

Using Autoethnographic Practices to Study the Situation of Female Immigrant Students
in English, Academic Adult Education in Quebec

Utilisation de pratiques autoethnographiques pour étudier la situation des étudiantes immigrantes
dans le système d'éducation aux adultes de langue anglaise au Québec

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Abstract

Adult Education -- high school equivalencies -- is an overlooked avenue of education in juxtaposition with the elementary, secondary, college, and university counterparts of education. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the realities that female immigrant students face when integrating into English, academic Adult Education in Montreal, Quebec. I participate in this research as a teacher - autoethnographer, using self-reflexive memory-work as a tool of inquiry, focusing on one main question. This thesis is divided into four Chapters. Chapter one outlines the journey that led me to engage in autoethnography with female immigrants in Adult Education in Quebec. The review of scholarly literature gives context to immigrant experiences in Quebec and Canada, as well as, specific instances of racialization present in Quebec education. Chapter two maps out the methodological framework of autoethnography through memory-work that was used in creating and analyzing the fieldwork. Chapter three is organized around three memory episodes, one dealing with female immigrant identity construction and experiences; the second examining subsequent mental health concerns of female immigrants in English Adult Education in Quebec and the third addressing protocols and testing. Intermixed throughout this thesis are personal photographs and descriptions of photographs of artwork that contributed to the overall autoethnography. Chapter four reviews and discusses the topics brought up in the thesis as well as, the limitations of this study, with a looking forward portion into Quebec education. Overall my study aims to facilitate further research and discourse surrounding female immigrant experiences in Quebec education, specifically Adult Education.

Résumé

L'éducation aux adultes pour l'obtention d'un diplôme de niveau secondaire est une forme d'éducation souvent négligée, comparativement à l'éducation primaire, secondaire, collégiale et universitaire. L'objectif de ce mémoire est d'examiner les réalités auxquelles font face les étudiantes immigrantes lors de leur intégration au système d'éducation pour adultes de langue anglaise à Montréal, au Québec. Je participe à ce travail de recherche en tant qu'enseignante et autoethnographe, utilisant comme outil d'enquête un travail de mémoire et d'autoréflexion axé sur une question centrale. Ce mémoire se décline en quatre chapitres. Le premier chapitre décrit le parcours qui m'a menée à pratiquer l'autoethnographie avec des immigrantes fréquentant des établissements d'éducation aux adultes au Québec. Une revue de la littérature savante contextualise l'expérience des immigrants au Québec et au Canada, et fournit également des exemples précis de racialisation rencontrés dans le système d'éducation québécois. Le deuxième chapitre établit le cadre méthodologique d'autoethnographie, par le biais du travail de mémoire, utilisé afin de recueillir et d'analyser les données sur le terrain. Le troisième chapitre s'organise selon trois épisodes mémoriels. Le premier traite de la construction et de l'expérience identitaires des étudiantes immigrantes, le deuxième examine les enjeux de santé mentale auxquels font subséquemment face les femmes immigrantes dans le système d'éducation aux adultes de langue anglaise au Québec, et le troisième aborde les protocoles et l'évaluation. Des photographies personnelles et d'œuvres d'art ayant contribué à l'autoethnographie dans son ensemble ont été insérées à divers points tout au long du mémoire. Le quatrième chapitre revient sur les sujets abordés dans cette thèse et en poursuit la discussion, examine les limites de la présente étude et offre une réflexion sur l'avenir de l'éducation au Québec. Dans son ensemble, mon travail de recherche cherche à encourager la recherche et la discussion au sujet de l'expérience des femmes immigrantes dans le système d'éducation québécois, et tout particulièrement dans le système d'éducation aux adultes.

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Thierry Mugler: *Robot Woman* (2019)

Donigan Cumming: *Untitled* - From the *Le Journal de Harry* Series (1994)

Peter Blume : *The Eternal City* (1934-37)

Wolf Vostell, *B52 Lipstick Bomber* (1968)

Kent Monkman: *The Scream* (2017)

Abbreviations

(ACCESS)	Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State
(CEFR)	Common European Framework of Reference for Language
(COE)	Council of Europe
(EA)	Educational Assistant
(EFL)	English Foreign Language
(ELA)	English Language Arts
(FSL)	French as a Second Language
(ELD)	English Language Development
(ELD)	Extended Learning Programs
(EL)	English Learners
(ELL)	English Language Learner
(ELP)	English Language Proficiency
(ELPA21)	English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century
(EMSB)	English Montreal School Board
(ESL)	English as a Second Language
(ESOL)	English for speakers of other languages
(EU)	European Union
(QEP)	Quebec Education Plan
(LTEL)	Long term English learners
(OHIP)	Ontario Health Insurance Plan
(RAMQ)	Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec
(SIS)	Social Integration Services
(W-APT)	Wida ACCESS Placement Test
(WIDA)	World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment

Glossary of Various Programs

(CCBE) Common Core Basic English

- In Adult Education there are two programs for students to choose. CCBE is the first program available to new students. This program is for new immigrants who are looking to learn English as a second language (ESL) or French as a second language (French). For students who want to pursue academic studies this is considered the pre-academic program. Otherwise it is merely a language program.

(CLIC) Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada

- CLIC is a government funded program to help immigrants acquire the basic language skills they need. It is a free program that is often offered by community centers or school boards.

(DBE) Diversified Basic Education

- This is the second program available to students in Adult Education. DBE is the academic program that mirrors the high school program in the youth sector of Quebec education. Students who enter this program are seeking to obtain their high school degree in Quebec and likely pursue further studies in college or university. This program differs from the Youth Stream as each course condenses ten months of teaching in the youth sector into three months in the adult sector.

(LINC) Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada

- LINC is Ontario's government funded program that offers free language courses to adult learners.

(RESO) Regroupement économique et social du Sud-Ouest

- RESO is a program that works with employment Quebec to offer financial assistance to students in Adult Education who qualify for assistance. It is a program that incentivizes students to complete their high school degree or vocational program by subsidizing a portion of their expenses to allow them to return to school. In exchange students agree to a contract of terms: attend school every day and complete it within a certain time frame.

(SIS) Social Integration Services

- SIS is a program offered in Adult Education in the EMSB tailored towards students with exceptional needs. It is an adult special needs program that aids students in developing life skills for success such as: culinary, home skills, sanitation, arts, and regular academic subjects.

Prologue

Teaching female immigrant students in Adult Education illuminates many of the day-to-day realities and struggles that are faced in Quebec education particularly in the context of social inequalities. When I started this thesis project I planned to conduct a study in which I would work with female immigrant students to bring their stories and experiences to light. The medium I intended to use was photovoice. Using photovoice allows for researchers and participants to, “tackle[] the power inequalities that create crises and sustain poverty and injustices through the suppression of marginalized voices...[By] adopting this strategy...[researchers can generally] deep[en] committ[ment] to improving the lives of people with whom they work...[and study]” (Prosser, 2011, p.484). However, as a result of the recent COVID-19 outbreak and the closure of schools I realized that I would no longer be able to work directly with students. However, I also realized that autoethnographic memory-work approaches based on my own experiences working with female immigrant students could also provide a critical entry point.

Autoethnography allowed for me to utilize the observations and experiences I have had working with female immigrant students to achieve the original goal of my study; illuminate day-to-day realities for female immigrant students in Quebec Adult Education. To this end, “autoethnographic stories...[provide] artistic and analytic demonstrations of how we come to know, name, and interpret personal and cultural experience. With autoethnography, we use our experience to engage ourselves, others, culture(s), politics and social research” (Adams, Holman Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p.1). Conducting an autoethnographic study – using the memory-work -- allowed me to explore the avenues of Quebec education that often go unexamined. To do this I produced three memory-work episodes that highlight different observations and experiences of female immigrant students from my point of view. In keeping with my interest in the visual I work with personal photographs and descriptions of photographs of artwork as part of each memory episode.

The COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing and unpredictable. As I was writing this thesis many different movements have taken a prominent role globally creating more focus on citizens becoming active members of society who apply a critical lens to their day-to-day lives. It is my

hope that this thesis allows for a critical lens to be applied to Adult Education and female immigrant experiences in education.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Introduction

In this study I investigate female immigrant experiences in academic Adult Education in Montreal, Quebec. This research is grounded in autoethnography as a “a style of autobiographical writing and qualitative research that explores an individual’s unique experiences in relationship to social and cultural institutions” (Custer, 2014 in Baker, 2020, p.28). My intention is to “investigate an educational phenomenon that is relevant to me and others who are teachers” (Madondo, 2014, pp.28-29). Through autoethnography I use a critical lens, analyzing my observations of experiences that young immigrant women have in Adult Education in Quebec. The methodology I use is self-reflexive memory-work to create episodes of issues that I have encountered during my time teaching in the English Montreal School Board, in Quebec. Autoethnography will allow me to use personal experiences to, “write myself in time, in space, and in place...to belong to something bigger than myself” (Blinne, 2010, 189 in Baker, 2020, p.28).

Memory-work dates back to feminist research conducted in the 1980’s in Germany. Frigga Haug is credited for early memory-work in which she developed a “step-by-step research method” (Haug, 1987 in Pithouse-Morgan & Van Laren, 2015, p.83). Over time researchers have evolved the foundation presented by Haug to “use memory-work in diverse ways to explore the social meanings of personal and collective memories in relation to a variety of research topics” (Pithouse-Morgan & Van Laren, 2015, p.83). Memory-work autoethnography is a method that, “Mitchell and Weber (1998, 1999) [developed and was] later extended by Samaras (2011)” (Pithouse-Morgan & Van Laren, 2015, p.83).

As a teacher -- in my first five years of teaching -- I use self-reflexive memory-work to examine the social and individual contexts of my classroom in academic Adult Education. First I am using the social level by recording episodes of experiences and observations made between myself and my students, between my students, and in the academic Adult Education classroom of the EMSB. Secondly, I am applying a critical lens to analyze these experiences bringing to light phenomena that exist in academic Adult Education for female immigrant students. The purpose of doing this through self-reflexive memory-work is, as “Haug (2008) explains, [to]

push...[myself and peers] to confront challenging, reflexive questions about our past with the aim of making future change possible” (Pithouse-Morgan & Van Laren, 2015, p.83).

A challenge of doing self-reflexive memory-work is ensuring that one takes the necessary time to record episodes and revisit these episodes ensuring that I am providing as much detail and accuracy as I can recollect. Haug (N.D) clarifies that, “our self-image is a part of our daily ability to act, it can also hinder expansion and continued learning”, she challenges the “write[r]...to write in as much detail as possible... [ensuring that they do] not censor or leave...anything [out], but, rather note everything that exists in the remembered scene[s]” (Haug, ND, p.4). At the same time, Laboskey (cited in Malondo, 2014) notes:

‘the assumption is that the accuracy of our memories does not matter: whatever shape they take, they influence the construction of our identities, our current thinking, and our future behaviour. Therefore, if we begin to access and interrogate those memories, we can have more control over them and their impact on our teaching. (p.31)

Ultimately, I follow Haug’s call for researchers to write memories in as much detail as possible while also considering Laboskey’s note that by doing this work I will be allowing myself to grow as an educator. In this way, as Malondo (2014) observes “memory-work has the advantage of assisting the individual to tap into the past because everything recalled can be used for self-development” (p.15).

When I began teaching I did so in something called the Public Youth Sector of the EMSB in Quebec. The Public Youth Sector is a mainstream, government funded public secondary school that is mandated for all students to attend until they are sixteen years of age. However, in Quebec there is also the “Alternative Stream” of the Public Youth Sector, which is another avenue consisting of a number of schools composed of students who have been removed from the mainstream education system due to -- for the most part -- behavioral difficulties. It is done under the rationale that in the Alternative Stream the classes are smaller and the students will receive more one-on-one attention.

Soon after teaching in both the mainstream and alternative stream, I moved into the Private Youth Sector of Montreal. Similar to the Public Sector it is again the same mandated curriculum for students until the age of sixteen, except that the Private School sector has a tuition

fee for the parents and generally subsequent perks such as smaller class sizes, additional assistance outside of school hours, advanced material beyond the students' grade level to challenge them if appropriate, specific time tables to fit the students' competitive sports training, and more extra-curricular options, to name a few.

Half way through my second year of teaching I transitioned into teaching in Adult Education. I realized then that the term 'adult' could be misleading as the students' age can range anywhere from 16 years old (the same age as in the Youth Sector) and upwards. Many of the students find themselves in the academic Adult Education sector as a loophole around Bill 101. Bill 101 refers to the French Language Law stipulating that you must have a parent who attended English school in Canada in order to attend English school yourself. Some students come from the Youth Sector searching for a second chance and many of them are immigrants trying to create a better life for themselves. For students from the Youth Sector and new immigrant students, they enter a new transitional phase in their academic journey -- a move from what they know into an unknown realm of academia. Resultantly, student identity becomes influx as they negotiate the old, new and anticipated elements in their lives. These students helped me to realize that, "identity is a construct that is both complex and multifaceted and can fluctuate and shift" (Woitek, 2020, p.59). As I marvel at their different stories and experiences it became clear to me that there was a lot of ambiguity around academic Adult Education in Quebec as not a lot of research has been conducted in this area. Female students -- in particular -- seem to carry a large burden as they try to harmonize a variety of external and internal expectations, all the while seeking success in their new environment. Narrowing to female immigrant students, it is often the case that they enter the country through another immigrant -- generally male -- sponsorship, leaving them in a more precarious and vulnerable position to integrate into a new society (Lacroix *et al.* 2017, p.435). It is because of my experiences with female immigrants in academic Adult Education in particular that I was inspired to write a thesis to illuminate some of their realities for academics, policy makers, and teachers in both youth and Adult Education, in Quebec, but with implications for work in this sector in other parts of Canada and across the globe. More than anything, however, I also recognize that I as a teacher

could deepen an understanding of my own teaching if I and others had a better grasp of the realities of these students.

Kirsten Woitek (2020) states that, “the teacher’s ability to understand and empathize with the students directly affects a student’s sense of belonging in an academic setting, and it is through studies on teacher identity that this understanding can be explored” (p.59). Given that there is little research done in this area of Quebec education, I believe that a self-reflexive study into realities of Adult Education is important. By analyzing the latent layers of my memory-work episodes, I can motivate changes in Adult Education or aid future teachers entering Adult Education. James Bernauer (2020) finds that it is important to acknowledge subjectivity in research stating that, “‘subjectivity and self-reflection are integral to academic writing in education and the social sciences...honest appraisal[s] of how we live and learn will readily reveal our use of both tacit and propositional knowledge’ (Guba, 1981; Polanyi, 1958 in Bernauer, 2020, p.17). Using self-reflexive memory-work episodes will allow me to evaluate how I approach teaching, as well as, highlighting female immigrant lived experiences with learning in the academic Adult Education classroom. I believe that autoethnographic research is beneficial to academic Adult Education because it “is a way to gain an understanding of one’s self and enables teachers to apply critical lens to their professional values” (Samaras, 2011 in Woitek, 2020, p.60).

Woitek (2020) cites research conducted in 2017 in North Carolina, USA involving teachers’ experiences working with immigrants. The study found that teachers had a strong interest in their immigrant students’ academic success and demonstrated empathy towards their students. However, ultimately these teachers were unable to properly assist or advocate for their students as they felt limited by the school curriculum and surrounding environment (Woitek, 2020, pp.59-60). This study, “demonstrated how teacher identity affects teacher agency that, in turn, contributes to immigrant students’ academic and social experiences in the classroom” (Woitek, 2020, pp.59-60). This study further solidified my belief that an autoethnography of my experiences in Adult Education in Quebec would be beneficial as the aforementioned study was conducted with students in the Youth Sector of high school and in the USA. I want to contribute to research about education in Quebec, more particularly Adult Education. I believe that as

Woiteck states self-awareness as a teacher can help to improve immigrant experiences and success in academic Adult Education.

A study I found by Jacqueline Celemencki (2020) further inspired me. She conducted research into Black Quebec youth and their experiences with racism in Youth Education. She highlights instances of oppression linking to racism in Quebec education finding that, “racism and prejudice remain persistent and pervasive problems at school (Livingstone in Torczyner, 2010)” (Celemencki, 2020, p.17). Though her research is done in the youth sector of Quebec education, much of what she writes aligns with conversations that I have had with past students in Adult Education. Her work further demonstrates that there is a need for more research to be conducted in Quebec education, Adult Education, and with female immigrants in particular.

I was drawn to this type of work during the various courses I took during the Masters program in the Department of Integrated Studies at McGill. For example, I created this collage in one of the courses. Originally, this photo was meant to represent the increase in technology used in the classroom, particularly the rise of cellphone use with students. However, upon looking at it with a new lens as I was writing this thesis, I find the large writing in this image of “we see you differently” aligns with race as the images that are posted in social media are created to perpetuate some internal view that we want the world to see, however, how the world interprets these curated photos is not necessarily the same way we intend. This mirrors the earlier discussed racialization that immigrants experience in their day-to-day lives between internal and external ascriptions. The middle of the collage was meant to be a reimagined cell phone with the screen showing a skeleton of a person trying to escape the screen. In this case I think the skeleton can represent all of humanity regardless of origin, trying to find a way to fit in. I used the caption “#nofilter” because in a way everyone is performing in the world, using filters to create an image that protects their insecurities while also adhering to a socially constructed concept of beauty.



Figure 1. Inconsistencies in Vision

Moreover, narrowing the research to specifically examine female immigrants in academic Adult Education in Quebec allowed for me to highlight some of the observations and experiences I have had with students. My interest is in improving my own teaching in relation to addressing the challenges of students' experiences, especially the experiences of female immigrant students.

Researching Immigrant Experiences

Canada has upheld, "one of the highest per capita immigration rates in the world" for the past decade (Ellyson, 2016, p.134). Moreover, Canada bolsters one, "of the most highly educated populations in the world, with 80% of its working-age citizens having completed secondary school and a large proportion going on to do post-secondary degrees" (Ghosh, 2004, p.548). In 1971 Canada passed the 'Canadian Multiculturalism Act', which encouraged immigration to everyone regardless of birth country (Ellyson, 2016, p.140). The "Canadian constitution allocat[es] education as a provincial jurisdiction and immigration as a shared jurisdiction between the federal and provincial governments" (Ellyson 2016, p.135). Immigration and education are divided amongst the legislative powers with immigration designated to the federal government and education alongside municipal affairs allocated to provincial powers (Ellyson, 2016, p.140). In 1977 Bill 101 took effect in Quebec with the objectives of: "(1)...halt[ing] the assimilation of French speakers to English; (2) ensur[ing] the socioeconomic predominance of the francophone majority; and (3) [the] promot[ion and] the assertion of the French fact" (Ellyson, 2016, p.143). As a result, immigrants no longer have the choice of their language of instruction for education in Quebec. All the while, Quebec holds

one of the highest provincial rates of illiteracy in Canada. An estimated 1.5 million Quebecers have difficulty reading, writing, and using texts and math in work or everyday life...Statistics Canada estimates that more than 1.5 million Quebecers aged fifteen to sixty-four do not have a diploma (Hrimech, 2009, p.39).

Correspondingly, the drop-out rate in Quebec remains significantly high which aligns with "illiteracy unemployment and the lack of social integration" (Hrimech, 2009, p.46).

Beyond immigrant education in Quebec, immigrants also experience inequalities and discrimination as a result of national and ethnic origin in Quebec and other areas of Canada (Lacroix, Gagnon, & Lortie, 2017, p.436). In 1985,

the Equality Rights in Section 15 of the Charter...became law...gaurntee[ing] the individual's protection against overt forms of discrimination...Section 15(1) of the Charter prohibits discrimination based on gender and race, and Section 28 guarantees gender equality. Section 15(2) permits the establishment of affirmative action programmes for women, even if they contravene Section 15(1). (Ghosh, 2004, p.552)

As noted earlier, women who immigrate to Canada generally do so as a dependent of another immigrant, often a male. As a result, they are often “relegated to the status of economic dependency, obscuring both their involvement in the decision-making process...and participation in the economic sphere (Lacroix *et al.* 2017, p.435). As such more attention is needed in regard to female immigrant experiences integrating into Canadian society.

Protocols Surrounding ESL Measures in the Youth English Stream of Quebec Education for Immigrant Youth.

Quebec became a unilingual French Province in 1977 when Camille Laurin created Bill 101: the Charter of the French Language (Behiels & Hudon, 2015). Bill 101 determines whether a student may attend school in English or French instruction. The purpose of the bill was to “protect the current status of French in the Education system, [while] incorporat[ing] non-English speaking immigrants into the French linguistic fold”(Alison d’Anglejan, 1984). There are three conditions that the government stipulates determine who is allowed to attend English schools in Quebec:

1. Children who are residing in Quebec permanently and who qualify for a certificate of eligibility of instruction in English.
2. Children who are residing in Quebec permanently and who are entitled to receive instruction in English under a special authorization.
3. Children who are living in Quebec temporarily and who qualify for a temporary authorization to receive instruction in English. (Government Canada Education, 2018)

Looking at these three criteria I notice the consistent use of the following words: qualify, eligible, entitled, and authorization. These words seem intentionally ambiguous allowing for case-by-case decisions to be made. During one of my courses in the Masters program I focused

my final project on Bill 101, allowing me the opportunity to actually read the bill. After reading and examining the Bill I noticed there are a number of loop-holes, most significantly, “(2) a child whose father or mother is a Canadian citizen and who has received or is receiving elementary or secondary instruction in English in Canada” may attend English language of instructions schools (Charter of the French Language, N.D, Ch-11 Article 73). This means that if a students’ parents enroll in an Adult Education program in the prior year, their children could potentially automatically qualify for English language of instruction Public School, despite the fact that no one in their home is fully literate in English. Of course I am speculatively drawing conclusions based on analysis of the Bill, but all the while bringing light to the fact that the policy uses ambiguous language and has cases of precedents to allow for parents to decide whether their child attends English or French school.

Marie McAndrew, Genevieve Audet, and Mahsa Bakshaei (2011) published a chapter in Stephan Gervais, John Kirkey, and Robert Rudy (2011) book, *Quebec Questions: Quebec studies for the Twenty-first Century* examining the different immigrant experiences in Quebec Youth Education. When examining protocols across Canada the authors found that in 1969 Quebec, in contrast to the model prevailing in the rest of Canada, which place[d] students lacking host language proficiency directly into regular classes but provide[d] ESL (English as a Second Language) support, Quebec ha[d] opted for a closed ‘welcoming class’ model. (McAndrew *et al.*, 2011, p.306)

This course focused on exposing students to the culture and lifestyle in Quebec for newcomers, while also providing French as a Second Language lessons. After further research it appears that immigrant students in Quebec -- who attend French language of instruction schools --are “provided with essentially two kinds of language support during their school career: (a) an initial, intensive linguistic bath: *accueil, francisation, mesures*; and (b) extra language support after having completed the initial language program: *soutien linguistique*” (Allen, 2004, pp.15-16). The first program ‘*accueil, francisation, mesures*’ is offered in “one-time, ten-month intensive linguistic and socio cultural preparation for the mainstream classes” to primary and secondary school grades (Allen, 2004, p.17). The second language support -- ‘*soutien linguistique*’ -- is designated specifically to provide additional linguistic aid to students who have

entered mainstream French language of instruction education in the previous two years (Allen, 2004, pp.15-16). Ultimately, when evaluating how newcomers to Canada perform academically “in the Quebec education system... immigrant-origin students do not... face a high risk of failure” (Bakhshaei, 2016, para.2).

When looking at the protocols in place for second language learning the Quebec Education Program (QEP) has outlined different curriculum expectations for students studying English as a second language (ESL), French as a second language (FSL) and Spanish as a third language (Government du Quebec, 2020). Moreover, the Canadian Government offers online assistance in the form of (1) “Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC)” and (2) “Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada (CLIC)” (Citizenship Canada, 2018, para.1). Similarly, Quebec offers support programs through the government for minimal cost. However, while the ESL program outline is present in the QEP it does not seem to have a corresponding course code in English Adult Education in the EMSB.

Racialization of Black Youth in Montreal Schools. The experiences of immigrant students are also linked to race. When examining matters of *race* it seems necessary to first define the term; “Race is a word used to both depict and distinguish individuals and groups of people as minorities, or *other[s]*, based on so-called biological distinctions” (Celemencki, 2020, p.20). James Torczyner and Sharon Springer (2001) published the book, *The Evolution of the Black Community in Montreal: Change and Challenge* which brings to light realities of Black Youth and adults in Montreal. The two authors find that,

the whole Black community...is marginalized by a Quebec culture with which it doesn't identify, in contrast to the other ethnic groups which carve out a place for themselves -- for example, the Italians with their neighbourhoods, their banks and their institutions. Blacks have no 'representation' and are the least socio-economically advanced minority group. (Torczyner & Springer, 2001, p.79)

Considering this statement juxtaposed with major cities across North America, there does seem to be a trend in terms of boroughs or established neighbourhoods. It seems that every major city has a 'Little Italy', 'Chinatown' and 'Little India'. However, these other ethnicities which make

up large portions of the immigrant population, in these same cities have not been able to establish their own 'hub'.

When looking specifically at how Black Youth experience life in school / society in Montreal, Torczyner and Springer (2001) state that,

growing up Black in Quebec is very hard. In the beginning, you try to forget your Black identity. But the hard reality of being Black soon catches up with you. At school, you have to be tough to survive. You have to struggle constantly against stereotyping and prejudice. If you're a boy, you become 'macho' much faster than White boys, developing more resourcefulness and a greater sense of initiative. If you're a girl, you mature much faster than White girls because of the countless obstacles strewn in your path and the general lack of respect for you. (p.79)

Given that Montreal is a large multicultural city in Canada and that this study was conducted in the twenty-first century, the results have been shocking. Looking beyond Black Youth experiences in Montreal education, Torczyner and Springer (2001) highlight astonishing statistics about the reality of life for many Montreal citizens. When evaluating overall income the two authors found that "the average Black income from all sources was one third less than the average income for all Montrealers" (Torczyner & Springer, 2001, p.45). Narrowing in on Black women, the Torczyner and Springer (2001) found that, "Black women lag far behind Black men and all Montreal women in terms of levels of educational attainment. 37% of Black women have not completed high school and this compares with 31% of Black men and 33% of all women in Montreal" (p.42). Contrasted with Mohammed Hrimch's (2009) statement that, "an estimated 1.5 million Quebecers have difficulty reading, writing, and using texts and math in work or everyday life...Statistics Canada estimates that more than 1.5 million Quebecers aged fifteen to sixty-four do not have a diploma", I am wondering the percentage of this number that are members of Quebec's Black population (Hrimch 2009, p.39)? Torczyner and Springer (2001) also found that Black females make up for twice as many poor Black men in Montreal, finding that in, "... the Montreal population as a whole, women ... represented 55.9% of the poor" around 1996 (Torczyner & Springer, 2001, p.60). When I taught in the Private Youth Stream of Quebec education, the majority of my class was Black. The adolescent students that were present

in my High School classroom, and the corresponding Elementary School students all came from affluent families who were able to afford a Private Education. Nevertheless, they seemed to bear insight into some of the realities Black Youth who may suffer from financial hardship face. Given that the statistics presented by Torczyner and Springer (2001) generally reflect Black members of Montreal who occupy the poverty line, I am even more concerned for the racialization of Black Youth in Montreal education.

In carrying out this review of relevant research, I began to consider events that had transpired while I was teaching in the Youth and Adult stream of education in Montreal. Reviewing issues that were in the Youth and Adult Stream of Quebec Education allowed for me to re-evaluate experiences to create a larger appreciation for situations regarding education in different provinces in Canada, as well as, the prevalence of issues locally. By “studying one’s own practice, knowledge, and values...[are] inevitably linked to questions of change: What kinds of changes are needed in specific contexts?” (Mitchell, Weber, & Pithouse-Morgan, 2009, pp.119-120). While the focus of my research is not the Youth Stream of Quebec Education, I felt it was important to highlight some of the common trends that may link through Youth and Adult Education in Montreal’s education systems.

Racialization.

With consideration to immigrant students in the Adult Education academic classroom, this section overviews roles of racialization in student outcomes. It is not a new concept that, schools (and school personnel) serve as a source of racial information, a location for interracial interaction, and a means of both affirming and challenging previous racial attitudes and understandings...schools are involved in framing ideas about race and are at the center of many struggles around racial equity. (Lewis, 2003, p.284)

As a white teacher I am continuously trying to become more knowledgeable about race and racial struggles in different contexts, so that I may be consistently improving how I lead dialogue in the classroom and challenge inequalities. For the most part, Adult Education classrooms are predominantly made up of an immigrant population, demanding more attention for how environments are cultivated and the safe space that will foster growth for all students.

I have looked at race and identity, in this section it is important to “treat[] race...[not] only as...[it is commonly found in research as] a variable used to partially explain variance in a range of social outcomes (e.g., income, health, incarceration rates) but...[also with] regard for the actual racialization process” (Lewis, 2003, p.285). Interestingly, most of the research concerning racialization in schools is completed at the high school level, but again more needs to be done in regard to Adult Education, especially given the diverse and immigrant heavy nature of Adult Education juxtaposed with the high school counterparts. Recently, in Montreal an article was published citing an instance of racism concerning a yearbook photo denoting “most likely to become a criminal” corresponding with a student of colour. However, when the student spoke of their school experience they commented “there aren't many students of colour in the school, and it hasn't always been easy” (Olson, 2020, para.21). Obviously, student experiences in secondary school are important and need to be researched, however, there is a large difference between the composition of an Adult Education classroom in this respect. While this students’ experience was one of solitude, in Adult Education racialization has to occur in some divergent ways based on the majority immigrant population that exists. Nevertheless, when we speak of racialization we are looking at

the assignment of bodies to racial categories (assigning identities to people and groups) and the association of symbols, attributes, qualities, and other meanings with those categories (which then are understood to belong to those bodies in a primordial or natural way). (Lewis, 2003, p.286)

Furthermore, there is a difference between how racialization occurs internally for a student verses the lived projected interpretation of teachers and peers. Edward Fergus (2017) conducted a study specifically looking at how Mexican students experience racialization in mostly white schools in America. He found that within “the racial/ethnic identity conversation with the [participating] students was the interplay between how they identified themselves and how they perceived others situated their racial/ethnic identity” (Fergus, 2017, p.468). Moreover, Amanda Lewis (2003) elaborates in her article *Everyday race-making: navigating racial boundaries in schools* that “all adults and children must regularly contend with others’ racial ascriptions—external racial identifications that may or may not match up with individuals’ own

self-identifications” (p.288). However, it is important to understand “that external racial ascriptions in many ways matter as much as one’s self-identification, if not more” (Lewis, 2003 , p.288). The innermost resounding concern for students in Fergus’ (2017) study was the feeling that peers and school staff made assumptions of student heritage based on racialization that largely upset the students and made them feel isolated or inadequate. The reality is that “self-identifications...[is] always occurring in interaction with an external world that assigns identities” (Lewis, 2003, p.289). The intersection of these two experiences can largely determine how a student experiences education.

Race as performance. For some immigrant students, they may adopt the idea of ‘fake it until you make it’ in which they try to perform the way that they perceive their environment to demand of them, or whatever way they view as the road to success. Race is comparable to gender as, “race is the product of social doings. And, similar to gender, doing race is unavoidable in societies such as ours, where racial meaning and categories are relevant and enforced and where racial differences are naturalized”(Butler, 1990; Goffman, 1977; in Lewis, 2003, p.292). It seems this is especially true in Adult Education as immigrant students negotiate their identity, family responsibilities, new languages, and academic expectations in a vacuum that offers little in the way of extra assistance but demands the same results of everyone.

Returning to Fergus’ (2016) study using Mexican student experiences integrating into secondary schools in the United states, his research “suggests racial/ethnic minority students develop dispositions about school and opportunity based on how they experience racialization”(p.461). He draws on MacLeod’s (1995) concept of ‘achievement ideology’ conveying that some,

students...maintain an achievement ideology belief that everyone can make it because the educational system is structured in such a way that if an individual puts forth effort and works hard in school, he or she will be able to reap benefits that result in success.

(Fergus, 2017, p.474)

However, the reality for immigrant students is that sometimes the resources and language necessary to find success is not available. This is a difficult reality, especially for female immigrants who find themselves being pulled in many directions, yet still find the time to

dedicate considerable time to their studies. In these instances where the ‘achievement ideology’ -- which has been largely contested -- falls short of their reality the next conclusion is that the system is not developed with their needs in mind. In the case of Fergus’ (2016) study the participants cited,

the persistence of inequality as involving two conditions (a) low-income people and minorities need to rely on individual attributes to ‘make it’ and (b) White and wealthy people ‘make it’ based on institutional systems of mobility, such as inheritance, connections with other wealthy individuals, and familial history of college attendance. (p.475)

The clientele in Adult Education largely vary between centers and it is often a reality that students come from minority, poverty, or families where they are not supported and no one has attended a post-secondary institution. As a result the female immigrant students in Adult Education may connect more closely with Fergus’ (2016) first condition when considering persistent inequality. The participants later explained understanding that

from their perspective, low-income and racial/ethnic minority individuals not only have to exert individual effort and demonstrate hard work and goal setting in school but also have to contend with structural and cultural conditions that limit their chances of ‘making it’. (Fergus, 2017, p.476)

This perspective holds true to Adult Education where immigrants are expected to integrate and critically engage with material that may not immediately make sense with cultural realities in their home country. For example, nuances relevant to advertisements or what is viewed as an act of sexism in North America may be inconsistent with their experiences prior to entering Canada. A students’ ability to engage and critically analyze these instances is something that may leave these students feeling that they are being pressured to conform to a way of thinking in order to find the success they seek. Conversely, perhaps there is a way to cover the same topics across multiple disciplines to allow for students to find a more unified integration process.

Students’ in Fergus’ (2017) study also outlined how they perceived teachers in regard to racialization finding that their experiences found “White teachers perceiving minority students as stupid...stat[ing] that [they felt]... supported by racial/ethnic minority teachers, ‘because they

always trying to help like us minority people out and whatever problem we have can just got straight to them” (Fergus, 2017, p.481). This is an interesting observation that could be subjective to the specific participating students but also seems logical in the sense that it is generally easier to connect with people who share similar experiences. It has been my experience that Adult Education consists of a variety of educators who can connect with students based on different shared experiences, such as: different minority groups, fellow immigrants, and even some who were once students in Adult Education that have evolved into teachers in Adult Education.

When looking at racialization in schools there is a need to separate ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ as “by conflating ‘race’ with ‘ethnicity’ ...immigration scholars fail to acknowledge” the diverse problems that could be specific to given races in specific regions of the world (Richards, 2017, p.127). Race primarily concerns itself with projected ascriptions based on physical appearance, whereas ethnicity focuses on social and cultural traditions. Both of which can take on different forms within the context of the school and classroom discussion. As cited multiple times,

the growing population of immigrant youth also means that educational institutions will continue to play an important role in socializing them into the existing racial hierarchy and/or will become sites where these lessons are both contested and transformed.

(Richards, 2017, p.137)

For this reason it is increasingly important for educational institutions at all levels to become properly equipped with necessary tools and also versed on realities of racialization to help progress in positive ways to improve student experiences. It is crucial to understand that

language is not merely a neutral mode of communication but a way of telling who a person is, where they are from, and whether they are in some way collectively different.

Not only is language racialized...but language itself racializes. (Lewis, 2003 , p.292)

This is true of immigrants, peers, and employees involved in education at all levels. It is important to understand the strength of language and continuously be learning new ways to approach instances of racialization to help dismantle them and allow education to evolve allowing for immigrants to positively experience academia.

Research Question

Working as a teacher with “at risk” female students in the DBE classroom of Adult Education has allowed me to become aware of some of the struggles they face immigrating to Canada, more specifically Quebec. Many of these students have immigrated as refugees in search of opportunities and a better life in Canada, only to fall victim to verbal/ situational discrimination and policies that hinder their ability to develop their potential. During oral exams, when students are asked to connect with the provided text, multiple female students have often articulated the obstacles they have faced in reconciling life in their home of origin with Quebec society, alongside also negotiating their expectations with the reality of being a female immigrant in Quebec. One instance of this is when a student connected to a text dealing with social responsibility / instances of oppression. The student responded by outlining the treatment she received in her first week in Montreal: Suffering a variety of discriminatory words with particular emphasis of her as an ‘other’ kind of human and ‘your kind of people’ to relegate her to the same stereotypes perpetuated in society. All the while, she was also facing this discrimination in a French school board that she had not anticipated having to attend prior to arriving in Canada.

It is experiences like this one which frame my study. I pose the following research question:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What can I learn as a teacher from my past experiences and observations of female immigrant students in the DBE Adult Education classroom? Are there recurring themes that emerge?

Overview of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into four chapters. In this first chapter I have broadly mapped out the purpose and use of autoethnography when exploring experiences and observations in Quebec Adult Education. Moreover, I have situated myself in the research explaining the journey that has led to this thesis. Finally, I close chapter one clarifying the research question that I have sought to answer in this thesis.

Chapter Two focuses on the methodological framework for this study. I provide an overview of autoethnography, the procedures used, the research context, data generation in

memory episodes and interpretations/analysis of observations /experiences, trustworthiness, and ethical concerns of this thesis.

The third chapter is composed of my three memory episodes. Memory episode one which presents a broad overview of my experiences and observations with female identity formation in the adult stream to highlight the realities for students in Quebec education. Memory episode two seeks to evaluate mental health concerns for female immigrant students in Adult Education. Finally, memory episode three focuses on the procedural realities of Adult Education for female immigrants in the academic, English classroom. The topics that emerge in the analysis portion of memory episode three take me away from female immigrants and towards the general academic student population as they are topics that are applicable contentions for all.

Finally, chapter four concludes the thesis by reflecting on each memory episode, discussing the limitations to this thesis, implications for services for young immigrant female students, implications for teaching / research, the ‘so-what?’ test of this thesis and a discussion reflecting forward.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

In this chapter I lay out the design for an autoethnographic study into the experiences of female immigrant students in English, academic Adult Education. In order to do this I conduct self-reflexive memory-work which I describe in this chapter. I create ‘memory episodes’ that I will revisit multiple times to ensure accuracy and authenticity of the scenes I am drawing upon.

Research Methodology

Qualitative Research. The overarching frame for my study is qualitative research. The purpose of qualitative research is to, “focus[] on human intentions, motivations, emotions, and actions, rather than generating demographic information”(Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.21). Given that my study is examining the observations and experiences I have had with students over the past four years of teaching, qualitative research empowers me to bring to focus day-to-day realities of students in a broad-arc, without necessarily, generating concrete data on these experiences.

I have chosen to outline in as much detail as possible the different methodological approaches that I use in this study to try to create an understanding between the reader and the research I am presenting.

Autoethnography

The primary qualitative method that I use in this study is autoethnography as “it offers nuanced, complex, and specific knowledge about particular lives, experiences and relationships rather than general information about large groups of people” (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.21). In so doing it “invokes the self (auto), culture (ethno), and writing (graphy)” (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.46). The field of autoethnography and autoethnographic practice is a burgeoning one in areas such as Education, Health and Social Work. Caroline Ellis’ groundbreaking book on artful practice and autoethnography *The Ethnographic I* (Ellis, 2004) paved the way for numerous publications mapping out critical issues related to theory, method, and ethics (see for example Chang, 2016). Applications to teaching have been particularly rich, ranging from Daisy Pillay, Inbanathan Naicker, and Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan’s (2016) *Academic Autoethnographies*

Inside teaching in higher education, to classroom teaching in Brian Benoit's (2016) dissertation *Understanding the teacher self: learning through critical autoethnography*.

Building on these various writings I conduct memory-work into my lived experiences with students. In doing this I am able to cover a range of recurring events that may lend themselves to critiquing and developing elements of Quebec and Adult Education that are not currently present in academic discourse. This methodology enables me to "offer complex, insider accounts of sense-making and show how/why particular experiences are challenging, important, and/or transformative" (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.27). Quebec Adult Education is an important area of education that is underrepresented in much of pedagogical discourses. By presenting the experiences that I have had with students I am able to demonstrate how Quebec Adult Education is both positively and negatively transformative for students. My memory-work utilizes "reflexivity to scrutinize my experiences of self/culture, to illustrate how the[se]...experiences'...can turn 'back to signify...[the] lived world' with and for readers" (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.30). In the case of Adult Education,

autoethnography is a method that affords an insider's perspective on the practices, meanings, and interpretations of cultural phenomenon[a]/experiences...insider knowledge can be used to call attention to the complexities of commonly held, taken-for-granted assumptions about these cultural phenomena. (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.31)

Autoethnography "allows researchers to reclaim voice by adding nuanced personal perspectives to and filling experiential 'gaps' in existing research" (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.41). By utilizing autoethnography I hope to bring to light some areas of contention to open discourse with the purpose of creating solutions for all areas of education. My intention is to "try to contribute to, extend, and/or critique existing research and theoretical conversations" about structures of Quebec education (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.37). In doing so I hope to

break[] the silence around understudied, hidden, and sensitive topics...[to] create a textual space for talking back to neglected cultural experiences and, simultaneously, offer account[s] that allow others to 'bear witness' to these experiences. (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.41)

The use of personal photographs/ and artworks in autoethnography. Throughout my early teaching years I have attended a variety of art exhibits -- both with students on field trips and independently on vacations. The photographs of artwork that I have taken during field trips was done with the purpose of facilitating later conversations in class about the exhibit. Similarly, photographs of artwork that I have taken during personal vacations have been done with the intent of intertwining these images into slideshows to cultivate meaningful conversations about socially relevant content that can also connect with different curricular outcomes. To this end I have intermixed personal photographs and descriptions of photographs of artwork from different exhibits I have attended into each memory episode (fieldwork), with captions, and brief discussions of the meaning of each photograph in relation to the topics discussed in the specific episode. To adhere to copyright guidelines I have described the images that are referencing professional artistic works. I use descriptions of photographs and personal photographs in the memory episodes as photographs that can act “as repositories of memories, reminders of persons, places or events in the past” (Kuhn, 2010, p.303). The photographs I choose to include/describe are photographs that I have taken at different points of my teaching career that upon reflection developed a deeper meaning when juxtaposed with themes that emerged in my memory-work. Photographs “can be approached in various ways: at one extreme, it can be treated simply as ‘evidence’; at the other, it can be interrogated for non-overt/non-obvious meanings, producing ‘counter-memories’: memory-work” (Kuhn, 2010, p.303). While the photos I include/describe are photographs that I have personally taken and chosen for this research it aids in the further discussion of realities for female immigrant students in Quebec education. As Kuhn writes:

photos...can function prosthetically as substitutes for remembering, they...[can be] used...as prompts for performances of memory in private, interactive, collective, and sometimes even public, contexts. The performance or enactment of memory in these instances takes place with (as opposed to in) the photographs. (Kuhn, 2010, p.303)

The photographs and descriptions of photographs I have chosen to integrate into the memory-work allow for the themes that emerge to be examined in a visual manner -- not because of the photograph per se -- rather as a result of the discourse that is developed in the memory

episodes. The images have been scattered throughout the episodes to add an element of further engagement into the topics covered.

Research Context

My research takes place in the academic, English Adult Education classrooms of the English Montreal School Board in Quebec. This research takes the form of an autoethnography, in which I conduct a reflexive self-study of observations and experiences I have had with female immigrant students in the context of a variety of academic classrooms in Montreal.

I have chosen to focus on immigrant experiences because of the increasing number of immigrant students that appear in Adult Education. It has been my experience that immigrants face many obstacles in academic Adult Education -- in the English stream of education in Quebec -- that are confined to discourses in Adult Education centers rather than academic literature. Specifically, my research focuses on female immigrant student experiences because of the large number of obstacles that these students are required to overcome during their journey. As mentioned earlier, these women find themselves negotiating external and internal identity expectations from multiple angles, all the while navigating new academic demands. Academic Adult Education is generally composed of a relatively equal number of male and female immigrants. Narrowing my research to female immigrants is a result of the experiences and observations I have had, as they are more frequently with female immigrants. More importantly, it has been my observation that structures in education are not always built with consideration to the demands of female immigrants in comparison with their male counterparts. This research is positioned to add to the foundation of research in Adult Education in Montreal and also to generate discourse surrounding improvements for female immigrant experiences integrating into education in English Quebec.

In keeping with an autoethnographic approach, I am the primary participant. I revisit my memories of teaching situations over a four year period focusing on my time teaching in Adult Education. My memory-work draws upon experiences of roughly twenty female immigrant students in one of the courses I was teaching over the years. The subjects I had taught range from English Language Arts, History and Citizenship, and Economics. These observations and experiences are limited to students who partook in academic studies -- the DBE program -- as it

is my intent to illuminate different areas of the academic program that generate concerns in regard to female immigrant education experiences. To protect the anonymity of the schools and students no distinctions about time, place, space, or cultural ascription are made. As I wish to discuss female immigrants from Academic, English Adult Education broadly, I have merely shared observations and experiences, utilizing specific incidents. The focus of this research is to critique the academic machine to improve female immigrant experience in adult, English education in Quebec.

Data Generation in Memory Episodes

To create this autoethnography I produced a series of -- what I am calling -- memory episodes. Before I began writing I first outlined -- in point form -- the different jobs I have had and made a list of students and memorable interactions from each job. The memory episodes were emergent based on common themes that appeared across the aforementioned interactions. After creating each episode, I write reflections on the specific episode to highlight issues that were brought up in each episode. Using these reflections I discuss the relevant literature to analyze the episodes and issues that have come to light.

Developing the Episodes. When using autoethnography “the forms an autoethnograph[er] might take are diverse...whether...a more traditional research report or monograph or [a] ...creative form[] such as narrative, poetry, performance, spoken word, song, film, photography, or dance” (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.84). As mentioned earlier, I have chosen to create memory episodes that I subsequently reflect, analyse, and conclude with intermixed photo image(s)/descriptions of photographs. Autoethnography utilizes the process called “accessing the field” which basically “means making your orientation to research and your goals for a project known to...[one’s self] and to others” (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.51). With that in mind I want to clarify that my orientation is to travel back into my memory and recall meaningful interactions and observations I have had with female immigrant students in the DBE classroom of Quebec Adult Education as a teacher. Generally, “field texts are constructed by the researcher usually from observations and/or interviews” (Butler-Kisber, 2018, p.44). In my case, I am solely using recollections from teaching and interacting with students.

Before I began writing my memory episodes I brainstormed the different experiences I had with female immigrants at each Adult Education centre. I then cross referenced the experiences from all the different centres to identify common themes or topics that have been recurring. Finally, I created a proposed schedule for myself in which I outlined the topics I wanted to cover. I did not finitely decide which topics needed to be covered when but allowed it to be more emergent in nature and rearranged as needed for cohesion during the editing process. I have provided the initial outline that I created for myself below in Figure 1.

Episode	Description
1: Family depends on them for Assistance	Students in Adult Education often qualify as ‘at-risk’ students as this is their last chance at a high school education. Traditionally, when the term ‘at-risk’ is used in education it is referring to “...students who are likely to fail at school” (National Centre for Education Statistics, 1992, p.2). It is my understanding that this term was historically created in response to student experiences in their country of origin rather than immigrant academic experiences in their host country. This term seems inconsistent with the experiences I have had with female immigrants in adult education because there is no preconceived reason as to why they cannot find success in academic pursuits. More importantly, they are often incredibly resourceful and responsible as they are -- in some instances -- balancing their studies while: - Mother / Wife - The primary caregiver and translator for their extended family of immigrants. - Seeking to find a loophole to allow for their education back home to be recognized in Quebec.
2: Feelings of inadequacy = panic attacks, comparing with friends back home, isolation	Specifically citing my observations with female immigrant students in the academic adult education classroom, I have noticed a consistent trend that these students suffer feelings of inadequacy about their academic performance leading to: - Panic Attacks - Comparing with Friends from their Homeland / Place of Origin - Isolation
3: Students who are pushed through or manipulate the system landing them in positions where they are not properly equipped to succeed and instances of plagiarism	Exploring experiences and observations of students who were placed in the wrong level of the DBE classroom. Having only spent two years in adult education it has become clear to me that students who do not have a strong understanding of the language of instruction are more likely to find themselves plagiarizing. Specifically looking at memories of: - Placement tests and how they determine the level the student is placed. - Inconsistency of Expectations across Educators. - Inability to comprehend what the term means therefore, leading them to jeopardize their own and their peers' education. - Developing feelings of racial profiling in the education system.

Figure 1: Episode Outline

Each memory episode was “prompted by a topic or experience that ha[d] grabbed hold of me and...I [felt had]...the possibility of teaching me something, or one that will allow me to

connect with the experiences of others” (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.66). This guided my memory-work as it allowed me to return to different classrooms and school environments.

When I began each memory episode I started by travelling back to the school and reimagining the landscape of my classrooms. As I entered my different classrooms I surveyed the room from left to right, recalling the objects in the room, desk placement, and where the students sat. I travelled from student-to-student trying to remember the names and stories that went with each face. Stephen Riggins (1994) discusses the power of evaluating elements of a room in his book *The Socialness of Things: Essays on the Socio-Semiotics of Objects*. In which he finds that “material artifacts which we observe in everyday environments...[are] relevant to most microlevel inquiries” (Riggins, 1994, pp.102-103). This was an interesting reality as I visually travelled around the room in my memory, I noticed different objects that were present in each of my classrooms. These different ‘artifacts’ as Riggins’ refers to them, helped me to return to the various times and places of my teaching career with my different students for a brief time. Once I returned to the specific moments that corresponded with the topics I was engaging, I recorded my experiences as they transpired, trying to create concise memories. I chose to “write using first-person voice or point of view, positioning the researcher as the narrator of the” experiences and observations (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.79). At times -- particularly episode two and three -- I found myself having to give greater foundational information for the different settings and observations. After completing each memory episode, I gave a grace period before returning to what I had written. Upon returning I reviewed the memory episode for validity to try to ensure that I had produced the most accurate and unbiased account of events as possible. All the while recognizing that with autoethnography, I am limited to my own observations and experiences which may affect the way events were seen. Finally, I reflected on the themes that emerged in the given memory episode to begin my interpretations/analysis process.

Reflections / Interpretations / Analysis. The purpose of creating memory episodes was to develop a “form[] of personal writing in which...[I could] explore...[my] experiences with the goal of understanding those experiences” (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.69). After revisiting the memories I tried to “think carefully about...my experience...[and] question, add to, or illuminate aspects of these processes, themes and perspectives” (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.67). Afterwards, I

prepared to analyze the memory episode. When conducting qualitative research, “coding field texts is a small part of what is entailed in implementing...inquiry” (Butler-Kisber, 2018, p.44). Rather than specifically coding in this format, I began “the work of interpretation and analysis by creating themes for the ideas, interactions, and insights that...[I had] generated in the” memory episodes (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.66). To analyze the episodes I reread and reflected upon the events I had discussed, trying to critically engage with each of the different moments. I tried to partake in “introspect[ion] as deeply as I...[could] to create a sense of both an event -- both as it happened then and as I re-experience[d] it now, after time and reflection” (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.66). Afterwards, I separated themes and questions that I had developed during the reflection process. The purpose of “thematizing...[was] to imagine a logic or pattern...[to the] narrative and to explicitly connect personal experience with culture” and realities in the world at present (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.78). From there I conducted research about the topics and questions I had parsed out of the memory episodes. I used the research to try to present a full picture of the topics I was discussing, at times taking a global perspective depending on the content at hand. It was my desire to try to present recent and relevant accounts of how neighbouring areas of the world were tackling similar topics to engage myself and readers in a dialogue overlooking contentions present globally with regard to these topics.

Defining Categories of Autoethnographic Analysis. In my initial brainstorming I allowed for the topics, questions and material that I discussed to be emergent in nature rather than trying to confine myself to a prescribed approach of analysis. When the topics and themes became clear I structured my reflexive research based on the topics that emerged. Adams *et al.*, (2015) present a series of possible categories for autoethnographic analysis. After writing my reflections and analysis of the themes and questions that emerged I considered what categories of autoethnographic analysis I had conducted. Upon review, I have concluded that I have utilized three different categories of autoethnographic analysis: realism, impressionism, and conceptualism.

Realism. The first and most applicable to the work I have done for autoethnographic research is the realist approach;

realist autoethnographers use personal experience as a way into, and/or a means for, describing and understanding cultural experience as fully, complexly, and evocatively as possible...Realist autoethnographers move from story to interpretation...creating texts that separate experience and analysis. (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.86)

In the case of my memory-work this is quite literally what I have done. I developed memory episodes that outline experiences and observations I have made during my time as a teacher. Upon completing these memory episodes, I interpreted and analyzed different themes and questions that had emerged from the topics discussed. My memory episodes are divided as outlined by Adams *et al.*, (2015) from memory-work to analysis. More specifically I use “layered accounts, which juxtapose fragments of experience, memories, introspection, research, theory and other texts. Layered accounts reflect and refract the relationship between personal/cultural experiences and interpretation/ analysis” (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.86). The analysis portion of my episodes sought to provide the most complete image of research as possible. I endeavoured to consider the different areas of the world that could handle similar situations differently to present a full picture of the topics. The element that is disregarded here is the photo images that I have also included in each memory episode.

Impressionism. The second category of autoethnographic analysis that I utilize in my analysis is impressionism. Autoethnographers that utilize impressionism as a form of analysis, are interested in creating an overall experience for readers, focusing as often on everyday subjects as on the epiphanies that shake, test, and change us...impressionist texts take readers into...the fragmented, uncertain, mundane, and mosaic qualities of cultural experiences.(Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.87)

Due to the nature of my research looking at female immigrant experiences in everyday Adult Education, I have an element of impressionism in my analysis. I am describing experiences and observations of events that at times can “shake [or] test” us as teachers and academics (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.87). Moreover, the reality that these instances come from “mundane” everyday experiences from the “mosaic qualities of culture” being the varying immigrant backgrounds that are present in this research -- though not clearly disclosed due to the anonymity of my participants -- lends an element of impressionality to my analysis process. More pointedly, I

make use of “narratives of space and place, which show how spaces and places infuse, inform, and shape our identities and experiences” (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.87). By overviewing experiences and observations over the course of multiple years, age groups, spaces and places I provide instances of lived experiences that have affected my development as a teacher and will hopefully influence readers' approaches to pedagogical reform and attention to Adult Education, as well as, all areas of education.

Conceptualism. The final category of autoethnographic analysis that my thesis utilizes is conceptualism. My research seeks to use the experiences and observed experiences of myself and my students to illuminate realities of female immigrant integration in Quebec Adult, DBE education. As such I use, “personal stories ...[that] become the mechanism for conveying and critiquing cultural experiences, breaking silences, and reclaiming voices” (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.89). Though I do endeavour to allow my memory episodes to be more objective and embody the real life events that transpired, they are still told from a first-person narrative and are subjective to my observations. In that sense they can at times take on the form of personal stories. Nevertheless, the memory episodes do seek to “critique cultural experiences and break silences” (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.89). Finally, the analysis portion of my research is based in a highly reflexive research process to educate myself before bringing concerns and critiques into the thesis. When discussing conceptualism as a autoethnographic analysis method, I more precisely use the “critical autoethnographies, which foreground overt critiques of cultural identities, experiences, practices, and cultural systems, as well as address instances of unfairness or injustice” (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.89). The particular nature of my thesis aims to bring light to the injustices that are present in Adult Education, especially for female immigrants. As such I am engaging in a critical dialogue of the experiences that these women have in Adult Education to highlight areas that I have observed need more attention.

Trustworthiness

By conducting an autoethnography about female immigrant experiences I am “look[ing] to stories to show sense-making, the processes we use to create understanding, and the reflexivity in considering...[my] location in research and representation” (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.103). As mentioned before, I am situated as the teacher in my relationships with my students and in the

observations I present in my memory-work. The goal of my reflexive research is to make sense of my experiences and observations, all the while illuminating realities in Adult Education. The trustworthiness of my research is founded in the desire to

contribut[e] to knowledge...[for the purpose of] extending existing knowledge and research while recognizing that knowledge is both situated and contested. Contributing to knowledge also means valuing the particular, nuanced, complex, and insider insights that autoethnography offers researchers, participants, and readers/audiences. (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.103)

By producing an autoethnography I am facilitating academic discussion about the politics of education and bringing concerns around how the different avenues of education in Quebec are presented and experienced by immigrant students. I am aiming to look at Adult Education over a broad arc to inspire more research to be conducted into improving female immigrant integration experiences. Ultimately, the trustworthiness of my work is -- as mentioned in the section preceding -- limited to by the nature of autoethnography. However, all research is limited in a similar way because as academics and humans “we do not trust. We verify. It is this fact that makes all theory violent. But it also makes all theory a form of faith, because verification -- and particularly verification of value -- is often impossible” (Dauphinee, 2010, p.813). I am contesting that if discussion is developed, even in the most miniscule of manners, it makes the work I have done valuable. The trustworthiness of my research is tied to the purpose I have for bringing these observations and experiences to a more accessible form. It is through “autoethnography...[that we have] the potential to create spaces that challenge the status quo, make our work more interesting, and connect in more meaningful ways to our subject matter and the human beings that inhabit the worlds we write about” (Doty, 2010, p.1050). By presenting my observations and experiences as a young teacher in Quebec education I am enabling my experiences and those of my students to generate the possibility for change. The trustworthiness of my work is indivisibly linked to my desire to authentically represent the observations and experiences I have had to bring about honest and important discussions around female immigrant experiences in Adult Education.

Ethical issues

The idea of conducting an autoethnography concerning female immigrant experiences is an ethical issue in itself as “culture and autoethnography, have not been taken up smoothly or in trouble-free ways” (Vass in Stanley & Vass, 2018, p.1). As white, and Canadian born, the question of “if, and why, I have the right to...represent the words and perspectives of others in my work” is the foundation for concerns (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.12). As an educator it is part of my job to advocate for my students and by presenting my observations of different student experiences I am allowing for anonymity, while also highlighting areas of contention in Quebec education for female immigrant students. When conducting an “autoethnography across cultures...[writing in] first-person points of view...[can seem] paradoxically told...[as it is]from one subject position, in storied form...reveal[ing] many potential difficulties”(Rinehart in Stanley & Vass, 2018, p.114). When presenting experiences and drawing analysis about immigrant experiences, I am utilizing observations that have occurred to a large variety of cultures and people, from a first-person narrative which can be problematic. However, the consistent and recurring themes that emerge regardless of heritage allow for the first-person narrative to bring light to important topics of discussion.

Another question that can challenge the ethics of autoethnography is the following : “can an individual experience be fully and wholly separated from the ideologies that have shaped an individual? How do individual experiences link to collective, shared experiences?” (Johnson, 2018, p.4). This question looks at how my experiences could potentially convolute the accuracy of my observations and memory-work. In considering the ethical implications of my identity and experiences affecting the validity of my work I think that as a teacher and researcher my goals are the same. I am aiming to highlight potential areas of harm and/or areas that could facilitate injustices to improve student academic experiences. It is my experiences that allow for this to happen and through this research I am able to simultaneously engage in professional development. Moreover, through reflexive work I can consider how I handle given situations in my past, through a new lens to critically consider my pedagogical and andragogical approaches moving forward in my career as both teacher and researcher.

Dauphinee (2010) discusses “the need to continue to distinguish between scholarship and storytelling” when overviewing the ethical dilemmas of autoethnography (p.799). She highlights that autoethnography,

affords the possibility of conveying something that we would not otherwise have been able to hear. It does not seek to appropriate...voice...Rather...autoethnography...focus[es] attention on the relationship of the self to the world that is investigated...[it produces a] reflexive awareness of the self as a perpetrator of a certain kind of violence in the course of all writing and all representation - a violence, incidentally, that cannot be avoided.

(Dauphinee, 2010, p.806)

This is a recurring reality that has been discussed in regard to autoethnography. While it presents concern surrounding the role of the writer within the research, it fundamentally creates opportunities for researchers to engage in the world around them, the lives of those who are involved in their research, and culminate into an awareness that can be experienced by the autoethnographer and readers alike. For this reason, “rethinking how we write others may raise a range of epistemological problems in terms of the privileged (or even romanticising) self, but it also forces us to consider the names and lives of those who are mobilised into our publications” (Dauphinee, 2010, p.807). In many ways this is the overarching goal of academic research as a whole; to mobilize voices and experiences of the world with the intent of developing discourse around different subjects and realities of life. In that sense, “if we understand stories and narratives as ‘tools for managing life’, it becomes possible to recognise the similarities in content, if not in form, between different forms” of research (Dauphinee, 2010, p.807).

Returning to the question of validity of the memory episodes that I create, scholarly writing is understood as ‘truth writing’, and the stories associated with this writing often - though not always - operate under the pretence that there is no self behind the choice to write something in a particular way. This is the sleight that allows us to call them intellectual ‘histories’ or ‘narratives’ and not ‘stories’. (Dauphinee, 2010, pp.807-808)

In the same way my memory episodes seek to highlight observations and experiences that I have had surrounding the realities of female immigrant students in education. My memory episodes

are not written as stories but rather narratives of my experiences that I am hoping to mobilize for growth in the field of Quebec education. The question of ethics in doing so is connected to “how we question, how we adjudicate between answers, and how we situate ourselves as writers, witnesses and participants” in our writing (Dauphinee, 2010, p.808). In order to attend to these questions, I engage in reflexive work repeatedly to ensure the most accurate account of events in my memory-work. When conducting my analysis of this memory-work I try to consider all the possible questions or concerns that could emerge in regard to the given topics and themes. Researching, to produce an informed voice to engage with the material. Finally, I have situated myself as both teacher and researcher within this study to ensure the clarity that my memory episodes stem from personal observations and experiences alone; “autoethnography allows me to hear the question that was asked of me. And, in hearing it, it asks me to make answer in some way. It shatters the illusion of expertise - the divide - between the ‘researcher’ and the ‘researched’”(Dauphinee, 2010, p.809). This form of research has enabled me to use my experiences to grow as a researcher and teacher, with the hope of providing insight into areas of Quebec education. Autoethnography “opens up the possibility of making an ethical response to a charge that would normally never be heard” (Dauphinee, 2010, p.810). For this reason the ethical issues which have been highlighted in this section can be reconciled through the contribution this study will make to the evolution of education, pedagogy, and andragogy.

The final ethical concern that I attend to is the use of my own photos in my thesis. Each memory episode features a series of descriptions of photographs that I have taken. While some are in the category of ‘family photographs’ others are descriptions of photographs of art works I have taken at museums across North America. The concern with “visual methods comprise a wide array of approaches and types of media...[that] raise particular challenges for ethics...confidentiality, legal issues...and dissemination of visual data...[that] are problematic for visual researchers” (Prosser, 2011, p.493). In the case of this thesis I have cited the place and creator of each image. The purpose of the photographs and descriptions of photographs is to utilize “visual methods...[that] can reveal important information that text or word-based methods cannot” (Prosser, 2011, p.493). The images I have chosen to include aim to increase the discussion of the different themes that emerge in the memory episodes. Moreover, each memory

episodes' photo image portion begins with a photograph of me at different times in my teaching career to help further account for my role and presence in this autoethnography.

Summary

Chapter two outlines the methodology that I used when creating this thesis. Overviewing the procedure when approaching and conducting autoethnography and narrowing to identify the specific types of autoethnographic analysis that are used in this thesis. This chapter clarified the approach to analysis that was used in each of the forthcoming memory episodes. The ethical issues and trustworthiness of the thesis was given consideration and explained. Moving forward, chapter three delves into three memory episodes that explain and examine female immigrant experiences in academic Adult Education in Quebec.

CHAPTER THREE: MEMORY EPISODES

Introduction

In this chapter I offer three memory episodes. Each one begins with the memory writing itself (as described in the previous chapter). I then go on to develop ‘Reflections’ for each section where I delve into the critical issues related to the memory writing. Intermixed into the episode are photographs and descriptions of photographs of artwork with analysis connecting the images to the topics. Finally, for each I offer concluding thoughts where I consider the overall meaning of the episode. Due to the nature of the topics that emerge, memory episode three’s analysis portion slightly deviates to discuss student experiences more broadly rather than narrowing to solely female immigrant experiences.

Memory Episode # 1: Family Assistance

Focusing on the time I have spent teaching female immigrant students in the DBE classroom of Adult Education, I have observed three commonalities that often emerge in every classroom. Generally, there is always a female student who has recently immigrated or arrived as a refugee in Canada who is trying to pursue academic progress while also maintaining a role as (1) Mother / Wife, (2) Primary Caregiver and Translator and (3) Seeking Quebec / Canadian recognition of Qualifications from their homeland.

Part One Wife/Mother.

Travelling back to my first contract in Adult Education, I remember having a student approach me on my first day to let me know that she would be late for class every morning. She explained to me that she had four children at home and had to bring them to their respective schools / daycare before she could go to school herself. Afterwards she showed me pictures of her children, one of which was only one year old. When she left the class that day I remember thinking how difficult it must be for her to care for all of these children and to be away from her new baby during the day. As the semester progressed she became a fixture of admiration for not only myself but also her fellow students. Many of these students had struggled with academics their whole life but found strength knowing that “if she could raise four children and pass the course, the least they could do is get a passing grade” (Former Student). She never spoke of a partner at school and I did not ask, therefore, I am not sure if she was raising these children alone

or not. Regardless, as I got to know her I learned that she had immigrated to Canada when she was a young adult and had been pursuing full time studies all the while building and caring for her family. When she immigrated to Canada her education back home was not recognized and she was in the process of completing the full high school diploma equivalent ranging from Secondary 1 - 5 in all academic courses. She further explained to me that she had begun her journey in the Common Core Basic English (CCBE) program, learning English before attempting to get her Quebec high school diploma. She had been in this school for years already.

Thinking back I remember asking her if she had a job. I could not imagine that she would have time to work, raise four kids, and pursue full time studies herself. It was at that time that she informed me she was a "RESO" student. Given that this was my first contract in Adult Education, I was not familiar with this acronym and did not know to what she was alluding. Serendipitously, the 'RESO' coordinator came to see me later that day and informed me that a number of my students were being paid by the government to attend school and get their high school diploma. Their attendance was mandatory and if they missed a day I was to report them to the RESO office in the school. Each of these students had been divided among the available counselors and would have to produce a valid note explaining their absence. To this day I do not know how much money RESO students get paid to go to school but understand it is supposed to be enough to ideally supplement a portion of their rent and some groceries. I am also unclear as to how students qualify to be a RESO student, or if there is a time restriction placed on their academic pursuits. Either way it seems like a necessary and reasonable way to help many students work towards achieving their high school diploma in Quebec. I recently ran into this student when I returned to the school for another contract, two years later, and she is now only two courses away from completing her high school diploma.

As I continued teaching in Adult Education I met many more immigrant mothers and students. Most of which were exceedingly young. However, there was one who was older and had two adult children. She had been trying to complete her high school diploma for over a decade, on and off, while raising her children. Unfortunately, she was unable to pass a required exam due to the language used in the exam. Adult, academic education courses are graded 100% based on the final Ministry exams. Meaning that the work these students put in for the three

months they are in the classroom does not necessarily bear any weight on their final grade. In the case of this one student she was struggling to pass a Ministry exam that was heavily dependent on multiple choice questions, which had also been designed to try to trick the students. Teachers even had to take their time when writing this exam because of the difficult language used. I remember her approaching me at the end of the course and informing me that she had reregistered in ESL courses due to her inability to pass this exam.

A third student who comes to mind was a very young woman who had immigrated to Quebec when she was fourteen, she married into an arranged marriage upon arriving and never registered in youth classes. Instead she began her family, giving birth to four children over the next eight years of her life. When I met her, she had children ranging from toddler through adolescent. She seemed very happy with her life choice to have a family first and approached her academics with great detail. She was one of the strongest students I have taught in Adult Education and I do think that is in part because she spent a decade learning about the society before attending academic studies. However, it also meant that her life had been placed on hold. Luckily her husband had a good job and was able to support their family but she did express a feeling of excitement about finally being able to begin pursuing her goals.

Finally, another student who sticks out in my memory is one that I taught more recently. She had immigrated to Canada as a result of an arranged marriage only a year before beginning her studies. Her husband had immigrated to Canada and spent two years setting up a life before bringing her over to Montreal. The two had recently begun their family only six months prior to my meeting her, meaning she had to leave her baby at daycare at only six month old. This student always arrived at class ten minutes before it began and only missed three classes in the three month semester that I taught her. Her language skills were weak but her ability to interpret and analyze to create meaning was incredible. As I got to know her more, she shared with me the exciting benchmarks her family was experiencing -- new things her baby would do, their plans to bring the baby back to their homeland to meet the grandparents in the summer, and upcoming milestones her extended family was enjoying. Since she was in class early every day, we always had a bit of time to discuss her life. It was not until two month into having these conversations that she shared with me that her husband was working two jobs to support their family. She

explained that neither of them had an education to fall back on -- he was making minimum wage -- and that he was gone for twelve to thirteen hours a day. She had chosen to work towards getting a high school diploma soon after giving birth because she was hoping to find a job to help with the finances. This student was also attending full time studies during the day, would pick up her child afterwards, care for her child, husband, home and when finished work on her homework. She consistently and very visibly looked tired. For whatever reason, she was not a RESO student, making me more curious as to what the qualifications are for this role?

Looking back at my observations with these students the things that struck me most was their dedication to their academics, the separation that they had to suffer from their newborn babies, their youth, and the different struggles they faced academically. All of the young women were within my age range or younger. It amazed and still does amaze me the extent of what they were doing on a day-to-day basis. They were struggling to begin a family, support that family, and also gain qualifications to hopefully work towards a career.

Field Trip to Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. I attended Thierry Mugler's "Couturissime" art exhibit that was featured at the Museum of Fine Arts in Montreal from March 2019 through September 2019 with my students. Mugler is a French designer and photographer, "known for spectacular runway shows and fetishistic fashions"(Major, ND, para.1). He is often credited for creating couture that is driven by "...female empowerment" (Garrigues, 2020, para.2). This was a field trip that the school I was working for at the time had planned for the CCBE program to help them integrate into society in Montreal. This exhibit was chosen for the variety of content in regard to fashion that would be present. The collection was divided into different rooms and featured different themes and collections in each room. Some of Mugler's showcases used common objects -- tires, popular media objects/images, jewels -- to create couture each room followed a different specific theme. The photographs of his artwork that I have described are from the rooms that had the most controversy as a result of their fetish driven fashion. The exhibit was significant as it helped to expose students to common culture, innovative fashion, and taboo areas of society that are not traditionally brought up in the curriculum. As new immigrants to North America this exhibit was an organic way to elicit conversation about fashion, art, and differences across cultures. I had attended this exhibit with a

group of new immigrants to Canada, who were excited about engaging with art and culture in Canada. When reviewing my photos I chose the following three images as I believe they fit well with the content covered in Episode 2. The first image features Mugler's 'riske' take on fashion as he produces a series of metallic pieces that embody the sexual fetishism for which he is known. The second image that appears is a photograph from Donigan Cumming's (1994) *Le Journal de Harry* series that is untitled. This series uses Nettie Harris as the female model exposing "climate[s] of intimacy to approach...daily dramas...[in] our existence" (Gingras, ND, para.10). While not part of the Thierry Mugler exhibit this series was located in the Museum of Fine Arts at the same time and our day passes allowed for us to travel through the entire Museum for the day. This image has been placed between two Mugler photographs as it too evokes conversations juxtaposing male and female identities. Moreover, all of the images are appropriated from the same decade – the nineties – either in creation or inspiration. The second image, by Donnigan Cumming pictures a naked elderly couple holding hands as Harris gazes at a male's genitalia. Finally, the third photograph –similar to the first—shows another piece of Mugler's fetish fashion with the addition of his take on social pressures/experiences.

Description of Thierry Mugler's (2019) *Robot Woman*. Imagine a female mannequin, positioned with one hip slightly elevated, the corresponding arm slightly bent to rest the one hand on the elevated hip, and the other one hand resting on the front thigh. The mannequin has no hair and maintains a serious gaze. She is dressed in a chrome, steel body suit from head to toe. The headpiece of the body suit is smooth and hugs her bald head. The body suit has cut outs with 'bare skin' exposed on her: face, shoulders, clavicles, biceps, forearms, breasts, stomach, and thighs. Her shins are adorned with a criss-cross of the metal body suit. Extenuating her breasts, there is metal work that operates as the wires of a bra cupping the bottom portion of her breasts. Imagine a sexualized, female version of armour.

The theme of this room seemed to be related to riske sex symbols and bondage. I chose this photograph because when we entered the new room I had three immigrant females look around the room and approach me to let me know that they were not comfortable with the content and explicit nature the exhibit was taking and that they would wait for the class to finish the tour in the hallway of the museum. I remember feeling badly that they were perhaps unable

to enjoy the field trip or if the exhibit had at all offended them / their beliefs. Nevertheless, I am left wondering how much of integrating into a new society revolves around these women having to negotiate images that are deemed criminal or inappropriate in their homeland. This can stretch from fashion, to advertisements, to lifestyle in general but I imagine this plays a large role in their identity construction in a new society. Moreover, this probably also strengthens their immigrant communities where they can seek solace and guidance from peers who share similar experiences and opinions. I believe that this image speaks to the difficulties that female immigrants may face creating their new identity in a foreign community with large differences in acceptable appearances and behaviour.

Gender Gaps. When looking at the simultaneous role of student and mother it seems important to note the gender gap that obviously exists but is not accounted for in education. Especially in Adult Education, where many of the young women who are pursuing studies are also primary caretakers for their families, all the while holding part time jobs. Their husbands / partners -- if they have them -- are working outrageous hours leaving these female immigrants to 'hold the house together'. One interesting observation that I made comparing my students' experiences with Kerry Vincent's (2012) research about youthful pregnancies in England, is the difference between youthful immigrant mothers and youthful native mothers. Specifically, looking at the connotation around,

youthful sex, youthful pregnancy and motherhood, we [in North America often]...see the age-related assumptions that underpin stigmatised representations of teenage pregnancy and motherhood and how they affect the thoughts, feelings and behaviour of the young women themselves. (Vincent, 2012, p.123)

This seems to be a view that is more common in the Youth Stream of education than Adult Education. Ironically, all of the young women I have encountered who are mothers and students do not feel any stigmatization around their choice to be a young mother. In many of the instances I estimate this is because of their immigrant status and the differing cultural norms. By that I mean that many of these young immigrant mothers come from arranged marriages or strong religious backgrounds in which it is viewed as a gift to be able to have a child. There are only a handful of immigrant females I have interacted with that did not clarify the status or situation

with their partners'. For that reason I suspect that the focus of these young mothers is not so much this idea of 'youthful sex' that Vincent (2012) discusses but a rooted traditional belief that after you are married you begin to build your family. I also suspect that this differing view towards young motherhood illuminates the different ways in which success is measured. In North America we are driven by a fast paced, consumer oriented society, leading success to be measured by one's monetary ability or preparedness. For some of the immigrant mothers that I have spoken with, money does not seem to play a large factor in their choice about when to start a family. If anything money seems to be an afterthought that will be dealt with if needed.

It is interesting to juxtapose this common assumption of young mothers in a mainstream youth school setting, as youthful pregnancy often, "conveys a view of moral contagion from which other students need protection" (Vincent, 2012, p.124). But in Adult Education and with immigrant mothers it does not carry that same connotation. The largest difference that can be observed is that generally young mothers in Adult Education -- even if they are the same age as their young mother counterparts in the Youth Stream -- have made the conscious choice to try to have a baby and it is in no way an accident. Regardless, it seems if you have two mothers both age sixteen it would seem logical they would experience the same scrutiny: "'Young mother' and 'good mother' exist in public consciousness as mutually exclusive categories" (Vincent, 2012, p.126). However, that has not been my observation for young immigrant mothers. While they face a multitude of challenges integrating into society, supporting their families, and trying to achieve their academic goals, they seem sure of their mothering capabilities and proud of the accomplishments that they make every day. In their existence 'young mother' and 'good mother' are synonymous. Nevertheless, this entire discussion of youthful sex, mothering while being a student, and the question of the quality of a female's capabilities to do so well is something that seems to fall on the burden of the mother alone. In many instances it seems that females are given a different set of standards when considering their role in becoming a mother;

Feminist research has highlighted a number of dilemmas and double binds for young people, but particularly for girls, in relation to sexuality...The difference to produce competing pressures and constraints on sexual encounters, and these affect the use of contraception. (Vincent, 2012, pp.129-130)

When considering the different set of standards that are automatically placed on females, it is interesting to consider the additional expectations that may be placed on immigrant mothers who may not even have the option of contraception. Furthermore, the added pressure that they face to try to adapt and comprehend the large differences in values or views towards sexuality in North America in comparison with their homeland.

Description of Donigan Cumming's (1994) *Untitled from Le Journal de Harry*. For this figure, imagine a naked elderly man and woman, holding hands, as the woman appears to be bending over, staring at the man's genitalia. The photograph is in a sepia colour scheme.

I chose this image for a variety of reasons but mostly because I think it speaks to the gender gaps that exist between men and women. When I look at this photo I imagine that the woman is thinking "that's it?". By that I mean it seems women, especially immigrant women, have so many responsibilities that they must juggle: being a daughter, sister, wife, mother, employee and student. They all seem to be such integral parts of their family and in the centre of ensuring their family unit functions. I imagine that at times the pressure these women experience is immense and when discussing the gender gaps in education I cannot help but wonder if they feel it is unfair that they are not recognized for their complex role. Especially young mothers who may be suffering from postpartum emotional roller coasters, all the while trying to navigate their different responsibilities. I say "that's it?" because while men may also experience pressures in similar ways as women, their contribution to creating a family is a seemingly easy and pleasurable one that has little immediate or lasting repercussions for their emotional and physical states. Sitting in a classroom contemplating if your baby has enough breast milk, trying to mentally plan your day, carrying enumerable thoughts in your head all the while, trying to shut everything off and give 100% of your mental capacity to this one Ministry exam which will determine whether your last three months of schooling was time well spent, seems to highlight the large gender gap present. Education - similar to many fields - has many areas that can be improved, however, in Adult Education I believe that this 100% Ministry exam is a large disservice to many of the students. The majority of students in Adult Education suffer from different learning needs, anxiety, and language barriers which make the final exam a very stressful and sometimes unimaginable expectation to

overcome.

Looking further in the direction of female immigrants who have very complex lifestyles, it would seem that if our goal is to educate and create lifelong learners we should be facilitating this through project based inquiry throughout the course allowing for the Ministry exam to account for a fraction of the student's final grade. The youth sector does not weigh their Ministry exam by 100%, which is why it seems perplexing that their adult counterpart does.

Part Two Acting as Caregiver and Translator for Extended Family.

Another role that seems to consistently emerge in my classrooms is the role of a female immigrant caregiver and translator in her larger, extended family. I have had many female immigrant students who explained absences or arriving late to class due to needing to take a family member to a doctor's appointment or meetings. Oftentimes these students act as a personal translator for the entire family. Thinking back to one student who was in her early twenties and recently immigrated to Canada, she was the only member of her family who spoke English. She had a sister who was married with three children -- one of whom was autistic -- her elderly mother, and her own husband to care for. As I got to know her she explained the pressure she felt to care for all of them and also wanting to do well academically. She clarified that she gave as much time as she could afford to her school work but ultimately, it never seemed to be enough for her as she had all of these other activities to tend to for her family.

This student seemed to have grown close to another girl in the class who I learned had a similar situation at home but also maintained a part-time job. This girl was a little younger and not married. However, again she was the only one in her family who spoke English or French. She often asked if she could leave class early to ensure that she would not be late for work. Both of these students frequently sought additional help either before or after school depending on their schedules. Again, the second girl with the part-time job also shared feelings of lacking an appropriate amount of time to dedicate to her academic studies.

When looking at female immigrant students as translators for their extended family we are able to see this concept date back to the 1800's with Jane Addams' "Hull House" in Chicago, Illinois, where she created "Settlement Houses" for immigrants to celebrate their talents and traditions which had been passed down from one generation to the next. There has always been a

need for “parents to depend on their children, who learn[] English at school, to act as interpreters of both the language and customs of [North] America” (Edwards, 2002, p.79). However, in the case of female immigrant students with whom I have interacted, they are no longer only being depended on by their parents but also by their siblings and extended families. Nevertheless, it is incredible to see that this dependence is something that has remained consistent for over two hundred years. Jane Addams’ explained that she did not view education as “a transmission of knowledge, but an interaction between pupil and instructor, who teach each other how to use knowledge to improve their lives” (Edwards, 2002, p.80). For this reason Addams’ goal was to allow education to connect people and enable an appreciation for learning as a long-term, lifelong experience (Edwards, 2002, p.80).

Literacy. Literacy takes on a very important role for immigrant families as “family literacy...[allows them] to more fully participate in the ‘lifeworld’ of their own immigrant community, where bilingualism [is]...valued because of the opportunities it [brings]...to interact[ions] with the larger English-speaking society” (Warwick in Higgins, 2011, p.99). For immigrants in Quebec they have the challenge of learning two languages while integrating into society. For young female immigrants who are able to pick up the language skills more easily than the rest of their family, they quickly become a ‘life-line’ for their families needs. Adding an additional stress to their academic goals. It is for this reason that “literacy cannot be seen as a unitary skill; it is better conceptualized as a form of social practice, adapted to particular contexts” (Warwick in Higgins, 2011, p.100). In the contexts of the students I have interacted with their literacy is adapted to medical appointments, bank appointments, “interacting with school personnel and selling used cars, and thus taking on more powerful identities in their families” (Warwick in Higgins, 2011, p.101). Looking beyond their immediate and extended families these womens’ “participation in new linguistic practises [becomes]...an ‘investment’ in cultural capital and thus in new identities” (Warwick in Higgins, 2011, p.100). Within their cultural communities they may become an asset to family and friends. For this reason “education ha[s] to be balanced with work and family life” (Warwick in Higgins, 2011, p.107). In this sense education is more than simply a way to progress in one’s career but it also becomes a way to be

an integral part of one's family and community, which can be very rewarding but also pressure filled when working towards personal goals.

Identity. Turning towards identity construction again it seems that these “women draw...inspiration from their own parents' experiences as they pursue[] educational opportunities under difficult circumstances” (Warwick in Higgins, 2011, p.101). When these women are trying to help their families and complete their studies there is a need for “ongoing construction[] of identities in a society stratified by race, class, and gender” (Warwick in Higgins, 2011, p.101). It is here that we again see the intersection and negotiation of female immigrant, mother and student as these women do their best to be

good mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters...[all the while] ...re-constructing their sense of self in the aftermath of immigration (Pavlenko & Lantolf 2000)...literacies enhance[] their capacity to successfully enact these relational aspects of their identities. (Warwick in Higgins, 2011, p.108)

Though it may be an added stress to be a linguistic resource for the community and extended family it may also allow for these female immigrants to create an identity for themselves in a new culture while remaining closely connected to their homeland culture. For these women “to engage with a new culture and pursue new goals while remaining firmly rooted within their extended family networks and immigrant communities” seems to be a way to lean on one another and create new meanings of their new lives (Warwick in Higgins, 2011, p.115).

This photograph was taken during Halloween as I was counting desks prior to an exam. In this photograph I am standing in my classroom on Halloween. My colleague snapped this photo as I was counting the desks prior to a Ministry exam ensuring that the students would all have a seat. The reason I chose this photograph for Episode 1 is because I believe it is an image of myself that may align to how female immigrants feel every day in Montreal. While, I only dress up in a costume once a year for Halloween, garnering stares on the public transit and consciously living wondering what they might be thinking, this may be their everyday experience. As a white person who was raised in Canada I am able to go through my day-to-day life with little thought about how people perceive me.

My identity is not necessarily tied to my appearance. However, for many immigrants I



wonder if this is the first part of their integrating into a new society; deciding how they want or determining how their appearance changes how strangers approach or think of them. In a lot of ways I think every day is Halloween for all of us as we try to create appearances that represent what we want to project into society. I imagine that entering a new society, observing their behaviour and the different ways people choose to carry themselves is the first step in trying to form a new identity in a new society.

Figure #3. Everyday is Halloween.

Description of a photograph of Thierry Mugler's (2019) *Robot Woman*. The next image is a description of a photograph taken of during the field trip to the Thierry Mugler exhibit. Recall the description of figure one, with the robot woman who was adorned in a female, sexualized suit of armour. Rather than a mannequin, now imagine that a model is dressed in this armour. She is featured in a black and white photograph that is framed in a museum with a light illuminating it. The model has a serious look on her face and in the close-up photograph you can see more clearly the robot-like build of the suit of armour. The accentuation of her breasts is made more clear as there is a metal circle surrounding her nipples, with the wire extending horizontally on each side and one vertical metal line connecting to the bottom of her breast. Finally, you see four different human hands reaching in from the four different sides of the model. One hand grasps the model's neck in a choke-hold. The other three reach and grab the models head.

I see this image as emblematic of the many different directions that female immigrants are pulled as part of their day-to-day lives. When I look at this image I think of how these women try to create a fluctuating identity that fits into societal expectations at home and in their new world. I imagine that the main female in focus in this image is the 'mind's-eye' self-reflexive image that an immigrant woman may have of herself. The reason I say this is because I remember on a different field trip, when I was sitting with one of my female immigrant

student's on the school bus, she shared some personal photos of her family with me. When she was scrolling through we eventually stumbled upon a rather alluring image of her, in which I did not recognize that it was her at all. Her hair and makeup were done nicely and she was posing like a model would for the photograph. She asked me who I thought it was and I said maybe one of her relatives. I had only ever seen her in school, where she wore her hijab and no makeup. When she told me it was her, that was clear to see but I was amazed at the difference in her appearance between the photo and day-to-day life. For that reason I imagine that - as all humans do - immigrant females encounter an image in their new society that may stick with them and become their mental image of themselves. I view the hands as their role as interpreter and the different directions they are pulled in their lives. While they may be negotiating and internalizing their experiences they also find themselves being placed in roles where their loved ones are dependent upon them and perhaps they feel subsequently isolated at times. In the case of the specific student referenced above, she had always worn a hijab both before and after immigrating. When considering how this photo could apply to female immigrant students in Adult Education, perhaps the photograph could speak to a self-representation of the different identities -- both public and private -- that female immigrant students carry on a day-to-day basis.

Part Three Seeking Quebec / Canadian Recognition of Qualifications

The final observation that I will discuss in this episode is the female immigrant students I have taught in the DBE program of the Adult, English stream that are seeking to have education they completed in their home country recognized in Quebec. This is particularly so for those who are nurses. Over the last two years that least one student in each of my classes has been a female immigrant who was a nurse trying to find a loophole around the French test qualification. These students have explained to me that they have two options to have their nursing certifications recognized in Quebec: (1) pass a provincial French test which is apparently very difficult, or (2) obtain a high school diploma that includes French at a Secondary 5 (Grade 11) capacity. Many of these female students feel that the high school diploma is a better use of their time for a variety of reasons. Firstly, some of these students have or are planning on having children and they want to have an idea of the education their children will be expected to learn. Secondly, as they are new immigrants in Quebec they feel this is a great way to practise their English and immerse

themselves in Quebec's culture. Finally, many of them have cited that the French test is significantly more difficult than the Secondary 5 (Grade 11) final French Ministry exam, meaning they believe this is an easier and quicker way to have their education recognized. Coincidentally, I had spoken to my accountant about this topic as she was also a female immigrant working in Quebec. She told me that she had hired four different private French tutors and had unsuccessfully written the test a handful of times. Near the end of tax season she explained that she will likely move her practise to Toronto as her clients all spoke English, the French exam was very difficult, and Quebec was mandating that all people in the 'Professional Orders' have proof of passing this test or hold a Quebec high school diploma.

Similarly, I was speaking with one of my teaching colleagues recently, who is also a female immigrant in Quebec and she informed me that prior to immigrating to Quebec her and her husband were told their educations would be recognized. However, upon arriving they too were subject to the same stipulation and had to find their own loopholes around this provincial French test. Finally, another one of my colleagues who is a native Quebecois informed me that she found the test impossible to pass as well and had taken it twice.

Reflections

When reflecting on episode one I found myself laying out a series of four questions that had come to mind. I have separated this reflection by each of the questions I had to guide my thoughts and research into answering these questions.

Question 1: How do students empower, influence, and inspire each other? The first observation that I made while reflecting on this episode is the role that students may have empowering, influencing, and inspiring their peers in the classroom. Specifically looking at the first mother in my Adult Education classroom, whose ability to juggle her children, family, and academics gave other students in the class a feeling of hope for their own academic success. When researching the different motivators that students use in their educational pursuits Robert Mathews (2017) explains,

Siobhan O'Flynn's 'auto-topographic metanarrative' [explaining that] ... it is humanity's need to articulate in some manner, a close relationship to one's own "place", and one's

“identity”, but done so, in relation to the degree one senses to be “out-of place”

elsewhere, from being in contact with another race, culture, ethnicity, and gender. (p.273)

When looking at the students that I had in that particular classroom, I remember that there was a large group of students who were sixteen and qualified to be in youth mainstream studies. Many of them came from group homes or poverty stricken households. There was a joined feeling of being “out-of-place” in the main-stream youth sector leading students to connect in the classroom, citing this connection as a driving factor for placing themselves in Adult Education. Considering the metanarrative that these students may have had when entering the Adult Education DBE classroom, they may have found a sense of belonging in comparing their own life situations with young adults who had diverse backgrounds and living situations themselves. These students came from very different backgrounds, races, cultures, and genders, however they demonstrated that despite one’s background “all human beings experience adversity” (Erwin, 2010, p.18). It is with that in mind that I was reminded that, “virtually all learning happens within the context of human relationships...contacts we have with individual students [...and that they have with their peers] affect how they feel about...what they are learning” (Cohen, 1999, p.17). This is something that is unique to Adult Education, the opportunity for students who have spent their whole life growing up in Montreal to connect with immigrant students who may share similar struggles, or challenge their preconceived notions of what is difficult in life. Allowing for new meanings to be developed that can ultimately propel the classroom forward together in unexpected ways.

The social and emotional capability of these students to interact with peers, reflect upon their life experiences, and create a feeling of privilege / optimism towards their own academics was incredible to witness. When teaching in the youth sector we often discussed the idea of social and emotional learning that should be facilitated in the classroom to try and help students better navigate their bodily responses to situations. This was referred to as SEL -- Social Emotional Learning -- and was something that I had not considered in Adult Education. This form of learning suggests that “emotional competency [means]... having knowledge and skills that channel ‘behaviors toward a positive end’...so they facilitate rather than impede thinking” allowing for students and humans in general to “...perform more effectively” (Erwin, 2010, p.8).

Emotional intelligence is inherently connected with social intelligence as, “almost all emotions have a social component: ‘you can[not] separate the cause of an emotion from the world of relationships -- our social interactions are what drive our emotions” (Goleman in Erwin, 2010, p.8). Jonathen Erwin (2010) extrapolates the difference between the two forms of learning clarifying that emotional learning enables one’s “ability to use intrapersonal skills”, while social learning enables one’s “ability to use interpersonal skills” (Erwin, 2010, p.9). He further explains that these two skills work together to develop “character traits such as respect for self and others, personal and social responsibility, optimism, a strong work ethic, perseverance, compassion, cooperation, and honesty” (Erwin, 2010, p.9). When applying the concepts that SEL learning suggests to the interactions I observed my students having with one another I now realize that these students all had a good deal of social and emotional intelligence. I am left wondering if these students cultivated these skills in their prior educational settings or -- more likely -- through the hardships that they had experienced in their lifetime. Regardless, “SEL programs [have shown to].. enhance students' behavioral adjustment in the form of increased prosocial behaviors... [,] reduced conduct and internalizing problems, and improved academic performance on achievement tests and grades” (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2010, p.417). The reality that having these skills will help them to perform better in life in and outside of the classroom is a comforting thought.

A complimenting theory William Glasser (1987) discusses is ‘Control Theory’. When discussing ‘Control Theory’, Glasser (1987) states that “all that we get from the outside world is information. We then choose to act on that information in the way we believe is best for us” (Glasser & Gough, 1987, p.656). In 1998 he furthered this idea in his book, *Choice Theory: A New Psychology of Personal Freedom*, where he discusses how human interactions shape individual development by outlining the five basic needs of human beings: “(1) Physical : Survival, (2) Love and belonging, (3) Power, (4) Freedom, and (5) Fun” (Erwin, 2010, p.45). When examining the different needs I found that the third one, power, connected most clearly with the observation of students affecting each other’s attitudes towards success. When discussing the role of power, Erwin (2010) separates the topic into three options: “*power over, power within, and power with*” (p.45). He explains that,

Power with refers to the power achieved when working cooperatively with others. It is the place where the need for power and the need for love and belonging intersect. If you think of the great achievements of the human race, they all resulted from humans working together or building on the achievements of others before them. (Erwin, 2010, p.45)

This idea of ‘power with’ resonates with the relationships that were occurring in my classroom as these students searched for a safe place to find a sense of belonging, feeling of warmth and also worked together to feed off of each other's prior achievements to take a sense of power and ownership over their own journeys. In these interactions it becomes clear that “students’ perceptions of themselves, other students, school, teachers, and individual subjects are critical to their success or failure” (Erwin, 2010, p.83).

Question 2: What are the pressures of being a full time mother and student?

Identity. To begin looking at the pressures of mother and student I think it is important to first accept that we are looking at identity construction. As a female immigrant I think the first obstacle many students may face is negotiating where they are from with where they are now. For example the different nuances of Western culture that they have to learn, alongside the further differences that are associated with moving to Quebec which in itself is seen as an outlier to the rest of North America. It is this concept of “transnationalization [that] requires mobile and relocated people to negotiate their identities at the intersection of a three-way relationship between their sending state, their host state, and their network of fellow transnationals” (Higgins, 2011, p.21). Though in the case of Quebec I would argue that there is a fourth relationship to be negotiated as the province juxtaposed with the country of Canada has many different values and views. For example, when Bill 21 was passed in Quebec this past year we, as a country, were able to watch as different discourses emerged across political debates discussing the legitimacy of such a bill. Within the classroom it enabled many heated discussions about what it means to live in Quebec versus the rest of Canada. As immigrants in French Canada these, transnationals intermingle with those who live less ‘fluid’ lives and hence must negotiate the fluidity of transnationalism along with the fixity of nationalism, bounded notions of culture, and clear-cut expressions of ethnolinguistic identity. Hence, how learners

navigate this tension is one aspect of identity construction that needs further exploration.
(Higgins, 2011, p.21)

I believe that there are many levels to be further investigated when considering identity construction for female immigrants in Quebec education, especially in Adult Education. When considering the facets of transnationalism for female immigrants in Adult Education we have to consider how they negotiate their pasts with their presents, how they negotiate lifestyle in Quebec in comparison with their homelands and the rest of Canada, and what it means for these young women to find themselves studying at a high school level in Adult Education when many of them completed their high school requirements in their homeland. Frankly, looking at the aforementioned questions only skims the surface of the different aspects these women would likely have to negotiate in their day-to-day lives.

Mother and Student. Moving beyond identity construction as an immigrant, I want to look at what it means to be a mother and student at the same time. When researching different studies that investigate this concept I found it very difficult to find any material. At first this led me to wonder if there was nothing? After refining the search to look at ‘teenage pregnancy’ I was able to find a variety of research that had been conducted. I ended up reading Kerry Vincent’s (2012) book *Schoolgirl Pregnancy, Motherhood and Education: Dealing with Difference* as it applied most appropriately with what I was looking to investigate; motherhood and education. Vincent’s work took place in England where she interviewed adolescent girls who experienced teenage pregnancy and subsequent challenges working simultaneously as a mother and student in high school. The study highlighted that in England the mainstream high schools were not necessarily equipped to always assist the needs of young mothers who are also students. Vincent (2012) explains how adolescent mothers,

found juggling motherhood and school a challenge...[While they] appreciated that the school treated [them] just like any other pupil by phoning...if [they] missed more than one consecutive day...[they also expressed feeling] at the same time...somewhat pressured. (p.93)

She further explained that students who were engaging in part-time studies also “found the dual demands of parenting and school very tiring” (Vincent, 2012, p.93). The schools in this study did

their best to make accommodations for youth pregnancy and young mothers to help allow them to have the opportunity of completing the same education as their peers whether through full-time or part-time studies. However, many of the females in the study expressed dissatisfaction with the “complete absence of consultation” in how to move forward with their studies (Vincent, 2012, p.94). The largest concern that emerged was around the fact that schools, their mission statements, and general climate are not created with the idea of ‘teenage pregnancy’ as something to be included. As a result the different environments that had been cultivated allowed for students to “interpret...that pregnancy [is] seen as irrelevant. No matter the pupil difference, the [general]...aim was curriculum access and achievement of qualifications” (Vincent, 2012, p.95). While this was a study conducted in England with adolescent students there are many similarities that can be observed between Quebec youth schools and adult centers. Youth schools seem to have a similar situation as the ones in England as they are not necessarily created with the idea that they will need to accommodate pregnant students, leaving an opening for students to feel marginalized and ‘othered’. When considering Adult Education it would seem reasonable to assume some of the students will have children given the fact that the clientele range from sixteen years old upwards. Ironically, in Adult Education, it is my experience that children of students are only referenced twice (1) in the student handbook and (2) before exams. First the handbook explicitly states that parents are not allowed to bring their children into the school / classroom at any time as it is a legal concern. Depending on the center, sometimes children will be invited for a school ‘talent show’ or similar activities, but that is on a case-by-case basis. Secondly, it is clearly stated - in some school’s ‘exam contracts’ - that children are not allowed to emerge on exam days. It is in these moments that, “we see that the young women [may]...feel constrained in their choices and find themselves challenged by taking on dual roles - of mother and student - that do not sit easily together” in education as a whole, regardless of country or age (Vincent, 2012, p.97). This resonates with the aforementioned student who chose to have four children before attempting Secondary studies in Quebec. She was not aware of the different obstacles she would face but it seems an insurmountable obstacle to attend youth or adult studies in secondary education when there are not protocols in place to assist pregnant or young mothers.

Vincent (2012) explained how in England there are alternative options for adolescent women who find themselves in youth pregnancies or as young mothers. Similar to the concept of an 'alternative school' in the Youth Stream of Quebec education, there seems to be centers in England that specifically cater themselves to youth pregnancy and young mothers who are trying to complete their high school qualifications. Vincent's (2012) study looked into three of the centers to evaluate how student experiences changed in these centers. One common theme that emerged was the role of a teacher in these student's lives. The young pregnant women and mothers

identified numerous benefits, both educational and pastoral, of studying... [in these specialized centers]. They enjoyed the smaller classes, being able to get more help with work, access to a tailored program, and the wider range of teaching and learning strategies. (Vincent, 2012, p.98)

Interestingly, the benefits of the centers are similar to some of the benefits that students of Adult Education enjoy. Often the class sizes are substantially smaller ranging anywhere from eight to thirty students. In the instances that the classes are below twenty students, the students' do enjoy a larger 'teacher-student' ratio. However, the programs are not tailored to students who have learning needs or extremely demanding personal lives, as mothers do. If anything, Adult Education is substantially more demanding than the mainstream youth classroom as we are condensing a six or ten month course into three months, for all subjects. Meaning that students are required to learn the material at an extremely accelerated pace. It is for this reason that many students in Adult Education do not take on a full-time schedule.

Furthermore, returning to the idea that children are not allowed in Adult Education under any circumstances it seems important to look at how these centers in England adapted to the needs of their young mothers. Vincent (2012) highlights that in some of the centers that were created to aid in young mothers completing their high school equivalencies, they offered an on-site nursery [which was cited]...as another important advantage. They valued it because it allowed young mothers a break from their caring responsibilities and they could continue their education - but their babies were also close to hand so they could feed and change them during the day. (p.103)

Granted that there are not necessarily a lot of students who have children that would need day-care services in Adult Education, it is my estimate that there are enough, in any given center per day, that would benefit from the option of ‘on-site’ daycare services. Moreover, many of the Adult Education centers house Social Services Integration (SIS) and Common Core Basic English (CCBE) programs that could even be used to assist in different aspects of the daycare such as reading buddies. Of course this is a logistical and legal uphill undertaking but if it were to become available in one center it would create a precedent or possibility of opening up similar options in other centers that could ultimately help young immigrant mothers work towards their high school equivalencies more efficiently.

Teacher - Student relationships. When reflecting on my relationship with the young mothers in my classrooms, I note that I took time to try to better understand their living situations. Sometimes this was a result of them appearing in the classroom outside of teaching hours, but mostly this had nothing to do with the fact that they were mothers. Often the students in Adult Education have extremely complicated lives between family challenges, work schedules, learning needs, and just overall relationships with education. For this reason I try to take the time to get to know all of my students so that I may tailor my lessons to their needs. Vincent (2012) finds that “staff showing genuine interest in [students’ lives], taking and having the time to listen, acknowledge the importance of all aspects of the students’ lives” allowed for students to find more success and confidence in their academic pursuits (p.99). Similarly, “research shows that an alternative setting with smaller class sizes and different relationship dynamics, can create a much needed and valued second chance at education” (Crozier & Tracey, 2002; Pomeroy, 2002 in Vincent, 2012, p.100). For female immigrants, mothers, and students alike this is something that Adult Education does offer. As educators we do not go by formal titles using our last names, but rather cultivate relationships with our students using our first names. There is still the divide between teacher and student, but it is not as stringent as in the youth sector. This allows for barriers that are present in the Youth Stream to be eliminated in the adult sector, creating more open dynamics for students seeking a second chance and new immigrants in Quebec education.

Academic Experience. Returning to academic experiences for young expecting mothers and mothers many “young women [state]...explicitly that being pregnant [gives]...them added incentives to take their schoolwork seriously and do well” (Vincent, 2012, p.100). In my experience this has held true as the young mothers who I have taught always work very hard to do the best that they can in their courses. Moreover, as earlier observed they also seem to propel their peers in the classroom to work harder as a result of their success despite their more demanding schedules. One of the adolescent mothers in Vincent’s (2012) study highlighted that the alternative centers tailored to pregnant and young mothers do not offer the “extra-curricular activities [that]...she had [previously]...enjoyed” (p.100). This is something that is also true in Adult Education centers. Adult Education is an interesting field as it is often in its own sphere. Even now with the pandemic occurring, when the government discusses school closures or plans to reopen, Adult Education is not really mentioned and if it is, it is done so as an afterthought. Similarly, each Adult Education center has a very different set of protocols. In the six different ones that are part of our board extracurriculars are not always a ‘given’. Some centers offer them and others do not but it is the general idea that students in Adult Education are not interested in anything other than achieving their high school diploma. However, as brought up in Vincent’s (2012) book *Schoolgirl pregnancy, motherhood and education : dealing with difference*, young mothers, immigrants, and adult students -- who can range from sixteen years of age upwards -- live very busy lives and may not have time outside of school hours to engage in extracurricular activities. With this in mind it seems even more crucial to offer extra-curriculars to help add enjoyment to student experience and aid in integration for immigrants.

Question 3: What is a RESO student in Quebec? How do you qualify for RESO? As a young teacher there are many new things that you encounter with every job, board, and school. ‘RESO’ is something that has emerged a few times over my time in Adult Education but has never been fully explained beyond the idea that “they are students that get money from the government to complete their high school diploma” (RESO coordinator). In the moment it is a satisfactory answer, however, upon reflection it does inspire many questions. Firstly, RESO stands for “Regroupement économique et social du Sud-Ouest”. The organization was created in 1989 as a reaction to economic changes in the southwest part of Montreal. During industrialization this area of Montreal was heavily used for factories and the Lachine Canal was a primary route for transportation of goods. With the,

closure of the Lachine Canal in 1965 in favor of the new St. Lawrence Seaway.

Employment fell catastrophically from 1967 to 1988, the South-West lost 20 000 industrial jobs. The population also decreased from a high of 100, 000 residents in 1950 to 69 000 in 1988. (RESO, N.D., para.2)

With this in mind, “the RESO offers support, to help [students]... finish [their]... secondary studies or requirements necessary for admission to Vocational/Professional training program[s]” (RESO, N.D., para.1). The website clarifies that the program is run with the assistance of an ‘Emploi-Quebec Resources’ and aims to assist students from low income settings achieve their goals. The website does not offer any clarification about who qualifies or how much financial assistance is offered. Rather, it seems to stipulate that everything is subjective to the individual candidates. As I think back I cannot recall if all of the RESO students I have taught were all entering vocational careers, though I do believe many of them cited that as an option they were entertaining.

Question 4: What is this French test that you are required to pass? As referenced in the memory-work above I have come into contact with many nurses who are choosing to redo all of their high school education, in Quebec Adult Education so that they can have their qualifications from their homeland recognized in Quebec. Moreover, it has become clear to me that many professional orders in Quebec require evidence of Secondary 5 French equivalency or a passing

grade for this ‘ominous’, incredibly difficult provincial test. When researching the test I found myself reviewing Bill 101 finding that:

Professional orders may issue licenses only to persons who have official language knowledge appropriate to the practice of their profession.

A person is deemed to have this knowledge if:

- (1) she attended, on a full-time basis, at least three years of secondary or post-secondary education taught in French;
- (2) has passed the examinations in French as a first language of the fourth or fifth year of secondary school;
- (3) As of the 1985-1986 school year, he obtained a secondary school certificate in Québec. In other cases, a person must obtain a certificate issued by the Office québécois de la langue française or hold a certificate defined as equivalent by government regulation. (The Charter of French Language, Ch-11, Article 35).

Beyond what is written in Bill 101 it is difficult to get very much information about what the test is or the level of knowledge that is expected to successfully complete this test. Interestingly, I did stumble across a blog or website created by immigrant nurses - for immigrants nurses that had a list of student testimonials for the most efficient and easiest way to get your credentials recognized in Quebec in which the general sentiment mirrored that of one student’s comment: “the level of French needed to get a Québec high school diploma is easier than the OQLF exam” (Student).

‘One size fits all’. When studying towards becoming a licensed teacher we are taught about creating accommodations for different students' needs, adapting curriculum to the class you have, modifying material where appropriate, and diverse yet inclusive approaches to educating. However, in Adult Education educators are faced with a bit of an obstacle in doing this as all the courses are 100% exam. Therefore, regardless of the student’s situation they are all required to pass the same exam. Accommodations can be made in terms of time, having a reader, and sometimes even software to write for the student. Beyond that, every student in Adult Education is required to pass the final exam in order to pass the course, and their participation in class or coursework prior to the exam has no bearing on their grade. When looking at youth

pregnancy and young mothers Vincent (2012) states the importance of alternative centers finding that,

‘one size does not fit all’. She explained that her local authority no longer provided alternatives. She thought this worked against educational continuity because in her experience, there was still a considerable gap between policy and practice when it came to supporting pregnant or mothering pupils. (Vincent, 2012, p.104)

In mainstream youth and Adult Education there are always very limited resources available. This is inherently worked into education as there never seems to be enough resources available to assist all our students’ different needs. However, in the case of young mothers, immigrant mothers and specifically supporting their achieving a high school diploma, it seems there should be some weight placed on the work they submit on a day-to-day basis. Expecting a sixteen year old, Montreal born and raised student who did not succeed in mainstream youth studies and an immigrant mother who is struggling with language / cultural barriers to pass the same exam under the same conditions, seems to be quite the challenge. However, the ‘flipside’ of that argument would be that if the student is not capable of passing the exam then perhaps they are not at the level they need to be for the corresponding grade. Nevertheless it would seem it is imperative to offer students assistance to be most successful in their academics, which is not necessarily possible with a 100% exam grade. It is for this reason that,

dealing with difference in affirming and respectful ways is not simply about policy or whether or not an educational alternative exists. It is a more elusive process which requires commitment, compassion, willingness to examine taken-for-granted values and assumptions, and an ability to provide genuine options and choices for young people. (Vincent, 2012, p.104)

Specifically considering the students that are found in Adult Education and the different needs that they might have when creating a center’s philosophies and protocols could allow for young mothers, immigrants, and students looking for a second chance to cultivate interests in unknown passions and also develop a new respect for education. In Vincent’s (2012) research she found that “accommodating students’ specific differences as pregnant or mothering schoolgirls, and having this aspect of their lives non-judgmentally accepted by other pupils and staff, was also

key to supporting good educational outcomes” (p.104). With this in mind it seems important to celebrate the differences that student’s bring into the classroom, as it can allow for them to feel heard while also empowering their peers to persevere. More importantly, it is vital to remember that “one-size does not fit all” (Vincent, 2012, p.104) and it seems erroneous to expect a facility that is aiming to help either (1) native students who have failed in the mainstream youth school, or (2) new immigrants with a slew of differing home pressures to pass an accelerated program that mirrors that of the youth schools which they have either already failed or never been exposed. It seems that the 100% exam mentality does not offer the greatest possibility for success to anyone who is in Adult Education, academic programs.

Concluding Thoughts for Memory Episode One

This episode focused on the role of female immigrant students in their immediate and extended families, as well as, their immigrant communities in Montreal. Using information from studies conducted in a variety of settings I was able to draw similarities and differences across youth, adult and immigrant experiences. One thing that has been reiterated through these studies is that there is an absence of research done in Adult Education. All of the research referenced either concluded their findings based on youth participants or based on general immigrant research. However, none of it was from immigrant experiences in Adult Education or even Adult Education itself. It connected seamlessly because of the fact that many young mothers in Adult Education are between the age of sixteen and twenty-five, therefore the youth research applies in half the cases. Moreover, immigrant experiences even dating back to 1800’s bare similarities in experiences which seem to be transcending time. Through exploring these women’s roles as wife, mother, caregiver, and interpreter / translator I was able to learn more about how maintaining such complex positions can inspire others and also make these women integral commodities for their families and communities. Furthermore, the loophole that Adult Education can offer immigrant females seeking to have their education from their homelands recognized in professional orders in Quebec, displayed another element of community between immigrant populations as they support each other finding the most efficient ways to harmonize in their new lives.

Memory Episode 2: Feelings of Inadequacy

Female immigrant students face many internal and external obstacles as they navigate their way through integrating into a new society and school system. In episode one I discussed some of the internal struggles female immigrants encounter in regard to identity construction in a new society. I have highlighted many of the external challenges that female immigrant students face surrounding cultural expectations, familial commitments, academic rigor and different exams. Travelling back into my memory for episode two I will be discussing three consistent internal obstacles that female immigrant students in the DBE classroom experience: (1) anxiety and panic attacks, (2) comparing with friends from their homeland, and (3) isolation.

Anxiety and Panic Attacks

Many students in Adult Education bring a variety of internal struggles and burdens with them into the classroom. Some of these may be learning needs that previously existed in their home country. These learning needs can lead to anxiety as many students try to hide their learning needs with the hope of ‘fitting in’. However, a common and recurring issue with female immigrant students is the persistence of panic attacks in academically inclined students. When I say ‘academically inclined’, I am referring to students who have experienced consistent levels of success in education during their studies in their home country. I recall during teaching summer school, I had a class of Secondary 4 ELA students that consisted of 100% immigrant students. It seemed that they were all trying to make up as much time as they could, as many of them were placed in lower levels of high school courses than what corresponded with their studies in their homelands. In this class I had one girl who sat in the back corner. She came to class early every day and was the last to leave each day. She had immigrated to Canada the year before and had only been studying in Canada for ten months. This student actively participated in discussions and often brought in extra work to be checked. She shared with me the extensive hours she was spending at home working on her homework and demonstrated an honest desire to improve her work explaining to me that it was her dream to go into computer engineering. Near the end of the course we were completing a series of practise exams that mirrored the exam; a comprehension, writing, and oral component. After receiving her grade from the practise exam she began to

shake and cry. The two of us went into the hall where I asked her what was wrong. She explained to me that it was difficult for her to hear that she had received a grade of 78% on her practise exam as she had been sinking so many hours into her work. She disclosed that in her home country the lowest grade she ever received was a 90% and now she is being forced to repeat many courses that she had already completed in her home country but in a new language with which she was unfamiliar. She told me how she had spent her first ten months in the country, immersing herself in as many courses as she was able to take with the hope of graduating at the same time as she would have in her home country. Finally, she informed me that she felt immense pressure to be successful as her parents were both working many jobs and had high hopes for her to achieve her academic dreams in Canada. With all of this, she conveyed to me that this was one of many panic attacks she had experienced in regard to grades since entering Canada. Her genuine frustration and visible anxiety surrounding her education was difficult for me to observe. I explained to her that what she was feeling was normal and that if I -- a university graduate -- was taken to her home country and plopped into high school level courses in a new language that I was unfamiliar with, that I would likely fail all the courses. I empathized with her and the struggles she was facing, drawing her attention to the fact that her grades had already improved by ten percent since she began the course only six weeks prior to this time. I reminded her that she was a recent immigrant and that learning a new language takes time and that she needs to be patient with herself. Finally, I encouraged her to share with her parents about her panic attacks and counselled her to seek coping techniques moving forward. When she left we had shared a few laughs about experiences of failures I had endured during my own high school days. Nearly two years later, I had this same student emerge in a different school in my Economics class. We were both pleased to see each other and I was even more happy to hear that her grades had reached the 90% that she was accustomed. There seemed to be a calmness to her and she also shared that she had told her parents about her panic attacks and that they had sought medical assistance. She was finishing her studies this semester and would graduate on time as she had planned. Her locker happened to be located directly in front of the door to my classroom so we would wave to one another when she walked by and I was teaching another class. One day she came running to her locker, her face was red, her breathing was

visibly laboured, and she began crying. Two of her friends followed behind her closely. It was clear that she was again having a panic attack except it seemed that the attacks had become more serious since the first one I had seen as she began hyperventilating. I immediately called the student supervisor to come and take her downstairs to the office. After class when I went to see how everything was going, her parents had arrived and seemed to be in a discussion with the student supervisor. It seemed the office was urging the parents to take their daughter to the hospital as the panic attack got increasingly worse when she got downstairs. It seemed to be a bit of a heated discussion surrounding calling an ambulance and tending to the students' needs as soon as possible. The student left with her parents but did not go to the hospital. When I saw her again I pulled her into the classroom to see how she was doing. During our conversation she explained to me that her parents' visa -- that they had entering the country -- had expired and that they were having difficulty obtaining new paperwork to stay in Canada. She shared that there was talk of the whole family immigrating back to their homeland as a result of the confusion and that they were trying to stay long enough for her to finish her high school studies and hopefully receive an acceptance letter for CEGEP, allowing her to apply for a student VISA. I cannot recall the exact logic that she conveyed to me but there was concern surrounding anyone in her family trying to seek medical attention while their paperwork to be in Canada was not up-to-date. Finally, the student informed me that her panic attacks had increased in intensity with the fear of her family being forced to leave Canada, especially after all the work she had done to achieve her goals.

I chose to share the journey of this one student as I had experience with her when she first entered the country and again later in her academic pursuits. She is one of many students who I have observed in similar situations, enduring panic attacks as a result of a large change in the grades they are receiving juxtaposed with what they were accustomed to in their homeland. Moreover, her journey highlights some of the fears that immigrant students encounter as they race to complete their studies against multiple clocks that have been set by their family, friends, society, and sometimes the government.

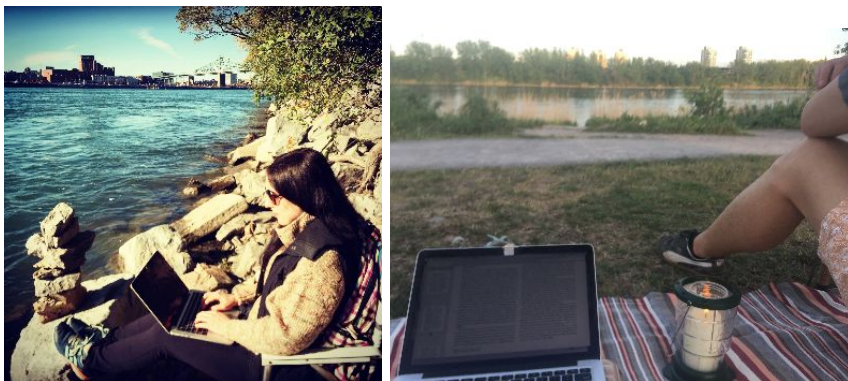


Figure #1. Outdoor Classrooms and Mental Health

The photo on the left was taken in Fall 2019 on Jean Drapeau and the one on the right Spring 2020 in Verdun.

Between sitting in front of the water, in a park, at McGill campus and on my balcony, a large portion of this thesis was written outside. In academia there has been a lot of discussion about the benefits of outdoor classrooms and the importance for learning to take place organically. I thought that this was a fitting photo for episode two topics of mental health because I think it reminds us that successful learning is not a finite equation that can be applied to everyone. In order for learning to occur students' need to be at peace with themselves as to allow them to engage with material fully. Many immigrants -- as earlier discussed -- find themselves in overwhelming situations where their mental health is not something that they take the time to maintain. For many working outside can be a soothing experience as they are able to enjoy their surroundings while still being productive. I wanted to begin with this picture for the purpose of illuminating that variety in the classroom environment is important for students' mental health. Immigrant students especially are often pressed to find time to decompress in their day-to-day life. Simply choosing to have a class outside once and a while may allow for students to enjoy outdoor spaces that they would otherwise not have the time to appreciate.

Comparing with Friends from Home

A second internal struggle that many female immigrants endure is an ongoing comparison with their friends' academic experiences in their homeland. For this section of my memory-work I will be outlining a story of a female immigrant that entered my Secondary 4 ELA class for the third book of the course. Each academic English course is generally divided

into three Ministry exams which we refer to as “three books”. These are separate courses that culminate to the credits for one secondary school level. At times students will be successful in some of the course books but not all of them, requiring them to return for certain books in the next semester. This student was unable to finish her third book the first time she took Secondary 4 ELA as she had previously booked plane tickets to return to her home country. The third book in English is often the longest and most heavily weighted portion of the course. For students entering for a single book they often enter after the class has developed relationships, protocols and rapports with peers, teachers, and additional classroom staff. This can be awkward for some students as they feel shy when they first join the class. The student I am discussing in this section was one of those students who definitely appeared to be shy. As normal I had planned a series of ice breaking activities for the class to do for any new students that were joining late in the course. This student was interesting as she seemed to have a very strong hold of the English language and as a result was able to critically engage with course material at a level that was higher than many of her peers. I often separated the students into groups to work on different things and when I did so she would ask if it was okay if she worked alone. While observing her group work, she did not seem to contribute very much during their discussions.

For this contract I shared the classroom with another teacher. I had the room for one period, while he had it for the subsequent two. I quickly noticed that she did not leave the classroom when class ended. This gave us approximately fifteen minutes to talk while I packed up my material and the new class moseyed into the room. It was during this time that I learned that she had graduated high school in her home country before being placed back in high school in Quebec. She shared with me that she was only in the school for the first two periods and then left to go to work for the rest of the day. I learned that she was eighteen years old and had a bit of a ‘chip’ on her shoulder as a result of her new situation. She told me that she had attended studies in English in her home country which is why she found it very easy to engage with course material. Moreover, she shared feelings of being embarrassed as all of her friends were in university back home and she was sitting in a Secondary 4 level high school course. When I inquired about her hesitation to do group work she told me that she does not speak to the other students as she found them all very young. This particular Adult Education center did have a

very young, immigrant heavy clientele. She elaborated that she did not want new friends because she had a lot back home and that she purely came to school to get the credits she needed and leave. I tried to share with her that many students found themselves in similar situations in the class, maybe not graduated from high school but nevertheless, placed at a lower level than they had hoped. I tried to reason that she should try to make new friends at this school as it might make her return to high school more enjoyable and less of a burden in her life. Furthermore, I highlighted the reality that many of the students in the class were very mature for their age, sharing that many of my friends as I got older became people that were either a few years older or younger than me because as you get older age becomes less relevant. Finally, I encouraged her to actively partake in the group work as she was a strong student who had a lot to offer her peers. We continued to have these discussions between her classes and I was pleased to see that she slowly began taking more of a role in the class and eventually moved her seat to sit next to a few girls that she would leave with between classes. I even had to tell her to stop talking occasionally during lessons. Nevertheless, talking to her helped me learn how immigrant students -- like her -- may be constantly comparing themselves with the success of their friends back home and this can lead to feelings of inadequacy, anger, resentment, and fear.

Isolation

The final observation that I have made working with female immigrants in the DBE classroom is feelings of isolation. Beginning with the student mentioned in the section above this one, she was choosing to isolate herself based on how she approached academics. She felt an injustice had been committed by sending her back to high school level courses and allowed that to drive her into isolation. This is one instance of how isolation may occur. The girl that she seemingly befriended in the class was another female immigrant who had contributed very quietly and little to the class for the first two books. She had an older sister that was in my Secondary 5 ELA class and did not seem to spend time with other students either. Her sister explained to me that she was very shy and found it difficult to make friends as she was afraid how her English made her appear. Her largest fear was appearing stupid. For many language learners there is a lot of anxiety surrounding how they sound in the new language they are trying to learn. Students who had previously found success in academics in their homeland often

experience more anxiety as they are confronted with feelings of insecurity in an area of their life that they had previously thrived or felt safe. Similar to her new friend, these two students had chosen to isolate themselves due to different internal struggles. Other instances involve female immigrants who are too busy to find time for themselves or for cultivating relationships with peers. For example young mothers who are also students and employees: these women have impossible schedules that often leave them feeling overwhelmed and riddled with anxiety about being a good mother, student, and employee.

Reflections

I consider here some internal struggles that female immigrants have experienced in my classes. When reflecting on the topics of anxiety, panic attacks, feelings of inadequacy, concerns juxtaposing their life progression in comparison with friends back home and finally instances of isolation I find that most of these topics speak to mental health of female immigrant students. For this reason, my reflection of this episode will center around topics of female immigrant mental health. To begin, “studying migration and mental...[health] cannot begin without serious reflection on what mental health problems are in all of their fullness, and why they may be manifested in particular and quite different ways according to culture and context” (Swinton in Harper, 2016, p.24). With immigration perpetually increasing globally, there are large culture shocks that occur when individuals find themselves trying to integrate into a new culture. Nazilla Khanlou and Beryl Polkington (2015) investigate women and immigrant women’s experiences with mental health in their book *Women’s Mental Health*. The two authors explain that “mental health comprises...[of] three domains, namely emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being”(Srivastava; Dastjerdi & Mardukhi in Khanlou & Pilkington, 2015, p.83). With this in mind, to discuss and reflect upon the topics present in the memory-work portion of episode two I have chosen to separate this discussion into the same aforementioned three subheadings with one addition; (a) Anxiety & Panic Attacks, (b) Comparing with friends in their home country, (c) Isolation, and (d) Mothers.

Anxiety and Panic Attacks. With consideration to the first female immigrant I discussed in my memory-work who was enduring panic attacks as a result of trying to maintain a level of consistency with her grades, it is important to note that “mental health problems are human

experiences that are open to many interpretations, interpretations that vary greatly across cultures” (Swinton in Harper, 2016, p.22). Looking at the role of school in different cultures in itself changes how students view their educational journey. Different parts of the world have stringent outlooks on education and place high value on student success. In the case of the aforementioned student, she was experiencing distress as a result of grade inconsistencies across languages, cultures, and schooling practises. For immigrants from varying areas globally, “such experiences...[allow them to] encounter the world in ways that are sometimes distressing but always personal, meaningful and often deeply spiritual” (Swinton in Harper, 2016, p.22). When dealing with mental health concerns with immigrants to a new country it is important to remember that,

simply by naming the perceived psychological condition of [immigrants]...we have already made some significant judgements with regard to how we intend to frame the issues, as well as importing a whole range of cultural assumptions....The real issues may be somaticized or ‘hidden’ within the disconnection that people feel in relation to their communities. (Swinton in Harper, 2016, p.32)

It is interesting to consider the different mental health terms that have been created from foundations of North American culture. However, when someone immigrates to a new country, can we expect these terms to apply the same ways for someone who brings different cultural experiences with them? Is it belittling to apply the same terms? Do we lack an understanding of the nuances they are experiencing to ascribe a ‘condition’ to their new experiences? With this in mind the question:

Is the psychological distress experienced by some [immigrants]...to do with the process of moving *per se*, or the process of moving into, or out of a particular context that may either be generally toxic, or specifically toxic to the particularities of the experience and context individuals, families and communities bring with them?(Swinton in Harper, 2016, p.30)

The different baggage that humans bring with them when they immigrate and then try to navigate integrating into a new society successfully is immense. Add learning new languages, trying to find success academically, balancing cultural and familial obligations/ expectations, and

digesting the reality that there may be portions of their life that they feel they have already successfully completed that they are now expected to repeat and it seems only normal that mental health would become a concern. Looking specifically at females “everyday experiences...[exposes] some of the oppressive social and economic circumstances, and sociocultural and geopolitical environment social and political structures that contribute to...[female] mental health disparities” (Landy, Sword, & McArthur in Khanlou & Pilkington, 2015, p.299). The additional stress that is placed on female immigrants between considering the role of females in their home country, religion, culture, and families alongside, the pressure of assessing the new country they have immigrated to, maneuvering their new realities and trying to find some form of harmony between these two worlds is a lot to consider, all the more of a sixteen year old student.

Immigration Status and Mental Health. Research has proven that “immigration status has a direct effect on the lifestyle of individuals in their host countries” (Dastjerdi & Mardukhi in Khanlou & Pilkington, 2015, p.88). For immigrants to feel secure and able to create a new life for themselves and their family they require assurances and stability. The reality of Adult Education is that many students enter the country alone and sometimes as refugees. In some instances, “refugees experience pre-migration trauma which affects their well-being and mental health” (Dastjerdi & Mardukhi in Khanlou, 2015, p.89). Moreover, to address the concept of placement tests and Ministry exams, sometimes the content used in exams touches upon sensitive material for immigrant students. During a practise oral for the final exam, I observed as a refugee student connected the theme of the presented text with a bullet wound she had in her own arm. She disclosed that she had been shot while in school in her home country. When the exams are created they need to be done with sensitivity to the clientele that are in Adult Education and with care to avoid obvious themes that could revive trauma experienced in the students’ pasts.

Returning to the student who did not seek medical assistance for fear of consequences due to the ambiguity around her families permanent residence status, it has been noted that “dependence on primary care is especially acute for immigrants lacking access to specialists because of lack of status” (Killian & Khanlou; Killian & Lehr in Khanlou & Pilkington, 2015, p.101). The reality for many immigrants in Canada is that they are afraid to seek medical

attention if they are experiencing tensions with their status in the country. Moreover, there has been “an association between immigration status and lower rates of use of mental health services, even when universal health insurance is available” (Killian & Lehr in Khanlou & Pilkington, 2015, p.101). During the present COVID-19 pandemic there has been a focus given to the subject of foreign workers whose precarious immigration status may jeopardize their access to medical benefits despite the fact that they are the people keeping the economy functioning; “in Quebec, to have implied status does not give a foreign worker a right of access to the RAMQ and means, among other things, that they would not be entitled to reimbursement of hospital costs” (Miekus, 2020, para.3). The Quebec government has attempted to rectify this by granting six month temporary access to foreign workers with ‘implied status’ but it has done so with a lot of paperwork that is required of these foreign workers. It seems that this is an area where Canada’s healthcare system falls short. Looking specifically at situations of female migrant workers in Toronto,

women with precarious immigration status in Canada... examined...health consequences of having no legal immigration status for women in Toronto, a large metropolitan located in the province of Ontario. Often, the gender-specific concerns of non-status women become lost amidst the media and policy attention directed at undocumented male...[immigrants]. (Khanlou, Khan, & Mill in Zangeneh & Al-Krenawi, 2019, p.114)

Meaning that female immigrants with precarious status are often neglected in comparison with their male counterparts and resultantly have a more difficult time ironing out their status and as a result fear medical attention despite the fact that in Ontario they have access to OHIP.

Ultimately, it seems that healthcare as a whole is something that immigrants’ are cautious of utilizing and that this becomes an increasingly large concern for those who find themselves with precarious situations in regard to their immigration status in the country.

Comparing with Friends from Home. After relocating to a new place it is normal to compare the progress between yourself and the people who you used to surround. However, there are many considerations that can affect how one integrates into their new settings;

culture, context, trauma, social dissonance and dislocation all have important corollaries within the lives of those who, for whatever reason, find themselves transported from a

place of homeliness and security to a space wherein home needs to be created and recreated rather than simply dwelt within. (Swinton in Harper, 2016, p.21)

In regard to the student who I discussed in this section of my memory-work, she was seemingly apprehensive to creating a new home as she had not come to terms with the reality that she had to return to high school. However, “by reifying depression...[or other mental health concerns] we can be tempted to take our eye off the fact that it may be society that has the problem and that the individual may only be manifesting the symptoms of a sick society” (Swinton in Harper, 2016, p.30). Here the concern becomes whether or not the students’ feelings of injustice held validity, or if her education did not realistically transfer and she was unable to accept that. Nevertheless, this student found herself caught between two worlds, back home and in Canada. By “understanding...[immigration] as an ongoing struggle of living in between physical and metaphorical points of departure and arrival, which can leave migrants vulnerable to disorientations ascribed to mental illness” we are able to begin to fathom the concerns that may burden them mentally (Shubin in Harper, 2016, p.38). In the case of this student she found herself in limbo with “contradictions of externality and internality, certainty and uncertainty” (Shubin in Harper, 2016, p.41). She had already mentally accepted that she had finished with this part of her life and did not want to, nor know how to harmonize the new reality she was facing in juxtaposition with what her life would have been had she remained in her home country.

In some instances, immigrants lose their close connections. As well, immigrants lose their connection with the world which has become unfamiliar to them. There may also be a loss of social status from that which they had in their home countries, communities, and families. The effects of these losses and the additional stresses of immigration are magnified. (Dastjerdi & Mardukhi in Khanlou, 2015, p.83)

The loss of progress and internal status can create mental health concerns and lead a student to feeling isolated in their surroundings. Moreover, feelings of “shame and guilt function as mechanisms of social control by helping to regulate and subtly shape people’s social behaviour to adapt to the moral standard of their society” (Su & Hynie in Zangeneh & Al-Krenawi, 2019, p.243). For an individual to immigrate to a new country with certain achievements behind them,

to discover they need to achieve what they believed was done could create feelings of shame as the individual struggles to harmonize their old life and new life. When looking at the role of shame and guilt in Chinese and European Canadian students' Su and Hynie (2019) concluded there are eight possible "categories of guilt and shame scenarios" (Zangeneh Al-Krenawi, 2019, p.251). I have chosen three of the scenarios that I believe are correspondent with the feelings the female student had shared with me:

- (2) Displayed/ had a flawed character/self...felt inferior to somebody...(3) Breaking own expectations: this included failed own expectations...could not achieve academic/personal/professional goals, (4) Breaking others' expectations: this included failed others' expectations. (Su & Hynie in Zangeneh & Al-Krenawi, 2019, p.251)

The three categories of shame and guilt that are listed above are three that aligned with what the student had shared with me. She felt that her return to high school while her peers back home were in university made her inferior. Moreover, the unforeseen change in her plans broke with the expectations that she had of herself when she entered her new life in Canada. Finally, -- despite necessary validity -- the idea that she had failed her parents and friends due to her new situation and lack of corresponding progression. This student was very successful in her academic pursuits at home and had already mentally placed herself at university level. This is a reality that many immigrants face after entering Canada, as they find themselves having to reacquire qualifications that they may have already held. Regardless of the merit of these situations, these are difficult realities to face alongside the integration into a new society and could lead to feelings of guilt and shame. When juxtaposed with peers with the same qualifications back home, this may lead to feelings of isolation as new immigrants try to build a new life in a new country.

Isolation. When looking at instances of isolation for immigrants it seems the foundation of the topic is around the dissemination of information about resources for new arriving immigrants; "overall...immigrants are not well informed about the supports and resources available to them" (Dastjerdi & Mardukhi in Khanlou & Pilkington, 2015, p.84). When building a new life for oneself and surrounding family, being made aware of all the resources that are available can be a crucial step to developing a stable life in a new country. Moreover,

English proficiency and educational status, ...[proved to be a determining factor surrounding] the...[pace at which] integration occurred and...[also connected to] better...well-being and mental health. As well, a higher level of English proficiency apparently helped participants enjoy their life in Canada....[Immigrants] indicated that the language barrier was one of the most significant barriers to the formation of community connections and integration into society and it had a negative effect on their well-being and mental health. (Dastjerdi & Mardukhi in Khanlou & Pilkington, 2015, p.86)

When immigrating to Quebec, immigrants are faced with two languages to learn and this can prove to have a daunting and isolating effect on their ability to develop a new and comfortable life. In chapter six of Khanlou and Pilkington's *Women's Mental Health* (2015) Mahdieh Dastjerdi and Afkham Mardukhi (2015) assess the difference in social isolation between men and women. The authors present research findings from Milica Markovic, Lenore Manderson, and Margaret Kelaher (2002) who convey that, "social isolation in Canada is even greater for immigrant women who are less likely to speak French or English" (Dastjerdi & Mardukhi in Khanlou & Pilkington, 2015, p.90). Due to the role that immigrant women play in their families they often do not have the same opportunities to integrate into society, develop language skills, and therefore, can at times lead more isolated lives than their male counterparts. It has been proven that, "social supports in the community play a vital role in bridging the gap between newcomers' social worlds and their surrounding environment" (Killian & Lehr in Khanlou & Pilkington, 2015, p.104). Therefore, it is important for awareness about available resources and also for community integration to take place.

Returning to mental health, it has also been proven that "women are generally more likely to report mental health than men" (Simona Moussa, Pecoraro, Ruedin, & Houmard in Khanlou & Pilkington, 2015, p.225). Meaning that if female immigrants are given support and assistance integrating, while also learning a proficient level of English or French, they are able and willing to seek medical assistance in comparison with their male counterparts. Delving further into mental health and feelings of isolation in female immigrants, I will briefly overview immigrant mother experiences.

Mothers. Connecting to memory episode one, here I revisit the topic of a female immigrant mothers' experiences in Adult Education this time focusing on their mental health. When examining mental health with immigrant mothers in Canada two overarching topics recurred. The first was the idea of, "false promises about educational equivalencies and the lack of fair employment punctuated the initial experience of many mothers following their arrival in Canada" (Bohr, Hynie, & Armour in Khanlou & Pilkington, 2015, p.237). For many female immigrants, they enter Canada under false pretenses about how their education will transfer and the life they will be able to build. I alluded to this in episode one when I discussed my colleague who immigrated to Canada and was told she would be able to teach. Upon revision she found herself back in Adult Education and later university as not all of her education seamlessly transferred.

The second recurring theme was the resilience of immigrant mothers. In chapter sixteen of Khanlou and Pilkington's book *Women's Mental Health* (2015), Bohr *et al.*, (2015) concluded in their research *Focusing on Resilience in Canadian Immigrant Mothers' Mental Health* that, resilience was highly salient in mothers in th[eir] study as they spoke about coping successfully in the face of economic and social adversity, their focus on re-establishing compromised relationships following the re-unification of their family, and their resolve to emphasize the constructive outcomes of their immigration to Canada. (p.239)

In many instances mothers cited a desire to create a stable and successful life for their families in their new country, outlining how that was a driving factor. In the case of the female immigrant mothers I have taught, that is an overarching pattern that holds consistent. Reaching back to episode number one, I discussed immigrant female mothers that inspired an entire class of peers with their fortitude. Others that were working, in school, and raising newborn babies. While female immigrants as a whole are more likely to seek medical assistance when needed, it also seems that female immigrants who are mothers are able to endure more -- simultaneously inspiring peers -- for the sake of creating a life for their families.

Description of Kent Monkman's (2017) *The Scream*. Attending the Kent Monkman exhibit, "Shame and Prejudice: A Story of Resilience" at the McCord Museum in 2019 was an activity that was part of one of my Masters courses. The exhibit was incredibly powerful as it

illuminates the reality of Canadian Indigenous history, while also utilizing subtle elements of European colonialism. I thought that this image was fitting for episode two as it illustrates images of families being torn apart. Imagine a painting of a prairie home in Canada. The sky is blue with two birds flying overhead. In the foreground of the painting viewers watch as Canadian Mountie Police, Nuns, and Priests physically rip indigenous children from their families and out of their mothers arms. The mothers are screaming and crying as they try to fight the restraints of the Mountie Police, reaching for their children who are being carried away by the Priests and Nuns. The children seem unaware of what is happening to them. In the distance you can see some people running away. The Canadian Mountie Police, Nuns, and Priests demonstrate the role of society in oppressing different populations based on socially constructed ideas of proper behaviour. While this image is powerful when looking at Indigenous history it is also appropriate for the topics covered in episode two. It illustrates this idea that immigrants are pulled from their homes, families, and communities to land in a new country where they must harmonize their old and new realities. Moreover, it further portrays the concept that society has determined what is required for success and delineates decisions how success is achieved. Finally, the idea that there are structures that are in place to determine if one's education transfers, immigration status, and also the different medical issues that may be at play for newcomers to Canada run parallel to the images of the Mountie Police, Nuns, and Priests above. Ultimately, the power of the picture applies to the inner turmoil that immigrants must experience when finding their previous efforts no longer applicable and forced to reimagine how their life journey will proceed.

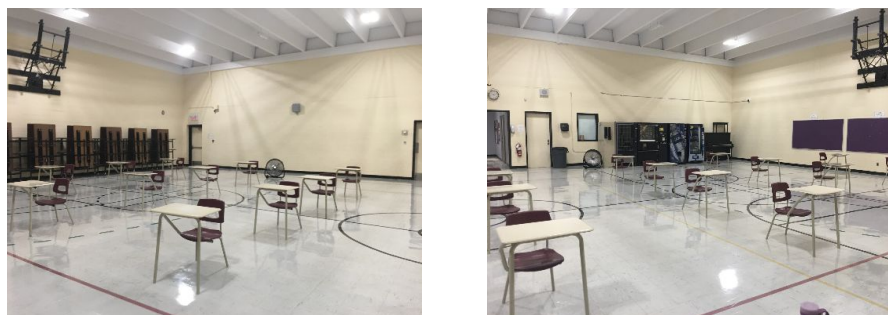


Figure # 3. Social Distancing, Industrial Fans and Mental Health

The final image for this episode's photo images are pictures of the gymnasium where the final Ministry exams took place at the end of June 2020 for Adult Education students in one centre. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Quebec government determined that students in the youth did not need to write their Ministry exams and that it would be left to their teachers' professional judgement to determine the students' final grades in their courses. This was not the same for Adult Education. First, very limited information in reference to Adult Education was given from the government during the conferences, leading to large disarray in the centers and further confusion/concern for eager students awaiting information. Moreover, due to the nature of Adult Education courses being 100% exam, it was decided that students would be required to return to schools after nearly three months away to write their final Ministry exams. If the students chose not to write the exam, they would be forced to re-register, pay, and attend the same three month course again in the next session. Many of my students voiced concerns around the safety of attending the exam, the protocols that would be in place, the anxiety they felt having to try to reteach themselves the material while also dealing with the many things going on in the world, the injustice of more less being forced to write the exam or accept their hard work would become useless, and ultimately the unfair comparison of how their corresponding peers in secondary school in the Youth Stream were being treated in comparison to them. One of my students was pursuing academic studies in the Youth Stream of the EMSB during the day and attended my evening class twice a week in Adult Education to expedite his studies. This student illuminated the inconsistencies of treatment of students who were seemingly completing the same level of education but were treated differently due to an assumption that they were 'adults'. Despite the reality that many of the students were -- again -- between sixteen and eighteen years old. Students' shared the mental health concerns they endured during normal day-to-day life and then explained the exasperated experiences they were having as a result of the ongoings of the world on top of their normal concerns. Many of the students had been working throughout the pandemic and some were even in the healthcare industry working as nurses. There was large concern surrounding the safety of choosing to write the exam. In the end all of the students successfully wrote their exams and found peace of mind knowing they had completed their courses. Nevertheless, it again illuminates a disregard for the

students in Adult Education. As they entered the gym it became quickly apparent that the school did not have air conditioning but rather large and loud industrial fans that attempted to temper the space. Students sat, socially distant, sweating as they did their best to write their exams. After collecting all material and cell phones my role as the teacher became to invigilate the exams and the proper wearing of masks on students' faces. It was a unique experience. I empathize with the students' concerns around their health and the strain the whole ordeal took on their mental health. I think this image is important as it illustrates another way that students in Adult Education may find their mental health being neglected at the hand of officials who seemingly give little thought to the ongoing of Adult Education.

Concluding Thoughts for Memory Episode Two

When looking at different aspects of mental health for female immigrants, realities surrounding how mental health can differ between cultures highlighted the need for more attention to be given to the mental health needs of female immigrants. Moreover, instances of anxiety for immigrants were clarified through examining the different elements of negotiating their new lives with their old lives. The idea that immigrant mental health issues could be a reaction to issues in a new society rather than individual mental health issues emerged. Discussions surrounding how immigrant status can affect medical treatment that is sought after has been illuminated across the country, especially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, an overview of how comparisons with peers in one's homeland can lead to feelings of isolation for many immigrants as they try to harmonize their old lives with their new lives helped put into perspective some of the mental challenges that female immigrants endure.

When discussing mental health it is not limited to direct discussions of mental well being but often extends to physical ailments as well;

people would complain of sore backs or vague pains in their abdomens. The feelings and experiences of what we in the West might call 'depression' were manifested in quite different ways due to the particularities of cultural assumptions and social expectations.

(Swinton in Harper, 2016, p.24)

Again, this acts as a reminder that mental health carries different stigmas in different cultures and may not be something that can be articulated in the same way as we are accustomed in the West.

As a result immigrants may find themselves expressing pain in other ways that could be tied to a mental struggle.

The length of time an immigrant has been in the country may also have a large impact on their mental well-being. Chen, Kazanjian, and Wong (2008) conducted a study surrounding Chinese immigrants in Canada and found that

the length of time an immigrant had been in Canada was associated with a substantial increase in the rate of mental health visits for most...immigrants...The literature suggests that immigrants are at heightened risk of psychological stress not only immediately after arrival but several years later. (p.536)

Suggesting that even if an immigrant does successfully integrate into Canadian culture they may be suppressing difficulties they are facing to achieve their goal. These same issues may arise later once they have more space for self-care. Similarly, “age emerged as a strong determinant...[finding immigrants] after the age of 25...were more likely to have received mental health services than the younger group...age was consistent across both sexes” (Chen *et al.*, 2008, p.537). This is not necessarily surprising as it has been repeatedly proven that youth are more resilient and able to endure more obstacles. Individuals who have already successfully created a full life, and enjoyed it as a young adult would logically face more mental health issues integrating into a new society. However, further looking at older immigrant populations, Reijneveld, Westhoff, and Hopman-Rock (2002) found in their research with immigrants over the age of 45 that “rates of health problems, such as cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, and mental health problems; among...immigrants are also comparatively high” (Reijneveld *et al.*, 2002, p.405). Their research suggested that “physical exercise...[showed] positive effects...[in instances of] depression” with immigrants (Reijneveld *et al.*, 2002, p.410). The reason I wanted to include this information around older immigrants is because it bears relevance to some of the students in Adult Education, for example the older female immigrant student I overviewed in episode one. Moreover, as earlier stated, in Adult Education we do not offer extra-curricular activities nor a gym class meaning that immigrants are not granted the opportunity to gain physical exercise while at school. This is a disservice to the Adult Education population as a whole, as many of the students who attend Adult Education lead very busy lives and do not have

time outside of school for such activities involving health or social integration. Therefore, it becomes integral that this is offered to them during their time in Adult Education.

Adult Education offers services to large bodies of immigrant populations. Some of which are older immigrants, young immigrants, mothers, fathers, refugees, etc. All the while, the academic classrooms are intertwined with Canadian born students who failed in the Youth Stream or have switched from the French stream and are searching for their second chance at a high school education. Some of the immigrant students are also entering Canada as refugees and may require specific health considerations. These students experience,

continuous movement...from regions where armed conflicts, political instability and severe economic difficulties are ever present...[furthering] the need in the healthcare system to [evolve protocols to] serve culturally diverse populations in the receiving countries. (Aichberger in Schouler-Ocak & Kastrup, 2020, p.25)

This has led to discussions surrounding different qualifications that may be necessary to serve the needs of individuals who come from different cultures and may not fit into the socially developed regimes for mental health care that have been developed thus far. Specific questions surrounding “barriers ...[that may] exist...[creating obstacles] to effectively treat patients with another cultural background than the therapist's” are in debate in the mental health community (Aichberger in Schouler-Ocak & Kastrup, 2020, p.25). Similarly, education -- specifically Adult Education -- needs to adjust the way that centers are run to try to offer better opportunities for immigrant success when integrating into Quebec society and school.

Memory Episode 3: Manipulated Systems

To begin memory episode three, I would first like to discuss the different experiences of female immigrant students who find themselves placed in the wrong level of the DBE classroom. To discuss this I will travel through my memory revisiting the different classes I taught, highlighting the different students I have encountered who struggle due to improper placement. Moreover, I will go over the different stories they shared with me about how they landed in that particular classroom. Finally, the second half of this episode will illuminate some inconsistencies that are recurring in Adult Education that perpetuate the improper placement of students. Some of the topics covered in this memory are not limited to female immigrant students. However, I will place my focus on my interactions with female immigrant students.

Wrong Level Forever

Once you are in you cannot go back. Adult Education is divided into three areas: (1) Diversified Basic Education (DBE), (2) Common Core Basic English (CCBE), and (3) Social Integration Services (SIS). The DBE program attends to academic studies, the CCBE program is for new language acquisition, and SIS is an adult special needs program. Firstly, before new immigrant students may register they must provide legal documentation demonstrating that they are a permanent resident in Canada, provide their health card, transcripts of their previous education if they attended another school in Quebec and pay the fee for the semester. After submitting these documents the students are then asked to write a placement test for each academic subject or for the CCBE program. These placement tests are graded by a teacher on staff in each respective department and a suggested grade level is produced. From there the student will begin their studies in the suggested grade level. Each teacher in Adult Education is given the first two weeks of the term to determine if the placement tests are accurate and may then consult their school's Principal and advisors about changing the level of the student. There are a few issues with this system though: (1) once a student is placed in the DBE program they cannot go backwards to the CCBE program and students cannot simultaneously study in the DBE and CCBE programs, (2) students are not always required to pass Ministry exams to move upwards, and (3) the placement tests are antiquated and too frequently repeated. Attending to the

first flaw, if a student is placed in academic studies they cannot be moved down to the CCBE program. The CCBE program is generally viewed as a pre-academic program for immigrant students who wish to pursue a high school diploma in Quebec. For this reason they are meant to begin in the CCBE program and move their way up, learning English and/or French, working towards a level of understanding that will enable them to enter the DBE program. However, once they are placed in the DBE program teachers cannot put them back in the CCBE program. Teachers are allowed to suggest that the student starts in the CCBE program but ultimately the decision is up to the student, who generally does not wish to move backwards in their academic pursuits. The second issue that arises at times is that each center of Adult Education has their own set of protocols. Some centers will require all students to pass the final exam of each level before moving forwards, while other centers will allow the teacher to bump the student up in the first two weeks if they feel they were improperly placed. The problem with this is that if the student is improperly placed in a lower level, they should find the final exam to be easy and receive a good grade. By making them write the exam, teachers have the ability to measure the student's level, ascertaining if they are prepared for the next level. When students are merely bumped they are not familiar with exam / level expectations and sometimes are placed in a level that is beyond their capabilities. Finally, the placement tests are very old and have not been revamped. They are the same tests that get used and reused every year, making it easy for cheating to occur.

In episode one I referred to a female student who had immigrated to Quebec quite a number of years earlier, raised her family and had been pursuing academic studies off-and-on as her children were getting older. When she emerged in my classroom her children were young adults and she was hoping to finish off the few credits she needed to obtain her high school diploma in Quebec. She was in her 50s and significantly older than the group of students in her class; the majority of the class was between the ages of sixteen and eighteen. She had taken the class I was teaching a variety of times and was repeatedly unsuccessful in the final exam. She came to class every day and tried her best on her weekly assignments. In the three month period she was in my class she wrote twelve weekly tests. The weekly tests were designed to ensure students were studying throughout the term, they were not meant to be unreasonably difficult but

rather a way to help students prepare for the style of the exam and help them to determine if they were studying enough. The topics that would be covered in the questions were given out ahead of time so that the students would have time to study the material before the end of the week. This student's grades were inconsistent on her weekly tests, the ones that she did well on all showed her regurgitating word-for-word from the class notes. The tests she did poorly on, she was unable to produce anything or critically think about the material presented in the questions. She explained to me that it was difficult for her to remember all of the material as a lot of the words were new to her and therefore, she was unable to always properly associate theories with corresponding names. Moreover, she found the critical thinking questions especially challenging because she struggled to apply memorized work into situations. She further revealed that she liked the weekly tests as they guided her studying but that the largest obstacle she had with the final exam was comprehension, she said she often found it difficult to interpret the questions fully. The exam she was repeating was a mostly multiple choice exam that tested the student's ability to comprehend and critically analyze the material covered in the course. Dictionaries of any language are not permitted in this examination. She did her best on the exam but again was not able to obtain a passing grade. At the end of the course she very ominously asked me to speak with her privately in the hall. In the hall she quietly explained to me that she had enrolled in an evening CCBE program at a neighbouring board in Montreal but planned to continue taking academic courses at this school. She thanked me for my efforts in trying to help her and said that after working together in the course she realized her language skills were not where they needed to be for her success. Finally, she asked me to keep this information to myself as she did not want to get in trouble. I was still relatively new to Adult Education at this time and unaware that she was not supposed to be enrolled in both programs simultaneously. I was thoroughly impressed with her dedication to her studies and naturally kept the information to myself.

Repeat until you pass. In that same class there was a young immigrant woman who sat next to the aforementioned student. The two had immigrated from the same country and often helped each other with their work. This younger immigrant woman was enrolled in this class with her brother, both of whom had taken the course multiple times. This young student

explained to me that she had taken every available version of this course's examination and was hoping that this time she would find success in completing the course. Similar to the earlier discussed female immigrant, this student struggled to comprehend the words being used when learning about the material and always regurgitated verbatim from class notes. She did pass the final exam and left the class with only one more course required to graduate. Her brother however, did not pass and had to repeat the course. These students illuminate two of the major issues for immigrants who have been placed in the wrong level of academic programs: (1) the academic programs assume that students have a language level that corresponds with the material and there is no protocols in place to help immigrants who have a language level somewhere in between ESL and Academic courses, and (2) immigrant students who do not have an adequate language level end up perpetually retaking the course until they have seen all the different versions of the exam enough that they are able to figure out the correct series of answers. At this point it seems that meaningful learning is not occurring and the Ministry exams are not truly testing what they are intending. The past school year has seen the creation of one hybrid “bridge” course that is meant to address the first problem surrounding extra assistance for students between ESL and Academic language levels, however, there is only one bridge course offered at one of the centres, only for ELA and it is very much in an experiential phase.

This next photo was taken in Seattle at the *Gum Wall* located beneath the *Public Market*. I was captured trying to zealously and excitedly photograph the alley of colourful gum. Under the *Public Market* in Seattle there is an alley of gum that, since 1993, has been a tourist attraction where people come to marvel at the decades worth of chewing gum that has been placed on the walls. The reason I have chosen this photograph for this chapter is because of the dialogue that I had with my travel companions.

Shortly after leaving the alley we began a discussion about whether the gum alley should be considered artwork or be removed by the city. The concluding sentiment landed on the fact that this immense quantity of gum has become a part of history, travelers from all over the world have come to this alley to leave their mark, and while at first the concept of vast amounts of chewing gum on all three surrounding walls seems gross it is pretty cool respectively. Relaying this back to episode three, I imagine that the different colours and age of the gum on the walls

can represent the reality that humanity -- regardless of nationality -- is ultimately just a species that is trying their best to find a place and achieve a realm of 'success' in their lifetime.

Similarly, education is evolving over time but it does so based on the foundational 'gum' that preceded it. I think the notion of this gum wall, immigrants in Quebec education and evolution of education are aligning concepts as it is something that is ever changing and demands discourse, as well as, illuminating contentious issues of perception.



Figure #1. Colours of the world, Gum of the world.

Plagiarism

I address plagiarism here because a recurring consequence of students being placed in the wrong level and subsequently repeating the same level multiple times, is that they may be driven to trying to find alternative ways of passing. I have no way of knowing whether this is more common for female students and would not want to draw any conclusions about gender differences. Nevertheless, the examples I offer here are from my experiences with female students. I recall that there was a young immigrant student who I met in one of my Secondary 4 ELA courses. She had recently immigrated to Quebec to join her husband who had arrived before her to set up a home for them. This young woman had two young children in elementary school, and she was working towards trying to complete her high school diploma with the hopes of attending college and later university. She was a very attentive and diligent student, always in class writing notes, frequently asking questions and remaining after every single class to go over the material. Initially, I believed she was just a very studious student, however, as I got to know her better it became clear to me that her language level was not appropriate for a Secondary 4 academic English class. The reason she stayed after class everyday was because she was slowly trying to develop a 'bank' of sentences that she would later replicate changing one word here and

there. It seemed as though she was trying to develop a formula to pass English Language Arts. Unfortunately, I found plagiarism in her work often and when asked to explain the sentiment of a sentence she had written, she was unable to or would try to apply something she had heard a peer comment during the discussion in class that did not connect with what she had written. I spent a lot of time with her going over her work, reviewing what it meant to plagiarize and the gravity of plagiarism. I explained to her multiple times that her language level was not where it needed to be to pass the final exam with a high grade and that she may want to consider practising her English more before moving forward if her academic plans were college and later university. As this student was stretched very thin between caring for her young children, husband, tending to household duties and assisting extended family she did not have a lot of extra time for her studies. She did her best to improve her language skills by reading in English to her children, watching English movies with her children, and ultimately just using English as much as she possibly could. However, Secondary 4 is the second last level of ELA to obtain a high school diploma and demands a strong control of the language to do well. I noticed that she was working closely with another student who was strong in English to try to learn what was expected of her. The girl who was stronger in English spoke with me outside of classroom hours expressing concern for the amount of assistance her peer was seeking and noting a feeling of being ‘uncomfortable’ sharing her work with the other student. She clarified that she did not want me to intervene but merely advise her. I counselled the student to share her feelings with her peer and set boundaries that she was more comfortable with.

Ministry exams in Adult Education provide students with their rubrics online for the public to access. In ELA rubrics are very useful as the student is able to guess the general questions or expectations for different parts ahead of time. They do not know the topic but can mentally prepare for what will appear on the exam. For this particular exam there are a few nights in between the different parts of the exam. Due to the way that this exam is administered students are able to mentally plan out the large written component of their exam in the evening between the exams. In the case of the one student who was strong in English she had told me that she planned to write a practise answer in the evening so that she could have an idea of how her paragraphs were going to be laid out. I explained to her that she was not allowed to bring

anything into the exam and that I would not be able to give her any feedback on the work she chooses to do at home in preparation for the exam. She was welcome to create a practise version of her exam's written component at home but it would purely be for her peace of mind. When the final exams were completed I noticed that she and the young immigrant student she had been working closely with had the exact same paragraph in their essays. Given that these two students did not sit near each other during the exam, I suspected that they discussed this portion of the exam outside of the school. After calling them both in and explaining that they both had plagiarized on their exams, the two girls explained to me what had happened. The young immigrant student asked to read her peers' essay that she had prepared in the evening and she had memorized a paragraph from her essay to reproduce in her exam. She emotionally explained that she did not feel she had plagiarized. I felt perplexed by her claim that this was not plagiarism as I had gone over the different forms of plagiarism with the class and this student multiple times in the course. Either way the instance of plagiarism was directed to the school's Principal who ultimately decided to have both students write a different version of the exam a second time. Both students passed. However, I was brought into the office later that year when this same immigrant student plagiarized in the exact same manner during the Secondary 5 English exam of another teacher's class. I felt badly for this student as she spent a lot of time trying to understand the material and what was expected of her but was placed at a disadvantage due to the fact that her language level did not enable her to properly engage with the course material, leading her to plagiarize in an attempt to find success.

Friends carry friends. At the beginning of each term, I ask my new students to write a paragraph based on a writing prompt that I had written on the board. The purpose of this activity is for me to gauge their critical thinking and writing skills. For one of my classes I chose the quote "never let schooling interfere with your education" by Mark Twain (Good Reads, ND). Most of the students struggled to comprehend what the quote meant but wrote something about education and the need to be accountable for one's own learning. One of the students in my class wrote a very comprehensive and intelligently written paragraph about the economy, specifically fiscal growth. I asked this student to stay after class so that I could inquire about her writing choice. The student was a young immigrant girl who was new to Montreal. She was unable to

communicate in English with me beyond saying “Yes, Ma’am” and nodding. As she was struggling with speaking she waved her brother into the classroom from the hall to translate between us. I consulted the teacher who marked her placement test to see how she had landed in academic courses and the teacher told me she wrote a very comprehensive overview of fiscal policy that seemed a little random based on the topic she was asked to respond to, but nevertheless her writing looked to be at a Secondary 3 level. After our interaction I went to see the administration as this student did not belong in Secondary 3 academic English and likely needed to go into the CCBE program to learn English. It was at this time that I learned that we could not push students from Academic programs into the CCBE program and it had to be their choice. I spoke with the student and her brother to explain the situation and counselled her to consider going back to first learn the language. She adamantly opposed this idea and therefore, I did all I could do and placed her in Secondary 1 academic English. She remained in Secondary 1 English for three semesters -- one full year -- never being given an exam as her teachers did not believe she was at an appropriate level to pass the exam. It is at the discretion of the teacher to decide if a student should not write an exam in Adult Education, and teachers are allowed to withhold the exam from the student if they have good reason. By her second year in Adult Education she managed to get into the Secondary 2 program, where she remained for another whole year. I was perplexed by how she ever managed to get into the academic program. She wrote the placement test in a private room, with an invigilator who took her phone. I spoke with the invigilator and the teacher who graded the placement test and each one assured me that she could not have cheated and that she placed at a Secondary 3 level. After reading her placement test, the student coordinator, Principal and myself could not figure out what could have possibly happened. This young woman was unable to verbally communicate in English and similarly was unable to read without translating every word into her native language. One day she re-emerged in my classroom as a student, again in the Secondary 2 program but this time she was able to partake in basic communication by herself, her English was getting better. During a practise exam she asked if she could go down the hall to ask her cousin a question about how they were getting home that day, citing the need to do it now because her cousin had to leave early to pick up her children. Because this was a practise exam, I allowed her to do this and told her I would

be watching at the doorway of the classroom to make sure she went directly to the class across the hall and back. To my amazement her cousin ended up being the same girl that had plagiarized in my Secondary 4 class mentioned above. After class I asked this student if that was her cousin and how they both came to study at this school. She explained to me that she was originally enrolled in a different school but they had placed her in the CCBE program. Her cousin apparently told her to take the placement test at our school because she had taken it herself and would give her the topic so she could prepare ahead of time. Finally, my question about how she landed in academic courses was answered. Her cousin was assisting her I felt bad for her as she was trying to obtain her high school diploma and go to CEGEP so that she could help her family financially, as they tried to set up their new life in Canada. For this reason she was trying to find the quickest way possible to finish with high school, but unfortunately did not realize the level of English that would be expected of her in Academic courses. When I was subbing at a different Adult Education center this past year, I ran into her again, still in Secondary 2 but in a new center now. When I left the school I wondered if she had switched because it was closer to her home or maybe a new job or if she was hoping to see if a new center would be easier to move forward into the next level. Regardless, in the time this student spent in Secondary 1 and Secondary 2 academic English, she could have completed the entire CCBE program and would likely have moved more quickly through the academic programs. This left me wondering why teachers are not allowed to push students backwards into the CCBE program?

Finally, the last student I will discuss in this portion of this episode is a female immigrant who had immigrated to Canada as a refugee. I met her in one of my ELA classes and she seemed to do pretty well throughout the course. She always sat with the same two girls: (1) was another immigrant but from a very different part of the world and (2) a girl who had immigrated to Montreal as a baby and attended the youth sector in French but transferred to Adult Education at age sixteen to finish her studies in English. This student did not do as well as her peers in the course but did obtain a passing grade. In the next semester I had these three girls in my course again, though this time I was teaching an elective. It was during this course that it became clear to me that this young student's English was not at the level she would need to be successful in

Secondary 5 academic English. As I watched how she handled the elective I was teaching, I noticed that she heavily depended upon these two girls to do her work. The other two girls were very strong students and slowly became irritated by the fact that their friend seemed to be using them. Nevertheless, they helped her and they all passed the elective course with very different grades. However, upon consulting with her Secondary 5 teacher, I learned that this student had failed the Secondary 5 English exam and barely passed the rewrite. Again, I was left with this feeling of wonderment, concerned that we were not properly equipping these students to be successful in CEGEP. The problem with the placement test that never changes and the exams that circulate through the available versions on repeat is that it allows for loopholes such as the ones listed above to occur.

Everyone gets an A.

In Adult Education not all of the teachers carry a teaching license. I remember when I switched into Adult Education it seemed it was a bonus that I had a teaching license but not a necessity. After spending two years working in Adult Education I have discovered that many of the teachers do not hold a teaching license. This has led to many inconsistencies in expectations of students, understanding of the role of rubrics, and the importance of Ministry exams. Moreover, in Adult Education there are no overarching directives that are enforced across all schools in all disciplines. Rather, every school has a different approach to handling protocols surrounding exams and student expectations. Unfortunately, this means that there is often an assumption that the people employed as teachers all have the same base knowledge which is not true. Ultimately, licensed or not it is not fair to assume that anyone has kept up with evolving trends or done the necessary reading to understand their job in a field that is driven by seniority based, tenured positions rather than one's ability to perform their job well. I have observed instances of classes being left unattended while students are writing their Ministry exam. The same offence would lead to a teacher receiving disciplinary action from the board in the youth sector. However, in Adult Education not everyone knows you are not supposed to leave classrooms unattended, especially during Ministry exams. Moreover, at times the rubrics are not being properly used but rather manipulated to form a grade that the teacher feels the student is

deserving of based on their class participation or work prior to the exam. This is understandable as many feel the 100% exam is not a fair representation of student ability but nevertheless underscores the purpose of the rubric and ultimately gives a false sense of capability to the student.

In one instance I had a female immigrant student – the student I mentioned in chapter one who had been racialized early in her academic pursuits and also experienced neglect from the academic machine that allowed her to be pushed through -- in my Secondary 5 ELA class. This student had a young son and husband who was often absent due to work and providing for the family. She did not have a support system in Montreal and as a result was always very busy with little extra time to attend office hours or tend to her homework. She was a student who had clearly been pushed forward by teachers who felt her work was deserving of a passing grade as a result of her situation. Nevertheless, this student had great difficulty speaking English and was unable to write coherently on her own. There were other students in this class that had great difficulty articulating themselves verbally but were able to write beautifully on the in class assignments - for which they were not allowed to use technology. However, in this student's case oral and written assignments were very difficult. During in-class discussions she would always present a comment on the same topic regardless of what the class was speaking about. Her written work that was completed in class was incoherent, but the work brought in from home was eloquently written. Based on the juxtaposition between her in-class writing and homework, it was clear that someone outside of school was doing her homework for her, with the only consistent marking being her handwriting. This student was not prepared, nor able to be successful in this course as she did not have the level of English that was necessary to complete the exams at an acceptable level. When the exam time came she plagiarized a large portion of her work off of different online 'sparknote' resources. This was possible because the students were allowed to bring their novels into the exam. When I examined her novel I noticed she had a lot of notes written in the margins. I explained to her that none of what she wrote in the book could appear in her exam, clarifying that I would be collecting the books with the exams to cross reference. She nodded and said she understood. However, when I graded her exam she had copied multiple sentences and even paragraphs from different online resources that she had noted

in the margins over multiple pages of her book. When I informed the administration of what had happened, they told me to review plagiarism with her and offer her a rewrite. I brought her into the classroom at the end of the day and informed her she received a grade of zero due to the obvious plagiarism. Her response was one of great surprise, claiming those were her words and that I was treating her unfairly. She -- with great difficulty -- told me a story of her former teachers who used her work as exemplars for the rest of the class. She explained to me that she had experienced racism earlier in her academic journey in Montreal and demanded an explanation as to why I checked her exam for plagiarism. I informed her that I checked every exam for plagiarism as I always did but it was clear in her exam because of the inconsistency in tone and vocabulary. She turned on her peers asking if the other students who were immigrants and could not verbally articulate themselves were also checked for plagiarism. Finally, she explained that this was an attack on her character. After calming down she conveyed that she did not feel I was racializing her but did not understand why she had been centered out and caught for this. Moreover, she explained how she had never received grades as low as the ones she was receiving in my class, stating that she had been given 90% in all prior levels. This was also surprising to me as she was averaging low 60's in my class, and I could not fathom that her writing had changed that dramatically between levels. When I consulted the academic advisor she shared similar concerns about this student and her surprisingly high average but cited that she did not know what to do about it in the past. When I consulted the administration, I was given the same response that she could not be pushed backwards after she passed a Ministry exam. I consulted other teachers in different centers and the board's consultants on her exam to ensure that I had used the rubric properly, all of whom said that I had been a little too generous in my grading. The entire experience left me feeling badly for students who find themselves pushed forward and given a false sense of capability. Allowing her to believe that she would be able to pursue studies in CEGEP and University and receive similar high grades. Mostly, I felt badly that she aligned this exam with an instance of racialization and left feeling marginalized. All of the students underwent the same plagiarism check and cross referencing between their notes and written work, however, for her it was a personal attack. I left wondering how her

previous teachers had graded her exams and if they used the rubric properly or even checked for plagiarism in her work.

“Respect but also that’s not fair”. The final instance I will cite of inconsistencies across academic expectations leading to unfair student experiences is one that I had with a young immigrant girl who was participating in my Secondary 5 ELA class while her friend was also completing the same course with a different teacher in the same center. After administering the first set of Ministry exams it became apparent that there was a large grade variance between the two classes with my students receiving grades nearly 15% different than the other class. Many students cited feelings of injustice stating that I was marking too harshly. As a result I planned an assignment for the class in which I had them each partake in a writing task and then mark their peers' papers using a similar rubric to that of the exam. The entire class gave grades between 60%-75% to each other. To which I asked them how they felt I had unfairly judged them as many of them received grades higher than their peer-evaluations on the exam. This seemed to bring about a little perspective for the students in which they realized that I was not using the rubric unfairly and many of them thanked me for the grade I had given. I explained to the students that my goal was not to placate them with falsely high grades but rather help them to work towards achieving the grades that they wanted to ensure they were prepared for their post-secondary academic goals. I reminded them that I offered office hours by schedule and assured them I would stay late and come in early to help them if they did the necessary work. Many of these students took me up on the offer and improved their writing tremendously. The averages for the Ministry exams were progressively going up in my class however, were still at times 10% lower than that of the other class. Finally, the young immigrant girl mentioned at the start of this memory story came to see me. She had worked particularly hard all term to improve her writing and thanked me for all the work I had done with her. However, she also shared the grade her friend had in the other class, explaining that her peer was a much weaker student and she did not feel it was fair for her friend to have such a high grade in comparison with her own. I listened to her and agreed with everything she was saying, reiterating that I was following the program guidelines and grading according to the rubric. I encouraged her not to compare herself

but rather continue to push herself to achieve her goals. It is her words that are captioned in the subheading at the beginning of this memory story as she said to me “Miss I respect that but also this is not fair, we are both applying into the same program at CEGEP”. At this point in the semester we were approaching the final Ministry exam that was worth the largest percentage of the students’ grades and I wanted to do something to try to level the playing field for the two classes. I consulted the administration and asked if they would bring a consultant in for the marking of the exams to try to find some marking consistency between the two classes. The consultant came in and conducted a review of how to use the rubrics and the expectations of students for the ELA teaching department. After engaging in a group grading session it became clear that there were large inconsistencies between what teachers were expecting of students. Moreover, it became apparent that the other classes' grades had been artificially inflated as a result of teacher compassion towards their immigrant situations. The student I cited above did particularly well on her final exam and finally achieved the grade she had been working towards. Many of the students in that class thanked me, explaining that they appreciated that they were leaving high school and entering CEGEP with a realistic idea of their academic capabilities. To my great surprise the largest take away that was cited was that they realized if they did not receive the grades they wanted, they learned that they could always continue working to achieve their goals. Obviously, I left the class with a feeling of accomplishment but also a feeling of relief. This group of students was mature and driven enough to do the necessary work to achieve their goals but the situation they were placed in was very unfair. I worried for students in the other class that were leaving with inflated grades, only to find themselves receiving failing grades at a college level. Mostly, I wondered how it was possible for two teachers, giving the same exams, to students of a similar caliber to distribute such a variation of grades. Ultimately, I believe that there is a need for more consistency across centers in each discipline to ensure that students are receiving the same opportunities and similar judgements.

Description of Peter Blume’s (1934-37) painting *The Eternal City*. The next photograph of artwork was taken while I was visiting the Museum of Modern Arts in the winter of 2020. While I journeyed through the exhibits, I captured photographs of the artwork that for whatever reason spoke to me. This particular piece was created by an American artist who

immigrated to Russia named Peter Blume. His work is often associated with surrealism and his particular “brand of Surrealism...[is often] based on the juxtaposition of disjunctive and unrelated objects and figures” (MOMA, 2020). This particular piece is titled “The Eternal City” and is meant to “depict the process of rebuilding civilization out of its own destruction” (MOMA, 2020). Imagine a colourful painting utilizing clay-like hues, with mountains in the background. The foreground of the painting shows a historic street in Rome. At the front of the image, imagine the accordion from a ‘jack-in-the-box’ bouncing out with a blue headed, balding middle aged man appearing at the end. The blue head is the focal point of the painting as it appears larger than its surrounding objects. His facial expression is surly as he looks onto the remains of a crumbled roman statue. To the left of the broken down statue, set back behind the crumbled statue, not completely clear is an illuminated painting on the side of a wall. From the distance it looks like a shirtless man, looking down at something. I chose this photo to be included in episode three of my memory-work because I imagine that some students feel like the ‘jack in the box’ as pictured. This idea of something that stands out in a comparison to what is familiar, facing each day with a bold face, hoping to achieve new goals.

Finally, I found the name and history of the painting to be appropriate to topics covered in this episode as Adult Education is an area that is in need of ‘rebuilding’ or at least attention to ensure that students are being given the best educational experience available. While education will be an eternal principle, it should be continuously evolving.

Reflections

The themes that have emerged in episode three are not necessarily specific to female immigrants -- though my experiences have been with female immigrants – therefore, when analyzing these topics I do so broadly, delving into how these topics are applicable to all students rather than focusing on female immigrants alone. I have separated my reflective discussion across five topics: (1) Placement tests & Language learning evaluations, (2) Ministry exams, (3) Immigrants placed in the wrong level, (4) Inconsistencies when grading, and (5) Racialization.

Placement Tests & Language Learning Evaluations.

When looking at placement tests I was curious about the contrasting national approaches to immigrant student placement. When researching I learned that there are many different acronyms used for placement tests and English language learners (ELL) alike, which I have outlined in my abbreviations at the beginning. The two main locations and their approaches to placement tests that I focused on were the United States and Europe as these two areas offered the most information. When conducting this research I stepped away from my focus on female immigrants and looked more broadly at immigrant experiences. To summarize, the United States has developed a couple different placement tests for immigrants – WIDA and ELPA21 -- that are used in different states. Some concerns that emerged were focused around administration of the tests by teachers, as well as the need for annual and continuous revision to these tests and the trustworthiness of these tests to accurately place the students with consideration to corresponding core content requirements (King & Bigelow, 2018, p.961). Again, this research was conducted in the Youth Stream of schooling and did not offer insight into how Adult Education functions. Moreover, these tests were made with the goal of improving available resources across all disciplines, rather than specifically for language learners (King & Bigelow, 2018, p.961). Contrastingly, Europe had assembled a team of linguistic experts from different backgrounds around the globe to develop a placement test – CERF-- that was made with the intention of evaluating second language acquisition in many languages as opposed to just one (Little, 2007, p.646) . This one test was the foundation which was used to also develop other attempts at placement tests in England; Asset Languages (Jones & Saville, 2009, p.57). Similar to the United States concerns around the success in accurately evaluating language proficiency and placing students still remains. Nevertheless, looking at these two Countries reiterates the need for Canada and Quebec to give more attention to placement tests. As it is now, the placement tests in Adult Education are outdated and recycled so frequently that students who know someone who has taken the test in a given centre can easily cheat. Moreover, in comparison with Europe's placement test, Quebec's tests were created by a handful of teachers rather than specifically selected linguistic specialists. While there is some consistency across the States and in Europe there is no consistency or clear comparable agency that is trying to bring unity to the placement

tests being used across Canada. Again demanding greater attention and unity be placed on the formation of effective placement tests that are annually revised to aid in successful immigrant integration into education.

Difficulty with Placement Tests. When developing placement tests for new immigrants there are many concerns that arise. The first concern that has been illuminated multiple times already is “adapt[ing] or develop[ing English language proficiency] ELP standards to reflect the language that ELs must acquire to meet rigorous content standards” (Lee, 2018, p.319).

Education is constantly under revision and programs frequently develop,

new content standards in ELA/literacy, mathematics, and science...[that] raise the bar for content learning to prepare all students for college and careers... For example, students engage in argument as they make claims, provide relevant and sufficient evidence to support their claims, and offer sound reasoning. (Lee, 2018, p.319)

However, if a student does not hold a strong command of the language of instruction / evaluation they will find it difficult to comprehend the text, let alone critically engage and create meaning with evidence to substantiate their claims. Secondly, it would seem reasonable that since Adult Education consists largely of immigrant students with a variety of native-languages, that some “form of standardised testing to evaluate immigrant English language proficiency before placing them in an academic level” should be developed and frequently revised with specific consideration to “disciplinary practices...[in] each content area” (Lee, 2018, pp.319-320).

Secondly, moving beyond content expectations it is important to consider the possibility that “each ELL student has a unique set of weaknesses and strengths in English and a unique set of weaknesses and strengths in his or her native language” (Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003, p.8). Ultimately, how each student interacts with each subject will be different depending on their academic challenges in their native-language. For that reason it would seem logical that a larger emphasis needs to be given to providing additional assistance to immigrant students for each subject specific content. Naturally, this a concern that is consistent across all of education due to a lack of funding.

The United States and Europe base their statistics and results on research conducted with immigrant students in the Youth Stream. Reiterating the need for more research to be done in

Adult Education to help ensure that there is a similar level of care being given to students in Adult Education as their Youth Stream counterparts. Looking at developments being made to placement tests, this upcoming school year 2020 has seen a change in protocols concerning student placement. The new protocol stipulates that students whose placement tests place a student in Secondary 5 (Grade 11) ELA will now make said student required to pass the Ministry exams for the level before, Secondary 4 (Grade 10). While a good idea in theory it is a relatively impossible task unless there is some suggested study material provided by teachers. The mandated topics covered in Secondary 4, while not unique to general ELA topics, are not tasks or materials that a student would be casually teaching themselves.

Ministry Exams/ Standardized Testing.

Ede (2006) writes that “students learn when curriculum is relevant to their lives, when it is of personal interest to them, and when they are actively engaged in the pursuit of knowledge” (p.32). There has been a move during the reformation of exams in Quebec Adult Education to attempt to create “Learning Situations” that generate a real life situation for students to engage in when completing course material and exams. Though a good idea in theory, it often is not executed effectively, as the exams are not updated frequently allowing for topics to become outdated quickly. Moreover, due to the nature of Adult Education exams -- counting for 100% of their grade -- it does not allow for much deviation from exam material; “the reality is that tests offer a highly potent and expedient method for changing school curricula and classroom practises, particularly when the stakes attached to them are high” (Menken, 2008, p.8). Students in Adult Education lead very busy lives between work, family, friends, heavy course loads and in many cases they are also trying to learn two new languages. Therefore, if a course neglects to teach a principal or theory that a student will need for college, university or life skills they often do not show great interest in completing anything that is not going to ‘appear on the exam’. Obviously, the teacher can claim that ‘everything is important and it will all appear on the exam’, however, many students have friends who have taken the exam or have unsuccessfully taken the exam themselves in the past, giving them an idea of assignments that are beyond the scope of the course. Moreover, given that Adult Education condenses a ten month course into three months,

there is generally a race against the clock to complete the required material, without even thinking of going beyond. Many,

researchers now realize that to understand the consequences and effects of assessment procedures more effectively, they need to gain better understandings of the ways in which their tests and examinations fit within complex educational systems; these systems are themselves influenced by socio political and economic factors and the relevant policy decisions made at different levels within society (local, national, regional). (Jones & Saville, 2009, p.55)

This is something that is becoming more relevant with the current climate of the world but also with the reformation of different programs in Adult Education. As outlined in episode one, the majority of the clientele that attend Adult Education are either students who were unsuccessful in the Youth Stream, transfer students from the French Youth Stream, or recent immigrants. As a result it is crucial that the Ministry exams are frequently revised -- as they are in the Youth Stream -- to ensure that the tests are evolving with the world and also challenging students to be prepared for their future academic pursuits. Creating three versions of an exam and using them on rotation for extended periods of time cannot be an acceptable practise.

Returning to the 100% exam, it begs the question: What are we hoping for students to take away from this course? In some instances testing is “deployed as a disciplinarian’s tool, forcing the test taker to conform; at other times they are the tool of state policy in schemes of accountability, compliance, and standardization, forcing teachers to teach to a test” (Sherris, 2003, p.189). However, standardized testing also allows for schools and teachers to,

identify students who may need additional support to gain the skills and knowledge that all students in the state...[/province] should possess, according to the Board of Education in each state...[/province]. Remediation programs are typically in place to offer extra support to those students who are not able to pass the tests or assessments. (Goodman & Hambleton in Phelps, 2005, p.96)

In this respect Ministry exams and standardized testing allow for students to demonstrate their knowledge, while also illuminating the needs of the class. Moreover, in Adult Education it is important to “acknowledge that students are given multiple opportunities to pass these tests”

(Goodman & Hambleton in Phelps, 2005, p.95). If a student fails a Ministry exam they are granted one rewrite per term, allowing them a second chance to demonstrate their knowledge. Yet, if remediation or extra support is not available in the centers as they are short staffed, lacking funding or materials to help the students the rewrite becomes irrelevant. In many instances the 100% exam “mak[es the course material]...merely instrumental and not meaningful” as students conclude that memorization is more important than learning (Shohamy, 2001, p.110).

Finally, “imagine...[a student, semester] after [semester], taking what has over time become a familiar test. Through experience, [t]he[y] know[] the test comprehensively and can speak expertly on each section and each question type” (Clark-Gareca, Short, Lukes, & Sharp-Ross, 2020, p.7). At that point the exam becomes ineffective in assessing a students’ knowledge and capability to move onto the next level. However, as illuminated in the memory-work of this episode, once a student passes a Ministry exam they cannot be pushed backwards. Leading to students repeating the cycle again. Here again, the problem of only using a few versions per level on repeat becomes clear. As explained in the memory-work of this episode, if a student has taken all the versions of the exam multiple times, the exam is no longer testing their comprehension or capabilities but rather their memory. One solution to this problem would be to make coursework count towards the students’ final grade, as if they were unable to complete in class assignments, they would not automatically be able to pass based on exam exposure.

Evaluating Learning vs Memorization. Another topic to be addressed when looking at Ministry exams and Standardized tests is the inherent differences that are present in the mode of evaluation. For example,

tests that rely on essay questions or other types of open-ended tasks generally require far more testing time per student to achieve a given level of score reliability...However, multiple-choice tests cannot assess certain types of knowledge and skills. This is one of the reasons why score reliability is not the sole criterion for evaluating test quality. (Le & Klein in Hamilton, Stecher, Klein & National Science Foundation, 2002, p.55)

This is generally why tests are composed of a variety of exam questions, to help gain a full understanding of the students' knowledge. Moreover, "if a test fails to capture important elements of the domain, scores can only justify narrow or qualified conclusions about performance" (Le & Klein in Hamilton *et al.*, 2002, p.62). It is for this reason that I am again advocating for constant revisions of Ministry exams --as with everything in life-- adjustments are always needed. Furthermore, "test scores are not a definitive measure of student knowledge or skills" making the 100% exam problematic (Le & Klein in Hamilton *et al.*, 2002, p.76). Especially, if the exam unfairly favours one mode of evaluation without offering other modes for students to demonstrate their knowledge. At that point a student could know the course as well as the instructor but is not being given the opportunity to succeed. Conversely, "students' increasing familiarity with the test may mean that...scores are" less accurate as student outcomes are no longer based on their proficiency in the subject but rather their ability to memorize a correct sequence or formula for success (Le & Klein in Hamilton *et al.*, 2002, p.67). Revisiting the purpose of a Ministry exam it would seem ideally "assessment should be *for* learning (i.e., formative in nature) rather than *of* learning (i.e., not summative)" (Cumming, 2009, p.93). By this I am again suggesting that course work completed throughout the semester should bear some weight. Utilizing solely summative testing is not fair for students and does not inspire the approach to learning that facilitates lifelong learners.

Standardized testing for English Language Learners. Evaluating the standardized test more narrowly for immigrant students who are also still learning the language the "pressing concern that language proficiency mediates performance on the standardized tests being used...makes language a liability for ELLs when test results are the primary criteria for high-stakes decisions" (Menken, 2008, p.3). Beyond the idea that exams in Adult Education dictate if a student progresses to the next level, once a student reaches their final level and college applications their final grades will also determine the future opportunities they are given. Burke (2011) comments on Menken's (2008) work highlighting that, "requiring ELL to pass...[ministry] exam[s] in English in order to graduate from high school is discriminatory and prohibits capable students who have not had sufficient time to acquire academic English from pursuing higher education" (Burke, 2011, p.421). Conversely, referencing the memory-work

portion of this episode, perhaps the purpose of the exam becomes to demonstrate to teachers and students alike that the language level is not where it needs to be in order to be successful moving forward. The reality is “many ELLs experience a test-focused curriculum, and must habitually retake the exams in order to pass” (Menken, 2008, p.12). In some subjects, such as ELA, students’ proficiency in English will be judged more harshly. Generally, students who have a strong command of the language receive corresponding grades between coursework and exam results. However, the problem remains for students who find themselves at a level that they are not equipped to find success, and the teacher is not able to move their placement. It is at this juncture that students find themselves repeating the exams.

Exceptions. When investigating different protocols for placement tests in the United States, I learned that there was an ongoing discourse discussing offering placement exams and standardized tests in two languages: (1) the students’ native language and (2) the evaluation language. This is an interesting concept that again raises the question: What is the purpose of the exam? As well as: What is the exam intending to prepare the student for? Moreover, it became clear to me that in some states if a student fails their standardized test and appeals the grade it can “nullify the results of the [exams]... Seniors who had passed their... courses but failed the exam...[are] eventually allowed to graduate” (Menken, 2008, p.47). In fact, it is a repeating reality that “the appeals are accepted if the students’ school grades in core subjects are comparable or better than the grades of students who were just above the passing score on the state test” (Goodman & Hambleton in Phelps, 2005, p.95). This is generally true in the Youth Stream in Quebec education as the Ministry exams may count towards a bulk of the students grade but it is balanced out by coursework throughout the term. However, in Adult Education there is no appeal opportunity as a result of the 100% exam. It is for this reason that “identifying the shortcomings of current systems by noting what is not working and indicating where harmful or unintended consequences are likely to occur” is crucial to help evolve the evaluation process and create meaningful learning experiences (McDonnell in Hamilton *et al.*, 2002, p.119). I cautiously posit that many of the issues in Adult Education are not addressed in a timely manner because it is “Adult” education. By this I am alluding to the fact that parents do not have a role in student education. Often the driving force in educational reform is based on the needs of youth or

parent pressures. However, given that Adult Education is assumed to be serving ‘adults’ -- despite the reality that a large number of students in academic courses are immigrants who are under the age of eighteen -- allows a margin of neglect to occur. Secondly, the parents of these students are unable to advocate for their children as they do not have a role in Adult Education, are learning the language/culture as well, find themselves overwhelmed with personal burdens, or are non-existent in the students’ life for whatever reason. In this same token “alternatives to current testing regimes that are feasible and that address the public’s desire for schools that are more accountable, responsive, and effective” is not an existent idea in Adult Education (McDonnell in Hamilton *et al.*, 2002, p.119). The discussions about changes in Adult Education are slow to develop and often limited to the same sphere of people who already are aware of the changes that are needed. For the time being “the most effective strategy will probably be for testing experts to identify changes that can be made to the existing testing and accountability systems” and revising the existing protocols to eliminate some of the plausible fixes, such as, newer Ministry exams more frequently with more relevant topics and assessment criteria (McDonnell in Hamilton *et al.*, 2002, p.119).

Immigrant Students’ Placed in the Wrong Level.

When immigrant students enroll in Adult Education it is generally not their first time attending school. The question of where they attended and if their credits will transfer becomes a large determinant in the level they are placed. In some instances, ELLs have “school histories with multiple moves...and high numbers of absences. Mobility and absenteeism understandably reduce the learning time in school for these students and increase the potential for gaps in their knowledge base” (Menken et al., 2012 in Clark-Gareca *et al.*, 2020, p.4). Moreover, if they are new to the country they may have,

started schooling in...[one country]...and then moved to another country or territory where the educational system was not in English. Upon their return to ... [the initial country], because of these breaks in learning English, some students ha[ve] gaps in their academic backgrounds. (Clark-Gareca *et al.*, 2020, p.4)

In these rare cases students are generally evaluated by the teacher to determine where they should begin. However, most often the immigrant students are subjected to the placement test and placed accordingly. One issue that is recurring in Adult Education is

[long term English learners] LTELs... [that have] learning disabilities that were not diagnosed. Sometimes they were identified belatedly and began to receive special education services in addition... In some cases, however, students were not provided with additional learning services corresponding with their learning needs. (Clark-Gareca *et al.*, 2020, p.4)

There is an added concern in Adult Education in respect to undiagnosed learning needs for students as students over the age of eighteen can no longer be tested for free. Often, leading students to remain stagnant in one level because they are unable to afford a test and also unable to pass the core content expectation. Furthermore, sometimes immigrants will try to withhold their diagnosed learning needs for fear of being unfairly judged. In these instances there is little that can be done as the only educational history that is accessible for immigrant students is the one that is provided to the school. Moreover, as Adult Education does not have the same resources as the youth, there are fewer -- sometimes no -- school officials available that have experience working with students with a variety of learning needs. Leaving it up to the teacher to try to make a ‘quasi-diagnosis’ of what they suspect it could be, without actually saying anything as it would cross the boundary of an educator's expertise.

Finally, immigrant students’ who find themselves placed in the wrong level may discover that, “native language courses also allow content instruction to move more quickly. These practises are critical in that they build on students’ linguistic and cultural assets rather than focusing on their academic gaps” (Clark-Gareca *et al.*, 2020, 12). In these instances, students who do not have a strong hold of the language of instruction will find themselves feeling overwhelmed and unsure of how to successfully progress. When considering the first female immigrant student I mentioned in the memory work portion of this episode – the one that asked many questions and frequently remained after class – being placed in the wrong level can place the student in a position where they are overwhelmed and frantically trying to continuously catch up. Moreover, for students who find themselves being ‘pushed ahead’ the concern lies with their

abilities to find success in the next more demanding level. In some cases, ““a number of these students have been identified as lacking sufficient literacy in their home language and in English...They have not had the educational opportunity to develop strong literacy skills in any language”” (Olsen, 2014; Menken & Kleyn, 2010; in Clark-Gareca *et al.*, 2020, p.3). In these instances students could find themselves feeling isolated in a variety of respects. Lastly, the interest of students’ who are in the right level and trying to prepare to continue in their academic journey can be largely affected when students’ find themselves grossly misplaced. At times, “the presence of students in the classroom with weak language skills may alter teaching methods in ways that affect their fellow students’ progress” (Friesen & Krauth, 2007, p.2211). Most commonly, students with weaker language will demand more assistance from the teacher. This leads stronger students to miss out on opportunities to grow, as they can find themselves adopting a more reserved role in the class, allowing for students needing more attention to garner more class time.

Writing Conventions , Gender, and Culture.

Plagiarism has become a recurring observation during my time in Adult Education. It may or may not be linked to gender but interestingly all of my experiences have been involving female immigrants. To discuss this topic I wanted to first look at the age in which plagiarism becomes a concept for humans. Kristina Olson’s and Alex Shaw’s (2011) article, *No fair, copycat!’: What Children’s response to plagiarism tells us about their understanding ideas* explores the age that children comprehend the notion of plagiarism. The two highlight that despite the literal diction, children are capable of “pejoratively...[isolating instances of]...‘copy-cat[s]’, suggesting that at least some children are concerned with plagiarism” (Olsen & Shaw, 2011, p.438). Olson and Shaw (2011) elaborate to deduce that children seem to comprehend the “relative[ly] complex[]...[idea] as young as 5 years old” (Olsen & Shaw, 2011, p.438). It is reasonable to draw a correlation between the age and start of elementary school as a possible reason for this discovery (Olsen & Shaw, 2011, p.438). After exploring the two authors’ article I was able to add a new approach to explaining plagiarism -- involving two drawings of a cat -- to my repertoire moving forward. Ultimately, with the idea that at the age of five children

are capable of understanding that a ‘copy-cat’ carries a negative connotation, it seems reasonable that an adolescent or adult with strong linguistic skills would also be able to comprehend this concept. Leading to the issue of “whether intentional or unintentional, the growing prevalence of plagiarism...raises important questions concerning academic integrity,...[and] student learning” (Park, 2003; Jereb, Urh, Jerebic, & Sprajc Polona, 2018, p.410).

Gender. When looking at how gender affects plagiaristic tendencies, the discussion often begins evaluating student awareness about the act of plagiarizing before developing into the gender discussion. Given that for my aforementioned encounters with plagiarism, I had spent three months reviewing the concept of plagiarism, consulted various peers on approaches to doing this, and finally had immigrants with strong control of the concept explain it to their peers in their native language, I am going to dive into the gender differences that have been noted. For the most part research has concluded “that women generally have a much more negative attitude towards plagiarism than men do” (Jereb *et al.*, 2018, p.418). Contributing factors that may lead to plagiarism involve “having a very busy social life...indicat[ing] that students with...very busy social li[ves] are more likely to believe that plagiarism is acceptable” (Jereb *et al.*, 2018, p.418). Moreover, individuals that maintain busy lives -- working as wife, mother, employee, and student -- may find themselves being stretched thin, thus leading them to plagiarize regardless of their moral stance. In these instances of being overwhelmed “the perception of powerlessness by test takers and the sociocultural consequences” may drive students to try to find a means to achieve their goals (Sherris, 2003, p.189). In episode three of my memory-work I overviewed the complex roles that female immigrants must navigate between their own identity construction and simultaneous familial expectations / duties. Generally, “men and women differ in their levels of social skills, which is inextricably linked both to the way they conduct their social lives and at the same time to their attitudes towards cheating in general and plagiarism in particular” (Jereb *et al.*, 2018, p.421). Reflecting on the instances I have had of plagiarism they have all been with female immigrants who maintain very prominent and busy roles in their families. All of the females who plagiarized were mothers and wives who lead extremely demanding lives with too little time to properly attend to their academic pursuits. Moreover, they have also all struggled

with control of the English language, finding themselves in high levels of academic courses, with rigorous demands that they are not necessarily equipped to find success outside of plagiarism.

Culture. One semester, I found myself teaching a CCBE class in Adult Education; ESL. While teaching in this class I had multiple female immigrant students who were educated in their home countries as engineers and lawyers. Their education had successfully transferred to Canada and they were solely enrolled in the course to gain a strong understanding of the English language. I should clarify that I was teaching the second level of six levels, meaning that the students were not very well acquainted with English. The point of this story is to bring to light an instance I had with the one engineer in which she copied a sentence from the book. It was the correct answer but I asked her “Why did she choose to copy it word for word rather than write it in her own words or point form”. She shared with me that she thought this would be a stronger answer as it provided evidence. I explained to her that she had committed academic theft and in the future should either put it into her own words or use quotations. To my great surprise she said that she had never heard this and could not translate the concept into her native language. She said that providing concrete and correct proof was more important. At this level of ESL no one would actually get in trouble for plagiarism but as it was my first time teaching ESL, my academic, Ministry exam focused mind felt it important to explain the issue. I did not add this to my memory-work as it is an instance from the CCBE classroom and my research is focusing on the DBE classroom. Nevertheless, I believe it provides an anecdote segueing into “culture as a possible factor in plagiaristic practices” (Flowerdew, 2015, p.109). John Flowerdew (2015) overviews previous works of his and shared authors to illuminate the different role culture can play when plagiarizing, extrapolating that plagiarism takes on a “framework consist[ing] of four dimensions: ethnic culture, local culture, academic culture, and disciplinary culture” (p.109). He clarifies that “a culture corresponds to the norms, values, attitudes, modes of behavior, and genres of a given community, large or small” (Flowerdew, 2015, p.109). Finally, he breaks down the aforementioned framework delineating that in regard to his first point the,

ethnic cultural view...could be that this is a contributory fact in the copying behavior of the doctoral students in the language re-use study...In particular, with China’s opening up to the West since the early 1970’s, it is unlikely that earlier views of Chinese attitudes to

copying still stand, even if they might have been valid at one time. (Flowerdew, 2015, p.110)

Using a doctoral sampling group in China, Flowerdew (2015) explains how the concept of “authorship, ownership, and contributing to society” may not have always aligned between Western culture and Asian culture (p.110). He attributes these differences to the “Enlightenment period” and “collective orientation of Confucianism” (Flowerdew, 2015, p.110). He concludes the topic by stating that this idea has likely evolved over time. Nevertheless, it holds as an interesting foundational framework as to how culture can affect interpretations of plagiarism.

Delving into his “second dimension...local culture”, Flowerdew (2015) uses the same sample group of Chinese doctoral students to look at the role of copying. He found that “the practice of copying was widespread among these students...[which] could be considered to be a feature of the local culture” (Flowerdew, 2015, p.110). In this particular investigation he clarified that the students worked in a small, niche environment, in which copying was common and accepted (Flowerdew, 2015, p.110). This is a fascinating idea that I had -- naively -- never considered. For his third dimension, “academic culture” Flowerdew (2015) highlights the difference in the Chinese “education system...[which] relies a lot on rote learning and memorization...[Concluding,] such an approach may lead to imitation of previously memorized texts and less emphasis on originality” (Flowerdew, 2015, p.110). The concept that different cultures may have different goals in their approaches to education, leading students globally to hold differing opinions about how to approach their academics would produce differing ideas of what qualifies as plagiarism. This idea resonated with one of the students I mentioned in the memory-work -- the mother who copied an entire paragraph from her peers essay during her exam -- because it brought me back to a conversation we had about producing her own criticisms in her writing. I recall that she felt this was an impossible task as ‘someone, somewhere in the world has probably already had this thought’. She struggled to comprehend that we were not expecting her to ‘reinvent the wheel’ but to produce a concept that was authentically her own and then provide evidence to back up her claim. Moreover, when looking at things like ‘theme’ I explained to her that everyone in the class should have a similar answer but the way they choose to express it, the proof they choose, and their analysis should differ.

Finally, Flowerdew's (2015) final realm looks at how different disciplines may hold differing views towards what constitutes plagiarism, elaborating that within that concept that varying cultures may also hold different approaches to subjects. He juxtaposes sciences with the humanities to prove his point stating that,

in science, when plagiaristic practices are considered, a distinction is made between the copying of language and the copying of ideas, the latter being considered a much more serious infringement on disciplinary practice. This is in contrast to the humanities, where great importance is placed on the way an issue is discursively constructed, in addition to the content of the argument. (Flowerdew, 2015, p.110)

For students who plan to pursue or show more interest in one discipline such as math or science rather than the humanities it could lead them to develop different ideas of what constitutes as "showing proof". For example in elementary school, I remember often we were instructed to copy a portion of the question word-for-word into our math proof conclusions. As we got older we learned to write ourselves, but it was used as a foundational concept to aid in the visualization of the expectation of a proof in math. However, if that concept never evolved it would have led to adolescents' and adults' thinking that is the manner in which to conclude a proof. It would be interesting to confer with my colleagues in math and science to ask if plagiarism -- in the conclusions for example -- is a consideration during Ministry exams or if the correct answer is the sole goal.

Transnational views on Plagiarism. Anne Palmer, Mark Pegrum, and Grace Oakley (2019) conducted a study evaluating student views of plagiarism while they were studying in a transnational environment (p.40). They discovered that, "a significant proportion of the students surveyed believed that their previous work could be recycled as it was their own" (Palmer *et al.*, 2019, p.40). This topic in many instances is actively under debate. Palmer *et al.*, (2019) also discovered that,

a large number of students strongly believed that there is no plagiarism involved in nearly identical assignments submitted in the context of a group work assessment, despite instructions that assignments should remain individualized. The level of disagreement exceeded 50% in some institutions. (Palmer *et al.*, 2019, p.40)

This I found interesting as it clarifies that the assignment instructions outlined ‘individual’ assignment submissions. If part of the criteria for a given group assignment is an individual final submission I am curious how fifty percent felt that submitting the same assignment is not plagiarism. Perhaps using the same results or similar evidence would make sense. Moreover, Palmer *et al.*, (2019) also, “found that a large proportion of students, ranging from 20% to 35%, considered recycling of their own work or copying from a friend’s work with consent as an acceptable act and not one of plagiarism” (Palmer *et al.*, 2019, p.46). Illuminating the different instances and boundaries that students’ use when considering plagiarism in their own work.

English Foreign Language (EFL) views on Plagiarism. A study evaluating EFL views on plagiarism in Iran outlined the different beliefs that some EFL students hold when approaching the topic of plagiarism. Firstly, “participants believed if they stole or copied others’ work and...[submitted] it as their own work and used it in their essays or dissertations without mentioning the source, they were accused of plagiarism” (Elham & Rogayeh, 2017, p.222). In this instance it seems that the students in this study were aware of the definition of plagiarism and able to comprehend the possible consequences. In regard to teachers’ checking their work for plagiarism, “the participants believed their professors threatened them a lot but did not check their projects” (Elham & Rogayeh, 2017, p.222). This could be a commonly held thought, especially if a student or a peer has previously escaped the consequences of plagiarism. When discussing how a teacher might approach isolating potential students who have plagiarized, the participants suspected that teachers used class performance as a cross reference to determine if they should check someone’s work for plagiarism; meaning if they did not contribute at a similar caliber in class, they may choose to check the exam (Elham & Rogayeh, 2017, p.222). Finally, “different reasons for plagiarism were mentioned by participants including: lack of good command of English and motivation...some participants thought students’ laziness and fear of failure caused plagiarism” (Elham & Rogayeh, 2017, p.222). This is a recurring theory as to why ELL students may find themselves choosing to plagiarize in their academic courses, returning to the importance of ensuring students are placed correctly and not pushed forward erroneously.

Another facet of culture to be considered is who is considered responsible for ensuring plagiarism does not occur in a given location. For example,

students in more individualistic cultures such as the UK, might also be expected to consider academic integrity to be an individual responsibility, whereas students in the more collectivistic East European nations might consider this to be an...[institutional or] community responsibility. (Mahmud, Bretag, & Foltynnek Tomas, 2019, p.275)

In this culture section I have evaluated global, transnational, cross discipline, as well as, English language learners views of plagiarism which has displayed that there are many different considerations that could lead an immigrant to misunderstand the qualifying factors of plagiarism. Moreover, “in addition to national culture, there are numerous other factors which may influence students’ perceptions of plagiarism/academic integrity policy including personal motivation, institutional environment and external pressures” (Mahmud et al., 2019, p.285).

Ultimately, highlighting that “the perception of powerlessness by test takers and the...[subsequent] sociocultural consequences” are strong motivators for immigrant students to find themselves considering plagiarism as an option for success (Sherris, 2003, p.189).

Moreover, in this age of technology there is a “persistence of filesharing” between classmates, as well as, available information on the internet, creating more opportunities for students to access knowledge but also more chances for plagiarism to occur (Blair, 2011, p.189).

Looking at how plagiarism and the onus of plagiarism can differ around the world brings to question if an immigrant student in the DBE classroom can truly comprehend what plagiarism is with the standard definition that a North American teacher would provide. In many ways it seems that it would be necessary to not only discuss the definition but also what the views of plagiarism are for every students’ different cultural heritage. Perhaps moving forward that is how the topic should be tackled: first with an explanation of the western connotation of the word and followed by a homework assignment where the student explains what plagiarism means in their heritage.

Description of Wolf Vostell’s (1968) *B52 Lipstick Bomber*. Wolf Vostell was another artist that was featured at MOMA in the exhibit I visited in the winter of 2020. I found myself particularly drawn to this photo as I was curious about the purpose of replacing bombs with lipsticks. This artist “often utilized mass-media images of destruction in his examination of consumer culture” (MOMA, 2020). When I took this photo I had intended to use it in my History

course to discuss different artistic representations that emerged as a result of World Wars. This image of “Vostell[’s was] adapted a[nd] widely circulated...[as a] war photograph of a Boeing B-52 plane dropping bombs over Vietnam. He replaced the bombs with tubes of lipstick -- equating mindless consumerism with apathy toward contemporary injustices and violence” (MOMA, 2020). Connecting this painting with topics covered in episode three, I have reimagined the purpose of the lipsticks. In this respect I would compare the tubes of lipstick to the repetitive use of inadequate and outdated resources such as the placement tests and Ministry exams. Here I imagine the perpetual falling of a series of lipstick colours, repetitive, predictable and assuming that the clientele of Adult Education do not require constant attention the same as their youth counterparts. While compared to a war plane it seems hyperbolic, I feel this image embraces some of the perpetual issues that emerge in education as a whole -- lack of funding and resources -- but nevertheless, the same solutions continue and create an apathetic approach to education as a whole. This idea of “mindless consumerism and apathy toward contemporary injustices” resonates with the issues that can be found in education for female immigrants as we expect them to integrate into a new society while critically engaging in cultural material that is in some cases incomprehensible for them (MOMA, 2020). When looking at the lipsticks I am brought back to the female immigrant student who showed me a picture of herself without her hijab and with her make-up done, where at first I did not recognize her. It is an interesting line these women tread as they perform both western ideologies alongside their cultural ideologies.

Inconsistencies in Grading.

One of the largest concerns that has emerged in Adult Education is inconsistency in grading. During a pedagogical day the different disciplines were separated and given different samples of student work, asked to grade using the ministry rubric, and then hand in their results. Upon review it became horrifyingly clear that especially in ELA there is a large discrepancy between expectations and interpretation of the rubrics. Possible reasons for these differences can be divided into,

three basic ways in which raters can differ from each other. They can have different average scores (i.e., some raters are more lenient than others), score spreads (i.e., how

much they use the full range of possible scores), or relative standings (i.e., the extent to which they agree on which answers are better than others). (Le & Klein in Hamilton *et al.*, 2002, p.54)

A fourth way that graders can differ in Adult Education is between teachers who have a teaching license and those that do not. Logical to most professions, “studies have shown that teachers who have higher levels of education and are properly certified in their prospective teaching area (i.e., mathematics, English) are more effective in the classroom” (Akiba, LeTendre, & Scribner, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2000; in Arbuthnot, 2011, p.37). When obtaining a teaching license a general program requirement is a course about creating, discussing, and interpreting rubrics to help ensure a level of consistency in the profession. Furthermore, with educational reforms occurring it is important to ensure that all teachers -- licensed or not -- hold the same view and understanding of the purpose of a rubric. If a teacher views the rubric as something for them to manipulate or an obstacle in their philosophy of education it leads to large discrepancies and renders the given rubric invalid. It is for this reason that, “the articulation of clear standards for academic content and student performance...[is necessary] to guide teaching and learning and the alignment of classroom instruction with those standards” (McDonnell in Hamilton *et al.*, 2002, p.102). By unifying the expectations across centers, in all disciplines of Adult Education, there can be generalized understanding and cohesiveness achieved that at present does not exist. Moreover, “some kind of externally imposed, standardized instrument is needed to provide comparable data on schools and students, so as to equalize the information available to everyone with a stake in the education system” (McDonnell in Hamilton *et al.*, 2002, p.103). By imposing a measurement across centers, discrepancies can be illuminated and a similar standard of expectation and grading can be ensured across the Adult Education centers. Rather than having students jump between centers based on rumours of easier programs or having teachers in the same center distributing varying grades for the same subject. Imposing some form of regulation can ensure a quality of learning and teaching. To achieve “the promulgation of academic standards...[provincially] local governments...[need to] make choices about what is most important for students to learn and what constitutes mastery of that knowledge” (McDonnell in Hamilton *et al.*, 2002, p.104). By ensuring that students have an appropriate grasp of the

expected course curriculum we are preparing them to enter the next level, with an opportunity to succeed. However, when students receive grades that are not representative of their work, or if they are pushed forward we are not helping the students but rather placing them in positions to fail. This is particularly important for female immigrant students who already have many obstacles to overcome while trying to create a new life for themselves.

Exam versions & Exam Administration. As mentioned above, in Adult Education there are a set number of exam versions that are rotated throughout the semesters, across centers. However, the centers do not have much communication with one another and often students have friends in other centers or are attending evening studies at one school and day studies at another. This leads to timbits of versions of exams being shared between students which is another reason that more cohesion is needed in Adult Education across disciplines and centres. Additionally, “a student’s score may fluctuate as a function of the particular version of the test taken. By definition, such inconsistency lowers reliability” of the exam (Le & Klein in Hamilton *et al.*, 2002, p.53). In ELA, the highest level of Adult Education leaves the choice of a class novel for the final exam up to the teacher. This seems logical, however, there is no one who is overseeing what each teacher chooses across the centers. Meaning that one teacher may choose a more difficult novel, while another teacher chooses a novella or children’s novel. For an ELL to read a novel in a new language, actively engage, comprehend, and then analyze to form a critical opinion can be a seemingly impossible task. It is for this reason that “the differences in the types of educational materials and equipment used by teachers can...[largely] impact achievement” (Arbuthnot, 2011, p.37). But for all of the students to write the same final exam, with novels of varying difficulty, to produce largely different grades that will be used to apply to College or University appears to be another hole in the system.

Similarly, the way in which the test is administered can largely change the results for students. There are flexible guidelines provided for things like exam duration, however, there are also rigid guidelines such as the order in which tasks are meant to occur, or options that are to be made available that can largely change the validity of the exam. This is concerning because “a test developed and validated for one purpose cannot be assumed to be valid for another because the test content may not lend itself to interpretations other than the ones for which it was

originally intended” (Le & Klein in Hamilton *et al.*, 2002, p.64). Moreover, if inconsistencies occur in the ways that teachers administer exams students are given grades that are inaccurate and may inflate averages or create false senses of competence in a subject.

Validity. Consistent for all exam grades, “a particularly serious threat to the validity...is the risk that the scores will become inflated. That is, increases in test scores are considerably larger than increases in student proficiency, so that inferences about student learning are biased” (Le & Klein in Hamilton *et al.*, 2002, p.67). Especially, for English language learners it is crucial to ensure that proficiency and grades align to allow for the greatest opportunity for success as well as, reducing barriers in other subjects. When testing the validity of an exam, “the test should produce the same score for two test-takers who are of the same proficiency level. Like validity, fairness is not an inherent property of the test but depends upon the use of the test” (Le & Klein in Hamilton *et al.*, 2002, p.68). Language learners are already at a disadvantage trying to learn a new language and find academic success while integrating into a new culture, however, by creating a fair opportunity for all students to achieve goals, we are allowing them to also be aware of areas that may need more attention before moving forward.

Translated versions of exams for English Language Learners. A final consideration to look at when evaluating exam grades and English language learners is the idea to provide two versions of the same exam: (1) in English and (2) in the immigrant students’ native language. The purpose of doing this is to create accommodations and also provide a better opportunity to evaluate proficiency. This is an idea that I had not heard of prior to my research and one that I think prompts many questions. Regardless, “it cannot be assumed that a score obtained from the translated version should be interpreted in the same ways as if it were obtained from the original test because test items may not function in the same manner” (Le & Klein in Hamilton *et al.*, 2002, p.72). I have observed many language learners in class translating words back-and-forth between their native language and English to try to create meaning. On exams these learners are not allowed a translating dictionary nor access to technology. They are allowed an English language dictionary, however, it is little help if the student does not hold a strong grasp of English. Ultimately, exams are meant to test the students’ proficiency in a subject in English, therefore, a translated version of the test may be irrelevant.

For immigrant students integrating into Adult Education, “the extent to which the[y] feel threatened by uncertain...[of course material or] unknown situations” can cause an array of outcomes during an exam (Hofstede, 2001, p.161). Reflecting upon the gaps present in the exam process and trying to iron out opportunities for inconsistencies in grading is necessary for a fair education experience. Unfortunately, as “test scores are numeric, they are often assumed to have a degree of precision that is not always justified” (Le & Klein in Hamilton et al., 2002, p.77). Working towards ensuring that numeric grades are as accurate as possible will empower immigrant students to have accurate interpretations of their skill level, allowing for clearer expectations moving forward with their academic pursuits.

Concluding Thoughts for Memory Episode Three

Episode three of my memory-work broadly looked at areas of contention that have become visible to me during my time working in Adult Education. I did my best to juxtapose the experiences I have had in academic Adult Education with realities in the secondary school systems in areas of North America and at times globally. Ultimately, while there have been many enlightening articles, I am left with the same feeling that there is a need for research to be conducted in Adult Education, specifically in Quebec, to illuminate ways in which we can improve student and immigrant student experiences. The analysis portion of this episode did not specifically deal with female immigrants as the topics that emerged were not unique to female students but rather important to the entire population of Adult Education. The topics that emerged in this episode highlight large areas of inconsistency that are affecting immigrant students but are not being discussed outside of Adult Education. The most pressing concerns center around the administration of Adult Education from the root of hiring educators with different credentials, using antiquated placement tests that seemingly hold no true validity, administering exams that are on rotation leading to opportunities of cheating or plagiarism, and finally the occurrence of racialization in a community that is inherently largely populated by immigrants. Episode three has illuminated the reality that the education machine for Adult Education is catering to an adult demographic -- regardless of whether they are adults or not -- creating large areas of contentions and ultimately not serving the needs of the students. When considering the topics discussed in this episode I am again brought back to the injustices that

immigrant students face that are inherently ingrained in education. Moreover, when thinking deeper into the extreme sacrifice and work – time away from their new born baby, juggling multiple children with multiple schedules, caring for extended family, maintaining the house, working a part-time or even full-time job -- that female immigrants must agree to do in order to pursue studies it further solidifies the need for more thought to be given when creating protocols and exams. All areas of education are in need of attention. In elementary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions parents and students are often vocal about the day-to-day ongoing of education to ensure that they are receiving a standard of care. However, Adult Education is a ‘grey’ area that has few to advocate for the students’ needs. More importantly, there needs to be a party baring power to make and regulate necessary changes that is receptive to the call for the upkeep that Adult Education needs.

Summary

Chapter three explores the day-to-day activities of female immigrant students in the academic program of Adult Education in Montreal, Quebec. In this chapter I have travelled inward and reflected on the experiences I have had with my students. The purpose of this chapter was to highlight some of the injustices that these female students navigate as they pursue a new life in Canada. After conveying some of the realities for female immigrants in academic Adult Education I engaged in reflection about the themes that emerged to analyze these realities and place them in the context of Quebec, Canada, the United States and at times globally. Memory episodes one and two solely focus on female immigrant experiences highlighting the complexity of their lives internally, externally, and societally. Memory episode three begins by focusing on the experiences of female immigrants but evolves to advocate for all students in academic Adult Education as it examines protocols, placement tests, and exams. This last episode’s content brings to light issues that are present for not only female immigrant students but all students. The final chapter of this thesis reflects on the work I have done in this chapter, discusses implications of the research and looks forward to how education is changing.

CHAPTER 4 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The goal of this thesis is to illuminate the lived realities of female immigrants in academic Adult Education. In the process I was able to highlight some instances of experiences that are comparable from my time teaching in the Youth Stream of education. The main purpose was to facilitate further discussion about areas of education that are in need of closer examination. I present a broad view of Adult Education through my experiences, but it demands further research to be done, as well as, policy changes in order to improve female immigrant experiences. Dauphinee (2010) stipulates that “to be silent is still to speak” (p.805). It is for this reason that sharing my experiences and observations in Adult Education with regard to female immigrant experiences is important. Developing discourses around these topics can aid in the evolution of approaches to academic education for female immigrants in Quebec.

Summary

Memory Episode One is firmly grounded in evaluating the roles that female immigrants have in classrooms, families, communities, existential existence and new societies. This episode examined the facets of female immigrant life to demonstrate the variety of avenues that pull at their attention in a given day. This episode demands that education as a whole re-evaluates how female immigrants integrate into education. Particularly, calling for reformation in how we provide assistance, accommodation, and overall aid to female immigrants. One aspect of Adult Education that I have critiqued a number of times between episodes one and three is the need to access extracurricular activities and fitness options. Adult Education primarily aims to provide opportunities for students to obtain a high school diploma but it should not eliminate the positive elements of secondary school in the process. It is important to remember that for many students school is the only break they get in their day-to-day lives. Moreover, immigrants' access to extracurricular activities can play an integral role in creating a new community of relationships, as well as, mental health.

Memory episode two dealt with the internal struggles that female immigrants face. Particularly, concerned with mental health this episode examined how integration can affect a students' psyche. Interestingly, it was highlighted that regardless of time or integration success, immigrant students generally face mental health concerns at some point in their life. The question of who or whether they seek medical assistance was largely debated based on immigrant status and understanding of their situations. Moreover, internal struggles harmonizing new realities with peer realities in their home country created an understanding for how shame and guilt may be experienced by some female immigrants. Finally, leading to isolation that may inhibit one's ability to successfully build a new life.

Memory Episode three takes on a slightly different approach than the first two episodes. The content covered in the reflective memory portion of this episode similarly discusses experiences and observations with female immigrant students. However, the analysis portion of this episode steps away from the focus of female immigrants and looks more broadly at immigrant experiences. The reason this occurs is because of the important nature of the topics covered. The emerged themes are ones that do not affect female immigrants alone – despite my experiences and observations – but are overarching contentions ingrained in Adult Education that need to be discussed as a whole. Many concerns were illuminated in regard to the orchestration and organization of placement and Ministry exams. The first take-away highlighted the need for more accountability and review of placement tests. While there is not necessarily a placement test that is free of contention, it would appear that Europe and the United States are making greater efforts to standardize an approach to placement testing that Quebec and Canada is lacking. Moreover, Ministry exams in Adult Education juxtaposed with Ministry exams in the Youth Stream of education need to be held to the same standard. If the Youth Stream of education demands a new Ministry exam each year to ensure the validity of the contents, then the same should be true for Adult Education. Furthermore, there needs to be an entity that is responsible for overseeing the academic procedures in Adult Education other than administration in a center. By this I am imploring for the respective board -- or trusteeship -- to empower a team of consultants to oversee the ongoing in the different Adult Education centers. There needs to be accountability for the different versions of exams being administered at different times and the

protocols -- in regard to administration and marking -- across all of the centres within the same board as to ensure that a fair exam is being administered. This is vital to both the integrity of the board, schools, and more importantly for the student experiences when approaching post-secondary experiences. Finally, plagiarism and racialization were overviewed to demonstrate the need for consideration to student backgrounds. Plagiarism is not something that can be neatly taught to all students when the population of class is largely immigrant based. Understanding that plagiarism holds different meanings in varying parts of the world enables educators to comprehend the hurdle they are attempting to overcome when teaching plagiarism. Moreover, racialization is something that will require ongoing research to try to create environments that are safe and open to the different respective individuals who partake in interaction. However, specific research is needed for the Adult Education classroom. To claim that racialization occurs is not enough as that is a proven fact. But looking at a classroom that is solely composed of immigrant students, some of whom are refugees, demands a new approach to determining how racialization may occur.

Making Sense of Autoethnography: The So - What?

When I teach my students how to create a thesis I always pose the question to my students: “Does your thesis pass the ‘so-what?’ test?”. By this I ask my students to consider if what they are putting together is important, focused, or proving something. I explain to them that if their thesis does not pass the ‘so-what’ test that means they are trying to prove something that is already a fact. My supervisor Doctor Claudia Mitchell (2016) also poses the question “So-What?” in regard to autoethnographic inquiry in her chapter, *Autoethnography as a Wide-Angle Lens on Looking (Inward and Outward): What difference can this make to our Teaching?* She posits that there are six propositions to consider when answering this question for teachers: “(1) creativity and doing something different, (2) collaboration, (3) positionality, (4) ethics, (5) addressing social justice and (6) advocacy” (Mitchell in Pillay, Naicker, & Pithouse-Morgan, 2016, p.180). I explore five of these propositions.

“Creativity and Doing Something Different” (Mitchell, 2016, p.181). Throughout this thesis there has been a repeated comment on the need for research in Adult Education in Canada

and Quebec. Education studies generally focus on the Youth Stream – elementary and secondary school – or they look at college and university institutions. However, little research is done into the ongoings of Adult Education. Given that a large portion of the population in Adult Education is under the age of eighteen this is concerning. There is a misleading notion that all of the students in Adult Education are ‘adults’. Moreover, regardless of their age these students are deserving of the same quality of care as their youth counterparts as each set of students is endeavouring to accomplish the same goal of better education. By creating an autoethnographic thesis exposing some of the day-to-day realities for female immigrants in adult education I have been able to “both study...[myself] and...[my] institution[s] as well as be part of something creative and artistic — and that...[can] tell a new story ” (Mitchell, 2016, pp.181-182). In creating this content I have been able to use the observations and experiences “at hand...[to prompt] critical and social change” (Mitchell, 2016, p.181). While research into education is ongoing, there is little available for Adult Education, especially in Quebec. In the wake of the pandemic there are many limitations to conducting research with participants. By utilizing autoethnography I have been able to explore surrounding issues in Adult education for female immigrants.

“Positionality” (Mitchell, 2016, p.181). As a teacher there are many different roles that are embodied in a given day, especially in Adult Education where students – on average – carry heavy burdens with them into the classroom. Determining, “how best to negotiate our changing positions, and at the same time recognise that our positioning is, in and of itself, contributing to what is happening are both critical issues” (Mitchell, 2016, p.183). While I am able to engage with students and their stories daily, year-after-year, their realities are not something that I can fully comprehend. Moreover, as I navigate the line between teacher, confidant, entertainer, counselor, administrator, and authority I must constantly consider how my positionality as an educator will affect the climate of the classroom and student experiences. By stepping back and adopting the role of teacher and researcher I am able to engage in my own experiences and observations. I am allowing for these stories to be further examined and also to engage in professional development as an educator. Autoethnographic research allows for the “types of awkward moments that are perhaps silenced in our classrooms when students are forced to take

on unpopular positions, or when the nature of the discussion does not allow for shifting in a position without losing face” to be reexamined (Mitchell, 2016, p.183). As an educator it is important to be evolving and improving our techniques and how we cultivate classroom environments. By reflecting on and analyzing these experiences I am able to recall instances in my teaching that could have been handled differently, learn new techniques for approaching subjects and develop to serve future students. Moreover, by presenting these instances to the academic community I am able to illuminate different realities. By “putting ourselves into the positions of performer or director require[s] us to take other positions”, reliving and developing empathy for the different positions that our students must adapt (Mitchell, 2016, p.183). Transitioning my positionality into a researcher allows for personal development, educational development, and hopefully societal changes.

“Ethics” (Mitchell, 2016, p.181). I have spoken about the ethical concerns and limitations of this research in the opening and closing chapters of this thesis. Revisiting this for a final time I want to reconsider my role within this text. In autoethnography, “when we take on the role of protagonist...there may be an over-determined view on what constitutes harm”, especially when discussing different cultural experiences that are beyond our scope of knowledge (Mitchell, 2016, pp.183-184). Moreover, as a young educator I am still learning to navigate the activities and protocols of the board and school. However, “perhaps...[there is an equal] failure to consider what might constitute benefits” (Mitchell, 2016, pp.183-184). The experiences that I have utilized in this thesis are from my own perspective of my observations and of what students have shared with me. By presenting an ‘insider’ account of day-to-day experiences I can bring to light for members of academia, the Ministry, board, schools, colleagues and students realities that may not be given proper consideration otherwise. In doing this work I am creating a discourse surrounding female immigrant experiences and incentivizing further conversation and research into how to make improvements to Adult Education in Quebec. When reflecting on the ethics of this thesis I think the most important consideration I need to be making is in regard to “How.. my...[students would] feel...[if] they read my account?” (Mitchell, 2016, p.184). In considering this question I have been able to further reflect ensuring another

layer of authenticity in my recollections. It is my hope that this thesis has done justice to the stories of my students to help give their experiences a voice in education.

“Social Justice” (Mitchell, 2016, p.181). Mitchell (2016) comments on the words of Adams, Holman Jones, and Ellis (2013) in their *Handbook of Autoethnography* observing the ambitious goal that the authors set forth in creating autoethnography with the purpose of social change (p.184). In explaining her own use of autoethnography with a cellphilm project she cites that she, “wanted to show that it is perhaps both the medium of doing (exposing...[ourselves]) as well as what...[we] hope[] would be an outcome of th[e] work” (Mitchell, 2016, pp.184-185). In this Mitchell is highlighting that in underscoring injustices -- giving voice to members of society that are underrepresented – we as researchers are able to promote changes through our work while also hopefully inspiring colleagues to take action against injustices that they are observing as well. In many ways the social justice of autoethnography is ingrained in the idea that as researchers we are also exposing our realities to bring about improvements in a field for our observed participants. While I have focused on female immigrant experiences in Adult Education, I am hopeful that this work will inspire colleagues and fellow researchers to conduct further investigations into Adult Education in Quebec to encourage further improvements to be made for student and teacher experiences.

“Advocacy” (Mitchell, 2016, p.181). Finally, when looking at advocacy this thesis exceedingly passes the ‘so-what?’ test. As I mentioned many times there is no one to advocate for the students in Adult Education other than the staff and students. Unfortunately, many of the students are not in a place in their lives where they know what their rights are or how to stand up for themselves. Parents are strictly not involved in the day-to-day activities of their children in Adult Education even if they are present and available to advocate for their children. More often than not, the students in Adult Education either do not have parent figures or their parent figures are new to the country themselves and are battling their own problems with little time to consider their child’s academic injustices. This leaves the teachers and members of staff responsible for challenging the incongruities between institutions and illuminating the transgressions present for different students in Adult Education. As educators and researchers we must “turn...[our]

attention to the harm being done to us and to others and use autoethnographic research to tell, and right stories of injustice” (Mitchell, 2016, p.185).

Vulnerability. In an earlier publication on autoethnographic practice in South Africa, Mitchell (2015) refers to the significance of vulnerability. In this article she notes that clearly vulnerability is a key issue in South Africa, where there remain many racial imbalances, but as she notes “race is only one part of this, and as I have noted above, diversity embraces many different features of our work” (Mitchell, 2015, p.9). I realize that in doing this type of work, I am also ‘putting myself out there’. How to take up race and class in the context of writing about the female immigrant students in my classes is far from easy and I recognize my privileged position that prohibits me from ever fully grasping these womens’ experiences. Though I have shared experiences and observations with analysis of how female immigrants may experience day-to-day life in Montreal academic education in comparison with global immigrant experiences, no amount of research can ever align my knowledge with their actual lived experiences. Moreover, I realize that in ‘laying bare’ my observations I am opening myself up to criticism. In doing this work it has not been my goal to appropriate or pretend that I can ever understand what racialized members of society experience. My intention is more so to try to highlight my interpretation of their experiences to hopefully bring a semblance of their reality into the public eye for discussion.

What have I learned?

Going beyond these five areas that Mitchell (2016) raises, I also want to go back to my own classroom to what I could call ‘the me in the classroom’ to consider that autoethnographies of teaching also need to inform our future work. Of the many different areas I have explored through the memory episodes I realize that probably I had the most to say about plagiarism. This surprised me somewhat as I do not think I had any idea that this topic or issue would so engulf me. As I return to my next classes one of the largest takeaways from this work that I will bring into my classroom is how to approach plagiarism. Prior to conducting this research I did not realize the complexity of plagiarism and how its meaning can frequently vary globally. When I teach this topic moving forward, I will do so in a very different manner than I have in the past bringing to light some of the information I have conveyed in this thesis. More pointedly Olsen

and Shaw's (2011) article put forth a creative and clear way to go about approaching the topic in which you draw a picture of a cat with a speech bubble and then a second the exactly the same except the colour of the cat (p.438). In doing this you then ask the class if this is copying to enter the discussion surrounding plagiarism from the child mentality of being a 'copy-cat'. A second topic that emerged multiple times was the focus on identity. While identity is something that comes up in class discussion generally, after conducting this research I plan to facilitate class discourse about how their immigrant or youth identity has changed. What influenced these changes? If they were conscious of the changes as they were happening? Hopefully leading the class through the process of turning inwards and considering the fluidity of identity in themselves and as juxtaposed to their peers. Moreover, another topic that I would like to engage future classes in discussion about would be mental health and how that may look in different situations depending on the individuals' experiences. By this I am again hoping to further discuss whether mental health terms that exist in Western culture transfer into other cultures to consider the experiences of immigrant students. A third consideration that was brought up in this work was the incontinuity of treatment of students in Adult Education in comparison with their youth counterparts. This is a concern that cannot be handled solely but may require a team of teachers to approach the Ministry, it is a discussion I can bring to my colleagues and superiors to seek advice on how to challenge and change these inconsistencies; the 100% exam. Finally, with the focus on female immigrant experiences throughout this thesis I believe I have isolated two areas that I could possibly bring about the discussion of changes for their experiences in education. The first would be to to discuss with my future administration and board the possibility of offering a form of in-house child care. This is a large and maybe impossible idea but it is a discussion that I can bring into the school. The second and more feasible would be to approach the administration and see if it would be possible to integrate more extra-curricular options. This is something that is not costly and could be made possible with the right school leadership. Nevertheless, in the midst of the pandemic I am certain these changes will be long term goals.

Limitations and Challenges of Study

When looking at the limitations and challenges of this study many are inherent to autoethnography. Primarily, the "first-person point of view is decidedly subjective because the

narrator reports what she or he sees, experiences, knows, and feels, providing readers with I/eye-witness accounts” (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.79). The subjective nature of this thesis demands a high level of self-regulated honesty in the work. I have done my best to relay information, experiences, and observations verbatim -- to provide the most honest and accurate account -- letting the experiences I have had lead the analysis and discourse that is generated. However, at the end of the day the study is limited by my first-person narration. Moreover, as a young teacher I am not an authority on all of the procedures and protocols in Quebec education, rather a participant and learning employee.

Moreover, “while I use my experiences to offer insight into cultural experiences, the way I make sense of these experiences is not the only way to make sense of them” (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.30). It is important to recognize the privileged role that I hold in this thesis as I am a white teacher that is native to Canada. As such I am endeavouring to observe, experience, and expose meanings to subjects to which I cannot fully understand. Nevertheless, as a teacher I have always led my classroom with an open-mind and open-heart which has allowed me the opportunity to learn from my students. It is my goal to present the lessons they have taught me in this thesis, without convoluting it by my own experiences. All the while, remembering that my experiences of the presented situations are not the only understandings that can be divested, and that there are a spectrum of infinite interpretations available.

When considering the academic ramifications of autoethnographic research some critics have worried that including storytelling and first-person narration in research sacrifices the analytic purpose of scholarship...autobiographic, and aesthetic work...[as it] cannot be assessed for its explanatory power, scholarly insight, or ability to cultivate social change. (Adams *et al.*, 2015, p.100)

While autoethnographic research -- similar to all forms of research -- is under scrutiny it does not eliminate the lived experiences conveyed. The ability of autoethnographic research to create changes in the world is not so much limited to the autoethnographic research itself but more so to the reactions that are had as a result of the research. In that sense quantitative and qualitative research take on the same role, as they both aim to produce something that can inspire a change in their respective fields. Measuring the change that is produced by each piece of research is

seemingly impossible. Rather, evaluating the text at hand bears the same questions concerning whether the presented material is valid and needed in scholarly works. I am confident that, especially in Adult Education for Quebec, more scholarship is needed.

The final limitation or challenge to this research that I will present is the fact that “there is no clear methodology for having a presence in one’s own writing or for making connections” (Doty, 2010, p.1049). As aforementioned, there is no clear methodology present for autoethnography. To resolve this, I have researched and based my methodology on the work of Adams *et al.*, (2015) who present a framework for conducting and analyzing an autoethnographic thesis.

Implications for Teaching and Research

This thesis creates the potential for large changes in Quebec English schooling, Adult Education, and for female immigrants in Canada. On the ground level this study highlights areas of contention, inconsistencies, and concern for how immigrant students experience integration into education. Placement exams, protocols surrounding Ministry exams in Adult Education, and school protocols as a whole, across schools and across boards/trusteeships are a few items that have been addressed and demand attention as a result of this thesis. Moreover, the misconception that Adult Education students can always be qualified as ‘at risk’ students has been dismantled proving that many of the students in Adult Education in Quebec are as a result of Bill 101. Therefore, more research into the ongoing and culture of Adult Education as a whole, as well as, for immigrant students is needed. Finally, the fact that many of the concerns in Adult Education are not discussed due to the inherent lack of parent advocates further necessitates for research to be conducted in Adult Education as to ensure that students are receiving the greatest opportunities for success.

Implications for autoethnographies. When considering the genre of autoethnography and implications for others who have or will want to engage in autoethnography I believe that my study has highlighted different ways in which autoethnography is beneficial and crucial to research. Foundationally, it allows for an individual to reflect on previous experiences and observations to professionally develop moving forward. In a larger sense though autoethnography opens possibilities to conduct research amidst global crisis -- such as a

pandemic -- while also inviting further research to be conducted into areas of the world that may go unexamined otherwise. Most importantly, autoethnography creates space for voices to be heard and to empower marginalized groups of society that may be voiceless otherwise. It is a medium that allows for personal experiences to enter into research to hopefully inspire changes in education.

Implications for services for young immigrant female students. Narrowing into the focus of this thesis -- female immigrants -- there is a need for consideration to be given in regard to the difference in personal, familial, societal and academic demands for female immigrant students. Episode one highlighted the intensive identity negotiation that female immigrants in Adult Education may experience as they juggle their heritage, new society, family needs, and different roles of mother / student / child / sister / aunt / community member. Memory episode two examined the different mental health concerns that can emerge for female immigrant students in Adult Education. As suggested in the above questions, two things that can aid in mental health that are presently not a part of Adult Education are (1) gym class or extracurricular options and (2) day-care options where mothers can seek guidance, assistance, and assurance knowing their child is close to them. Both of these may be budgetarily challenging or even impossible but it returns to the question: Are schools and school environments created with consideration to their clientele? Finally, episode three exposed the procedural obstacles that immigrant students experience while juxtaposing globally to illuminate that considerations specifically applying to female immigrants are needed. Questions such as: Should a day-care service be provided in centers? How can extracurricular activities be offered to promote immigrant integration and mental health? Are school protocols and environments created with the consideration of young mothers and the struggles they may face? How can create more opportunities for immigrant students to be appropriately placed and given the necessary resources to flourish academically? The largest implication -- and seemingly most obvious -- for female immigrants from this thesis is the complexity of their lives and the need for educational institutions to more clearly curate in a way that offers assistance to extend the greatest opportunity for student success both in school and beyond secondary school.

Contributions and Advancements of Knowledge

Research on immigrant experience and integration into education in Canada -- specifically Quebec-- is ongoing. Specific interest is given to immigrants from particular areas of the world and their experience in elementary or secondary education in Quebec. However, there is little research conducted on female immigrants in the academic, Adult Education classroom. Adult Education is divided into two streams in Quebec; (1) CCBE and (2) DBE (MEES, 2018-2019). The first stream is the Common Core Basic English program which is tailored towards immigrants hoping to participate in English as a second language, or French as a second language course. The Diversified Basic Education Program takes the youth academic program and adapts it for adult learners, who do not have their high school diploma (MEES, 2018-2019). Students in Adult Education qualify as ‘at risk’ students because the DBE program—for example—is the last opportunity for these students to obtain a high school diploma (Elffers, 2013). For this research I use self-reflexive memory-work to create episodes recounting interactions and observations of students from the DBE program of study. The reason for focusing on the DBE stream is that students in this section of Adult Education, intend on pursuing post-secondary studies and are often in Adult Education as a result of experiences in different areas of Quebec education. Conversely, students in the CCBE program are generally not interested in pursuing further studies, and are more focused on acquiring language skills.

Reflecting Forward

At the end of the 2020 school year educators, academics, and really the world found themselves confronting many realities as the global environment shifted, the pandemic continued to expand, and social movements found footings. Specifically, the Black Lives Matter movement has been illuminating the ongoing inequalities and injustices that have been evolving from colonialism into the problems present in the world today. The difficulties that communities of colour face are becoming increasingly clear as the citizens of the world take a breath to consider their education on topics that are not adequately addressed in mainstream education: such as Black history and Indigenous history. These conversations question the systemic elements of politics, society, and education as we become more aware of the realities for people of colour on

a day-to-day level. Similarly, this thesis examines the experiences of female immigrants who share in the need for a voice and attention in regard to how Quebec education and Adult Education approaches the institution of education with consideration to immigrant experiences and needs. Female immigrants occupy a complex space in society as they navigate between their own internal concerns, external social pressures from their new society, their cultural upbringing, the familial / educational pressures and adjustments that are made everyday. It is my hope that this thesis has illuminated some of the realities of these women in Adult Education in Quebec so that conversations can continue and begin addressing how we can show more consideration in regard to how education is developed with the diverse populations in mind.

English Quebec education is presently undergoing large changes as we move – though somewhat delayed now as a result of the pandemic -- from school boards to trusteeships. As a whole English education often takes a back burner to the French education stream given the linguistic properties of Quebec. However, this can be a disservice to both French and English students alike. The rigid protocols that are presently in place confine both populations and resultantly limit the number of resources provided. The reality of the growing immigrant population suggests that more needs to be done to attend to the needs of students in both French and English, youth and Adult Education in Quebec. With specific regard to female immigrant experiences and immigrant experiences alike, there is a need for a more unified provincial approach to aid these students in as many available ways as possible. Equipping students with the skills to not only build a new life but find success is integral to the development of society. The COVID-19 pandemic has had large implications on education globally and as we approach the new school year there are many contentions that are still being ironed out. As we navigate the new protocols of the school and classroom it is equally important to remember the additional and unique struggles that students may have previously experienced in the classroom, while also anticipating how the events of the last six months can help to shape new discussions to make necessary changes in education.

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