, and social stigma attached to the word [race]” (p. 216). LangCrit examines how the individual (micro) is shaped by the macro, and how race and language are socially constructed in intersecting ways. The four components of LangCrit are:

- 1) acknowledges that racism is a real part of everyday society;
- 2) accounts for socially constructed and negotiated hierarchies and boundaries among social categories, such as language, identity, and race, which constitute a continuum of possibilities from fixed to fluid;
- 3) embraces and seeks out the intersectionality of different dimensions of identity;
- 4) and emphasizes how local language practices and individual stories are connected to broader social, political, and historical practices and discourses through nested relationships that are woven together through webs of social relations. (Crump, 2014, p. 218)

This study combines these overlapping and intersecting theories to centre race and raise questions about how race intersects with language and identity within the FI program.

Table 3

LangCrit versus Raciolinguistics

LangCrit	Similarities	Raciolinguistics
Context		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canadian context • Has sometimes been applied in CLD environments, but not elsewhere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to be applied broadly in language research outside of their specific national contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US context • Developed from/for minoritized bilingual students in dual-language programs
Foundations		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavily based in CRT and follows the same tradition of other theories based in CRT which add ‘crit’ to the end of the theory (e.g., LatCrit, AsianCrit) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based in CRT, applied linguistics and sociolinguistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cites many CRT scholars and constructs as a base for raciolinguistics, but does not mention CRT as a foundation of this theory
Constructs		
<p><u>3 main constructs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity: “LangCrit captures a full spectrum of identity possibilities (imposed, assumed, and negotiated).” (p. 209) • Language and languaging: languages are not as distinct as people think, but the fact that they think so gives this distinction power; “The doing of language is intricately intertwined with the performativity of identity” (p. 210) • Race: Race as social, not as biology: “skin color differences do exist, and people have different physiques and hair types, but the meanings associated with those traits are socially and historically constructed, not biological facts”; “race as a construct that has significant material and social consequences for individuals and groups of people.” (p. 211) • These constructs are socially and locally constructed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race, language, identity all connected • Fluidity of identities • Languages are fluid, not fixed • Race, language, identity are inter-related 	<p><u>3 main constructs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race: created to make Others in opposition to European supremacy; does not emphasize it as an innately separate category • Language: European languages positioned as superior to all others; others were put into fixed categories in opposition to European languages; languages are not fixed; language is closely related to race, but not always • Identity: not a fixed category; “assemblages of signs and identities are configured in particular contexts, from particular perspectives, and with particular consequences.” (p. 636) • Constructs are not clearly defined like they are in LangCrit

LangCrit	Similarities	Raciolinguistics
Main Components		
<p><u>4 main components:</u></p> <p>“1) acknowledges that racism is a real part of everyday society; 2) accounts for socially constructed and negotiated hierarchies and boundaries among social categories, such as language, identity, and race, which constitute a continuum of possibilities from fixed to fluid; 3) embraces and seeks out the intersectionality of different dimensions of identity; 4) and emphasizes how local language practices and individual stories are connected to broader social, political, and historical practices and discourses through nested relationships that are woven together through webs of social relations.” (p. 218)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchies in racial and linguistic categories • Intersectionality • Socially constructed boundaries of race and language • Social and historical influences on race and language 	<p><u>5 main components:</u></p> <p>“(i) historical and contemporary co-naturalizations of race and language as part of the colonial formation of modernity; (ii) perceptions of racial and linguistic difference; (iii) regimentations of racial and linguistic categories; (iv) racial and linguistic intersections and assemblages; and (v) the contestation of racial and linguistic power formations.” (p. 623)</p>
Other Elements		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking subject is “the subject-as-seen and the subject-as-heard.” (p. 217) • Within society the speaking subject is racialized: “The outer sphere thus represents a site of racialization, where people are judged against White norms and marginalized based on judgments made not first on their language, but on the way they look.” (p. 217) • Brings subject-as-seen to the fore, instead of just subject-as-heard (i.e., brings race into conversation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking subject is racialized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening and speaking subject as well as a racially hegemonic perceiving subject • Interrogates “the interpretive and categorizing practices of racially hegemonic perceiving subjects” (p. 628) • Links explicitly to Whiteness: Whiteness “as a structural position” (p. 630) that can include White people, non-White people and institutions • White listening subject is interpreted through “hegemonic perceptions” (p. 630) that are both linguistic and semiotic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritizes both micro and macro 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connections between micro and macro 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leans slightly more toward the macro (situates the micro/individual within the broader sociohistorical context)

LangCrit	Similarities	Raciolinguistics
	Other Elements Ctd.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More contemporary, less discussion of history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical and contemporary lens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More historical; constantly refers to how history has influenced the present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not speak explicitly to White supremacy, but challenges racism and Whiteness as the norm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges racism and default Whiteness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly challenges White and European supremacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentions nation-state in terms of constructing languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions the connection of the nation-state and language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connects more explicitly to the building of the nation-state, colonialism, and structures/systems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “nation-state/colonial governmentality relied on raciolinguistic ideologies that positioned colonized populations as inferior to idealized European populations” (p. 627)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosocial system; both/and ideology 		

Note. All quotations about LangCrit come from Crump, 2014. All quotations about raciolinguistics come from Rosa & Flores, 2017.

La Négritude

CRT can be related to the Negritude movement (1930s – 1960s) in Africa and the Caribbean. Negritude was a literary and socio-political movement that came about during the liberation and decolonization of many African and Caribbean countries (Nielsen, 2013). Authors of this movement focused on anticolonialism. The movement had similar goals and foci to CRT today, however, it was essentially African and Caribbean. Frantz Fanon, who studied under one of the founders of Negritude, Aimé Césaire (Nielsen, 2013), is an integral author to many studying CRT today, including myself in my one of my antiracism courses. Negritude authors were Francophones engaged with issues of race, racism, and anticolonialism in the French language and society. Some key publications from the movement include: *The wretched of the earth* and *Black skin, white masks* by Frantz Fanon; *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* and *Le discours sur le colonialisme* by Aimé Césaire; and, *La rue cases-nègres* by Joseph Zöbel. In these works, Negritude scholars incisively critique the twin pillars of colonialism and racism and present counter-stories of resistance and humanity. In this way, CRT has been influenced by Black French scholars and as such, it has an interesting connection to this study.

Researcher Positionality

Here, I reflect on my positionality. I am a Black woman FI teacher from a low-income family. My father is an immigrant from the Caribbean and my mother's parents are immigrants from Scandinavia. I was born in Ontario, Canada and have lived here my whole life. I grew up with a strong sense of justice—stemming in part from the rights and freedoms granted to me as a Canadian citizen. I speak both English and French, learning both through school and the latter through some trips to Quebec. I attended core French as a student and have taught in FI classes

since 2016. My own social location reveals why I tend to focus more on issues related to race, gender, and social class, as this is where I have been disadvantaged in my life.

I have completed three post-secondary degrees and am heavily entrenched in academia and education, being that I am a teacher and graduate student. As a Black woman teacher in an elite program, and an anglophone researcher, I occupy the space of “the outsider within” (Hill Collins, 2002, p. 11). While I have gained access to elite (White) areas like FI and graduate studies, making me an insider, my race and gender will forever push me to the fringe. I cannot embody the true insider identity of a White cis man even if I wanted to. For this reason, I have to perform twice as hard as my White peers to be taken as seriously (Henderson et al., 2010). I cannot fully fit into academic spaces which have not been designed for me, and in fact until recent decades, intentionally excluded those of my race and gender. That being said, the outsider-within position affords me with the ability to view and to critique the systems in which I operate (Hill Collins, 2002). My varying identities place me simultaneously in positions of privilege and oppression and impact how I view and interpret the world and my research.

I am a settler scholar on unjustly acquired Indigenous lands. My own privileges as a settler in the colonial state of Canada affords me with many unearned and often unnoticed (by me) privileges. Even as someone who attempts to employ decolonial and anticolonial frameworks (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001; Smith, 2016; Tuck & Yang, 2012), I am still benefitting from the continued subjugation of Indigenous peoples and the environmental decimation of a globalized world. In many ways, colonial epistemologies within the schooling system, in higher education, and applied linguistics (e.g., Kubota, 2019) have made me ignorant to and take for granted my rights and responsibilities on this land. Working within the field of education creates its own tensions with Indigenous peoples in light of the violent history that the education system has in Canada (e.g.,

residential “schools”). I know two colonial languages and actively teach and research one (French), highlighting my own participation in the ongoing linguistic hierarchization and domination in Canada. Particularly in terms of FAL teaching, learning and research, I am able to access funding and participate in the economy because of the linguistic capital that the French language affords me. I need to bring myself and my work into conversation with Indigenous peoples and disrupt my image as a “perfect stranger” with no relation to Indigenous peoples or their concerns (Dion, 2007, p. 330). I have started on the path to disrupt the perfect stranger, but have a long road ahead of me, especially as I work within and continue to uphold colonial thought and institutions. I continuously grapple with the question: can we/I ever teach French in a way that is anti/decolonial, or will it always uphold the colonial project?

Summary

This chapter outlined the philosophical and theoretical frameworks of this study. The study exists within the transformative paradigm with the end goal of transforming society to be more just. In line with this paradigm, we find CRT and its related sub-theories. CRT centres race and looks at ways to bring racial injustice to light. CART explicitly works toward countering racism in education for the betterment of society. Within CRT and CART, objective research is not seen as possible, hence the need to locate the self and reflect upon how one’s various identities impact their research. Finally, LangCrit and raciolinguistics are sub-theories of CRT that relate explicitly to race, language, and identity. These theories are highly relevant to my study which is based in the FI language program and interrogates issues of race and identity. Lastly, I located myself within this study and questioned how my multiple identities influence my research and afford me power (or not). The next chapter will outline the research design of the study.

Chapter 4: Research Design

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design for the study. It starts first by summarizing the types of research that have been completed in FI to contextualize this study within the broader field. Next, I explain the methodologies framing the study: arts-based research, counter-stories, youth participatory action research, and online focus groups. Here, I consider the appropriateness of these methodologies in a study framed by CRT. The chapter then presents the overall research design followed by a detailed description of each stage of the study. This study was a multimethod qualitative and quantitative exploratory sequential study. It had three stages: 1) virtual Playbuilding; 2) online questionnaire; and, 3) member-checking. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the quality of the data from the study.

Types of FI Research

FI research about social and equity issues are mostly qualitative in nature (Cobb, 2015; Dagenais, 2003; Mady & Arnett, 2015; Makropoulos, 2010, 2009), with few quantitative (Mady, 2015; Sinay, 2010) and mixed methods studies (Mady, 2017; Sinay et al., 2018). All four main methodological communities are present in FI research: constructivist, transformative, pragmatist, and post/positivist (Tashakkori et al., 2020). Within the qualitative realm, phenomenology (Cobb, 2015), ethnography (Dagenais, 2003; Makropoulos, 2010; Palmer, 2010), and historical policy sociology (Gale, 2001; Heller, 1990; Olson & Burns, 1983; Wise, 2011) are common methodological frameworks. In terms of methods, researchers use: interviews (Cobb, 2015; Dagenais, 2003; Mady & Arnett, 2015; Makropoulos, 2010, 2009), case studies (Yoon & Gulson, 2010), and document/text-based studies (Heller, 1990; Kunnas, 2019; Mady & Arnett, 2009; Netten, 2007; Olson & Burns, 1983). Rovers (2013) explored integrating arts into the FAL

classroom to promote language use, though her study did not analyze any art created by participants and focused on language outcomes. Masson and Cote (2024) used linguistic portraits with FAL teacher candidates to explore legitimacy and belonging. Arts-based research in FAL is an emerging area of research (Masson et al., 2021), though, there is a lot of arts-based research in additional language learning more broadly (e.g., Burton & Van Viegen, 2021; Farmer & Cepin, 2017; Leavy, 2020; Stille & Prasad, 2015; Tahooley et al., 2012).

Most quantitative FI studies are part of a mixed method study and are postpositivist. Most studies use descriptive statistics to analyze surveys and tests (Arnett & Mady, 2017; Genesee, 2007; Mady, 2013, 2015, 2017; Sinay, 2010; Sinay et al., 2018), although some use inferential statistics (e.g., Parekh et al., 2011). Quantitative methods are generally used to enhance qualitative findings in FI studies. Mady (2015, 2017) is one of the few equity-based researchers in FI who employs solely quantitative methods because she primarily investigates student achievement.

Methodologies

Arts-Based Research

I define art as any creative production from written (poems, stories) to performed (monologues, films) to creations (statues, paintings, collages). In my perspective, anyone who creates art is an artist, though there is a distinction between novices or amateurs (i.e., beginners, unpaid) and professionals (i.e., paid, those who have studied and/or created art extensively). From an arts-based research (ABR) perspective, anyone can do art, though the researcher should have experience with the art form and/or a professional should be present to assist with it (Leavy, 2020).

ABR is any research that uses the arts to generate and/or disseminate data. This may include participants creating stories, videos, multimedia portraits, etc., or the researcher creating art based on the findings from their research. In Cahnmann-Taylor and Siegesmund's (2018) words,

“Scholartists [scholar-artists] do not only record data; they also make it” (p. 5). Many academics have become “disenchanted” (Leavy, 2020, p. 1) with the academy and seek out ABR to find ways to both involve participants in research and disseminate knowledge beyond academic journals (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2018; Leavy, 2020). While Leavy (2020) argues that ABR is a new paradigm, different from qualitative and quantitative research, I situate ABR within the qualitative paradigm given its overwhelming use of qualitative methods. Cahnmann-Taylor and Siegesmund (2018) emphasize that ABR does not necessitate any specific theoretical framework nor a specific data analysis process, but instead can work with many different approaches.

There are many benefits to ABR. I will only highlight a few that directly apply to this study (from Leavy, 2020); ABR:

- Raises critical consciousness, raises awareness, provokes empathy
- “unsettle[s] stereotypes, challenge[s] dominant ideologies, and amplif[ies] marginalized voices and perspectives” (p. 25)
- Creates counterimages/counter-stories that jar people into rethinking stereotypes
- Is participatory
- Promotes dialogue
- Creates public scholarship and promotes social justice
- Allows for multiple meanings and interpretations
- Encourages learning about others

The arts seek to “illuminate aspects of the human condition” (Leavy, 2020, p. 4). Given that working with the arts can promote deep self-reflection, one artist-teacher-researcher reflected that writing poems in his language class gave him freedom in the language that he normally would not have as an additional language learner (Hwang, 2018). This teacher embraced his linguistic

identities through poetry which reinforced his additional language abilities. Oftentimes, we might reveal more than we would through the arts and are better able to articulate our ideas than through non-creative venues (Khanolainen & Semenova, 2020; Leavy, 2020; Seppälä et al., 2021; Vaart et al., 2020).

ABR also has some potential barriers and challenges. The concept of performing can be intimidating to those who have rarely engaged with it before or who feel they do not have the required skillset (Cahnmann-Taylor & McGovern, 2021; Khanolainen & Semenova, 2020). Furthermore, art is viewed as a way to break down linguistic barriers (Leavy, 2020); however, participants' personal feelings toward art may preclude them from enrolling in an ABR study (Khanolainen & Semenova, 2020). In their narrative review of ABR literature, Nathan et al., (2023) note ABR is “resource- and time-intensive” (p. 801), brings up potential ethical issues around consent and ownership, and ABR may “expose young people to retraumatization by triggering past experiences” (p. 802). For this reason, the authors advocate for mental health support for participants who are engaging with difficult topics.

Performance Arts

The dramatic arts and performance art fall within ABR. While ABR and performance do not always portray 100% fact, they are rooted in autoethnographic narratives and portray people's lived realities in ways that may be more impactful than nonfiction research (Leavy, 2020; Norris, 2016). Because it is not entirely fact and due to its creative nature, ABR can create spaces to critique power systems that would otherwise be impossible to critique (Leavy, 2020). Oddly, “performance can make things seem more ‘real’” (Leavy, 2020, p. 183) even though it is a work of fiction. Performance research is particularly good for “consciousness-raising, empowerment, emancipation, political agendas, discovery, exploration, and education” (Leavy, 2020, p. 183).

Seppälä et al. (2021) echo these benefits, particularly in using the arts for decolonizing. Arts-based methods for decolonization can help educate and heal participants who have undergone oppression due to colonialism (Seppälä et al., 2021). While my work does not focus on decolonization directly, antiracism work is rooted in anticolonialism (Dei, 2016). Moreover, I argue that French is a deeply colonial language and simply having racially minoritized students speak about and in it could be seen as an act of disrupting French colonial narratives.

Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1985) influenced the development of this study, even though it is not explicitly part of the study. Theatre of the Oppressed, or forum theatre, was developed following the tenets of critical pedagogy (Freire, 2018) and advocates that theatre can be used to raise consciousness of those who are oppressed and help them “rehears[e] for revolution” (Boal, 1985, p. 122). Boal argues that through exploring ways to address societal problems through theatre, participants are more likely to then take action in their lives against oppression. Theatre goers are not just audience members, but “spect-actors” who play an active role in the performance through feedback, dialogue, or even going on stage. Schroeter (2013; Schroeter & James, 2015) has shown how employing Theatre of the Oppressed with African French-speaking youth has led them to be able to critique a specialized refugee program and explore their own identities. My study does not follow Boal's audience as spect-actors, though, the audience is asked to speak back through the online questionnaire.

Playbuilding as a Method

This study mainly employed Playbuilding as a method (see Norris, 2016). Playbuilding is a dramatic ABR method that involves creating a play based in autoethnographic stories. The Playbuilding process is similar to devised theatre and other forms of collective creation (e.g., Oddey, 1994; Smith et al., 2020). In devised theatre, the company works as a collective around a

theme or question to create a piece of theatre together. Playbuilding differs from ethnodrama because in ethnodrama, participant data serves as a basis for the dramaturge/researcher to create a dramatic piece based on interviews (Norris, 2016). Ethnodrama can include direct quotes and verbatim theatre. Playbuilding, however, actively involves the participants in the creation of the performance—they are not inspiration, but instead co-creators. Below, I outline Norris’ (2016) original conception of Playbuilding (see Figure 9).

Figure 9

Norris’ Playbuilding Process



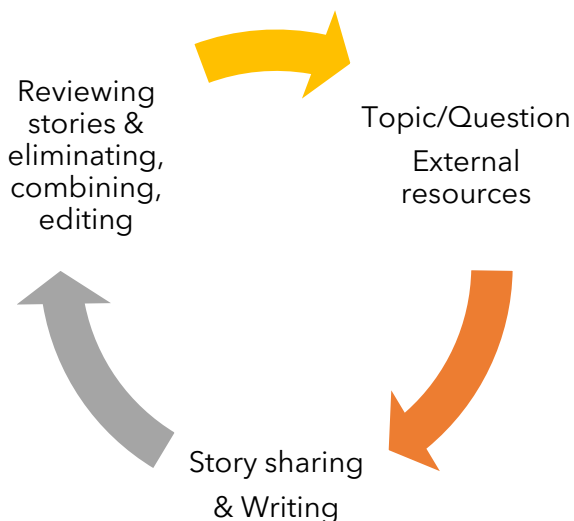
Note. Adapted from Norris, 2016, p. 40.

Playbuilding starts with a question or subject, generally imposed by the researcher. In a group, participants are invited to share their own autoethnographic stories related to that topic. This sharing unfolds naturally and one person’s story may remind someone else of something related that they share or they might be completely different stories altogether (see Figure 10). Sometimes outside documents will be brought into the session to prompt ideas and stories, like statistics, demographics, or newspaper articles. Documents come “from both deliberate searches and serendipitous occasions” during the play creation (Norris, 2016, p. 25), for example, members researching more about bullying or someone coming across a news article by chance that pertained to the play topic and bringing it in to share with the collective. At the end of each sharing session, participants are invited to write down their stories so that there is a written record of what they shared. At the beginning of each collective storytelling session, the written stories are reviewed.

People continue to share oral stories and write them down until, collectively, participants feel there are enough stories to draw from to create vignettes.

Figure 10

Playbuilding Story Sharing Phase



Note. Adapted from Norris, 2016, p. 40.

Once there is a substantial collection of stories, participants review the written stories and choose the ones that are the most impactful (however the collective defines this: emotional, complex, pedagogical, exemplary, etc.) to the group. Review may include combining stories and editing them. After this point, participants organically break into small groups to create vignettes based on their chosen written story/stories. Vignettes do not have to be literal or realistic and may be metaphorical. Vignettes can include individuals, small groups, or the whole collective. Once vignettes have been created, they are shared with the collective. Collective workshopping (revising) of the work occurs until everyone is satisfied with the product created. As a group, participants choose a presentation order for the play. Collective authorship is an important element of Playbuilding. As a group, the participants choose a company name and all work created is

attributed to the collective. Individuals may elect to include their names within the citation should they so choose. Participants are not just authors in theory, they receive credit and reference for their work. The play is performed before a live audience. Playbuilding is similar to Theatre of the Oppressed in that audience members may be invited on stage during or after the performance, or there may be deep discussion between the audience and cast once the play is over. The performance serves as dissemination of the research generated.

ABR methods and Playbuilding were used in this study because of my own experiences as a Drama teacher. I have written many short plays, directed student-written and licenced plays, and have taught multiple FI Drama classes in the past. Because of my drama background, my focus on social justice in my teaching, and my critical race studies at the graduate level, I undertook Playbuilding with former FI students as co-creators. Playbuilding also complements CRT and the transformative paradigm given its emphasis on participant voice and its goal of raising awareness and action around a given topic.

Counter-Stories

Narratives and storytelling are common approaches in ABR. Subramanian (2018) argues, “Stories are particularly useful ... because of their accessibility; everyone has a story to tell, and telling a good story does not require an extensive education” (p. 92). Given that Playbuilding revolves around story sharing, in this case, of racially minoritized people, this study employs counter-stories (Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), a common CRT method (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Delgado (1989) defines counter-story as a story that presents a different (or counter) narrative to the dominant narrative. To Delgado, counter-story is both fictional and nonfictional. Counter-story is not just a method to share stories of those who have been oppressed, but also “a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian

stories of racial privilege” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). In other words, “stories can shatter complacency and challenge the status quo” (Delgado, 1989, p. 2414). For Delgado (1989), counter-stories serve as “psychic self-preservation” (p. 2437), a form of therapy, and solidarity for those in the “out-group”. This is echoed by Subramanian (2018) who says, “Personal narratives of oppression build solidarity and community by providing platforms for discussion, healing, and action and making visible commonalities between the experiences of marginalized groups” (p. 92). Storytelling is an excellent way for the racially minoritized and other marginalized people to amplify their voices and be heard (Subramanian, 2018).

For those in the “in-group” counter-stories are a way for them to “enrich their own reality” (p. 2439) and challenge their conceptions of the world. Similar to the power of performance, the “graphic quality” of counter-stories “can stir imagination in ways in which more conventional discourse cannot” (Delgado, 1989, p. 2415; see also, Leavy, 2020). This imaginative quality to stories allows the in-group to “suspend judgement [and] listen” (Delgado, 1989, p. 2415). In other words, narratives are engaging and help develop empathy and self-reflexivity (Leavey, 2020). These goals tie into the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2012), since promoting reflection is one way to ameliorate society.

While there are clear benefits to counter-storytelling, there have also been critiques of such an approach. For example, Subramanian (2018) offers the critique that counter-stories can be detrimental as there is no guarantee that that telling/hearing one’s story will result in some form of action or social justice. Instead, Subramanian argues that scholars need to use their privilege to change the world, instead of simply sharing stories. Another critique of storytelling comes from Tuck and Yang (2014) when it comes to exploiting pain narratives to reinforce a deficit view of a

given group and advance a scholar's career—a common practice in research about Indigenous and other people of colour. Tuck and Yang (2014) argue:

The stories that are considered most compelling, considered most authentic in social science research are stories of pain and humiliation. Reporting on that pain with detailed qualitative data and in people's "real voices" is supposed to yield needed material or political resources; this is the prominent but unreliable theory of change in the academy. (p. 812)

Thinking deeply with their concerns about "inquiry as invasion" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 813), I see the ways this study may contribute to the "pain tourism" (p. 811). Tuck and Yang promote the refocusing of research on institutions and power and move away from presenting the traumatic stories of the oppressed. In an effort to move away from trauma narratives, I asked participants to reflect on positive experiences and what they wanted to see in FI instead of only focusing on the negative. However, they chose to focus, for the most part, on the negative and on sharing their stories of pain. Perhaps this tendency stemmed from Delgado's (1989) and Subramanian's (2018) assertion that story sharing was a form of healing or therapy for participants. Additionally, the study's guiding question—what are your experiences related to race and *racism*—likely directed participants toward sharing negative experiences only. Kubota (2015) similarly presents the critique that counter-stories can be used to essentialize the multitude of experiences faced by racially minoritized people, however, she employs them nonetheless in a bid to make visible the need for critical antiracism. Moreover, Kubota connects the individual to institutions and questions the role of institutional racism. My study moved away from observation as method—which is critiqued by Tuck and Yang (2014)—toward collective creation. Future research will need to shift toward antiracism, instead of experiences of racism and investigate the powerful ways that racially

minoritized people are succeeding. Further, counter-stories are firmly situated within CRT (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Miller et al., 2020; Subramanian, 2018), so while there is an abundance of pain stories, it may be better to tell them than to let them go on silenced, particularly when the voices of racially minoritized students have been relatively absent from the literature.

Youth Participatory Action Research

ABR ties into youth participatory action research (YPAR) because of its participatory nature. YPAR falls within critical pedagogy (Anderson, 2020; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Wright, 2020) and CRT (Anya, 2021) because it aims to empower youth and involve them in their own research to transform oppressive systems (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). YPAR is in line with the transformative paradigm, which explicitly draws on participatory action research (Mertens, 2007, 2012; Romm, 2015). The key elements of YPAR are: “(a) Power-sharing between youth and adults; (b) training in research methods and advocacy; (c) training in critical thinking for social change; and (d) building alliances with stakeholders” (Branquinho et al., 2020, p. 1302). YPAR is usually undertaken with marginalized and racially minoritized youth, echoing the CRT tenet of positioning racialized minorities in the centre. Similar to Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 1985), “Once a young person discovers [their] capacity to effect change [through YPAR], oppressive systems and subjugating discourses no longer persuade [them] that the deep social and economic problems [they] faces result from [their] own volition” (Cammarota & Fine, 2008, p. 6). Wright’s study (2020) demonstrates how well ABR and YPAR tie in together, particularly for prioritizing youth within the research process and giving space for them exercise their agency.

Due to revising the study based on ethical clearances and access to participants, the study fell short of its original YPAR goals. For instance, participants received very limited training about research methods and advocacy because of the limited time frame and lack of interest. That being

said, I was very transparent about the research process during and after Playbuilding—even adding a third follow-up stage so that I could explain and confirm findings. Likewise, we spent some time considering critical thinking for social change throughout the process, particularly when we thought about the needs for racially minoritized students in FI programs. However, there could have been more time devoted to activism and research training, and I remained the authority of the research. Lastly, there was no explicit building of alliances with stakeholders, but participants were invited to share our website with FI stakeholders and have them participate in the online survey. The Stage 3 participant expressed interest in joining a school board presentation, though at this point no presentation has occurred. For these reasons, only some elements of YPAR were integrated into the study.

Online Focus Groups

Stage 1 was similar to online focus groups. Focus groups are group discussions on a chosen topic guided by a moderator (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). Like counter-stories, “focus group discussions can provide a very supportive forum in which participants can express their emotions or anxieties” (Sim & Waterfield, 2019, p. 3012). Even before the pandemic, a move to online research was starting (Kite & Phongsavan, 2017). Conducting research online has some clear benefits: anyone can join from around the world, especially those in remote locations; research can be lower cost; increased speed when it comes to data collection (for example, having Zoom auto transcribe recorded sessions) (Kite & Phongsavan, 2017); and you are able to anonymize names and turn off a camera should the participant desire. In fact, giving participants autonomy in the extent of their anonymity counteracts many of the potential harms that Sim and Waterfield (2019) discuss about focus groups (e.g., breaches in confidentiality and anonymity). As anyone who has

participated in a Zoom call knows, virtual interactions are not the same as in-person ones; however, they can still be powerful. One researcher remarked:

using videoconferencing platforms to conduct interviews and focus groups has both allowed me to see more of the world in which the participants live and has enabled participants to be more relaxed and open in their conversations, resulting in a potentially richer dataset. (Fletcher, 2021, p. 141)

Fletcher believed they had greater insight into their participants. Henage et al. (2021) likewise demonstrate that successful interactivity is possible in online focus groups and see them as a viable option for qualitative data collection.

Some drawbacks to online research are that, due to audio quality and other technological considerations, participants cannot speak over one another as would happen more naturally in person. Additionally, there are often technological or internet connectivity issues, making it difficult for participants to participate (or for facilitators to facilitate). This may result in less natural interactions where you must wait for someone to finish speaking or unfreeze.

Research Design Overview

The research design is summarized in Figure 11. This study had a mixed multimethod exploratory sequential design. There were three stages: 1) Playbuilding; 2) online qualitative survey; 3) member-checking. The project took place entirely virtually via Zoom, wix.com, and Google Forms from July 2022-June 2023. The research questions were:

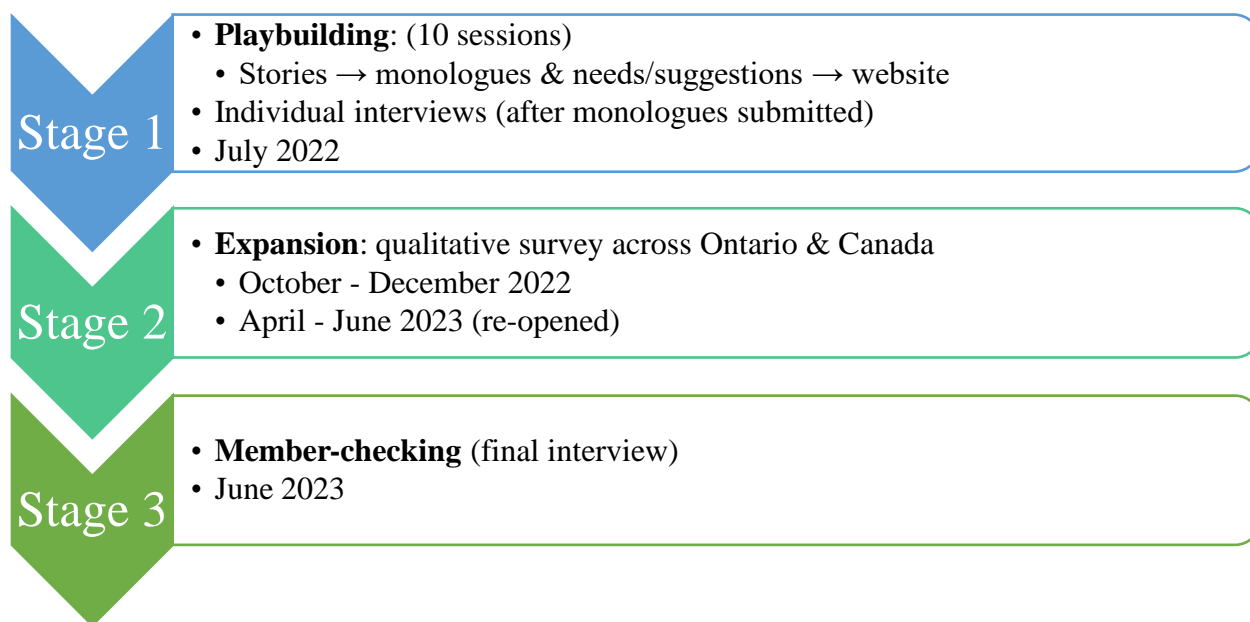
1. What are the experiences of racially minoritized students in FI programs in Ontario?
 - a. What common themes and needs emerge from these experiences?
 - b. What suggestions for improvement do racially minoritized students have for FI programs?

2. How do FI stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, administrators) react to these experiences and suggestions?

Here, ‘experience’ is used in the broadest sense, meaning what students live through or undergo and how they perceive the world. Experience includes internal and external elements such as emotions and actions.

Figure 11

Simplified Research Design



The study was originally conceptualized as an antiracism unit that would be implemented in a secondary school drama classroom. Unfortunately, the chosen school board denied this research study due to concerns about (re)traumatizing students by discussing racism as well as how time-intensive the study was. As a result, the research project was reconceptualized as it is presented here. The antiracism unit would have included: participants exploring antiracist principles, Playbuilding sessions, and a final play presented to the school and/or school community. The original study was designed with the intention of involving the whole class in

learning about antiracism. The main differences between the proposed antiracism unit and what actually happened are that the study was not a classroom intervention, a series of monologues were created instead of a play, and there was no performance.

Stage 1: Playbuilding

Participant Sample and Recruitment

The participant sample for the Playbuilding process was purposively chosen from across Ontario. All those who self-identified as a racial minority, who completed at least 8 years of FI schooling, and were aged 16-20 were eligible to participate in this study. Participants could be current or former FI students. I sought out 8-15 participants meeting these criteria, however, only three participated. Recruitment proved difficult; despite many expressing interest, very few actually participated. Places were filled on a first come first serve basis, and one participant (Hassan) joined four days into the study. Ages 16-20 were chosen so that participants would be able to consent for themselves, have recent memories of being in FI, and had done at least 8 years of FI programming. The requirement of completing 8 years of FI was based on the fact that many FI students leave the program after Grade 8, but they may still have many experiences they wish to share about their time in FI. Additionally, they would have ample experiences to draw on during the data generation phase. Including both former and current FI students broadened the participant pool when considering FI's attrition issues (Sinay et al., 2018).

Participants were mainly recruited via email and word of mouth through the snowball method (Tashakkori et al., 2020) of my own social and professional network. Emails included a link to a website (since archived) describing the project in plain language. I contacted teachers and former students that I knew and asked them to participate in or promote the study. My supervisor

and advisory committee also shared the study with their networks. Lastly, participants were recruited through my social media network: I posted on FI Facebook groups and Instagram.

Participants were incentivized by \$20 payments after each session (\$20 x 10 sessions = \$200). Incentivization was offered for three reasons. One, conversations with fellow graduate students revealed their difficulty with recruitment without incentivization. Two, in light of the time commitment involved in this study (about 20 hours), I felt it important to compensate participants, especially because participants were racially minoritized people who are often asked to do unpaid labour. Three, given that this stage happened during the summer, I recognized that I would need more incentive for participation. Incentivization was made possible through my Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Joseph-Armand Bombardier CGS Doctoral Scholarship.

Participant Demographics

Participant demographic information was collected via a Google Form. This data was confidential, and participants were not required to answer any questions they did not wish to. The demographic questionnaire is located in Appendix A and contains questions around race, gender, spirituality, nationality, and languages spoken. As an oversight, I did not include a section on their sexual identities or socioeconomic status. All demographic data was self-reported.

Stage 1 recruited three participants, Ace, Roy, and Hassan²⁰ (see Table 4 for a summary of their identities). Surprisingly, more men (n=2) than women (n=1) participated in the study, despite the lack of boys in FI. I was expecting no men at all. All participants were young, either having just graduated from FI or entering their Grade 12 year. Ace and Roy are Black and Hassan is South Asian. Ace and Roy speak English as a first language, whereas Hassan was multilingual, speaking

²⁰All pseudonyms. Participants were given the option to choose their own, but only Ace did. The other pseudonyms were approved by Roy and Hassan.

English and Bengali as his first languages. All participants were Canadian citizens, all started FI in senior kindergarten, and none had identified special education needs. Ace and Roy said they “sometimes” liked FI (though Ace later went on to say she did not like it) and Hassan said he did like it.

Table 4:

Stage 1 Participant Demographics

	Ace	Hassan	Roy
Race	Black	South Asian	Black
Gender	Woman	Man	Man
Age	16	17	18
Languages	English L1	English & Bengali L1	English L1
Religion	--	Spiritual	Christian
Learning Status	No special education needs	No special education needs	No special education needs
Nationality	Canadian	Canadian	Canadian
FI Start Year	Started in SK	Started in SK	Started in SK
Type of FI Schools	FI Centre, Dual Track	Dual Track	Dual Track
General FI Feeling	Sometimes liked FI; overall negative	Liked FI; overall neutral-positive	Sometimes Liked FI; overall neutral-negative
Post-Secondary Plans	University	University	College
Social/Equity Awareness	Equity minded	Not very equity minded	Somewhat equity minded
General Disposition	Cynical	Positive	Apathetic
Relationship with Researcher	Taught briefly	Did not teach	Taught extensively
Openness to Sharing	Very Open	Somewhat Open	Open
FI Demographics	Majority White Multilingual Few IEPs	50-50 White/POC Multilingual Few IEPs	~40-50 Black/White Multilingual Few IEPs
Neighbourhood	Middle-class, majority White	Middle-class, Greek and South Asian	Middle-class Black and White

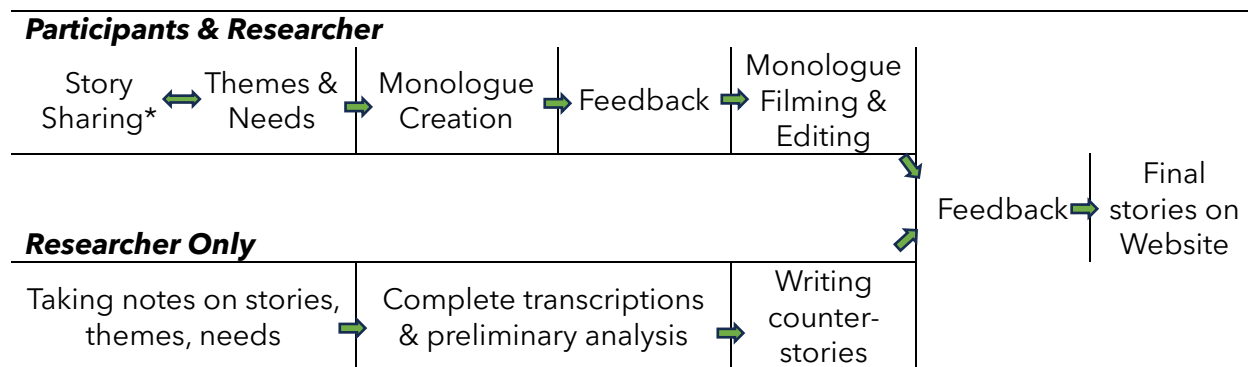
Ace and Roy attended all sessions, while Hassan joined on the fourth day of the study and attended all sessions after that point. Both Ace and Hassan chose to participate in an individual interview following the completion of their monologues. None of the participants turned on their camera during the length of the study, choosing to participate solely using audio.

Data Generation and Collection

The data from this study was generated by participants and the researcher and included: autoethnographic counter-stories; monologue scripts and videos (n= 2)/audio recordings (n=2); and, a list of themes and suggestions to improve FI. I contributed to the data generation in tandem with the participants to both equalize some power dynamics of me being the ultimate authority in Playbuilding process and to see what my experiences might add to the process. However, my data is not emphasized in the analysis. I chose to cut my monologue from the analysis in favour of prioritizing the youth participants' findings. The data collected by me were: demographic information; audio recordings and transcripts of autoethnographic stories from participants; and, researcher notes.

Modified Playbuilding Structure

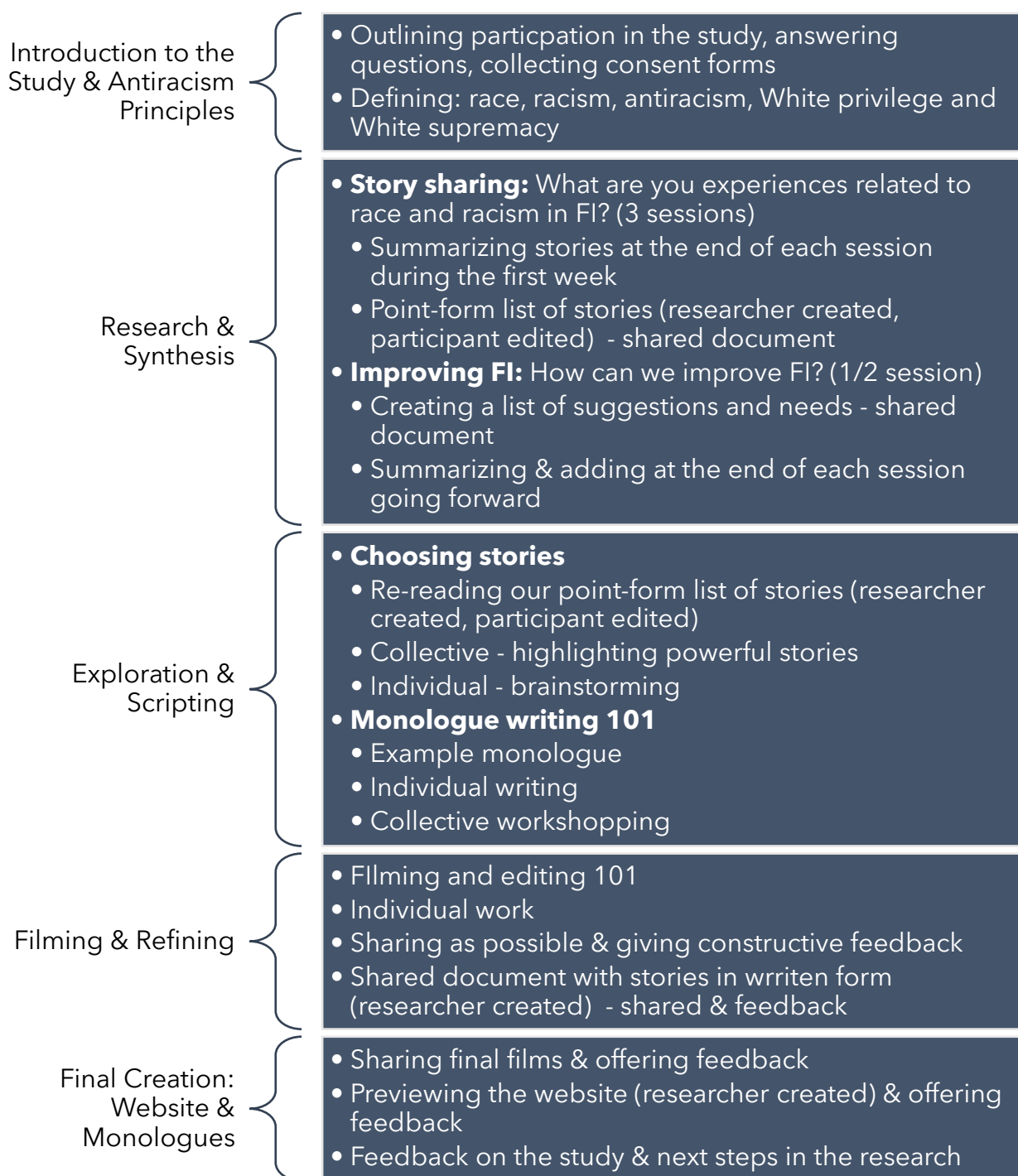
While this study followed the main elements of Norris' (2016) Playbuilding process, it was modified (see Figures 12 and 13). The major differences being that instead of a play, participants created monologues, the study was online, and the audience did not participate beyond a survey. To see an outline of activities, timing, and the progression of the Playbuilding process, please see Appendix B.

Figure 12*Modified Playbuilding Overview*

Note. Adapted from Norris, 2016, p. 40.

*Story sharing followed the same process as Norris, see Figure 10 in this dissertation.

There were 10 two-hour sessions, plus an optional post-Playbuilding interview. At the first session, I went over the informed consent form, confidentiality, demographics, answered questions about the study, did some team building activities, and went over some principles of antiracism. Antiracism principles were included so that we all had a similar language to talk about issues of race and racism. It was also included because I did not know my participants' experiences with antiracism and wanted to make sure that there was a basic understanding of it. During this time, we defined race, racism, antiracism, White privilege and White supremacy. Participants were encouraged to think about intersectionality and intersectional identities. After this point, we focused on Playbuilding.

Figure 13*Detailed Modified Playbuilding*

I explained the Playbuilding process to participants and had them think about collective authorship (we came up with a collective name well after Stage 1 ended: French from the

Impacted). The “research” phase started with the central theme of race and racism in FI programs. Our guiding question was: What are your experiences related to race, racism or antiracism in FI? Participants shared as a whole group. Participants were welcome to write down their experiences instead of sharing them out loud, but none did. The three sharing sessions (two with Ace and Roy, and an additional one with Hassan who joined late) were recorded on Zoom and a transcript was auto-generated that I later edited using InqScribe. Following the Playbuilding method, participants were welcome to share related (or unrelated) stories one after another. Sharing was iterative. During natural pauses in the sharing process, we had discussions about what themes we were seeing arise (or in other words, we completed preliminary thematic analysis). When there were silences or participants did not have much to say, I prompted participants with follow-up questions based on their stories or shared my own experiences. I only included one external resource, which was the racial demographics of FI programs in the TDSB published in the report by Sinay and colleagues (2018).

At the end of each session, I orally synthesized what we had discussed and asked for feedback if I missed anything. Originally, participants were supposed to be in charge of writing down their stories, however, I quickly realized that we would not have enough time to do so. Instead, I decided to write out their stories for them in a shared Google Doc. I did not want them to have to complete extra work outside of the two hours a day they had dedicated to the project. At the end of the storytelling sessions, we discussed program needs at length, thinking about what participants would want to see in FI in an ideal world.

After our sharing sessions, there was a “crash course” on writing monologues. Monologues were chosen because of the online nature of the study, the low number of participants, and their ability to give every participant the opportunity to share. As can happen in collectives, some people

make take up more space or be more willing to share than others. Monologues meant that everyone was heard and could focus on what they wanted. Participants were trained on basic dramatic writing skills. They were given the direction to write a 1- or 2-minute monologue about their experiences related to race/racism in FI, based on what we had shared up to that point. Their monologues ranged from 2-3.5 minutes long. Participants chose to work individually to develop their monologues, despite my efforts to do so as a collective. They were allowed to combine stories (their own or others') and add embellishment to make the monologue more interesting or impactful. Following ABR methods (Leavy, 2020) and Playbuilding (Norris, 2016), stories did not need to be 100% factual, but only based in truth. Participants had two sessions to write their monologues (four hours). During this time, there was a lot of sharing and feedback (workshopping) from myself and to a lesser extent, the other participants. As participants shared their draft monologues, it became clear that many of their stories would be missing from the final product, which felt like a shame to me, given the depth of data generated during Stage 1. For this reason, I suggested we host all the stories online along with their finalized short films. Participants agreed with this idea wholeheartedly and approved the stories being added to the website.

While they were still refining their monologues, participants received a “crash course” in filming and editing. This included an example of my own monologue. If this study were to be repeated or done in another context, allowing more time to develop arts-based skills should be emphasized. All participants reported that they had many previous experiences of filming and editing a short video for class projects. Though, the filming/editing process could have been better modelled. In retrospect, more time should have been dedicated to this in the initial study design. Perhaps if sessions were longer or the study was 3 weeks long instead of 2, there would have been

more time dedicated to the film creation. I gave some general tips about acting, but there was not enough time to speak in depth about the various styles of acting.

At the last group session, we viewed Ace and Hassan's final films. They both had to make a few minor edits after the study ended. Roy had not yet finished recording, so his story was not shared, but he gave a summary of his monologue. I also previewed the website with the participants and received feedback on the design, layout, and stories. Participants all loved the website and were looking forward to it being published. The final product can be consulted at this website: <https://mkunnas.wixsite.com/race-in-fi> (Kunnas & French from the Impacted, 2022). We also updated the online questionnaire together for Stage 2. We revisited our list of common themes and needs for FI. Participants also gave some general feedback about the overall experience of participating in the study. Feedback questions related to what they learned, if they enjoyed themselves, and how I might re-create/modify the study were I to do it again. Concluding the first stage, I re-explained the second stage to participants and thanked them all for their contributions to the research.

Throughout the process I took researcher notes to encourage my own critical reflexivity (Byrd Clark et al., 2014). These notes reflected on the mundane as well as: my own thoughts and emotions, my personal connections, preliminary analysis, ideas for future studies, and ways that my study could be improved. During Stage 1, participants were given shared access to different Google documents, like the common themes and needs, each others' monologues and videos, and monologue-writing resources (all data was anonymized). Shared access allowed the information sharing to be more equal between the researcher and the participants. Shared access was removed after the completion of Stage 1 to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

It should be noted that I also wrote and created a filmed monologue as both a participant in the study and as an example for participants. My monologue is not included in this dissertation for two reasons: 1) I wanted to prioritize the findings from the students, and 2) I have reported on themes from my monologue in another publication (Kunnas et al., 2023) and in my introductory narrative in this dissertation. My monologue can be found in Appendix C.

While the study is in line with Playbuilding, there are a few key differences. Often, the topic of the play is determined by the collective (Norris, 2016), however I chose the overarching topic. Since the study was entirely online, I made the decision to make a series of monologues instead of a play. Creating vignettes together was not feasible due to the limited time frame, the lack of organic collaboration on Zoom, and participants' varying dramatic and technological skills and tools. There was a lot of collective feedback, but the products that participants made were individual, unlike in Playbuilding. I was the one who took notes on their stories at the end of each session and wrote the narratives for the website. This was to lower the participant workload; however, it meant that I was positioned as the authority in the research. Stories were written using participant language and direct quotes. For example, I wrote out "straight up racist" instead of just "racist" to emulate Roy. Roy said that the writing in the stories sounded like him and the others had nothing to add/change to their written stories.

Interviews

Ace and Hassan each had a one-on-one interview online during the third week of the study. Interviews were semi-structured (Adams, 2015) allowing for the participants to determine what they find most pertinent to share, while still responding to the research questions. I asked clarification questions and went more in-depth into their experiences, and their perspectives on the research process. The protocol can be found in the Appendix D. Participants were given \$20 via

e-transfer for participating in the interview. Interviews ranged from 30-60 minutes in length, were completed on Zoom, and were audio and video recorded. An auto-transcription was generated that was later edited in InqScribe. Interviews were included despite the fact that the final Playbuilding session included feedback questions because I wanted the opportunity for participants to respond to individual questions that I had about their participation in the study. I also wanted to give them a venue where they could share their thoughts without the influence of others (Sim & Waterfield, 2019; Zorn et al., 2006). I took notes during interviews about my own thoughts, reactions, and questions as well as preliminary conclusions. Follow-up interviews are an important process in ABR; through explaining one's artwork, participants get at a deeper meaning behind their creation (Khanolainen & Semenova, 2020). Because I worked with marginalized people, it is important to allow them to express themselves and to avoid misinterpreting what they are saying.

Data Analysis

All data analysis was iterative as data was generated/collected. All data went through a preliminary analysis (during Stage 1), followed by an in-depth analysis after Stage 1 was complete. This allowed the Stage 2 questionnaire to be modified based on emergent themes from Stage 1. All data was considered in the analysis, including: written and oral stories, researcher notes, monologue texts, filmed monologues, and interview transcripts. For in-depth analysis, I started the analysis from scratch as form of data validation to compare my initial analysis and see if the themes and categories remained the same or changed after I had some time away from the data. This study primarily used thematic analysis in all stages. I also used critical discourse analysis (CDA), visual analysis techniques, and some content analysis for Stage 1 data. Combining various forms of analysis has been proven to make findings more rigorous and trustworthy (Leech & Onwuegbuzie,

2007) which is another reason that multiple types of analysis were employed. Throughout the process, I took notes to detail the steps of the analysis and my thinking.

First, NVivo 12 Pro software was used to conduct thematic analysis. Thematic analysis “is a method for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set” (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 2). It is particularly appropriate for this study which sought out common experiences and needs in FI programs. Thematic analysis has been critiqued for not being rigorous enough or being used improperly (Nowell et al., 2017). For this reason, I followed the six stages of thematic analysis as outlined by Nowell and colleagues (2017): 1) familiarizing yourself with the data, 2) initial codes (starting with *in vivo*), 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) producing the report. Coding was inductive; *in vivo* codes were used to ensure that findings are grounded in the data and were not my own ideas.

CDA was used concurrently with thematic analysis because “language is entwined in social power” (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 10) and *how* and *what* people say reveals issues around power and inequity. In other words, “CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, legitimized, and so on, by language use (or in discourse)” (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 10). It was important to see where issues of power and inequity were hidden in participants’ data. I read all the documents closely, questioning: vocabulary choices, the ways participants described themselves and others, and overt and covert instances of power, oppression, and inequity.

Analysis focused on issues related to racial identity, program needs, and, how race was and was not represented. To make sure that I did not miss any mentions of race, some content analysis (Weber, 1990) methods were used. Content analysis also helped to confirm which themes were most prevalent to participants and those that were more prevalent to me. Using the NVivo 12 Pro

query function, word count analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007) was used to determine the top 1000 cited words. I read through the NVivo top 1000 words and pulled out what I deemed “thematic words”, (or words related to themes established from the thematic analysis) in contrast to “filler words” (e.g., “like”, “the”, etc.). Within this analysis, I determined whether the thematic words were as frequent as I thought they were. Once I completed a word count chart, I clicked on each thematic word and completed key word in context (KWIC) analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Weber, 1990). KWIC situates and evaluates how common thematic words were used in context: Was race spoken about in a negative, positive, or neutral light? Were they saying that there was *no* racism? Alongside KWIC, I completed a NVivo word tree query for each of the frequent thematic words. This is another form of KWIC that is simply visual, showing the words before and after each key word in a flowchart.

Lastly, visuals from monologues were considered within the analysis as they enriched the words from participants’ monologues. Visual technique analysis considers not just what is being said, but how it is being represented (Pauwels, 2010). This analysis considered what images and sounds participants chose to associate with their monologues through their individual films. The images added another layer of interpretation to participants’ work that created a unique understanding of their experiences in FI.

While YPAR advocates for participants to take part in the analysis process (Branquinho et al., 2020), they were only minimally involved. The study did not have enough time for participants to both complete monologues and partake in the analysis process, so I completed all of the in-depth analysis. Participants contributed to preliminary analysis using elements of thematic analysis through the development of a list of thematic needs based on our collective stories. However, this thematic analysis was not as rigorous as Nowell et al. (2017) advocate for. Member-checking

(Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007) became the main way that participants contributed to the analysis process. It was important to confirm with participants that I correctly interpreted their work and their words, particularly because marginalized groups have been misrepresented and spoken for in past research (Dei, 2000).

Stage 2: Online Survey

Data Collection

The Stage 2 questionnaire invited FI stakeholders to engage with our website, react to, confirm and add to the stories, and give their ratings of suggestions to improve FI. The Stage 2 questionnaire can be found in Appendix E. The questionnaire was first opened in October to December 2022. Due to low response rate, it was opened again from April to June 2023. Hosted on Google Forms, the questionnaire included demographic information, but it was entirely anonymous. All FI stakeholders (current, graduated, and former FI students, FI teachers, parents and administrators, teacher educators, school staff) were invited to participate in this study to both bring awareness to issues in FI related to race as well as to allow for many different perspectives to be shared. The focus was Ontario, however, the survey was open across Canada. The questionnaire included questions about affective reaction to the stories, similarities and differences in one's own experiences in FI, what participants learned, and a rating of 15 suggestions to improve FI. The suggestions were each given a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "not important at all" and 5 being "very important" to implement in FI. The overall goal of the questionnaire was to enrich the Stage 1 findings and broaden the participant pool.

The questionnaire sought to consider critical self-reflection, not just reflection of the Other, to avoid unconsciously reproducing oppression (Call-Cummings & Martinez, 2016). The aim of the website and questionnaire was not to make audience members and stakeholders feel badly

about the realities in FI programs, but instead to induce reflection on the part of various stakeholders and incite change in the programs. The questionnaire could have explicitly called participants to reflect and act through asking questions like: “what are you doing to combat racial injustice” or “based on these accounts of racial injustice, how can you respond? In what ways can you take action?”

Recruitment

Participants were recruited using the same method as Stage 1: snowball sampling. I reached out to those within my personal and professional network multiple times between October and December 2022 and again between April and June 2023 via email, word of mouth, and social media. This stage expanded beyond Ontario given the small response rate from Stage 1. The goal was to get as many participants as possible, aiming for about 50-75. However, only 39 completed the survey. Participation was incentivized by a random draw for three \$50 Amazon gift cards (totalling six gift cards of \$50, because the survey was reopened). Participants could opt into this draw by providing their email. Their email was not linked to their responses to maintain anonymity.

Participant Demographics

The website was hosted on wix.com. Wix collects analytic data about website traffic: the number of visits, the number of unique visits, and where the website was accessed from. Between October 1, 2022, and June 3, 2023, the website was visited 223 from 175 unique visitors. Visits mainly came from Ontario (Toronto, Ottawa, Mississauga, Sault Ste. Marie, Hamilton, Scarborough, Richmond Hill, North York, Burlington, London, Newmarket, Brampton, Aurora, Stoney Creek, Guelph, Greater Sudbury, Markham, Kitchener, North Bay, Oakville, Stratford), however, there were also visitors from all the Canadian provinces except for Prince Edward Island

and Newfoundland. Internationally, there were visitors from the US, Switzerland, Romania, and Hong Kong. Despite low participation in the survey, the website was farther reaching than initially expected. It is clear that the snowball method worked, given that participants from outside of the researcher's network visited the website and participated in the survey, including those from Catholic school boards, in which I have no connections.

The data from the questionnaire is not generalizable due to the recruitment method (snowball sampling), though this was not the intended goal of the questionnaire. All respondents were asked demographic questions related to: stakeholder identity (teacher, student, etc.); FI history; age; gender; school board/region; race; home language(s) and languages spoken; special education status; citizenship; Ontario residency. In an oversight, they were not asked about their socioeconomic status. Of note, there were two errors that may have impacted the final demographic data. As pointed out by one respondent, the options for gender identification were too narrow and made transgender its own category. Further, "cis-gendered" should have been included on the form to allow for more clear demographic data. When the survey was reopened in 2023, the gender categories were expanded, and one participant did make use of the term "cis-gender". The second error was a typo on the questionnaire about if the participant had attended FI as a student: this has left a question about whether those who said that they attended FI as a student attended for all, most, or some of their educational career. For analysis purposes, everyone who indicated they attended FI as a student (whether it be for most, some, or all of their education) are grouped together. Demographic data tables are included in Appendix F. Table 5 includes the pseudonyms and demographic information for the Stage 2 participants who are quoted in the analysis. Information is grouped based on stakeholder identity.

Table 5*Stage 2 Participant Pseudonyms and Demographics*

Pseudonym	Stakeholder identity	FI History	Gender	Race	Province
Greg	Current FI Student	Yes	Man	White	Ontario
John	Current FI Student	Yes	Man	White, Indigenous	Canada
Peter	Current FI Student	Yes	Man	White	Canada
Angela	Graduated FI Student	Yes	Woman	White	Ontario
Catherine	Graduated FI Student	Yes	Woman	White	Ontario
Divya	Graduated FI Student	Yes	Woman	White, South Asian	Ontario
Jordan	Graduated FI Student	Yes	Man	White, Middle Eastern	Ontario
Kathleen	Graduated FI Student	Yes	Woman	White	Ontario
Mei	Graduated FI Student	Yes	Woman	East Asian	Ontario
Mia	Graduated FI Student	Yes	Woman	White	Ontario
Rosa	Non-FI Student	No	Woman	Latinx/South American	Ontario
Candice	FI Parent	No	Woman	White	Ontario and Canada-wide
Jacob	FI Parent	No	Man	White	Ontario
Tracy	FI Parent	Yes	Woman	White	Canada
Grace	Former FI parent	No	Woman	Black	Ontario
Donald	FI Teacher	Yes	Man, Cis-gender	White	Canada
Jessica	FI Teacher	No	Woman	White	Ontario
Linda	FI Teacher	Yes	Woman	East Asian	Ontario
Lynette	FI Teacher	No	Woman	White, Indo-Guyanese	Canada
Serena	FI Teacher	No	Woman	White	Ontario
Bernard	Core French Teacher	No	Man	White	Canada
Celia	Core French Teacher	Yes	Woman	White	Ontario
Naomi	Core French Teacher	Yes	Woman	Black	Ontario

Pseudonym	Role	FI History	Gender	Race	Province
Monique	French Supply Teacher	Yes	Woman	Black	Ontario
Akari	Non-FI Teacher	Yes	Woman	East Asian	Ontario
Anika	Non-FI Teacher	No	Woman	South Asian	Ontario
Dana	School Staff	No	Woman	White	Canada
Kelly	Teacher Educator	No	Woman	White	Canada
Melinda	Teacher Educator	No	Woman	White	Ontario
Riya	Professor	Yes	Woman	South Asian, European	Ontario

The majority of respondents were current or former FI students, followed by teachers, parents, then educators at the university level. Most participants, 66.7%, attended at least some FI as a student. Most participants were aged 16-39, with a smaller number aged 40-59. The most common school boards were the TDSB, followed by the Toronto Catholic District School Board, however there was a large spread across Ontario, and even a fair amount of participants from outside of Ontario (n=12) from British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, and Manitoba. The responses were overwhelmingly from those who identified as women (n=27). No one identified as transgender or “Other”, though one participant chose “prefer not to say”.

Overall, there was an almost even split between White respondents (n=21) and racially minoritized respondents (n=18). Respondents all identified differently and were welcome to write in their own race in addition to choosing from a list. Many identified as several races. Similar to Masson et al. (2022), I collapsed the participants into two groups: people of colour and White people to facilitate with analysis given the extreme racial diversity of all the participants. That being said, 21 people identified as White only, with an additional six identifying as White mixed

race. Seven people identified as Black²¹, four as East Asian, four South Asian, one Latinx/South American, two Indigenous, two Middle Eastern, one Indo-Guyanese, and one simply as “mixed race”.

The majority of participants (51.3%) spoke English as their sole home language. That being said, 92.3% spoke at least two languages (French, Italian, German, Swahili, Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese, to name a few). Additionally, 38.5% spoke three languages or more and 89.7% of participants spoke (at least) English and French. Participants were heavily bi/multilingual and most had familiarity with the language of instruction in FI. In the analysis, I use multilingual²², bilingual²³, and English monolingual to collapse the data together since there is not a significant number of people for each language represented. All participants spoke English.

Overwhelmingly, most participants did not identify as having a learning exceptionality. While the survey did not make it clear that parents should have identified if their child had a special education need, one parent did identify their child as having such a need. Seventeen people said they did not have a special education need, 20 simply did not respond. This lack of response cannot entirely be interpreted as them not having special education needs, but instead it could be that participants did not wish to self identify. All participants self-identified as Canadian citizens, though it is possible those were not born here but became citizens after immigration. The majority of respondents currently lived in Ontario (n=27) or did during their time in FI. Twelve respondents lived outside of Ontario. These respondents cannot speak directly to Ontario schooling experiences

²¹ These numbers all include those who identified as mixed race, see Appendix F for a detailed breakdown.

²² Multilingual means that a person identifies as speaking/knowing at least three languages or more.

²³ Bilingual means that a person identifies as speaking/knowing only two languages.

and are identified as from out of province in Table 5. They are considered in the analysis as these provinces also offered FI.

Data Analysis

Because the survey was opened twice, the same analysis process happened once in January 2023 and again in June 2023. I first completed the thematic analysis, following the same process outlined in Nowell et al. (2017) and above in Stage 1. The data from the questionnaire was exported from Google Forms as an Excel spreadsheet. Based on this spreadsheet, a Word document was made compiling all the open-response answers for thematic analysis in NVivo 12 Pro. I coded thematically by survey question, then regrouped these into themes across the different questions. Once I had a summary of the themes from the Stage 2 data, I compared these themes with the data from Stage 1 to see where there was overlap and where there was not. A secondary spreadsheet was made to prepare the data for quantitative analysis using IBM SPSS. The data used in the quantitative analysis was the ratings of the suggestions for improving FI. A rating of 1-2 was considered within the “unimportant range” and a rating of 4-5 was considered in the “important range”. A rating of 3 was considered “somewhat important”. Lastly, demographic information was converted into quantitative data and compiled into tables.

Quantitative analysis used simple descriptive statistics (Byrne, 2007): frequency counts and cross tabs analysis in SPSS. Frequency counts tallied how many times participants rated the suggestions for improvement between a 1-5. Cross tabs analysis showed these frequency counts for each demographic category, except for nationality as all participants were Canadian: stakeholder identity (teacher, student, etc.); FI history; age; gender; school board/region; race; home language(s) and languages spoken; special education status; provincial residency. Once quantitative analysis was complete, I wrote up summaries for each suggestion including a

summary of each demographic category per suggestion. Due to the snowball recruitment technique, the data was not looking for any generalizable results. However, data was analyzed for trends. Using quotations and themes from the survey open responses, I added to the quantitative suggestion analysis. Once both qualitative and quantitative findings were complete, I re-read the summary of findings and revised them as needed, comparing the findings to Stage 1. The data analysis for suggestions is less reported on in this dissertation to prioritize the thematic findings. Suggestions ratings can be found in Appendix G and will be reported on in more detail in future publications.

Stage 3: Member-Checking

Data Collection

In the final stage of the study, I reached out again to the Playbuilding participants (Stage 1) to see if they wanted to meet one last time to go over the findings, clarify any questions, and/or add anything to what they said the previous year. Member-checking is a form of “descriptive triangulation” and contributes to more trustworthy findings (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, p. 575). I prepared a short document with a plain language list of the findings from Stage 2 to share with Stage 1 participants. I also prepared some questions to ask them based on my findings (see Appendix H) building in space within the protocol for participants to ask any questions or voice any concerns that they had. Only Ace expressed interest in meeting again. This 60-minute semi-structured interview took place over Zoom in June 2023. It was video and audio recorded. The transcript was auto generated and edited in InqScribe. I took notes during this meeting that were also considered in the analysis. Prior to conducting the interview protocol, I showed Ace how NVivo works and how I conducted thematic analysis. Because she expressed interest in research, this was an attempt to include more elements of YPAR.

Data Analysis

Data was once again analyzed in NVivo Pro 12 using thematic analysis, CDA, and comparative analysis. This stage did not use content analysis, as there was very little data to draw from. Findings were updated based on clarifications and data was added to existing themes.

Data Quality

The pre-existing racial demographics of FI (i.e., few people of colour) meant that it was difficult to find racially minoritized students who were willing to participate in this intensive study. The findings from the study cannot be considered representative of FI across Ontario due to the small sample size. In Stage 2, recruiting from a wider a population helped with validity, however the participant sample is far from representative of Ontarian FI students and stakeholders. Because the study did not have a random sample, findings are not transferable. When it comes to Stage 1, a small sample size was to our benefit. Generally, ABR calls for fewer participants to make the project manageable and to build a sense of community (Seppälä et al., 2021). The small number of participants in the first stage allowed for a depth of data that would not be possible with a larger group. To reiterate, this project is not meant to be representative nor paint a picture of the entire province nor country, but instead explore what some experiences are and start the conversation around race in FI. To ensure that the interview protocols, demographics questionnaires, and online questionnaire were reliable, my supervisor and committee were consulted. Participants from Stage 1 were also consulted on the Stage 2 questionnaire.

Summary

This chapter outlined the different methodologies framing my dissertation research: ABR, Playbuilding, YPAR, and online focus groups. From there, I detailed how I modified the Playbuilding process to suit the needs of my study. Participants created individual monologues

and I had more authority than would normally happen in Playbuilding research generation. Stage 2 invited FI stakeholders to react to stories and suggestions for improving FI in an online questionnaire. Stage 3 invited back the Stage 1 participants to reflect on the findings. Data was analysed using thematic analysis, CDA, content analysis, descriptive statistics, and some visual analysis. I concluded discussing the quality of the data generated from this study as well as its transferability. The following chapters will outline the findings.

Findings

Chapter 5: Participant Profiles and Monologues

In this chapter, I present the profiles of the Stage 1 participants. Participants are listed alphabetically. Profiles²⁴ include demographic information, participants' overall perspectives on FI, linguistic confidence, most common themes, their top three needs for FI, and their reflection on the study. For the common themes, a summary of the theme is included, but specific instances will be elaborated on in Chapters 6 and 7. Each participants' monologue text is included and critically and thematically analyzed. Participants are thematically compared to one another to show the similarities and differences in their identities, experiences, and monologues. This chapter serves to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the Stage 1 participants and the thematic findings and analysis in the following chapters.

Ace

General Profile

Box 1

Ace's Profile

At the time of Stage 1, Ace was a 16-year-old Black woman residing in a racially diverse city. She spoke English and is a Canadian citizen. Ace did not have an identified special education need. Ace attended FI from senior kindergarten onward in the same city. She was entering her final year of secondary school at the time of the study and was enrolled in FI, on target to receive the FI certificate. She has since graduated. Ace attended a total of two FI schools: elementary and high school. Ace's elementary school was an FI centre (FI students only). In Grade 7, her elementary school became dual-track and English-track students from the neighbourhood joined. Her high school was a dual-track school. The neighbourhoods for her elementary school straddled an upper-class and lower-class divide. She found her neighbourhood to be somewhat racially and linguistically diverse. However, her high school's neighbourhood (which she did not live in) was less diverse. Ace described

²⁴ Participants were invited to write their own profiles. Only Roy did. I wrote Ace and Hassan's and had them confirm the profile was accurate.

the immediate neighbourhood surrounding her secondary school as middle-class. Her FI classrooms, though, were less diverse than the surrounding neighbourhoods and, in her estimation, less than 10% of her high school's population was Black. Ace had almost all White teachers in FI, except for in Grades 8 and 9. Ace found that her FI classes were Whiter and more middle-class than the rest of the school. There were "a lot" of multilingual people in FI at her school. She thought that there were few students with IEPs or exceptionalities in her class, though she emphasized that you cannot know unless someone tells you.

Ace was planning on attending a postsecondary institution to become a dentist. She made sure to highlight that she is not planning to continue in French because she had such a negative experience in FI. I taught Ace briefly two years prior to the start of the study for 3 weeks and was an occasional teacher at her secondary school. I describe Ace as very socially progressive and critically minded. She had strong terminology for racism, knew about CRT, and had a social justice orientation in her day-to-day life. Ace implicitly described herself as queer during the study, stating that she had to choose her battles between homophobia and racism²⁵. She did not make reference to her queer identity apart from that one time. When I asked her after the study, she outright identified as queer. She was a self-defined "researcher" and was very keen to participate in the study. Ace was the most open to sharing her stories.

Linguistic Confidence and Identity

Ace was not confident in her French ability at all. She would "absolutely not" define herself as a French speaker and was "definitely not" confident in her language skills. She complained, "I thought I was supposed to be able to speak French." Ace "find[s] [her]self second guessing everything [she] allegedly know[s]" about French. Ace blames the program for her low French proficiency and does not connect her un-Frenchness to her Blackness, but rather to the failing

²⁵ In this way, Ace felt she had to segregate her identities from one another; she did not take an intersectional approach to her identity.

program. Ace felt she learned very little French in FI. Ace reported that she learned the same grammar lessons many times but felt like she never really grasped the concepts. Ace expressed that by Grade 8, it was already too late in her French education for her to learn anything, she saw herself as “beyond the point of success”. When she did have a teacher who cared about her learning, she had already given up on learning French.

Overall Experiences

Of the three, Ace had the most negative outlook on her time in FI. She said that the “negative experiences outweighed the positive” and that everything bad that happened to her in school happened in (or in connection to) FI. She speaks of teachers being racist, students being racist, sexual harassment, migraines, teachers singling her out, and almost having to leave the program on more than one occasion. Ace also complained about being the token Black student in her classes and having to be the one to educate her peers and teachers about racism. Despite this, Ace remained in FI for the increased job opportunities and increased pay as a certified bilingual person.

Most Common Themes

Racism was a focus for Ace. She came to the first day of the study with a list of racist incidents that she wanted to share. The racism she spoke of was not always centred around FI, but her school at large. Ace did not directly experience racism in most cases; however, she heard about many racist incidents occurring at her school and in FI. Ace said she was willing to educate people about racism, but generally had very little hope that people would change. In general, Ace expected people and society to be racist.

Racial representation was a huge issue for Ace. She reported that most of her FI teachers were White, and she only had one Black full-time teacher in her 12 years of schooling. She also

found that she was not learning about anyone apart from White people and White men; Ace said, “nowhere am I seeing much colour”. Ace had a few standout memories of learning about racially minoritized people, but generally she learned very little. She felt unwelcome in FI, in part, because of the lack of representation in the program; Ace was not reflected in her courses (i.e., resources), classes (i.e., students), nor teachers.

French proficiency was a huge concern for Ace. In fact, she stated that she would have been fine with the racism that she had experienced if at least she had learned French. Ace expects racism to happen no matter where she is because she understands that society at large is racist. She was more upset that she did not have a strong French level despite her years of study. That being said, Ace reportedly gave up learning French by Grade 8, even when there was a teacher who was willing to put the work in to get her language skills up to “grade level” and to directly mentor/tutor her. Here, arises a contradiction between wanting to improve, but not having the motivation when given the opportunity.

Lastly, Ace had **concerns about teachers**. She was fed up with teachers not caring about students, lacking patience, and lacking French proficiency. She felt like teachers needed to be more than just teachers, but mentors; they needed to support students beyond the curriculum. Ace expressed clear frustration with teachers treating students poorly and teachers not liking their jobs: “you chose this job”; “can we have more respect for each other?”. Generally, Ace thought that teachers were not fulfilling their duties and were letting her down.

Top Three Needs

Ace only suggested two needs for FI programs: 1) teach French culture, and 2) more resources in French. Teaching culture was important to Ace because she was not aware she was even supposed to be learning about (diverse) French cultures at all. Resources were a key concern

for her because she found her French resources uninteresting, or the French was too difficult or poorly translated. Ace wanted resources beyond books, like websites and apps. Despite her talking for a long time about racism, antiracist training was not a priority for her at all. She even had room to include this in her top three needs, but instead elected to only list two. As Ace emphasized, if people do not want to learn, they will not, so she did not put much stock in professional development.

Monologue

Video

Ace's monologue can be [found here](#). Ace's monologue (Box 2) is entitled "Do Better" and is a scathing critique of FI. Ace's video followed a makeup "get ready with me" TikTok style video where the subject of the video gets ready to go out while sharing a story with the audience. This type of video can be jarring and/or confusing because the speaker often talks about a serious or controversial topic while simultaneously doing their makeup step-by-step. Often, the final frame is the person with their overall look "complete" and smiling, no matter what the content of the video is. Ace's video primarily follows this format; however, she is less expressive than the average TikToker. Of her own admission, she prefers to just deliver poetry in a monotone voice with little movement or actions, so her lack of enthusiasm in the video should not be interpreted as a reflection of her true emotions.

Box 2

Ace's Monologue: "Do Better"

Do Better

- 1** I'm gonna be honest with you, I don't really like French immersion all that much
2 and not because I'm not good at it or nothing, the program's just not
3 that...welcoming to students but especially non-white students. And that's on
4 multiple fronts like representation in the staff.
- 5** How have I only had one black teacher that wasn't a supply in my twelve years of
6 education? And they tried to fire him because he pointed out the fact that none of
7 us actually knew how to speak French. Like isn't that a serious problem?
- 8** Or how 'bout the white man who was teaching me who alluded to the struggle of
9 black people being comparable to the struggle of white French Canadians in the
10 1940s? I think my biggest problem was I could tell he saw no issue with what he
11 said...like what?
- 12** Another thing I'm ridiculously tired of is racists—be it the students, teachers, or staff
13 that ain't teachers.
- 14** My biggest thing with the racist students is that they ain't even bold enough to be
15 publicly racist. Actions have consequences, words have consequences and I know
16 me and all the other black students I know would be fully willing to explain those
17 consequences.
- 18** My issue with teachers and staff is that these people are quite literally responsible
19 for my future and they just out allowed to be using slurs. Now before you get your
20 panties in a twist, I know about the policies, I also know I haven't seen any of those
21 policies in action, so let me know when you figure out what I'm supposed to do.
- 22** While I wait for you to get back to me, let me tell you what a travesty it is about
23 how little I know the French language and the people who speak French. *Il y a 29*
24 *pays qui sont reconnus pour parler français. 21 sont en Afrique et la liste que j'ai*
25 *utilisée ne touchait même pas les pays asiatiques qui parlent français.*²⁶
- 26** *Dans tout mon éducation j'ai pas une fois appris à-propos de quelqu'un qui n'est*
27 *pas blanc, ça c'est ridicule mais qu'est-ce que je peux faire avec ce que je sais pas.*²⁷

²⁶ There are 29 French-speaking countries. 21 are in Africa and that's without even considering Asian countries.

²⁷ In all my education I never once learned about someone who isn't White, that is ridiculous but what can I do with what I don't know?

28 So, for my parting words, do better. You are failing and have failed the students
29 you were supposed to teach French to, the students you were supposed to
30 educate on French culture, so shame on you, cuz if I wanted to experience racism
31 and not learn French I woulda stayed in English.

Teachers and Administrators to Blame

In her monologue, Ace calls out FI students for being racist, saying that she is “ridiculously tired” (line 12) of having to deal with them and that they are so cowardly that they are not even “bold enough to be publicly racist” (lines 14-15). Even though she calls out students, teachers and administrators are the focus of her critique of the program. She emphasizes that it is the teachers who are “responsible for [her] future” (lines 18-179) and they are the ones that are failing. For instance, she is aware that there are antiracist policies, but as she claims, she hasn’t “seen any of those policies in action” (lines 20-21). The existence of policies alone does nothing when teachers are “allowed to be using slurs” (line 19). Ace also expresses her frustration at not being educated at all about the diversity of *la francophonie*. While this is a dramatic exaggeration, it is not far from the truth, since she could only remember studying racially minoritized people a handful of times. She says it is “*ridicule*” (ridiculous) (line 27) that she never once learned about a non-White French speaking country and again the blame falls on her teachers. Ace says, “*mais qu’est-ce que je peux faire avec ce que je sais pas?*” (but what can I do with what I don’t know) (line 27) — meaning, she is not to blame for not knowing about the diversity of the French speaking world because she was not taught about it. Ace highlights an experience of a teacher comparing the oppression of Black people with the oppression of White French Canadians (lines 8-9). It is such an unfathomable idea for her that anyone would make such a callous comparison, that she simply says, “like what—[?]” (line 11) and has to move on. Ace concludes by addressing FI teachers: “You are failing and have failed the students you were supposed to teach French to, the students

you were supposed to educate on French culture, so shame on you” (lines 28-30). Not only are teachers to blame, in her perspective, they should be ashamed of their failures.

Lack of Diverse Representation

Lack of diverse representation had a strong impact on Ace. She says that she does not feel welcome in FI because of the lack of representation in course materials and in the staff (line 4). Ace goes on to say that she only had one Black French teacher in 12 years of schooling, and he was subject to discriminatory treatment (lines 5-7). She asks, much like I did at the beginning of this dissertation, “isn’t that a serious problem” (line 7)? Yet, no one seems to be addressing the lack of racial diversity. Ace also implies a link between lack of representation and racism when she discusses her teacher’s comments about French Canadians (lines 8-11). By positioning the lack of Black teachers directly before a White teacher making a racist comment, Ace implies that this racist experience might not have happened were her teacher Black. Ace later says, “*Dans tout mon éducation j’ai pas une fois appris à-propos de quelqu’un qui n’est pas blanc ça c’est ridicule*” (In all my education, I never once learned about someone who is not White. That is ridiculous) (lines 26-27). Again, the lack of representation that she experiences is not acceptable for her; “*c’est ridicule*”.

Racism is Everywhere in French Immersion

Ace’s monologue embodies the theme of racism is everywhere in FI. Ace shares a story of a racist incident (lines 8-10), explains that there are racist students, teachers, and staff (lines 12-13), and points out that people in FI casually use racial slurs (line 19). She felt that student-led racist incidents necessitated “consequences” (line 15). Her script implies that students (and perhaps teachers) were unaware of those consequences, but that Black students such as herself were more than willing to explain and even dole out those consequences (lines 15-17).

Interestingly, it is not the responsibility of the administration to deal with racist incidents or educate about racism, but rather the Black students.

French Proficiency above all Else

In her final line, Ace emphasizes that she would have accepted all the racism that she experienced in FI if she had at least learned French: “If I wanted to experience racism and not learn French I woulda stayed in English” (lines 30-31). To her, French proficiency was more important than anything else. When I questioned her final line, she revealed that she felt that racism was everywhere and there was no avoiding it. So, if she were in the English-track or the French-track, it would not matter, she would experience racism. However, what she could not tolerate was the wasted years of not learning French. Ironically, her final line contradicts her opening sentence. At the beginning of the monologue, she states that she does not like FI, but “not because [she’s] not good at it or nothing” (lines 2). Here, Ace claims a strong French proficiency. Yet, she ends the monologue saying that she did “not learn French” (line 31) after 12 years of study. While these two opposing statements might seem contradictory, those of us who have learned more than one language know that we can feel very proficient and feel like we know nothing all at once. Indeed, FAL students in Marshall and Bokhorst-Heng’s (2020b) study thought their French needed improvement, despite feeling that their French was strong.

Hassan

General Profile

Box 3*Hassan's Profile*

Hassan was a 17-year-old South Asian man residing in a racially diverse city. Hassan's home languages are Bengali and English, making French his third language. Hassan identifies as a spiritual person. Hassan did not have an identified special education need. He graduated from the FI program and received his bilingual certificate. Hassan accepted and enrolled in a post-secondary program that started in the Fall of 2022. Hassan attended two dual-track FI schools: elementary and high school. The schools were located close to Hassan's home and in middle-class neighbourhoods. Hassan described the schools as racially and economically diverse. In the upper years of his program, about 50% of students were people of colour. Hassan described his neighbourhood as having a large Greek population and a large South Asian population. Hassan said that he did not know of a lot of students with IEPs. He said that there were many multilingual students in FI, himself included.

I would consider Hassan to be less socially progressive based on the lack of criticality of his responses. Hassan is the only participant who I did not teach prior to the study. Hassan joined the study four days late but attended every session after missing the first three. Generally, Hassan did not have a lot to add which may have been because of his self-reported "bad memory." He had trouble giving concrete examples to back up his general feelings and I needed to prompt him a lot.

Linguistic Confidence and Identity

Hassan was not confident in his French ability and would not describe himself as a French speaker. He thought his French was "not that good" and blamed the program for not teaching him well enough. He qualified that in FI contexts, his French is good, but trying to understand people outside of the program proved to be very difficult for him (as documented in Vanderveen, 2015). Similar to Holland from Marshall and Bokhorst-Heng's (2020b) article and Vanderveen's (2015) own experiences and findings, French was limited to a school context. In Vanderveen's study with FI students, "most students had not even attempted to speak French outside of class. In fact, 72%

percent [sic] of participants admitted to not speaking French with their friends outside of the classroom at all” (p. 138). A common sentiment of/about FI students is that they speak “immersion French”, not real French (Roy, 2012, 2020; Vanderveen, 2015). For Hassan, the measure of a French speaker was the ability to communicate *beyond* the FI environment. In his monologue he emphasizes: “I have seen one too many French immersion students who doubt their French speaking skills” (lines 19-20). So, low French confidence was seen as a collective, not individual, problem. Hassan refused to label himself as a French speaker. One of my notes reads: “Hesitant to associate South Asian identity with French identity.” He thought that Black people had more of a claim to French identity than South Asians did because of the colonization of Africa. To him, you had to either be from a (former) French colonial nation and/or have French as a first language to be considered a French speaker. Similar to the Canadian-born teacher candidates in Masson and Cote’s (2024) study, Hassan thought legitimacy was tied to French proficiency and heritage. Without an ancestral connection, Hassan found it difficult to see himself as a French speaker, despite being born in Canada, a country colonized by the French.

Overall Experiences

Overall, Hassan had a “neutral-positive” experience in FI. He enjoyed the memories that he made in the program and said that FI “built a part of his character”. Similar to the students in Vanderveen’s (2015) study, FI education had an important impact on Hassan’s identity formation. However, he believes that the program should do better as a whole in terms of teaching French. Hassan would not recommend FI to his family members because of his perceived poor level of French. He thought that tutoring or private classes would be a better way for people to learn the language. Hassan was not able to articulate a lot of experiences that he deemed positive when I asked him, but he also could not think of anything negative. Hassan was adamant that he did not

experience racism in FI and his school was not racist. He only referenced one racist incident: racial slurs (to be expanded on in Chapter 7). He felt confident that he learned a lot about the various French cultures, but he also had no specific examples.

Most Common Themes

Positive experiences were at the forefront of what Hassan had to say. In his experience, there was little or no racism or discrimination. Even when he spoke about racial slurs being used, he added a positive spin, emphasizing that once White students started using slurs, the slurs were stopped. So, even when there was racism, it was quickly ended. Hassan contradicted his positive view of his learning with his only real frustration in the program: **repeated grammar and low French proficiency**. It was not entirely clear how frustrated with his learning he was until his monologue was written. The final version focused solely on grammar and French proficiency of students and teachers. He saw the program as a failure because he had spent 13 years learning French and still felt like he couldn't "really" speak it.

Top Three Needs

For Hassan, his top concern was the need for one-on-one communication between the teacher and students in French. He felt that this would help develop students' French a lot more than grammar exercises or writing. In this suggestion, he views the teacher as the expert. Only through individual contact with the teacher does he think his oral French can improve. His second priority was having more resources in French. He complained about FI having "old" and "boring" books in comparison to the English program. To him, resources meant books, as opposed to website or apps. Hassan was very focused on French proficiency overall, so it is unsurprising that his top two needs speak directly to that. Lastly, Hassan thought that teaching French culture was a priority. Prior to the others talking about culture, Hassan did not seem concerned about cultural

learning, especially because he felt he had learned a lot of diverse French cultures. Here, Hassan may have been influenced by his peers during the research process to conform with the common opinion (Zorn et al., 2006)—that cultural learning was important and missing. Though, Hassan may have simply developed a new perspective and understanding of FI after interacting with Ace and Roy, which in turn changed his priorities (Zorn et al., 2006).

Monologue

Box 4

Hassan's First Monologue: "French in Black"

French in Black

- 1** French in **black**. But a search on Google of a French **person** shows mostly pale
- 2** **skins**. Why is **that**? When most French speakers reside within **Africa**? Not from
- 3** France nor the sum of Europe, not even **Canada**. Yes, it does not come from a
- 4** good **history**. But the impressions by black French individuals are making good
- 5** **memories**. A **memory** that could soon clean our lenses of biases, and
- 6** prejudice, and clean our **esprit**.

- 7** From a young age, mental imprints circling around the **negativity** of black
- 8** people were put on **me**. Was put on me like a cloak—a cloak that blinded **me** to
- 9** the truths of **reality**.

- 10** This wasn't anymore as the actions of my black French peers and teachers were
- 11** cleaning my lens **incrementally**. The memorable occurrence happened in the
- 12** class of **geography**. Where my Senegalese teacher proudly gave **souvenirs** to
- 13** me and my fellow **peers**. The souvenirs spoke a thousand **words** enriched with
- 14** the African roots so well **preserved**. Or the time when a proud black classmate
- 15** spoke poetry of the truths of black culture. Yes, the **truths**, that went back to its
- 16** **roots** where equality is not a **dispute**. But these actions by African French
- 17** speakers were not the only ones, they for justice [unfinished]
- 18** With all due respect. It is **true** French is black **too**.

Note. Hassan bolded the words in the script.

Hassan's first monologue draft (Box 4) was vastly different than the final one. His first monologue focused on learning about the existence of Black French people and countering their negative representation. Hassan's first monologue is unfinished, with line 17 ending abruptly. He critiques the fact that Frenchness is associated with Whiteness when "most French speakers reside within Africa" (line 2). He even highlights the colonial violence that brought about the population of Black French speakers: "Yes it does not come from a good history" (lines 3-4). Hassan says that Black French people are now making "good memories" (lines 4-5) and we are cleaning "our lenses of biases and prejudice" (lines 5-6) against them. He demonstrates this with his experiences in school where his peers and teachers educated him slowly over time about the strength and diversity of the Black French community. He concludes stating that "French is Black too" (line 18) returning to his point at the beginning of the monologue that French is only associated with Whiteness.

Monologue 1: Discussion

In this monologue, Hassan learns from Black people to counter his own negative assumptions and associations of Blackness in *la francophonie*. Hassan sees learning as a process that happens incrementally, not overnight (line 11). His construction of antiracist learning is realistic in that sense. Though, it is subconsciously the responsibility of his Black peers and teachers (line 10) to educate him so that he can counter racist beliefs. Hassan shifting the responsibility onto Black people is not surprising since antiracist and multicultural education are often seen as the responsibility of the racially minoritized (Carr & Klassen, 1997; Dreher, 2006; Smith et al., 2017). Moreover, placing the responsibility on Black people limited Hassan's learning because he had few Black teachers and classmates. He also puts a positive spin on colonization by saying that "good memories" (lines 4-5) are now being made by those who were colonized. Considering Hassan's general disposition and positive outlook, it is not surprising that he would

obfuscate the violence of colonialism. It is similar to when, during story sharing, he negated and minimized the damage of racial slurs and instead focused on the fact that most of his peers had stopped by Grade 12.

The theme of sight is common in Hassan's piece. He talks about "clean[ing] our lenses" (lines 5, 11), "mental imprints" (line 7), and being "blinded" (line 8). Here, he equates learning about the racial reality of *la francophonie* with antiracism. If only we could open our eyes to the reality, we would challenge racist assumptions/racism. Hassan presents a simplistic view of antiracism, assuming that simple knowledge acquisition will bring about equity. Hassan's viewpoint embodies an Education about the Other (Kumashiro, 2000) approach to anti-oppressive education. However, as Kumashiro (2000) critiques, "awareness does not necessarily lead to action and transformation" (p. 38). Finally, the monologue is rooted in the past. Hassan himself bolded key words like: "history" (line 4), "memory" (line 5), "souvenirs" (line 12), and "preserved" (line 14). So, while he says that he is learning about the reality of the French speaking world, his monologue is in fact rooted in history, not the present reality.

When giving feedback on his first draft, I suggested Hassan find a place to modify a line or two to make it clear to others that he was not claiming Black identity²⁸. I also suggested he expand his final line ("With all due respect. It is true French is black too." (line 18)) to move beyond simply Black to include other races. These suggestions were aimed at bringing Hassan's identity into his monologue instead of focusing on a race that was not his. Instead, Hassan chose to completely change his monologue. When I asked him about it, he felt it was important that he spoke about something that he had actually experienced and not speak for others. I reassured him

²⁸ His original text varied slightly from the one in this dissertation as he had started to edit it before deciding to change topics entirely. I was only given access to this version.

that his monologue was excellent and was not him speaking for others; however, it could be more connected to his identity. He said he preferred his new monologue since it engaged with an issue that was more important to him: French proficiency. This was a lost opportunity to have a critical reflection and discussion about race in the dramatic arts. I was disappointed that my suggestions appeared to be taken as discouragement, which made me reflect on the difficulties of engaging with race even as a racially minoritized person.

Monologue 2: Discussion

Hassan's final monologue can be [found here](#). Hassan's final monologue (Box 5) dealt expressly with the French proficiency levels of students and teachers in FI, which was his only real critique of the entire program. Hassan chose to show his emotions dramatically in his video. He addressed the camera head on and had a few zoom ins and outs at key moments. Hassan was very facially expressive: he raises his eyebrows dramatically, throws his head back, leans towards the camera conspiratorially, and so on. His expressions made for an interesting and engaging video. His frustration and disappointment with the FI program were very clear through his tone of voice. His video is comedic at times due to the editing and acting.

Hassan starts the monologue questioning his French confidence, not wanting to claim that he is a French speaker since he does not view himself as an expert (lines 1-3). Hassan challenges the conception that learning French makes him "special" (line 3), a common sentiment among FI students (Vanderveen, 2015), particularly because he is not confident in his French. Hassan critiqued the fact that he had spent several years learning the same grammar over and over and still felt like his French was substandard (lines 4-6). In fact, he stopped paying attention because they kept repeating the same points. He compared his experience of learning the language to a Francophone's who said that they almost never studied grammar. This upset him most because

Box 5*Hassan's Final Monologue: "Reprogramme FI"***Reprogramme FI**

- 1** Every time I say I'm in French immersion, people overestimate it all the time.
- 2** "Oh my god you can speak French! And I respond with "*oui*", but in that *oui* it's
- 3** a "not really" Why is that? I don't feel anything special about it. 13 years of
- 4** French and I still don't know much. Well, let's be honest, I stopped paying
- 5** attention from 7 years of repeated conjugation. It becomes like noise that soon
- 6** is muffled by the brain.
- 7** What disappoints me even more was when a fellow peer from Montreal said
- 8** they don't know much about conjugation. That I spent that many years of my
- 9** life doing conjugation, while hearing a Francophone who speaks insanely well
- 10** French to not know much about it. Like 350 irregular verbs, that's what you
- 11** expect us to learn?
- 12** And you know when French immersion is going downhill. When students,
- 13** including myself, translated our English work into French. I didn't become a
- 14** better French writer, I just became a better user of a translator.
- 15** It gets unbelievably sad when a teacher does it. This was the case with one of
- 16** my teachers who relied on himself using Google Translate. How did this guy get
- 17** qualified to teach French in the first place? Not even a core French class would
- 18** do enough.
- 19** I have seen one too many French immersion students who doubt their French
- 20** speaking skills.
- 21** And one too many teachers who should doubt their French speaking skills.
- 22** The big question is...What is going on with French immersion? Is it the teachers'
- 23** fault? Can't seem to be, as they are only following a given curriculum – and their
- 24** paycheck.
- 25** Come on [school board], French is our national language.
- 26** Nous attendons un meilleur programme d'immersion.
- 27** (Background audio:) Oh my god you speak French!
- 28** (Hassan:) *Oui*.

Hassan felt like he had wasted his time learning grammar (lines 7-11). To him, this francophone peer provided legitimacy to the claim that grammar is not the way to learn the language. Hassan's monologue evidences native-speaker ideologies (Faez, 2011; Wernicke, 2017).

Hassan also critiqued his teachers' ability to speak French (lines 15-17, 21). His monologue spoke of a teacher who used Google Translate to prepare course materials (line 16). While Hassan admits that he and his peers use Google Translate (lines 12-14), it "unbelievably sad" (line 15) when a teacher does it. In other words, it is worse when a teacher uses Google Translate, likely because Hassan sees the teacher as the language expert. In lines 22-23, Hassan questions if teachers or the curriculum are at fault. Either way, the blame for lack of language learning does not fall on the students. Hassan also questions if teachers care about their teaching at all or only care about their paycheck (lines 23-24). In Hassan's experience, no teachers were excited to be teaching, no matter the subject. Indeed, FI teacher shortages and high teacher turnover (Durham District School Board, 2021; Sinay et al., 2018; Upper Grand District School Board, 2017) suggest that teachers do not want to teach French. Hassan ends the monologue stating that, yes, he does speak French (line 28), but we know that that yes means "not really" (line 3). For Hassan, race and representation were far less important than his actual learning of the language.

Roy

General Profile

Box 6*Roy's Profile*

I have spent 12 years in a French immersion program, I have been in it since senior kindergarten. I have 3 siblings and I am the oldest as well as the only one to have gone through the French immersion program. I am a black person, but I am not defined by my skin colour more so by my beliefs and attitude towards life. I don't come from the wealthiest or most fortunate family, but we are also not poor. I live in the "safe" part of an area that is supposedly known for being bad. It is mostly minorities that live in my areas and yes there is crime the same as there would be anywhere else, but I am actually thankful for where I live since it gave me and my family easy access to a French immersion elementary school which lead to continuing the program at middle and high school. I will have to admit that because of the schools I went to and the program I was in, students like myself were outnumbered by white students at an alarming rate our whole lives. I have had some bad experiences and many good ones as well throughout my French immersion schooling and definitely stand behind teaching kids French through school but would also like to see many changes to the program as a whole.

Roy attended two dual-track FI schools: elementary (he refers to his middle school as separate, but they were in the same school) and high school. Roy says he attended 12 years of FI, but including senior kindergarten, it was actually 13. Roy graduated with the FI certificate and was headed to college after high school. In his high school, there were more Black students and teachers in FI than in the English stream, even though White people were still the majority. Roy said that there were not a lot of multilingual people in his school, but the ones that he was aware of were in FI. He also said that he was not aware of a lot of people with IEPs in FI. I would describe Roy as moderately progressive. He was aware of many social and racial inequities but lacked criticality around some issues. I was Roy's teacher in three different courses between 2019 and 2020, prior to the start of the study. Roy did not wish to participate in an individual interview after Stage 1, so I was left with questions about his monologue and his experiences during the study. Roy was

concerned about keeping information anonymous and avoided revealing any identifying information to the other participants. However, he would often indicate to me who he was speaking about through his tone of voice—only I would be able to read between the lines given our history at the same school. Roy’s participation and sharing in this study appeared to be a moment of catharsis for him. Thinking of Delgado’s (1989) reasoning behind racially minoritized people sharing counter-stories and the potential supportive environment of focus groups (Sim & Waterfield, 2019), Roy may have been validated by sharing.

Linguistic Confidence and Identity

Roy was not confident with his French level. He felt confident in his reading and writing, but not in his speaking and listening. Roy did not consider himself a French speaker, but a “French knower”. He felt like he could hold a conversation with a Francophone or in a francophone setting, but he was not confident in that setting. He was disappointed in his French level given the amount of time that he had spent learning French. He felt his French was stronger in elementary school when stricter language policies were upheld. Roy thought that a stricter language policy would result in better language learning. However, researchers (Kubota & Bale, 2020; Marshall & Moore, 2018; Prasad, 2020; Tian & King, 2023) alongside organisations like the Council of Europe (2020, 2023) and the OMLTA (2017) strongly advocate for a plurilingual approach to language learning, not a monolingual one. Roy did not think that race factored into his lack of French identity and instead blamed the program.

Overall Experiences

Overall, Roy said that it was not necessarily FI that he did not like, but school in general. Nonetheless, since he participated in FI his entire schooling career, there must have been some ways in which FI contributed to his negative outlook. Roy said he felt “neutral-negative” about FI,

leaning more toward neutral than negative. It should be noted that most of the racist experiences that Roy spoke about had little to do with FI specifically and more with school in general. He did share one racist experience in French class, but apart from that, it seemed that there was a general culture of racism that permeated his school, no matter the program. Roy had trouble remembering any positive experiences from his schooling. The one thing that stood out to him was whenever he would learn about Black history. Despite his dislike of school, Roy thought learning in French was beneficial and, with enough structural changes, could benefit students.

Most Common Themes

Roy spoke about **culture** a lot. He was not aware that they were supposed to be learning about francophone cultures. Roy proposed the implementation of a cultural course to address the lack of cultural learning in FI. Roy may have been so invested in cultural learning because it is a venue for racial representation in his learning, which was absent. **Racism** was a very common theme for Roy. He spoke about his own experiences of racism and unequal treatment frankly and with obvious anger and frustration. Roy experienced unequal treatment throughout his education. Despite this, he had faith that people could learn and grow to be antiracist.

French proficiency was also a key concern of Roy's. He hated repeated grammar and felt like he had learned very little in his 13 years of French. He felt confident in his knowledge of French, but not in his communication skills. He also thought that some teachers' proficiency was too low. Roy showed bias toward francophone teachers, thinking that they were inherently better French teachers as opposed to Anglophones or other FAL speakers. Roy singled out a few teachers who were Anglophones who he thought had a "good" level of French. Otherwise, he felt that the teachers' French proficiency was too low. Roy bought into native speaker ideologies (Faez, 2011)

when it came to his own level of French not being high enough and teachers needing to have French heritage to be considered “good” at French.

Top Three Needs

Roy’s top three needs were: 1) resources developed by French speakers, 2) implement a cultural class, and 3) more classes available in French. Interestingly, Roy did not speak a lot about resources needing to be developed by French speakers, but he did list it as his most important need for the FI program. Roy did not enjoy most French course materials and he felt teacher-developed resources were poorly translated. He thought all resources should be developed by Francophones only, evidencing native-speaker preference (Wernicke, 2017). While more French courses were not discussed at length by Roy, this suggestion made his top three list. Nonetheless, having more opportunities to use French was paramount to him. His second suggestion of the cultural course was not surprising given his focus on cultural learning throughout the study. Listing two needs that were not of huge importance for him throughout the study could show that while he was concerned about racism, he only discussed it at length because racism was the focus of the study.

Monologue

Roy’s monologue can be [accessed here](#). Roy’s monologue (Box 7) is entitled “I am a Student”, a phrase that he repeats throughout his monologue in French and in English. Roy did not make a video and only did an audio recording; he had trouble conceptualizing his video. Roy starts his monologue talking about how what he has learned in all his years in FI does not relate to French or any curricular content, but instead that he has learned different behaviours and attitudes (lines 4-7). These lines emphasize the theme of learning throughout the monologue—he is on a learning journey, he is still a student who is learning about the world, learning about racism and how to deal with it, and learning French. Roy does not give much emotion when relaying what he

Box 7

Roy's Monologue: "I am a Student"

I am a Student

- 1** *Je suis un étudiant.*
- 2** *J'étais mis dans l'immersion française dans SK—senior kindergarten. J'ai passé*
- 3** *les prochaines douze années d'école à 3 écoles d'immersion française.*
- 4** If you asked me or any of the students what we learned, you'd get an answer
- 5** very similar. You'd expect us to talk about Math, French, maybe English, but no.
- 6** We'd all be able to tell you what the people, activities, behavior, and behaviors
- 7** we've learned or learned to avoid.
- 8** Through my years I've learned that it's normal for all eyes to be on me when a
- 9** racist act is shown or read in a movie or book in class. I've learned that it's normal
- 10** to be outnumbered by white people in my classes.
- 11** I've learned that it's normal to be called whitewashed for the language that I
- 12** learned in school and the opportunities I have because of it.
- 13** I've learned that a lot of the time, things that are said in class that may seem
- 14** racially motivated or culturally offensive usually get said again and I'll usually
- 15** have to hear them again, probably in a context that affects me. But at the end of
- 16** the day, I've learned to ask why these things are okay. I've learned to forgive and
- 17** to connect with others, as well as how to accept differences others bring to the
- 18** table.
- 19** Although I want to believe that people can change, I've been shown too much
- 20** racism and I've been shown too much prejudice. Although I want to believe that
- 21** people can change, I've seen change and I've seen change back.
- 22** But I've also seen that the diversity that I've learned in French immersion is more
- 23** than just the skin I was born with, but also the one that I've earned through my
- 24** years of experience of racism and prejudice but also love and kindness, as well
- 25** as a sense of connection, I was able to hold with my peers.
- 26** *Je suis un étudiant.*

has learned, and instead leaves it up to interpretation. Roy chose to focus mostly on talking about his experiences related to racism in FI, being in a White program, and his internal tension between

being able to forgive (or not) racist perpetrators. He emphasized that he had experienced racism and discrimination and that he knew he would continue to, both inside and outside of FI (lines 13-15, 19-20, 24). For him, this was part of what built his identity—it was the skin he “earned” in contrast to the skin he was born with (lines 23). That is to say, Roy became Black through his experiences with racism; it was anti-Blackness that forged his identity.

Roy spoke about being the token Black student; whenever something racist would happen, students would turn to him (lines 8-9), though he does not convey how he feels about being tokenized. Roy also spoke about being outnumbered by White students in his classes (lines 9-10). Being outnumbered seemed to directly clash with his statements during the story sharing phase when he said FI was where he found his Black friends. Though, Roy may be indicating that while there were many Black people in FI, he was still outnumbered by White people, who were the majority. He also spoke about how Black students in FI were seen as “Whitewashed” because of the program and the language (lines 11-12). Here, both the language and program are associated with Whiteness (see also Munroe et al., 2022), even when Black students are present. By associating with French, Roy’s racial identity is delegitimized, all while he is Othered as Black in a White majority program. In Osbourne et al.’s (2023) study with Black university students in the United Kingdom, “Black students felt that they sacrificed some of who they are in order to thrive in a predominantly white institution” (p. 50). Reflecting on Roy’s distancing of his own racial identity, it could be concluded that he sacrificed his race to remain in FI. Roy says the White majority in FI is something that he has “learned” to be okay with over time (lines 9-10), “learned” to be normal. Roy was subtly coerced into accepting inequality, similar to how the oppressed must accept their own oppression for inequality to continue (Freire, 2018).

Roy grapples with whether or not he should be able to forgive people for the racism that they have committed. At first, he says that he has learned to forgive, but then he goes on to say that “Although I want to believe that people can change, I’ve been shown too much racism and I’ve been shown too much prejudice. Although I want to believe that people can change, I’ve seen change and I’ve seen change back” (lines 19-21). During the story sharing phase, he talked about how he still associated with people who were racist in the past because he wanted to believe that they could change. He also thought that completely cutting someone off or distancing from them would give them even more reason to be racist toward Black people. Here, Roy centres the comfort of the oppressor (Osbourne et al., 2023). In contrast, his Black friends would call him out for hanging out with known racist students and they would avoid racists at all costs. Despite the negative experiences that Roy reflects on, he still finds the positive in FI: the relationships he has with peers (lines 24-25). Roy’s monologue emphasizes that he is still a student, learning how to deal with these complex issues.

Comparative Analysis

In this section, I compare the different participant profiles and reflect on the differing identities, experiences, and monologues. Table 6 summarizes the participants’ linguistic identities, common themes, and top three needs.

Table 6*Stage 1 Thematic Comparison*

	Ace	Hassan	Roy
Linguistic Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a French speaker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a French speaker • Can speak in FI only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a French speaker • A French knower
Common Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racism • Representation • French proficiency • Teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racial slurs • Positive experiences • French proficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture • Racism • French proficiency
Top Three Needs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teach French culture 2. More resources in French 3. _____ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One-on-one communication with teachers 2. More resources 3. Teaching French culture 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resources developed by Francophones 2. Implement a cultural class 3. More classes available in French

General Comparison

All three participants were English speakers, Canadians, and attended FI since senior kindergarten. They all appeared to live in middle-class areas. While I did not outright ask them to identify their socioeconomic status, I assume they were within the middle-class range based on how they described their experiences and neighbourhoods. Roy confirmed that he was middle-class. In terms of student demographics, Ace's school appeared to be the least racially diverse and Hassan's the most racially diverse. While Roy's school had a large Black population, the school was still majority White. They all felt there were a lot of multilingual people in their FI programs and few people with IEPs, including themselves. All participants planned on attending (Ace) or were accepted into (Roy and Hassan) a post-secondary institution. Of the three, Hassan had the most positive outlook on life and on FI while Ace was the most cynical and critical. Ace and Roy shared more than Hassan did and were more forthcoming with their stories. Ace and Roy's

openness to sharing may have been because of our previous student-teacher relationship, our shared racial identity²⁹, or their own dispositions. The overall experiences range from Ace: negative-neutral, to Roy: neutral-negative, to Hassan: neutral-positive. Roy and Ace had more negative and racist experiences than Hassan reported. Hassan learned far more culture than either of the other two reported. Participants were invited to engage in data analysis, but none did. All of them expressed interest in participating in Stage 3, a follow-up focus group to look over the results of the study and potentially contribute to the analysis. However, Ace was the only one who responded and participated in Stage 3.

Linguistic Confidence and Identity

None of the participants felt confident in their language skills. They felt that their reading was stronger than their listening and speaking, especially when it came to having to interact with Francophones in authentic settings, as echoed in Vanderveen's (2015) study. One of Vanderveen's participants even stated, "I thought I would be able to speak on par with France or Montreal and then you go there and you are like aw crap" (p. 145). Likewise, none of my Stage 1 participants identified as a French speaker because they felt their language level was too low and they measured themselves against a native speaker standard (Faez, 2011; Roy, 2012). Vanderveen's (2015) research showed that even when FI students were confident with their French, they felt inadequate compared to native speakers, demonstrating the negative impact of native speaker ideologies. French speaker identity was firmly associated with native speakers and national/provincial or heritage identities. All three of my participants emphasized that it was not their race that made them feel like they were not a French speaker, but instead their level of French and the FI program

²⁹ While shared racial identity can contribute to increased disclosure, it does not guarantee anything, such as a better connection between the researcher and participant (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

itself. Despite claiming race was not a factor, Roy and Ace did have a racialized (White) view of a stereotypical French speaker (Hassan was absent during this conversation). Race was not a conscious concern, but it may have been subconscious for Ace and Roy. For Hassan, it was more conscious, as discussed above with his hesitance to associate South Asian identity with French.

It is possible that participants equated linguistic identity with national or ancestral identity. As Sylvie Roy (2012) points out, we often conflate these differing identities and while there is overlap, they are not always the same. Seeing as none of the Stage 1 participants were from a majority French speaking country³⁰ or province (e.g., Quebec), they might have felt (as Hassan did) that they could not claim French as a linguistic identity. Likewise, Hassan did not see himself within French culture(s). Moreover, as Masson and Cote (2024) argue, linguistic identity impacts belonging, which was further seen when both Ace and Roy said they felt unwelcome and like they did not belong in FI.

French proficiency was a key concern for all participants and outweighed concerns about racism. For instance, Roy and Ace who spoke at length about racism, both thought that having stronger French was more important than bringing antiracism/addressing racism in FI. The acceptance of racism will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

Most Common Themes

Unsurprisingly, Roy and Ace had common themes, while Hassan was an outlier, given his more positive experiences. That being said, concerns about low French skills were shared across all three participants. Participants felt that they had learned the same grammar year after year but

³⁰ While they were all Canadian, they did not associate Canada with French identity. In fact, Hassan explicitly distanced Canadian identity from French identity. In my experience, most Canadians outside of Quebec who are not French first language speakers do not think of themselves as associated with French identity. Hence, the term: English Canada. Participants may not have viewed Canada as a French speaking country, but rather as a bilingual country—as it is constructed nationally (Haque, 2012).

never actually learned anything. The concern around student proficiency echoes the literature (Durham District School Board, 2021; Peel District School Board, 2012; Roy, 2012; Sinay et al., 2018; Upper Grand District School Board, 2017).

Racism was central to Ace and Roy's experiences. They both shared experiences of racist students and teachers and how they dealt with them. There was a general culture of racism within their schools. Both Ace and Roy did not necessarily equate FI with racism, but rather society with racism. They were used to having to put up with racist students and teachers, and a system that was set up against them. Roy wanted to give people room to learn and grow from their past racism but was hesitant to do so. In contrast, Ace did not seem to want to give any sort of slack when it came to racism and described herself as "confrontational". I would describe Roy as non-confrontational because he would interpret racist statements as jokes so as "not to embarrass" the racists. Roy was the victim of racist treatment whereas Ace was generally present when racist things were said, but racism was not always directed at her. Hassan said that he was never discriminated against by teachers but did not discuss students.

While both Ace and Roy had some overlap when talking about cultures, Ace was more focused on CRSP (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014) while Roy seemed more interested in learning about diverse French cultures (i.e., ICTL; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Ace wanted her French learning to be more representative of the student body. Roy wanted to learn more about others, and not necessarily have the curriculum reflect himself. In this way, both he and Hassan did not see their own cultures within French culture(s). Of note, one of Roy's only positive experiences came when he was learning about Black people during Black history month. Perhaps he too wished to have more CRSP in addition to learning about other diverse French cultures.

Top Three Needs

Echoing the literature (Ottawa-Carleton School Board, 2007; Sinay et al., 2018; Thames Valley District School Board, 2015), all participants thought that there needed to be better French resources, whether it be because they were “boring” and “old” (Hassan) or because they needed to be developed by Francophones instead of by Anglophones (Ace, Roy). Better resources seemed to be understood as both course materials (books, texts, films, etc.) and other language supports like dictionaries, websites, and apps. They all felt that their French was low and having better resources would improve their learning as well as engagement in class. To them, resources were key to language learning.

Teaching culture in French was included in all their top three needs. This ranking might have to do with the fact that Ace and Roy were unaware they were supposed to be learning about culture. Hassan was not asked explicitly if he knew the curriculum expectations included intercultural competence because he was away that session and did not respond to follow-up emails post-study when I realized I had not asked him. As discussed in the literature review, culture is often pushed to the side in additional language courses (Byrd, 2014; Gour, 2017). Culture may have also been such a priority for the participants because they spent 12-13 years learning the same grammar points over and over again and they wanted diversity in their language learning. Lastly, Roy and Hassan’s suggestions of more courses available in French and more one-on-one communication are based in their concerns about French proficiency. Thus, the top three concerns were all rooted in French proficiency or cultural learning. In fact, none of the participants cited the need for antiracism training for teachers. When I proposed antiracism training, they agreed, but it was not on their radar.

Monologues

The creation of the monologues and the films/recordings seemed to be difficult for all participants, but especially for Ace and Roy. Ace had to refilm several times and changed her concept multiple times. Roy had some filming ideas but ultimately decided to submit an audio file only. Hassan had the most positive experience filming, however, he still implied frustration over the editing process and changed his monologue script entirely. More time could have been devoted to monologue script writing, filming, and editing to make this process smoother for participants.

Hassan's video was very punchy, engaging, and dynamic. His monologue resembled a YouTube video. Hassan seemed the most comfortable in front of a camera and with editing. In contrast, Ace's monologue was less dynamic and resembled a TikTok "get ready with me" video. Her video was filmed in one shot, which eliminated the need for editing. Finally, Roy decided not to complete a video at all. Whether this was because of comfort in front of a camera, lack of time, equipment, or ideas was unclear.

All the monologues are delivered from the perspective of a student and are personal. While they do have elements of exaggeration and fiction, the monologues are all based in the facts that were shared during the Playbuilding process. Ace was the most incisive in her monologue. Hassan also harshly critiques FI but does so from a place that is more comedic due to his filming techniques, tone, and script. Both Ace and Hassan's monologues serve to "call out" FI programs, teachers, and administrators. Ace goes further to call out the students as well. In contrast, Roy's monologue is more of a personal reflection than the other two. He thinks about his role as a student and how he is ever learning about himself and others. Roy expresses frustration when it comes to racism and prejudice, but this lacks the same level of anger that Ace and Hassan portray.

Furthermore, Roy's emotions are less obvious than the other participants' due to his tone and the lack of video.

All the monologues touched on French proficiency. Hassan's final monologue focused exclusively on French proficiency. Hassan focuses on both his linguistic confidence and his learning history. Ace spoke to linguistic proficiency in line 2 (she claims she is decent at French) and in her final sentence (line 31) implying that she has not learned French at all. In their monologues, both Ace and Hassan absolve themselves of any responsibility in their language learning and place the responsibility on the teachers. Lastly, at the beginning of Roy's monologue, he says that people expect him to talk about everything he learned (about French), but that he has only learned social lessons (as opposed to academic/linguistic ones). Roy speaks to French proficiency the least directly of the three.

Roy and Ace's monologues focused more on racism than French skills. Seeing that they had both experienced and witnessed a fair amount of racism, it makes sense that these would be the themes that stood out to them. Ace covered the most topics in her monologue, speaking about representation, students, teachers, and policy. In Ace's monologue, there is no excuse for the racist behaviour that she is seeing and experiencing. She blatantly declares that FI needs to "do better" by its racially minoritized students. In contrast, Roy talks about how he has learned about who he is and what racism is based on his experiences in FI. He speaks about being singled out in a White majority program and how racism will probably keep happening even by those who have claimed to change. Unlike Ace, Roy is able to find some positive elements from his experiences in FI: e.g., "love", "kindness" and "a sense of connection" (lines 24-25). All the monologues presented different perspectives of FI, however, none of the participants were enthused with their experiences in the program.

Summary

This chapter outlined the Stage 1 participant profiles. Profiles included a general participant profile, their own perceived linguistic confidence and identity; their overall experiences in FI; common themes that emerged for them throughout the study; their top three needs for improving FI; their reflection on the study; and a presentation and analysis of their monologue. Participant profiles were compared to see where there were convergences and divergences. This chapter served to provide more background on the diversity of the participants and to allow for a deeper analysis of their monologues. The next chapter will delve into findings related to diverse representations in FI.

Chapter 6: Diverse Cultural and Racial Representations

This chapter presents the thematic findings from Stages 1 and 2 related to diverse racial and cultural representations in FI. The chapter starts by summarizing Ace, Hassan, and Roy's cultural learning experiences and if they match the curricular requirements. The second section of the chapter outlines the emphasis of White people in FI programs, considering participants from both stages. I then present the few standout experiences with diverse racial representation in FI. Here, I consider *how* diversity was integrated. The importance of representation is discussed in relation to CRSP. Then, the presence of Indigenous peoples in FI is reviewed. Next, I outline who the participants saw as the stereotypical French speaker and how the dearth of diverse representation in their learning has contributed to this biased construction. Finally, the chapter concludes with a presentation of the racial demographics in participants' programs.

Curriculum and Cultural Learning

Below, I summarize which cultures each Stage 1 participant studied. See Table 7 for an overview. To start, both Ace and Roy were unaware that they were supposed to be learning about French culture(s) in French class. Hassan was not present when I outright asked whether or not they knew they were supposed to be studying culture and was unreachable after the study. All participants were questioned year by year if they had studied the cultural groups outlined in the curriculum. Admittedly, trying to recall what you learned about in Grade 1 when you just graduated secondary school is quite difficult, so these findings should be taken with a grain of salt. Moreover, it must be noted that the 2013 curriculum was not required to be implemented until September 2014. The previous curriculum did not require anywhere near the same extent of cultural learning; in fact, the previous elementary curriculum only mentions "culture" two times in the whole document (OME, 2001). When the new curriculum (OME, 2013) was released, Roy

and Hassan were in Grade 5 and Ace was in Grade 4. Accordingly, learning about cultural groups in Grades 1-4/5 was not mandated. Nonetheless, the new curriculum did not appear to impact their cultural learning at all because Ace and Roy still learned very little, even after the 2013 and 2014 curricula had been in effect for years. Conversely, Hassan claimed to have learned about all the cultural groups, even before the 2013 curriculum was released.

Hassan was the only one who was confident that he studied every culture mandated by the curriculum. Hassan was not certain if he studied the cultures in the years he was supposed to, but he claimed that he studied them all at one point. Hassan said, “We covered generally a lot of French speaking countries worldwide.” However, when questioned deeper, he did not have any concrete

Table 7

Curricular Cultures Studied

Grade	Cultural Groups	Ace	Hassan	Roy
Grades 1-2	Local French speaking communities	--	✓	--
Grade 3	Local & Ontario-wide	--	✓	--
Grade 4	Franco-Ontario	~	✓	~G
Grade 5	Quebec	--	✓	--
Grade 6	Canada	--	✓	--G
Grade 7	The Americas ³¹ & the Caribbean	--	✓	~G
Grade 8	France	~	✓	o
Grade 9	Europe	--	✓	--
Grade 10	Africa & Asia	o	✓	~G
Grades 11-12	Worldwide	~	✓	✓

Note. -- = did not study; ✓ = studied; ~ = studied somewhat; o = studied in a different year; G = studied in Geography class

³¹ The curriculum says the Americas, however the prompts include the Caribbean

memories and was unable to cite facts about different cultures he studied. While this could be explained by his self-reported bad memory, it may also be indicative of the lack of time and focus spent on French cultures during his 13 years of French classes.

When I pushed Hassan and asked him to list any and all cultural groups that he had studied, Hassan listed the following regions: Sudan, Morocco, Vietnam, France, and African countries. When I asked for more specific details, he was able to elaborate on Sudan only, saying that there were gorillas and other endangered animals, and that French was the national language. While we cannot expect a student's memory to be perfect, the fact that these are the only details he could remember studying is troubling. We never defined culture together as a group, so it is possible that he was interpreting culture as simple geographic and national facts, a common essentialist approach to culture (Diaz & Dasli, 2016). For him, studying a culture might have consisted of simply mentioning a group of people, a geographical area, or regional facts. Whereas, for Ace and Roy, cultural learning required deeper learning than regional facts. Hassan enjoyed cultural learning and when his teachers brought their culture into the classroom. Hassan said,

most of my teachers were diverse and ethnic groups, I just found that they—a little bit—they added—implemented a little bit of their culture within the subjects. They would talk about their personal life and what was—what their culture consisted of doing. ... I had a teacher that was from Senegal who brought souvenirs to our ... geography [class...] I feel like she did she did a great job.

Hassan said his teacher disrupted his deficit bias about African/Senegalese people and made him better understand their culture. While he explained that his “bias” was disrupted, he was not clear on what that bias was. Nonetheless, Hassan felt he learned a lot from the experience.

As for Roy, he thought it was possible he studied every cultural group listed in the curriculum during his Geography classes over the years. He admitted he could not remember if he had, but he felt that if he had studied these cultures, it would have been, as he said, “in geography class, maybe, but not outside that.” Roy emphasized that if these cultures were studied it was a brief mention to the fact that the country spoke French and that was all. To Roy, this did not constitute cultural study. Indeed, even the OME (2013b, 2014) would not consider this adequate.

I will now present Ace and Roy’s cultural learning year by year. In Grades 1 to 4, local francophone groups are supposed to be studied in FI. I asked them if they had learned about any local francophone communities or Franco-Ontarians broadly. Ace replied that she “didn’t even know that [Franco-Ontarian] was a term”. Roy could not remember if he had studied any. In Grade 5, Quebec was the cultural focus. Both Ace and Roy remembered studying Quebecois culture and studying Quebecois texts/films throughout their learning in FI but could not recall if they did specifically in Grade 5. Roy emphasized that Quebec was the one region that was most present within his FI years and that Quebec was the only French area that his peers would remember studying:

If you asked anyone in my school who’s ever been even in one of your classes, I promise you, the only thing that they’ll tell you that’s memorable about any French place that we’ve ever technically looked at is the fact that we’ve read books from Quebec authors and/or watched movies from Quebec like theaters and stuff like that so that’s like about it really.

Quebec is the only place that I’ll tell you, people will be like “oh that’s the one.” –Roy

Both participants thought that Quebecois culture was the most studied in their FI careers.

In Grade 6, students are supposed to study francophone groups across Canada beyond Ontario and Quebec. Here, I gave examples of Francophones in Manitoba and New Brunswick.

Ace and Roy did not study French-Canadian cultures outside of Quebec. Roy conceded he might have studied them in Geography but had no specific memory of doing so. In Grade 7, students are supposed to study the Americas and the Caribbean. Ace replied, “oh definitely not” when I asked her if she had studied these groups. She emphasized that she only knew about the French Caribbean because her uncle is Haitian. Roy remembers talking about the French Caribbean in Grade 9 Geography “because it’s on a map”.

In Grade 8, students are supposed to study France. Both Roy and Ace said that they did not study any specific culture in Grade 8 and instead focused entirely on verbs. Roy went on to say that his Grade 8 French class was 50-50 verbs. When I questioned what the other “50” was, he said, “it was verbs and nothing.” Grade 9 is supposed to focus on European French groups. Ace has no memory of learning about Europe. Both Ace and Roy recall Québécois learning materials during this year.

In Grade 10, the cultural focus is Africa and Asia. Ace laughed when I asked her if she had studied either of these regions. She said that Grade 10 had a Québécois focus. In Grade 8, Ace learned marginally about Africa because her French teacher was African. However, he did not emphasize cultural learning and instead focused on grammar. At one point during Ace’s FI career, there was a country “fair” project (similar to a science fair) about African French countries. She emphasized that despite African countries being the focus of the project, there was little in-depth learning about the countries, cultures, or people. The project instead focused on geographical and population facts, revealing an essentialist orientation (Diaz & Dasli, 2016) and incomplete cultural learning (Brooks, 1968; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Furthermore, Ace expressed frustration over the lack of discussion around colonialism and why French *African* countries exist. In a similar vein, a teacher educator from Stage 2, Kelly, highlighted *how* culture is taught is just as important

as including cultural learning. Kelly likewise pointed out that French language learning must include discussions about colonialism. Serena, another Stage 2 participant, agreed, “we also need to acknowledge the colonial past, present and future of our language”.

Roy claimed Grade 10 French class was simply verbs again. It should be noted that when I taught Roy in his Grade 11 year, we did study French authors from the Caribbean and Africa, but he did not bring them up when asked about these groups. It is possible he assumed that I was aware of his history with African and Caribbean French cultures or that he forgot. At another point during the study, he remarked that I was one of the few people to engage with Black people in my courses: “except for like in your class right, you were really good at actually talking and bring it [Black people] up, so I was, I was like ‘damn, okay’”. Here, Roy reacted in surprise that I was teaching about Black people in French class.

In Grades 11 and 12, there is no overt cultural focus, rather teachers should bring in cultures from across the world. Given that they all studied a world French culture to some extent at some point, all the participants technically addressed this curricular requirement. However, *when* they studied that culture and *to what extent* did not follow the mandated curriculum. I did not ask them outright what cultures they studied in Grades 11 and 12 once they had agreed that they addressed the “worldwide” requirement. Ace, however, did mention that her Grade 11 French class focused on Quebecois culture again. Once again, Quebec was “the only place”, to borrow Roy’s words, that had any significant amount of study dedicated to it. Quebecois language and culture are often devalued compared to French from France (Cormier, 2015). I recall several of my own students stating that they wanted to learn “real” French, not Quebecois. For these reasons, it was surprising to find that Roy and Ace focused so much on Quebecois culture in their learning. Though, it must be noted that Ace and Roy studied *White* Quebecois culture. Despite a shift away from the colonial

metropole, there is still a connection to colonial France through the White descendants of French settlers.

For Ace and Roy, they felt that they had not studied many French cultures and if they had, as Ace said, it was “definitely not enough to be memorable”. Most of the cultural study that was happening appeared to be in relation to geography and nothing else. In Stage 2, Serena stated, “In Ontario our curriculum contains explicit expectations around intercultural awareness that teachers seem to conveniently ignore.” As an FI teacher, Serena confirms that culture is not being taught in FI. All of the Stage 1 participants agreed that cultural learning needed to be improved in FI, even Hassan, who claimed he had learned a lot. Roy suggested the creation of a cultural course that ran in tandem with the French language course. He felt that there needed to be a separate space for cultural learning to occur because it was not happening in French classes. Ace and Hassan both agreed wholeheartedly with this idea. In Stage 2, implementing a cultural course was one of the suggestions that participants rated on a scale of 1 to 5 in terms of importance (1 being not important at all and 5 being very important). The course was one of the more popular suggestions, with 28 of 39 participants rating it a 4 or a 5. Jordan thought that students need “more cultural exposure” and that cultural exposure would lead to “broaden[ing] worldviews”. In contrast, Linda felt that cultural learning was “not as much of a priority” when it came to addressing issues in FI because it was already part of the curriculum. However, just because culture is part of the curriculum, does not mean that it is taught, as evidenced with Ace and Roy’s years of learning (or lack thereof).

On the questionnaire, the suggestion that FI should focus more on culture than grammar was the lowest rated. Only 48.7% of participants rated this suggestion in the important (4-5) range. The rest were neutral or thought it was unimportant. Three participants were concerned about

“doing away” with grammar and felt that there still needed to be an emphasis on grammar. All of those who felt that grammar was important were graduated FI students:

Though I know the education direction for French is going towards learning French culture rather than writing/grammar, I still place high importance on learning grammar since it is essential for learning a language! I do not agree with putting culture learning over the actual language acquisition. –Mei

Grammar is still important. –Catherine

While oral French is important and may seem more important in the short term, I see the importance of a strong understanding of grammar, writing and reading as being essential to sustaining language skills for the future. –Kathleen

So, while cultural learning was viewed as important, for Stage 1 and 2 participants, grammar/language learning remained more important. The concern about language learning may have also been rooted in the widespread French proficiency and confidence issues in FI students across Ontario (Durham District School Board, 2021; Peel District School Board, 2012; Roy, 2012; Sinay et al., 2018; Upper Grand District School Board, 2017).

Representation of Diverse Racial and Cultural Groups

In this section, I outline how race and culture were represented in participants’ FI experiences. We see first that there was an emphasis on White cultures throughout the participants’ learning in Stages 1 and 2. However, there were some instances of diverse representations. Within this diversity, there was an emphasis on Indigenous peoples. I consider how representation in students’ learning impacted how they viewed the stereotypical French speaker. Finally, representation in terms of school racial demographics is presented.

Emphasis on White People and Cultures

Both Ace and Roy found that their studies throughout the years included a lot of resources about White people. Ace went on to say that it was White men, specifically. As Roy said, it was mostly “White protagonists with White stories ... [and] White parts of history. So, there’s not really much like actual Black representation when it comes to resources that are used.” Roy said course materials “were all usually about White individuals, except for like in your [Marika] class right, you were really good at actually talking and bringing it up, so I was, I was like ‘damn, okay.’” Similar to Hassan’s Senegalese teacher, a racially minoritized teacher (me) was the one to actually engage with diverse racial representation. In general, there was a lack of diverse racial and cultural representation in Ace and Roy’s experiences.

The emphasis on White people was confirmed by the Stage 2 participants. In the open-response data, there were 15 references to Euro-centrism and Whiteness of the curriculum. Angela argued that “the curriculum itself was not representative of [racially minoritized] experiences.” Mei agreed, stating: “I realized how Euro-centric the French immersion curriculum is and how it bleeds into all the subjects.” Here, the problem goes beyond individual teachers to the Ministry of Education. At the classroom level, participants found that White Europeans were most represented. Akari spoke about how it is “White/European contributions that are amplified even though there are so many French speaking countries in other parts of the world.” Similar to Stage 1 participants, Monique confirmed that she mostly learned about White Canadian history. Greg stated, “the stuff we study in class. It’s all mostly about white people, however I am noticing an effort to have more representation in the material we study.” Tracy wrote that it was not just the curriculum that was lacking representation, but the teachers: “FI programming has also been historically Eurocentric both in content and demographics (students and educators as well as leadership level roles within

the programming).” Melinda expressed the need to trouble “associations of French with Whiteness”, leaning toward the critical stance suggested by Masson and colleagues (2022).

Some participants reflected on how little they learned about the diversity of the Francophonie: “It made me really reflect on how little I learned about other countries in the francophone diaspora (or, for that matter, Métis people) in school” (Jordan). Jordan had little to no exposure outside of France and Quebec, and his learning was highly based in Whiteness. Furthermore, the Métis identity was completely absent from Jordan’s learning. Serena reflected, “It’s a missed opportunity not to talk about la Francophonie around the world.” Kelly, an FI parent and teacher educator, explained that her daughter never learned about diversity in FI. Kelly said, “the overarching orientation was that this diversity is inconsequential for learning French”. During the Playbuilding stage, Ace said “nowhere am I seeing much colour.” For these participants, diversity was missing in FI.

To conclude, participants wanted diverse representations in FI. The most highly rated suggestion on the Stage 2 questionnaire was: Diversify resources to have better racial representation. This suggestion had 69.2% of participants rate it a 5, with an additional 17.9% rating it a 4. It is the only suggestion to have zero ratings of a 1 and 2. For this reason, it was the most widely accepted suggestion and viewed as the most important need in FI. As Jacob said, “kids need to see themselves in the curriculum”. Rosa emphasized, “representation is important” for students feeling seen and heard and achieving high grades. Likewise, Mei wrote, “there is a lack of representation in media for minority groups”, concluding that we need more French resources to address this problem. Stage 2 participants emphasized the importance of culturally responsive teaching and learning (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Participants called for resources that are “culturally reactive” (Mia) because many materials being used now “might not be appropriate” for

CLD and racially minoritized students (Melinda). Tracy even thought that “educators ... felt they were being culturally responsive but were in fact being the opposite”. So, culturally responsive training was necessary.

Instances of Diversity

While there were few diverse cultures or races studied for both Roy and Ace, they had a few key memories about racial and/or cultural diversity. This section considers diverse groups that are not directly outlined in the curriculum, but instead are diverse racial groups that were studied during FI. I will focus on Ace, Roy, and Hassan given that only one Stage 2 participant gave examples of their diverse learning. Mia, a graduated FI student, claimed her school’s curriculum included “culturally reactive content” with diverse cultures. She used Belgium and Senegal as examples.

Ace described a project that involved writing a play about the Canadian Pacific Railroad in Grade 8. She enjoyed this experience and was the “director” for the class. She did note, however, that while learning about the railroad, there was a heavy focus on White people because they discussed how White people were racist and exploitative. However, I argue that studying the Canadian Pacific Railroad without addressing the role of White people in the oppression of Asian people would be incomplete and inaccurate. In Grade 5, there was a collage project about important/famous Black figures in the world. This experience stood out to Ace because she enjoyed making her collage and she actually learned about important Black people. She also seemed surprised that her teacher cared enough to integrate this activity into her work, since she was a White woman. This shows an underlying belief that Ace thinks that only racially minoritized people will care about integrating racial diversity into their classes.

Roy highlights that Black people were rarely present in his studies, and when they were, they were often included in books as a side character and never the focus. Roy said, “But in 90%, of the other classes I’ve ever been in when a Black person does come up, they’re usually like maybe a side character in a book or something.” Additionally, teachers often make the Black students read for Black characters which Roy did not like because he felt like he was being singled out. Daily announcements in Roy’s school are when he learned the most about racially minoritized people. Thus, it was outside of his courses where most instances of diversity occurred.

Hassan remembers a unit where they watched the television series, “The Book of Negroes” in middle school. He really enjoyed this unit and found it both engaging and informative. It should be noted that the series was viewed in English with discussion and assessment in French. In this instance, racial diversity was distanced from the French language because the resource was in English. Hassan also studied many diverse cultural groups in his years in FI, as outlined above.

These different experiences indicate that the way that a unit is taught greatly affects how students feel about that unit. In Roy’s case, he did not enjoy reading books with Black characters because he knew he would be singled out. For Ace and Hassan, they both enjoyed when they engaged with Black history because they were interested in what they were learning.

Presence of Indigenous Peoples

While most racial and cultural diversity were lacking for Ace and Roy, Indigenous representation was not. All three Stage 1 participants noted that they learned about Indigenous peoples throughout their years at school, especially in History and English classes. They had guest speakers, units, lessons, and announcements about Indigenous folks. Hassan said, “at a certain grade we just spoke about it like a lot ... before ... Grade 6 or Grade 7, I didn’t really hear about Indigenous groups as much.” He did not elaborate beyond this statement. Only one Stage 2

participant, Jordan, explicitly talked about the lack of Indigenous (Métis) representation in their learning.

Ace's elementary school focused on Indigenous peoples: "For Indigenous though, my elementary school was very heavily focused on Indigenous." She goes on to say that at her elementary school, the study of Indigenous peoples outweighed the study of White people. For instance, "any history class we ever had we were talking about Indigenous people and only Indigenous people. ... we didn't really cover White history, like we didn't cover White history as much as we covered Indigenous history." Ace explains that her teacher was "was a bit dismissive on other issues, race-wise. ... the fact that both Indigenous and Black people were both held as slaves in Canada was not brought up once". For her, there was an over-representation of Indigenous people and a lack of connection with other oppressed groups. Despite focusing on Indigenous peoples, Ace felt that the way they were taught did not allow for any actual deep learning about Indigenous communities and she had little knowledge to show for her years of Indigenous studies. Ace claims she did not learn about specific groups or cultural customs but would instead focus on a specific person or general ideas related to Indigenous philosophies. Ace's perceived over-representation of Indigenous peoples was likely influenced by the 2015 publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) 94 calls to action. Teachers and her school board were likely scrambling to react to the TRC document, which called for the inclusion of Indigenous peoples and histories in public school systems. Moreover, Indigeneity became the "hot topic" in education following the publication of the TRC with school boards, ministries, and educational associations centring (or at least attempting to) Indigenous peoples. Indeed, Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) critique the uncritical integration of Indigenous content into post-secondary courses because they are not inherently decolonial nor transformative. Based on

what Ace said, I think it possible that teachers were attempting to integrate Indigenous perspectives without reflection or meaningful learning on the part of the educators.

For Roy, Indigeneity was glossed over, and learning happened mostly outside of instructional time (e.g., during announcements). Roy recalls one unit in elementary school where they read a book about Indigenous people. Apart from that, he found that Grades 9 and 10 had a big Indigenous focus (he did not elaborate), but not much beyond that. Both Ace and Roy had to do their own research if they wanted to learn deeply about Indigenous peoples. They felt that most of their learning happened outside of their classes and was self-motivated. Apart from these key instances, racial and cultural diversity was lacking completely from their studies.

The Racialized Stereotypical French Speaker

When asked about who they imagine the stereotypical French speaker to be, Ace and Roy said White men. They said this image came from the media, teachers, and personal experiences. Data from Stage 2 contributes to the construction of French people as White. Two participants reflected that as people of colour, they are often met with surprise and shock that they can speak French. Lynette, a mixed-race woman, has to explain her Quebecois roots for people to accept why her French is so strong:

As a racialized women [sic], people are always shocked that my French is excellent. I always have to share my personal background to let people know my father is Québécois.

It is a constant slap in the face when people judge you before they get to know you. It is

like a racialized women [sic] could not be French. –Lynette

Without a provincial/heritage identity claim (Quebec), her French expertise is suspicious. In Lynette's words, being delegitimated based on her race "is a constant slap in the face". Mei wrote that people are "surprised" or "impressed" because "they don't really expect" for her, a Chinese

woman, to “speak French fluently.” These women are being subjected to racialized ideologies of the so-called native speaker (Wernicke, 2017). Participants from Stage 1 may have been so reluctant to identify as French speakers because it could be another area where they have to defend their identity. In fact, two racially minoritized teacher candidates from Masson and Cote’s (2024) study anticipated facing similar issues of being delegitimized as French speakers and teachers based on their race. Lastly, Mei described an experience where her fellow racially minoritized teacher candidates opened up about discrimination based on their French accent, which did not mimic the idealized Parisian (White) accent. Mei then wonders what Vietnamese French accents sound like—an especially poignant question as an East Asian woman. Despite being an FI graduate, she had not heard this accent before. Thus, standard French speakers were racialized as White in this study.

Representation in School Demographics

Racial representation in course materials is touted as important in racially minoritized students’ learning (Ladson-Billings, 2014), emphasized by the common refrain: representation matters. However, racial representation is also important in the student body; Nguemini Tiako et al. (2023) demonstrated how Black medical students at historically Black colleges and universities have a higher sense of belonging and greater confidence in their academic abilities as compared to those at predominantly White institutions. Moreover, Gershenson et al. (2021) discuss the positive impact of same-race teachers on racially minoritized students’ learning. For this reason, I now turn to racial representation (students, teachers, and administrators) in participants’ FI schools.

As presented in Chapter 5, Ace, Hassan, and Roy had varying racial demographics in their schools. Roy’s school had the largest Black population (about 40%), Hassan reported his school as 50% White, 50% people of colour, and Ace’s school was mostly White with about 10% Black

people. At the most, racially minoritized people represented 50% of their FI school's population, despite being from very racially diverse areas in Ontario. These findings were echoed across the province in Stage 2. Participants reported that their schools were often dominated by White people and that non-White people were underrepresented in FI. Kathleen commented, "In my school, French immersion was very white. However, the entire school was white." Whether her whole school was White because it was an FI school or because of the surrounding neighbourhood demographics is unknown. Serena, an FI teacher, said, "the program is seen as very white". Catherine, a graduated FI student, stated, "French immersion is more encouraged for people with privilege. There seems to be a disproportionate amount of white people in the program." Catherine implies that it is not just White people, but middle-class ("privileged") White people. Tracy said, "My own daughter, being the ONLY child of colour in her FI classroom, was often reminded of that fact on an ongoing basis".

Roy also mentioned that FI seemed to be what drew Black people to his secondary school; FI was where he found the most Black people in the school. This finding surprised a few Stage 2 participants, including Lynette, a Black FI teacher, who said, "I was surprised to hear some students mentioned that FI was more diverse than English stream at their schools. This is not usually the case." Peter likewise reflected:

I found it interesting that there were quite a few stories by students of colour who found solidarity in French immersion among peers, which contrast with the experiences of whiteness by others. I wonder to what extent the experiences of encountering diversity depend on the school location and/or demographic, the school administration or the teachers intentionally mindful of inclusive environments in FI, the background of the students themselves, or other factors.

Peter questions why students found solidarity in FI and brings up the important question of what teachers and administrators can do to foster solidarity and inclusion.

The representation in the staff was also an issue that was cited by Ace, Hassan, and Roy. Ace only had one Black teacher her entire schooling experience in FI, and he was treated poorly by the administration and did not return after her Grade 8 year. In her secondary school, Ace remarked that they had no permanent Black teachers, but were fortunate enough to have a Black vice principal. Ace reported that she had a few Asian teachers throughout elementary school, and one in high school. Hassan said that he had a few racially minoritized teachers in elementary school, but in high school, he only had one Black teacher and one Asian teacher, and the rest were White. Hassan noted that racial diversity was lacking in teachers in the English-stream as well. While Roy said he had more racially minoritized teachers in the FI stream, he noted that they were still few and far between. Roy stated that his school only had two Black teachers total, one being a vice principal. As Donald remarked, "I think the story about a student telling a supply teacher, 'We need you!' was especially impactful for me because it spoke to the lack of representation of racialized students and teaching staff in French immersion." Donald is from outside of Ontario, showing how racial representation is not an Ontario-specific problem. Akari wrote, "we do need more Black teachers!" Given this need for representation, one suggestion on the questionnaire was: There should be targeted recruitment of racial minority French teachers. This suggestion was the third most highly rated suggestion of all: 59% of participants rated targeted recruitment a 5 and an additional 17.9% rated it a 4. More diverse racial representation was widely supported by all participants.

Summary

The first half of this chapter outlined Stage 1 participants' experiences with cultural learning in FI. It discussed whether or not participants were learning about the cultural groups outlined in the OME curricula (2013b, 2014). Through discussions about cultural learning, it became clear that participants all had a different understanding of what culture was. Hassan was the sole participant who felt that he learned what the curriculum called for. When it came to diverse representations in their learning, Hassan was again the only one who felt that he learned significantly about diverse races and cultures in FI. However, he was unable to provide many details. Ace and Roy did not feel that they learned about diverse people, with a few exceptions, notably, Indigenous peoples were present in their learning. Above all, Stage 1 and 2 participants emphasized that curricular content was entrenched in Whiteness. Whiteness was accentuated by the racialized (White) construction of the stereotypical French speaker. Participants from both stages felt that Frenchness was associated with Whiteness. Finally, racial representation was lacking amongst students and teachers in FI programs, with a majority White population. Participants called for a more diverse population.

Chapter 7: Racism and French Proficiency

Chapter 7 deals with two major thematic findings: the presence of racism and the pressing need to improve students' French proficiency. Starting first with racism, the section discusses racist experiences by perpetrator (student or teacher/administrator), how racially minoritized people deal with racism, antiracist efforts, and—in the rarer cases—, the lack of racism. Next, the lack of repercussions for racism are discussed. Despite the clear presence of racism in all three participants' schools, their main concern when it came to FI was their own perceived low French level. For this reason, the chapter ends by exploring participants' French proficiency and how that impacts their identities as French speakers. The need to improve oral French is presented. Teacher proficiency and francophone hierarchies are considered.

Experiences of Racism

The “racial reckoning” of 2020 did little to bring about antiracism in participants' schools. While all Playbuilding participants remarked that people were more aware of racial discrimination and injustice, racism was still occurring. Both Roy and Ace had several experiences with racism and racist teachers and students, however, Hassan claimed that he had not experienced any “discrimination”. Hassan had a general reluctance to speak about racism. He even said he would not tell his family about the racist stories he heard during this study because he did not want that to influence their opinions of FI. However, Hassan had no issue with telling his friends and family that FI failed in terms of linguistic development.

In Stage 2, 18 participants cited racist incidents they heard of or experienced, 16 of which explicitly indicated that they happened in FI. Divya remarked, “racism exists everywhere”. Broadly, Anika said, “Racism continues to permeate FI”, but did not offer any other examples. Angela acknowledged that racism was a barrier for racially minoritized students attending FI. She

felt that everyone should have access to FI and by not addressing and stopping racism, racially minoritized students were being denied their right to get “the French education they deserve.” Tracy reflected on the fact that her experience as a White student in FI was drastically different from her daughters’ experiences as people of colour in FI in the same province and program. While Tracy does not cite overt racism, she does give examples of microaggressions and lack of representation. Kelly reflected that “there was a substantial lack of understanding about issues of race and racism among her [child’s] peers in FI.” Grace, an FI parent, felt that FI was “designed to only prop up the white students and push out the black students” and removed her daughter from the program. These exact sentiments were felt by Black FI parents in Munroe et al.’s (2022) study.

Riya felt that she was not welcome in the FI space. This professor relates to feelings of being “invisible” and “devalued” as a racialized queer woman. Similarly, Ace, who identified as queer, said that she did not feel that she was welcome in FI. Unlike Riya, Ace did not link her queer identity to her lack of welcomeness in the program, though it is possible that it was a contributing factor. While queer identities were largely absent from the study, the intersection of race and gender/sexuality is an emerging body of research in FAL (e.g., Bouamer & Bourdeau, 2022a; Hakeem, 2022; Meyer & Hoft-March, 2022; Spiegelman, 2022a). To summarize, racism was present for both Stage 1 and stage 2 participants.

Racist Students

Roy and Ace said that there were several students in their year who were known to be racist. As Roy said, “it’s just common knowledge” who is racist and who is not, and it was rare for students to change over the years. Ace explains, “the same people who were racist in Grade 9 were still racist” in Grade 12. At Roy’s school specifically, the students were fairly open with their

racism and did very little to hide it from teachers or students. For this reason, Roy talked about how Black students at his school would avoid those known to be racist. Roy explains,

I've known these kids since like Grade 6 and they've kind of grown up either the same way, or like one or two of them are actually making strides to change. Like it's kind of just become a thing, where like in friend groups that specific person is kind of just like "Oh well, you know he's racist." Like I could be like "Oh, I was talking to such and such today," and then it comes back just like "Oh, you know he's racist." I'm like [emphasis] "yeah I know, but like I'm not just going to like ostracize everybody." ... I see it as if I make them feel left out ... it just gives them more reason to attack me or more reason to be racist towards me. I don't know, that's just how I see it, but like it's just like common knowledge that everyone's kind of like "stay away from that person." They have their group, but like joining that or like associating with that person isn't a good look ...

Roy was more open to spending time with those who were racist in the past but in whom he saw change. He reflected that completely ignoring or cutting off racist students would give them even more ammunition to dislike him. Here, Roy is taking on the responsibility to make the racist students more comfortable in the hopes that it will change their minds or behaviours. Roy's fellow Black friends seem to judge him when he hangs out with those who have been labelled as racist. I posit that Roy was tired of constantly battling his White peers, unlike some of his Black peers who would do their best to never associate with racist students.

Ace spoke about a student in her school who had "strong White supremacist views." The students' Drama teacher tried her best to make him change his views. Whether or not the teacher succeeded was unclear. In another instance, Ace spoke about a fellow Grade 2 student who

screamed “I hate Black people” in the hallway. These examples shows that racist students were present in Ace’s school, even if they were less common than at Roy’s.

In Stage 2, Monique explained that she experienced anti-Black racism from her peers as an FI student. Donald spoke about how he was aware of racism, while Dana “witnessed a few incidents” which she addressed “right away”. Dana reflected that some elementary FI students have “misperceptions” about certain races within her school, demonstrating that racism is happening even at a younger age. Jordan mentioned that around 2020, some classmates shared their stories about racism similar to those presented on our website: “white people committing microaggressions with little or no awareness”. Peter, a current FI student, stated that he had heard people make “jabs” about people with African descent. Mei, an East Asian woman, experienced anti-Asian racism committed by a another racially minoritized person in FI. Mei did not associate racism with the program, but rather the people.

Racist Jokes

Roy spoke about how most racism that he encountered was couched behind “jokes”. For instance, following the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, students in his class made egregious jokes saying, “oh you can’t breathe?” in a mocking tone. Roy claims that these “jokes” are made with the knowledge that they are racist. Before one Black history month assembly, students at Roy’s school made claims/jokes that they were going to belittle Black activists like Rosa Parks at or before the assembly, however Roy said that, as far as he knew, nothing happened. It seemed more like students enjoyed making big claims about racist acts but had little follow through for most of them.

In a book in Roy’s Grade 12 French class, there was a racist term used to describe a racially minoritized person. The teacher explained that the term was racist, and it was used because the

novel was set during a time where racism was rampant. A student who was known for being racist then used the term inappropriately. Roy elaborates:

There was a time this year, actually, where a *specific* student. They basically figured out—because we were reading a book and it had like it was dealing with racism, since it was set in, like the past, so obviously it was set in a time where like there was racism. And so, the teacher had—because there was a word that we didn’t know. I don’t even really remember it, but the teacher explained what it was—he didn’t like say it, because in English, it would just be straight up be racist, so he explained it to us, and was like “this word is racist in this context and that’s why it’s being used here, because the person is being racist.” And then one of the students who is known for being racist started using it, and was like “Oh, but we just learned it so like what’s the problem?” And when I, and even a few other students, tried to explain it to him. He doubled down and the teacher kind of gave him a pass and was like, “Oh well, he just learned the word, whatever.” And I’m saying, “but like he knows what he’s doing, like it’s a conscious thing that he’s doing.” And I figure it’s because the teacher didn’t want to call him out in the moment but then afterwards, he was called to talk to the teacher, so I think he was talked to about it. But that’s just like a general occurrence. [Racism,] It’s more so with the students.

The student tried to play it off as a joke or as him not being aware of what he was doing, but as Roy highlights, “it’s a conscious thing that he’s doing.” The teacher’s reaction will be discussed below.

These jokes were echoed by Stage 2 participants (Greg, Jacob, and Mei) who reported hearing about racism and seeing people “making racist jokes” (Jacob). Mei remarked that “casual

racism” like jokes was something she had experienced. Greg confirmed that racial slurs were used “as jokes among racial groups” in FI. The theme of couching racism in jokes was prevalent.

Racial Slurs

Hassan reported that the one form of racism that he witnessed was the use of racial slurs. Hassan said that he and his racially minoritized friends would use racial slurs within their own race and for other races amongst themselves. He implied that they were used as jokes or as a form of camaraderie. When asked if slurs were used across racial groups (e.g., a non-Black person of colour saying the N-word), his answer was not clear. Hassan said that he realized it was bad to use these slurs as he got older and White peers started to think that it was okay to use them as well. He made it seem as if most people stopped using slurs only once White people started using them. As the use of the N-word is common amongst Black people within Black circles, the use of racial slurs is not surprising. However, the question remains as to whether other races were using hate speech and passing it off as a joke or not. Greg confirmed that he heard racist slurs in FI, and Serena’s student told her about their peers using racial slurs. Naomi, a Black woman, stated that she “experienced racialized slurs from peers” when she was in FI. Racial slurs were widely used with seemingly few consequences.

Segregated Friend Groups

Unsurprisingly, students at both Roy and Ace’s schools tended to have racially segregated friend groups. Both Ace and Roy remarked that there was a racial segregation that happened naturally (and by design) within their FI classes. Hassan countered this, saying that the segregation that existed in his school was based on gender in his classes, not by race. He also mentioned that his program was very small, so there were not a lot of people in his grade to start with. As a result, students self-segregated based on FI-track and English-track. Contradicting his earlier point about

racial segregation, Hassan notes that his friends are primarily racially minoritized. By his own math, 50% of the people in his class were White, so if the majority of his friends were racially minoritized, Hassan also had a (somewhat) racially segregated friend group. For Ace, any friendships that she had with White people during high school were initiated by her. She said that there was the general sentiment that Black people should be left to hang out with Black people. Ace remarked that she had a White friend group and Black friend group.

Ace and Roy note that when they were younger, there was less racial segregation (if any) amongst their classmates, everyone just hung out with everyone else. Although, Roy does make the distinction that boys and girls tended to stick together. Then over time, it moved from the boys and girls to the White boys, the Black boys, the White girls, the Black girls. Tatum (2017) mirrors this assertion that young children in mixed race environments often cross racial boundaries, but as they age, children become more segregated in their interactions. Roy expressed that he did have some White friends, but they were only friends because they remained friends from elementary school. Generally, as Roy said, “the White kids stay with the White kids”. Roy explains:

I have like a lot of White friends and stuff and most of them are—because I knew them when I was in elementary school. I find that when it’s like—in elementary school it’s just kind of like everyone is a kid, everyone’s doing whatever right. And, like, for example, it’s more so just boys and girls over like Black/White whatever, right. ... Whereas, as you grow up people start to then see it as the Black kids or like the Black boys, or the White kids and the White boys, right. I don’t know it’s, just as you grow up, I think it just becomes more of like an idea or an idea is put in your head because it’s like what we’re taught over time.

For someone to breach this racial divide, they must be popular enough or the White student would have to have something to gain. Roy gave the example of becoming popular because he was on

the basketball team. After joining, he was suddenly invited to parties and White students who had previously not spoken to him wanted to become his friend because he had higher status.

As Roy suggests, this racial segregation is an idea “we’re taught over time” and not something that happened before racist ideologies permeated their younger brains (see also, Tatum, 2017). Naomi, from Stage 2, agreed that “White students did not want to associate” with her. Racial segregation might point to racism on the part of White students and/or self-preservation for racially minoritized students in oppressive environments (Tatum, 2017; Villalpando, 2003).

Racist Teachers and Administrators

Most teachers were not critiqued as being racist, however, they were complicit in upholding racism in several instances particularly through the lack of repercussions or intervention (see below). Hassan felt that he had no discriminatory teachers whatsoever and could not relate to the others’ stories. Three Stage 2 participants outright agreed that there were racist teachers and administrators. Jordan confirmed that everyone knew who was racist and knew which vice principals to avoid: “The story about knowing who was racist and who wasn’t was unfortunately very true to my experience, especially since it was one of the Vice-Principals everyone knew to watch out for.” Jordan went on to say that teachers’ and administrators’ racism manifested as: “teachers not recognizing barriers or supporting students (particularly learning disabilities/behavioural needs) and encouraging parents to pull their kids out of the program instead”. John stated that in his elementary school, teachers were “traumatizing” students with their racism. While less overtly racist, Anika remarked that “Black students in FI are often silenced or asked to speak on behalf of their entire race” by their teachers. This experience echoes Ace and Roy’s sentiment as the token Black student.

Using the N-Word

As Roy says, “there are a few racist teachers” at his school. He described an incident with a math teacher. Roy had two Black friends who received tutoring for math from one of the teachers at the school. During one of these sessions, the math teacher called them “stupid [N-words]” because they were not understanding the concepts that he was trying to teach them. Roy’s friends were told that he was fired, only to find out that he was merely transferred schools. To be told that a teacher has been appropriately reprimanded for a blatant instance of hate speech, only to find out that person is still gainfully employed is a slap in the face. What would students have to gain by reporting incidents when nothing happens?

The N-word was used many times by teachers in Ace and Roy’s classes. These instances were not specific to FI classes and instead happened in English class. Ace expressed surprise and disappointment that her teacher “didn’t seem concerned that, [she] and the other Black students in class would be ... affected” by the N-word. Students in Ace’s school frequently spoke about past incidents of teachers using the N-word. Ace recounted a teacher who was reading *The Hate U Give* and insisted on reading the N-word aloud because she did not want to skip part of the story. In a Black Literature course at her school, the White teacher likewise read the N-word aloud in class and did not see an issue with it. Ace argued, “Had there been a book in French, it [reading the N-word aloud] probably would have happened in French too” which is confirmed by Roy’s story about a racist term in a French book (see above).

Comparing Oppressions

One of Ace’s teachers made the claim that French Canadians went through the same struggle as Black people: “he says, you know, I think that the struggle that the French Canadians

went through is comparable to Black people. At that point, I stopped listening to anything he said". After her teacher made this comparison, Ace reflected,

I could not respect the man any further because he said something like that. I don't remember exactly how it went, but I know that that was the message, and I was done with him. ... you are a French teacher teaching Black students how, how are you going to say—?

The impact of his off-hand comment meant that Ace fully disengaged from her learning.

In Stage 2, Lynette, a racially minoritized Québécois woman, felt that Ace was over-reacting to her teacher's comment and thought that she had misunderstood what the teacher was saying. Lynette said,

When the Black students commented that they stopped listening once the Québécois teacher had mentioned the history and the on-going laws that are trying to erase Québécois people and culture. I feel like there was definitely a miscommunication and teachers need to be trained before discussing topics that are culturally sensitive.

Lynette takes more of a neutral ground approach; while the comparison should not have been made, she thinks that Ace over-reacted and simply misunderstood her teacher. Nevertheless, Lynette blames the teacher, making it clear that it was the teacher's responsibility to communicate his point better. In contrast, Jordan thought Ace's teacher's comment was "enraging". He says,

comparing systems of oppression is never appropriate, because it erases what is unique about different forms of oppression and different ways systematic oppression occurs. But honestly? It's just offensive, and I totally side with the people who dismissed anyone who tried to make that argument.

Similar to Jordan's point, scholars Patricia Hill Collins (1998) and George Dei (1993) argues that comparing oppressions is never productive and in fact, plays into colonial hierarchical thinking.

Whether the participant agreed with Ace's reaction or not, her teacher's comment was viewed as inappropriate and damaging.

Run-ins with Administrators at FI Schools

Black students were seen as troublemakers at Roy's school. Roy recounted stories of being sent to the office because he was crying, getting suspended for breaking up a fight while other (White) students who were actually fighting did not get suspended, getting double the suspension time as his White peer when he was involved in a fight, and having the police called on him. Roy had a vice principal imply that Black people should not express their emotions because it is seen as aggressive. She shamed him for being upset and blamed him for being sent to the office. Roy explained the incident as follows:

I've had many instances where I remember—one time in Grade 9, I got really angry, right. I wasn't hurting anybody I wasn't doing anything, but I was like crying, right. And long story short, I was sent to the office and now I'm like more agitated because I'm saying like, "why was I sent to the office? I'm sitting in a chair crying", right. And the principal, not the principal, the VP at the time, and she looked at me and she was like [in a higher pitch] "Well, I care about you guys, like *you guys* you get so angry and I can't like—we can't deal with that, you guys just get so mad", right. But then when we were referring to it afterwards, she said "you guys" in a way that—okay, *maybe* it might not have been racist but it felt kind of like [emphasis] "*you guys*" is like emphasis on the fact that I'm Black right? Now she didn't say that, so I'll never fully know, but that's how it felt.

Roy explains his hesitance in naming this a racist incident since his vice principal was not explicit. This ambiguity leads to him not knowing how to interpret his vice principal's words. Either way, he was punished by his teacher for crying, then sent to the office and further punished and made

to feel as if he were a threat due to his skin colour. Through his many instances of differential treatment, it is evident that the administrators at his school were not treating Black boys the same way they treated White boys, which is unfortunately a common reality for Black students (e.g., Brown, 2006; James & Turner, 2017; Munroe et al., 2022).

Jacob, a Stage 2 parent, shared that the Children's Aid Society was called on his child for no reason when the parents were marginally late for after school pickup. The father reflected that the only reason he could think of was because his daughter's last name is stereotypically Latinx. Jacob felt that the office administrator unjustly assumed that his child was neglected or that the parents were neglectful because she was Latina. In these two examples, administrator's racist assumptions were revealed.

The Great Teacher Ally

Apart from the instances above, Ace found that teachers were afraid to be racist. Ace thought teachers would go out of their way to appear overly nice and not racist, though, not necessarily *antiracist*. As Kendi (2019) argues, if you are not antiracist (that is, taking action against racism), you are supporting racist actions and institutions. According to Kendi, there is no middle-ground between racist and antiracist people; you are either one or the other. Ace felt that she had several teachers who claimed to be "great allies" and would let her down when their racism was revealed. This left her disappointed and disengaged with that teacher's class. An ally is defined as someone who holds a place of privilege and uses that privilege to help an oppressed group of people (Lawford-Smith & Tuckwell, 2024). The term ally has been critiqued (Bourke, 2023; Kutlaca & Radke, 2023) because those who claim allyship may do so while simultaneously oppressing those they claim to support (Lawford-Smith & Tuckwell, 2024). George Dei instead

proposes the term “critical friend” to signal the need for critical conversation and action in allyship (Ahmed-Ullah, 2017).

Ace noted that teachers seemed afraid of treating Black students differently. Ace said that students and teachers are genuinely afraid of the consequences of being racist because the Black people at her school are “confrontational”. Ace elaborated:

at least from my grade, none of like the Black students we play at all, like we-we’re not letting anything slide we’re a little confrontational as a group of Black students. ... I never heard of a situation where somebody’s been racist close enough to any of us that we had to deal with it. And I think it’s because they’re scared.

Fear was a motivator stopping racism, which is perhaps not the best-case scenario; caring and respect should be the motivation for antiracism. At Ace’s school, Black students were also seen as resource students for teachers—if they needed to know something or needed help, it was the Black students who were called on. Ace found that Black students were more closely monitored and less able to step out of line than their White peers, but generally Black students were not seen as troublemakers. Conversely, Tracy, an FI parent, critiques teachers, saying, “educators ... felt they were being culturally responsive but were in fact being the opposite.” So, those who may have been attempting to enact a more critical orientation to their teaching were not doing so in an effective way.

All three Stage 1 participants reflected that White teachers who presented themselves as allies often embodied White guilt. White guilt is defined as: “the emotion that is elicited among White individuals in response to becoming aware of their racial group’s misdeed or harm of other groups” (Mekawi et al., 2021, p. 2). Hassan reflected that White teachers would go so far as to act like “they were a victim of racism”. Roy found the same thing: “they’ll speak as if they’re speaking

from experience”. White teachers instead centred themselves in the conversation about racism. The participants felt that this behaviour was inappropriate, and undermined the teachers’ attempts at being an “ally”. In these examples, teachers were not critical allies to racially minoritized students.

Dealing with Racism as a Racially Minoritized Person

When asked how it felt to be surrounded by racist people, both Ace and Roy metaphorically shrugged. They were used to it, and they knew that it was not going to change. This resonated with my own schooling experiences in a rural town. As long as people leave you alone, you can get by. Constantly fighting them or trying to change them gets exhausting quickly. Ace explained: “And I didn’t really feel a ways about that whole thing ... People are racist, I was kind of already aware of that.” Ace noted that she could live her life as long as the racism was not blatant: “as long as they stop showing their racism around me, I can function until I go to university.” Unfortunately, racism would likely continue at university as well. That being said, should racism be blatant, Ace described herself as “confrontational” and willing to educate anyone on what is and is not acceptable.

Roy was more open to seeing people as capable of change and growth. He was annoyed that people who did something racist in Grade 7 were still being prosecuted in Grade 12, especially when it was clear that some of them had changed. However, he was hesitant to fully be open to a growth mindset, calling it “dangerous” since some people could be hiding their racism from him. He expressed this worry in his monologue when he talks about “seeing change” and “seeing change back” (line 21) to one’s previous racist ways. Roy also said that he takes racism as a joke “so as not to embarrass” the racist person. He goes along with the racism so as not to make an awkward moment in a school setting—what happens beyond the school setting is another matter entirely.

Here, his reaction seems to mirror his teachers' reactions to racism. They let it slide or even go along with it in the moment, but later on, it is dealt with. Roy also shows a concern he has about people who are perpetuating racism feeling comfortable instead of prioritizing his own comfort as the victim of racism. Given that he had to live with these peers for 13 years of school, he had to find a way to get by, otherwise he would be constantly fighting. In this way, making racist students comfortable may have resulted in his own temporary comfort, even if it enabled racism (e.g., Osburne et al., 2023).

The Need for Antiracist Efforts

When it came to antiracist efforts that are happening, Ace, Roy, and Hassan did not have many examples. Hassan mentioned a Black peer who was part of the Black student alliance and the Black history month assembly. Hassan said he enjoyed the Black history month assembly but was not a member of the Black student alliance because he saw it as a space for Black students only. Antiracism, for Hassan, was extracurricular. Roy said that one or two teachers cared about antiracism but did not elaborate. Ace laughed at this question—there was little to no antiracism in her FI classes. Monique from Stage 2 confirmed that antiracist efforts were few and far between. She said, no “anti-racism in general” was happening. Celia, a core French teacher, stated, “we are not doing enough” when it comes to antiracism. Melinda, a teacher educator, highlighted that “we should be able to do better as teachers”, echoing Ace’s monologue. Many participants spoke about how there was a lot of work that needed to be done to address racism. For example, Jacob wrote,

I learned that more needs to be done to create anti racist spaces. It’s not enough to not be racist, racism needs to be stopped in its tracks with anti racism training for all who work with children so they can create safe places for students of colour.

While little antiracism was happening, participants had a desire for antiracist efforts.

There were some efforts underway to combat racism. Dana, a staff member, stated that when she sees racism happening, she “address[es] it right away”. Greg, a current FI student, said “staff are [already] doing what they can to combat” racism at his school. Divya thought that we are on the right path when it comes to antiracism because the participants in Stage 1 were able to name racism whereas Divya, “wouldn’t have had the words/knowledge to label someone like that.” To Divya, naming racism is a step toward antiracism. Two participants emphasized that the work of antiracism should not fall onto the students or people of colour. Jacob was sad about the reality that students have the “burden” of “creating a safe space for themselves” (e.g., Ace and her friends having to dole out consequences for racism), while Kelly emphasized that race needs to be addressed by those who “are doing all the racializing” (i.e., White people). These Stage 2 participants had a more critical understanding of antiracist work than the other participants.

No Experiences of Racism

Hassan claimed that he did not experience any racism or “discrimination”. Similarly, three participants from Stage 2 stated that they did not see or witness racism in their FI programs. Monique said that her school was “accepting and welcoming”: “I never felt that I didn’t fit in, in comparison to my white peers.” Likewise, while not directly related to racism, three racially minoritized participants highlighted that they had good teachers. John (from outside of Ontario) said, “some teachers ... were incredible”, Mei had “amazing teachers” and at Rosa’s schools there were “kind educators [who] would not tolerate this behaviour [racism] or exhibit it.” Peter expressed that he did not think that there was racial profiling going on in his FI school, though did not elaborate. While Angela said that she “didn’t notice any racism”, she reflected that she is White, so she “did not experience racism”, “didn’t have much perspective” and “would’ve been

pretty naive to it.” That is to say, racism might not be present or might not be as obvious to some, but it is likely still happening.

Lack of Repercussions for Racism

At Roy’s school, racist acts faced very few repercussions which emboldened students in their racism. Roy showed how teachers would not acknowledge when racist things were being done around them. He shared an example of a student saying something racist and the teacher having a visible facial reaction to the statement, but not saying or doing anything to counter it:

I’ve seen a lot of teachers like witness it [racism] firsthand. And even like I’ve seen them make faces or whatever, but a lot of them won’t actually step in because they don’t want to do it and then have them, like the student, back down on it and then no one comes up to say, “okay that’s what happened” and then the teacher looks stupid, and it doesn’t look good on them. –Roy

Here, the teacher knows that something wrong is happening, but they are more concerned about looking “stupid” if they feel they cannot prove the student said something racist. Moreover, students will support one another in their racism to make the teacher feel incapable of intervening.

Roy reported that teachers often let racism slide with little or no repercussions, especially in the moment. For Roy, the problem was not racist teachers (though they were also detrimental), but rather that teachers “won’t acknowledge when racist things are being done around them.” Sometimes, a teacher would call a student back after class to talk to them one-on-one, but they would not disrupt the lesson or address the incident in real time. The message sent to the class, then, is that racism is permissible in their classrooms. For the example with the racist term in Roy’s French class, the teacher let the student use the term and even backed him up saying that the student was applying his learning in class. However, after class, the teacher held the student back. In this

case, it cannot be argued that the teacher was unaware of the racism going on—they were simply unwilling to intervene.

As Roy says, racist students know that “there’s no repercussions” and that most of the teachers “aren’t going to do anything”. He thinks teachers are more afraid of “getting flack” from students, parents, or the administration for speaking against a student. Teachers are afraid that students and parents will push back and that they will be questioned. Their fear of being challenged keeps them from addressing racism in the moment or at all. However, this means that racism continues to be rampant in Roy’s school and students’ beliefs continue unchallenged. Furthermore, students are emboldened and will often talk back to teachers when one or two of them do put their foot down about racism. Roy narrates,

a lot of the time, a lot of teachers, [emphasis] *especially in French*, a lot of them are a bit too, like, I want to say they’re more afraid of actually saying something about it. And, for example, having like a student bring flack down on them and then it looks bad on them if some like, for example, if the student comes with their parents and they’re like “Oh, he would never do that” or whatever and then the teacher kind of looks dumb for saying anything. So, I don’t know, I find that the teachers are more afraid, but the students are a lot more just open with it [racism] because they know nothing’s really going to happen because of it.

It should be noted here that Roy makes a point that it was the French teachers specifically who would not step in and say anything to stop racism. While many of these examples of racism have been throughout the school and not specific to FI or unclear on where they have happened, here Roy makes that distinction clear. Something about his FI teachers meant that they were less antiracist than his English-track teachers. I wonder if FI teachers viewed the French language as a

barrier to antiracism. Perhaps if there was more administrative support for dealing with issues of racism, clear guidelines, and a culture of zero tolerance for racism, teachers would be more willing to “step in” as Roy puts it. It is also worth questioning the impact of parental involvement/push-back when it comes to teacher interventions. Anecdotally, FI parents are known for being very involved in their child’s learning and teachers might want to avoid a confrontation with parents.

Roy hinted at the fact that there were social repercussions for students who committed racist acts; he said, “we don’t talk about what happens later”. Here, he implies that those affected by racist statements enact consequences outside of school. Another social consequence is that Black students segregate themselves from racist students, as discussed earlier. So, despite there being few official repercussions for racism, the Black students at school ensured there were other consequences.

Ace spoke about how the student who claimed he hated Black people faced no consequences, to her knowledge. After the incident, Ace was taken to the office and given a popsicle and her mother was informed. However, it did not seem that the perpetrator received any consequences for his words. Likewise, the teachers who expressed racist viewpoints or used the N-word faced zero consequences for their actions and many continue to use the word, despite students pushing back. Greg, an FI student, also stated that there was a lack of repercussions for racism in his FI school. Whereas Jessica, a White FI teacher, was shocked that there were no repercussions for racism.

Racism Less Important than French Proficiency

French proficiency was a key concern for all participants in both stages of the study and outweighed concerns about racism for Stage 1 participants. For instance, Roy and Ace, who spoke at length about racism, both thought that having stronger French was more important than

addressing racism in FI. In fact, in terms of needs, none of the participants cited the need for antiracism training for teachers. This was a need that I suggested, and they agreed with, but not something that was even on their radar. Ace felt that if teachers did not want to learn about antiracism, they would not, so antiracist training was only helpful for those who actually wanted to change. Ace clarified in her final Stage 3 interview that she found racism to be a “lesser” evil than her not learning French properly. Either way, she would be experiencing racism, so she would rather know French than not know French. For this reason, the final section of this chapter will briefly discuss the participants’ feelings toward their own and their teachers’ French proficiency.

Low Learning Levels and Suggestions for Improvement

All Stage 1 participants agreed that they were dissatisfied with their level of French and their French learning in FI. Participants thought their French levels were low and they lacked confidence in their French. All three thought that their entire class’s French proficiency was below their grade level. Vanderveen’s (2015) literature review and findings emphasize that many FI students and graduates lack confidence in their French abilities. In Ace, Hassan, and Roy’s top three needs to improve FI, they all implicated improving French skills: one-on-one communication, better resources, and more French classes (see Chapter 5 for a deeper discussion on linguistic confidence in Stage 1). Roy shared a story about how teachers gave up on students, especially in the upper years because they had not yet mastered the basics: “I feel like he [French teacher] kind of just gave up ... this year especially I didn’t feel as welcome in the class because I felt kind of like it was like the teacher thought I was a lost cause.” Not only did his teacher’s lack of support result in lower confidence, but it also made Roy feel unwelcome in the class. Mia, who graduated from FI, agreed that she was “not prepared as well as [she] wanted to be” when it came to speaking French. Mia, like Ace and Roy, felt that her teachers had given up on teaching her

French. Similarly, Jordan lacked confidence in his French speaking skills, despite graduating from FI.

Three suggestions from the Stage 2 questionnaire focused on improving students' French proficiency. The suggestions were focused on oral French skills, not reading or writing because the Stage 1 participants did not see these skills as priorities. Almost all suggestions related to improving French were highly rated. Suggestions included: Activities should be more action-oriented and authentic to encourage language use (87.2% rated a 4 or 5); Oral French should be emphasized over written French and grammar (69.2% rated a 4 or 5); A stricter policy on French language use in the classroom (e.g., speak more French) (53.8% rated a 4 or 5). The last suggestion was the most contentious. Though the majority of participants rated it between a 4 and 5, seven participants (17.9%) rated the stricter French policy as a 1 or a 2. To contextualize this result, ratings below a 3 were very rare for all other suggestions. Bernard said,

I strongly disagree with the 'A stricter policy on French language use in the classroom' statement. I find that such a policy deters student motivation in the classroom. Use of other languages should be encouraged and supported in addition to French.

Bernard's view reflects the plurilingual turn in language education where learners are encouraged to draw from their linguistic repertoires (Marshall & Moore, 2018; Prasad, 2020). Candice even said we need an "emphasis on plurilingualism" in FI. In contrast, Mei, a teacher candidate, said, "it'd be great to enforce speaking French more." While this suggestion was less popular in Stage 2, Roy and the other Stage 1 participants felt that if teachers were stricter, students would be forced to actually use French. Roy even said he felt his French was stronger when he was younger and teachers had French only policies, versus in high school when teachers stopped enforcing the policy. Roy's experiences mirror research that shows how language learning for English first

language speakers often plateau in immersion after the introduction of English courses (see Ballinger et al., 2017 for a discussion). However, it should be noted that even with a stricter policy, there is no guarantee that students would speak more French. As Vanderveen (2015) says about her own FI experiences, “Despite the best efforts of many teachers, I do not remember speaking very much French with my peers after grade five or six” (p. 14). The role of other languages (especially English) in FI programs remains a contentious debate (Ballinger et al., 2017). I argue for a plurilingual stance that centres the French language.

For the other two suggestions, participants were largely in favour of more action-oriented learning, and more oral French. Many participants spoke about the need to emphasize oral French since it was the most important skill. Mei said, “Speaking French is also its most useful form for most people.” Greg thought, “More opportunities are needed to practice oral French in contexts other than language classes.” Though, Kathleen reflected, “While oral French is important and may seem more important in the short term, I see the importance of a strong understanding of grammar, writing and reading as being essential to sustaining language skills for the future.” Similarly, Kelly said, “Oral and written use of French are both important in that they each have a different purpose”. Kathleen and Kelly saw the different strands of language from a both-and approach instead of an either-or one, unlike the Stage 1 participants. Improving oral French was a priority for most participants.

Teacher Proficiency

Ace and Roy thought that their French teachers did not have a high level of French. Ace highlighted that those who did have high levels of French were Francophones—demonstrating linguistic hierarchy and discrimination (Masson et al., 2022; Tian & King, 2023). She thought it was important that French teachers were able to explain words and concepts in French and not just

translate them to English. Roy likewise said that the only good French teachers he had were Francophones, with a few key exceptions. While Hassan did not comment on teacher proficiency in the story sharing phase, his monologue does. Hassan thinks that teachers' French level is low and that they rely on Google Translate to teach the language that they are supposed to be experts in: "I have seen one too many French immersion students who doubt their French speaking skills. And one too many teachers who should doubt their French speaking skills" (lines 19-21).

The need for FI teachers to improve their French proficiency was one of the suggestions on the Stage 2 questionnaire. It was rated highly by participants, both students and teachers, as an important need: 64.1% of participants rated this suggestion between a 4 and 5 in terms of importance. Angela commented that she had a French teacher whose language skills were very low. Melinda, an FI teacher educator, added nuance to the need to improve teacher proficiency by saying, "Teachers may need support with their language skill, but I think that should come from a place of *maintenance and curiosity* for lifelong learning *rather than shaming* teachers into thinking that their French is not 'good enough'" (emphasis added).

The second suggestion related to improving teacher proficiency had to do with teachers attending a summer institute. Unlike the above suggestion, this one was more divided: only 53.9% rated within the 4-5 range, with 4 being the most chosen rating. While it appears that most participants think teachers need to improve their French, how they go about that is less agreed upon. Mei thought that a language course for FI teachers would be helpful. However, her suggestion shows evidence of native-speaker favoritism (Wernicke, 2017): "regarding the French teachers, I believe a course to maintain French proficiency would be great since the new upcoming generation of French teachers would most likely have learned it as their second language." In Mei's mind, those who have French as an additional language need more support. Echoing Ace's

assertion, Catherine said, “I don’t think teachers will take advantage of programs directed towards their learning.” So, it might not even matter if there was a summer institute available.

Overall, French proficiency was a huge concern for all participants, however, how to improve proficiency was less agreed upon. Stage 1 participants chose to focus their suggestions around improving French proficiency instead of addressing racism. Stage 2 participants were less exposed to the concerns about French proficiency via our website, so it follows that they would speak less to French proficiency. French proficiency was also viewed as a separate issue from antiracist pedagogy; Stage 1 participants favoured proficiency over antiracism and did not see how French learning could be enhanced by an antiracist orientation. FI programs should be antiracist *and* support high French proficiency.

Summary

This chapter summarized the findings related to racist experiences in Stages 1 and 2 of the study. I first highlighted racism committed by students which was mainly in the form of “jokes”, racial slurs, and segregated friend groups. Unfortunately, Stage 1 and 2 participants confirmed that students were committing racism in FI. From here, I summarized (in)actions of racist teachers and administrators, including when teachers used racial slurs, made off-hand comments, and acted like allies only to disappoint racially minoritized students. Administrators were also key players in delivering unequal punishments and blaming Black students when they were the victim. Here, I considered how racially minoritized FI students dealt with racism daily and still managed to get through the FI program. Briefly, some antiracist efforts on behalf of teachers were presented, however, they were few and far between. Some findings from Stage 2 indicated that a small number of participants, including racially minoritized FI students, never experienced racism and in fact had a very positive experience in FI. When it came to racism, there was an unfortunate lack

of repercussions. Despite racism being an evident problem in FI, the Stage 1 participants were more concerned about their French proficiency than the racism that they had experienced. Participants were dissatisfied with their language learning experiences and wanted different approaches to teaching French as well as teachers to improve their proficiency. The next chapter will discuss the findings from Chapters 5 to 7.

Chapter 8: Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings from Chapters 5 to 7. The findings related to cultural and racial representation are discussed first. I consider the lack of diverse representations, the troubles with defining and teaching culture, the debate around whether or not culture should be taught/emphasized, and CRSP. Next, the discussion of findings related to racism are broken into the following subsections: racism as a forgone conclusion; race as a Black and White issue; racial demographics and overt racism; perpetrators and power dynamics; jokes as a shield for consequences; and the pressing need for antiracism training and action. French proficiency is discussed next in terms of blame and agency in language learning as well as underlying linguistic and racialized ideologies. Finally, this chapter considers the colonial, White supremacist relationship between racism, cultural representation, and French proficiency.

Culture, Race, and Representation

Diverse Representations

The sheer lack of diversity in participants' learning reinforces Whiteness in French studies. If all that students see time and time again are White people and cultures, it follows that they will associate French with Whiteness. Not only is the lack of diversity in contravention to the curriculum, but it is also racist in and of itself. Dei (1996a) argues,

School teachers who use texts that fail to acknowledge the contributions of non-Europeans to academic scholarship may not have a racist intent. However, such practice of exclusion can be deemed racist insofar as it has debilitating social effects on some youth. (p. 253)

For instance, Ace's monologue touches on how alienated she feels in FI due to lack of representation. Anya (2021) equally argues the over-representation of White people in course texts is White supremacist. Ace and Roy all viewed the stereotypical French speaker as a White man

and they did not identify as French speakers due to, I argue, the lack of diverse representation in their learning. The intent of many FI teachers may not be racist; however, the impact is.

Even Hassan, who claimed to have diverse representations throughout his learning, was only able to list a handful of examples of said diversity. In 12-13 years of FI studies, completing one or two projects on Black people does not represent the cultural diversity of *la francophonie*, nor the students in the classroom. Moreover, Hassan's example of "The Book of Negroes" which he studied in an FI class was undertaken in English. So, the integration of racial diversity was not done in the language of instruction nor was it explicitly about French speaking communities, further distancing racially diverse identities from the French language. The absence of diversity defaults to the implied White norm (Apple, 1999) and robs students from being able to understand and navigate the realities of the French speaking world (Bouamer & Bourdeau, 2022b). The emphasis on Whiteness further reifies colonial, racialized ideologies of who is and who can claim to be a French speaker. French identity is associated with White people from France, because that is all that students see in their education. Teachers (and textbooks (Spiegelman, 2022b)) play an important role in developing how French students see French speakers, and in turn, themselves (Anyia, 2021; Bouamer & Bourdeau, 2022b).

Interestingly, no Stage 1 participant thought of Indigenous peoples when I asked them about different cultures and races that were represented in their schooling. After first asking about what diverse (non-White) races and cultures they saw in their FI classes, I had to specifically ask if they had studied Indigenous peoples because none of them spoke of these groups. Contradictorily, Ace emphasized that the races represented in her learning were largely White but then went on to say that she learned the most about Indigenous peoples. Hassan also needed prompting to discuss Indigenous people; he did not include them in his list of cultures that he

studied or diverse groups without my prompting. Of particular interest, only Jordan, a Stage 2 participant, reflected on the Métis population and its intersection between Indigenous and French people; no one else did in the entire study. The context of Ontario, as opposed to the prairie provinces or even Quebec, may have impacted the awareness of the Métis population (though, Jordan is from Ontario). Indigenous peoples were seen as separate from other people of colour, and perhaps not even members of the “POC” label. This separation reinforces the finding about race/racism being a Black and White issue (discussed later in this chapter). It also echoes the critique that multiculturalism/diversity work seeks to “promote the narratives and the claims of the descendants of slaves and settlers of color at the expense of Indigenous people” (Tuck & Gaztambide- Fernández, 2013, p. 81). Indeed, Lawrence and Dua (2005) critique antiracism for excluding Indigenous peoples. For this reason, many have changed the BIPOC/POC (Black, Indigenous and other people of colour) label to IBPOC to centre Indigenous people in discussions of race (University of British Columbia, n.d.).

Defining and Teaching Culture

The findings reveal that culture was barely taught and not well understood by students. In Stage 1, we did not define culture as a group, which makes these findings harder to report on. Based on how participants spoke about culture, it was largely understood as facts about a geographically based social group of people (usually nationally grouped). Culture seemingly included elements of historical fact, environmental factors, and sometimes traditions. Hassan understood culture as simple facts and geographical elements, like gorillas. In Roy’s learning experience, cultures were mentioned based solely on their geography, though Roy felt that cultural learning required going beyond geographic locations. As Brooks (1968) elucidates, culture is “not geography” and “not the same as history” (p. 208), but it is instead “patterns of living” (p. 210).

These simplistic representations of culture were essentialist (Diaz & Dasli, 2016) and did not account for the intercultural turn in language learning (Byram & Zarate, 1994). Ace, in Stage 1, implied that culture required more than simple facts, but necessitated study of power inequities, history, and colonialism. These elements came from her concerns that when there was cultural learning, they rarely went beyond the surface. Ace had a more critical, non-essentialist lens to culture (Diaz & Dasli, 2016), though she still did not embody the idea of intercultural learning which requires interaction and skill development in new cultures (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). In Stage 3, Ace defined culture as “how you communicate with your community”, though she was not confident in her definition. Ace went on to say that teachers should not attempt to teach deep culture (e.g., social customs, beliefs, unconscious elements of culture (Brooks, 1968)) because they would likely offend someone, and that cultural learning should stick to facts. These three participants did not have a strong understanding of what culture was.

Both Ace and Roy based cultural learning entirely within course texts/films. When I asked them if they learned about Quebecois culture(s), for example, they both cited learning materials, not elements of the culture. To them, to learn about another culture meant reading books or watching a film. Cultural learning did not include any interactions or learning from others (teachers, guest speakers, peers, communities) aside from texts. Scholars like Liddicoat and Scarino (2013), Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey (2002), and Marshall and Bokhorst-Heng (2020a) highlight that interaction is vital in ICTL. Moreover, consuming culture through text may place a barrier between the student and the culture of study. It may be seen as separate from them and something that exists in a fictional other place, instead of somewhere real; something to be consumed instead of participated in (Biers, 2022; Spiegelman, 2022b). It should not be concluded that meaningful cultural learning cannot happen from novels and films, however, I argue that *only*

learning from fictionalized accounts and published materials can reify culture as static and historical (see also Benaglia & Smith, 2022). For cultural learning to be successful, students must learn not only facts, but how to navigate within these new cultures (Byram et al., 2002; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

Based on the findings, it is clear that the intercultural element of the curriculum is not being followed in many FI classes. In theory, the curriculum makes it so that students will cover a diverse range of cultures throughout their 12-13 years in FI (see Table 1). However, given that many teachers do not focus on the Ministry mandated cultural group in the assigned year, it is possible that students learn about the same culture over and over again, as happened for Ace and Roy with Quebec, and/or not study diverse cultures at all. Again, it must be highlighted that the “new” curriculum (OME, 2013) was not implemented until September 2014—so at least in the early years of Ace and Roy’s learning, their teachers were not in contravention of the curriculum. All of the participants lived through the transition years to the new curriculum. Nonetheless, even the previous curriculum stated that students needed “an understanding of the cultures of French-speaking societies by integrating cultural study into daily language instruction” (OME, 2001, p. 4). So, the lack of learning at all for both of them in those early years remains problematic. Additionally, teachers struggle to implement the new curriculum (Gour, 2017), so despite it now being a decade since it was first introduced, many teachers may still face issues with teaching intercultural competence.

Even if teachers were to rely on the curriculum, it is not enough. For one, the curriculum provides only some examples and resources for teachers to draw from, which can make implementing a full cultural unit of study difficult. Moreover, the curriculum is not clear when it comes to cultural learning requirements, does not define intercultural competence, and even

presents essentialized cultures (Masson et al., 2023). Cultural learning is relegated to the sidelines by the curriculum and by teachers.

To make matters worse, many teachers are completely forgoing the cultural learning outlined in the curriculum in favour of language/grammar learning. As a result, students are learning about language in a vacuum and/or associating only White people and culture(s) with the French language. Inconsistent cultural teaching may echo their teachers' own training; ICTL is rare in additional language methods syllabi (Byrd, 2014; Dema & Moeller, 2012). Masson and colleagues (2022) noted that if and to what extent culture was taught in two faculties of education varied widely:

some professors indicated that they did not teach about culture in their FSL course ... Some seemed to indicate they represent culture mainly as an object of study (e.g., films, food, clothing), while other professors emphasized the risk of essentializing cultures and the need to go beyond surface-level depictions of culture-as-object-of-study and discuss culture-as-a-social-practice. (p. 394)

So, the extent of cultural exposure that teacher candidates receive varies greatly. As a result, teacher candidates from Masson et al.'s (2022) study "were not always sure how to effectively integrate culture into their teaching practices" (p. 394).

Another consideration is that teachers need professional development in ICTL. As Ace said in Stage 3, teachers are not necessarily connected to the cultures that they are teaching and as a result, they may unintentionally reproduce oppressive ideologies which would be very detrimental to student learning and well-being. The literature review emphasized that additional language teachers feel under-prepared to teach culture. I argue teachers need sustained, integrated ICTL development in addition to precise guidelines (Göbel & Helmke, 2010) to prepare them to teach

the diverse cultures hinted at in the curriculum. This includes questioning the French language's role in colonialism (past and present) and engaging with complex socio-cultural issues. Lastly, combining diverse French cultures and students' cultures (i.e., CRSP) into French classes requires cultural knowledge (Chevant-Aksoy & Corbin, 2022) and constant reflexive thinking (Paris & Alim, 2014). To address these concerns, I advocate for the creation of an FAL curriculum companion document to support ICTL.

A cultural companion document could be similar to the framework documents published by the OME for multilingual learners (2016) and for students with learning exceptionalities (2015). In these guides, the OME outlines policies, research, strategies to support excluded learners, and some examples of what inclusive programs look like. A cultural companion document would need to be prioritize both theoretical guidelines *and* practical resources for teachers. While preparing teachers with the theory behind ICTL will ensure they are able to successfully teach culture no matter the content, providing practical resources and knowledge will help beginning and inexperienced teachers engage with not just cultural teaching, but also cultures that they may be unfamiliar with. Thus, including different cultural groups, resources to learn more about them, and examples of planning for ICTL at all stages (lesson, unit, long range/full course) would greatly benefit teachers.

The Culture Debate

The findings from Stage 1 and 2 reveal an interesting divide between cultural learning and grammar/language learning. In Stage 1, Roy distanced cultural learning from language learning by suggesting a separate culture course. This course was a popular suggestion for all participants. The culture course would mean that cultures, especially diverse ones, could be studied in depth. Yet, having a standalone culture course would further distance culture from language. It could be

compared to admitting that culture has no place in the language classroom, and if one wants to learn a culture, that must be done separately. This distancing echoes traditional approaches to language and culture teaching where culture courses were often completely separate (Byrd et al., 2011). This either-or thinking was further evidenced in Stage 2, when participants expressed concerns that cultural learning would eclipse language learning. Statements like “grammar is still important” emphasize the belief that grammar and culture cannot co-exist. As FI courses are functioning now, culture is not adequately taught and having a culture course might address that. While the culture course is evidently not a perfect solution—especially since it distances language and culture—, it should not be thrown away entirely. Though scholars (Bryam & Zarate, 1994; Kramersch, 1993; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013) advocate that culture should be integrated into language learning, not separate or absent from it, a separate course would allow for a deeper dive into cultures than any language course could, simply based on the course objectives. In an ideal world, ICTL would be integrated into language classes, though with curricular requirements and time constraints, it may be unlikely for deep and critical integration to occur.

Either-or thinking points to a need for education around the relationship between culture and language. As Kunnas et al. (2024) point out, many FAL teachers felt that language and culture were related, although, how teachers saw this relationship varied greatly. As a result, it can be concluded how teachers integrate culture into language learning varies widely. Results from the present study indicate that culture was not being adequately taught. Culture should be understood as not only a way to enhance language learning, but also deeply connected to linguistic and verbal expression (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013), instead of a dismissible element of the curriculum that is only covered if there is enough time.

Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Pedagogies

As for CRSP, the few times that Ace and Roy were engaged in their learning was when it revolved around their own Black identity. Even Hassan said he found learning about Black people engaging, but he did not have a time when he learned about South Asians in his FI studies. He may have been more engaged when learning about Black people than White people because some racial diversity was better than none. Diverse racial representation is an important element of CRSP, though, it falls short of CRSP's goals. Teachers were not integrating elements of their students' culture(s) into the actual learning within the classroom (e.g., Black cultures, South Asian cultures). Rather, teachers sporadically added some diverse racial and cultural representations into their courses. Of the three stated goals of CRSP—1) high achievement; 2) sustaining students' cultural competence; 3) critique of social inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2014)—none of them were explicitly achieved in Ace, Hassan, or Roy's learning experiences in FI. Unfortunately, as Ladson-Billings (2014) critiques, CRSP was understood in its most simplistic terms: including examples of students' races and cultures in their learning, and not moving beyond simple representation. Representation is important, and as discussed by Kunas and colleagues (2024), may result in better engagement and grades in French class. However, representation is not enough to empower students in their learning. Additive multicultural education (Banks, 2008) is tempting, but does not critically engage students and their cultures. For instance, Tracy remarked that teachers thought they were being culturally responsive but were in fact causing harm. This is echoed by the findings in Masson et al.'s (2022) study where professors claimed to be integrating an antiracist anti-biased stance, but teacher candidates reported that some professors were racist themselves. Evidently, more training on CRSP in an FAL context is needed to better understand how to properly undertake this pedagogy.

Racism

The racial reckoning of 2020 brought race, racism, and antiracism to centre stage in North America and beyond. However, this increased attention to race has launched culture wars surrounding equity and CRT in both the US (Bedecarré, 2022; Kachanoff et al., 2022) and Canada (James & Shah, 2022; Jivani, 2022), stalling antiracist efforts. As Corley (2021) questions in NPR's Morning Edition podcast, the uprisings of 2020 may have led to widespread disinformation surrounding antiracist efforts and antiracist groups like Black Lives Matter, furthering the divide between racists and antiracists. Similarly, students at Roy's school made jokes about not being able to breathe. Joking about Floyd's horrific murder makes the utter lack of learning and racial insensitivity obvious.

The presence of racism in FI programs is deeply concerning. Admittedly, some Stage 2 participants did not experience racism and they had excellent teachers. Although, the fact remains that many Stage 2 participants experienced the same racism discussed in Stage 1. However, based on the findings from Stage 1, it cannot be concluded that racism was unique to the FI context. Only Roy felt that his FI teachers were more likely to let racism happen in their presence. Moreover, many of the instances of racism did not appear to be FI specific, but rather happening throughout the entire school, no matter the program. Similarly, in Stage 2, only some participants explicitly referred to racism within FI. Others spoke broadly about racism with the implied context of FI. This implication came from the context of the study. The lack of specificity in Stage 2 participants' responses makes it hard to know if participants' stories were FI specific or not. Thus, racism might not have been unique to or exacerbated by FI. However, it was occurring in at least some FI programs and schools, amongst students, teachers, and administrators.

Racism as a Foregone Conclusion

Ace and Roy expected to encounter racism no matter where they were. Kathleen, from Stage 2, said that “racism is prevalent everywhere” and, as a result, an expected reality for racially minoritized people. While the ubiquitousness of racism is something that most people of colour know and a key tenet of CRT (Anyia, 2021; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), it is a very concerning conclusion, especially in the context of education. Ace and Roy were ready and willing to endure racism, even citing occasions when they did not intervene during racist incidents. Because racism was expected, they were less likely to combat it. As with the Black students in Osburne et al.’s (2023) study, racism was expected and sometimes even accepted. Osburne and colleagues argue, “the burden of racism is carried by the victims; it is Black students who must make sense of racist incidents and formulate strategies to navigate a racist campus culture” (p. 52). For Ace and Roy, their strategies varied from being confrontational and enacting social consequences, to ignoring racism to concentrate on their education instead. In many instances, they were resigned to experiencing racism from students and teachers alike. It was almost as if they could not imagine a world in which they would not be victims of racism in school. Indeed, racism was so expected, that the Stage 1 participants did not consider ways to address racism when coming up with suggestions to improve FI. Racism was not something that any of them saw as necessary to address urgently, whereas language learning was urgent.

Racism: A Black and White Issue

The results of this study demonstrate that racism was understood as a Black and White issue, a common viewpoint in the US (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023; Miles & Torres, 1996). Roy and Ace both talked about racism in terms of White perpetrators and Black victims/resistance. Roy referenced one example where an Indigenous student was the victim of a microaggression, but he

did not elaborate on this experience. As for Hassan, he also seemingly understood racism as only a Black/White issue. In his first monologue he decided to discuss anti-Black racism. Hassan did not connect to his South Asian identity nor any other racial identities apart from Black and White. It is intriguing that he did not place his racially minoritized identity in conversation with racism. In fact, the way his first monologue reads positions him as a-racial (or even White). When I suggested he include more of his racial identity in his monologue, he pivoted entirely away from racism, once again showing that he saw racism as a Black and White issue—something separate from himself, and something that he had no voice in. Additionally, when Hassan spoke about race during the study, he always highlighted Black people: his Senegalese teacher, his Black peer who led the Black student alliance, Sudan, and so on. Participants from Stage 2 similarly viewed racism as Black and White, except for those who spoke about racism in generic terms (i.e., not referring to specific races), and two participants who discussed anti-Asian racism. In one of these instances, racism was committed against an Asian woman by another racially minoritized person, demonstrating one reason why viewing racism as only a Black/White issue is problematic.

It is possible that the focus on anti-Black racism arose from personal experience, given the number of Black participants in Stage 1 (two, plus the researcher). My own identity as a Black woman might have impacted how Stage 1 participants viewed and spoke about racism as well. Simply being visibly present as a Black woman may have subconsciously influenced what they spoke about. Moreover, the website contains a heavy presence of anti-Black racism stories (from Ace and Roy), so the survey participants might have focused on anti-Black racism for that reason. However, the survey respondents had a much smaller percentage of Black participants than Stage 1: 15.4% of participants identified as Black (n=6) (versus $\frac{3}{4}$ people, or 75%, in Stage 1). On the other hand, 43.6% (n=17) identified as White. The rest of the questionnaire participants were South

Asian (n=4), East Asian (n=3), Middle Eastern (n=2), Indigenous (n=2), and Latinx (n=1). So, for the questionnaire, it does not follow that the emphasis on anti-Black racism arose from personal identities. It is also possible that because anti-Black racism has been at the centre of media since 2020, it was more prevalent in participants' minds. Only viewing racism as a Black and White issue ignores the complex and dynamic realities of other racially minoritized people (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023; Miles & Torres, 1996). It is worth questioning how all forms of racism manifest in FI.

Racial Demographics and (C)overt Racism

Ace, Hassan, and Roy all came from schools with varying racial demographics. Ace's high school was about 10% Black and there was less overt (and more covert) racism at her school. Roy's high school was about 40% Black, 50% White, and 10% other people of colour, and he had the most rampant and overt experiences of racism. Hassan's high school was 50% White and 50% people of colour, and according to him there was almost no racism at all. No matter the racial demographics of their school, racism was present in all venues (in Hassan's case, there was racism—e.g., racial slurs being used by White peers—but he did not view slurs as racist).

Interestingly, racism was more prevalent in Roy's school, which had the largest Black population of the three. The high Black population and corresponding high instances of racism in Roy's school may have come from the fact that Whiteness at the school was being threatened. Whereas, at Ace's school, Whiteness was not threatened because of the small racially minoritized population. When Whiteness/power is threatened, White people develop negative attitudes toward those who they feel threatened by (Outten et al., 2012; Quillian, 1995). Morrison et al. (2010) contend that "Given that intergroup threats can increase both outgroup prejudice ... and endorsement of group-based dominance ... multiculturalism could cause some dominant group

members to adopt *less* tolerant attitudes” (p. 1657, emphasis in original). Likewise, Outten and colleagues’ (2012) study demonstrated that White Canadians were likely to react in fear and anger toward changing racial demographics which would result in White Canadians becoming the minority. With this in mind, it is possible that White students at Roy’s school felt threatened by the near equitable Black population, and as a result had more negative attitudes and actions toward Black students.

On the other hand, the overt racism at Roy’s school may have stemmed from the fact that Black students were less confrontational, and teachers were more likely to let racism happen within the school walls. If students at Roy’s school were more confrontational, would there have been less racism (or just less *overt* racism)? If the teachers were more willing to put an end to racist remarks, would there have been less (overt) racism? I am left wondering if less overt racism is good—especially when the racism just moves from overt to covert. Covert racism can be a lot harder to combat because it is not visible or is disguised (Nkrumah, 2022). Students at Roy’s school know what racist incidents are happening and could address them as they saw fit. In contrast, students at Ace’s school were more covert in their racism, which made it harder for Ace and her peers to address racist incidents unless they happened in their presence. When Whiteness is threatened, there are consequences, whether overt or covert.

Perpetrators and Power Dynamics

An interesting finding when it came to racist acts was that most racism was perpetrated by students. Teachers and administrators’ main role in perpetuating racism was that of by-standers. There were some key instances of racist teachers and administrators, however, when it came to FI, the students were the major perpetrators. We might want to believe that as time progresses, and we become more educated in our society, many forms of oppression will cease to exist. However,

racism is alive and well in society, and not just with older generations, but with the youth. Students perpetuating racist ideologies may be trying to fit in with others, trying to assert dominance within their school environment, or may actually be racist. Either way, the impact is that racially minoritized students are subject to racism and do not feel welcome in FI spaces. Racist peers pose significant challenges when it comes to teaching and learning. Not only is racism disruptive to the class, for obvious reasons, it makes teaching and planning more difficult. Speaking from experience, I have had to question my wording, wondering if racist students would challenge me, all while hoping to push them toward critical reflection of their own beliefs. Additionally, group assignments and seating arrangements become landmines. Students may refuse to work with one another (due to racism or fear of racism), or work together reluctantly, which may impact their learning and achievement. Racially minoritized students should not be blamed for not wanting to work with racist peers, though, finding ways to teach and learn in a space permeated by racist discourses and ideologies is difficult, to say the least.

Interestingly, despite teachers technically having more authority than students, students held power in an instance of racism described by Roy. The student who decided to use a racist term in Roy's French class held the power in that interaction. The teacher seemingly defaulted to the student, who claimed that he was simply using a new term he learned. Instead of asserting their authority over the student, the teacher backed down and let the student do as they wished. Moreover, Roy pointed out that teachers did not intervene when students made racist comments because teachers were worried about how intervening would affect the teacher (not the students). Teachers gave up their power in these instances by allowing students to do and say whatever they wanted. Teachers were more afraid of students, parents, and administrators backing up the racist students, than stopping the racism. Teachers may have also been "worried about saying the right

thing ... that it was not their place to do so ... or felt uncomfortable addressing racism” (Masson et al., 2022, p. 398), as was the case for some FAL teacher candidates in Ontario.

Conversely, racially minoritized students demonstrated moments of taking power back. They dealt out consequences for racist behaviour both within (e.g., racially segregated friend groups, interrupting racist remarks) and outside of school (e.g., implied physical or social consequences). In these instances, racially minoritized students pushed back against racist discourses and ideologies. When it came to interrupting racism, these students could be considered either empowered or “burden[ed]” as Jacob put it. Standing up against hatred might be how racially minoritized students take back some of their power, instead of quietly and passively accepting racism. However, this power could also be viewed as a burden because it is socially risky and requires a lot of courage to stand up to one’s peers, especially if you are outnumbered by White people. In the case of racially segregated friend groups, it is less clear how much power racially minoritized students had in determining these groups, or if White students were also self-segregating. Both Roy and Ace implied White students would not associate with Black students, unless forced to. Roy, however, goes on to say that Black students intentionally did not spend time with known racist (White) students. Ace also pointed out that she was the one who had to go out of her way to make friends with White students, whereas Black students congregated together. For these Black students, segregation was a form of protection (Tatum, 2017; Villalpando, 2003). As Ace said, whenever she needed support, she always knew where to find Black peers. Racial segregation by people of colour protected themselves from potential racist incidents as well as exerted power in determining their social groups.

Though racism was less common amongst teachers, racist teachers arguably had a stronger impact on racially minoritized students than their racist peers did. As Ace says in her monologue,

“My issue with teachers and staff is that these people are quite literally responsible for my future and they just out allowed to be using slurs” (lines 18-19). Ace emphasizes the critical role that teachers play in students’ lives, whether it be because students need to pass certain courses, teachers’ attitudes and behaviours affecting student achievement and beliefs, or even counselling that is not to students’ benefit. Roy’s experience speaks to the power of teachers and administrators in his educational journey. Roy was suspended due to racist unequal treatment, removed from class for expressing his emotions, and even had the police called on him. All of these instances likely contributed to Roy’s apathy to his education and may have even impacted his educational journey. From Roy’s stories, it was clear that he had no faith in the education system, and just wanted to graduate and leave. Jordan, from Stage 2, shared that everyone avoided one vice principal who was known to be racist. Administrators and teachers can determine your future, from success in courses, to punishments, to attitude toward education. They have an abundance of power over determining students’ futures, and to mimic Ace, they are out here allowed to be racist.

Jokes as a Shield to Consequences

The overt instances of racism demonstrate that some FI students were boldly racist. However, semi-covert racism (i.e., jokes) was far more common, and harder to combat. The insidiousness of racist “jokes” points to a few issues. First, jokes are hard to contest because the perpetrator can easily dismiss claims of racism by saying it was just a joke (Pérez, 2017)—whether or not it was meant to be one, as Roy points out. When listeners react poorly to racist jokes, the onus is shifted to the listener, instead of the joke teller: the listener misunderstood, does not have a sense of humour, or is a killjoy (Osbourne et al., 2023; Pérez, 2017). Whether or not the perpetrator is actually racist, “racist humor works to reinforce everyday and systemic forms of white supremacy” and racial hierarchies (Pérez, 2017, p. 957). Adding a tone of humour can serve

to confuse or shock the listener into silence. Second, joking about racism shows a certain level of sophistication on the part of racists—they know that they cannot be overtly racist, but they might get away with an ill-timed comment here or there (Osbourne et al., 2023; Pérez, 2017). Racist jokes are a way to “circumvent perceived constraints on racist discourse” and assert racist ideologies (Pérez, 2017, p. 957). In other words, jokes are still an acceptable form of racism in society. Joking allows racists to push socially acceptable boundaries while still protecting themselves from consequences. As Roy pointed out, many teachers do not want to get involved when they hear something vaguely racist, like a joke, because they know that students will push back and have ways to circumvent punishment.

Racist humour must be challenged when it appears because it reflects racist ideologies and racist hierarchies (Pérez, 2017). It has been debated to what extent disparagement humour (i.e., sexist, racist, homophobic) creates or increases negative attitudes and behaviours (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). It has been proven that disparagement humour “increases tolerance of discriminatory events for people high in prejudice toward the disparaged group” (Ford & Ferguson, 2004, p. 79). In other words, for those who are already racist, racist humour increases their overall tolerance for racism. Racist humour is one way for those in the ingroup to create a division with the outgroup and reassert their power (Pérez, 2017). Racist humour further creates a “norm of tolerance for discrimination” (Ford & Ferguson, 2004, p. 79), meaning that racism becomes more accepted in the venues where these jokes are told. Most importantly, racist humour negatively impacts those who are the target of the humour (Osbourne et al., 2023). For these reasons, consequences for racist humour in FI must be enacted.

Antiracist Education and Action

It was shocking to learn how few repercussions there appeared to be when students and teachers alike committed acts of racism. The fact that teachers would ignore racism rather than intervene, as described by Roy, was telling. Racism was allowed to exist without challenge in FI spaces. While teachers and fellow students might not have agreed with racist speech, by not speaking out against it, they passively supported racism in FI. In fact, there was a huge gap in antiracist efforts, broadly speaking. While there were many teachers that were neutral or positive influences in FI students' experiences, these teachers rarely engaged in antiracist action or pedagogy in FI. The one or two examples from Stage 2 participants of "good" teachers and administrators who went out of their way to stop racism, ignores the complacency and complicity of the rest of the teachers who may not be outright racist, but who allow racism to flourish under their watch. Importantly, equity policies (including antiracism) must exist in every school board³², as mandated by *Policy 119: Developing and implementing equity and inclusive education policies in Ontario* (OME, 2013c). Evidently, teachers and administrators are not enacting *Policy 119* or their specific school board policy. Instead of the adults in the room handling racist incidents, children are left to be the ones doing the educating and delivering consequences.

It was evident from Ace and Roy, that teachers and administrators were not viewed as agents for antiracist action, because students had to take matters into their own hands. Jacob stated, this "burden" of addressing racism should not be placed on children. Whether these students had the vocabulary and know-how to intervene during racist incidents is irrelevant; racially minoritized children should not have the responsibility of stopping racism, especially when there is an authority

³² *Policy 119* requires every school board in Ontario to have an inclusive education and equity policy that meets certain criteria—however, how in depth these policies are vary greatly from school board to school board. See my master's thesis study (Kunns, 2019, 2023) for a comparison between the TDSB and the Toronto Catholic District School Board's equity policies.

in the room whose job it is. Teachers need to be the ones responsible for creating a classroom and school environment that has zero tolerance for racism and other forms of oppression. Teachers may work with students and other community members, but at the end of the day, the responsibility falls on teachers.

However, many teachers are not (adequately) trained to deal with racism or enact antiracist pedagogy. Despite the need for teacher development, Stage 1 participants did not see professional development as an antiracist solution. Ace emphasized that only those who want to learn will learn, so professional development (particularly workshops) would do little to combat racism in FI. In fact, research (Shepherd, 2019) has shown that equity workshops are not as effective as we would hope them to be. Shepherd (2019) critiques cultural awareness workshops as superficial and essentializing (see also, Mohanty, 1989 for a discussion of diversity workshops; Ahmed, 2006 for a discussion of antiracist training). As Nicole West-Burns says in her TEDxTalk (2020), “you gotta make the commitment if you want to see the change, you gotta put in the time” (10:20-10:25); “We got hundreds—500 years—of oppression and we think we can solve it in a 1.5-hour workshop? Come on, people, that’s not going to happen!” (10:30-10:37). Participating in a workshop once a year will not bring about change. Similarly, teacher education programs are lacking in antiracist training. Masson and colleagues (2022) discuss how in one teacher education program in Ontario, professors claimed to teach about antiracism and equity throughout the program, however, teacher candidates reported feeling unprepared “to ‘deal with’ equity and anti-racism in their own classrooms” (p. 403). In the other teacher education program of their study, antiracism was relegated to one course and not discussed anywhere else, which equally fails to prepare teacher candidates for antiracist pedagogy (Masson et al., 2022). Evidently, the approach

to antiracist pedagogy needs serious development and consideration. Above all, antiracist training needs to be ongoing to have any sort of impact.

Of note, all three Stage 1 participants reflected that their teachers who were attempting to undertake antiracist pedagogy or CRSP, often embodied positions of White guilt (Mekawi et al., 2021). While Mekawi et al. (2021) argue that White guilt can have positive impacts on reducing acceptance of microaggressions, popular media and scholars (Spanierman, 2022) criticize White guilt for being unproductive in antiracist efforts. White guilt can lead to White people centring racism on their own feelings or paralyzing them from taking action (beyond performative action) against racism (Spanierman, 2022). Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) argue, “Apologist accounts serve only to bring whiteness to the center, giving space for white people to air their experiences of racialization, attempting to rescue themselves from the damages of racial thinking, and appropriating the language of critical race theory” (pp. 82-83). For the Stage 1 participants, teachers shifted the focus of those who were being oppressed onto how the teacher felt about the oppression. In doing so, the teacher spoke as if they were the one experiencing oppression, not the oppressed. Here, they centred their own narrative instead of critically engaging with (anti)racism (Spanierman, 2022).

Because of their White guilt, Roy thought that teachers gave off “White saviour energy”. A White saviour is someone who sees themselves as a hero helping unfortunate people (i.e., low-income, un(der)educated, racially minoritized) who are in need of “saving” from their unfortunate circumstances (Aronson, 2017). White saviourism reinforces White supremacist beliefs that White people are advantaged (the righter of wrongs) and people of colour are disadvantaged and agentless (Aronson, 2017). Furthermore, White saviour ideologies are very present in media surrounding education (Aronson, 2017), influencing how teachers—a largely White woman

profession—see their roles. In the process of centring their guilt and/or White saviourism, teachers ignored the actual voices of racially minoritized students in their classrooms.

Teacher communities like FSLdisrupt (<https://www.fsldisrupt.org/>) and the OMTLA's (2023) antiracism module series represent a positive movement in FAL and antiracism. However, based on the findings from this study, antiracist efforts in FI classrooms are few and far between. The great divide between those who want to see an antiracist world and those who deny the existence of racism seems to be ever widening. It is for this reason that I advocate so strongly for ongoing antiracist education for teachers. Teachers hold tremendous power in shaping young minds who still may be open to critical thought and change. However, teachers must first be able to disrupt their own oppressive beliefs and engage with antiracism themselves.

French Proficiency

Everyone Else to Blame: A Need for Agency

As discussed in Chapter 5, teachers and the FI program were blamed for the unsatisfactory language learning experienced by Stage 1 participants. Contrary to Liddicoat and Scarino's (2013) assertion that language learners should be agents in their learning, Ace, Roy, and Hassan did not see themselves this way. Instead, the participants shirked all responsibility for their own learning. Placing the blame outside of themselves may have been a tactic to preserve their self-confidence; if their low proficiency was not their fault, but someone else's, they could maintain a positive view of themselves. It is easier to critique the teachers and pedagogy instead of turning inward to question one's own role in language learning. In this way, Ace, Hassan, and Roy were exhibiting learned helplessness (Tam & Liem, 2018). Tam and Liem describe learned helplessness as follows:

Fundamentally, students lack motivation as they perceive that they have no control and their actions do not translate into results. Failures may or may not stem from students'

actions or the lack thereof; students do not see themselves as being responsible for their failures. The perceived dissociation between students' actions and outcomes leads students to believe that their failures cannot be overcome. This, however, may not reflect students' objective ability. Students attribute their failures to fixed or uncontrollable reasons such as poor ability, rather than malleable and controllable reasons such as inadequate effort. (p. 953)

In my study, and in my experience as a teacher, FI students appear to be in a double bind wherein they care about their level of French and want to improve, but they are also apathetic and will not put in the effort. They have learned helplessness. They do not try to speak French since they have already given up on themselves. Moreover, like in Vanderveen's (2015) study, many FI students and graduates saw French as something to add to their resume, not useful beyond their FI classroom. For Ace, this was particularly evident when she emphasized she stayed in immersion to add it to her resume but had absolutely zero plans of pursuing French in any way in the future (e.g., for study or employment).

Admittedly, FI is premised on language *acquisition* and not necessarily language *learning*, the former meaning students are expected to pick up the language with little explicit instruction (Vanderveen, 2015). Because of this *acquisition* premise, the question of who is "to blame" becomes trickier to navigate. If students are supposed to naturally pick up the language but most are struggling to do so, where does the blame fall? Instead of thinking in terms of blame, I turn instead of agency and advocate for a more blended approach of acquisition and learning. In Sikorski's (2022) study examining FAL students' experiences, the author concludes that students felt that they lacked both pedagogic and systemic agency in their learning. It is possible that the

participants in my study likewise felt they had little agency and, as a result, further distanced themselves from their responsibility in their learning.

Importantly, the FAL curriculum argues that responsibility for student learning is shared between the student, teacher, and family (OME, 2013b). According to the curriculum (OME, 2013b), teachers should give students “a certain degree of choice” and be “involved in controlling the learning process” (p. 13). Increasing student and parent participation and power is a key aspect of antiracist education (Dei, 1996b) and anti-oppressive education (Freire, 2018). Supporting students’ self-regulation skills through project-based learning is one way to increase their responsibility in their learning (Ayish & Devici, 2019). Teachers need to develop their students’ confidence, refrain from showing their frustrations with their students’ learning, meet students where they are, and not give up on them. While much responsibility lies with the teacher, students must have a “willingness” to learn (OME, 2013b, p. 11) and a willingness to communicate; in other words, the students need to meet the teachers halfway.

Native Speakerism and Linguistic Identity

The Stage 1 participants often spoke in ways that revealed discriminatory native speaker ideologies toward themselves and teachers who had French as an additional language. Hassan measured his level of French proficiency explicitly against Francophones and even went so far as to discredit his French skills since he only felt confident in an FI setting. The hallmark of language learning was one’s ability to converse with “real” French speakers, meaning Francophones. Roy thought his French was poor because he could not easily get by in francophone settings. As Sylvie Roy (2012) states, “*Les jeunes ont une certaine insécurité linguistique face aux locuteurs natifs*” (the youth have linguistic insecurities when faced with native speakers) (p. 15). When Ace’s Grade 8 francophone teacher declared that her French was not up to par, she believed him without

question. As a French first language speaker, he represented the ideal French speaker. Sylvie Roy's (2010) study revealed that "Students in French immersion considered themselves bilingual, but not 'entirely' bilingual or 'truly' bilingual because they did not speak French at the same level as native speakers of French" (p. 550). Vanderveen's (2015) study highlights how FI students and graduates measure their French against native speakers. Wernicke (2017) demonstrates how FAL teachers judge themselves "most often in terms of ... [their] proximity to an NS [native speaker] standard" (p. 212). Ace, Hassan, and Roy implied that there was a standard of French that they needed to reach in order to be considered French speakers—a native speaker standard (Amanti, 2019; Benaglia & Smith, 2022; Faez, 2011; Wernicke, 2017). The native speaker standard is the belief that there is a level of a language that one can reach that embodies how so-called native speakers use the language (Faez, 2011). However, this is a mythical (Benaglia & Smith, 2022) idealized language level since all native speakers have varying language levels and native speakers have difficulty agreeing on what constitutes a standard language (Roy, 2010, 2012). That is to say, the native speaker is imaginary (Faez, 2011). Furthermore, Benaglia and Smith (2022) critique the native speaker standard as "harmful to language learning in general and to minoritized students in particular" (p. 19).

The results of this study reveal teachers, more than students, are held to a native speaker standard. Ace thought that her only "good" French teachers were Francophones and claimed the others did not know French. Hassan, in his monologue, criticized his French teachers, claiming that they use Google Translate to teach their French courses. Roy openly judged his teacher's French proficiency, saying that only a few Anglophones were good at French. He went on to say that Anglophones had to try harder to be good French teachers. Mei implied that teachers with French as an additional language needed more support than Francophones. Within these examples,

there is “the assumption that only native speakers can be expert language teachers” (Wernicke, 2017, p. 209). Moreover, teachers with French as an additional language are held to a higher standard than francophone teachers, the latter are allowed to make mistakes in the language whereas the former must always use the language perfectly (Roy, 2020). To make matters worse, “Teachers can contribute to feelings of linguistic (in)security among their students, who can graduate from the program feeling they are not ‘bilingual’ or able to speak French ‘well enough’” (Masson et al., 2021, p. 167). Benaglia and Smith (2022) contend, “schools and universities play a crucial role in the development of linguistic insecurity by promoting an inaccessible and mythical model of French” (pp. 20-21). Thus continues a vicious cycle of linguistic insecurity due to the native speaker standard.

Interestingly, the Stage 1 participants felt comfortable judging their teachers’ level of French, despite feeling that their own French was low. Again, this may come from reproducing what they see and know: if their teachers are very critical of French levels, students may be more likely to be as well; if they are critiqued by Francophones for every little mistake that they make (Roy, 2012), students may be more likely to critique others’ French as well. From their open judgement of themselves and others, it is clear that participants learned in negative environments that fostered criticism and low confidence which in turn contributed to negative relationships with their linguistic identities.

Native speaker standards are socially constructed and racialized (Benaglia & Smith, 2022; Masson & Cote, 2024; Sterzuk, 2015; Wernicke, 2017). Neither Ace, Hassan, nor Roy overtly or covertly made connections with race when speaking of their preference for francophone teachers or reaching a native speaker standard. In fact, in Ace’s example, her Black French teacher had more legitimacy because he came from a French speaking country in Africa. For Hassan, Black

people had more of a claim to French identity than South Asians due to colonialism. That being said, the stereotypical French speaker that Ace and Roy constructed was a White man, so it is possible that they were reaching for a White native speaker standard. Furthermore, as Bouamer and Bourdeau (2022b) argue,

the French foreign language curriculum continues to present a very narrow and specific model of a French speaker—the white, monolingual native speaker with a Parisian accent. As a result, there often is a disconnect between the students’ identities and the ideal they hope to achieve, which leads to linguistic insecurity and anxiety. (p. 9)

Also, there were two Stage 2 participants (Lynette and Mei) who were delegitimized as French speakers based solely on their racial identities. When they attempted to claim French identities, they were met with surprise or challenged on their identity claim. Thinking through the lens of raciolinguistics (Rosa & Flores, 2017), “the general public is often still surprised to find out that so many racially minoritized people speak French” (Masson et al., 2022, p. 388). In fact, it goes beyond surprise to denial of linguistic identities. As with Lynette, a racially minoritized woman with a Quebecois father, she had to reference him in order to be legitimized as a Francophone. In Masson and Cote’s (2024) study with teacher candidates, two candidates worried they would be delegitimized as French teachers due to their racial identities. In contrast, the White teacher candidates did not make reference to their race, but rather their heritage or linguistic levels when it came to fears of delegitimization. Here, race becomes a barrier to identity claims.

Masson et al. (2022) discuss the de-legitimacy that racially minoritized FAL teacher candidates experience due to colonialism: “Black international students (e.g., from Cameroon, Senegal, etc.) ... are delegitimized (here in Canada and in their home country) due to ongoing colonial ideologies” (p. 401). A Black professor from their study explains further: “often they

[teacher candidates] find themselves engaging in this sort of imposter syndrome, right? Where they think to themselves: I don't really belong here, like I'm teaching this language, but it's not really mine" (Masson et al., 2022, p. 401). This feeling of being an imposter may be rooted in "the colonial ideology that language belongs to a specific and singularly delineated group of people, namely, White people from France" (Masson et al., 2022, p. 401; see also Masson & Cote, 2024). Conversely, Kunnas et al. (2023) demonstrate how one Cameroonian woman rejected the francophone label because, to her, it represented colonialism, and she wanted nothing to do with it (see also, Masson & Cote, 2024). Who the language belongs to and is associated with is a key area of study in raciolinguistics (Rosa & Flores, 2017). Racial and linguistic identities intersect and impact identity claims and belonging in linguistic communities (Masson & Cote, 2024).

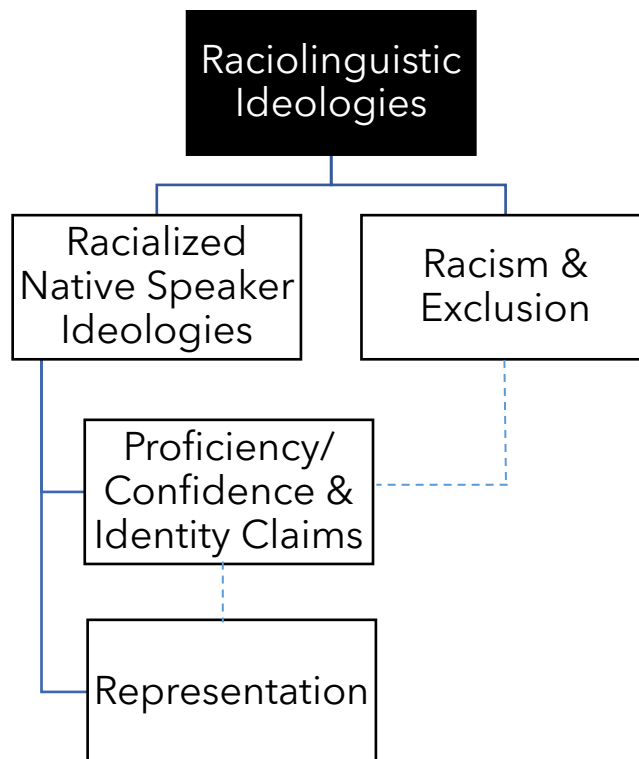
A Raciolinguistic Perspective: Intersections of the Major Findings

The three major themes of this study (French proficiency and identity; racial and cultural representation; and racism) are all connected through raciolinguistic ideologies (see Figure 14) (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa & Flores, 2017). First, looking at French proficiency and identity, these findings are impacted by colonial and racialized (Rosa & Flores, 2017) native speaker ideologies (Wernicke, 2017). The native speaker standard for French learners is directly connected to the belief that the colonial metropole (France) is the authority over the language (Benaglia & Smith, 2022; Rosa & Flores, 2017). Everyone who learns the language must measure themselves up to the empire's standard. If a learner does not reach this standard, they cannot claim they are a French speaker. These views are deeply rooted within colonial ideologies of the language as belonging to one group (Benaglia & Smith, 2022; Wernicke, 2017), which in turn devalues all other French cultures and dialects. Even if speakers succeed in attaining the colonial standard, racially minoritized language users will likely be delegitimized by the White listening subject

(including both White and non-White teachers and peers; Rosa & Flores, 2017) simply based on their skin colour (Rosa, 2019; von Esch et al., 2020) since they do not look like a “legitimate” French speaker (Masson & Cote, 2024).

Figure 14

Intersection of Findings and Raciolinguistic Ideologies



Racialized native speaker ideologies also influence the second major finding of this study: cultural and racial representation in French learning. Seeing as French is associated with the colonial, White native speaker (Masson & Cote, 2024; Wernicke et al., in press), representations in teaching and learning reflect these ideologies, resulting in the exclusion of racially diverse people and cultures. I argue that the racialized conceptions of the French native speaker result in a deficiency of racially diverse representations, which in turn impacts racially minoritized learners’

claims to French identity because they do not see themselves as legitimate language users (Rosa & Flores, 2017). In this way, representation influences linguistic identity claims.

Finally, given that European language learning exists within a racialized and colonial paradigm (Rosa & Flores, 2017), racialized and racist discourses are present in language learning (von Esch et al., 2020). Teachers and students consciously and unconsciously reproduce racial hierarchies and racialized thinking (von Esch et al., 2020). In light of the colonial and racialized history of the French language and language learning (Wernicke et al., in press), it follows that racism would be present (and even normalized) in these programs. Racism may further distance racially minoritized French speakers from claiming French identity or even impact their motivation and success in learning French. Due to colonialism and increased globalization (Bedecarré, 2022), French language programs are held in high regard, so it is not surprising that they would be exclusionary and cater to the (White, middle-class) elite. To summarize, all three findings are connected by raciolinguistic ideologies.

Summary

This chapter discussed the findings from Chapters 5 to 7. First, representation and culture were considered. The role of diverse representations on linguistic identities, the lack of depth in defining culture as well as the debate around how to teach culture, and the role of CRSP in FAL were examined. Next, the discussion of racism touched on: its inevitability, racism as Black and White, the role of demographics on (c)overt racism, the power dynamics at play, the role of humour as a tool to evade consequences, and antiracist education and action. French proficiency was briefly discussed, considering who was “to blame” for students perceived low proficiency and their agency in their learning. Next, I discussed the impact of racialized native speaker ideologies on linguistic identity. The chapter concluded by placing representation and culture, racism, and

French proficiency in conversation with one another through the lens of raciolinguistics. The next chapter will conclude the dissertation.

Chapter 9: Conclusion and Implications

FI is critiqued as an elitist program that caters to the (White) middle-class (Delcourt, 2018; Kunnas, 2023; Olson & Burns, 1983). Yet, very little research has investigated race in FI (Kunnas et al., 2023; Wernicke et al., in press). Instead of race, most research has focused on CLD learners (e.g., OME, 2016) and special education (e.g., OME, 2015) in FAL programs. Despite the middle-class dominating FI programs, little research has investigated this phenomenon, and it remains unchallenged by provincial and municipal policies and guidelines alike (Kunnas, 2023). In general, race, racial identity, and racism have only recently entered the conversation in additional language learning (Crump, 2014; Kubota, 2015; Kubota et al., 2021; Rosa & Flores, 2017; von Esch et al., 2020) and FAL (Bale & Lackner, 2022; Davis, 2023; Kunnas, 2019, 2023; Kunnas et al., 2023; Masson et al., 2022; Wernicke et al., in press). In my own experiences as an FI teacher, I have noted how few racially minoritized students there are in my upper year classes and have sought to find out why. This dissertation continued the line of inquiry from my master's thesis (Kunnas, 2019) which demonstrated how FAL policies upheld inequities in FI programs in Ontario and Toronto. Building on my thesis, this study centred racial identity in FI. I sought to document and give voice to the experiences of racially minoritized students in FI programs in Ontario and Canada.

Summary of Study

This dissertation study employed a multimethod qualitative and quantitative exploratory sequential design. The research questions of this study were:

1. What are the experiences of racially minoritized students in FI programs in Ontario?
 - a. What common themes and needs emerge from these experiences?

- b. What suggestions for improvement do racially minoritized students have for FI programs?
2. How do FI stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, administrators) react to these experiences and needs?

Stage 1 of the study employed virtual Playbuilding, a modification of Norris' (2016) qualitative Playbuilding method. Stage 1 recruited three participants via the researcher's professional and social networks to participate in a 10-day (2 week) study for 2 hours each day on Zoom. Participants included racially minoritized FI students, Ace, Hassan, and Roy. Over 3 days, participants shared stories about their experiences related to race, racism, antiracism, representation, and cultural learning. After sharing stories, I asked participants to think about a list of suggestions to improve FI programs in Ontario. We added to and edited this list over the remaining days of the study. I compiled a list of their stories and participants created a monologue featuring their chosen stories and/or themes that we discussed. Monologues were video or audio-recorded and posted online to our website (<https://mkunnas.wixsite.com/race-in-fi>). Alongside the monologues, participant stories were written by the researcher, approved by the participants, and posted online to enrich the short monologues. Lastly, a list of suggestions for improvement were posted online. After completing monologues, two participants chose to complete an individual semi-structured interview reflecting on their monologue as well as the ABR process. Thematic data analysis (Nowell et al., 2017) was iterative and initial findings were shared with the participants before the completion of Stage 1. In-depth thematic analysis followed the completion of Stage 1.

Stage 2 invited stakeholders from Ontario and across Canada to read, watch, and listen to our stories. Over 200 people visited the website between October 2022 and June 2023. Of these,

39 FI stakeholders participated in an online questionnaire asking for their reactions and thoughts to the stories, and opinions on the suggestions from Stage 1. Participants were asked to rate the importance of the suggestions included on the website. Open-response data was analyzed thematically whereas quantitative data (suggestions) was analyzed using descriptive statistics (Byrne, 2007). Stage 3 invited the Stage 1 participants back to review findings and add any more information. Only Ace responded and participated in Stage 3. Ace's semi-structured interview was recorded and analyzed thematically. All themes from all stages were compared and amalgamated in the final analysis.

Summary of Findings

In response to the first research question, participants had a diverse range of experiences related to race in FI programs. The data from the study revealed three major thematic findings: a lack of diverse cultural and racial representation, the presence and acceptance of racism, and a preoccupation with French proficiency. First, the experiences of Ace, Roy, and several Stage 2 participants revealed that the representation in students' learning was strongly biased toward White people. As a result, French was associated with Whiteness. There were few instances of diversity in their learning, and it was often through one-off lessons or lacked depth. Furthermore, for Ace and Roy, cultural learning—not even considering *diverse* cultural learning—was nearly absent from their 12+ years of FI. Stage 2 participants confirmed an over-presence of White representations in their learning. Even in the case of Hassan who claimed to have learned about all the cultural groups of study outlined in the Ontario FAL curriculum (OME, 2013b, 2014), cultural learning did not move beyond geographical facts and some traditions. I argue that the lack of diverse cultural and racial representation resulted in the participants internalizing French identities

as White. As a result, none of the Stage 1 participants identified with the language that they learned for most of their lives.

Given that the study focused on race and racism, the findings centred around this theme. Racism was seen as a foregone conclusion and was implicitly accepted by racially minoritized students. Both Ace and Roy said that they expected racism and none of them (including Hassan) proposed antiracist teacher education as a solution to racism in FI programs. When I proposed this intervention, the participants were not against it, however, they did not think that antiracist training would result in much change. Even worse, teachers and peers accepted racism by not intervening when racist incidents occurred in FI classrooms and schools. There was a glaring gap around antiracist pedagogy and efforts in participants' experiences. That being said, Stage 2 participants reported some antiracist efforts by teachers and staff, demonstrating that it is highly dependent on where one is, and which teachers are in their school. Antiracism is inconsistent from classroom to classroom, school to school, board to board, and province to province.

Interestingly, racism was often presented as a Black and White issue, with only a few participants including other races, like Asians. In fact, when Hassan talked about racism, it was almost exclusively in reference to Black people, distancing racism from his South Asian identity. It is worth questioning if the high representation of Black people in Stage 1 (2/3 participants, plus the researcher) skewed the conversation toward anti-Black racism in both stages.

Joking about racism became a metaphorical shield for students to distance themselves from the label of racist or any sort of consequences. Racist jokes were downplayed by Stage 2 participants who said the most racism that they saw were inappropriate jokes here or there. In this way, racist jokes were not seen or treated as overt racism. There were interesting power dynamics where racist students seemingly held more power than the teachers in the room who would not

intervene, potentially worried about repercussions for themselves. Lack of repercussions for racist incidents were extremely concerning, once again showing where one's teachers, school, and school board can vastly change how racist incidents are handled. Ace and Roy also demonstrated moments where Black students asserted their own power over racist students through speaking up and enacting social consequences. While educators did not seem to be the worst perpetrators of racism (students were), educators who were racist had more detrimental effects on participants. Ace remarked that she completely disengaged from a course due to an off-hand comment from a teacher. In this way, educators urgently need to examine their own instances of racism and need to engage in antiracist pedagogy, no matter their subject of instruction.

French proficiency was of concern for participants in both stages, but particularly in Stage 1. While the study focused on race and culture, participants spent a lot of time discussing their own linguistic insecurities and French language learning. In fact, many suggestions from Stage 1 centred around improving student and teacher French proficiency, not around antiracism or (inter)cultural learning. They critiqued the program for not teaching them enough French and making them feel as if they did not know the language. Ace, Hassan, and Roy also blamed the program and teachers entirely for their lack of learning instead of turning the question back on themselves and their role in their language learning. Within their concerns about French proficiency, issues around native speaker ideologies arose. Stage 1 participants clearly aimed for native-like proficiency, preferred francophone teachers, and thought that the measure of knowing the language was ability to communicate in French-only milieus. While some participants from Stage 2 challenged native speaker preference, one participant emphasized that teachers with French as an additional language would need more help than Francophones. All three Stage 1 participants did not identify as a "French speaker", though they said this was solely based on their

knowledge of the language (and not their race). When compared to racialized native speaker ideologies (Wernicke, 2017), it can be concluded that their desire to attain the (White) native French speaker standard precluded them from identifying as French speakers themselves.

In response to the second research question, the majority of stakeholders from Stage 2 confirmed the findings from Stage 1 as they related to racism, representation, and culture. Stakeholders either experienced or had heard of similar things happening in their FI contexts, or were not at all surprised by the findings from Stage 1. That being said, several stakeholders were shocked and disheartened to hear about the instances of racism in FI. These stakeholders appreciated learning about the realities of the program for some students. Some stakeholders were reaffirmed in their commitment to fighting against racism and oppression more broadly. In general, stakeholders agreed with all the suggestions from Stage 1, rating them all highly in terms of importance. They were more split when it came to prioritizing culture over grammar, however.

Significance

This study is significant in the field of FAL and FI research and education. The questions of race, (diverse) culture, and representation have been neglected within the field until recent years. While CRT assumes that racism is happening in all venues in society, it is important to investigate FI to show where there are successes and challenges in combatting racism. The findings from this study confirmed that racist incidents are occurring in FI programs across the province and in Canada. Findings even suggest that a colonial, racialized, elite program like FI allows discriminatory practices like racism to flourish. The role of specialized programs must be questioned in the fight for an equitable society (Alphonso, 2017; Chami Lindsay, 2023; Gaztambide-Fernández & Parekh, 2017).

Moreover, this study gave space for racially minoritized FI students to share their voice, experiences, and stories with the world. Given the decades long silence around race in FI, hearing from racially minoritized students is a groundbreaking act of speaking back. Though the Stage 1 participants chose to speak almost entirely in English, they all included French within their monologues. Seeing and hearing racially minoritized FAL speakers serves to disrupt the dominant narrative of French as a White language. I argue that disrupting this White colonial imagination is essential in FAL identity formation. Moreover, participants from all stages learned from participating in this study and some even expressed commitments to undertaking antiracist work. Hassan and some Stage 2 participants had their critical consciousness raised through taking part in the study. Lastly, the list of suggestions generated in Stage 1 and rated in Stage 2 can serve as a starting point for future research, and institutional and pedagogical endeavours to ameliorate FI. For all these reasons, this study fulfilled some of the goals of the transformative philosophical paradigm (Mertens, 2007) which aims to use research to transform society. While these steps are minor, they point to a way forward to improve FI one step at a time.

Implications for Research

This study is very significant in setting the stage for future research in FAL/FI. For one, it indicates the potential success of instituting not only ABR, but online research. The participants from Stage 1 made it clear that ABR made the study more engaging overall, allowed them to learn new perspectives, and feel comfortable to share emotionally sensitive stories about themselves. Hassan praised ABR for its ability to allow participants to express themselves according to their own creativity, instead of providing strict parameters that the research had to follow. Ace even remarked that ABR made her realize that research does not have to be “tedious”. ABR methods like Playbuilding are one way to engage participants in research generation. It aligns also well with

CRT which advocates for giving voice to those who have been oppressed (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). ABR methods present endless ways to engage in research generation with minoritized groups. The addition of the internet allowed for ease of engagement in many ways and vastly widened the participant pool. However, it should be noted that a study like this one could easily be repeated in a face-to-face format and might have better artistic creations and collaboration as a result. In this study, technology allowed for ease of access, but it limited creative work time and feedback.

This study is one of the few that explicitly interrogates race in FAL. With this study, I contribute to building an empirical foundation for future inquiry. The findings reveal how important racial identity and racism were to the participants' educational experiences in FI. French, being a racialized and colonial language, necessitates that research take race into question. Though this study points to serious issues regarding race, culture, and representation, it is evident that further research should more thoroughly investigate antiracist pedagogies in action. We must question how antiracism is being taken up and suggest ways forward in antiracist efforts within FAL. Moreover, the findings from this study indicate that intercultural learning is underdeveloped and inconsistently applied. It must be questioned and likewise better developed from an antiracist lens.

Lastly, this study implemented modified Playbuilding with a small participant sample. It is suggested that a similar study with a larger participant sample be undertaken in order to enrich the findings herein. Of particular interest, this study featured two Black participants and one South Asian, potentially skewing the data toward Black experiences and realities. Another Playbuilding study should intentionally widen the racial identities present in order to consider other racial identities, particularly East Asian ones, as one Stage 2 participant highlighted.

While this study undertook important work of giving voice to marginalized people, it does centre traumatic experiences. Tuck and Yang (2014) advocate for research about marginalized and oppressed people to shift focus from trauma and pain narratives to desire-centred research. As they critique, reporting on trauma is assumed to bring about change in some way, however very little change happens from the sharing of trauma-based stories (Tuck & Yang, 2014). For this reason, Tuck and Yang (2014) call for research to shift from oppressed people to “study instead institutions and power” (p. 815). While this study attempted to employ elements of desire-centred research, it still reports on stories of pain. Future research in FAL *with* (not *about*) racially minoritized people must move away from pain toward desire. Some possible questions for future research are:

- What are the experiences of diverse racially minoritized students in FI (and core French)? (Similar study with a larger participant pool)
- How are FAL spaces/schools racialized? Who holds power in this racialization?
- How are FAL teachers enacting antiracist pedagogy? What are their strengths and challenges? What support do they need?
- Where do FAL teachers learn how to engage in antiracist pedagogy? Where/how have they developed their antiracist pedagogy? What resources do they use?
- How do FAL students react to antiracist pedagogy? What does this reveal about what must be adapted in antiracist efforts and what we are doing well?
- How do teachers integrate intercultural competence in their FAL curricula? What are their strengths and challenges? Do teachers teach intercultural competence from an antiracist lens?
- Do teachers follow the cultural groups of study outlined by the FAL curricula?
- Where do FAL teachers learn how to teach intercultural competence?

- How do teacher preparation programs prepare FAL teachers to teach intercultural competence?
- What do FAL students know about intercultural competence? What cultures have they studied? Do they enjoy learning about cultures?
- How does intercultural competence overlap with culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies in FAL?

Of particular importance are studies that investigate core French in addition to FI, since most studies in FAL are about FI and it is a heavily researched area (Masson et al., 2021). Furthermore, the majority of students in FAL programs in Ontario are in core French programs (CPF, 2021)—so research should not neglect this large demographic of students. Also, FI research continues to speak about socioeconomic status, but rarely does it explicitly investigate it (see the literature review). Research looking at the intersections of race and income should be undertaken. Lastly, the intersections of race and queer identities merit further investigation. My study revealed one participant's queer and racial identities impacted their sense of welcomeness in FI. Another queer racially minoritized participant did not explicitly make this connection, though, she too felt unwelcome in FI.

Implications for Pedagogy

In terms of pedagogy, this study has two important implications: 1) antiracism training, and 2) intercultural competence training and resources. Starting with antiracism training, the findings of this study make it abundantly clear that antiracism training is sorely needed in FI contexts by teachers and administrators alike. Antiracism training should be better integrated into FAL teacher preparation programs to train and prepare future teachers for antiracism. As Masson and colleagues (2022) suggest, integrating an antiracist, anti-bias framework throughout teacher

education programs is one way to address this need. Initiatives from school boards, professional associations, and the province are needed to disrupt teachers' and administrators' thinking, expose them to antiracist principles, and give them concrete examples on how to integrate antiracism throughout their pedagogy and career. One such effort has already been undertaken by the OMLTA (2023) through their online module series: *How to be an Antiracist Educator*. As a contributor to this series, I see its significance and benefits for FAL and language teachers. However, antiracism cannot be distilled down to a few modules—it is ongoing work. Antiracism training must include the understanding that antiracist pedagogy requires ongoing (un)learning and must be integrated throughout the entire school and curriculum, not as a one-off.

Second, the major finding about intercultural learning from this study underpins the pressing need for resources and training around teaching culture in FAL. Masson and colleagues (2023) outline how there is little support for teaching culture in the FAL curricula to begin with. A search of major search engines reveals that there are few free and publicly accessible resources for FAL teachers when it comes to teaching culture, with a glaring lack of information about the cultural groups of study outlined in the FAL curricula (OME, 2013b, 2014). So, depending on a teacher's own cultural knowledge and their teacher training, there is very little support for them to develop the intercultural strand of the curriculum. As a follow up to this study, I am in the process of developing a website where teachers can share their information and knowledge about the curricular cultural groups. This website would provide both a theoretical framework for teaching culture and practical ways for teachers to engage with ICTL, instead of only theoretical ideas. Based on the findings of this study, FI students are not learning about culture and when they do, they barely go beyond surface facts. Language learning necessitates cultural learning (Kramsch, 1995), so FAL classes need to consider culture, not just the language.

Limitations

While this study has many findings that enrich the field of FI/FAL, the main limitation of the study is the number of participants. It should be noted that the goal of the study was not to be generalizable at any stage. Stage 1 was always conceptualized as a small number of participants, though the goal was to have up to 15 participants originally, and only due to low recruitment (largely because of the COVID-19 pandemic) was the final number three participants. Stage 2 was conceived to broaden the participants and to confirm or deny the experiences outlined by the limited number of participants in Stage 1. While Stage 2 aimed to have anywhere from 50-75 participants, this number also fell short, only recruiting 39 participants. Again, the goal was not to be representative of the province, however, especially because the recruitment strategy was through the researcher's personal network—it would be difficult to obtain a representative sample of racially minoritized FAL students (Stage 1) and FI stakeholders at large (Stage 2). For this reason, the findings cannot be generalized to the rest of the province or country. This study can only claim to represent the few participants who took part in it. As a result, further research is needed to broaden the scope of the findings and see where similarities and differences in experiences arise. Second, the limited number of racial identities in Stage 1 might have influenced the findings and skewed discussion toward Blackness and anti-Black racism. Additionally, the data from Stage 1 comes entirely from southern Ontario, which limits the scope of the findings. More participants, more diverse participants, and participants from different regions might have revealed very different findings. Lastly, the data collection/generation and analysis could have been more intersectional. For instance, when Ace spoke about her queer identity, I did not engage with this identity (admittedly, she directed the conversation away from it as well). Likewise, the study did

not engage with participants' socioeconomic status. As such, the findings speak to race and not intersecting identities.

Concluding Thoughts

To conclude, I would like to return to my introductory narrative. One of the main questions pushing me on my research journey was/is: where are all the people of colour? I went searching for those racially minoritized students who were in FI. I wanted to hear their stories and I wanted to help them make their stories heard by others. Based on my own experiences, and rooted in CRT, I postulated that racially minoritized students were experiencing racism in FI programs. The results of this study confirm that racism is not just anecdotal but happening in many FI locations across the province and in some areas across the country. While these findings are not statistically representative, they are very concerning. As I remark in the introduction, had I known to what extent racism was present in FI programs, I may not have worked so hard to become an FI teacher. But I am here now, and I am hoping to make a difference.

FI, like all FAL programs nation-wide, has a plethora of problems that it faces right now, not limited to staffing, funding, proficiency levels, pedagogic approaches, and resources (Masson et al., 2021). These systemic issues are huge and tend to outweigh other more social concerns, like equity and antiracism. Faced with these highly problematic issues, we may be tempted to ask: How can we talk about antiracist training when students do not know how to introduce themselves in French by Grade 9? How can we talk about cultural representation when the class is being taught by a rotating door of occasional teachers? How can we focus on antiracist units of study when basic grammar is still not understood? To these questions, I respond simply that *we must*. We must talk about antiracism, culture, and representation in FAL classes because if we do not, we are failing our students. I instead pose the following questions: How can we expect our students to

learn when they are experiencing racism on a daily basis? How can we expect students to understand a language without learning about its many cultures? How can we expect our students to be engaged in their learning when they never see themselves represented in their learning?

In fact, antiracism, cultural learning, and diverse representations may even be answers to some of the systemic issues facing FI right now. For instance, teaching language in context—or through cultures—can help support linguistic proficiency (Genç & Bada, 2005). Antiracist spaces and representational course materials may make students more interested in their learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995), feel more like they belong in their school (Sinay et al., 2018), and/or more able to identify with the French language. As a result of more engaged students, teachers may become more interested in teaching and remain in the French stream. Lastly, students who experience racism in FI may be discouraged from continuing to study French (as Ace expressed), further contributing to the low pool to draw potential FAL teachers from. As a professor from Masson et al.'s (2022) study proclaimed:

I think our crisis in Canada and recruiting language teachers is not related to proficiency. It's related to all sorts of discrimination, all sorts of assumptions, all sorts of prejudices, all sorts of politics, all sorts of baggage, all sorts of exclusion. (p. 401)

Instead of seeing the systemic issues facing FAL in opposition to social issues, we should see them as in tandem with one another.

Given that this dissertation paints the picture of FI as a negative space, it may be used in future debates about whether or not it is finally time to end FI programs for good. However, I would caution future FI stakeholders to instead focus on what I would consider the main issue at hand: racism exists everywhere, whether it be in FI, international baccalaureate programs, or the so-called mainstream program. *Racism exists everywhere*. In the literature review, I demonstrated

the unique ways that the sociohistorical context of the French language and French language learning intersect with race to allow for racism to thrive in programs like FI. My findings confirm that racism is very much present in FI. Nonetheless, *racism* is what must be dismantled, not necessarily FI. Yes, there are many ways that FI can and must be modified to be more equitable. For instance, in an ideal world, every school might be an immersion school, where students could learn in multiple languages (not just English and French) to support a plurilingual, pluricultural (Beacco et al., 2016; Lau & Van Viegen, 2020) society. But given the current staffing crisis, expanding this program is not feasible, and may never be. However, I would not advocate for the complete destruction of FI considering the cognitive and social benefits of language learning. FI, like our society, needs a paradigm shift, that includes revisiting policies to make them more equitable (as discussed in Kunnas, 2019, 2023), instituting antiracism throughout the program, and building up the base of French language speakers who may one day take up the mantle to teach the language. It is time for us to imagine an FI otherwise (García et al., 2021).

Sylvie Roy (2020) reminds us of who is most important when it comes to FI: “French immersion is for the children, not the parents, not the teachers, and not the administrators. It is for the youth and children of tomorrow” (p. 179). As researchers and educators, we can get caught up in policy, pedagogy, terminology, interdepartmental drama, and so on, but the most important element of FI, of all education, is the learner. We cannot abide a program that is not for the learner and does not support them. To those FI stakeholders and researchers, I hope you join me in taking up the important work of antiracism in FI and beyond.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Stage 1 Demographics Questionnaire

Demographics Questionnaire : Playbuilding Process

1. Circle which best describes you:
 - a. French immersion student
 - b. Extended French student
2. When did you start French immersion / Extended French?
 - a. Junior Kindergarten
 - b. Senior Kindergarten
 - c. Grade 1
 - d. Grade 2
 - e. Grade 3
 - f. Grade 4
 - g. Grade 7
 - h. Other: _____
3. What is your age
 - a. 16
 - b. 17
 - c. 18
 - d. 19
 - e. 20
4. What is your gender
 - a. Girl / woman
 - b. Boy / Man
 - c. Non-binary / Gender-fluid
 - d. Transgender
 - e. Other: _____
 - f. Prefer not to say
5. What is your racial identity? (Circle all that apply)
 - a. Black (Caribbean, Africa, etc.)
 - b. White (Europe, Scandinavia, etc.)
 - c. East Asian (China, Japan, Korea, etc.)
 - d. Pacific Islander (Polynesia, Micronesia, Melanesia, etc.)
 - e. South Asian (India, Pakistan, etc.)
 - f. Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuit)
 - g. Latinx / South American
 - h. Other (specify): _____
6. Home language: what language(s) do you speak most at home? What is the language(s) of your family?

7. Languages spoken: what languages do you speak? (check all that apply)

8. Special education status: Did or do you have special education needs? For example, having a resource teacher, having an IEP, having a disability, in the gifted program, etc.

a. Yes

i. Explain briefly: _____

b. No

9. Are you a Canadian citizen?

a. Yes

b. No (specify): _____

c. Prefer not to say

10. What is your religion? _____

11. Do you like French immersion as a program? Why or Why not?

a. Yes

b. No

Appendix B: Playbuilding Sessions Outline

- 18 – 20 hours total time commitment over 2-3 weeks, evenings from 5 pm – 7 pm
- 10 – 11 sessions, depending if you did an interview

#	Date	Time	Activity	Data collected
1	July 11	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent Forms and Project Overview (30 min) • Team Building (45 min) • Antiracism principles (45 min) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent form • Demographics form • Collective definitions
2	July 12	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team building (15 min) • Story sharing & writing (1h 30 min) • Themes and program needs (15 min) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recorded oral stories
3	July 13	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story sharing & writing (1h 15 min) • Themes and program needs (45 min) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recorded oral stories • Recorded needs
4	July 14	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed written stories, reviewed themes and needs (15 min) • Monologue writing instruction (15 min) • Writing (1hr) • Sharing (30 min) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written stories • Themes and needs
5	July 15	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing (1hr) • Sharing & Workshopping (1hr) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monologue Script
6	July 18	1 hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filming and editing crash course (1 hr) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monologue Script
7	July 19	(Participant dependent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filming and editing time (each person to create a 1-3 minute film, no synchronous session) 	
8	July 20	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film sharing & feedback (1 hr) • Questionnaire updating (30 min) • Collective film editing ideas & consent form (30 min) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of finalized monologue • Film consent form

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating profiles 	
(9)	July 22	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional additional session if needed (not used) 	
9/10	July 21	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch finalized films, go through website • Feedback session about the process • Finalized themes and needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of themes and needs • Feedback notes
11	July 25 - 29	30 – 60 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online interviews (optional) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio and video recording, transcript

Appendix C: Marika's Monologue Example

Where are all the Black Kids?

Teacher delivering her reflection to the audience.

There's something that's been bothering me more and more lately. It's been 6 years of teaching French immersion, 8 if you count teachers' college—which I do. 8 years and 5 French immersion schools, (*sarcastically*) yeah, I've been busy. At 4 out of 5 schools that I have taught at long term, I would look around my immersion classrooms and notice a conspicuous lack of colour. I've asked myself "where are all the Black kids?" "Ou sont-ils et elles?" (*pause*). Then I started to notice what I was seeing. It wasn't only Black kids, it was also Brown kids and Asian kids.

4 different French immersion schools and the question emerges again and again, (*punctuated*) "Where are the students of colour?" You leave the immersion classroom, and you can see them in the hallways (*gesture*), you can see them in clubs (*gesture*), in assemblies (*gesture*), but the French immersion classroom is suspiciously White (*raise eyebrows*). Granted, not everyone is White...But when you look around the room, it is (*emphasis*) painfully obvious. I am one of the only people of colour in my classroom in one of the most multiracial cities in the world. How is that possible?

Other teachers have noticed, students have noticed—immersion, c'est blanc.

(*Emotional*) I have stories, so *many* stories, so many horrible, depressing, unfortunate stories about students' experiences with racism in French immersion programs. But not only do I not wish to share them because of their own right to confidentiality and agency, I also know that I am subject to review and scrutiny from my teaching colleagues.

How can I return to teaching if I publish my real thoughts and experiences? How can a principal hire me when they know that I am not afraid to expose the racism in the system? How can I look a colleague in the face over lunch or in a staff meeting when they know that *I* know what they've done?

Donc, ou sont-ils? So where are all the Black kids? Where are all the kids of colour? While I wish they were in immersion, maybe it's better that they're not.

Appendix D: Stage 1 Individual Interview Protocol

Introduction Script:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. This interview will be about 30 – 60 minutes long. You will be responding to questions I have about the Playbuilding process that we just did. I will ask you questions related to the experience in general, your personal monologue, and the playbuilding process. Should you have any questions at any point, please do not hesitate to ask them. You have read through and signed the informed consent form. Do you have any questions for me about this process or the consent form?

With your permission, this interview will be recorded. I am going to start recording now.

Questions:

1. What did you think about the **antiracism introduction** in general?
 - a. Did you learn anything?
 - b. Do you think your peers learned anything?
2. **Monologue:**
 - a. How would you describe your experience of writing and filming a monologue about race and racism in French immersion?
 - i. Was it positive or negative? Did it bring up any other thoughts or emotions?
 - ii. Do you think it was a productive or helpful experience?
 - iii. Is there anything you would change?
 - b. Clarification questions (to be determined per individual)
 - i. What did you mean when you said...
 - ii. I interpreted this to mean _____, am I correct in this interpretation?
3. **Playbuilding**
 - a. Do you think the film will have an impact on French immersion stakeholders?
 - b. Do you think that drama is a good venue for social change? Why or why not?
4. **French immersion**
 - a. Do you have anything that you want to say about your experiences in French immersion that you were not able to share or did not share during this process?
 - b. Why do you think there are so few racial minorities in French immersion programs?
 - c. Is there anything you think we can do to help diversify French immersion programs?
 - d. Other than what we have already discussed, is there anything else that you think we can do to better French immersion programs?

Appendix E: Stage 2 Online Questionnaire

Online Questionnaire: Racialized experiences in French immersion programs

Informed consent

About the study:

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Marika Kunnas, a doctoral student at York University, and supervised by Dr. Gail Prasad, a faculty member of York University. The purpose of this study is to learn what racialized minority students' experiences are in French immersion programs. This study will determine how to better French immersion programs for all students.

What you will be asked to do:

In this study, you will be asked to view a website (<https://mkunnas.wixsite.com/race-in-fi>) created by French immersion students about race and racism in French immersion. After navigating the website, you will be asked to participate in an online questionnaire (on Google Forms) about what you just viewed (approximately 15-20 minutes long). The questionnaire will remain completely anonymous. It will ask questions related to the website, your own experiences, and some demographics information (i.e., age, race, languages spoken, etc.). Findings from this research will be reported in Marika Kunnas' dissertation. Findings may also be reported in other venues like: conference presentations, academic journals, and to school board employees.

Eligibility:

You must be 16 years of age or older.

Risks and Discomforts:

Because this study is about race and racism, people who have had traumatic or negative experiences with racism may be uncomfortable or emotionally triggered by accessing this website. It is highly encouraged that participants access online resources like Kids Help Phone (<https://kidshelpphone.ca>) or Crisis Line (<https://crisisline.ca/>) or seek professional help, should you need it.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You:

Participants of this study will contribute to creating a better French immersion program by identifying common experiences in the program and program needs. Participants will also have a chance to share their opinions and have their voice heard. Participants may elect to participate in a draw for 1 of 3 \$50 CAD Amazon gift cards.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer, to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence the nature of the ongoing relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff, any school staff or teachers, or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future.

In the event you withdraw from the study, your data may still be considered in analysis because all information collected will be anonymous. If you do not want your data to be considered, please contact the research team by June 2024 to have it destroyed (_____@yorku.ca).

Confidentiality:

All data collected via this survey will be anonymous. You will create an anonymous code at the beginning of the survey instead of indicating your name. Unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research.

The researcher acknowledges that the host of the online survey (Google Forms) may automatically collect participant data without their knowledge (i.e., IP addresses). Although this information may be provided or made accessible to the researcher, it will not be used or saved without participant's consent on the researcher's system. Further, because this project employs e-based collection techniques, data may be subject to access by third parties as a result of various security legislation now in place in many countries and thus the confidentiality and privacy of data cannot be guaranteed during web-based transmission.

Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law. Electronic data will be stored in a password protected folder and only accessible through a password protected computer. Information will not be shared with anyone outside of the study. This means the researcher (Marika Kunnas), and her supervisor (Dr. Gail Prasad) will have access to the entirety of your anonymous responses. Findings will be shared publicly in an anonymous format.

Data will be archived indefinitely on an encrypted and password protected external hard drive. The data collected in this research project may be used – in an anonymized form - by members of the research team in subsequent research investigations exploring similar lines of inquiry. Such projects will still undergo ethics review by the HPRC, our institutional REB. Any secondary use of anonymized data by the research team will be treated with the same degree of confidentiality and anonymity as in the original research project.

Please note that it is the expectation that participants agree not to make any unauthorized recordings of the content of the website or the questionnaire.

Questions About the Research?

If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact me at _____ or my supervisor, Dr. Gail Prasad at _____ and/or _____. You may also contact the Graduate Program in Language, Culture and Teaching at gradprogram@edu.yorku.ca and/or 416-736-2100 ext. 22051.

This research has received ethics review and approval by the Delegated Ethics Review Committee, which is delegated authority to review research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, Kaneff Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

Legal Rights and eSignature:

I consent to participate in “Racialized experiences in French immersion programs” conducted by Marika Kunnas. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. Checking the box below indicates my consent. By checking the box below, I confirm that I am 16 years of age or older.

- By clicking the check box, I acknowledge that I have read the above consent information and authorize my responses to this questionnaire to be used in this research study. This serves as an electronic signature.
- I do not consent to this study, or I am not 16 years or older.

Date: _____

Make sure to view the website (<https://mkunnas.wixsite.com/race-in-fi>) prior to completing this questionnaire.

Please note, you can skip any questions you desire and can stop at any time.

Anonymous Code

Please fill in the following responses to create an anonymous code to represent your answers.

1. Last 2 letters of your last name:
2. Last 2 numbers of your year of birth:
3. Last 2 letters of your middle name:

Ex. AS93KA

Demographics Information

The following information will be gathered to help with research analysis and to understand who answered the survey. You may skip any questions you choose. All information is anonymous for this survey and will not be associated with your name at any point.

12. Check which best describes you:
 - i. French immersion student
 - ii. Student (not in French immersion)
 - iii. Former French immersion student (still in high school)
 - iv. Graduated French immersion student
 - v. Graduated non-French immersion student
 - vi. French immersion teacher

- vii. Core French teacher
 - viii. Extended French teacher
 - ix. Non-French teacher
 - x. French immersion parent
 - xi. Non-French immersion parent
 - b. French immersion Administrator
 - c. Non- French immersion Administrator
 - d. French immersion School Staff
 - e. Non-French immersion school staff
 - f. Other
13. Did you attend French immersion as a student?
- i. Yes - All or most of elementary school
 - ii. Yes - All or most of elementary and high school
 - iii. Yes - Some of elementary school
 - iv. Yes - Some of high school
 - b. No
14. What is your age?
- a. 16 – 18
 - b. 19 – 20
 - c. 20 – 29
 - d. 30 – 39
 - e. 40 – 49
 - f. 50 – 59
 - g. 60 – 69
 - h. 70 – 79
 - i. 80 – 89
 - j. 90 +
 - k. Prefer not to say
15. School Board / Region: Which school board are you currently in (as a student, teacher, or parent)?
- a. Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board
 - b. York Catholic District School Board
 - c. Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB)
 - d. York Region District School Board (YRDSB)
 - e. Toronto District School Board (TDSB)
 - f. Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB)
 - g. Peel District School Board (PDSB)
 - h. Halton District School Board (HDSB)
 - i. Halton Catholic District School Board (HCDSB)
 - j. Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB)
 - k. Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board (DPCDSB)
 - l. Limestone District School Board (LDSB)
 - m. Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB)

- n. Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB)
 - o. Renfrew County District School Board (RCDSB)
 - p. Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB)
 - q. Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario (CDSBEO)
 - r. Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board (ALCDSB)
 - s. Near North District School Board (NNDSB)
 - t. Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board (HPEDSB)
 - u. Sudbury Catholic District School Board
 - v. Rainbow District School Board (RDSB)
 - w. Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB)
 - x. Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB)
 - y. Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB)
 - z. Niagara Catholic District School Board (NCDSB)
 - aa. Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB)
 - bb. District School Board of Niagara (DSBN)
 - cc. Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB)
 - dd. Lambton Kent District School Board (LKDSB)
 - ee. Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB)
 - ff. Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB)
 - gg. Other (specify)
16. What is your gender? (Check all that apply)
- a. Woman
 - b. Man
 - c. Non-binary / Gender-fluid
 - d. Transgender
 - e. Other
 - f. Prefer not to say
17. What is your race (check all that apply)?
- a. Black (Caribbean, Africa, etc.)
 - b. White (Europe)
 - c. East Asian (China, Japan, Korea, etc.)
 - d. Pacific or South Islander (Polynesia, etc.)
 - e. South Asian (India, Pakistan, etc.)
 - f. Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuit)
 - g. Latinx / South American
 - h. Other (specify): _____
18. Home language: what language(s) do you speak most at home? What is the language(s) of your family? (Check all that apply)
- a. English
 - b. French
 - c. Punjabi
 - d. Chinese
 - e. Cantonese

- f. Mandarin
 - g. Italian
 - h. German
 - i. Tagalog
 - j. Arabic
 - k. Portuguese
 - l. Spanish
 - m. Other (specify): _____
19. Languages spoken: what languages do you speak? (Check all that apply)
- a. English
 - b. French
 - c. Punjabi
 - d. Chinese
 - e. Cantonese
 - f. Mandarin
 - g. Italian
 - h. German
 - i. Tagalog
 - j. Arabic
 - k. Portuguese
 - l. Spanish
 - m. Other (specify): _____
20. Special education status: Did or do you have special education needs (not including being in the Gifted program)? For example, having a resource teacher, having an IEP, having a disability, etc. If yes, please explain.
- _____
- _____
21. Are you a Canadian citizen?
- a. Yes
 - b. No (specify): _____
 - c. Prefer not to say
22. Do you live in Ontario?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. No, but I did during my time in French immersion

Survey Questions

Do not include any identifying information in your responses unless you wish to. You may refer to your school or town in an anonymous way; for example, “at my school in a large city...”

Should you include identifying information, it will not be published, but the research team will have access to it. The research team will anonymize any identifying information for you.

1. How did you feel while engaging with our website? Explain.

2. Was there any element, moment or quote from the website that stood out to you? Explain.

3. Did you learn anything while engaging with our website?
 - a. Yes
 - i. What did you learn? _____
 - b. No
4. Did you think the experiences were similar to those that you have had or those that you have heard of? What was similar? What was different?
5. What other experiences have you had or heard of relating to race in French immersion?

6. The following are a list of program needs that were developed through this research study. Please rank them on a scale of 1 to 5 according to what you think is most important. Afterward, explain your rationale.

	Not important at all		Somewhat important		Very important
Need	1	2	3	4	5
Implement a cultural course into the French immersion program					
Diversify resources to have better racial representation					
More courses should be taught in French					
More focus on culture than grammar					
Activities should be more action-oriented and authentic to encourage language use					
A stricter policy on French language use in the classroom (e.g., speak more French)					
Oral French should be emphasized over written French and grammar					
More French should be visible throughout the entire school					
Teachers need to develop their language proficiency					
There should be more time dedicated to the French language course; potentially have an					

extended period or French year-round in semestered schools					
Exchanges and field trips should be subsidized and better integrated into the school year					
More French immersion school locations					
There should be targeted recruitment of racial minority French teachers					
There should be a summer institute for French teachers to practice and improve their French					
The province should be officially bilingual to help raise the status of French					

- a. List any other program needs for French immersion. What do we need to improve the program for racialized minorities? for everyone?
- b. Rationale:

7. Any other comments or thoughts? Write them below.

Thank you for taking this survey. If you have any further questions, please contact [email removed]. If you would like to know more about the findings from this study, consult our website which will be updated as findings emerge.

If you wish to participate in the draw for a \$50 Amazon gift card, please fill in your information below. This will not be linked to your survey responses.

Contact email: _____

Appendix F: Stage 2 Demographic Tables

All tables were generated in IBM SPSS or based on SPSS-generated tables.

Stakeholder Identity

	N	%
Graduated French immersion student	8	20.5%
French immersion teacher	7	17.9%
Current French immersion student	6	15.4%
Core French teacher	4	10.3%
French immersion parent	4	10.3%
French immersion teacher educator	2	5.1%
Non-French immersion teacher	2	5.1%
Student (not in French immersion)	2	5.1%
Former French immersion student (still in high school)	1	2.6%
General French Supply Teacher (Core, French, Extended)	1	2.6%
Professor university	1	2.6%
School Staff	1	2.6%

Gender

	N	%
Woman	27	69.2%
Man	11	28.2%
Prefer not to say	1	2.6%

Did you attend French immersion as a student?

	N	%
No	13	33.3%
Yes - All or most of elementary and high school	12	30.8%
Yes	8	20.5%
Yes - All or most of elementary school	3	7.7%
Yes - Some of high school	2	5.1%
Yes - Some of elementary school	1	2.6%

Did you attend FI as a student (Summary)		
Yes	26	66.7%
No	13	33.3%

Age

	N	%
16 – 18	8	20.5%
20 – 29	10	25.6%
30 – 39	10	25.6%
40 – 49	7	17.9%
50 – 59	3	7.7%
Prefer not to say	1	2.6%

Ontarian?

	N	%
No	12	30.8%
Yes	27	69.2%

School Board

	N	%
Outside of Ontario.	12	30.8%
Toronto District School Board (TDSB)	9	23.1%
Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB)	8	20.5%
Not indicated	2	5.1%
York Region District School Board (YRDSB)	2	5.1%
Algoma District School Board (ADSB)	1	2.6%
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB)	1	2.6%
Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board	1	2.6%
Ottawa and GTA	1	2.6%
Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB)	1	2.6%
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB)	1	2.6%

Home language

	N	%
Arabic, Swahili	1	2.6%
English	20	51.3%
English, Cantonese	2	5.1%
English, French	6	15.4%
English, French, Italian	1	2.6%
English, French, Japanese	1	2.6%
English, French, Patois	1	2.6%
English, French, Tamil	1	2.6%
English, German	1	2.6%
English, Italian	2	5.1%
English, Spanish	2	5.1%
English, Tigrinya	1	2.6%

Languages spoken

	N	%
English	3	7.7%
English, French	19	48.7%
English, French, Arabic	1	2.6%
English, French, Cantonese	1	2.6%
English, French, Cantonese, Mandarin	1	2.6%
English, French, German, Spanish	1	2.6%
English, French, Italian	3	7.7%
English, French, Japanese	1	2.6%
English, French, Korean	1	2.6%
English, French, Spanish	3	7.7%
English, French, Spanish, Japanese	1	2.6%
English, French, Spanish, Patois	1	2.6%
English, French, Tigrinya	1	2.6%
English, Malayalam	1	2.6%
French	1	2.6%

Home language

	N	%
Bilingual (EN-FR)	6	15.4%
English	20	51.3%
Multilingual	13	33.3%

Special education status

	N	%
Blank	20	51.3%
No / N/A	17	43.6%
Yes	2	5.1%

Race

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Black (Caribbean, Africa, etc.)	4	10.3	10.3	10.3
	Black (Caribbean, Africa, etc.), East Asian (China, Japan, Korea, etc.)	1	2.6	2.6	12.8
	Black (Caribbean, Africa, etc.), White	1	2.6	2.6	15.4
	Black/Middle Eastern	1	2.6	2.6	17.9
	East Asian (China, Japan, Korea, etc.)	2	5.1	5.1	23.1
	East Asian (China, Japan, Korea, etc.), South Asian (India, Pakistan, etc.)	1	2.6	2.6	25.6
	Latinx / South American	1	2.6	2.6	28.2
	Mixed South Asian European (Belgian)	1	2.6	2.6	30.8
	South Asian (India, Pakistan, etc.)	1	2.6	2.6	33.3
	White	21	53.8	53.8	87.2
	White, Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuit)	2	5.1	5.1	92.3
	White, Indo- Guyanese	1	2.6	2.6	94.9
	White, Middle Eastern	1	2.6	2.6	97.4
	White, South Asian (India, Pakistan, etc.), mixed race	1	2.6	2.6	100.0
	Total	39	100.0	100.0	

Race

	N	%
White	21	53.8%
BIPOC	18	46.2%

Race Overview		
Black (Caribbean, Africa, etc.)	4	10.3%
Black Mixed Race	3	7.7%
Black Total	7	17.9%
White (Europe)	21	53.8%
White Mixed Race	6	15.4%
White Total	27	69.2%
East Asian (China, Japan, Korea, etc.)	2	5.1%
East Asian Mixed	2	5.1%
East Asian Total	4	10.3%
South Asian (India, Pakistan, etc.)	1	2.6%
South Asian Mixed Race	3	7.7%
South Asian Total	4	10.3%
Latinx / South American	1	2.6%
Indigenous Mixed Race	2	5.1%
Mixed race Middle Eastern	2	5.1%
Mixed race Indo-Guyanese	1	2.6%
Mixed Race	1	2.6%

Appendix G: Stage 2 Suggestions Ratings

	Not important at all		Somewhat important		Very important	No response
	1	2	3	4	5	
Implement a cultural course into the French immersion program	0	3	7	7	21	1
	0.00%	7.7%	17.9%	17.9%	53.8%	2.6%
Diversify resources to have better racial representation	0	0	4	7	27	1
	0.00%	0.00%	10.3%	17.9%	69.2%	2.6%
More courses should be taught in French	1	3	5	15	14	1
	2.6%	7.7%	12.8%	38.5%	35.9%	2.6%
More focus on culture than grammar	0	7	11	7	12	2
	0.00%	17.9%	28.2%	17.9%	30.8%	5.10%
Activities should be more action-oriented and authentic to encourage language use	0	1	3	8	26	1
	0.00%	2.6%	7.7%	20.5%	66.7%	2.6%
A stricter policy on French language use in the classroom (e.g., speak more French)	5	2	10	11	10	1
	12.8%	5.1%	25.6%	28.2%	25.6%	2.6%
Oral French should be emphasized over written French and grammar	2	3	7	11	14	2
	5.1%	7.7%	17.9%	28.2%	35.9%	5.1%
More French should be visible throughout the entire school	0	4	6	13	14	2
	0.00%	10.3%	15.4%	33.3%	35.9%	5.1%
Teachers need to develop their language proficiency	2	1	9	9	16	2
	5.1%	2.6%	23.1%	23.1%	41.0%	5.1%
There should be more time dedicated to the French language course; potentially have an extended period or French year-round in semestered schools	2	4	10	10	11	2
	5.1%	10.3%	25.6%	25.6%	28.2%	5.1%
	1	2	5	8	20	3

Exchanges and field trips should be subsidized and better integrated into the school year	2.6%	5.1%	12.8%	20.5%	51.3%	7.7%
More French immersion school locations	2	2	6	10	17	2
	5.1%	5.1%	15.4%	25.6%	43.6%	5.1%
There should be targeted recruitment of racial minority French teachers	1	3	3	7	23	2
	2.6%	7.7%	7.7%	17.9%	59.0%	5.1%
There should be a summer institute for French teachers to practice and improve their French	2	5	9	12	9	2
	5.1%	12.8%	23.1%	30.8%	23.1%	5.1%
The province should be officially bilingual to help raise the status of French	5	5	7	5	15	2
	12.8%	12.8%	17.9%	12.8%	38.5%	5.1%

Note. Green indicates where the highest percentage of responses were.

Appendix H: Stage 3 Interview Protocol

Stage 3 – Focus Group Questionnaire

Participants will receive a brief presentation from me outlining the findings from stage 1, including key quotes and demographic information. After sharing these findings, we will launch into the question period.

Survey-Based Questions (Stage 2)

1. What are your initial thoughts based on the summary of findings?
 - a. What stood out to you?
 - b. What surprised you?
2. Do you agree with the participants for our online survey?
 - a. Why?
 - b. Why not?
3. Do you think we need to alter our list of needs?
4. What do you think about the demographics of who participated in our study? (Reflection on demographics of participants – share demographic information)
5. How might we have changed or improved the website? Recruitment?
6. Based on the responses, did your predictions about the impact of our website match up to the reality? What was different or similar?
7. Based on stage 1 and stage 2 of this study, what do you think should be the next steps for this research? (Webinar, presentation for school boards, trustees, professional development workshops, developing a teaching culture resource, etc.)

Clarification Questions based on Stage 1

1. What did you mean in your monologue when you said...?
2. Can you expand on your suggestion that we include a culture class?
 - a. How do you define culture?
 - b. What elements of different cultures would you have liked to learn about or see in your French classes?
3. You all thought that using language was key to bettering your French, but you were all resistant to speaking French in school. How can we encourage students to use the language more?
4. Is there anything you wish you had changed from stage 1?
5. How do you feel about the racial segregation that happens in your friend groups?