'Hey, whassup homeboy?'

BECOMING BLACK: RACE, LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

African Students in a Franco-Ontarian High School

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
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A DEDICATION

Of course, to my mother Fatima Salih Mohamed who left us in 1992. My love and gratitude are certainly to you.
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Abstract

This project looks at a group of continental francophone African youths who are attending a French-language high school in Toronto, Canada. It examines the sites and the ways in which their social identities are formed and performed and how these identities enter, so to speak, the processes of language learning, among others, especially learning English as a second language (ESL). Part of the process of learning for these youths is learning 'to become', to become Black that is, by means of learning Black English as a second language and taking up and re-positioning Black identities and cultural forms: hip hop and rap. Youths' experience of/with racism is of extreme significance in the course of becoming. Racism is located within a framework of an imaginary whereby the dominant hegemonic discourses and groups position African youth and thus treat them, respectively, as 'Blacks'.

The process of identity formation for African youth, significantly, is a process of creolization, translation and negotiation. Deploying ethnography of performance as a methodological contention which maintains that we as social beings reflect, at least partially, our identities in our linguistic and cultural practices, I conclude that the product of this process is a schematically complex 'third space' where the 'Old' and the 'New' are translated into configurations that look neither like the 'Old' nor the 'New', but the two combined. Identity is therefore best re-searched not in oppositional terms ('African' vs. 'Canadian'), but in its linguistic and cultural performance. Linguistically and semiotically, I show, the 'Old' and the 'New' are produced in the same sentence, in the same garment. Race, however, as a site of identification, crossed with gender, are the youths' points of departure for identity negotiations and translations.
I offer, in conclusion, students' narratives an alternative anti-racism scheme that seeks to explore what, in the school, works for the students, as oppose to what does not. I also propose *pedagogy of the imaginary* as a critical praxis that deciphers subjectivities by traveling into their complexities. Black popular culture is taken into account here as a critical curriculum site in 'encountering', de-re-constructing, and, in the process, growing sensitive to the multi-significations of the signifier Black.
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Black popular Culture does not determine the formation of social and cultural identities in any mechanistic way, but it supplies a variety of symbolic, linguistic, textual, gestural, and above all, musical resources that are used by people to shape their identities, truths, and models of community. That culture has struggled over a long period of time with its transmutation into the closed form of the commodity. It is used in dynamic ways that liberate it from the logic of commodification and supplement the original creative input of its producers with further contributions (Gilroy, 1995: 25-6).

... the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of color-line (Du Bois, 1903:13).

"Je suis une combinaison de plusieurs choses" [I am a collage of a number of things] (Hassan, a 17 year old boy of Somali origin, 1996). Yet "I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids - and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination - indeed, everything and anything except me" (Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man, Vintage Books, 1995).
Chapter 1

1. Introduction

"Q7 in the house":

Language, Culture and Performed Identities

Extract 1. (Aziza is an 18 year old very active OAC\(^2\) student of Somali origin. The interview was conducted in February 1996. Aziza and I here were pondering in which language to conduct the interview):

Awad: You have the time? I have all the time in the world. Ahm tu veux le faire en français ou en anglais?
Aziza: Oh in French.
Awad: In French.
Aziza: But I don't know I might be get in [one]. I [may be] talking English I don't know.
Awad: Ah that's exactly what I'm what I want, like the language you want; it doesn't matter to me.
Aziza: So like both?
Awad: You can yah, switch in and out, yah if you want to, yah.
Aziza: O.K. I do it both. Because I know 'm not gonna [one] in French and (one?) in English. Gonna talk in both.
Awad: OK! so, how does that .. how does that happen? / like.
Aziza: How does that happen?
Awad: Comment comment tu t'es arrivée à cette situation?

---

1 These are idiom-lexical and mostly ritual expressions used commonly in hip hop and rap language/sphere and which are then taken up by African students students. I will be using them as headings all through the thesis chapters.

2 OAC (in French CPO) is a preparatory year for university which is equivalent to grade 13.
Aziza: Influence, *influence*. When I came here, the first days the first months, I can only speak in French. Because that’s what I learn that’s what I always spoke backhome and anywhere else, right? I came here, people speak in English, television’s in English. Ahm tout à l’entour environment.

Aziza’s example is a fitting illustration of what I will endeavor to delineate in this thesis: the ‘switch in and out’ of languages, the ‘switch in and out’ of subjectivities. I take this mixture of languages as a metaphor for the Self: French, English, and Aziza’s Somali language are inseparable. These languages, I argue, are expressing the complexity and the inseparability of Aziza’s identity, or better identities. These switches in and out of languages, in other words, are performances of the Self, the identity. They are performed identities. Contrary to the grand narratives of identity and grounded on ethnographic research, this dissertation is to search out the ways in which identities are indeed performed. To reach this grounded level, however, I contend that it is the performed language and cultural capitals that will mirror who we are as social beings (at least in part). It is in the language: how we talk and with which accent we speak that we as social identities tell the Other what to expect next (Gumperz, 1982). But, I as well contend, it is in our cultural practices do we express our desires, inclinations, aspirations and yearn (see also Kristeva, 1974: 230; Bourdieu, 1991: 203). Taken together, language and culture will be my path to identity.

Identities, as Martin (1995) has argued, are no longer constructed within isolation; no longer is there a ‘deep’ self that is not changing, not shifting, not multiplying, multiplied and contradictory (Hall, 1986, 1991). Given the post-modern contention of the situatedness of the Self (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991/93), social identities then are formed and performed within and through multiple, multilayered, shifting, shifted and contradictory discourses that are informed by history, memory, language, culture and power relation (Usher and Edwards, 1994; hooks, 1992; Dei, 1996). As I understand it, post-modernism is a
critique of all forms of representations, identities and semiosis that claim transcendental and transhistorical status (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991/93: 116). It, instead, points to community, compassion and desire as essential aspects of how we relate and experience the world around us in a meaningful way where the Self, the Identity and the Other do not exist in dichotomy, but in metamorphosis (Todorov, 1984). As Stuart Hall (1991) contends:

The critical thing about identity is that it is partly the relationship between you and the Other. Only when there is an Other can you know who you are (...). And there is no identity (...) without the dialogic relationship to the Other. The Other is not outside, but also inside the Self, the identity. So, identity is a process, identity is split. Identity is not a fixed point but an ambivalent point. Identity is also the relationship of the Other to oneself (cited in Giroux, 1993: 75).

The critical question, then, is to see, ethnographically, how the Other enters the Self and once the Other is there, inside, how is it negotiated, translated, metamorphosed and then re-produced? (see also Bakhtin, 1981/1990: 365). This thesis is an answer to this question. It looks at a recently arrived group of continental Black francophone African youth and their processes of integration into the Canadian context. Race, blackness to be more specific, I will show, is a crucial component of these processes. In fact, it is race that will determine, especially for the boys, who they can and indeed do identify with, what to learn and how. The girls however, as is discussed in subsequent chapters, find themselves at the 'dirty' intersection of gender and race. The boys' identification with the 'New' geo-cultural and linguistic context, especially hip hop, seems to be stronger than the girls; or it is at least performed in a stronger fashion. Depending on their age, the girls, on the other hand, are whether fully identifying with North American black culture - hip hop - or being eclectic in choosing between the 'traditional' cultural performances, dress for example, and hip hop. Language, once more, is where this gender difference is performed: boys learn Black stylized English, an indispensable variable of hip hop, whereas the majority of the girls tend to speak what Nourbese Philip calls in Harriet's Daughter 'plain Canadian English.' Corollary, one may conclude
that when the Other enters the Self, so to speak, the former will be translated into new forms. This Other then enters, from now-on, a new arena of signification and semiotic spaces where the ‘Old’ and ‘New’ are metamorphosed and therefore performed in ‘new’ shapes and forms that do not look like either the ‘Old’ or the ‘New’, but the two combined. These combined forms are given birth to and are themselves giving birth to what I call ‘the third space’ (see chapter 2). I deploy the category of the third space, which differs from Bhabha’s (1990a) whose ‘third space’ is *hybridity*, as an analytical and a methodological category. It is a third space, for me, because it is a combination of two (or more) cultures, two (or more) languages, two (or more) belief systems. These cultures, languages and belief systems are ethnographically observable and possibly describable. Bhabha’s ‘third space’ in the context of this research, then, is necessary as an analytical tool, but less helpful methodologically because Bhabha’s frame of reference is textual and not ethnographic analysis. Hence, since my project is located within the latter analysis, what this third space, ethnographically and performatively, looks like is a significantly important question.

Again, I am deploying ‘Old’ and ‘New’ to refer to an experience of displacement from one geo-cultural, historic and linguistic setting to another, and neither term is pejoratively used. Here, the Old is a set of memory, experience, language, religious and cultural behavioural patterns that African youth practice and bring with them when coming into Canada. The New, on the other hand, is what the youth engaging, run into, run across, and in some cases stumble against in the Canadian context. These encompass, among others, racism, class, gender, and sexual oppression. In engaging, however, and experiencing the New, the Old undergoes stages of a) continuity and b) transformation, both of which are products of negotiation, comparison, and translation: translation of the Old by the New and vice versa. Both continuity and transformation, hereafter, belong to a new arena, a third space. Moreover,
both are part of identity formation project which I, as a researcher, can only access through performance.

Hence, performativity is central not only as a methodological approach, but as well part of identity formation processes. Judith Butler (1990), whose point of entrance is gender, contends that gender is not “a set of free floating attributes”, on the contrary, “gender proves to be performative” (p.p. 24-25). That is, it is in the performance does gender, the identity, the Self exhibit and display it’s virtues, and attributes. Butler (1990: 25) thus concludes, “gender is always a doing.” If the ontology of gender is always in the doing, in the making, I would like to extend the same argument to race and class. However, my research goes beyond Butler by taking language and culture as partial mirrors, performances and ‘doings’ of gender, race and class social categories.

In a similar line, Manthia Diawara (1993: 25) argues for what she calls ‘Black performance studies’. By this, Diawara is calling for a “study of the ways in which black people, through communicative action, created and continue to create themselves”, especially, “within the American experience.” Central to the Black performance studies, for Diawara, is the play of history whether enslavement, degradation or dehumanization and the notion that “performance involves an individual or group of people interpreting an existing tradition -- [to reinvent] themselves.” Given the ‘wretch of the earth’ (Fanon, 1963) situation of Black peoples in the Americas (Collins, 1990; hooks, 1994), their very existence is dependent on a continual re-invention of themselves (West, 1994). The re-invention, however, requires a communicative act, a performance and a language. Given their blackness, how is this Self re-invented by continental African youth who are becoming part of the ‘black Atlantic world’ (Gilroy, 1993: 3)? Hip hop, as I suggest in this research, is the method and the politics through which the re-invention of the Self and history is taking place (see also Walcott, 1995). Continental African youth, that is, are re-inventing the history of blackness as they understand, translate and then perform it. Parody is central to this performance (Butler, 1990: 138).
But parody, Butler contends, more often calls into question the very notion of original. What is commonly known as the original was already open to hybridity and translation (Bhabha, 1990a): thus to not be original. Therefore, what can be called origin is only antecedent in history. But history is always present in the present through traces, culture, and memory (see also Walcott, 1995). History, in other words, is continually performed, translated and re-invented in our quotidian acts (Bhabha, 1990b). It is through repetition, I contend, that the acts, the parodies become ours. As well, I contend, identity itself is a continual parodic repetition of performative acts. That is, the acts of history, the Other’s acts at some point belong to us when we continually repeat them, as our own. When this contention is applied to ethnography, it is the observation of the repetitive patterns of identity performances, in and through language and culture, in different times and places, that allows me as a researcher to access the Self, the Identity of my research subjects. This is what I term the ethnography of performance (see also Ibrahim, 1997). Ethnography of performance is a way of contending that we as social identities perform part of who we are in our linguistic and cultural practices and that it is in observing these practices (but not exclusively) can ethnographers (especially the interactionists) access identities of their subjects.

1.1. Pre/post-conceptualization of the Present Study: Due to the particularity of how this study came to existence, I feel the need to tell this little anecdote. In September 1993, I was invited to join a research project at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) financed by a grant from SHRCC. For ethical reasons I can not reveal more about this project. Never-the-less, it is a longitudinal ethnographic study which took place at Marie-Victorin from 1991/92 to 1994/95. Marie-Victorin is a French-language high school in the Metropolitan city of Toronto, Canada. The project had always at least three


3 Unless indicated, all names are altered.
people at a time, and in other times four; some were graduate students at OISE, University of Toronto, and some were appointed specifically for the project.

Being a member of the research team, we conducted on site observations at least once a week. Conducting on site observations include, among others, attending classes, public performances (e.g. theatrical plays, school parties and/or other performances) and attending hockey, volleyball, soccer, and/or basketball matches. We also conducted interviews, mainly with students, but with teachers and administrators as well. These observations and interviews were reviewed in the weekly meetings that the research team held. In these meetings, research strategies for the up-coming week(s) were discussed and defined, information and findings were shared, and notes of observations were exchanged.

The objective of the project was to look at the different ways in which the linguistic practices which constitute social interaction in educational contexts contribute to the maintenance or redefinition of social difference. Having no previous experience in ethnography, I started frequenting Marie-Victorin at least once a week and in some cases more than once. I talked, with no preconceived knowledge as to where conversations and interactions were leading to, to students of all races, ages, and genders. After two months of being at Marie-Victorin, my contact with the Black students, most of whom were Somali-speakers, increased partially because my presence at the school as a Black person was becoming visibly perceptible.

Being the only Black adult, besides the only Black teacher in the school, some Black students began to wonder if I was a student and others asked if I was a teacher or a supply teacher. I introduced myself as Awad with an Arabic pronunciation which is also their pronunciation, and as a student at the University. "Vous êtes Musulman?" [You are Moslem?], I was asked all the time. Both humorously and as a strategy for steering further discussions, "je pense" [I think], I answered. "Mais qu'est-ce vous faites ici?" [What are you
doing here?], I was asked by most Black students. "On fait une recherche ici à l'école" [We are doing research in the school], I responded. After some introductory questions, I then conversed with them on a variety of issues. These conversations, coupled with participating in some social and sport activities such as basketball games, allowed me to establish good relationships with a number of them, across gender and age.

Joining the OISE project opened a window to a site and a population. The project familiarized me with what it meant to do ethnographic research and it shed light on the racial plight of continental francophone African youth in an almost all white school. Governed by the interest of the wider project, I was registering, taking note of, and video-taping the different sites where continental African students gathered. I also conducted interviews with African students. With them, I sought to explore their perceptions of, particularly, school racial climate. I stayed in the school for a period of a year and a half and in the project up until May, 1995. Let me state it clearly: OISE project and my Ph. D. project are two completely separate projects, with different findings. If, in case, some of the findings and the narratives are similar in both projects, it is because a) I talked to the same individuals in both projects in some cases and b) the horrific school racial climate has not changed over almost three years. In OISE project, I reached, however, no conclusions except for the latter horrendous school racial atmosphere whereby African students felt the need for anti-racism transformation and praxis. They praised the principal, a white man of a French-European background who had lived in different parts of Africa, for doing precisely this. He had an anti-racism praxis which cost him his job because teachers were antagonistic toward him and his discourse, but his program helped, on the other hand, African students to form their own organizations and to celebrate Black History Month and do other social activities.

At my return to Marie-Victorin in January 1996, this time for my own Ph. D. project, I was called Awad, I was talked to, I received very-friendly hugs,
and à l'africaine I was welcomed back. Students wondered about my whereabouts and if I had been ill. ‘Non’, I responded, ‘mais j'avais des choses à faire’ [No, but I had other business to take care of]. Following six months of reflections from June to December 1995, I knew who to talk after my return to Marie-Victorin, about what, and whom to observe. I was, as parameters for the research, going to look at the processes of identity formation and the ways in which these processes were manifested, performed in and through linguistic and cultural enunciations.

After being at Marie-Victorin almost every day between the beginning of January and mid February, 1996, continental African youths' identification with hip hop culture needed no second ethnographic observation. Continental African youth, especially, across age, the boys and the younger girls, were dressing in hip hop dress and listening to rap music. “Hip hop is the overall naming apparatus of which rap music might be identified as its most important element”, Walcott (1995: 5) explains. “Hip hop culture then”, Walcott continues, “comprises everything from music, to clothing choices, attitudes, language, and an approach to culture and cultural artifacts positing and collaging them in an unsentimental fashion.” As I saw it at Marie-Victorin, hip hop was a camouflage, and a collage of different linguistic and cultural capitals expressing, most of the time, human, social and historical conditions.

For continental African youth, hip hop is a new social practice that they take up and/or enter, so to speak. As it is discussed in full in subsequent chapters, taking up hip hop had influenced students' linguistic and cultural practices as well as their identity formation. These youth spoke what I refer to as Black stylized English, which is a form of linguistic practice that depends on rituals and idioms and no fluency in the language is necessary (Rampton, 1995: 233-6). Such rituals may include lexical expressions like ‘whassup’, ‘what up’, ‘yo, whadup homeboy’. In other words, taking up hip hop had influenced how continental African youth position themselves and how they are positioned by others (Foucault, 1977). In a racially conscious society, engaging hip hop by
('Black') continental African youth is, I contend, an act of pleasure, desire, social positionality, and it certainly has a resistant and political edge to it. Again, this engagement of hip hop, as I will show, plays an acute role in how students are seen and thus positioned by the dominant hegemonic discourses as 'Blacks'. I, in fact, maintain that the ways in which continental African youth are positioned as 'Blacks', with all the negative memory and history affixed to blackness in North America, has an extreme importance in African youth taking up hip hop and rap music.

Being, or becoming 'Black', in a race conscious society, means one is expected to be Black, to act Black, and so to be the Other (Hall, 1991). The othering usually takes place in a dialectic sense and in a positionality situation. This notion of positionality is eloquently marked out in Fanon's *Black skin/White mask*. Fanon (cited in Hall, 1991) talked about "how the gaze of the Other fixes him in an identity." When the child pulls her hand and points at him and says "Look momma, a Black man", Fanon writes, "I was fixed in that gaze." The gaze of Otherness (Hall, 1991). It is, moreover, my contention that the Other can be hated and at the same time desired (see also Hall, 1991).

When Whites, for example, take up hip hop, rap, reggae or basketball, they are expressing their desire for blackness and for the black body. However, when they continue to stereotype blackness negatively, hatred is what Whites perform. Based on this contention then, the Other and the Self are always found in a dialectic relationship. "The Other", notwithstanding, "is not outside, but also inside the Self, the identity" (Hall, 1991: 16).

Based on Foucault's (1977) notion of how people are positioned and constructed within and through discourses, the shift from what can loosely be called 'home cultures', Somalian or Haitian, to hip hop, as I already contended, is a result of students' relation to the discourse and representation of blackness. That is, taking up hip hop and learning Black stylized English can be related to how Black youth immigrants and refugees are positioned by the hegemonic
discourses as 'Blacks' and how they take up this positionality. In other words, blackness was/is significant in deciphering and translating and then producing 'their' hip hop and black English. I am deploying the lexicon 'their' hip hop to contend that students are not just passive consumers of the culture, they are, on the contrary, active participants. This active participation is observed not only in picking and choosing their clothing, but also in the ways in which they integrate their home cultural and linguistic capitals with hip hop and other North American cultural forms (see chapter 7).

However, because there is limited personal and everyday physical contact with North American blackness, that is African students have few personal North American Black friends, it is, corollary, my contention that these 'new' practices and discourses of hip hop are introduced to students through and by Black popular culture which they access through the media: TV, VCR, films, among others, as well as through peers by exchanging tapes, for example. By Black popular culture I refering to films, newspapers, magazines, and more importantly music such as rap, reggae, pop, and R&B.

Up until that moment in my Ph. D. research, at the end of the first half of my second month of my field work, the hip hop identity phenomenon was based on observation and some video tapings. At the end of the second half of the same month, notwithstanding, I commenced juxtaposing what I observed, documented, and took note of with students' narratives. Here, I started conducting interviews. These interviews were to continue, along with the ethnographic observation, over another four months. I asked autobiographical questions as a way of putting forth and narrating what cannot be observed; I also asked African students to reflect on what I observed and concluded.

1.2. The Significance of the Study: In her recommendations for future research, Lynn Goldstein (1987) reminded us as researchers of the need to take into account the social context in which our subjects are acquiring languages. She writes "The practice in almost all such research - to compare subjects' output
with that expected of a native speaker of standard English - ignores the fact that speech communities are not homogeneous and that nonnative speakers may have a target other than standard English" (Goldstein, 1987: 431). The heterogeneity of speech communities, and having a target other than standard English are one of two aspects that this study will deal with. The second aspect deals with cultural practices which should not be in opposition to the linguistic practices, but in dialectic relationships that reinforce each other (Bourdieu, 1977).

Keeping alive Goldstein's recommendation, I started searching for similar studies in Canada. To begin with, to my surprise, up to date there is no empirical study that deals with continental Africans (except probably for Dei et al. 1995, in whose study there were continental African subjects). Moreover, although a number of studies have dealt with diasporic Africans within the Canadian context led by George J. S. Dei (1993, 1996), Frances Henry (1978, 1995), Patrick Solomon (1992), Dan Yon (1994), Carl E. James (1989), Henry Codjoe (1995), Patricia Daenzer (1993), and Agnes Calliste (1993), there is none that deals with the linguistic question. Most of these studies deal with racism, discrimination, whether in the workforce/place or in housing, students' culture of resistance, and the question/problem of 'dropping out', among others. These studies notwithstanding have an indispensable relevance to my study.

I therefore recognize the need to look at the linguistic and cultural practices and how they intersect with variables such as blackness and schooling, for example. By making language central, I hope to advance the notion of politics of language; one of the notions that gives a particularity to this study. The politics of language is generally deployed to mean that learning a language does not solely mean learning the phonology, morphology, and the syntax of the language, as the structuralist school made us believe for a long period of time (Gumperz, 1982; Rampton, 1995). Learning these linguistic features of the language in question is nevertheless crucially important if people want to
communicate and be understood. The **politics of language** refers to the styles and the ways in which these phonological, morphological and syntactic features, among others, are learned, used and deployed. It asks the questions: under what social conditions are these features learned and used, for what purpose, and in Bourdieu's (1991: 37-65, 163-170) language, what does learning Black English mean as a 'symbolic capital'? and what kind of symbolic and material resources does learning Black English open or shut down (see also Heller, 1992, 1994 for similar questions)? Moreover, what does choosing a linguistic norm over another mean and, symbolically, what does it mean for a Black second language learner to learn Black English?

These non-exhausted questions are part of the **politics of language**. It is a way of contending that not only identities are reflected in languages (Peirce, 1993), but also constructed in, through and within them (Foucault, 1977). Both languages and identities are however socially constructed. Furthermore, the politics of language argues that **language is not a neutral tool**. Contrarily, it is racialized (Fisher, 1983), gendered (Swann, 1992), and classed (Bourdieu, 1986). I hence contend that **how language is used, with whom, and for what purpose is a performance of our racialized, gendered, and classed identities and social locations**. Thus, language can be or is a political statement and is or can be a medium of identity performance⁴. Language usage therefore has political and pedagogical implications. What these implications are, will be an important question to ask within this research.

Another provocative aspect of the study stems from the context in which the study is conducted. It is about a voluntary minority group (Ogbu, 1990) that finds refuge in North America only to find itself a minority within a minority. The latter refers to the Franco-Ontarian context (see chapter 3). Within this context, the categories of identity, culture, and, importantly, language have

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⁴ Black English is a political statement and an identity affirmation in the U.S. (Smitherman, 1994) as much as the Creole in Britain (Fisher, 1983).
very sensitive connotations (Heller, 1994). Franco-Ontarian communities are autonomous minority groups (Ogbu, 1990) that have a long history of struggle when it comes to the preservation of their language and culture in an English speaking society (Heller, 1994, 1993, 1992). However, within these (mostly White) Franco-Ontarian communities there is a growing community that I refer to as Black Franco-Ontarians. This community encompasses a few members of the Black English community and a small but active group of Haitians, and recently, en grand masse, continental Africans. In fact, in Marie-Victorin, save for a handful, the Black Franco-Ontarians are the continental Africans.

Franco-Ontarian context is worth studying for two reasons. The first has to do with, as I aforecited, the social categories of culture, language, and identity. These categories can, and indeed do, inform us about the process of struggle when it comes to the preservation of language and culture in a minority context. So, the question of what it means to speak English in a francophone school, I suppose, will have a special flavor. The second has to do with the ways in which Franco-Ontarians themselves, as a minority group, and their authority are put into question. The arrival of Black francophones and other minorities into French speaking schools in the province of Ontario puts Franco-Ontarians in a dominant and, at the same time, dominated group situation. It is a dominant group as far as their relation to Blacks and other minorities, but dominated when put vis-à-vis hegemonic English-speaking society.

Beside these, the third aspect that necessitates this study is the complex ways of intersection of (popular) cultural practice and language. So far, I know of no empirical research that links popular culture and second language acquisition. Moreover, when it comes to (second) language learning, even when the cultural and social context is mentioned, as in Lynn Goldstein (1987), B. Rampton (1992), Tara Goldstein (1991), and Peirce (1993), the race category is rarely talked about, let alone seriously addressed. An exception is Rampton's
Crossing (1995). My research will then attempt to fill in this gap by intersecting race, (racial/social) identities, culture, and language learning.

1.3. Research Questions and Hypothesis: Over all, the research is guided by these questions: How and in what ways do our social identities - race in this study - enter the processes of learning? Under what social conditions do students learn what they learn? How is being Black, for example, implicated in what youth learn and how? What is the role of race and racism in students' social identity formation? Given their Blackness, how are continental students positioned and constructed in-and-out of school? What are the implications of this construction in students' social identity formation and processes of learning? And, finally, how are these identities formed and performed?

The research's instrumental hypothesis is that continental African students will be imagined and positioned, and thus treated, as 'Blacks' by the North American hegemonic discourses and dominant groups, respectively. This positionality offered to continental African students through net-like discourses in exceedingly complex ways does not, and is unwilling to, acknowledge students' ethnic, language, national, and cultural identity differences. In other words, the self-identified Black continental African youth find themselves in a racially conscious society which, wittingly or unwittingly and through significantly complex mechanisms such as racism, asks them to racially fit somewhere. To fit somewhere would mean, I contend, choosing or becoming aware of one's own being and cultural practices which are partially reflected in language. Continental African youth choose, I suggest, to identify with African Americans and African American cultures and languages. Being Black or becoming Black, I also suggest, and choosing hip hop and speaking Black stylized English are by no means a coincidence. On the contrary, these are performances of youth's desire to belong to a location, to a politics, to a memory, to a history, and thus to a representation.
Elsewhere (Ibrahim, 1996), I argued that this perception and treatment that African youth receive, which is resting on them being ‘Blacks’, a category which oscillates more towards the negative than the positive (West, 1994), works within a race and racism framework. This perception, in vital ways, has influenced students’ sense of identity which, in turn, influenced what they learned and how and thus their identity formation. What they learned however is ‘Black stylized English’ which is introduced to them in and through hip hop linguistic practices such as genres of music. Hip hop linguistic and cultural capitals nevertheless are performed in and through Black popular culture.

1.4. Research Methodology, Subjects, and the School: As articulated thus far, this project is situated within la francophonie internationale. It is taking place within a French-language school in Toronto, Canada. The population is exclusively composed of continental African students, males as well as females. These students are, hence, French-language speakers, most of whom are refugees. In what follows, I explain, first, the theory of method, i.e. methodology. I then look at how the data was collected and give a brief history of the school. This is followed by an introduction of the subjects of the research, their age, nationalities, gender, cultures and language.

1.4.1. Method or Methodology: Creating a Critical Ethnographic Project: Following Sandra Harding (1987: 3), I make a distinction between method and methodology. Harding defines methodology as “a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed; it includes account of how the general structure of theory finds its application in particular scientific disciplines”. Method, on the other hand, “is a technique for (or way of proceeding in) gathering evidence” (p. 2). This distinction is what Peirce (1993, ch. 2) referred to as ‘the theory of the methodology’ and ‘the methodology of the theory’.

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5 Here, I am talking about the over-all continental francophone African population and not only the subjects of my research, all of whom are refugees.
Peirce (p. 22; emphasis in the original) argues that “Theory (implicit or explicit) informs the questions researchers ask, the assumptions they make, and the procedures, methods, and approaches they use to carry out projects. How data is collected”, she continues, “will inevitably influence what kind of data is created, and in turn, what conclusions are drawn on the basis of data analysis.” Theory, then, informs, explicitly or implicitly, the methodology, the approaches, and the methods used to carry it out.

Yet if, first, the theory and the approaches to how the research does or should proceed are, I will argue (cf. Simon and Dippo, 1986; Harding, 1987; Peirce, 1993), not neutral, and if, secondly, how the research does and should proceed, as Simon and Dippo (1986: 195) argue, has “an underlying set of assumptions, a structure of relevance, and a form of rationality”, corollary then: what questions get to be asked, by whom, and for what purpose and who benefits from them are, whether admittedly or unadmittedly, ideological and political questions. To admit the political nature of doing research is one of three important criteria of doing ‘critical ethnographic research’, as defined by Simon and Dippo (1986). The other two have to do with the limitation of doing research and its utility in the social transformation.

This ‘critical ethnographic research’ is, Simon and Dippo argue, situated within a ‘project’ that seeks and works towards social transformation. This ‘project’ is political as well as pedagogical: it is “an activity determined both by real and present conditions, and certain conditions still to come which it is trying to bring into being” (p. 196; emphasis in original). Based on this, the assumption underpinning my ‘project’ is based on the notion that Canadian society is “inequitably structured and dominated by a hegemonic culture that suppresses a consideration and understanding of why things are the way they are and what must be done for things to be otherwise” (Simon and Dippo, 1986: 196). Thus, I take the position that a critical ethnographic project is, in part, a deconstruction of hegemonic institutional and cultural practices and norms. It is a project which
is structured in relation to our efforts to construct a mode of learning and a conception of knowledge that may enhance the possibility of collectively constituted thought and action which seeks to transform the relations of power that constrict people's lives ... It is a position which intentionally appropriates and reconstructs a "method" in the service of a distinct form of cultural politics (Simon & Dippo, 1986: 196)

Having outlined the notion of 'project' within which I locate my research, I see the latter as politically and ideologically oriented. My 'project' sees the inequitable conditions under which schooling takes place; it sees a need to deconstruct these conditions and, corollary, works towards transforming them. It sees, as well, what Harding (1987: 8) calls the "locating of the researcher in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter" as very significant.

Harding calls for a subjective notion of research where "the class, race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors of the researcher her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture that she/he attempts to paint" (Harding, 1987: 8). This subjectivist notion of research is usually articulated within what I term a politics of embodiment. This is a politics that critically engages who the researcher is, that is her/his embodied race, sex, gender, class identities, and what forms of knowledge production arose from that location. Put otherwise, our embodied (race, gender, sexual and class) subjectivities are influencing what research questions we ask and, in turn, what conclusions we come to. For precisely this politics, Harding warns against the "objectivist" stance which "attempts to make the researcher's cultural beliefs and practices invisible while simultaneously skewering the research objects' beliefs and practices to the display board" (p. 9). Harding hereafter concludes that it is only within a 'subjectivist' approach, articulated clearly within a politics of embodiment that sees the researcher as part of the research, that we can hope for the least distorted picture. Again, for specifically this reason she asserted that we should see "the beliefs and behaviors of the researcher [as] part of the empirical evidence for (or against) the claims advanced in the results of research" (Harding, 1987: 9).
1.4.1.1. **Re-searching the Researcher**: as a corollary, I feel an obligation to tersely enunciate my politics and cultural belief. I am a continental Black African, aware of and living under a hegemonic culture which is structured by gender, race, sexual and class social differences, among others; and my politics is located within my working class background. I situate myself at that ‘third space’ where my Africanness (including its history, language, and culture) is an asset that challenges and as well reinforces what it means to be Canadian. Ideally, I would not like to negate either. I see myself mirrored in the subjects of my research in desiring hip hop and rap and in taking up the very long historical memory of struggle that my sisters and brothers have accumulated in diasporic African contexts. My political project is located within progressive discourses influenced by Marxism, Feminism, Anti-racism, Critical Pedagogy, Cultural Studies, and, more importantly, postcolonial discourses and postcolonial elders (my mother), and black liberatory discourses. My desire to do this research stems from a vision where racism, class, race, sexual and gender oppression, and all other forms of oppression can be reversed and challenged. This research desires to challenge what I saw as barriers within Marie-Victorin that prevented, and still prevent, Black students from succeeding; it hopes ultimately is to see subjugated knowledge making one day part of the everyday curriculum of the school.

In what follows, intermingled with the actual methods used in the data collection, I first introduce the subjects of the research and then give a brief history of the school - Marie-Victorin. I hereafter conclude in explaining the progression of the study.

1.4.1.2. **Subjects and Methods Used for Data Collection**: Knowing the school and the subjects, with whom I established a warm affinity which continued even when the OISE project was terminated, I went back to Marie-Victorin from January to June, 1996. The affinity was expressed, for example, when I was invited in the summer of 1995 to play basketball and soccer with the boys.
outside the school in a municipal park near their residence; I was also invited to a picnic with a mixed group of girls and boys, and I as well went out for dancing soirées with the boys. When I went back to school in January, I submitted to school administration a written request with my accepted thesis research proposal. My request was then accepted by the principal who told teachers and other personnel at the school of my research.

From January to June 1996, I was present at the school at least once a week and in most cases twice to three times. To my surprise, I was so much present that I had to impede myself from ‘going native’ because on most days I forgot I was in Marie-Victorin not as a friend, a basketball coach, an activity organizer, a liaison between teachers, principal, on the one hand, and African students on the other; I also forgot that I was in the school not as a counselor, an academic helper, ... etc. (although I did all of these), but that I was conducting a research. I commenced, in short, ‘hanging out’ again with continental African students. Nothing had changed, surprisingly, at the school save, although still constituted a majority, the number of African students diminished significantly.

As already cited, I frequented the school once, and in most cases, twice or three times a week. This usually meant spending a whole-day in the school. I attended social and sport activities. These included basketball games, school graduations, Black History Month festivities, social and dance soirées, and I have also been to lunch and extra-curricular activities. I played basketball and soccer with the students and helped them in coaching. Indeed, I became the basketball team coach. I video-taped some of these activities, Black History Month soiree for example - including backstage, the practice, and ‘natural’ interaction - and I helped them to organize this soiree. When I saw the need, some of these videotapes were transcribed.

As far as the sites of the research, my main focus was in the gymnasium, cafétérias, and hallways and on the interactions that took place in these public
spaces, but also in ESL classes. Observation and journal notes were kept on a regular basis and I was, cordially, invited to one of the students' domiciles where a focus group interview was conducted. The interviews took the formal, informal, open ended, and focus-group formats. I interviewed ten boys: six Somali-speakers (from Somalia and Djibouti), 2 Senegaleses, one Ethiopian, and one from Togo. Of the ten boys, 3 were drop outs: 2 Somali speakers and one Senegalese. Their ages varied from 16-17 to a little bit over twenty, grade 12 to grade 13, respectively. I was not planning to interview drop-out students (décrocheurs). The three décrocheurs, however, were present at the time of the focus-group interview which took place in one of the students' houses, and because of the controversy and the level of the debate, they joined in the discussion.

I also interviewed 6 girls: all Somali-speakers (from Somalia and Djibouti), 14 to 19 years old, grade 9-10 to grade 13, respectively (see Appendix 2 for more details about the subjects of the research). All of the interviews with the girls were conducted at the school. Interviewing the boys as well as the girls usually formally meant sitting down with them individually or collectively and conduct the 'formal' interview. I interviewed them only on one occasion. However, besides the individual interviews, two were also present in the focus-group interview with the girls. The boys, on the other hand, were interviewed once either individually or within the focus-group. Informal interviews generally meant 'normal' talks with students with no tape-recording. That is, I either had my note-books with me or I register these talks at later times.

The only Black counselor, who was on a contract for a year, and the ex-only-Black teacher, both of whom were of Haitian background, were interviewed as well. These interviews were then transcribed and analysed. School documents, brochures, and archives were consulted and I videotaped the posters and slogans which were posted on the walls and the physical building of the school. All of the interviews were conducted at the school,
whether during free periods or after school, save for one focus group interview with the boys which took place in a house rented by the students themselves, which in significant ways indicated their age and maturity.

In sum, 6 females and 10 males, from 14-15 to 18, and a bit over 20 year old in some cases, were interviewed. This sample was chosen according to a) my familiarity and friendship with them, b) age and gender, and c) their intensity of engaging in hip hop, particularly those who performed rap. Choosing this sample, notwithstanding, came out of my observation which covered different sites of the school such as the gymnasium, cafeteria and the hallways. I spoke, in short, to those who would articulate best in language what they practice. These interviews took the form of open ended questions, but with special focus on the themes of the research. I usually began the interview with autobiographical questions. In them, I sought the history and processes of (language, among others) learning; I then asked questions dealing with racial climate of the school and what students think of their teachers, the principal, the curriculum. I also asked them about the racial conditions in the larger society, how they learned English, what was the role of gender, religion, and race (among many others) in translating, engaging, interacting with the Canadian context? Who did they identify with, how and why? And, importantly, what was the role of Black popular culture in these processes of identification?

Except for two focus-group interviews, one with the boys and one with the girls, all of the interviews were individual and were conducted in the school during lunch time, free periods, or after school. The focus-group interview with the boys, as already cited, was conducted in the house rented by the students themselves. Besides the interviews, a very minutely detailed journal and a diary were kept. The boys and girls were followed in, but particularly outside, classrooms. Given the emphasis on language, ESL classroom was also observed. As well, I 'hung out' with males as well as
females in and outside the school. This was a continuous pattern from January to June, 1996.

All of the interviews were minutely transcribed and analyzed using the margin of transcriptions as sites for notes and for identifying themes. These themes from the different interviews were then summarized in chapters and presented accordingly in this thesis. The transcriptions, with the interview tapes, were kept in a locked drawer which nobody could access. As part of the analysis, I used what I already identified as ethnography of performance. In it, I, as a researcher, read students’ body and garment languages. These are then juxtaposed with and against students’ narratives. In reading the body and garment languages as a partial performance of the Self, methodologically, I hypothesized, can I access cognition. That is, in observing ethnographically what people do, juxtaposed with and against what they say, I as a researcher can possibly access their desires. Nonetheless, as a limitation of this study, I was unable to neither fully engage cognitive categories nor talk to the younger groups of boys whom I observed engaging in hip hop and rap to a great extent. I was also unable to thoroughly explore the social category of sexuality as, for African youth, it was a discourse and practice that was not public (see chapter 6).

As cited earlier, all of the students are continental Africans. Significantly, they are all Muslims, with various degrees of attachment to the religion. For example, some would observe Ramadan and do their five prayers and others only know about these religious practices. Moreover, they are all refugees. Some declared their refugee status by themselves. That is, they directly reached Canada by themselves from their homelands, or through Europe or the United States. Others declared their refugee status as a family, that is coming with their parents: this usually means the mother because the father is, especially as far as the Somali-speakers are concerned, often left backhome for war, job, or professional reasons. Hence, some live alone, exclusively boys, and others with their parents, including boys and girls.
In addition, with no exception, all of the African students at Marie-
Victorin are at least trilingual: English, French, and mother tongue or first 
language\textsuperscript{6}. Some of the interviewees spoke more than five languages. In 
conducting the interviews, however, students were given the choice of carrying 
out the interviews in English or in French. As expected, they felt more 
comfortable and fluent in French and, in few cases, in English. For this study, 
interviews conducted in French are translated into English; and transcription 
codes will be explained primarily after the preface, but as well whenever and 
wherever is felt necessary.

1.4.2. Marie-Victorin (M.V.): At the entrance of the main foyer of the school, 
beside the statue of M.V., after whom the school was named, flags of different 
nations, representing students’ backgrounds, such as Lebanon, Somalia, India, 
among others, are dangling and the golden-board on which the school mission 
is written is unmistakably noticeable. It reads:

\textit{La mission de l'école Marie-Victorin consiste à offrir aux jeunes 
francophones de la région Métropolitaine une programmation de base, 
solide et unique, dans une atmosphère de respect mutuel entre tous, et 
toutes, grâce à un cadre éducatif efficace et propice à la réussite.}

[The mission of the school Marie-Victorin consists of offering to young 
francophones of the Metropolitan region a basic program, strong and 
unique, in an atmosphere of mutual respect between everyone, thanks to 
an effective and success oriented educative cadre (framework)].

Marie-Victorin is one of fourteen French-language schools, in the well-
to-do middle class and suburban northern region of metropolitan Toronto, 
Canada; indeed, inaugurated in 1969, it is the first French-language public high 
school in this metropolitan area. Marie-Victorin is a small intermediate (grade

\textsuperscript{6} I make a distinction between mother tongue and first language. Mother tongue can be the first language, but 
one can have a first language that is not one’s mother tongue. For instance, my mother tongue is Nubian 
(Sudanese Nubian as oppose to Egyptian Nubian), but I was educated in Arabic which then became my first 
language, that is the language I master the most. Unfortunately, as it is my case, one’s first language can 
replace one’s mother tongue to the extend that the latter is only declared for administrative and official paper, 
and census purposes.
7 and 8) and high school (grade 9 through 13) of approximately 385 students from different ethnic, racial, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. Their ages vary from 11-12 to 18-20 years old, grade 7 and 8 to grade 12 and 13, respectively. Looking through the pictures of, les étudiants gradués, graduate students from M.V., posted on the walls of the foyer of the school, and the annual school books since M.V.’s inauguration, the presence, albeit in a tiny number, of Black students and two Black teachers was documented. Blacks were either Haitians or Canadian-born. Continental Africans have no presence up until 1990-1991.

Historically, Marie-Victorin was under the supervision of an English-language board of education. However, on the first of September 1988, the Champlain French-language Board of Education was founded and hereafter Marie-Victorin was to fall under its supervision. The Champlain French-language Board of Education came into existence with the establishment of Bill 75, on the 10th of July, 1986, which stipulates that French-language schools should be administered by francophones. The Champlain Board of Education has five elementary schools and two high schools.

Through the first four years, and up until Tuesday, May 29th, 1973, Marie-Victorin was in portable classrooms. Now, it is a modern building with two floors. In the foyer of the main floor, there are the flags, M.V. statue and the names of the students identified by the school as superlative students. To the right of the foyer is the gymnasium of the school, and to the left are the administrative offices, including those of the secretaries, the principal, and the school counselors. To the left, south of the administrative offices, are the cafeteria, teachers’ lounge, and industrial and home economics classrooms. Opposite the teachers’ lounge are classrooms for modern languages and social sciences which are found next to the resource center (library) where there are

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7 I obtained these statistics kindly from the principle.
more than 19,000 books, 5,000 slides, and 300 records available for students' consultation. There are computers with access to the Internet.

The second floor of the school houses mathematics, science, art and commercial classes, with mostly senior students. The sport program is carried out in the gymnasium and spacious playing fields in front of the school. Sports activities include hockey, basketball, volleyball, handball, American football and soccer which are competed both interamurally, and extramurally against other French-language as well as English-language schools.

Marie-Victorin has 27 teachers, 19 for the high school (l'école secondaire) and 8 for the intermediate (intermédiaire). In addition, it has 2 counselors, a principal, a vice-principal, and 7 academic departments. These include English, French, science, social science, mathematics and computer, student services (service à l'élève), physical education (éducation physique), with a teacher acting as head of each department. M.V. has two streams of academic level: niveau général (general level) and niveau avancé (advanced level). The latter enables students to progress to university education whereas the former allows for community and technical schools and colleges. Marie-Victorin has also Conseil des élèves, student council (an elected body by the students to voice their concerns), a radio (la radio-frog), a newspaper (le Canard), and different social and technical clubs. These include L'équipe technique, preoccupied with filming, and setting up sound systems, lighting ... etc. for social or school events such as the graduation and fashion show; there is also Les Voyageurs, a club which organizes excursions.

Marie-Victorin has as well annual seasonal events such as Black History Month, which was initiated by the former principal of the school in 1993 to commemorate the Black heritage in Canada and North America. In passing, unfortunately, after this principal's discharge by the French-language Board after a bitter fight with teachers who accused him of too much allying himself with Blacks and other minorities, African students now carry the burden of
organizing Black History Month by themselves with very limited institutional support. Another annual event is the fashion show where students, mostly girls, show fashion from bikini, to Calvin Klein, to Club Monaco, to multicultural fashions. The latter, in fact, is intended to put an accent on a global notion of fashion and garments by exposing students, for example, to Asian, First Nation, South American, and African fashions and other ways of putting garments on and different styles of hair.

The archives of Marie-Victorin since its inauguration in 1969 show that M.V. had an almost all white students and teachers, save for a few students from the Middle East and Blacks who have had a very minute periodical presence. By and large, however, students of color have had their space in the school, albeit extremely limited, but not until the 1990s did their presence become so palpable and dominant. According to the M.V. principal, the percentage of students born outside Canada whose parents were born elsewhere rose to 70 percent of the school population. Within this 70 percent, continental African students certainly constitute the majority; their percentage nonetheless varies from one year to the next. At the time of my research, for example, continental African students formed 50 percent to 60 percent of the school population.

The school’s official discourse emphasizes the theme of unity within these multi-cultural and multi-ethno-racial perspectives and populaces. The slogan, for instance, upon which the school sells itself is “Unité dans la diversité” [Unity in diversity]. Notwithstanding, it is the Frenchness of the school that seems to be the capital of it’s promotion:

La principale raison d’être de l’école secondaire de langue française est de former des membres de la communauté de langue et de culture française, et d’acquérir une pensée juste, une sensibilité vive, un comportement distinct.

[The primary raison d’être of the French-language high school is to form members of the community of the French language and culture, and to
acquire judicious thought, active sensibility, a distinctive way of behavior].

This discourse of unity, regrettably, stays emphatically at the level of discourse and has very little bearing on practice and everyday interaction, as it will become clear in the next subsequent chapters (especially chapter 3).

1.5. Progression of the Study:

Chapter two of my investigation looks at race, culture (with specific attention to popular culture) and identity. It brings Stuart Hall’s (1990a, 1991, 1986) ‘new ethnicity’ and ‘articulation’, Homi Bhabha’s (1990) ‘hybridity’ and Pierre Bourdieu’s (1991; 1977) ‘market’, and ‘capitals’ to build a new landscape/theoretical framework that I term the ‘third space.’ In the process, I discuss Kristeva’s (1974) ‘transposition’ and Bakhtin’s (1981/90) ‘heteroglossia’, ‘dialogue’ and ‘translation.’ The subsequent section will then review a) the relevant literature that endeavors to intersect language, culture, race and identity, b) the relevant literature that addresses any of these social categories.

Chapter three looks at the history of the Black presence in Canada and the francophone presence in Ontario, with special emphasis on education. It traces the being of Blacks all across the nation; West Indians are a significant part of this history. I hereafter discuss the palpable recent influx of continental Africans and their presence in Canada by discussing StatCan’s estimate of Black Canada. The latter includes: Canadian-born, West Indians, and continental Africans.

Chapter four is to set the stage by discussing the racial atmosphere at the school which is jittery and nerve-racking for Black students as well as Black teachers. As far as blackness is concern, in this chapter, I make a distinction between ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ Black. I contend that African youth before their refuge to North America were not Blacks, although they might have other adjectives that describe them such as Ghanaian, Sudanese, Somali, tall, soccer player, ... etc. However, once in North America, they enter, so to speak, social
processes whereby they become Blacks. In other words, students confront a social climate that is asking them to racially fit somewhere. Racism is vitally significant in this climate. African youth, I will show, are allying themselves with blackness, specifically, after understanding that the effects of racism felt in their everyday life has a long historical memory and trauma. Racism, I conclude, has to be taken here as an incident in the process of racialization and becoming Black.

Chapter 5 is where I address the issues of pedagogy, the absence of Black teachers and, as significant, the absence of Black peoples from history books. Building on their experience of schooling in their homelands, African youth show a clear understanding of the eurocentric nature of the text books, the pedagogy, and teacher component. Their sense of exclusion is indeed a continuation of the ethno-racial trauma of chapter 4. There is nothing funny about a student body that constitutes 1/3 to a half of the school population that has no representation except in the lower streams of the academic level; while they already have the memory and the experience and they know they ARE capable of being otherwise.

Chapter 6 is divided into two sections. The first addresses memories and histories of language learning, students relation to language, and sites of language learning. Those include (Black) popular culture, particularly when it comes to learning English. The second section introduces culture as found in students’ narratives. This encompasses cultural representation and ‘separatist culture’. Cultural representation speaks to the issue of how Africans are and how Africa is imagined in the popular representation and the impact of this imaginary in students’ articulatory sense of belongingness. ‘Separatist culture’, a title borrowed from Solomon (1992), on the other hand, will seek to explore the question of cultural zones demarcated by cultural practices including language and religion.
Using my ethnographic gaze as a researcher, in chapter 7, I want to articulate the shape and form of the 'third space'. In this space, racial, gender, and sexual identities are manifested through linguistic and cultural communicative performances. In these performances, what students brought with them from Africa as cultural and linguistic memory and history are not negated, by and large. On the contrary, they are performed concomitantly and in chorus with the new (Black) North American culture and linguistic practices. In fact, I contend, the 'old' no longer looks completely like the 'old', and this is a result of the dialectic relation between the latter and the 'new': the 'old' translates the 'new' and vice versa. I will discuss two incidents to elucidate these arguments. Before doing so, we will see the impact of blackness in students' identity formation: identification. Here, it is through language - speaking Black English - which I hypothesize as students' desire to be identified and to identify themselves as 'Blacks'.

Chapter 8. Finally, against, in its oppositional and background signification, the repressive hegemonic and paralyzing structures, discourses and racist practices that we will identify, I will show how some African students were not only successfully in working their way through these structures, but some were academically victorious, socially stars, and politically active. I will, in this concluding chapter, offer their narratives and experiences as an alternative anti-racism framework. The idea, beside being a hopeful note, is to see how these youth were able to be successful in a traumatic atmosphere of negation.
Chapter 2
Section ‘A’

"Hey, ain’t I Black too?"

Race, Culture, Language and the Politics of Identity:
Towards a Theory of the ‘Third Space’

Race is salient to my research, and for precisely this reason an emphasis will be given to it. It will be discussed not as a category per se, but as a performed category. It seems to me, in reviewing the literature, that race is often discussed in a categorical term (Bolaria and Li, 1985). This, I contend, is firmly veracious if the questions asked are: a) what is contained in the category (its virtues and criterias) but also b) how are these virtues performed? (see also Walcott, 1995). Race, I will add, is also relational, historical and contextual (Dei, 1996; Mercer, 1994), which has no place outside history (Hall, 1981, 1987). The notion of performance, for me, implies the body as a central site where race is performed. Race, however, is inseparable from ethnicity. Here, I will discuss Lopez and Espiritu’s ‘panethnicity’. Race, I contend, is performed in and through language and culture. The outcome of this cultural and linguistic performance is an (ethnic/racial) identity or better identities. Within this research, these identities are performing and are themselves performed in and within the ‘third space’. Following this, in section B, I genealogized, so to speak, my study by reviewing the literature that looks or deals, in some capacities, with the population, notions, and categories of my research.

2.1. Race: The fact that:

Any theory which involves the claim that racial and ethnic groups are inherently superior or inferior, thus implying that some would be entitled to dominate or eliminate others, presumed to be inferior, or which bases value judgments on racial differentiation, has no scientific
foundation and is contrary to the moral and ethical principles of humanity.

has unanimously long been declared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1978: 4). Biological heredity traits, according to UNESCO declaration, have no ‘scientific’ ground to be used as an explanation of social stratification (see also Bolaria and Li, 1985: 10; Dei, 1996a: 40-54).

Racism therefore, as emphatically announced in the same article 2 of the UNESCO (p, 4) declaration, “includes racist ideologies, prejudiced attitudes, discriminatory behavior, structural arrangements and institutionalized practices resulting in racial inequality as well as the fallacious notion that discriminatory relations between groups are morally and scientifically justifiable...”. Racial prejudice, on the other hand, is “historically linked with inequalities in power, reinforced by economic and social differences between individuals and groups, and still seeking today to justify such inequalities, is totally without justification” (UNESCO, 1978: 4).

These declarations came as counter-discourses to the mythical and fallacious understanding of race which came from a long history of biologization of race (Dei, 1996a; Miles, 1989, 1993; Winant, 1994; Banton, 1967, 1977; Omi and Winant, 1986). The foremost common misunderstanding is held on the idea that race is based on the color of skin (Winant, 1994). The Anthropology and Biology disciplines went a long way to classify people based on the latter idea (Outlaw, 1990). Without justifying why the color of skin is taken up and discussed as a more salient physical feature than eye color, physical height, size of feet or fingers or whatever, the impasse was inevitable for these fields of study (see also Bolaria and Li, 1985: 11).
This being so, what is then race, and how is it related to genetic variations? The Moscow *pronunciamiento* (1964) was quite vehement in responding to these questions (discussed in Bolaria and Li, 1985: 8-9). It states, first, that race as a way of classifying people is limited and the genetic difference between intra-group is probably less than inter-group. The declaration, secondly, argues against establishing relationships between the biological heredity blood-group and racial groups. Race is not blood. As Bolaria and Li (1985: 8) stated “the only difference between population groups attributed to biological heredity alone is that which relates to blood-groups; but populations sharing the same blood-group do not coincide with racial groups.” Thirdly, to correlate cultural practices and performances to genetic inheritance is as fallacious as to say Blacks are athletes and singers. Fourthly, the declaration maintains, all humans possess the command, the faculty and the ability to advance culturally, intellectually, socially, politically and economically. And, as it is thereafter stated in the UNESCO declaration: “The difference between the achievements of the different peoples are entirely attributable to geographical, historical, political, economical, social and cultural factors.” But, these “differences can in no case serve as a pretext for any rank-ordered classification of nations or people” (1978: 4).

By now, linking race and biology is, unless one blindly insists on it as for example Richard Herrnstein and C. Murray (1995) in their *Bell Curve Wars*, more than ever disputable. However, if biology, genes and heredity are put into question, then one is only left with the social and the historical nature of race, as it has been discussed in critical race and anti-racism praxis and frameworks. Race, Winant (1994: 4) asserts, “can only be understood as an evolving historical construct, that it can have no "objective" or unchanging
interpretation.” This ever changing socio-historical interpretation, corollary, does two things. First, as already argued, it questions the ‘objective’ biological argument of race, but, secondly, it gets the argument closer to the notion of race as an ideological construct.

Bolaria and Li (1985) argue that capitalism, labour and market are the key players in the process of defining what race is and which group is (already) racially constructed. The European dominance of the globe and the increased need for cheap labour, especially in the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century, for Bolaria and Li, is what gave rise to slavery and colonization (see Miles, 1989, 1993 for further discussions and, probably, disagreement). Quoting Cox (1948) who argues that sometimes it is not realized that the slave trade, probably because of its very obviousness, was simply a way of recruiting labour for the purpose of exploiting the ‘great’ natural resources of America, Bolaria and Li (1985: 16) contend that “Until the cheap labour of the colored people was discovered, skin color did not carry a social significance.” They thus, in paraphrasing Cox, concluded that “racial exploitation and prejudice emerged among Europeans with the rise of capitalism and nationalism (...) [and] racism [and racial stratification] flourished [henceafter] because there were obvious economic benefits in the use of coloured labour.” Based on this, Blacks and Indians were then exploited not because they were black and red, “but because they were the best workers to be found for the heavy labour in the mines and plantations across the Atlantic” (Cox, 1948: 332).²

² Similar to this is Barbara Fields’s (1990) article “Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America.” In it, Fields argues that race was invoked as a kind of comfort zone where Whites, slave owners and statesmen would feel a psychic comfort in genociding First Nations and enslaving Africans. Race, for Fields, was “the means of explaining slavery to people whose terrain was a republic founded on radical doctrines of liberty and natural rights” (p. 114).
These approaches that see race as an illusion, a constructed one that does not see race as a fait social (as Durkheim (1963) would have said), a social fact. It fails to acknowledge that if people define situations, categories or whatever as real, they are real in their consequences (Sivanadan, 1990; Essed, 1991; Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). It, in addition, "fails to recognize the salience a social construct can develop over half a millennium or more of diffusion ... as a fundamental principle of social organization and identity formation" (Winant, 1994: 16). The longevity of the idea of race and its social consequences in terms of racial acting and thinking, for Winant (p. 16), has produced enough evidence that race will be part of human social realities (including how people position themselves and how they are positioned by others) though it lacks (in the biological sense) any scientific merit. Moreover, and finally, this approach that sees race as an illusionary ideological construct (see also Miles, 1993) fails to see how race permeates our everyday experience, psychic and identity formation and, more importantly, the performative aspect of race (Walcott, 1995). In thoroughly racialized societies such as the Euro-U.S. and Canadian societies, "to be without racial identity is to be in danger of having no identity. To be raceless is akin to being genderless. Indeed, when one cannot identify another's race, a microsociological crisis of interpretation results" (Winant, 1994: 16).

These competing definitions and interpretations of race (biology vs. ideological vs. socio-historical) are part and different expressions of the ever changing and competing discursive and cultural racial projects (Goldberg, 1993; Rattansi, 1993). The latter discursive racial projects are expressions of how certain groups can and indeed do access resources and capitals, without uttering a word, by the mere fact of being (white for example) (see also Omi and
Winant, 1986). Race, blackness for instance, is pivotal to these projects. It “provides a key cultural marker, a central signifier, in the reproduction and expression of identity, collectivity, language, and agency itself” (Winant, 1994: 30; see also Dei, 1996a, 1995; Hall, 1991; hooks, 1990; Gilroy, 1987, 1991, 1995). Central to these racial projects, for me, is racialization, racism and performance.

To begin with, I want to locate my racial project within a critical anti-racism praxis, a framework that sees race as a social construct whose meaning is ever-changing depending on socio-historical moments and power relations. Race, in this framework, is not a biology, but rather what we as social actors think it is. It is linked, in this project, to racialization and racism. In fact, it is racism, for me (see also Dei, 1996a: 40), that matters as a social problem, which keeps certain groups from accessing the material and symbolic resources that Canada can and in fact does offer, and not the theoretical conception of race per se. Thus, to talk about race, in my project, is only to explore what we construct and name as race and how this construction materialized. That is, how whiteness, for example, centralizes itself and hence becomes the norm and normalized gaze upon which the Other (blackness, for instance) is measured.

For my study, I want to distinguish between what can be identified as racial identity and racialized identity. To explain this, I take the Black example. To begin with, blackness is a socially and politically constructed category (Hall, 1990b; Gilroy, 1995, Mercer, 1994) whose meaning is constantly in change depending on history and politics (the civil rights movement for example), and it is usually found in opposition to whiteness (Dei, 1996a). For me, to talk about ‘being’ Black, on the one hand, is to talk about a racial identity. Racialized identity, on the other hand, has to do with ‘becoming’ Black. The processes, in other words, whereby an individual becomes racially conscious of her blackness is what I refer to as racialized identity (Fanon, 1967; Winant, 1994: 58-9 Miles, 1989: 73).
Put otherwise, there is a difference between 'being' and 'becoming' Black. For example, I myself was not a 'Black' person (in the North American sense of the term), though I had other adjectives that described me: tall, African, Sudanese, basketball player ... etc. But, when I refuged to North America which is finely tuned in its racial recognition, I went through a series of social processes whereby I 'became' a Black man. These processes are some of the central issues of this research project. Furthermore, given the history of enslavement, degradation, oppression, poverty, nihilism, oppression and economic marginalization that North American blackness is connoted and allied to, the question of how continental African youth deal with this changing nature of their blackness is vitally important. The distinction between racial and racialized identities helps us to see how continental African youth 'become' Blacks.

For Omi and Winant (1986: 64) the racialization concept is used to "signify the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group." Miles (1982: 157), on the other hand, sees racialization which he terms 'racial categorization' as "a process of delineation of group boundaries and of allocation of persons within those boundaries by primary reference to (supposedly) inherent and/or biological (usually phenotypical) characteristics." Whether for Miles or Omi and Winant, the process of racialization, the process of becoming encompasses and delineates a process of being positioned by another, considered an outsider. It delineates the dialectic, ever changing interpretation and meaning, and relational nature of race. When how people are positioned is based on race, on the fallacious notion of the color of skin, blackness in particular, this has incalculable consequences when it comes to identity formation: how one sees oneself, which capitals they can and indeed do access, which doors are opened and which are closed?
To become Black, nevertheless and vitally critical, is not a matter of choice in a society where race and race representation permeate all public spheres of life (hooks, 1992; Wallace, 1990; James, 1989; McRobbie, 1994). When continental Africans (youth and myself alike) find ourselves in North America, we enter, so to speak, processes of negotiation where new articulations of our social identity are to be performed. In this project of identity formation, the moment of identification is extremely significant. As part of our newly to-be-articulated racial/social identity, and when we as newly arrived immigrant Black peoples are reminded through mass media and everyday racist interaction that we don’t belong here, where-else will we identify for positive feedback if not blackness? I will show that continental African youth’s identification with blackness is quite important in their process of identity formation. The aforementioned processes of negotiation however are expressions of the dialectic (Carby, 1992) and the socio-historical nature of race (Hall, 1990b; Dei, 1996a; Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991). These negotiations are nonetheless then performed in the self-representational acts (Cixous, 1994).

The notion of performance when it comes to self-representational acts, takes us away from categorization and gets us closer to the questions of how race (blackness for example) is performed, how the internal social differences (gender, class, ability and sexuality) among and within blackness are articulated. The importance of these questions stems from the idea that category has a form of staticism attached to it (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985), whereas performance has a (constantly changing) context: a moment, an interaction, and it is, for me, ethnographically observable. So, instead of looking at blackness as a category, I will look at the moments and the different ways blackness is performed by continental Africans. This is significant in that it helps us to locate and see how
the intersection of race, gender, sexuality, and class looks. Performance, nevertheless, usually expresses traces of history of the 'old' (Cixous, 1994): *history is always already in the present*. The 'new', on the other hand, encompasses a notion of becoming (Black). Central, moreover, to the social processes of becoming Black and as part of the processes of racialization, I contend, is racism which, at least for continental Africans, is a product of what Lopez and Espiritu (1990) call 'racial lumping' which, in turn, produces a 'panethnic' formulae.

2.1.1. EthnIdRacial Formula: To state the obvious, race is salient to my research. But race cannot be bisected and not even differentiated from ethnicity (Banton, 1983; Rex, 1983). On the contrary, the multi-cultural nature of African, First Nations, or Asian Canadians goes against the only ethnic category. By multi-cultural nature, I am referring to linguistic, cultural, religious and belief system that people espouse within a nebulous category like Black, Asian or Indian. Blackness as a racial category is therefore a stigmatized category that refers to populace of African origin (Walcott, 1995). However, the latter is a trans-Atlantic populace (Gilroy, 1993): it is found in the U.S., Canada, the Caribbean, Latin and South America, in Europe and, of course, in Africa. In each of these sites, nevertheless, the very 'same' signifier of Black has its own cultural, linguistic and religious beliefs. For outsiders, particularly, given the historical power relations, the 'black' category is imagined, positioned and thus treated as an uni-dimensional category (hooks, 1992; Lopez and Espiritu, 1990). Black and Asian Canadians as racial groups, are thus treated like Italian, Polish or Greek Canadians. This, for Lopez and Espiritu (1990: 203), creates a racial

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9 Up until the Civil Rights Movements in the 1960s, the notion of 'unmeltable' European (read whites) ethnic groups did exist (Novak, 1972). But, hereafter in the U.S., for example, Italians who came from the different parts of Italy all melted in the category/identity Italian-American or Italian-Canadian (Nelli, 1970), which was a step "towards assimilation" (Lopez and Espiritu, 1990: 200). However, the situation is different
epiphenomenon that they refers to as ‘racial lumping’: this is when sub-groups ‘look alike’ from the perspective of the outsider, read Whites in the case of Blacks and Asians in North America. The question, importantly thereafter, is what would happen within the subgroup?

For Lopez and Espiritu (1990: 198), a process of panethnicization will start to occur. Panethnicity, which is part of the racialization process and a result of it, is “the development of bridging organizations and solidarities among subgroups of ethnic collectivities that are often seen as homogeneous by outsiders.” It is my contention that panethnicity occurs when the individual becomes a symbolic representation of a whole group. For example, when it was discovered in Toronto that some individuals of Somali origin were defrauding their social assistance, the whole Somali community became the accused (Ali Sharif, Now Magazine, 1993). In a similar line, when a Black (Jamaican) male committed a crime in May 1996 in Toronto, the whole Black community was put under a microscopic accusatory gaze (Toronto Star, May 5, 1996). This shows the centrality of race/ethnicity in panethnic phenomenon: the “groups that, from an outsider’s point of view, are most racially homogeneous are also the groups with the greatest panethnic development” (Lopez and Espiritu, 1990: 219-20).

when it comes to 'people of color', i.e., people whose racial identification is feasible. Lopez and Espiritu (220) thus conclude that panethnicity “may not be generalizable to sets of panethnic subgroups that are not, [to the eyes of dominant groups-whites], racially distinct.” Therefore, the question of ethnicity is increasingly "a question of race. And those well-established 'ethnic' groups that are still most excluded ... are racial minorities. For Italians [Lopez and Espiritu continue] and other whites panethnicity may indeed been a step towards assimilation and 'Anglo-conformity'. But ... no non-white ethnic group has ever fully assimilated [sic; I would say , participated as full citizenship, or at least afforded a feeling of full citizenship] in American [and Canadian] society” (ibid.: 220; see Dei, 1996; James and Shadd, 1994; Solomon, 1992; Lee, 1994 for the Canadian context).
Race, class, generation, and geographical factors constitute, for Lopez and Espiritu, structural factors that enforce or de-enforce the degree of panethnicity while language and religion encompass the cultural factors. The authors clearly contend that panethnic formations are not merely ‘alliance of convenience.’ They are inversely necessary means of everyday survival, accessing resources and even identity and group formations. As we will see, this panethnic phenomenon is quite significant in continental African processes of integration in the Canadian society and their sense of identity and which cultural and linguistic capital they can and indeed do identify with, and can and do access.

One warning, however, that deserves to be emphasized when it comes to the race/ethnic couplet is what Paul Gilroy (1987) calls ‘ethnic absolutism’. Discussed as a racist practice to be fought against, ethnic absolutism is oftenly socio-political process where race (the colour of skin to be emphatically clear) is equated to identity, culture and whole being. Ethnic absolutism occurs when all black peoples are seen as musicians and basketball players. It is a discursive space that reduces “the complexity of self-image [identity] and personality formation in the black child to the single issue of ‘race’/colour” (Gilroy, 1987: 66). Ethnic absolutism occurs when the Self is said to be what the Other is not. That is, and this is how popular racisms work (Dei, 1996a; Gilroy, 1987, 1992; Goldberg, 1993; hooks, 1988; James, 1995; Henry, 1995), when Black peoples are represented as criminals in the popular imagination through simplistic and readily comprehensible mediatic images, whiteness will/can not be, by definition, what blackness is. Whiteness is, or will become, as a corollary, innocuous and harmless in spite of its continuous history of colonialism, oppression, imperialism and racism. ‘Race’, not blackness though, recently is put in quotation marks. In what follows, I contend against this.
2.1.2. What is This Inverted Comma in 'Race'? Brief Comments: To distinguish it from the biological and essentialist discourses that dominated public spaces - including the academy - for a long period of time, and inversely to emphasize the socio-historical nature of race, the latter is put in quotation by some scholars (see Miles, 1989, 1993; McCarthy and Crichlow, 1993). Agreeing with Miles, I take the position that race is not a biological question, but a social one. In other words, what constitutes race is socially constructed and historically specific. Though I think, and this is where Miles and I are in disagreement, what is socially constructed is also "real", at least in its consequences (Winant, 1994). Miles argues that because of the pseudo-scientific nature of race, to continue talking about 'race' as a reality, would mean to continue perpetuating something that is not real. Following Winant however, I take the position that North Americans' "ability to recognize race is so finely tuned, so ingrained, that it has become a "second nature."" Thus, Winant (1994: 37; emphasis in the original) concludes, "with the development of this ability comes a naturalization of race itself: if racial identity is so recognizable, so palpable, so immediately obvious, then in practical terms (...) it becomes "real"."

Furthermore, it seems to me that Miles is suggesting that by doing away with race as an analytic category, we can do away with a problem. For me (see also Dei, 1996b, 1997a), these arguments confuse the definition of race which, according to Miles, lacks scientific basis, with racism. Race does lack scientific basis (in its biological sense), but its consequences and use in social relations are palpably present. Race is used to classify, suppress, open doors for some and shut them before others (Wallace, 1990; hooks, 1994; James, 1990; Giroux, 1993). I need no reminder every time I enter Marie-Victorin to realize who I "hang out" with and to whom I have a hard time even saying 'bonjour'. Race,
whatever it may mean, is therefore real in its social consequence. Finally and as importantly, if Miles did not see the need to invert commas for gender and class, each of which went and do go through the same and ever changing social process, semiosis and interpretation, I do not see why race has to be hand picked as needing them.

In the following section, I discuss the social category of culture as it relates to popular culture, youth sub-culture, and the Black diaspora. Here, I show how Black diaspora cultural forms cannot be neatly contained within the project of the Nation State, but within a framework of a diaspora, a project of hybridization (Gilroy, 1987; Mercer, 1994). The focus of my research, Black youth culture, therefore, has to be analyzed within a diasporic cultural project. This is followed by a section on language. Contrary to some dominant discourses in the field of Linguistics, language is discussed here as an instrument of power which gains its signification and authority from who is speaking, to whom, and what is talked about. Following this is a discussion of ‘identity’, where Stuart Hall’s distinction of ‘old’ and ‘new’ identity is the focus. The Self here is a split between You and the Other, both of whom are socially and historically situated. I conclude section A of this chapter by constructing a new theoretical landscape termed the third space.
2.2. Culture, Popular/Youth Culture and the Black Diaspora

The [black] cultural forms ... cannot be contained neatly within the structures of the nation-state... [Blackness, hence,] defines itself crucially as part of [the black] diaspora... Analysis of black politics must, therefore, if it is to be adequate, move beyond the field of inquiry designated by concepts which deny the possibility of common themes, motives and practices within diaspora history. (Gilroy, 1987: 154 &158).

Our task becomes ... to discern the hidden messages inscribed in code on the glossy surfaces of style, to trace them out as 'maps of meaning' which obscurely re-present the very contradictions they are design to resolve or conceal. (Hebdige, 1979: 18).

Thus far, I traced some of the already abundant history of the concept of race. We saw that race has an interlocking connection to racism and racialization which, in turn, have immeasurable consequences when it comes to identity formation, socialization, linguistic and cultural preferences. I now turn to another concept that is related to race: culture. Here, the performed categories of race, class and gender are not blocks felt, performed and lived separately (Mercer, 1994; Essed, 1991). On the contrary, they are performed and expressed in and through culture, language, garments and other semiotic signs (Hebdige, 1979). By semiology, the science of signs (Saussure, 1916), I am referring not to linguistic signs, but signs “whatever their substance and limits; images, gestures, musical sounds, objects, and the complex associations of all these, which form the content of ritual, conventions or public entertainment: these constitute, if not languages, at least systems of signification” (Barthes, 1967/83: 9, original emphasis). This will be the background semiological theory against which culture, popular culture and black expressive cultures will be read. I, in other words, see these systems and structures of signification as needing to be deconstructed. When signs are clustered together, Barthes contends, they produce a language or languages (in the semiological sense) or
'maps/régimes of meanings' (Foucault, 1977; Hall and Jefferson, 1993) which hint at the deep underpinning structures. My research will then survey these 'deep structures' and endeavor to delineate their 'maps of meaning' (Hall, 1981).

2.2.1. Culture: In his influential *Keywords*, Raymond Williams stated that "Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (1976/83: 87). This complexity, for Williams (p, 87), stems, first, from the different historical trajectory passages that the concept had been through and, secondly, the different utilization of the term in 'several distinct intellectual disciplines' and in 'several distinct and incompatible systems of thought'. Jenks (1993), on the other hand, contends that the convolution and the enigmatic nature of the concept, culture, stems from the fact that culture permeates all aspects of our lives: from sports, to Hollywood, to shopping, to food, to language, to religion, to opera, to music, to literature, and so on.

The genesis of the concept of culture, for Jenks (1993: 11-2), takes place through a four-fold typology which, for me, gives a précis and in pivotal ways epitomizes the historical and contemporary usage of the concept (see also Hebdige, 1979; Hall and Jefferson, 1993; McRobbie, 1994, During, 1993; Williams, 1976/83):

1) The first typology celebrates culture as a cerebral or a cognitive category. As a corollary, culture is or becomes a state of mind. "It carries with it the idea of perfection, a goal or an aspiration of individual human achievement or

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10 Within the field of linguistics, Chomsky (1993) distinguishes between 'deep' and 'surface' structure of the language. He argues that the phonological utterance is indeed expressing a deeper forms of syntactical structures. The role of researchers then, he contends, is to deconstruct these deep structures.
emancipation” (Jenks, 1993: 11). Marx’s ‘false consciousness’ and Mathew Arnold writings, for Jenks, are two exemplary representations of this typology.

2) The second typology articulates culture as a more embodied and collective category. Within this typology, culture encompasses a Darwinist notion of evolution out of which came some pioneering anthropological researches and it is, as well, linked and connected to nineteenth-century imperialism. Culture, nevertheless, is brought to the sphere of the collective life, rather than the individual consciousness.

3) The third typology addresses culture as a descriptive and concrete category. Here, culture is to represent the collective body of arts and intellectual work within any given society. This is the everyday language whereby the particular, exclusive, elitist and specialized knowledge of any one society is to be incorporated. “It includes a firmly established notion of culture as the realm of the produced and sedimented symbolic; albeit the esoteric symbolism of a society” (Jenks, 1993: 12).

4) Finally, the fourth typology is where culture is used as a social category. This is Williams’s (1961) ‘whole way of life’. It is the pluralist and potentially democratic sense of the concept which became the focus of anthropology, sociology and, more recently, Cultural Studies (McRobbie, 1994; Hebdige, 1979; Grossberg et al., 1992; Hall, 1993).

What can be defined as ‘the return of culture’ is owed pivotally to the latter: Culture Studies, the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (the CCCS) which came to be known as Birmingham Center/School (see Grossberg et al., 1992; During, 1993; Amit-Talai and Wulff, 1995), but especially Stuart Hall whose post-colonial subjectivity was pivotal in the process of
de/re/constructing the field of Cultural Studies itself. Following a Marxian-Gramscian framework, CCCS has taken culture away, teleologically, from the bourgeois notion and usage of the category where it signified glassy art galleries and museums and elitist entertainment (Bourdieu, 1993). Culture, within the bourgeoisie dominant bloc (Gramsci, 1971), is understood in its 'high' culture: literature, linguistic norms, sports, mannerism, garments ... etc. On the contrary, culture for Culture Studies is socio-historical, dialectic, dynamic, performed in several varieties depending on nation, generation, class, race, gender, sexuality and power relations within which the Self is formed and performed (Bhabha, 1994; Hall and Jefferson, 1993; Bourdieu, 1993; Hebdige, 1979; Gilroy, 1987, 1995; Hall, 1989, 1988, 1990a, 1991). What is previously known as 'high culture' is now, in Cultural Studies that is, found in dialectic with the 'popular' and 'low' culture (Hall and Jefferson, 1993, Giroux and Simon, 1989). The 'high' is now influencing but also vitally influenced by 'popular' culture (Bourdieu, 1993; Mercer, 1994). 'High' culture, which was also referred to as dominant culture (Hall and Jefferson, 1993), gets its 'highness' only in its alliance with the dominant power bloc (Gramsci, 1971). Culture now, moreover, is 'maps of meaning' not simply carried in the head of the individual but performed in the everyday interaction. It is also performed in the individual relation(s) to and with institutions, environment, customs, material and symbolic capitals. It is in challenging these deeply saturated 'cultural norms' that social change can be anticipated, so Cultural Studies argue (Hall, 1989). This is how Clark, Hall, Jefferson and Roberts (1993: 10-1) in Subculture, Culture and Class articulate their conceptualization of 'culture' (it is certainly worth quoting at length as it captures my own position):

We understand the word 'culture' to refer to that level at which social groups develop distinct patterns of life, and give expressive form to their
social and material life-experience. Culture is the way, the forms, in
which groups 'handle' the raw material of their social and material
existence ... 'Culture' is the practice which realises or objectivates
group-life in meaningful shape and form. "As individuals express their life, so
they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both
with what they produce and with how they produce" (Marx, 1970: 42).
The 'culture' of a group or class is the peculiar and distinctive 'way of life'
of the group or class, the meanings, values and ideas embodied in
institutions, in social relations, in systems of beliefs, in mores and
customs, in the uses of objects and material life. Culture is the distinctive
shapes in which this material and social organisation of life expresses
itself. A culture includes the 'map of meaning' which make things
intelligible to its members. These 'maps of meaning' are not simply
carried around in the head: they are objectivated in the patterns of social
organisation and relationship through which the individual becomes a
'social individual'. Culture is the way social relations of a group are
structured and shaped: but it is also the way those shapes are experienced,
understood and interpreted. (no emphasis added).

Then culture is where the Self is formed. The latter is found, Clark, Hall,
Jefferson and Roberts (1993) argue, in a dialectic relation between 'raw' and
symbolic material. The Self exists among and within 'maps of meaning',
régimes of discourses, which themselves are influencing and influenced by it. It
is here among and through these discourses that the Self interprets and makes
sense of the Other. The Other includes the social, environment, whatever or
whoever surrounds and is found in dialectic with the Self. The Self then no

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11 This is what Hélène Cixous (1994: 6-9; translated by Susan Sellers) has to say about the dialectic between
the Self and the Other in Holocauste

L’un n’est pas sans l’autre
«L’un n’est sans l’autre»
.. délire la cendre ou les cendres en tous les
sens alors, : (un mélange de jaune safran
blanc gris noir, et, bizarrement, carmin,
cendre) descendre du haut en bas du
Désir

... De même que l’un n’est pas sans l’autre,
l’un ne peut être pensé sans l’autre. Ni J’un
sans l’autre

[The one is not without the other]
[«The one is not without the other»]
[delirium the ash or ashes in every]
sense therefore, : (a mixture of yellow saffron]
[white grey, and strangely, carmin]
[ash) descend from top to bottom of the
[desire]

Just as the one is not without the other.
the one cannot be thought without the other. Not I
one without I other].
longer exists in a vacuum but is formed and performed in and through cultural and semiological signs.

When it comes to my research, one pivotal and vital element is missing in the above definition: 'popular culture' and its dialogue with and against 'high' culture. As already hinted, no culture is found in and for itself: in isolation. 'Popular' culture, therefore, cannot escape a slap in the face from the 'high' culture, but the latter cannot avoid a vehement challenge from the former. It is power that is expressed and challenged in both cases. In reiterating the aforecited definition, but in a curtailed way, Hall (1989: 1) sees culture as:

the changing ways of life of societies and groups, the networks of meanings which individuals and groups use to make sense of and communicate with one another, what Raymond Williams once called 'whole ways of communicating which are whole ways, whole ways of life.' The dirty crossroads where popular culture intersects with the high arts. That place where power cuts across knowledge, or where cultural processes anticipate social change.

I fear the repetition: Hall's definition of culture emphasizes, first, that culture is complex "networks of meanings" or codes through which people can and do communicate and can and indeed do make sense of the socio-environment that surrounds them. These 'networks of meanings' are what the French theoreticians Bourdieu (1977), Foucault (1977) and Barthes (1972) called 'capitals', 'régimes' and 'mythologies', respectively. (It is beyond the scope of this research to discuss each of these concepts.) Hall, secondly, emphasizes that these networks of meanings are changing, dynamic, fluid, and even hybrid (Bhabha, 1990). The dynamic and fluid nature of culture, thirdly, Hall contends, is created thanks to the wars taking place at the "dirty" intersection between

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12 Bourdieu's notion of capital is an important one and will be discussed subsequently.
“popular” and “high” culture which are divergent performative acts and deployment of power relations. The high culture with its power, powerful “networks of meanings” and (material and symbolic) capitals are, nonetheless, influenced by popular culture, Hall vehemently argues time and again, but he also argues that the reverse is true as well.

2.2.1. Youth Culture, Popular Culture and/or Sub-culture? The aforecited discussion on culture, when applied to the socially constructed category of youth, gives birth to what some have called ‘youth subculture’ or just ‘sub-cultures’ (McRobbie, 1994; CCCS, 1982; Jefferson and Hall, 1993; Willis, 1977; Hebdige, 1979). In Youth Culture, Vered Amit-Talai and Helena Wulff (1995), went, however, against these Birmingham School authors in delineating, discussing and then establishing youth culture, not in terms of a ferocious always already resisting sub-culture, but as a ‘culture’ “in its own right” (Wulff, 1995: 3). For Amit-Talai and Wulff, culture is dynamic, historical, dialectic, situated and always expressed within power relations. Amit-Talai (1995: 227) contended notwithstanding that “in any society, to operate effectively, people have to be multi-cultural.” When this conceptualization is applied to ‘youth cultures’, for Amit-Talai and Wulff, one perceives the multi-cultural nature of youth cultural productions. The youth cultural production is multi-cultural in light of the fact that it occurs “at home, at schools, at work, at play, on the street, with friends, teachers, parents, siblings and bosses,” Amit-Talai (1995: 231) explains, it “draws elements from homegrown as well as transnational influences, and intertwines with class, gender, ethnicity and locality with all the cultural diversity that such a multiplicity of circumstances compels.”
Whether it is youth subculture or youth culture in its own right (see also Brake, 1985), or whether it is teenagehood or adolescence (Danesi, 1994)\textsuperscript{13}, all authors, including the Birmingham School, are of the opinion that youths perform a \textit{sui cultura}, a unique and often temporal cultural production. From style, to ‘image’, to ‘demeanor’, to ‘argot’ (Brake, 1985: 12) youth cultural production has its temporality, mannerism, hermeneutic, particularity and historicity. My position tends, however, to oscillate between ‘youth subcultures’ (Hall and Jefferson, 1993) and ‘youth culture’ (Amit-Talai and Wulff, 1995) usages; I will therefore use both interchangeably. The ‘sub’ in ‘subculture’, for me, is a performance of power relation where class but, vitally, race and gender, are pivotally indispensable variables. Since culture is never one (Amit-Talai, 1995; Bhabha, 1994), cultures in the plural is hence the appropriate usage: which then gives birth to the poly-signifier ‘sub-cultures’. ‘Youth culture’, on the other hand, as defined by Amit-Talai and Wulff, is not radically different except for their critique of the Birmingham School for being compulsively consumed by class analysis (see also McRobbie, 1991, and her auto-critique). Amit-Talai and Wulff’s critique is worthwhile and my research will show the centrality of gender and, indispensably, race in the process of African youths’ appropriation, expropriation, identification, and hence performing hip hop (sub)cultures. The different interpretations and meanings of sub-culture are probably as old as ‘culture’ itself. As Hebdige declared a while ago “The meaning of subculture is ... always in dispute” (1979: 3). The ‘youth’ in youth subculture/youth culture is nonetheless a different terrain which can and indeed is found in an uneasy borderland.

\textsuperscript{13} Danesi (1994: 6) distinguishes between adolescence and teenagehood. Adolescence or ‘young adult’ ‘refers to the psychosocial behaviors that are characteristic of all primates at puberty... [I]t designates the behaviors set in motion by the onset of the reproductive capacity. Teenagehood, on the other hand, refers to a socially constructed category superimposed on the life continuum by modern consumeristic culture.”

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Youth and youthfulness in everyday language is linked in part to sexuality: being sexually active or even promiscuous when it comes to the female body (Brake, 1985: 163; McRobbie, 1994; Wulff, 1995: 6). This is even more so when it comes to the black (female) body (Mercer, 1994; Wallace, 1990; hooks, 1992). Besides sexuality and erotica, youth is also demarcated by age, spontaneity, energy, exploration, risk-taking, vivaciousness, ‘attitudes’ and playfulness (Wulff, 1995: 7). When it comes to age, youth can most probably be situated between 13 and 19 year old. However, there are certain professions where ‘looking young’ can be prolonged: acting or sports, for instance. In light of this, the blurred boundaries between ‘childhood’ and ‘youth’, on the one hand, and ‘youth’ and ‘adulthood’, on the other, should then shed lights on the constructed nature of these categories. It is for precisely this reason that Wulff advocates for an equation between ‘youth’ and ‘young people’, both of which are self (but they can also be externally) defined. This dialectic between ‘adult’ and ‘young’, ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ is, in part, responsible for the ever changing nature of ‘youth culture’ (Rampton, 1995; Gilroy, 1987).

Youth sub-cultures are, in general, dynamically fluid, hybrid and enigmatic (Brake, 1985). This hybridity (Bhabha, 1990a) is a product of its multi-cultural nature but, as well, a product of its dialectic relation not only to and against the ‘dominant culture’ but also to and against what is called ‘parent culture’. By dominant culture, Clark et al. (1993: 13) mean “the structures and meanings which most adequately reflect the position and interests of the most powerful class - however complex it is internally.” Parent culture, on the other hand, is where Paul Willis’s ‘lads’ (1977)14 are a compelling illustrative

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14Beside Willis, there is Hebdige’s Subculture (1979) which includes ‘Teddy Boys’ and ‘Punk’ cultural performance both of which are working class sub-cultures.
example. They are working class lads who “come to take a hand in their own
damnation” (Willis, 1977: 3) by performing and articulating the exceedingly
complex patterns of what can be called the sub-culture of ‘failure’ within the
working class (Willis, 1977: 1; see Ogbu, 1986, when it comes to the black
situation in the U.S.). ‘Failure’, as a sub-culture, has borrowed, and still does,
from the parent working class culture. The lexicon parent is metaphorical
rather than actually biological. The parent culture is therefore an umbrella
under which the subculture of failure falls.

Fluidity of youth sub-cultures, significantly, is also linked to temporality
and fashion. As Hall in his seminal Notes On Deconstructing ‘The Popular’
alluringly contends:

The meaning of cultural form and its place or position in the cultural
fields is not inscribed inside its form. Nor is its position fixed once and
forever. This year’s radical symbol or slogan will be neutralised into next
year’s fashion; the year after, it will be the object of a profound cultural
nostalgia. Today’s rebel folksinger ends up, tomorrow, on the cover of
The Observer colour magazine (1981: 235; original emphasis).

Youth subcultures, in the final analysis, are products of history where
peers, neighbourhood, schools, the immediate circle of kin, community and
locality act as decisive players in constructing, deconstructing and interpreting
symbols and semiotic signs around youth. These symbolic signs include
language, (popular) media, religion, gender, race, class, consumption, music,
garments, books, and narration. The symbolic nevertheless can never stand by
and for itself. It is always dialectic with the material (Bourdieu, 1977): One is
invertable and convertible to the Other. Youths, nonetheless, in interpreting
the world around them, and as they attempt to “resolve collectively
experienced structural problems.” They “experience a gap between what is
happening and what they have been led to believe should happen” (Brake,
Murdock (1974; cited in Brake, 1985: 27) sums up well these dialectic processes when it comes to defining youth subcultures. For him:

[Youth] Subcultures are the meaning system and modes of expression developed by groups in particular parts of the social structure in the course of their collective attempts to come to terms with the contradictions of their shared social situation. More particularly subcultures represent the accumulated meanings and means of expression through which groups in subordinate structural positions have attempted to negotiate or oppose the dominant meaning system. They therefore provide a pool of available symbolic resources which particular individuals or groups can draw on in their attempt to make sense of their own specific situation and constructed a viable identity.

When culture and subculture are applied to the socially and politically constructed signifier black with its poly-significations, the very notion and boundaries of nation-state will be in trouble (Gilroy, 1987). Before outlining this contention, I want to outline, briefly, what is commonly know as 'popular culture' and intersect it, thereafter, with the performed category of blackness before discussing 'black popular culture.'

2.2.1.1 Popular Culture: Against the bi-polar (see also Kristeva, 1974; Rushdi, 1981/91) of dominant vs. popular culture, Tony Benett (1986) suggests a 'turn to Gramsci'. Till the 1970s, Benett explains, there were two trends of theoretical and practical analysis within cultural studies (in the small c and s letters). The first is 'structuralist' and the second is 'culturalist'. In the structuralist perspective, popular culture is thought of as an 'ideological machine' which in complex ways dictates people's thoughts. This was the dominant ideology when it came to studying cinema, television and/or popular writing. Culturalist on the other hand, Benett (Xii) continues, is the school of thought where popular culture (sport, say, or youth sub-cultures) is often celebrated as
romantic and the 'authentic interests and values' of subordinate social groups and classes.

Against (the backdrops of these) two positions, and yielding a third position, Benett 'turns to Gramsci'. Gramsci (1971) contended that the classical Marxist 'ideology' of 'class struggle', which he captured in his metaphor of 'wars', no longer holds as the difference among, within and between classes. The difference is more than ever dialectic and ever increasingly blurred, especially when it comes to popular culture (Hall, 1981). To delineate this ambivalent space between classes, Gramsci introduced 'hegemony'. The Gramscian concept of hegemony "refers to the processes through which the ruling class seeks to negotiate opposing class cultures into a cultural and ideological terrain which wins for it a position of leadership" (Benett, 1986: XV). Gramsci, hereafter, departed from the Marxist tradition that sees class relation in terms of domination. In capitalist societies, Gramsci argues, cultural and ideological relations between ruling and subordinate classes consist less in the domination of the latter by the former than in the struggle for hegemony. Popular culture in the Gramscian terms then "is viewed neither as the site of the people's cultural deformation nor as that of their cultural self-affirmation or ... of their self-making; rather, it is viewed as a force field of relations shaped, precisely, by these contradictory pressures and tendencies" (Benett, 1986: Xiii).

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15 When it comes to race, see Hall's Gramsci's relevance to the analysis of race (1986b) in Communication Inquiry. In it, Hall explains through history how 'hegemony' is vital in the process of racialization and hence racism. Hegemony can only be maintained, Hall (1977; cited in Hebdige, 1979: 16) argues, so long as the dominant blocs 'succeed in framing all competing definitions within their range'. It is not, Hall maintains, "universal and 'given' to the continuing rule of a particular class. It has to be won, reproduced, sustained. Hegemony is, as Gramsci said, a 'moving equilibrium' containing relations of forces favorable or unfavorable to this or that tendency."
A few years preceding Benett, Hall (1981) did us a great favour by tracing what we recognize now as the 'popular' which is found in the signifier 'popular culture'. The 1880s - 1920s is, for Hall (p. 230), "one of the real test cases for the [contemporaneous] revived interest in popular culture." Hall discussed three definitions of the signifier 'popular', as applied to popular culture. The first two are less satisfactory, according to Hall, and the third is his which is offered as an alternative. The first definition refers to "the things which are said to be 'popular' because masse of people listen to them, buy them, read them, consume them, and seem to enjoy them to the full" (p. 231). For Hall, this is the 'market' or commercial definition of the term. The second "is all those things that 'the people' do or have done" (p. 234), the anthropological definition: the culture, mores, customs and folkways of 'the people'.

The third definition is Hall's own definition where he contends that to develop some universal popular aesthetic, founded on the moment of origin of cultural forms and practices, is certainly mistaken. Take the novel as an example, he explains; as a cultural form, when asking the question 'is the novel a 'bourgeois' form'? The answer, Hall delineates, can only be historically provisional: when, which novels? for whom? under what conditions?

This being so, when asking 'what is popular culture?', our answer hereafter is or should be whose popular culture? when? where? who is included and who is excluded? Within Hall's definition, popular culture as a cultural production is dynamic, shifting, contradictory, relational, historical and temporal. It is always dialectic with and against the 'dominant' culture of the 'dominant power-bloc' (p. 238): it informs and is informed by 'high' culture. The dominant culture is and can never be absolute in its dominance, but it is and can be hegemonic, Hall contends. Popular culture "always has its base in
the experiences, the pleasures, the memories and the traditions of the people”, Hall (1992: 25) asserts, and it “has connections with local hopes, local aspirations, local tragedies, local scenarios that are the everyday practices and the everyday experiences of ordinary folks.” It is hence connected, Hall continues, to what Bakhtin calls ‘the vulgar’: that is the popular, the informal, the underside, the grotesque.

Popular culture, as a field of analysis and as cultural forms where identities are formed and performed, in Hall’s terms:

looks, in any particular period, at those forms and activities which have their roots in the social and material conditions of particular classes; which have been embodied in popular traditions and practices... It... insists that what is essential to the definition of popular culture is the relations which define ‘popular culture’ in a continuing tension (relationship, influence and antagonism) to the dominant culture... It treats the domain of cultural forms and activities as a constantly changing field. Then it looks at the relations which constantly structure this field into dominant and subordinate formation. It looks at the process by which these relations of dominance and subordination are articulated... the process by means of which some things are actively preferred so that others can be dethroned. It has at its center the changing and uneven relations of force which define the field of culture - that is, the question of cultural struggle and its many forms. Its main focus of attention is the relation between culture and questions of hegemony (1981: 234-5; original emphasis).

Popular culture, then, is that articulatory process of cultural production where today’s radical symbol is tomorrow’s fashion and next year’s nostalgia. It is where the populace’s desires are expressed and shaped. It is a theater of popular fantasies and desires; it is, Hall (1992: 32) adds, “where we discover and play with the identifications of ourselves, where we are imagined, where we are represented, not only to the audience out there who do not get the message, but to ourselves [meaning black people] for the first time.” But who is this ‘populace’ - who is this It - ‘the people’? With no specific reference, just as there
is no fixed content to the category of 'popular culture', Hall (1981) argues, so there is no fixed subject to the It - 'the people'. My people have been marginalized, dehumanized, colonized, violently and abjectly oppressed, so declared Malcom X (1965); My people are on the move, repeated Walcott (1995). I now want to focus on my people and look at the different ways in which culture and popular culture are performed. Where do we begin, so much for Black (youth) popular (sub)culture(s).

2.2.2. Diaspora Project and Black Cultural Expressions: Interestingly, but not surprisingly, in his comparative study of Youth Culture in Britain, U.S. and Canada, Brake (1985/93: 116-42) studied youth cultural expressions, yet when he turned to Black youth (sub)cultures, he had to devote an entire chapter. This is not surprising, declared Gilroy (1987: 154), because Black "cultural forms ... cannot be contained neatly within the structures of the nation-state." They need a 'framework of a diaspora' (Gilroy, 1987: 155), 'a project of hybridization' (Mercer, 1994: 26). Both frameworks, precisely, are offered as alternatives to the different varieties of absolutism which would confine culture in racial, ethnic or national essences. Black cultures can only be understood within, according to both Gilroy’s and Mercer’s frameworks, a history of cultural exchanges between the Black Atlantic (Gilroy, 1993). Within the Atlantic blackness, youth are of extreme significance in performing, producing, reproducing and inventing and reinventing Black cultural forms. Indeed, I contend, youth are probably the most important variable in the continuation of the specificity of the diasporic Black Atlantic.

According to Gilroy (1987: 155), there are four nodals when it comes to Black cultural exchanges: the Caribbean, the US, Europe, and Africa. What is missing from Gilroy’s ‘Black Atlantic’ however is the Black Canada. Thus there
are five and may be six nodals if Canada, Central and South America are to be added. This absence of Black Canada, in particular, is probably an outcome of the invisibility of Black Canada which can be related to its limited number, on the one hand, and the dominance and ultra-visibility of Black America, African Americans, on the other. For Gilroy:

Black Britain defines itself crucially as part of a diaspora. Its unique cultures draw inspiration from those developed by black populations elsewhere. In particular, the culture and politics of black America and the Caribbean have become raw materials for creative processes which redefine what it means to be black, adapting to distinctively British experiences and meanings (1987: 154).

Given the history of the Caribbean and the American presence, a point which I will detail in the history chapter (see chapter 3), I will argue that Black Canada when it comes to cultural exchange is no different from Black Britain in performing the diaspora-originated hybridization process. Black America nevertheless, given the history of the run-away slaves to Canada from the US (Walker, 1985), and the US world dominance, is a more discernible influence.

The diaspora project creates a language in both semiological and linguistic sense that has its own syntax and grammatology (Derrida, 1974). It is a process involving black styles, music, dress, dance, fashion and languages which affirm while they protest (Gilroy, 1987). They affirm the hybrid nature of black styles, music, dress, dance, fashion and languages in not only being African, but in also affirming that Africa itself has been re-articulated through experiences since emigration. As will all current phenomenon, the black styles, music, dress, dance, fashion and language always have historical traces. The articulation of Africa, in other words, is mediated by the present socio-historical, cultural, geographical, and linguistic conditions of the diaspora.
Africa, in the diasporic conditions, is consciously appropriated as a location of history and memory from which to draw. Afrika Bambaata and Jah Shaka are two leading hip hop and reggae cultures, respectively, yet both are named for African chiefs distinguished in anti-colonial struggle (Gilroy, 1987: 156). The present black expressive cultures, as Gilroy explains, draw on a plurality of histories and politics. In the case of Black Canada, this plural history includes the US history of enslavement, African Caribbean (anti)colonial history, and, recently, en masse continental African immigration.

The plurality of politics might include the Civil Rights Movement and anti-colonialism, anti-racism and anti-sexism. The Civil Rights Movement in the US and Canada is indispensably important in helping to (re)define not only what it means to be a man or a woman but also what it means to be Black, First Nation, Hispanic or Asian in the Americas. The Civil Rights Movement can also be read as part of the anti-colonial movements in the so called ‘third world’, particularly in Africa (Gates, 1988; Said, 1993). This Movement initiated and helped to articulate, respectively, anti-racism, anti-sexism discourses and practices and the Woman’s Movement (hooks, 1992, 1988; Carby, 1982).

These Black (Civil Rights) movements are however trans, intra and inter-national movements. They are indeed different performances of and they are, inextricably, performed within the diaspora project. This is a process wherein Africans in the diaspora and on the continent understand what it means to be under abject colonial, enslavement, and dehumanized conditions. As Gilroy (1987: 156) puts it:

16 Mohanty (1990), however, showed that in spite of the fact that it was the continuous pressure of the Black Civil Rights Movement that sprung Affirmative Action, an initiative to remedy the historical exclusion of Blacks and people of color from the work force and government institutions, it was white women who benefit the most from it when it come to higher education, especially professorial positions.
The social movements [including anti-colonialism in Africa, for example, and the Black Civil Rights Movements in North America and Europe] which have sprung up in different parts of the world as evidence of African dispersal, imperialism and colonialism have done more than appeal to blacks everywhere in a language which could invite their universal identification.

It is in and through this common language of experience that the soul singers of Afro-America have been able to send a message to their friends not only in Africa but elsewhere as well (Gilroy, 1987; see also Mercer, 1994; Hebdige, 1979).

The universal experience of Black peoples around the globe, however, gets its vitality when it comes to the population of my research: displaced group of continental African youth who found themselves in Canada. The colonial legacy of the French and the English is a collage of experience they are already familiar with. To choose an identification with Black diasporic expressive cultures in their search for identity and identification therefore, I contend, is not surprising but needs a closer look. In the case of continental African youths, it is probably the racial categories (read racism and racial stratification in Canada) and the colonial antagonisms that are the two lived experiences that facilitate the identification with diasporic Africans. As Gilroy (1987: 158, original emphasis) contends:

It may be that a common experience of powerlessness somehow transcending history and experience in racial categories; in the antagonism between white and black ... [and] European and African is enough to secure affinity between [the] divergent patterns of subordination.

The universal experience and identification with dehumanization, I would argue, renders (sub)cultural exchanges between black peoples, especially in the diaspora, especially youth cultures, a second nature. These exchanges are expressed in the several varieties of style, music, dance, fashion and language
of black peoples. It is within these exchanges, Mercer (1994) argues, that the hybridization project has to be located. This, on the one hand, goes against any rigid notion of purity and, on the other, it affirms a notion of mixture and adaptation which are the very nature of black popular culture which “has come to signify the black community” (Hall, 1992: 28). It is in the black popular culture that black cultural traditions were kept, and whose struggles survive in the persistence of the black experience (the historical experience of black people in the diaspora), of the black aesthetic (the distinctive cultural repertoire out of which popular representations were made), and of the black counternarratives we have struggled to voice (p. 28).

The black cultural expression, Hall (1992) continues, is indeed an appropriation, incorporation, and rearticulation of European ideologies, cultures and institutions alongside an African heritage. There is no then an easy return to/of history (see also Gilroy, 1993; Mercer, 1994; Wallace, 1990; hooks, 1992). The outcomes of this incorporation and rearticulation therefore are linguistic innovations in rhetorical stylization of the body, forms of occupying an alien social space, heightened expressions, hairstyles, ways of walking, standing, and talking, and a means of constituting and sustaining camaraderie and community (Hall, 1992: 28). And as Hall eloquently puts it:

black popular culture, strictly speaking, ethnographically speaking, there are no pure forms at all. Always these forms are the product of partial synchronization, of engagement across cultural boundaries of the confluence of more than one cultural tradition, of the negotiation of dominant and subordinate positions, of the subterranean strategies of recoding and transcoding, of critical signification, of signifying. Always these forms are impure, to some degree hybridized from a vernacular base. Thus, they must always be heard, not simply as the recovery of a lost dialogue bearing clues for the production of new music (because there is never any going back to the old in a simple way), but as what they are - adaptation, molded to the mixed, contradictory, hybrid space of popular culture.
Talking about the United Kingdom, for Kobena Mercer, the project of hybridization is "an aperture into the imaginary of an England "made" by the descendants of those encounters, in the formation of new, syncretic, mixed identities" (1994: 26). The notion of 'an England' is vital in that it brings 'the other story' to the center. It, indeed, decenters what is known as the 'center' - England. Blacks are no longer from somewhere else. They are, on the contrary, Blacks and, more than ever crucially important, British. The project of hybridization then, Mercer (p. 26) argues, is something "happening to the English, whether they like or not." The hybrid Englishness, Mercer continues, is precisely an effect of its de-centralization, on the one hand, and the centrality of the Other 'black cultural politics', on the other, to the extent that it becomes hegemonic:

I've been puzzled by the fact that young black people ... today are marginalized, fragmented, enfranchised, disadvantaged and dispersed. And yet, they look as if they own the territory. Somehow, they too, in spite of everything, are centered, in place: without much material support, it's true, but nevertheless they occupy a new kind of space at the center (Hall, 1987; cited in Mercer, 1994: 19; emphasis added).

Once hegemonic therefore, the effects of black cultural styles and politics are not only felt by black people, but by white people as well (see also Gilroy, 1987: 155). Indeed, as Mercer has shown in his re-articulation of the politics of black hair style, "it is white people who have been doing a great deal of the imitating while black people have done much of the innovating" (1994: 114) out of which came the story of 'black innovation/white imitation' (p. 120). The dialectic between white and black is what Mercer refers to as the 'interculturation' (p. 114). To begin with, Mercer argues, black styles -whether music, hair, garment or language - constitute a political statement in the absence of an organized direction of black political discourse and in a situation
where blacks are excluded from official and unofficial channels of democratic representation. In this exclusion, in addition, black style re-enforces the terms of shared experience of blackness and a sense of collectivity.

To delineate the story of black innovation/white imitation, let us take the example of the 'zoot suit' as a garment style of the 1940s (discussed in Mercer, 1994). It constituted, together with the conk, "the de rigueur hepcat look in the black male 'hustler' lifestyle of 1940s ghettos" (Mercer, 1994: 120). The zoot suit, a bricolage of a Western style re-articulated in a neo-African format, signified and projected stature, dignity and presence for the black man whereby he was important in his own domain. Interestingly, by 1948 the American fashion industry took it apart and toned it down as the new 'bold look' marketed to the mainstream (white) male (Mercer, 1994; ch. 4). This is one among many other black cultural expressions which have been taken up and appropriated by whites: hip hop, jazz, reggae, dreadlocks and rasta. Elvis, The Beatles, Tony Benett or Frank Sinatra are just a few among the many who built their 'kingdom' on appropriating, if not literally imitating, black musical styles. These examples are important for two and maybe three reasons.

First, it shows that the dialogic relationship can and does exist between the subordinate and dominant cultures and, moreover, that the former can and indeed does influence the latter: the 'interculturation'. Second, it shows the creolized and syncretic nature of black styles. As Mercer puts "Syncretic strategies of black stylization, 'creolizing' found or given elements, are writ large in the black codes of modern music like jazz, where elements such as scales, harmonies or even instruments like the piano or saxophone from Western cultural tradition", he continues (1994: 114), "are radically transformed by this neo-African, improvisational approach to aesthetic and cultural
production." What is true for jazz is also true for other black cultural expressions. Black cultural forms hence appropriate Western styles only to synchronize, reform, and deform them so as to produce in the end styles - including linguistic styles - encompassed in the signifier 'black style'. Black (sub)cultures are thus a bricolage of (neo)African traditions and cultures alongside Western cultures, performed in the 'new world'.

But,thirdly and finally, the very appropriation of black (sub)cultures by the mainstream media and cultures, in turn, reforms and deforms them. That is, mainstreams do and will not take black (sub)cultures as they are (Bobo, 1992; Malveaux, 1992). They, in fact, rip them off and tone them down so they can be acceptable and presentable to, especially, whites. The difference though between white and black culture of consumption is that within the white mainstream, consumption is a private, individual and passive process whereas for Blacks consumption is "a procedure of collective affirmation and protest in which a new authentic public sphere is brought into being" (Gilroy, 1987: 210). Once black cultural forms are appropriated nevertheless, Blacks restart the processes of cultural innovation.

Among these innovatively performed, synchronized and hybrid forms of black cultural expressions and for the purpose of my study, I want to bring into focus these two: hip hop culture(s) and rap music.

2.2.3. Hip Hop or Rap? Contrary to Powell (1991: 245) who sees hip hop as "the beat of the music" and rap as "the rhythmic talking over the beat", I make a distinction between hip hop and rap. For me, hip hop as a cultural form "encompasses everything from music, to clothing choices, attitudes, language, and an approach to culture and cultural artifacts positing and collaging them in
an unsentimental fashion" (Walcott, 1995: 5). Hence, as I have seen at Marie-Victorin, hip hop is is a way of dress, walk, and talk. Hip hop dress is eloquently described by Rose (1991: 277) in talking about a New York summer party. Picture this: “Thousands of young Black folks milled around waiting to get into the large arena. The big rap summer tour was in town, and it was a prime night for one to show one’s stuff.” She adds, “Folks were dressed in the latest “fly gear”: bicycle shorts, high-top sneakers, chunk jewelry, baggy pants, and polka-dotted tops. The hair styles were a fashion show in themselves: high fade designs, dread, corkscrews, and braids.” Hip hop walk, on the other hand, usually means moving the hands’ fingers simultaneously with the head and the rest of the body as one is walking. The talk, however, is what generally is referred to as ‘Black Talk’ (Smitherman, 1994).

Rap, as Walcott (1995: 5) argues, stands out as one of the most identifiable elements of hip hop culture. Rap originated in New York City in the late 1970s as a form of popular music that entails talking, or “rapping”, to rhythmic musical background. Gilroy (1987: 221), argues that rap started when the Jamaican sound system culture was adapted to the experience of urban New York. Whether originated in New York or Jamaican dance halls, rap was popularized as an urban African American youth cultural form that revels in the reduction of the music to its essential African component of rhythm, words and voice (Powell, 1991; Gilroy, 1987; Ebron, 1991; Baker, 1991, 1993; Walcott, 1995). The rapper, according to Powell, is a “vocalist [who] tells a story set to syncopation, and a disc jockey (DJ) provides the rhythm with a drum machine or by "scratching" on a turntable (rapidly moving a record back and forth under the needle to create rap’s famous swishing sound)” (1991: 245).
In a world of urban poverty where real instruments are an unaffordable luxury but where records are commonplace, Gilroy (1987) contends, the authority and trade marks of records are undermined and thus records become a background against and with which rap music is made by pulling the stylus back and forth across a disc. The DJ, whenever needed, can use a record or records to produce this background against which the narrative is produced. *Rap is then a collage of voice, melody, rhythm, public (audience and a performer that is), spontaneity and word.* This collage represents part of the old Afro-American prophetic tradition of communication (Craddock-Willis, 1991: 30). Like the jazz, gospel, R&B, and other African American musical forms that represent the human experience of peoples of African descent in the diaspora through alternative language of oppositional meaning and collective strength, rap is indeed a furtherance of these traditions.

Rap lyrics are primarily narratives, critiques and performances of the experience of dominant social relations and marginality of people of African descent in North America and the Black Atlantic world (Gilroy, 1993; Walcott, 1995). This social and human experience of dominance is felt at the level of sex, sexism, racism, crime, and police brutality\(^\text{17}\). Besides these relations of

\(^{17}\) Here are two examples of some of the issues that can be found in rap lyrics: a) social oppression and b) police brutality, respectively:

I've been wonderin' why
People livin' in fear
Of my shade
(Or my hi-top fade)
I'm not the one runnin'
But they got me on the run
Treat me like I have a gun. (Public Enemy, 1990)

Fuck the police, comin' straight from the underground
A young nigga got it bad 'cause I'm brown
And not the other color, so police think
They have the authority
dominance, anti-capitalism, anti-colonial, anti-oppression, environmental, contemporary and historical politics such as Civil Rights Movement themes can also be found in rap. Part of this history is also historical figures whose resurgence and commemoration are more and more prominent in rap lyrics; particularly about Malcom X and Martin Luther King. Rap, given its attractiveness to particularly youth, including whites, is sensationnally consumed across language, gender and class in North America and around the world. Rap, but also reggae, jazz, Blues, R&B, and other black Atlantic musical forms can now be heard in such distant places as Italy, Sweden, Nepal, Hong Kong, Rio de Janeiro and Townships of South Africa. In fact, rap is no longer only in English. I experienced listening to rap in French, Spanish, Greek, Korean, Italian, Arabic, Hebrew, German, Swahili and Portuguese. This, as Gilroy (1987: 212) argues, would mean a new articulation of race, ethnicity and consumption that is beyond the scope of this project. Rap as a black Atlantic cultural form is indeed an outstanding example of how the ‘Empire strikes back’ (CCCS, 1982) and centralizes itself at the ‘belly of the beast’ (Hall, 1981). It is where identities, including gendered identities, are articulated.

2.2.3.1. Rap and Gender Performance: Hip hop and, in particular, rap sets itself within a discourse and a performed politics of resistance. However, in doing so, male rap performers tend to re-inscribe themselves to and bond with the normative and normalized (Foucault, 1977) white heterosexual male gaze whereby femaleness is treated not only as inferior but not worth the pause. Maleness, accordingly, defines and shapes the meaning of resistance, community and culture (Ebron, 1991: 23-6). In fact, as Paulla Ebron argues, gender in rap lyrics is only addressed when women are doing the talking or

To kill the minority (NWA,1988) (both cited in Rose, 1991: 279)
when they are talked about. “But a dialogue about community resistance in which Black women are absent also has a gendered dimension”, Ebron (1991: 25) affirms. The absence of women, for Hazel Carby (1986), translates into men defining the public space, including race, and the very notion of resisting. Defining the public space, in part, also means a definition of the issues worth contemplation and attention. Within these male defined public spaces, Carby argues, women are welcomed if they are not to re-define this space or challenge it.

However, Ebron reminds us that, as part of cultural forms that are meant to express but also re-define the Black community, “rap performances and performers are not homogeneous but stratified by age, class, gender and culture/political agenda” (1991: 24-5). Any critique, in other words, that attempts to analyze Black cultural forms “should recognize that any notion of ‘Black culture’ is already the result of a struggle within the Black community whose outcome is shaped in part by who can speak ‘Black’ to the dominant white society and to a culture industry which has its own agenda.” For Ebron, “What is viewed from the outside as unified, homogeneous culture is, in fact, the product of dialogue and confrontation” (1991: 24).

From this perspective, women’s intervention in rap as public sphere was then a counter act to their exclusion and silencing. Queen Latifa and Salt ‘n Pepper, in particular, are quite vocal in expressing their own positionalities and create their own space in a terrain dominated by male.

Of course as Black men articulate the ‘Black experience,’ Black women have not remained silent; they have taken exception to these narrow representations of womanhood and Blackness and have called for inclusion in both male and female projects. The interventions by African American women have challenged an almost exclusively male domain of rappers. Women rappers like Queen Latifa, among others, respond to sexism and contest the most regressive ideas about the role of Black women in the process of cultural production (Ebron, 1991: 26)
It is my contention that the level of sexism that exists in rap is, indeed, because of, first, the pre-occupation with race and racism which in turn, secondly, leaves unchallenged notions of maleness and femaleness (see also Carby, 1986; Walcott, 1995). For rap to represent an opposition to dominant cultural form - it is Ebron (1991) again - rappers need to articulate the hidden complicities of a position that chooses to prioritize one issue - racism for example - over another - gender for instance. Because performance “plays a significant role in discussions about identity for it gives agency to those who represent as well as consume these images” (Ebron, 1991: 24); and if, moreover, Black male rap performers want to bridge the gap with Black women to build a community of resistance, they need to dissociate and de-bond with white men over gender. For it is the Black men bonding with white men over gender and over the control of women that enables Black men to collude in practices that devalue Black women, Paulla Ebron vehemently argued.

This creates an enigmatically interesting but also complex situation for continental African youths, boys and girls. It would be emphatically important to see if continental males will take on hip hop and rap gendered identities and how females will deal with the offered positions. Whether continental males or females will take on or negate these aforementioned prescribed gendered identities will be expressed, in part, in language. In other words, the formed and performed identities are also formed and performed in and through language. In the following section, I articulate tersely my views on language and how it will be dealt with in and within this project. I argue that language cannot be bisected either from who utters it and its cultural context or from its politics, especially when it comes to black English.
2.3. Linguistic or Cultural Literacy? The Politics of Language: Some researchers have treated language in its abstract universal form (Chomsky, 1965) while others have argued for a contextualized, historicized and political study of language (Bourdieu, 1991). I locate my project within the latter. Language as a social phenomenon (Rampton, 1995; Heller, 1992) cannot be located outside the social signification and symbolic representation (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991; Barthes, 1967; Montgomery, 1986/95). Language is part of the social but also constituted in it (Gumperz, 1982). It is therefore my contention to argue, following Bourdieu (1991), that if language is to be historically and socially contextualized, the syntax, the morphology, the lexics, and the phonology of the language can not be examined apart from who is uttering it, when, where and with whom they are speaking.

As Fanon (1967: 17) has argued in *Black Skin/White Masks*, "To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support a weight of a civilization." When these arguments are applied to continental African youths who chose black Atlantic linguistic codes and styles, as we will see in chapters 6 and 7, this choice, for me, is an expression of support to a long history of resistance and they are hereafter joining a linguistic community. Yet, Bourdieu (1991) argues, in order for a language to be converted into and accepted as a capital, it needs to be located in a market, a field. "Utterances receive their value (and their sense) only in their relation to a market, characterized by a particular law of price formation" (Bourdieu, 1991: 67). In this market, there is a 'price formation' and 'anticipation of profit' depending on who is speaking, how (style, accent, etc.), where (a classroom, conference, rap performance, etc.) and with whom. In short, language, Bourdieu continues, is
where the parameters of the market are defined and it is not any more a 'pure' instrument of communication as linguists continue to maintain.

Language, Bourdieu affirms, on the contrary, is an instrument of power. It can be connected to the state through the education system which 'inculcates' (1991) the 'official language' - the standard language - to students. Language is part of and constructed and performed in and within cultural forms. It is in the language that identity is formed and performed (Cixous, 1994; Butler, 1990). However, Bourdieu warns us (1991: 67), these should not be confused with the fact that "the linguistic relation of power is not completely determined by the prevailing linguistic forces alone [but] by virtue of language spoken, the speakers who use them and the groups defined by possession of corresponding competence, the whole social structure is present in each interaction." Hence, the linguistic interaction, the linguistic exchange is "a relation of communication between a sender and a receiver, based on enciphering and deciphering, and therefore on the implementation of a code or a generative competence." The linguistic exchange is also:

an economic exchange which is established within a particular symbolic relation of power between a producer, endowed with a certain linguistic capital, and a consumer (or a market), and which is capable of procuring a certain material or symbolic profit. In other words, utterances are not only (save in exceptional circumstances) signs to be understood and deciphered; they are also signs of wealth, intended to be evaluated and appreciated, and signs of authority, intended to be believed and obeyed.

For Bourdieu, The pursuit of maximum informative efficiency is only exceptionally the exclusive goal of linguistic production and the distinctly instrumental use of language which it implies generally clashes with the often unconscious pursuit of symbolic profit. For in addition to the information expressly declared, [Bourdieu continues,] linguistic practice inevitably communicates information about the (differential) manner of communicating, i.e. about the expressive style, which, being perceived
and appreciated with reference to the universe of theoretically or practically competing styles, takes on a social value and symbolic efficacy (Bourdieu, 1991: 66-7; original emphasis)

Of interest here is Bourdieu's notion of market, its capitals and the symbolic prices. When it comes to what is known to some as 'black talk' (Smitherman, 1994) and to others as 'black English vernacular' (Labov, 1972), it is a creolized linguistic repertoire (Gumperz, 1982) of English and African languages (Smitherman, 1994) which is circulated within the black community. This creolized language is also a product of creolized identities which fought tyrannical and ruthless human conditions of enslavement and economic deprivation. These inhuman conditions were then resisted in and through different means: music and other cultural forms, but also through language. Language, therefore, enters a) politics and b) the politics of identity by being a) a political statement in itself - as it is the case with 'black English' in the U.S. - and at the same time b) a manifestation, a performance of an identity as it is the case with Afro-Caribbean identity in the U.K. (Smitherman, 1994; Labov, 1972; Montgomery, 1986/95; see LePage and Tabouret-Keller, 1985, for the Jamaican Creole and its usage as a political statement and identity performance in the U.K.).

As we will see, continental African youths choose an identification with this resistance to inhuman conditions by taking up what I term 'black stylized English': a linguistic performance that depends heavily not so much on a perfect mastering of a linguistic repertoire but on ritual expressions (Rampton, 1995) such as 'yo, whassup homeboy' - an expression that is frequently used in black talk (Smitherman, 1994). This raises the question: is standard English always the target for the ESL (English as a second language) learner? Can there be other linguistic norms that can be the target? (See also Goldstein, 1987). The
answers will be provided in the subsequent chapters 6 and 7 of the analysis. Nevertheless, for now one can certainly argue that the ways in which black English, rap, and hip hop are influencing continental African youth in Canada is a question of identity and identification. Continental African youth, in other words, desire to see themselves mirrored within the Canadian society. In what follows, I delineate this question of identity by introducing Stuart Hall’s "new ethnicity" and "articulation", Homi Bhabha’s "third space" and "hybridity", and Pierre Bourdieu’s "market" and "capitals." In the process, I discuss Kristeva’s "transposition" and Bakhtin’s "heteroglossia," "dialogue," and "translation".

2.4. Identity or no Identity, that is the Question

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as already accomplish fact (…) we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation (Hall, 1990a: 222).

Identities are coming back, identities are “returning”, Stuart Hall (1991: 9) argues. By “return”, Hall is not implying that “the question of identity ever went away”, but it is returning with “a particular kind of force”. This forceful return, in my view, can be linked to postcolonial, postmodern, anti-racism and feminist discourses which see and locate identity performance in that complex intersection of multiple discourses which include, among others, discourses of difference, of subjectivity, of language, of history, of memory, and of power relations (cf. Butler, 1990; Hall, 1991).

Identities are on-going “productions” that are given birth to at the borderland between the Self and the Other (Bakhtin, 1981/90: 365). It is in this
dialectic with the Other that the Self knows its virtues, it is in that split that the Other enters the Self. As Hall argues:

The critical thing about identity is that it is partly the relationship between you and the Other. Only when there is an Other can you know who you are (...). And there is no identity (...) without the dialogic relationship to the Other. The Other is not outside, but also inside the Self, the identity. So, identity is a process, identity is split. Identity is not a fixed point but an ambivalent point. Identity is also the relationship of the Other to oneself (Hall, 1991; cited in Giroux, 1993: 75).

The Self, the Identity, the Subject is no longer found in isolation nor is it a fixed point. On the contrary, it is found in multiple discourses, including the discourse of otherness. Hall (1990b) refers to this 'process' of identity formation as the 'New' (discourse of) identity which he distinguishes from the 'Old' (discourse of) identity. 'Old' and 'New' identities are, nevertheless, used interchangeably with 'Old' and 'New' ethnicities. The discourse and the logic of the old identity, Hall explains, "contains the notion of the true self, some real self inside there, hiding inside the husks of the false selves that we present to the rest of world. It is", he continues, "a kind of guarantee of authenticity. Not until we get really inside and hear what the true self has to say do we know what we are "really saying"" (1990b: 42-3). The old identity, in short, is an expression of the Cartesian stable self where the subject is situated within essentialized and static discourses of history, self, and memory. It is "a notion of the continuous, self-sufficient, developmental, unfolding, inner dialectic of selfhood. We are never quite there, but always on our way to it, and when we get there, we will at last know exactly who it is we are" (Hall, 1990b: 42).

The new identity discourse, on the other hand, is more complexly different. It neglects neither history and the multiplicity of discourses within which the subject found herself and the contradictory nature of these discourses, nor the power relations, the politics of positioning, and the dialogic relationship between the Self and the Other. This dialogic relationship is indeed, as Bakhtin argues, "a dialogue of social forces perceived not only in
their static co-existence, but (...) as a dialogue of different times, epochs and days, a dialogue that is forever dying, living, being born: co-existence and becoming are here fused”, he continues, “into an indissoluble concrete unity that is contradictory, multi-speeched and heterogeneous” (Bakhtin, 1981/90: 365).

This indissoluble and heteroglossic nature of the “forever dying” and re-born subject formation processes, according to Bakhtin (p., 365), is part of the on-going processes of “ideological translation.” By heteroglossia, Bakhtin refers to the notion of having multiple voices, languages, and discourses within the Self. These discourses, he maintains, can be contradictory, shifting, heavily influenced by, and constructed in historical moments. In the novel for example, Bakhtin adds, the author may have more than one voice, one language, one style, and one subjectivity: narrator, a female character, a male character, a servant, an idiot ... etc. These voices are articulated by the same subjectively formed author, though. From a different angle, these poly-voices are also underscored in Kristeva’s notion of “transposition.” By transposition, Kristeva refers to the poly and multi-positions that the subject takes resting on who is speaking, to whom, and what is talked about. By introducing desire and impulses, Kristeva (1974: 231) concludes that the signifier/signified (Signifiant - Sa/Signifié - Sé) bar can only be taken as inauguration, “processus primaires”, and not final product, in the processes of understanding how (male and female) subjectivities are formed and the dialectic that can, and does, exist between (male and female) subjectivities. Because identity cannot be ‘barred’, but dialogized, and because identity is formed within multiple but contradictory discourses, then, Kristeva asserts, the Sa/Sé bar can only serve other objectives like Man positioning himself as, and at, the center of the sign (Barthes, 1967/83).

Yet, Bakhtin asserts, the same process of transposition and multi-voices is also true when applied to “ideological translation.” When the receiver, whether a reader or listener, for example, is interpellated (as used by Althusser, 1971) by the speaking subject’s language and voice, she/he, Bakhtin maintains,
is "coming to know one's own language as it is perceived in someone else's language, coming to know one's own belief system in someone else's system. There", Bakhtin contends, "takes place (...) an ideological translation of another's language, and an overcoming of it's otherness" (1981/90: 365).

In other words, in the processes of ideological translation, the Other's language(s) and, I add, culture will belong to the Self. These processes, however, Bakhtin asserts, are not all consciously processed. Thus, through these partially unconsciously processed translations, the Other is becoming part of the Self. The Self, on the other hand, enters, so to speak, the Other through the dialogic process of translation. The subject formation, according to Bakhtin, Kristeva, and Hall, then takes place in and within multiple and contradictory discourses. Notion of difference is central for all three authors, especially Hall and Bakhtin. Difference is not only dialectically constituted vis-à-vis the Other, but as well within the Self. The différence and différence (Derrida, 1974) within the Self, I believe, is a product of the contradictory nature of the discourses within which the Self is found.

However, the moment of identification in the dialectic relationship between the Self and the Other is of extreme importance for it impacts and guides the shape, the form, and the intensity of the ways in which the Self translates the Other and vice versa. The question of 'intensity' is an issue of desire. In this thesis, African students' desire and identification with blackness has certainly influenced their translation of the new Canadian context, what they learned and how. African students identified and named, unconsciously though, African American culture and language as sites for investments and yearning. Identification, therefore, I argue in chapter 7, is the starting point for identity formation. When the naming takes place, for me, the process of ideological translation commences; the outcome of which for displaced subjects is the third space.
Nonetheless, to have an identity, to be able to speak, to have a location from which to speak, and to have an identity politics, by definition, means to have an ethnicity, Hall (1990b, 1991) argues. When people are blotted out, put over there in the Third World, Hall explains, they need an identity, a politics, a location from which they can start their odyssey of “the search for roots” (Hall, 1990b: 50). He adds that people:

need to honor the hidden histories from which they come. They need to understand the languages which they’ve been not taught to speak. They need to understand and revalue the traditions and inheritances of cultural expression and creativity. And in that sense, the past is not only a position from which to speak, but it is also an absolutely necessary resource in what one has to say (Hall, 1991: 18-9).

Yet, to honor these languages, histories, and cultural and aesthetic traditions, people need politics of location, representation, and positionality where history and traditions can only be talked about mediated by the present social conditions. People thus need an ethnicity, a new ethnicity, that allows them to come from the 'margin' to the metropolis and still be able to speak.

2.5. Making Connections: The Third Space and the Politics of Articulation

In this section, I discuss the notion of the third space which is a complex space where, I argue, continental African youth’s identities are articulated in such an enigmatic and knotty way that makes them inextricably interconnected to the ('New') Other. It is a space where the 'old' gives birth, so to speak, to nebulous and unrecognizable 'new' cultural forms. I will first define this space and then discuss how Bourdieu’s notions of capital and market are related to it. Before doing this though, Hall’s notion of articulation is pivotal.

For Hall (1986a: 53), articulation has to do with two or more different things that “can, but need not necessarily, be connected to one another”; such as a lorry which has a cab and a trailer. The politics of articulation is thus a language that makes a unity of two different elements that need not necessarily
be connected. When continental African youth (as we will see) speak Somali, black stylized English, and Jamaican Patois, these are indeed performances of this politics. These are different languages that are articulated to perform the Self.

Although I owe a lot, intellectually, to Homi Bhabha, his usage of 'the third space' is relevant and directly related, but different from mine. I ground my analysis on observations that seek to ethnographically explore the intersection of race and gender and their interconnectedness to identity formation and ultimately to the processes of learning; whereas Bhabha’s framework is textual analysis. In doing so, I differ from Bhabha in being contextually specific and also in addressing the play of power relations in creating the third space. In what follows, I discuss, first, Bhabha’s third space as it relates to my research and then explore my own definition and see how it will be applied to my research.

In an interview with Jonathan Rutherford, Homi Bhabha (1990a) advanced three notions that are relevant to our discussion here and which will help us to visualize the make up of the third space. The first point has to do with the distinction between what Bhabha calls “a creation of cultural diversity” and “a containment of cultural difference.” Bhabha argues that within the Western cultural practices, “although there is always an entertainment and encouragement of cultural diversity, there is always a corresponding containment of it” (Bhabha, 1990a: 208). This containment usually takes place in a subtle way and through a process of normalization whereby the dominant culture becomes the normalizing gaze. In other words, “A transparent norm is constituted, a norm given by the host society or dominant culture, which says that 'these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our grid’” (p. 208).

Unsatisfied with this liberal distinction, Bhabha advanced his second point by introducing what he calls cultural translation. It argues that “no
culture is plainly plenitudinous, not only because there are other cultures which contradict its authority, but”, he continues, “also because its own symbol-forming activity, its own interpellation in the process of representation, language, signification and meaning-making, always underscores the claim to an originary, holistic, organic identity.” Cultural translation then is:

a way of imitating, but in a mischievous, displacing sense - imitating an original in such a way that the priority of the original is not reinforced but by the very fact that it can be simulated, copied, transferred, transformed, made into a simulacrum and so on: the 'original' is never finished or complete in itself. The 'originary' is always open to translation so that it can never be said to have a totalised prior moment of being or meaning - an essence. What this really means [Bhabha argues] is that cultures are only constituted in relation to that otherness internal to their own symbol-forming activity which makes them decentered structures (Bhabha, 1990a: 210).

Cultural translation therefore does not allow for an essentialization of what is known as the 'original' or 'originary' culture for the latter itself is, and was, always open to and for translation. It is only original in the sense of being anterior, Bhabha argues. He thus convincingly concludes that all forms of culture are “continually in a process of hybridity” (p. 211). However, Bhabha emphasizes, “the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity ... is the 'third space'” (p. 211, emphasis added). Precisely, this is where I differ from Bhabha. I deploy the third space as an ethnographic performance of two or more languages, cultures and belief systems. Indeed, the third space, for me, is a trace, a synthesis, and an articulation of these two or more cultures and languages, and since these traces are corporeally articulated, they are thus ethnographically perceptible. However, in the articulation, the 'Old' and the 'New' are now metamorphosed in forms that look neither fully like the former nor the latter, but the two: the ‘Old’ and the ‘New’. The signifier third space, for me, moreover, sees the body as the locus of embodiment where this semiosis is articulated. Tersely, my unease with Bhabha's definition stems from the fact that it doesn't subjectivitify, historicize, or make tangible the hybridization
project. Where, for example, is the play of race, sexuality, gender, and class in the process of hybridization? In this process of hybridization, where are those who are historically marginalized from the 'centers' of power? How does hybridity ethnographically look? Here, Bakhtin can be of great help in answering some of these questions, particularly his 'ideological translation'.

For Bakhtin, the result of cultural and ideological translation wherein two linguistic, ideological, and cultural systems are to be mixed is to give birth to an organic world view which, in turn, will be performed in 'new' linguistic and cultural practices. The product of this mixture, for Bakhtin, is or can be 'hybrid', but, for me, it is socio-linguistically detectable and ethnographically observable: "It is of course true that even historical, organic hybridity is not only two languages but also two socio-linguistic (thus organic) world views that are mixed with each other;" Bakhtin (1981/90: 360) asserts, "but in such situations, the mixture remains mute and opaque, never making use of conscious contrasts and oppositions. It must be pointed out however", Bakhtin adds:

that while it is true the mixture of linguistic world views in organic hybrids remains mute and opaque, such unconscious hybrids have been at the same time profoundly productive historically: they are pregnant with potential for new world views, with new "internal forms" for perceiving the world in words.

In other words, the third space, for me, is organic, precisely, because it is historically situated and partially unconsciously executed. It is an indissoluble mixture of two, or more, linguistic, ideological, cultural, and belief systems. It is third because it is found in the inter of (the 'first' and the 'second') discourses, cultures, languages, and memories. It is indeed where the 'first' and the 'second' are produced in the same sentence, in the same syntax, in the same grammar, in the same garment, at the same time. In the case of African students in this project, the product of the ideological translation of the Canadian context which synchronously starts at the moment of identifying and naming Black America as a site of investment by African students is a third space. That is, the third
space for African youth is a product of the memory, experience, cultural, and linguistic behavioural patterns they bring with them when coming into Canada and what they translate in the latter context. Here, race is crucial.

Nonetheless, borrowing from Bhabha (1990: 211), the third space “enables other positions to emerge. [It] displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom.” These emerging positions are unrecognizable because they are the product of that luminal space where the 'old' is already in the 'new' and the 'different.' The old and the new emerge and are born from longitudinal negotiations and translations. These negotiations are what Bhabha refers to as “the process of cultural hybridity” which “gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (Bhabha, 1990a: 211).

It is the understanding of this ‘new area of negotiation of meaning’ that might illuminate our comprehension of identity formation processes, I contend, especially for immigrants and their displaced subjectivities. Immigrants and displaced subjects do find themselves in the borderland of two cultures, languages, and belief systems. I certainly believe this is the case for, if not all, most immigrants - it is undoubtedly my case as a refugee from Sudan now living in Canada. In the processes of understanding and translating the 'New' context, we also understand and translate the 'Old'. Immigrants are located, I argue, in this landscape between the 'Old' - which is part of us - and the 'New' - which is becoming part of us. By and large, the language of the third space helps me to ask the questions: How do students negotiate their 'old' and 'new' identity? How does this negotiation look? How, why, and what happens when students lean on one identity more than the other? And, finally, within this (third) space, what does it mean for continental African students to choose hip hop identity and black talk as a resource to be borrowed from, a way of expressing oneself?
To avoid relativism, and to reiterate my different use of the third space from Bhabha’s, I would like to see the students’ linguistic and cultural translation and negotiation taking place within a socio-historical-and-political space. The episteme of hybridity and third space, more importantly, has to be positioned within relations of power that place students in certain locations, including an unequal power relation. Generally, the notion of third space, like Giroux’s (1992) “border crossing” in which the pedagogue, cultural workers, as well as students are asked to, linguistically and culturally, be border crossers and facilitators of border crossing, raises fundamental questions when it comes to who is (already, always) asked to be border crosser and who is asked to be hybrid. It seems to me that it is always the less powerful who is asked to be linguistically and culturally hybrid and thus the border crosser. If we are to talk about hybridity and border crossing as episteme to question power relation, I take the position that dominant and marginalized groups are both as implicated in crossing cultural, linguistic, and ideological border representations.

Within my research, the epistemology of the third space also raises another series of fundamental questions: how gender, race, sexual and class identities are articulated and performed by students to create this third space. How identities are articulated in such a way that they are a manifestation and expression of that 'dirty' intersection of discourses, and at the same time constructed in and within them. How is race articulated with gender via class to create what I will refer to as hip hop identity? Before answering these questions (which I will do in detail in chapter 7), Bourdieu is certainly quite illuminating when discussing the third space and its currencies.

2.5.1. What’s Bourdieu Have to Do With It? Given his contribution to the cultural theory, I think, Bourdieu needs special attention for two reasons. First, he would help us to deepen our understanding of 'the third space' and, second, his episteme around notions of market and capital is of extreme significance. In Bourdieu’s language (1986, 1977), this third space, and this is my own reading
of Bourdieu's framework, is a 'social space', a 'universe', a 'field', a 'market' where certain structures and capitals are in play. This space or "social world", Bourdieu (1985) explains:

can be represented as a space (with several dimensions) constructed on the basis of principles of differentiation or distribution constituted by the set of properties active within the social universe in question, i.e., capable of conferring strength, power within that universe, on their holder. Agents and groups are thus defined by their relative positions within that space...The active properties which are selected as principles of construction of the social space are the different kinds of power or capital which are current in the different fields...The kinds of capitals, like the aces in a game of cards, are powers that define the chances of profit in a given field (cited in Laberge, 1995: 134).

Thus, to ask what the nature of this market is, how it functions, who participates in it, how and why, what kind of capitals are in play, and how are they expressed, will enlighten our comprehension of the social 'third space.' Nevertheless, Bourdieu (1991, 1986, 1977) showed that capitals are exchanged and agents are unequally positioned in the market given the 'legitimacy', 'habitus', and 'acceptability' of who is speaking, under what social condition, and what she or he is saying. This being so, Bourdieu then goes on to distinguish between different forms of capitals: economic, cultural, and social. The cultural capital itself is divided into three states: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized, which are thereafter named 'symbolic capital'. This symbolic capital functions by disguising itself by being "unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence" (Bourdieu, 1986: 245); and it also functions as a way of communicating between groups. Academic language, for example, functions as a symbolic capital through abstraction and ambiguity, and it has a value in relation to the academic 'field'.

The social capital, on the other hand, is "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of durable networks of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition- or in other words, to membership in a group" (Bourdieu, 1986: 248). The
symbolic capital is thus the actual or potential resource that allows a communication between groups, whereas social capital are the capitals that allow the communication between members of the same group. Given it's inter-and-intragroup communicative nature, the symbolic and social are, however, Bourdieu (1986) argues, convertible, under certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications and a title of nobility, respectively.

Put simply then, Bourdieu seems to argue that there are markets in which capitals are exchanged, yet these markets, given its class nature, and, I add, race, gender, sexuality, and ability are controlled by a few stated, but mostly, unstated rules and regulations. These capitals include material and symbolic capitals, which are however found not in oppositional terms, but in intertwined relationships: they enforce each other. Within Bourdieu's frame, 'black stylized English' is equated to linguistic capital whereas 'hip hop identity' is equated with symbolic capital. Yet, for hip hop and black talk to be capitals, they need a market, regulations, agents, and rewards.

Based on these arguments, then, it seems to me that we can talk about race, gender, sex, as well as class social identities as forms of capitals which are drawn on, and drawn from, in the process of identity formation which takes place within the third socially constructed space. Within this space or according to Bourdieu, within the third space market, black talk and hip hop identity seem to be significantly valuable capitals (as I will discuss in the subsequent chapters). These capitals, moreover, which are 'illegitimate' in the macro-level (Dyson, 1993), are the 'acceptable' and the 'legitimate' capitals within the third space field. They are, of course, next door to African students' own capitals. Thus, as Bourdieu would have argued that capitals have values only in relation to a market. Black talk, for example, is valued because of the third space, created by continental African youths, in which it is highly
treasured linguistic capital. Yet, this linguistic capital should not, Bourdieu (1977) reminds us, be separated either from the market, the social being of the sender and the receiver or from the social conditions under which the utterance occurs. Who utters and performs what, how, where, and who is listening are, in practice, ethnographically, I conclude, the constituents of the third space. However, hip hop and Black stylized English should not be located oppositionally to, for example, African youth’s cultural and linguistic background. On the contrary, both -the ‘Old’ and the ‘New’ - are concomitantly performed: creating an inter, a third space.
Chapter 2
Section 'B'

'Mais c'est génétique ...'\textsuperscript{18}

Race, Culture, Language and the Politics of Identity:
Towards a Genealogy of the Case Study

In this section I will establish a history, a genealogy to my study by looking at the relevant other studies that dealt in some capacity with some of the notions and categories of my own study. I am using genealogy in its broadest sense to refer to the already existing studies which influenced the ways in which I saw my own. This section B is divided into three sub-sections. The first emphasizes Blackness in Canada: the Black people/youth in Canada as found in Dei, James, Henry, and Solomon’s studies. For its significance, Sansone’s study on Black Surinamese youth in the Netherlands will be my, almost, comparative study and my second sub-section. The third, however, puts the accent on language. This includes Heller, Rampton, Goldstein, Goldstein and Peirce’s studies.

2.6. Black (Youth in) Canada: In his three year study, Dei (1995, 1996) explores the plight of Black youths in the Euro-Canadian education system. Dei points to the differences within the Black youths themselves: Diasporic/Caribbean vs. Continental youths. They are, however, referred to by Dei as ‘Black/African Canadian youth’. They differ not only in terms of politics, representation, identity, class and gender but as well along language, cultural and religious lines. The issues of representation and experience are felt along these lines. Continental/Somalis, in particular, put an accent on language, culture and

\textsuperscript{18} In asking the question of why continental African youths take up diasporic African cultural forms in a focus-group interview, one male of Djiboutian origin answered 'mais c'est génétique' [but it is genetic].
religion, Dei affirms. Diasporic/Caribbean youths, according to his study, on the other hand, complain about the 'social labeling' of Black students as 'trouble makers'. Nevertheless, "while Black students are not a homogeneous group", Dei et al. (1995: 13) contend, "we believe that there are some commonalities in the educational experiences of students born in Africa, the Diaspora and those of mixed parenthood (Black and non-Black)." A great deal of these shared commonalities, Dei et al. continue, "stem from the exigencies of being Black in a white dominated society" (p. 13).

These shared commonalities are lived and experienced in the differential treatments by teachers, administrators and non-Black students (read whites). These commonalities are also lived and experienced in the different ways in which teachers pick on Black students (Diasporic and continental) and thus treat them as 'trouble makers'. Most of these teachers, Dei et al. demonstrated, claimed not to see colour and to see, instead, only people. For Dei et al, this is an articulation of the completely different vantage points of Black youths and their teachers. "While", Dei et al. argue, "Black students approach the subject of race as a part of their everyday lived experience, many teachers are only able to see race from the position of White privilege" (1995: 45). These different vantage points, in turn, created a sense of discomfort on the part of teachers, if not guilt, as soon as race and racism are the focus. Racism itself for these teachers, according to the study, is reduced to name-calling rather than a wider systemic epiphenomenon and everyday experience.

Black students, given the internal differences among Black youth along religious, cultural but, particularly, linguistic lines, Dei et al.'s study showed, were further divided in affinity groups based on gender, ethnicity and language. Gender, in this study is emphatically important because it sheds lights on the internal dialogue between Black youths. In the study, Black male and female narratives have pin-pointed the different ways in which Black males received heavier surveillance and are more likely to be targeted for discipline. What goes on at the school however, I will argue, following Dei (1996) and Dyson
(1993), cannot be separated from the macro societal representations where Black males receive similar surveillance. While Black female narratives show an acknowledgment, recognition and identification with Black males' social conditions, Dei et al. argue, Black male narratives show no sign of understanding, let alone identification with, Black females' situation and the sexism, racism and class oppression they face at the school and in the larger societal structures. Black males, in overt and covert ways, in fact, contribute to their Black females partners' oppression. This perpetuation of negative attitudes and behaviours on the part of Black males, the study concludes, serves to undermine the unity of Black students.

Ninety percent (90%) of these same male and female Black students, saw labeling and streaming in the school as practices which have negative implications for Black students. Dei et al. exposed the fact that Black students' presence in the lower streams was pretty palpable. Black so-called immigrant students expressed their concern at the different ways in which their language and cultural capitals are treated as deficits within this ideology of streaming. Despite been schooled in English, Caribbean students for instance cited being put back a year or placed in ESL classes. Being put back a year, in particular, made some students feel angry at having to do things over and also at being with their younger brothers or sisters which has severe psychological and academic consequences in making students feel worthless. "What we see then", Dei et al. (p. 62) conclude, "is how negative evaluations are ascribed to language characteristics, such as speaking with a different accent. Therefore", Dei et al. contend, "it seems that conformity to White middle-class standards for language and cultural norms has become the manifest purpose for schooling in Canada, with obvious and lasting repercussions for those who cannot or will not conform."

Teaching styles and teachers expectations were cited in Dei et al. study as contributing to Black students' sense of belonging or not belonging to the school environment. The commended and best-liked teachers were the ones
who had positive perceptions, high expectations and the time, energy and commitment to point out and help students whenever needed. In this sense then, it is respect from the part of teachers that is looked for by students. The curriculum, on the other hand, its content and its connection to identity, representation and experience were also mentioned in the study as a way of exclusion and dis-engaging Black students. It is argued that the absence and invisibility of Black peoples from the school history, science, and other didactic subjects, in addition to the absence of Black teachers, counselors and administrators, were painfully experienced by Black students. To connect these students’ histories and experiences to the school curriculum was vitally important, the study concluded.

For my own study, the language question within Dei et al. study (1995) needs special attention. Despite the discourse of ‘We’re Black’, ‘We all understand each other’ and ‘We have the same experience’ (p. 85), differences among Black youth along language lines was noticed in the study. For instance, the authors argue, the Caribbean-born Black youths tend to have a patois oriented linguistic repertoire which excludes the Canadian and African-born Blacks. This exclusion created a situation whereby the Canadian-born Blacks “are prevented from really fitting in” (p. 89) and African-born Blacks, some of whom are ESL (English as a Second Language) students, feel more comfortable within their own language group. This example is significant in that it ruptures any monolithic and simplistic notion of Black culture and experience.

These findings are important; however, they are somewhat similar to Carl E. James and his study in 1989 which looked at the effects of racism and discrimination on the self-concept of Black youth which, in turn, James argued, have implications in their perceptions of their chances to realize their career aspirations. Although James does not make the distinction I already made in this chapter between being and becoming Black, his discourse suggests that my distinction is still valid. First, James argues that in the Canadian society being Black is qualitatively different from being White. As a Black, skin colour is
more significant than being a person, whereas for whites they have the leisure of being the normative strata, the normalcy. This racial stratification is significant when it comes to Black youth and adolescents for it points to the fact that Black youth will be treated differently and thus will have different opportunities when accessing material and symbolic resources, including jobs. Because of these disadvantageous different accesses to social opportunities, and because Black youth perceive that they are viewed, labeled, reacted to differently, Black youth “feel they must consider their race when reviewing their career [and education] aspirations and plans” (James, 1989: 9). These differential treatments and perceptions, I will argue, are part of the process of becoming Black. Blacks, contrary to Whites whose skin colour seems not to matter as much, if not at all, then have limited choices in wishing and desiring to be.

It does not matter whether the individual chooses to identify themselves as Black because society forces them to do so. People initially interact with each other on the basis of colour. So, it is not so much how people think of themselves that makes race a significant factor in their lives, but living in this [Canadian] society which forces them to define themselves in racial terms. This is a consequence which society imposes on Blacks. No one can escape it. Some youth ... state that they would prefer to live without being conscious of their colour, but in this society, it is not possible (James, 1989: 11).

This conclusion is significant, specifically, for my study for it demonstrates what continental African youth, the subjects of my research, might expect on their arrival to Canada. This conclusion in fact supports my hypothesis that continental African youth, upon their arrival in this society, will be asked to racially fit somewhere. They have no choice because in this society, “people”, as James argues, “initially interact with each other on the basis of colour.” Continental Africans, I show in chapter 3, are already positioned by hegemonic representations, they are already imagined.

If this is the situation, it is doubly disadvantageous for Black females, James shows. Again, like Dei et al. (1995), a large number of females and a few
males in James study have stated this additional burden of being Black and female: "a double minority". Here, nevertheless, Black male and female youth find their own ways of dealing with these discriminatory, sexist and racist practices. Some of these ways include "being realistic" in realizing that being a "visible minority", one would more likely have problems in applying for jobs and in his/her education. Accordingly, one has to "be extra careful", "polite" and "on guard". Some of these youth "try to ignore it" - racism and sexism that is - and look at themselves as "persons" and take racism and sexism as "just part of life". Others, try to "work twice as hard" and set plans, to "be independent and strong-willed" with "determination and strength" and not be White people's "token". As in Dei et al.'s study, sports in James's is also turned around and used, especially by males, as a way of "gaining self-confidence", "self-esteem" and a "boost" to their morale and "ego".

Similar in many ways to Dei and James studies, Henry et al. (1995) focus on what they call 'the colour of democracy' which argues that contrary to popular belief that racism and race problems exist only in our neighbour in the South (the U.S. that is), racism and race problems are as old as the European presence in Canada. Racism is then not a contemporary epiphenomenon linked to the arrival of people of colour to Canada, but a historical one. As Shadd (1991: 1) contends "It always amazes me when people express surprise that there might be a "race problem" in Canada, or when they attribute the "problem" to a minority of prejudiced individuals. Racism", Shadd continues, "is, and always has been, one of the bedrock institutions of Canadian society, embedded in the very fabric of our thinking, our personality."

One finding from Henry et al.'s study that needs to be emphasized here concerns 'racism in the media' (ch. 10). The authors delineated the complex ways in which people of colour are made invisible whether in the print media or in visualistic representations. It is observed that the unequal status of racial minorities in the media was reflected by their absence from on-air roles such as anchors, reporters, experts or actors and their lack of representation at all levels
of staff, operation, production and decision making. This, for the authors, is a result of "both overt bias and systemic discrimination" (Henry et al. 1995: 233), including who is hiring whom and why. For instance, although approximately one third of all Canadians are non-British and non-French, "less than 3 percent of such Canadians appear on the stage, less than 3 percent were in commercials, and 5.5 percent were television principals" (p. 233). This lack of representation, clearly, sends the message that people of colour are not full participants in Canadian society.

The lack of representation of people of colour and their negatively reproduced images are not new phenomena, the authors argue. "The media often select events that are atypical, present them in a stereotypical fashion, and contrast them with "White behaviour" (Henry et al. 1995: 235). One of the most persistent examples of racism and negative representations is "the frequency with which racial minorities and Blacks are singled out as "having problems" that require a disproportionate amount of political attention or public resources to solve or "creating problems". These discourses and representations create in people's memory a discursive space whereby people of colour and Black people are making "unacceptable demands that threaten the political, social, or moral order of society" (Henry et al. 1995: 235). Siddiqui (1993; cited in Henry et al. 1995: 235) puts it this way:

When visible minorities do appear in our newspaper and TV public affairs programming, they emerge as villains in a variety of ways - as caricatures from a colonial past; as extensions of foreign entities; or, in the Canadian context, as troubled immigrants in a dazzling array of trouble spots; hassling police, stumping immigration authorities, cheating on welfare, or battling among themselves or with their own families.

These negatively stereotyped representations of, specifically for my own study, Blacks, send continental African youth to, despite its limited diffusion, Black popular culture for positive imagery representations. Against this
background of representational discourses, Patrick Solomon (1992) conducted his study. The study showed the different ways in which a group of 'West Indians', mostly Jamaican-born whom Solomon referred to as the 'Jocks', articulated their identity formation processes. They forged, according to Solomon, 'a separatist culture' - a culture of resistance - where language style, dress, fashion, attitude, music and dance are not just cultural practices but different manifestations of identity formation and identity performance. This Black culture of resistance is used to undermine the rules and authority of the school, administrators and teachers. Nevertheless, Solomon explained, like Paul Willis's 'lads' (1977), the 'Jocks' who come from the same working-class background as the 'lads', expressed a collective disregard for women and the sexual exploitation of girls.

Sports and the school gymnasium were where the Jocks felt at ease. Some of them even considered pursuing sports as a future work. For the Jocks, Solomon states (p. 76), "sports serve three main functions: it helps in the formation of Black culture and identity; it preserves machismo; and it is pursued as a viable channel for socioeconomic advancement." The significance of sports in the Jocks' lives is similar to the findings by Dei et al. and James; another similarity is streaming. The Jocks express their concerns about being allocated to the lowest academic track. This allocation came as a disappointment not only to the Jocks but also to their parents. As Solomon (1992: 108) clearly states:

[Newly arrived] blacks ... from the West Indies [and I would add Africa] embracing the official achievement ideology or their folk theory of making it in Canada, but they soon recognized some of the contradictions of a meritocratic society and its educational system. Social origin, more so than individual effort, is a key determinant of occupational mobility, and education plays a key role in the transmission of status from one generation to the next. The majority of blacks [Solomon concludes], therefore, will experience the limits of schooling in realizing their goals and aspiration.
It is at the gymnasium, in hallways, while dancing, while playing dominoes and in some cases in classrooms, Solomon contends, that the separatist Black culture of resistance is at its height. In these spaces and territorial boundaries, language is where resistance is formed and performed.

Using ‘double talk’ - patois and standard English - was a potent linguistic feature within the Jocks' community. In fact, it was patois, as well referred to as ‘pidgin English’, ‘Jamaican talk’ and dialect which is a creolized linguistic form engendered from English-based vocabulary but also from Spanish, French, Portuguese, Dutch and, of course, African languages, that was often used by the Jocks. They spoke it in the classroom, corridors, cafeteria, gymnasium and on the ground. Using patois created a community and excluded others. It created the Jocks community which was exclusive to those from West Indies background and it, on the other hand, excluded not only teachers and other school authority figures, but also other students, including Whites and Blacks.

For Solomon, patois dominates school life for two main reasons. "First, it is an adequate, functional language for black immigrant children who are more accustomed to speaking this dialect than standard English." And "Second, it has become a major dynamic in black youth solidarity, excluding authority figures from the communication process" (1992: 37). Although, 'bidialectal skills' were demonstrated in classrooms when talking to the teacher or other classmates, patois was the exclusive language used by the Jocks in the corridor and in pre-class chatter "effectively 'locking out' teachers and students of another culture and language group" (p. 37). Name-calling and profanity such as "nigger", "black bastard" and "bumbo chat", Solomon observed, were routinely exchanged without malice. Teachers' reactions to patois using varied between a complete dismissal by ignoring the speaker and violent and direct reactions. For instance, while some teachers, Solomon tells us, jokingly refer to 'it' as "a foreign language called patois", others define it as a kind of "American jive" (1992: 38). One teacher, however, Solomon writes (p. 38), 'is confident that immigrant students' poor language is a reflection of their unschooled
background, and that their speech will improve with proper schooling in Canada. By effectively locking out teachers, administrators and other fellow students, Solomon concludes (p. 41), "the Jocks are able to secure for themselves a certain kind of power."

At stake in Solomon's study is how language can, and indeed does, create exclusive space and community where a sense of boundaries and territories and a sense of comfort can be created and shared between the members of the community. Yet, language can also create a sense of discomfort for those who do not share the same speech code. This sense of discomfort is indeed very challenging to school authorities and fellow students. As we will see in my study, this is a theme that is raised time and again by the Somali speakers. Language, in other words, becomes a marker of and a performance of the Self, the Identity; it is in and through language that the territories of the community are created and marked.

2.7. Is This Happening Only in Canada? A study similar to my own was conducted in the Netherlands by Livio Sansone between 1981-1991 (Sansone, 1995). In it, Sansone studied a group of "African-Caribbean young people of Surinamese origin" - the "Creoles" - and their struggle for identity and identification. Although the author does not make the distinction between being and becoming, Sansone convincingly shows the different ways in which the Creoles become 'Blacks'. That is, the different articulations of the Self, the Identity whereby the mediatic representations of Afro-American symbolic linguistic and cultural capitals become sources and resources from which to borrow. Part of these processes of becoming Black is a realization by the Creoles of a socio-economic marginality and thus marginalization from the symbolic and material resources which are openly offered to the members of the dominant Dutch society. For Sansone, the
long-standing relative dependence of Creole culture on Dutch metropolitan culture, the close relationship of young Creoles with general youth culture and with the symbols of international black culture have speeded up the process by which Creole-black [as oppose to strictly Creole] ethnicity has become symbolic -not after three or four generations but after only fifteen or twenty years in the Netherlands (1995: 127; emphasis added).

At stake here is, first, the speed with which the Creoles became ‘Blacks’ and, second, ‘the symbols of international black culture’ which borrow emphatically from the Afro-American cultural forms, whether break dance, hip hop, haircuts, garments or even politics such as the Civil Rights Movement. Like Sansone, I contend that being Black - i.e., visible - whether in the Netherlands, the US or in Canada is of primary significance to the process of (social) being and becoming, who one can talk to, and which market and capitals one can access. Contrary to whites who can hyphenate and disappear as did Italians, Irish and Polish in America or Canada and for whom ethnicity is a ‘twilight’ and ‘symbolic resource’ from which they can pick and choose, blackness is or can be the ethnic marker around which the identity is formed and maintained. However, Sansone argues, ethnicity for youth Creoles should be understood in response to current needs rather than only a departure from past traditions. Traditions and community, for the Creoles, are vital mechanisms in how to deal with the Euro-Dutch situation where racism is expressed in how blackness is perceived as the bottom of humanity (see also Essed, 1991).

But neither community nor traditions are fully accepted or fully discarded by the young Creoles. “There is”, Sansone writes, “a complicated process of evaluation and reinterpretation of one’s own culture and traditions” (1995: 127). Creole traditions, according to Sansone, are, as it were, retailed so as to assist the symbolic negotiation with and against white peers. In the process of negotiation, nevertheless, the Creoles downplay certain cultural forms of their own traditions and emphasize others. “The aspects of traditions that young Creoles turn down - or confine to home - are usually those which they

“Other aspects of traditions, in particular with regard to recreational roles and the management of physical appearance, are enhanced and rediscovered” (Sansone, 1995: 127). Physical appearance has a greater role to play in how young Creoles and Blacks in general participate in ‘black international culture’: “Belonging to black culture is largely based on the management of physical appearance in the context of a prevailing somatic norm which places the Negroid at the bottom, or near it”, Sansone argues (p. 130). The trans-and-international nature of ‘black culture’, given its diasporic nature, Sansone adds, makes it different from most other ethnic subcultures in Western cities because of its higher degree of interdependence with Western urban culture.

Because there is no direct contact with African Americans, Sansone explains, the Creoles translate and interpret what they see in Black popular cultural forms which they access, especially, from “Black movies”. Black popular culture is where the Creoles find symbols to identify with and resources to borrow from. For example, within the Creoles, the “rastas had heard of Rastafarianism for the first time from radio; after a while they also saw it on television. In recent years”, Sansone continues (1995: 124), “video clips broadcast around the clock on certain television channels, have become an important source of information and inspiration for their style.” Hip hop is an interpreted and translated version - a quotation - of what young Creoles “learn ... from watching well-known US and, to a lesser extent, British hip hoppers.” Within the translated version, hip hop “comprises specific music, singing (‘rapping’), dancing ... and special clothing. One has to look ‘rough’: requirements are expensive sportswear and trainers ... which must be worn ‘casual’, modern haircuts inspired by music magazines and video clips, and particular gestures” (p. 123).
Working within and through the trans-and-international nature of black culture expressed in cultural forms like hip hop, the Creoles created two characteristics of their own cultural forms: a) an “international orientation on Afro-America which is combined with a pan-black discourse that plays down differences among blacks from different countries” and b) “the relativization of work together with a specific view of leisure time as the focus of conspicuous consumption and as the moment in which black physical appearance can be turned into ‘capital’” (Sansone, 1995: 131). The internationalization of Black cultural forms and the ways in which Black people from different countries develop similar cultures, Sansone (1995) argues, can partly be explained by how white people in different countries stereotype, look at and thus treat Black peoples. These stereotypical representations of blackness are usually accessed through media and have innumerable consequences. The US plays a large role in creating the negative media representations of blackness, but US Blacks are central in countering these images: “US Blacks, thanks also to the central position of the US in the world system of culture, are historically at the giving end of the symbolic and economic exchange leading to the internationalization of [Black cultures]” (Sansone, 1995: 133).

Central as well to the Creoles’ identity performance is an eclectic and camouflaged choice between Surinamese-oriented or simply Dutch cultural and linguistic traditions. For instance, they can choose between Surinamese-based and ‘white’ leisure facilities, and between languages. The Creoles, Sansone tells us (1995: 126), “can switch easily from high Dutch to the Amsterdam dialect and from Sranan Tongo to a sort of ‘community Surinamese-Dutch’.” The Creoles’ everyday life then depend on the management of ethnicity: on creating an in betweenness. “Their ethnicity implies a great deal of self-reliance, skills in the presentation of self in different circumstances and a degree of integration in, and familiarity with, Dutch

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19 “This is a variety of Dutch used in leisure facilities by young people which borrows many words and even some expressions from Sranan Tongo and from English” (Sansone, 1995: 126).
majority society. In fact,” Sansone emphasizes, “their use of traditions requires both detachment from the parent culture and a particular form of ethnic allegiance” (p. 126).

The Creole identities therefore cannot be put in oppositional either/or couplet. Clearly, a third space, expressed through language and culture, is emerging. The Creole identities, according to Sansone’s descriptions, are formed at those ‘dirty’ intersections of nations, languages and cultures where the ‘old’ is read, interpreted and re-read according to the present social conditions. The ‘old’ hence will have ‘new’ significations and interpretations which, whether people like it or not, put them in new relations with, within and to the Self. Because of this realization of the ‘old’ which is not put in opposition to the ‘new’, I contend, the young Creoles have a meta-consciousness of which identity to use, with who and for what purpose.

The [identity] of the younger group [of Creoles] is a much more complicated phenomenon, and is combined to an increasing extent with other, equally ‘lived’ identities based on age, gender, peer group, neighbourhood and class. It is a matter of creation and exploration and it is less Surinamese-based. Blackness is more relevant than being a Surinamese Creole - physical appearance is more important than, for example, mastering Sranan Tongo. For creating its ethnicity the young age group reinterpret, on the one hand, the parent culture and, on the other hand, the subcultures and styles of certain groups of white youth and ... black youth in other countries (Sansone, 1995: 126).

Sansone’s study is relevant for several reasons. First, it points to the processes of becoming ‘Black’: these include, among others, marginalization, racism, how blackness is perceived, positioned and thus treated. The processes of becoming Black also encompass a sense of exclusion from material and symbolic resources that are offered to members of the dominant society. The study as well points to the complexity of identity ‘blackness’, its formation and articulation. Language and cultural symbol, borrowed in greater part from African Americans and other diasporic communities, are essential in this
identity performance and formation. However, in articulating, interpreting and performing identity, the either/or bar is not the most helpful framework to work with.

The Creoles were, at first, Surinamese, then Surinamese-Creole-Dutch and, finally, 'black-Creole' living in the Dutch society: to include one without the other, for me, will be like taking part of who the Creoles are and what they have become. The 'first' Surinamese identity entered a process of translation, adaptation and 'new' configuration when it entered, so to speak, the process of negotiation with the 'new' Dutch social context. The outcome is a bricolage that does not look like the 'old' nor completely like the 'new', but the two combined that, analogically, sounds like code-switching and using two linguistic codes. In what follows, I centralize language and codeswitching issues and the relevant studies will be discussed and I then, finally, discuss women's relation to and with language by focusing on Peirce's and Heller's studies.

2.8. Language and the Politics of Code-switching: Carol M. Eastman (1992: 1) declared in her introduction to the special edition of *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* (JMMD) on codeswitching that

It is clear that once we can free ourselves of the need to categorise any instance of seemingly non-native material in language as a borrowing or a switch, we will be much further along in our effort to understand the way cognitive, social, and cultural processes work in urban linguistic contexts.

In this section, I endeavor to do precisely this. I will focus on language and the politics of using more than one language and then look at codeswitching as an act, a metaphor of identity. In the JMMD special edition, all of the papers argued for a sociohistorical, ethnographic and sociolinguistic analysis where language is not an abstract code, but is used for political reasons, for power and power relations, as an ethnic marker and ethnic mobilizer. It is within these discourses that I situate my analysis and my approach to language. However, whether in Monica Heller's *Codeswitching* (1988) or the special edition of
JMMD, none of the work approached the metaphor of codeswitching as mirror of the Self. As I previously argued, if the Self is ever shifting and ever changing, and always on the move, so is codeswitching. In Sansone's (1995) study, if the Creoles code-switch between Sranan Tongo, Creole and Dutch language, this is because of their split identities between the three communities (see also Heller, 1984). To say the least, codeswitching, I believe, is an expression of the complex ways of one's own desire: where one wants to be, where one wants to ally him/herself and where and how the Self wants to be positioned and looked at by the Other. Codeswitching can be a way of exclusion, but also a way of inclusion (see also Heller, 1992, 1988).

Heller (1988) defines codeswitching as “the use of more than one language in the course of a single communicative episode” (p. 1). Heller, following Blom and Gumperz (1972), proposes two types of codeswitching each of which is applicable to homogeneous groups which share the same conventions of the linguistic code and inter-groups. The first, situational codeswitching, is “rooted in a social separation of activities (and associated role relationship), each of which is conventionally linked to the use of one of the languages or varieties in the community linguistic repertoire” (Heller, 1988: 5). Here, conventions, depending on the social situation, are expected from the individual speaker. The second metaphorical codeswitching, however, occurs when varieties of the same language or different languages are used in unconventional contexts. Of interest to my study is Heller's notion that codeswitching represents, or can represent, a way of “neutralization of tension at the boundary between separate domains” (1988: 7) which are otherwise kept apart. I read this notion alongside the language of the third space. That is, when African students codeswitch from one language to another, they, firstly, neutralize the tension between these languages, which otherwise would have been kept apart. They are, secondly, sending a message to the receiver of what to expect next and, finally, for African youth, the codeswitching is forming while performing the third space. The codeswitch, that is, which is found in their
linguistic utterance, is an expression of the third space, but it is, at the same
time, forming the essence of this very space.

Of vitally, also, when studying codeswitching is the question who is to
participate in it and who is excluded from it. “While the social separation of
domains implies the existence of social boundaries regulating or constraining
access to linguistic resources which form part of the social life of those
domains,” Heller (1988: 8) vehemently argues, “that the existence of
codeswitching necessitates that at least some individuals have access to all the
domains in question, and therefore have access to those linguistic resources.”
This conclusion, when coupled with Heller’s second conclusion that “only
those who are so socially situated with respect to the social boundaries that they
have access to multiple roles”, have direct implications when it comes to
continental African youths.

Moreover, in a different context, Heller (1992: 136) explains that in
French speaking schools in Ontario, “Official (i.e. adult-run) school activities
are normatively conducted in French ...; [and] peer-group activities are
normatively conducted in English. In order [Heller argues,] to participate in
both, one has to be bilingual.” These three conclusions certainly raise
fundamental questions that constitute the main-foci of this thesis: what kind of
strategies do continental African youths use in order to participate in a context
where their bilingualism, at the time of their arrival, is Somali/French, for
example, and not English/French? How is not being English/French bilinguals
significant in their processes of exclusion and inclusion? When learning
English, which variety of English do Somali-language speakers, for instance,
learn, how and why? What is the role of Somali-language in this francophone
context? Is their Parisian French valued within the school context? If so, how?
if not, why not? Finally, what is the role of all of the linguistic repertoires
(Gumperz, 1982) that students possess in identity formation?
Two studies by Heller (1984, 1992) are relevant when seeking answers to these questions. Building on Bourdieu’s symbolic capitals and symbolic marketplaces, Heller (1992: 124) draws a picture which “hinges on a notion of codeswitching as a means of drawing on symbolic resources and deploying them in order to gain access to other sources, symbolic or material.” For continental African students, these symbolic capitals may include their own languages in addition to the varieties of English and French they learn or the varieties they already speak. To participate in marketplaces, however Heller argues (p. 125), “it is necessary to display appropriate linguistic and cultural knowledge in order to gain access to the game, and playing it well requires in turn mastery of the kinds of linguistic and cultural knowledge which constitute its rules.” Hence, continental African youth need to comprehend the market in question if they ever want to participate in it or, alternatively, they can create their own space and marketplace where rules and capitals are created by themselves. As Heller (1992: 138) argued, some of us:

usually because they were too removed from the boundary to begin with, are either insulated from the process altogether, or are left behind unless they can organise themselves (collectively or individually) either to fight for the value of the symbolic capital they do possess, or to acquire new forms of capital whose value is increasing.

I would argue for now, following Heller (1993), that the latter option of creating alternative marketplaces and fighting for one’s own space are what continental Africans have opted for - the third space - as strategy to center themselves.

In her second study, Heller (1984) shows the ways in which, through language use (English and French), a group of students in a Toronto French-language school whether to an English, French and/or a bilingual identity. In fact, for Heller (see also Heller, 1992), the self-identified francophones, anglophones and/or bilinguals, are not just in reference to language that one speaks, but to social identities that have markets, conventions, ways of being, capitals, resources and rewards. In other words, as I already argued, it is in and through the language that identities are performed. Here, Heller (1984: 2 & 3)
argues, “ethnicity [identity] is socially negotiable rather than a given”; indeed, “it is through face-to-face interaction that background knowledge is established, and, further, that without shared background knowledge, interaction breaks down or leads to miscommunication.” Relative to my study are, first, Heller’s notion of identity and the ways in which it is formed and, secondly, her interactionist approach. For Heller (p. 3), identity is expressed in language, in everyday interaction, and it is always in negotiation. This negotiation, significantly, depends on the social context and our access to that context, but, probably more importantly, it depends on the people with whom we interact: “what is important is the group of people with whom knowledge, background knowledge about how the world works and knowledge of conventions of behaviour, is shared.” At stake here, then, is the hypothesis “that patterns of behaviour [including cultural and linguistic] in social interaction, in the context of participation in social networks and social activities, constitute the process whereby identity is both formed and defined” (Heller, 1984: 3).

Closer to Heller and my approach and to the argument that identities are, or can be, performed through language, is Ben Rampton’s Crossing (1995). It is a sociolinguistic study that looks at the different ways in which people cross from one linguistic and cultural domain to another and the underpinning politics behind that. The crossing, a term which was discussed by Rampton as more engulfing and significant than codeswitching and linguistic borrowing, often takes place in and through using and learning the Other’s language and cultural practices. Taking up and learning the Other’s language, in particular, would mean, Rampton argues, a new articulation of race relation and race stratification (see also Hewitt, 1986). Crossing, in sum, is a study of the symbolic significance of using Caribbean Creole by Anglo and East Indian background youth, and the symbolic significance of using Punjabi language by Anglo and Caribbean background youth. It is in the language usage and language crossing, the study shows, that youth successfully access material and symbolic resources such as academic help and friendship. Here, language is more than just an
instrument of communication, it is the symbolic resource and capital that one has to access or obtain in order to participate in social network and everyday interaction. Neither Caribbean Creole nor Panjabi language, however, are languages that are valued within the macro level of analysis in the British context where the study took place.

Crossing is an illustrative example of Bourdieu's framework of marketplaces and capitals. Rampton, convincingly, showed how the social network of friendships, struck at the school and in the community, was the symbolic marketplace and that in this marketplace, Panjabi and Caribbean Creole were as valued as English language, if not more. This is important because it supports the argument that, as a capital, which language or linguistic norm is valued cannot be separated from who speaks it, where, with whom and for what purpose. It is also important because it shows that other languages can be learned, as second languages, depending on what is needed in the social context. In my study, for example, a white female was learning Somali-language for no reason other than accessing friendship and that she fell in love with a Somali boy (see chapter 7 for more examples). In Rampton's (1995) study, nevertheless, and in the process of learning Panjabi and Creole by the different populations of youth, the notion and practice of ritual was significant. I want to focus on this aspect of ritual as it will enlighten our understanding of the level of proficiency needed in the learned second language.

In Crossing, Rampton (1995) argues that in learning Panjabi and Creole as second languages, youth were not so much into high proficiency as they were into joking and jocular abuse and picking up some expressions and idioms that are currently used by the speakers of the language. This is usually done in order not to feel left out, abused or insulted. A high level of proficiency in the language is therefore not urgently required because it is friendship and, in my study, identification and identity formation that can be perceived as the symbolic and political reasons behind learning the language (Panjabi, Creole
and Black stylized English, respectively). Rampton defines ritual, prototypically, as:

a) formulaic conduct, b) displaying an orientation to issues of respect for social order and emerging from some sense of the (actual or potential) problematicity of social relations, c) giving a more prominent place to symbols than to propositions, d) eliciting a marked emotional response and creating an increased sense of collectivity between at least some of the participants, and e) being itself subject to comment and sanctions. (1995: 81)

(c) and (d) are the two significant definitions and of interest to my study. Definition (c) suggests that the accent in rituality is not put on propositions but, rather, on symbols: using expressions such as ‘whassup’ or ‘wadap’ (some of the saluting rituals among the Blacks - read African Americans), for instance, by continental African youth without being fully fluent in English language. Rituals, for Bloch (1985; cited in Rampton, 1995: 84) “convey meaning by means of symbols ... If rituals are to be seen as a means of communication, they use very peculiar means ... Rituals use symbols to refer and connote only in the vaguest of ways.” Significantly for Bloch, “Rituals employ relatively fixed sequences of language, above all, singing which hinders analytic communication.”

Definition (d), on the other hand, is where a sense of identification and collectivity emerges. Using idioms and lexical expressions, identified as ‘Black talk’, by continental African youth can then be read, according to this definition, as an expression of their own symbolic desire about where they want to identify themselves and where they want to be identified, which might contribute to a sense of collectivity inside the identified and identifiable category Black. Building on the literature, Rampton, pointed in addition to three features of rituality:

[F]irst that ritual action need not be accompanied by an intense charge of collective emotional effervescence (...); secondly, that it is essential not to expect value conformity or a consensual outcome from the ritual process
and, thirdly, that no ritual is so rigid that there is no room for at least some improvisation. (1995: 85).

Based on symbolism, ritual is hence temporal, changing, can be, but need not necessarily be, emotionally charged and it can go against conformism which expects particular linguistic or cultural practices. Speaking Creole or Panjabi in Rampton’s or Hewitt’s (1986) studies, for example, is not something to be expected from Anglo-British youth, but the symbolic social context of friendship and network makes it a desirable linguistic repertoire. The importance of the ritual notion stems from two points. First, it takes us away from the rigid and limited notion of proficiency and, second, it gets us closer to the socio-historical and cultural notion of why people use language. This, I believe, is where sociolinguistic analysis should pay more attention: ethnographically, who speaks what, with whom and for what purpose?

This was the central question in Lynn Goldstein’s (1987) and Tara Goldstein’s (1991) studies. In Lynn Goldstein’s study, the focus was on the usage of ‘white’ or ‘Black’ English varieties by Hispanic groups in New York City. L. Goldstein found that Hispanic youth have what I call meta-consciousness of language: “White people, they talk different form black”, as Carlos, identified by Goldstein (1987: 417) as “a nonnative speaker of English”, put it. Lynn Goldstein argues that “black English served as a target for Hispanic boys acquiring English as a second language in the New York City metropolitan area” and “that extensive peer contact with blacks was a necessary but not sufficient condition for the acquisition of two features of black English, negative concord and distributive be” (1987: 417).

L. Goldstein’s (1987) study demonstrates the possibility of selecting a target other than the dominant form of the language when learning a second language. However, the question of identity and identification is the added element to language: it is through language that Hispanic boys demonstrated their identification, which was heavily influenced by their socialization with Black peers. This non-immediate and not necessarily everyday interaction with
Black peers in learning Black English as a second language, nevertheless, raises the point that there must be other mediums where Hispanic boys access Black English. I would argue that these mediums would probably be Black popular culture and Black TV, such as Black Entertainment Television (BET) cable.

Tara Goldstein (1991), on the other hand, demonstrated that, based on Bourdieu’s frame of the marketplace, it was the Portuguese language that was the capital and language of power in the factory where she conducted her study. People from Italian, Philippine and other national backgrounds saw the need to learn Portuguese if they wanted to participate in social networks and job advancements, for the factory’s population was predominated by Portuguese speakers. This study shows that learning a language will depend on the social context of who is learning which language and for what purpose. The study also argues, like Rampton and L. Goldstein, that people may have targets other than standard English, or English language to begin with, in the Torontonian context, depending on what the language is used for. In the following section, given the gender difference in linguistic practice as I will show in this thesis, I want to emphasize language as it relates to women.

2.8.1. Language and the Feminine Social Identity: In her study, Bonny Peirce (1993: 9) defines social identity with reference to “how a person understands his or her relationship to the social world, how that relationship is socially constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future.” Therefore, for Peirce, “the question “who am I?” cannot be understood apart from the question “what can I do?”” This, Peirce argues, raises the notion of social relations of power which “enable or constrain the possible range of human action” (p. 9). Human action, however, for me, includes the possibility of what to learn and how, especially when it comes to language. “Thus it is the person’s access to symbolic and material resources that will define the terms on which choices and desires will be articulated”, Peirce concludes (1993: 9).
The lexicon 'desire' is quite significant as it points to my own contention that, in a racially conscious society, the ways in which continental African youth take up and perform Black stylized English and hip hop identity, for example, is an articulation of their own desires about where they want to fit in the larger framework of the Canadian society. When these arguments were applied to women in their social process of learning English as a second language (ESL), Peirce (1993: 9) contended that “social relations of power, which produce or deny the opportunity to speak, cannot be divorced from an understanding of a language learner's social identity.” The learner's social identity is, however, racialized, gendered and classed. This allows me, like Peirce, to argue that one's own social identity (one's own racialized, gendered, sexualized and classed identity) will be the marker, the social condition and the capital that opens or limits one's own chances to access material and symbolic resources, including learning language. These race, gender and class social identity differences are not a system of categories, “but a system of relationships between people” (Peirce, 1993: 13).

Peirce, building on these contentions, goes on to argue that in her study, the women's access to the marketplaces where English was spoken was limited. This limited access to the symbolic resources of learning English was, primarily, because of the women's gendered identity. Although race is superficially dealt with in Peirce's study, her conclusions and arguments offer direct implications to my own study. Two conclusions, in particular, are significant and relevant. The first has to do with the relationship between language, social identity, and language learning. Here, “Language is not just a neutral form of communication, but a practice that is socially constructed in the hegemonic events, practices, and processes that constitute daily life” (Peirce, 1993: 100). The second conclusion has to do with “the role of language as constitutive of and constituted by a language learner’s social identity.” Here, Peirce argues (p. 14):

It is through language that a person negotiates a sense of self with and across different sites at different points in time, and it is through
language that a person gains access to - or is denied access to - powerful social networks that give learners the opportunity to speak. Thus language is not conceived of as a neutral medium of communication, but is understood with reference to its social meaning (Peirce, 1993: 14).

In focusing on women’s relation to and with language, this conclusion is no different from Heller’s (1993). Heller (p. 1), building on the literature, argues that “women and men have different opportunities for access to different economic activities, access which is regulated through displays of competence in different languages. Women and men”, Heller continues, “also have different interests in acquiring and maintaining languages in order to participate in those economic activities.” When it comes to language, women are caught in continuous processes of negotiation, for it is the male, Heller maintains, who decides what a legitimate language is and it is the male who is authorized to speak it.

Women’s choices have different consequences (...) than those of men, since one way or another the language of power is usually male(...) [w]hether with respect to their mother tongue or with respect to a second language, women’s construction of ethnolinguistic identity is done with reference to male ideologies and practices of that identity, both in terms of what they may be trying to get away from and in terms of what they may be trying to move towards (Heller, 1993: 1).

In sum, women have to negotiate, continually, their relation to language and what it represents to and for them. However, if they enter the process of learning, a second language, women’s gendered identity is significant (see also Cameron, 1990). This gendered social identity may take different forms but it is no different from racialized and classed identities in the means by which they are implicated in the processes of learning a second language, on the one hand, and the particular variety of this language chosen, on the other, as will make clear in the following chapters.
Chapter 3

"... that's what you basically learn in the history class!"

A History of French and Black Canada

Until recently, Canada had known two distinct groups of Blacks who saw Canada as 'the promised land' where freedom and progress were promised. The first were Black slave freedom seekers from the U. S. The second were “West Indians leaving behind them postcolonial depression and limited opportunities, and arriving in Canada seeking socioeconomic advancement” (Solomon, 1992: 17). At the beginning of the 1980s, however, a third group of Blacks - continental Africans - were becoming palpably present. Their numbers have increased, particularly, at the beginning of 1990s. This should not obscure the fact that continental Africans have relocated in Canada since early in its history (Krauter and Davis, 1978), but always in small numbers. Some of them were professionals, but they mostly came as students. Continental Africans, at least the ones who chose Metropolitan Toronto, often come from postcolonial contexts where English is the official language, as in Nigeria for example, or the second language such as in Sudan. The subjects of my research however are French-language speakers. Due to this obvious French connection, this chapter will give an overview of Black Canada's history followed by that of French-language speakers in Ontario, commonly known as Franco-Ontarians, and Canada.

The reader should be reminded that the history delineated here should not be read as a passé, i.e., over-there, behind us. It should, instead, be read as a history of the present: it controls in significant ways our present ways of 'seeing', thinking, acting, interacting, and reacting to the world around us.

4.1. Black in Canada: an Overview: Blacks have lived in Canada since 1628 (Krauter and Davis, 1978; Henry et al. 1995; Davis, 1971). Nevertheless, since
Canada does not keep statistics by race, their numbers have always been in doubt. This is the case even in our present time. The 1971 census, for example, suggested that there were 62,470 Blacks, 0.4 percent of Canada's total population, while estimates in popular press run as high as 250,000 (Krauter and Davis, 1978). This is also the case in the 1990s. While, for instance, Africans who claim Somali origin were estimated at 7,075 in the 1991 census, the estimates of Now Magazine (1992) and Toronto Star (1995), an hebdomadal magazine and a daily newspaper respectively, run as high as 300,000.

Before the arrival of West Indians in disproportionately large numbers, almost all Blacks in Canada were of American descent; and contrary to popular belief, slavery has been as much a part of the Canadian experience as it has been of that of the United States (Bolaria and Li, 1988; Walker, 1980; Krauter and Davis, 1978). Although it was never as strong an institution in Canada as it was in the U.S., slavery did exist indeed in New France and it continued for a long time. As Walker (1980; cited in Bolaria and Li, 1988: 187) pointed out “until the early nineteenth century, throughout the founding of the present Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Ontario, there was never a time when Blacks were not held as slaves in Canada.” The first Canadian slaves, however, were Native peoples, referred to as 'pannis,' rather than the Blacks (Krauter and Davis, 1978). Between 1689 and 1709, slavery was legally practiced in New France and by 1759, there were about four thousand slaves in New France, both pannis and Black (Krauter and Davis, 1978).

Slavery, Bolaria and Li (1988) explain, was never as strongly developed in as large a scale as in the US for several reasons. First, as a labour system, slavery is primarily suitable for plantation economies. As the Canadian climate was unsuited to plantation farming and no large plantation system existed in Canada, “it was not profitable to own slaves” (Bolaria and Li, 1988: 187). Moreover, another element that prevented slavery from developing on a large scale was the rocky terrain of Nova Scotia where most Black slaves have settled.
with their owners. The existence of slavery, albeit on a small scale, however for Bolaria and Li (1988: 188), had an ever lasting impact. They cite:

The association of Blacks with slavery has had profound consequences for the “image” and “place” of Blacks in this country [Canada]. As Walker (...) states: “With few exceptions that image, and the resulting place, have regarded Blacks as an exploitable reservoir of cheap labour. This notion first entered Canada with the institution of Black slavery.”

The first arrival of Black slaves in any considerable numbers occurred in Nova Scotia were in the late 1750s, after the expulsion of the Acadians (Krauter and Davis, 1978). When the American Revolution broke out in 1776, there were already about the five hundred slaves in Nova Scotia. This number was to triple as white Loyalists fled the American colonies after the American Revolutionary War, bringing with them 2000 or more slaves (Krauter and Davis, 1978): more than 1200 of these slaves were to settle in Nova Scotia, 300 in Lower Canada and 500 in Upper Canada (Walker, 1980). The slaves were predominantly used as domestic servants, and in cities like Halifax, they were used in construction and shipbuilding labor; and slave sales were infrequent because of their small number.

During the American Revolutionary War, the British encouraged slaves to rebel against their masters and join the British side. The reward for doing so was freedom and independence. Many slaves did rebel believing that they were not only fighting for their own freedom, but for the abolition of slavery (Bolaria and Li, 1988; Walker, 1980). The Black Loyalists were a vital part in the war. They made many valuable contributions as soldiers, guides, spies, and workers. Once in Canada, Black Loyalists were promised the same treatment and rewards as white Loyalists. This was never to be materialized. On the contrary, it was to be reversed and a cast-like segregationist policies were to be implemented (Krauter and Davis, 1978). When, for example, the first group of free Black Loyalists arrived in Nova Scotia from Boston in 1776, it was suggested that they be used as ransom for British prisoners held by the Americans. Furthermore, with few exception, Blacks were given one-acre lots, while whites were granted
lots of one-hundred to four-hundred-acres (Krauter and Davis, 1978: 42). This treatment, for Bolaria and Li (1988), coupled with the land allotment policy led to segregated Black communities.

The British, supposedly, were to supply all Loyalists with food and shelter for three years or until they could survive on their own. The Black Loyalists, however, received unlivable segregated lands at the edges of towns and they received similar treatment with food (Walker, 1980). To make matters worse, in all parts of the British North America, there was a serious famine, coupled with an exceptionally cold winter that killed all the crops (Krauter and Davis, 1978). Under these conditions, many of the former American slaves, now ‘freed’ in Canada, were forced to seek alternative means of livelihood to avert starvation (Bolaria and Li 1988). They worked as hired or indentured servants (Walker, 1980; Krauter and Davis, 1978); they were preferred by the wealthy white employers, precisely, because they worked for lower wages. This Black preference was violently resented by white workers which led to Canada’s first race riot when, in 1784, a mob of white workers attacked Black areas in Shelburne and Birchtown in Nova Scotia, destroying Black property and drove many Blacks out of town (Walker, 1980).

These harsh and inhuman conditions forced 1200 Blacks to flee to Sierra Leone. There was a local opposition to this exodus most of whom were fearful of losing their cheap Black labour pool. Nevertheless, 2500 Black Loyalists have stayed (Walker, 1980). After the Black Loyalists have left for Sierra Leone, they were replaced by about 500 Jamaican Maroons who stayed in Canada between 1797 and 1800, only to be subjected to the same conditions of discrimination and prejudice as the Loyalists. The Maroons eventually followed the Loyalists to Sierra Leone.

A second influx of American Blacks - Refugees - began entering Canada in 1815. Again, as during the American Revolution, the British encouraged the slaves to desert their American masters in return for settlers’ status and land
(Krauter and Davis, 1978). This again, however, never materialized. Blacks were instead granted land allotments on a ‘license of occupation’ (Bolaria and Li, 1988) which meant that they were not free to sell the land. Some thirty-six hundred of these former slaves were brought to Canada by British ships. Almost two thousand of them were to land in Nova Scotia (Krauter and Davis, 1978). These ‘Refugee Blacks’ settled temporarily on Melville Island in Nova Scotia which then included the now province of New Brunswick. They were then sent to the now depopulated and deserted towns of the Black Loyalists where they suffered the same hardships of not being able to support themselves on the small plots of marginal land.

Against the backdrops of these inhuman conditions of unsustainable and unsustaining land, the Refugee Blacks moved to large cities. Their movement gave rise to the so-called ‘Negro question’ between 1815-1861 (Krauter and Davis, 1978). Their now palpable presence attracted the attention of officials as well as the general population of Nova Scotia. In 1815, for example, an amendment addressing a ban on any further Black immigration was discussed in the Nova Scotia Assembly. In these discussions, “Many stereotypes came to the surface once again” (Bolaria and Li, 1988: 191). “The poverty of Blacks”, the authors continue:

which clearly resulted from structural conditions such as small and uneconomical land holdings, unemployment and low-paying jobs, was attributed by some to personal characteristics such as lack of motivation, laziness and lack of ambition and industry.

As Tulloch (1975; cited in Bolaria and Li, 1988) shows, gradually the racism that lay beneath the surface came to be institutionalized with segregated churches and schools and laws against the full participation of Blacks in the life of the communities in which they lived.

After the passage of the Abolition Act of 1793 in Upper Canada which classified any runaway slaves entering the province as free, another considerable group of Blacks entered Canada: the fugitives (Walker, 1980;
Thus, upper Canada became the ‘promised land’ and a safe haven for the runaway slaves, especially after the passage of the second Fugitive Slave Act in the U.S. which made even the northern states no longer safe for the runaway and ‘freed’ Blacks (Krauter and Davis, 1978). They traveled as individuals and in groups along the route of the ‘Underground Railroad’. Most of these fugitives stopped just beyond the Canadian border, clustering at Amherstburg and along the Niagara frontier, which some believed was an indication that the Blacks’ sojourn in Canada was only temporary and that they eventually intended to re-turn to the United States.

It was estimated that as many as thirty fugitive slaves a day would crossed the Detroit River at Fort Malden alone (Krauter and Davis, 1978), and in the month following the U.S. Fugitive Act of 1850, as many as 3,000 entered Canada. Between 1850 and 1860, it is estimated, perhaps twenty thousand Blacks entered Canada. The flow became flood and in 1860, the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada estimated that there were 60,000 Blacks in Canada. Other estimates, however, range form 20,000 to 75,000 (Walker, 1980; Bolaria and Li, 1988). With the outbreak of the American Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, many Blacks returned to the United States. This emigration continued till the middle of the twentieth century, especially during reconstruction years, 1867-77, due to the better opportunities available there (Walker, 1980).

Although most Blacks entered eastern Canada, a western groups from California and other western states focused on British Columbia (Krauter and Davis, 1978). Just before the state of California passed a law restricting immigration of Blacks and imposing mandatory registration on them, a delegation of Blacks traveled to British Columbia. After being assured that they would be accepted as settlers without ‘legal’ discrimination, they moved to B.C. “The Blacks who moved to British Columbia from California, and from more distant Oklahoma and Kansas, were not fugitives”, affirmed Krauter and Davis (1978: 45). “They intended to live permenantly in Canada. Skilled and literate, they were accepted by Victoria’s white population. Many of the Blacks went into
business for themselves, others worked for the Hudson's Bay Company” (Krauter and Davis 1978: 45). This British Columbia venture, for Krauter and Davis, marked the closest proximity to equality for Canadian Blacks in the 19th century. One factor that might shed some light on this proximity and on Black success in British Columbia is that some moved to the interior of Vancouver Island or to the mainland, so that their numbers were less obvious than in cities of eastern Canada (Krauter and Davis, 1978).

Not distantly far from British Columbia, parts of the prairies were also settled by Blacks. Invited by prairie governments and the railroads, about 200 Blacks moved to Saskatchewan from Oklahoma in 1909. Another 300 settled in Alberta in 1910 (Krauter and Davis, 1978; Walker, 1980). Again, they were promised good farm land, but on arriving, they had to accept inferior allotments. The Black settlements in the prairies failed to grow, however, because the Canadian government prevented other Blacks from Oklahoma entering (Krauter and Davis, 1978). For instance, when attempts to stop Blacks in the borders failed, a special medical officer was sent to Emerson, Manitoba to examine whether the Canadian weather was too severe for Black settlers already in Canada. “An investigation in April 1911 revealed that the Commissioner of Immigration for Western Canada had offered a fee to the medical inspector at Emerson for every Black he rejected” (Krauter and Davis, 1978: 45). Suddenly, climate became a leading issue for those opposing the immigration of Blacks. As the Dominion Commissioner of Immigration in Winnipeg admitted (cited in Krauter and Davis, 1978: 46), the Canadian government “was doing all in its power through a policy of persuasion, to keep negroes out of Western Canada.” The Commissioner adds, it is his “purpose to bar [Blacks] from Canada, upon the broad ground of being undesirable.”

Between the two world wars, the entry of Blacks and other racial minorities (Bolaria and Li, 1988) was severely restricted (Krauter and Davis, 1978). During 1920s, a small group of West Indians came to the Maritimes to work in the mines and railways. Indeed, not until the late 1960s did Canada
experience another major influx of Blacks from the Commonwealth, and this
time not from the U.S. but from the West Indies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number (a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>18,291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>19,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>22,174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>18,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>32,127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>62,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>144,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a): Figures for 1921-71 are for “Negroes” in Canada, as reported in the original sources. The 1971 Census, in addition to 34,445 “Negroes”, also listed 28,025 West Indians (cited in Bolaria and Li, 1988: 192)

As Table 1 shows, in 1921, there were 18,291 Blacks in Canada. This was to remain fairly stable with only a small decline between 1941 and 1951. Thereafter, however, a dramatic increase occurred. By 1981, the number of the Canadians who declared Black heritage was 144,500, and the 1991 census reported 224,620 Blacks in Canada, with a higher female population (117,420) than male (107,195); the latter category of Blacks included African, Caribbean, Haitian and other Blacks. Of the 224,620 who claimed Black heritage, those who declared African origin in 1991 census were 26,430.

The higher female population is due to the fact that the majority of West Indian immigrants have been women. In 1970, the West Indies was by and large the third largest regional source of immigrants to Canada, with women constituting the majority and living in Ontario, principally, in the Metropolitan Toronto area (Krauter and Davis, 1978). The availability of domestic work in cities and the relative ease with which females domestics were able to find white Canadian sponsors were two good reasons that might
shed some light on the larger female population. As Krauter and Davis (1978: 47) noted, "Even as early as the 1920s the Canadian government made exceptions to its otherwise exclusionist immigration laws in order to allow the entrance of West Indian female domestics." This exception to the rule for domestic West Indian women policy was to continue until 1967 when it was replaced by a more liberal set of immigration regulations (see Solomon, 1992: 137-9).

Historically, until the present, with a few exceptions in the Maritimes such as the Loyalists, Black Canada was and is an urban population. Most live in Ontario and Quebec, primarily in Toronto and Montreal. If we take Montreal as an example, Blacks were the 6th largest ethnic group (38,645) in 1991 census, just ahead of the Chinese. Africans in Montreal, on the other hand, were 42,175; and Caribbeans, including Haitians, were 53,925. When combined, Africans and Caribbeans in Montreal constituted a bigger ethnic group than those who were born in the U.S., Central and South America, United Kingdom and India combined. In the same census of 1991, Toronto, the largest Canadian city, has 128,000 claiming a Black ethnic origin, with nearly 70% living in Metro Toronto, mainly in Scarborough and North York (see Table 2.0).
Given the social conditions of wars and political oppression that a good number of Africans have endured before coming to Canada, they most probably entered Canada as convention refugees or by applying for political asylum. In 1991, Somalia and Ethiopia constituted two of the top ten countries of origin for refugees coming to Canada, with Somalia ranked sixth (2,955) and Ethiopia seventh (2,180). In 1992, Somalia was ranked third (4,701), Ethiopia eighth (1,588), and Ghana tenth (1,263).
Table 3.0
Extract from Immigrant Population to Canada by Place of Birth
N.B. Countries were chosen according to the highest numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>166,175</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male: 37,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 34,455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>11,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>6,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>3,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Africa</td>
<td>75,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>17,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>16,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>11,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>8,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>52,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>28,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>16,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Africa</td>
<td>3,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>1,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaire</td>
<td>1,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Africa</td>
<td>25,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of South Africa</td>
<td>25,725</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3 shows that of 166,175 immigrant Africans, 11,965 came from West Africa, 72,285 from Eastern Africa, 53,215 from Northern Africa, and 25,165 from Southern Africa with, almost always a higher percentage of males over females. The highest percentage seems to have come from East Africa, with largest number from Tanzania and Kenya and least from Central Africa. A remarkable number of immigrant North Africans came from Egypt and Morocco. Ghana, in West Africa, had the highest number of immigrants to Canada and the Republic of South Africa had almost all of the influx from Southern Africa. Finally, and significantly, those immigrants who claim African heritage, according to 1991 census, are relatively young in age and highly educated.
4.2. Education of Blacks in Canada: Krauter and Davis (1978), among many others, noted that Blacks never enjoyed educational opportunities equal to those of other Canadians. Indeed, Krauter and Davis argue, Black school children in Nova Scotia, in their early years, have met as much hostility as Blacks in other regions of Canada, if not more. The first schools in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia were church related where emphasis was put on religious activity and not socio-technical skills. Teachers were poorly trained and very gravely underpaid.

There were segregated public schools in Ontario and Nova Scotia, existed in segregated Black communities. By 1859, the Separate Schools Act was passed. It provided that any five Black families could petition their local school officials to open separate schools for Blacks. Although the Act was a voluntary procedural device, "its practical effect was to create a system that could force all Black children out of white local schools. De facto residential segregation was thus transformed into de jure, educational segregation" (Krauter and Davis, 1978: 49). Indeed, as Krauter and Davis pointed out, few Nova Scotian Blacks were being at all educated in the public schools.

This segregation continued until the 1960s. Even then, "educational opportunities for Nova Scotia's Blacks remained grossly inadequate", Krauter and Davis (1978: 49) affirmed. "Black teachers in the usually dilapidated separate schools were both poorly qualified and underpaid. Student attendance was irregular, and at times even the schools themselves operated intermittently" (Davis (1978: 49). This created a situation where the opportunity for higher education was almost impossible. A few Blacks, however, were admitted into universities such as University of Toronto and Queen's University before late 1950s and early 1960s. One factor that militated against Blacks moving on to university was their high drop out rate in elementary school. Describing the situation in 1960s, Winks (cited in Krauter and Davis, 1978: 51) argued that:
The cycle of poverty, ignorance (sic), and unemployment had lasted far too long for anyone but the most idealistic to expect the ... Negro to assimilate (sic) to [Canadian] society ... For Negroes were not yet equal in fact and were unlikely to be until the slow curative powers of equal education had made their impact. It was not this generation that had been liberated but the next.

Reading Winks, coupled with more recent studies, it seemed that history never went away. It, instead, only took different shapes and forms. In short, it repeated itself. Krauter and Davis (1978: 51), reflecting on the Black plight in Canada since their arrival in 1628 until 1978, pointed to findings about their racial/social conditions and their endurance of racism that were no different than findings by James in 1989, Solomon in 1992 or Dei in 1995 (or, as will be seen, in my study in 1996). Krauter and Davis pointed to the continual racial discrimination against, particularly, Blacks in all spheres of public life and in almost all parts of this country. They write:

... textbooks paid no attention at all to the historical background and present-day culture of Canadian Blacks. Racial stereotyping is also frequently apparent. Many misguided teachers have lower expectations of Black students, considering them to be slow learners incapable of high achievement. Not surprisingly, many Black youngsters have developed negative attitudes about school. Inadequate counseling and advising have resulted in considerable ‘streaming’, whereby Black students are channeled into trade schools and vocational classes rather than academic studies.

At stake in these comments are the complex ways in which history inform our present conceptualizations where blackness is dehumanized and racially stratified at the bottom. This stratification is however forming and informed by historical conditions. Conditions where the so-called Negroes suffer more discrimination than any other minority (Davis, 1971: 50). This racial discrimination, significantly, touches on all aspects of public life from education, to housing, to employment, to public accommodations (Walker, 1980; Henry et al., 1995).
The following is a brief historical overview of the *Canadiens français*, French Canadians, followed by a discussion of Franco-Ontarians and their educational system.

4.3. *Les Canadiens Français: an Overview*: Heller (1994: ch. 2 and 4), from whose narrative I extract what follows, clearly outline that the history of the French in Canada is a double-edge history where yesterday's oppressors are today's oppressed and tomorrow's oppressors and so on. This teaches us that power and power blocs are never fixed. On the contrary, they are historical, fluid, and always changing. To begin with, especially as far as First Nations are concerned, the history of the French in Canada is a history of colonialism, imperialism, human and resource exploitation, human degradation and European expansionism. It is, however, also a history of oppression of the French Canadians by English speaking communities.

The French presence in Canada dates back to 1534 with the expedition of Jacques Cartier in 1534-6 across the Atlantic and up the St. Lawrence river. He founded what is now the City of Montreal. Not until 1604, with the arrival of Champlain, did the French exploration and colonization start en masse. In 1604, Champlain established what is now known as the Acadia and in 1608, he explored the St. Lawrence river, establishing Quebec City at its the mouth (Heller, 1994). From here-on and over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, settlements were established along coasts and waterways (Heller, 1994), which meant a genocide for First Nations (Pask, 1994).

The presence of the British, the French and other Europeans in North America, as Heller (1994: 37), paraphrasing Wolf (1982), demonstrated, “was principally due to the need of the new European states to find new sources of valuable goods, since they had exhausted local capacity to produce adequate surplus to sustain the crown.” Indeed, Heller argued, “European presence in North America was only part of the global expansion of European empires. Significantly, British and French interest in North America was primarily in
furs, which were used exclusively as luxury items.” These luxury items were put on, in Europe, as a sign of the bourgeoisie class status (Heller, 1994).

With the decline of the beaver population in the East of North America, the European, namely French and British, expansion in other parts of North America commenced. This expansion has lead the French and the British to, among others, the Great Lakes and what is now Ontario. Yet, because the expansion in North America was linked to the lucrative fur trade, the question of who controls what was a constant battle between the French and the British. First Nations were exploited in these processes of control; and given their knowledge of the area and their expertise in hunting and trapping, they were allied with and, in most cases, bargained with through gift-giving, such as alcohol and firearms, only to become the middlemen and eventually to be converted to Catholicism (Heller, 1994).

The Acadians, in the Maritimes, since their deportation by the British in 1755 after the settlement of the Loyalists, had a sense of Self and identity that is, according to Heller, different and separate than the population that settled in Quebec. Four years later, in 1759, the British successfully conquered New France (Nouvelle France) but have to wait till 1763 to officially sign the Treaty of Paris which granted them the territory. After the conquest, French administrators and soldiers went back to France leaving behind “a fairly undifferentiated, rural society of peasants dominated by the landowning seigneurs and the Catholic church” (Heller, 1994: 39).

Montreal, here-on, was to emerge as the capital of fur trade and thus a financial center. Significantly, the relationship between the British and the French changed towards subjugation of the latter by the former; nevertheless, it was pragmatism that dominated the relationship (Heller, 1994). This pragmatic approach was pretty clear in Quebec Act of 1774 which “involved letting the French retain their social and economic institutions, which were left, for the most part, under the control of the Catholic Church and the French land-
owning and professional élite” (Heller, 1994: 42). As significant as well, in 1830s, after the settlement of the Loyalists who came from the U.S. and it’s American War of Independence, and after the French Revolution, the British were to adopt the policy of assimilation towards the French. This was particularly significant after the Act of Union in 1840 which brought the French and the British closer (Heller, 1994).

The Act of Union, as Heller has pointed out, scarcely resulted in the assimilation of the French. On the contrary, “as might be expected, it probably helped strengthen a sense of identity among the French” (1994: 43). Furthermore, in 1840s, the rural French population was producing a large number of children. But, because of the earth ecology which could not produce enough food, a large number of these families moved to the city, within Quebec, others to what is now Ontario and others to New England. With a distinct political, religious, and linguistic identity, Quebec joined the Confederation in 1867.

During the period between 1867 and 1960, the farms in southern Quebec were draining which meant, for the Catholic Church, a loss of control over a substantial population and, for the British, a lost of revenue.

The result was a major campaign to recruit French-speakers from Quebec (as well as eastern Ontario, Acadia and even New England) to colonize northern Ontario. Through the last half of the nineteenth century, and indeed well into the first part of the twentieth, emigration from Quebec was directed, as French speakers, guided by the Church, established agricultural settlements up the Ottawa river and across northern Ontario, participating also in the new zones of exploitation of lumber and minerals, and, after 1880, in the construction of the Trans-Canada railway. While French emigrants to New England eventually assimilated, those within Canada remained socially, and, to some extent geographically, distant from English-speakers, establishing their own cooperatives and credit unions, as well as their own schools (Heller, 1994: 46).

The recruitment of francophones, especially to Ontario, has resulted in creating two distinct populations, one is urban and another rural. Eventually, the rural
population migrated to urban settings as they expanded from 1800s onwards. In the case of Franco-Ontarians, especially in the Ottawa area, the federal government played a significant role in recruiting francophones from the rest of Ontario as well as Quebec. However, by the 1950s, francophones across Canada found themselves disproportionately uneducated and at the lower end of occupational hierarchy (Heller, 1994). This discovery was significant in the Francophone ethnic mobilization in 1960s.

Coinciding with the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. and Canada in the 1960s, an ethnic mobilization of French Canadian nationalism in and outside Quebec took place. (One may tentatively argue that it is, in fact, part of the Civil Rights Movement in Canada.) By the 1960s, the Catholic Church has been significantly weakened and lost its influence due to urbanization and to the separation between the State and the Church. It was towards the former that francophone struggle was directed. Particularly in Quebec, but also elsewhere, the idea was to use the "state apparatus to permit francophones to gain access to sources of wealth directly and as francophones, that is, without having to assimilate" (Heller, 1994: 57). La Révolution tranquille of the 1960s, an élite movement that called for a modernization of education and state apparatus, has done precisely this: allowing francophones to enter social and state institution without fear of assimilation. These institutions included the already existing institutions and created new ones such as CEGEPs, Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel, publicly funded pre-university and vocational training institutions (Heller, 1994).

During these socio-political mobilizations, a piece of legislation was passed that changed drastically not only Quebec's relationship to the rest of Canada, but also the importance of the French in relation to the English language. That was the Charter of the French Language, known as Bill 101, passed in 1977. The Charter:
... decreed that only French be considered the language of work, which meant that all internal and external communications, both oral and written, had to be in French only, and that only knowledge of French could be used as a criterion of hiring, although certain exemptions could be granted if a convincing case was made (Heller, 1994: 62).

Although Bill 101 was significant in that it fostered a pride in speaking French and forced the rest of Canada to take the road of bilingualism where French was to become a vital asset to possess, it was also paradoxical for two reasons.

The first has to do with the presence of immigrants and First Nations in Quebec. The diversity of immigrants who want to be fully ‘Québécois’, full citizens that is, and thus treated accordingly undermines the very essence that underlines francophone mobilization. As Heller puts it, “The democratic and state-building processes which francophones were able to use to their advantage are now undermining the very basis of their mobilization as a homogeneous group” (1994: 65). In other words, this, for francophone Québécois, raises a fundamental question of how they can use the same processes they themselves utilized to resist Anglophones’ oppression to oppress immigrants and First Nations.

The second paradox has to do with Quebec’s relationship with francophone communities outside the province. Significantly, if Quebec is to support francophone minorities outside it’s territory, this is contrary to its own actions of not supporting linguistic minorities within Quebec borders. Heller was quite vehement in explaining this paradox. She writes:

Francophone power outside Quebec is intimately linked to the strength of Quebec. However, the strength of Quebec is built in large measure on a logic which precludes the continued existence of linguistic minorities with full rights; in particular, it precludes the enlargement and strengthening of the rights of francophone minorities outside Quebec (1994: 67).

When it comes to Franco-Ontarians, this ambiguous relationship with Quebec is most keenly felt. They have to use and depend not on Quebec’s support but on dominated by anglophones State institutions to fight and execute their
4.4. Les Franco-Ontariens: Of Canada’s total population 27 million in the 1991 census, 16.5 million declared English as their mother tongue while 6.5 million claimed French. 900,000 of those claiming French as a mother tongue live outside Quebec. As Heller (1994: 136) points out, the francophone population in Ontario may be in decline, but their number in big cities where the economy is in good shape and where there are job opportunities such as Toronto, is certainly on the increase. In 1941, for example, 0.8 percent of Toronto’s population claimed French as a mother tongue, while in 1986 and 1991, the figures were 43,845 and 49,800, respectively, constituting 1.3 percent of the total of Toronto’s population. Significantly, those who claim French and a language other than English in 1991 were 6,200. It is within this latter population that the subjects of my research are situated.

In general, francophones move from Quebec, Acadia and other parts of Canada to big cities in Ontario such as Toronto for economic reasons. The same is true with the recent waves of immigrants from Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Haiti, among other places. They tend to settle in the Metropolitan Toronto and Ottawa areas. However, even before the arrival of immigrants, the francophone population, especially after the 1960s, was more diversified along, particularly, class lines (Heller, 1994). The arrival of immigrants, on the other hand, made clear the diversifications along class, gender, religious, culture and race social differences as immigrants started to articulate and fight for their rights as francophones (Ibrahim, 1997). Immigrants, as Heller (1994) alluded to, who did not feel welcome and well-represented by ‘mainstream’ francophone associations formed their own: Association multiculturelle franco-ontarienne and Association interculturelle franco-ontarienne. These are urban associations which play crucial roles in voicing social differences between immigrants vis-à-
vis Canadian-born francophones, using the same democratic tools and rights that Canadian-born francophones utilized antecedently in their struggle

The question of immigrants, or what Heller (1994: 111) calls ‘the issue of multiculturalisme’, is indeed important, for the purpose of this study. The issue of multiculturalisme

... refers to the presence in Franco-Ontarian schools of an increasingly wide variety of ethnocultural backgrounds. Their presence calls into question the basis of group solidarity, what it means to be Franco-Ontarian. In so doing, it underscores some ways in which inequalities within Franco-Ontarian society may have been relegated to the background in the common struggle for rights and resources.

At stake here is the question of power: how it can be obtained, challenged and shared? If this question has been difficult for Franco-Ontarians, Heller maintains, it is because of their ambivalent power relation positions. They are in a position of subordination when it comes to their relation to the Anglo-dominant society and at the same time in a position of power when it comes to their relation to immigrants.

The question of power is vital not only in internal relations among Franco-Ontarians, but in Quebec’s relation to the rest of Canada as well. Ethnic mobilization, with it’s substantial power gain in Quebec in the 1960s, had an impact on francophones outside Quebec. In 1969, New Brunswick declared itself a bilingual province and Franco-Ontarians began receiving support from their government. In 1968, the Ontario government agreed to publicly fund French-language education through high school to OAC - grade 13 - and declared French as one of the province’s official languages. This was followed by Bill 8 and Bill 75 in 1986, among others. Bill 75 guaranteed minority control over their own schools. Bill 8 guaranteed provision of services in French in so-called ‘designated areas’. These are regions where there are more than 5,000 French-language speakers or where francophones constitute ten percent of the
population. Three-quarters of the province was thus covered by bill 8 (Heller, 1994).

These recent gains by Franco-Ontarians, nevertheless, have a long history of struggle. Heller shows that for the most part of the 19th century, francophone populations in Ontario were left alone, with an implicit hope that they would eventually assimilate. By 1890, French language schools were in jeopardy when it was declared that English was the only language of instruction and that other languages were no longer permitted. Francophones relocated within separate/Catholic school systems, only to find themselves in a fight with the Irish over control of the Church. In 1913, in coalition between the Irish and the English Protestants, a law blocking bilingual schools was passed. For Heller, this was crucial in awakening francophone leadership which succeeded in revoking the 1913 law in 1944.

Although the 1913 law was revoked, there was still another problem just as difficult. French language schools that were part of the Catholic system only received financing until grade 10. Those that wanted to continue their education could only do so in English. "Not surprisingly, the education level of francophones of that generation remain low" (Heller, 1994: 69). This low academic achievement continued until the 1970s. However, positive changes were inevitable with francophone mobilization outside and inside Quebec's Révolution Tranquille. In 1968, as I already mentioned, the Ontario government agreed to publicly fund French-language schools including high school. Between 1966 and 1970, the bilingual Glendon College, a francophone theater, and media organizations were established, and in 1969, the first French high school Etienne Brûlé was opened in Toronto (Heller, 1994). In the 1960s, Laurentian University, and Glendon College of York University were opened.

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20 The school is named after Étienne Brûlé: an interpreter and explorer who was born in Champigny, southeast of Paris, France, toward the end of the sixteenth century. He came to Canada as a boy in 1608, became an Indian interpreter, and accompanied Champlain to the Huron country in 1615. In 1622, he penetrated, first of white men, to Lake Superior. He was murdered in Ontario in June 1633.
to serve Franco-Ontarians in their pursuit of higher education. Eventually, in 1989, the Conseil des écoles française de la communauté urbaine de Toronto (CEFCUT), Toronto French-language Board of Education, was inaugurated to bring together high and elementary and high schools which fell previously under the supervision of various English language Boards of Education (Heller, 1994). These francophone gains were significant in that they narrowed the gap with English-speaking communities, but, more importantly they rendered francophones 'another mainstream'. These gains and mobilizations, on the one hand, strengthened:

... group identity [which] ... resulted in progress, in terms of increase access to resources like education and jobs. On the other hand, the results of that mobilization have drawn francophones farther and farther into mainstream life, and rendered the quality of their everyday experience less and less distinct from that of so many others who share their way of life (Heller, 1994: 76).

It is thus safe to argue that immigrants, whether they know the Franco-Ontarian history or nor, are getting the message that Franco-Ontarians constitute another 'mainstream', if not part of the 'mainstream'. Given the level of treatment of, particularly, Black students, as we will see in this study, Franco-Ontarians do constitute just another white eurocentric and dominant community that Blacks have to encounter (see next chapter). Whether Blacks or otherwise immigrants, their number grew, and is still growing rapidly in Franco-Ontarian schools. Although there are no prior records, in 1993-1994 at the CEFCUT, French Board of Education in Metropolitan Toronto, the ratio of the students of African descent21 was 30.6%. It was 40% in 1994-1995, but dropped to 27% in 1995-1996. In conclusion, the challenging question now for Franco-Ontarians is will they contstitute 'just another dominant mainstream' or will they endeavour to form a different set of agenda that can be engaged and desired to engage with?

21By African descent I am referring to continental as well as diasporic Africans; diasporic here is referencing les Antillais and les Haïtiens.
Chapter 4

"Wallahi, ils sont tous des racistes." 22

Race, Racism, and Becoming Black

This chapter sets the stage for the forthcoming chapters. It depicts the socio-racial climate where African students' subjectivities are located. It is the stage where they were to participate and painfully experience the play of schooling culture in Canada. The setting of this colorful - or I should say wanting to be color-less - stage is done with the hypothesis that students enter, so to speak, translate, and in some cases, confront a social interpellation that is asking them to racially fit somewhere. Racism is significantly vital in this stage. Indeed, students' narratives clearly show the differential treatments they receive, whether academic or otherwise. They also show, in the process of confronting and combating racism, students allying themselves with blackness and becoming more and more aware of the history of racism, discrimination, and dehumanization of blackness within the Euro-Canadian and American contexts. They are, in the process of comprehending their own plight as 'Black' subjects in Canada, becoming Blacks, which has a sharp political edge to it (see also Dei, 1997c). I am using to become as opposed to being Black. To become refers to the social processes whereby the Self is experiencing and building memories that help it to translate the socio-cultural environment that surrounds it. Being, on the other hand, refers to the notion that these experiences and memories are already there within the Self.

Racism has to be taken here as an incident in the processes of racialization and becoming Black. When, for example, continental African students undergo the experience, the physical and the psychological pain of the differential treatment, they comprehend that the latter has a long history. In

22 Mukhi (18 year old boy from Djibouti; here he was talking about his white teachers): «I swear in the name of Allah, they are all racists».
fact, it is the history of blackness in North America. Before discussing this though, I will introduce some extracts of the only Black teacher (Aristide) at the school who has been discharged by the board at the time of the interview and who has a human rights case before the Ontario Human Rights Commission. This is important for it sheds light on who are behind the scene: teachers, counselors and administrators, and what forms of racial understanding they have. It also shows the blunt forms of racism that are found at the school, plus their consequences and the trauma they cause.

4.1. Behind the Scenes: a Teacher's Agony: Aristide, from a Haitian background, moved to Toronto from Quebec where he taught in Montreal and in First Nations reserves in northern Quebec. He has been teaching since 1970 with a qualification of two masters degrees, one from Université de Montréal and the other from York University, and he is presently enrolled in a Ph. D. program at Université de Montréal, Faculty of Education, with a specialization in Measurement and Evaluation. He was at Marie-Victorin on a contract, which was renewed at the end of each three months. What follows are extracts of a two hour interview in March 1996:

Aristide: But people did not want to see me at the school. And since I arrived, the principal23 told me that. He told me “be careful!” , because the teachers did not want to see me. I said, but I noticed that there is a lot of, I told him that I noticed that there is a lot of suspicious towards me. But what did I do to them? Because I knew that I had to continue to live with them. And I knew that these heads of divisions are the ones I am going to meet in the interviews. Because everytime they called me, if I pass three months my contract terminated. That was their politics [with me]. If they had to give me another contract it is where they didn’t find anyone else. I had to fill an application, and then pass another interview. Then, they had to call the places where I worked before. It was always the same place. But everytime they had to call them to tell them “we are going to offer a position to Aristide, what do you think of him?” (...) [And me,] I was there with the most experience than all of the teachers. I

23 This is an Africanist white man from France who is a Ph. D. holder. He lived in Africa where he taught for years in different parts of the continent, he did not hide his admiration for Africa and Africans, and has a solid anti-racism discourse and praxis and well-liked and loved by students, particularly African students.
was the teacher who had the most experience, recognized (...) And I am, more or less, certain that in terms of diploma and certificate qualification, I had superior qualifications.

If Aristide was brought into the school, it was because 60 percent of the school population was Black, yet the absence of Blacks among teachers, staff and administration was complete. What Aristide has endured however and suffered from being the only Black teacher and the only Black adult in the school was wretched, agonizing and hauntingly disturbing:

Aristide: I was making confidence on them [white teachers]. I asked the head, the [teachers’] union representative, who is called, how is he called, Pierre. He told me “I don’t see you here next year.” But, I did not understand what he wanted to tell me by that. By the way, he had told me that “you don’t have the right to fill an application.” I didn’t understand either. He told me “you don’t have the right to fill an application, you have to wait, there are two openings, but you, you don’t have the right to fill an application. You have to wait for the teachers, who are in the plus, to be engaged. And then, when [we] have nobody to engage, the Board will send you another exterior form (formulaire extérieur) because you, you supposed to be in in the exterior (tu supposais d’être à l’extérieur).” They will take care of those in the in the inside before everyone. And then they, I waited, it never came. (...) But it is two years that I was waiting. The next year, I arrived. There were openings. I was always there [at the school]. The openings were empty. They called the others, they called the candidates, but they didn’t want to, they didn’t want to take me in.

Why?

Aristide: They told me that they have to be careful with me because I was the spy (eye - espion) of the principal, the spy of the Board. Awad : But no! but no! (mais non! mais non!). You didn’t hear it like this? you were told?
Aristide: No, it is not that I heard it. It is not someone who was talking to someone else and I overheard. They were people who told it to me in my face. And [these were the] people for example who were hired after me, who are now tenured teachers (professeurs permanants). (...) At one point, the principal called me to tell me, “they don’t like you.”
Awad: Completely (carrément)
Aristide: What did I do to them? Yes, completely. (...) I have seen enough in this school (J’en ai connu dans cette école). I was humiliated. What happened was that when the principal told it to me, all the students already saw that I was weak at the school. And this made me sick because
we were all teachers at the same level. And moreover I was the most experienced among them, more qualified than the others. But we are in the middle (*Mais on est dans le milieu*). Everyone looked down on me as inferior and consequently I felt inferior. I had accepted this because I was telling myself that after three years, five years, it is going to be all right. I just arrived [to the school]. But I was working in a class, there were two peoples, the head of the division who was all the time in front of the door to survey the students, to see what they were doing in my class, and then another person, special education teacher (*éducatrice spécialisée*). Her name is Simona I think. Everytime these two peoples come to the door, there was a female [*une élève*] student who said “monsieur, look at the door, you are surveyed.”

Awad: Ohhh.
Aristide: Ok, I told myself, it is not too bad. I have my work to do and time, on it’s side, has his.

But this promulgation was more of a dream that turns into one nightmare after another that does not know gender or age differences. Aristide endured his experiences from men, women, and students:

Aristide: This was how the teachers, who worked there [ in the library] with me; there was a computer. The computer had a password. All teachers had the password except me. If a student came up to me and he wanted to do some work, he addressed me, I had to address another teacher to go write the password. In one incident, there is a student who found the password, the guy Pierre [the teacher head of the library] called me. He said to me that it was me who gave the password. I guided the student in my presence; the student said “Monsieur Pierre, it was not Monsieur Aristide who gave me the password. It is another teacher who wrote and I was surveying him and I saw the password.” Another moment, I see Pierre who went out. There was another woman [teacher] who came in with me. A student came asking for a diskette, I went into the office to give him the diskette. And I came back, this woman got into the office [after me]. She said “go a head, go a head”. I said “why this go a head?” She said “I see you were busy doing something in Pierre’s office, and once you saw me, you stopped. I said you can continue and it doesn’t bother me.”

Another abject horror that made me wonder how Aristide was emotionally, physically, and psychologically able to handle all of these:
Aristide: One time, two days after [the above incident], I was at the library with my class. We worked in the library because we were doing a research. But, the class where I worked, I shared with two other teachers. The youngest teacher her name is Hélène. She, I am telling you, is a racist to the maximum and it is her husband that was kicked out [of school] because he insulted a student by calling him Nigger and so on. And so Hélène comes in and tells me, “I worked like this on the computer”, she tells me “Aristide, I went to the class and there were a number of bad words like [in English] fuck you, which were written on the board. I know they are not the students of Armand [a teacher] who wrote them. They are not my students either, they have to be your students.” I said «me, it’s impossible!” But I was calm. I said “there is one thing, check on the notebook, you will see that it has been two days that I didn’t go to the class with my students because we are working at the library, since we are doing a research project.” There are plenty of these happened which really, I don’t know what to say, in any case, I had enough.

What is significant to remember in Aristide’s re-telling is the fact that these are the teachers whom continental African students encounter everyday in their processes of schooling and their identity formation. Students are ethnographers in seeing and translating what is coming into being around them and they are intelligently receptive to and conscious of the messages they receive from the communicative social environment. These messages will become clearer as the study progresses, for now I want to delineate the notion of students as ethnographers because it has a direct bearing on identity formation which, in turn, impacts how they react and interact with the surrounding social environments.

4.2. Displaced Subjects as Ethnographers: Entering, so to speak, translating, and thus comprehending a new social context is an arduous, laborious, but importantly formidable task. When I, as the participant-observer and the ethnographer, am gazing around hunting for patterns of social life, I do not believe the situation is so much different for African students who are caught
up in rapid processes of translation of the new Canadian context. This is because of displacement from one socio-cultural and geo-ecological condition to another. Listen to Amani telling her story about her first days in Marie-Victorin:

Amani: No, I mean, it's like, for me, the situation was new school, new country, new society, new everything is new. (...) So, I found myself in a situation where I was especially observing. I wasn't commenting in the class. I wasn't saying anything, I was there just to observe because there were a lot of things to observe, right (n'est-ce pas)? So, I did, the things that did me ah, in the class, it was the ways, the links (relationships) that were there between students and teachers. I was surprise especially when they said the word tu.

It is obvious that Amani was there, in the classroom and the school, to comprehend the culture of schooling and the pedagogy of teacher-students relationship. One of the first things she came to be cognizant of, observe, at the level of teacher-students pedagogical relationship, is the linguistic usage of the subject tu which in French is used among close friends, peers, for children, or pejoratively for an unknown person or an interlocutor we mean to disparage. Amani's reading to the usage of the subject utterance tu, nevertheless, was a sign of disrespect for the teacher on the part of students. This reading is demarcated by her memory (her 'comparative system', as Ogbu (1983, 1990) would have said) of teacher-students relationship in Africa which is based on respect, authority and, significantly, discipline which is performed in the lexicon usage of subject vous.

In another similar example, the ethnographer and the participant-observer Amani was remembering about what she observed and remarked (remarquer) as the reason why continental and Black students do not have a

24 I used the italics for words and phrases that were originally uttered in English.
sense of being integrated and welcomed in the school. Her ethnographic gaze is reflected in the expression ‘took note of’: she cites:

Amani: But one of the features of, sorry, one feature is that here at the school that I was able to take note of (j'ai pu remarquer), compared to probably James\textsuperscript{25} or things like that, is that here at Marie-Victorin you will not really have students who are really all integrated in the same activity or something like that. But that is explainable you know, there is a history to this. When [continental African] students came here [in the school], they feel, they felt marginalized (égaré). So, when you feel marginalized, you stay (tu restes) marginalized, right (n'est-ce pas)? Not dig in.

While on the same topic of not being welcomed and, in turn, not being able to engage with the school curriculum and extra-curriculum activities, Amani again has taken note of this:

You see Awad here the situation here at Marie-Victorin, it is easy to comprehend, you know. You came to almost all of the organizations, the activities which we had and all that since a year now, and since you were able to film or even ask questions. And it is easy when you really observe, and then you try to evaluate the situation here at Marie-Victorin, you notice that the students they only involve in Black History Month (le mois de patrimoine africain). It is very rare to see a student of colour taking part in some of the stupid activities (des activités bêtes) they put in place. It's really ridiculous. There isn't anything that was put in place which interest them. It is only things that interest a Canadian [re. white] student or I don't know what. And I, I am not interested, I won't go to some shit like ah like ah FECFO [see chapter 8] or whatever. It doesn't interest me, you know. (bold added).

This is how immigrant and displaced students, and by and large every social being with memory, history and experience, detect and scrutinize their new socio-cultural context. This detection and scrutiny take place in an effort to translate this context and eventually react and interact with and to it. I believe, notwithstanding, that this translation mostly takes place at the subconscious level. In the following section, which discusses the students' account of what has been their racial experience at the school, this will become more evident.

\textsuperscript{25} James is another French school where there is no streaming: all the students are in the advanced level.
4.3. Before the Scenes\textsuperscript{26}: African Students' Racial Experience: As I already footnoted, the experience of African students should be read as part of the processes of becoming Black, part of building a memory of what race means and where they racially fit. Continental African students show an understanding of race through the re-telling of their racial experience. This racial experience, by and large, means racism. Their understanding of what constitutes racism varies from one student to the next. However, there are three streams of thought. A) Racism understood as an offered positionality by the dominant culture that restricts one's choices. This is the example of Omer, a 19 year old Ethiopian boy who came to Canada by himself when he was 15 year old. Omer was living in a shelter at the time of the interview, yet enthusiastically he was longing and planning to go Laurentian University in 1997. Talking about how the dominant culture/groups interpellate Blacks and Muslims, he cites, "hello there, you are Black you can't do anything, Muslim you can do nothing. This is what astonishing to me. It is already seen [what Blacks and Muslims can/should do and can not/should not do]."

B) The undemocratic processes and decisions taken by the school that implicate students' lives were also read by students as racist and discriminatory practices. For instance, given the racial, religious and ethnic representation of school teachers and personnel being all white and Christian (except for one Jewish female English teacher), when the school decided that it was no longer permissible to do midday Muslim prayer, this is how it was read: Aziza (18 year old girl, in Grade 13, from Somalia, the aforementioned sister of Amani):

So that, now this is a new rule. They met, the personnel of the school, they met. They agreed, like we were nothing at all. They said "oh, who cares!" you see. We have to just tell them to not leave the class, because our class is more important than their pray. (...) So, there wasn't, I am sure there wasn't even one teacher who was opposed to that. They all agreed.

\textsuperscript{26} I am using before as opposed to behind the scenes to mean on stage.
Although students finally agreed with the school decision, they, obviously, needed a sense of democratic participation in the process of decision making. They agreed with the school decision with the help of a Moroccan teacher who was brought to school from James High School by the principal to explain to students that midday prayer does not have a specific hour but an extended period of time from 12 through 3 p.m.

C) The third category of what students see as racist practice is an accumulative memory of small minute details that when put together, they tend to leave students with clear messages that they are not trusted, wanted and that they are deviant and divergent. Listen to Aziza again:

I am going to give you like an example. A teacher\(^{27}\) is going to always give the absent paper (*la feuille d’absence*) to always be given to white students. They are moreover going to know the names when they know the, for a teacher always knows the names of all the class. He is going to know more the names of the white students than the names of the Black students (...) “what’s your name before? Bûralé? how do you want me to pronounce that, Bûrralé Boralé?“ You see things like that. It’s a bit, it gives it gives you pain here [pointing to her chest] (...). This is like, these things are small small, but they can be big, which can also be something catastrophic you see. And you, you have to live with this everyday, you see.

4.3.1. Racial Stratification: Whichever stream of thought and perception of racism, students bear the experience of blunt and shocking forms of racism. The following story is a depiction of the danger that stems from discerning and treating race in opposition to ethnicity, which is imagined in cultural terms. It seemed that in Marie-Victorin, once Chinese and students from the Middle East were represented in school activities, Black students\(^{28}\) would be stratified at

\(^{27}\) In fact Aziza is talking about a female teacher (*une professeure*). The gender, I believe, will continue to be a problem in the translation. In the most severe cases, nevertheless, I will make note of this.

\(^{28}\) Through out this thesis, I am using Black students interchangeably with African students, continental African students, or Africans, because Black students in Marie-Victorin, except for a few, are Africans. Hence, unless indicated, Black students are African students. This is also the reason why Aziza used ‘Black students’ interchangeably with Africans ... etc.
the bottom and thus cut off from these activities. This is Aziza again telling her story:

Aziza: I also remember in 1994, I tried to join the volleyball team here at, at the school. And then I tried, I started when I first came here. When I first arrived like that, I started to try because I always, I was always good in volleyball. I played handball and volleyball when I was backhome, which were popular especially [among] the women (les femmes), the girls (les filles). Whereas soccer was only popular among the boys.

Awad: all right.

Aziza: OK, I always loved this sport you see. I came here, I tried to join the team, and then I was accepted the first two years. The third year, I started to, because you see why he accepted me [in the first two years] because I was the only Black.

Awad: Aha

Aziza: You see, so in other words, me being accepted, it was like he was doing me a favour, you see. (...) So, after that I tried in 1994, I tried for the team, I wasn't accepted at a time when the teacher who used to tell me “Oh, Aziza you are good” in the first two years, when I was playing in the team. He used to tell me “you are good, I would like”, he even told me the teacher even told me “do you want to try for the team next year?” I started to tell him “yes, I would love that, yes.” I come next year to try for the team, I was, I was not accepted.

Why?

(...) There were other students, students from other origins. There weren’t only white students. There were, there was an Indian girl, there was an Arab girl, there was an Asian girl, things like that you see.

Awad: Oh OK (oui, d’accord).

Aziza: So there, they favour, you see, the people; for example he is going to favour an Asian girl over a Black girl, who comes from Africa.

However, the story does not end in Aziza’s ethnographic gaze and her perception of the racial and ethnic conflict. She is about to encounter another obtuse and blunt form of racism:

Aziza: So, I always came to practice. I came, I haven’t missed even any practice, and I was never late because he told us that “don’t come late and don’t miss the practice.” Some of me, I was already, I am never because it’s a sport which I love, I really want to be accepted in the team. So, me who always came to practice, without delay, I was not accepted whereas the students who were accepted in the team, they missed the
practice two times. (...) You see always that. (...) But believe me I have witnesses in the team who were not accepted like me, you see.

Aziza then took matters seriously into her own hands and pressed charges before the principal who apparently spoke to the physical education teacher, the person in charge of the volleyball team. The principal also asked Aziza to speak to the physical education teacher: "No Monsieur, I have no desire to see him [the teacher]", Aziza responded to the principal. But she was too angry and furious to let go of a rage that was paralyzing her. For example, the same morning when Aziza spoke to the principal, the physical education teacher called her:

Aziza: And he started to tell me “but what is you problem Aziza? Do you have a problem against me?” And me, I looked at him like that. I have no desire to [speak to him] because, I know that if I start talking, it is going to be catastrophic. All my rage, which is here [pointing to her chest] will come out. Because you know you are really you are really angry. (...) And when I spoke to him, I told him “Monsieur, you are a racist” and I left. “But what does this me being racist mean? I was never a racist (...) I treat all students equally.” I looked at him like that and I told him “oh really! good.” And I said “of course you are a racist and I have no desire to speak to you, I will be late for my class” and I left.

To take this stance, Aziza has to calculate a number of things in her mind; among others is the fact that this was her teacher who will grade her and, secondly, the fact that he might complain to the principal or other institutional bodies. Nevertheless, Aziza was psychologically and emotionally motivated to let her paralyzing anger out and to take a firm stance:

I was so relief that I told him that, because it came out of me, it is a rage. All what I had here [her chest] before, and finally came out like that. I don’t want to have anything here, I want to feel comfortable, I want to breath, I want to be relief (released) you know.

Interestingly, nothing happened on the part of either Aziza, the principal or the teacher: “And you know what, nothing happened”, Aziza explained. However, leaving the matter unresolved and unsolved brings two significant questions. The first is what else can Aziza do, and, secondly, where else can she
go to complain about her incident? A recurrent theme that I found in students' narratives is the differential power relation which positions teachers in ways that allow them to do anything that pleases them to, particularly Black, students. Aziza again:

Always teachers are protected. This means that teachers could inflict anything on us, especially they could do anything on Black students and no one is going to defend us.

4.3.2. Justice and School Structures: Aziza, for me, is expressing the agony of Black subjects in Canada and North America with the very category of justice. The history of racism and racial stratification had taught Blacks that justice is neither to be implemented nor is it to expected (Winant, 1994). Indeed, her mistrust for teachers is so high that to complain about them, for Aziza, will in fact mean to address oneself to the same individual, the same symbolic and material structure that inflicts the injustice on her, and other Black students. She has a sense of not being heard, of no one is willing to listen to her story:

And then and then all, everytime we go to make a complain to the office and all that, we were ignored or what. We weren't taken seriously at all. What pisses me off (ce qui m'enerve), if you gave it, this discourages us because everytime we try to talk to them, to talk to them “no Monsieur, listen we have a problem”, they ignore us, you see. And we become all discourage, despaired because nobody is willing to hear us.

Moreover, school structures and personnel are not accustomed to the particularity and peculiarity of refugee students and refugee situations where, for example, underage (under 16 year old) students find themselves in the school with no parental support. Even those who are over 16 year old feel the burden of representing themselves before a structure that they know is not listening or offering them any support. In my focus-group interview with the boys, Musa talked about not only not being heard, but also about the painful feeling of being oneself for oneself. Musa is a 19 year old boy, from Djibouti,
Grade 13, who lives with three other students from the same school. It was in their house that I conducted the interview. Musa also expresses his desire to go to Laurentian University for his university studies. In the school, Musa, more importantly, plays the role of the African elder who goes beyond the Self in helping the younger students in their academic and social problems:

Musa: The African students, they have a lot of problems. Here, the Canadians don't have problems, they have their parents, there is that. We, we have problems. You, you are late, she [the principal] send you. You go home for three or four days. We, we can't afford that because there is the immigration which calls us: "you have to come to see me today." You have to sign your check like that. There is back and forth. So, you have to go to the immigration, you have to go with, your how do you call it, counsellor?

A male voice: Social worker.

Musa: No no, there you go, you have to speak with your social worker. If not, you don't receive your [social assistance] check. You can't live you know. This is the problem, she [the principal] doesn't try to understand the problems. (...) For example, the Canadians who were born here, they don't have problems. They have their parents, they bring them to school. They feel comfortable, he will not be late, unless he is sick. He can't be late, he can't be absent. But us we have nothing. There isn't, our parents don't live here. I live by myself, he lives by himself, he lives by himself, he lives by himself.

Living on their own often translates into ways of everyday survival. Students have to pay their own bills and have to see their social workers for their social assistance. Social assistance for these students, in most cases, is their only survival income. However, as hinted at, school rules and regulations are incongruent with these lived experiences. The following episode is significant.

For example, Musa noted that 'all' of the African students take general level courses. In an effort to support the younger students, he pushes them to take advanced level courses: "But the majority of the [African] students who are at Marie-Victorin, everytime I see them, they take general level courses. I don't know why. Why are you taking a general level course?" [explaining how he talks to other younger students] "It's Madame Robert [the principle] who gave it to me." "But, gee Madame Robert, [let her] go to hell, and take an advanced level course", I said.”

In my field notes, Musa, on February 5th, 1996, came requesting me if I can offer an English tutoring course because he thinks that African students have problems with English. Here, what is significant is the fact that Musa went beyond himself in looking to help other African students.
in showing that African students are guilty of not being punctual and in getting to school in time in the morning, and always being absent, unless proven otherwise. This always being guilty situation stems from the fact that students are in fact not ‘heard’ and ‘listened’ to:

Musa: The other day, I was absent the first period. I came in the next period. (...) And that day, I didn’t even see her [the principal], I came the following day, and I told her “yesterday, I was absent.” All day? you were absent because you had problems. I had problems with Hydro, Toronto Hydro. I told her that I was going there if not, they were going to cut electricity. So, I would not, I would not have electricity. So, I told her that I had this problem, I went to see them to pay the bill, and once and for all solve this problem. She said “no no, that doesn’t concern me. That is your problem. If you have to solve that, your holiday time.” But holiday times, they are closed. Saturday and Sunday, Hydro they are not opened. So, I have to go, I have to miss a class in order to go there and solve my problem. She didn’t even listen, she said “you were absent all day.” “But Madame, how do you want me to, I was absent the first period.” I didn’t even finish, she said “no no, you were absent all day for Hydro, to solve this problem.” I told her “Madame, try to listen, try to hear me, leave me finish first.” And I told her that I was only absent the first period. “Ah!”, she now said, “you were only absent the first period, I am sorry. Then, I give a paper to (the administration?) this time, but don’t be late.” But that is me, I told her straight “That is your problem, you don’t try to listen to the African students. You only scream. That is your problem, and you have to change this character.” I told her, straight, I told her that (bold added).

The fact that African students are always already guilty unless proven otherwise creates a social situation where the Black body is either completely obliterated from public spaces and activities or fall under special microscopic attention.

4.3.3. Excluding and Surveying the Black Body: The racial experience, by its nature as a social phenomenon, takes different forms and shape. In addition to the above-cited examples whose disturbing angle stemmed from the fact that these were the representatives of the school institution - the principal and teachers - who inflicted racism upon African students, here, I will discuss another two. The first racial experience is related to the exclusion of African
students from school activities and the second has to do with the Black body falling under strict code of behaviour and receiving special surveillance. Concerning the first, in my field notes, I marked down that during lunch time, on February 5th, 1996, the student council was organizing an activity in the foyer of the school. It was a theatrical piece of competition between girls on the one side and boys on the other. In the play, one had to show his/her best performance which was then judged by how loud spectators applauded and screamed. Shah (the president of the student council, originally from Iran) was the judge. I observed that there were no Black students either as spectators or as participants. This was a common exclusionary pattern that was also confirmed time and again in African students’ narratives which indicated clearly their sense of marginalization and exclusion.

In remembering a general assembly (réunion générale), Najat (a 15 year old Djiboutian girl, who came to Canada when she was 7 year old and whose father passed away when she was 3; she now lives with her single mother and her only sister who used to be at Marie-Victorin and who then transferred to an English-language school) expresses this sense of alienation. Najat has been in Marie-Victorin since grade 7 and she dislikes the school, precisely because she always feels disengaged from school activities, whether academic or otherwise. In the activity she describes below, male and female students are auctioned before an assembly of the school student body. The student in question comes to the stage and the auctioneer starts a price and it is up to students to add to it or not. The student from the assembly who pays the most, gets the student on the stage.

The activity presumed to have two objectives. The first is sexual and the second is to test student’s popularity. Being sexual, however, is always juxtaposed with gender in that it is the female body that is highly priced and it

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30 This activity conjured up in my mind the abject horrible slave trade, except this time disguised in gendered and sexual performative forms.
is the 'stud' (as one student calls it), the attractive, handsome and popular boy, who is the most expensive. Nevertheless, there is no actual money involved. The interview with Najat was conducted in English:

Najat: You know, and I go all the, all the guys were there [including] the counsel. I was like “they not worth it.” I was like “hold on, how come there is no like, you know, how come there is no like Black guys coming, you know.” Goes you know, I will be like “Oh my God you know, I got like 100 dollars on me.” (laugh) I feel like keep that XX 100 dollars.

Awad: There wasn’t any Black person over there?

Najat: There wasn’t. I was like all last, ‘am like, so I just left. Because I got a practice, I just left “Oh wo, bye.” Everybody is like left, there wasn’t any Black person, and we suppose to be like all white.

In cases like this, I noticed that African students use several strategies to get over the sense of exclusion. The first is to play the role of the present-absent, that is physically here but in mind somewhere else or, secondly, talking among themselves during the course of the activity. They also sometimes listen to music on their personal Walkmans. Finally, they physically obliterate themselves by leaving and going somewhere else and doing the things they like, such as playing basketball. This sense of exclusion is a significant reminder to African student of their blackness. In other words, it is part of the processes of becoming Black; at least by now it is only a reminder to those who are not yet aware of their blackness. The significance/signification of this sense of exclusion will become more clear and evident when I discuss the sites where African students will look for identification and identity: Black cultural forms.

A second form of continental African students' racial experience is related to their Black body which becomes a site of surveillance and restriction. In the following episode (which Najat tells in English), although Najat does not do anything other students are not doing in classrooms, her and other black bodies still receive special attention:

Najat: Madame, eh me and my friend used to, the course is so boring like nobody actually care about the course you know. We like, siding in a
class you know it's a drama class. Sitting in a class and then we do whatever we want, we eat and then, when she talks, we ignore her we like "Madame bye" (laugh). (...) Ok I was OK, this what happened. Once there was a party from the other class, from Khadija right? So then after that they invite us to come with them. But then the stupid teacher, comes and says "vous devez pas aller" [you should not go]. And then, and I sta [start] me and my friend sta running ah, and then she is like "reviens" and tha was like; so I came back you know. And then she comes "go to the bureau!" [bureau was pronounced in French]. It's only me, she goes "go to the bureau". She hates me and my friend, she hates us. Always our names, always our names. She doesn't (care?) about the rest of us, there is always our names Najat, Amina, Sara you know, Alia you know. "You guys have zero", you know. (...) And my friend comes and says, what's call ahm, "Madame you racist you know, because."

Awad: Why?
Najat: You just look, because it's always like us. It's always like, you have to be like most important people you know. Whereas you know she doesn't see others, you know, the other people in fact.

Awad: Do they do this thing or, or you guys kina, ahm, does the rest of the class do what you do?
Najat: Oh yah. The rest of them kina so bad you know. They like jumping around and everything. And some times, we just go you know, Ok we have to have some respect for the teacher. So we just quite. And then she didn't even see what the rest of them are like doing that jumping around, looking at everything. And then she is like, "oh no it doesn't have to be them." And this guy call her a bitch you know, and she didn't do anything.

Awad: He did?
Najat: And then we like you know, we like "oh my God", and ...

Awad: And what did she do?
Najat: She doesn't do anything and she always looks at us. We didn't curse you know. We sta like tha tha day I got mad. Me and my friend we got mad, and then I was like stuffed. We ran to her and I was like "Madam you so racist." you dat dat and dat, you know, my friend goes "you need a man." I go "you need a mental hospital" (laugh). "you need help, you need" (laugh). (...) No it's true because we like so mad.

It is obvious that chatting away and jumping around is not as absurd and problematic as the sexist epithet calling - 'bitch'. Interestingly, nothing happened to the boy who cited it, but when Najat decided to go with the other class, she received a warning by sending her to the 'bureau', which usually means the principal's office where she will be disciplined, and may be warned
of dismissal. This differential treatment is a recurrent theme found in almost all of the students’ narratives, especially the boys’, and it takes three forms: a) the way they are treated by the school administration and personnel (including the principal), b) the differential treatment because of their age and c) le contrat.

A) The differential treatment commences with the ways in which the principal and other school personnel talk to African students, primarily, on a patronizing and accusatory tone: African students are guilty till proven otherwise. Sam and Mukhi are 19 and 18 year old, respectively, boys from Djibouti and have been at the school since grade 7 (this is extracted from my focus-group interview with the boys):

Sam: OK, this woman there [the principal] you know, she came from this school there, what is it called? Lionel-Giroule you know. She knows you know, she learned how to speak to kids you know, the kids and all that, the small kids (les petits gamins) there. You know she learns how to you know, speaks with the kids (...). You go to the office, you know, you see, you know, only the Africans there (...) But, you see the difference how she speaks to African students and the students, how do I say it, with other students there. There is a big difference.

Mukhi: But she doesn’t know anything. She comes from an elementary school, she treats us like kids. You know, the way she talks to us, she lives like a baby, man (laugh). Wallahi, like a kid, but really sometimes she gives me, I have a desire to put a bomb to blow her out.

The consequence of these linguistic phonological and lexical usages is what Feagin et al. (1996) call the unconscious accumulation whereby one just knows that he/she is differently treated. The lexical usage, however, has the potential of turning into an abusive language. For example,

Sam: Wallahi bellahi (in the name of Allah), some times you know, she [the principal] said to me, she didn’t say, she didn’t say noting about that, but I overheard the guy who spoke with and she told him, how do I say it, “you at this age”, you know, “you are still here”, you know, you know.

“You are never going to finish your studies”, you know, “you don’t have anything or what!” I don’t know, she doesn’t know why you are at the school, yah?

This violent language will certainly have severe consequences in African students’ sense of exclusion and not being wanted; and it is, totally,
incomprehensible when it comes from someone (the secretary) who is not authorized to use it, if it is ever authorized to be used. When the secretary of the school takes on the language and the role of the principal in her relation to African students, it should not surprise us that the latter will feel out of place and not at 'home' in the school:

Sam: OK, it was (...) an African student who arrived late. Me, I was there. Me, I wanted to speak with Madame Robert or what, I had an appointment with her. So, this is student he comes in late, so he says “Madame, I am late.” You know, the secretary, the secretary of the office it is her who starts with him. She says to him “why are you late? You, you always late.” She doesn’t even know the guy, this student. She doesn’t even know (...). It is not it is not, she is not the principal or what. She, she is there. The secretary she has nothing to do with that.

B) When the principal says ‘you, at this age’, she is indeed addressing the fact that African students are most often older than their Canadian born mates; a fact which is connected to displacement, wars, the Somali civil war for example, and refugee experience and the years lost between countries and schools. However, her insensitivity and her incapacity to undertake seriously these experiences makes the principal’s reading of the age question problematic and discouraging to students to the extent that they feel that they don’t belong to school. The school, accordingly, becomes her/their school: it belongs to someone else and to the speaking ‘T’:

Sam: Things like that [such include what the principal said in the above quotations], that that discourages you, really wallahi (in the name of Allah).

Mukhi: This semester, I have some problems last semester, so like I couldn’t come to school [for] a month. So, I had a lot of absences, so this semester she asked me, ahm why why instead of coming to their school, why don’t I go to another school. Like, she wanted that I leave, I go from her school and I go somewhere else. She didn’t want me back, so (bold added).

4.3.4. Le Contrat: Dropped Out or Pushed Out? In their study of the ‘dropping’ out phenomenon, Dei et al. (1995) observed that in most cases students are not voluntarily dropping out, but they are pushed out through
very complex mechanisms. Such extend from pedagogy, to curriculum, teachers, and teachers’ expectations, among others. The same is true in Marie-Victorin. In Sam’s narratives, the one before the last quotation, ageism is one of the ways to push students out of school. In this section, however, I will put the accent on le contrat, an event very specific to Marie-Victorin. The narrative around le contrat, to begin with, is a male narrative and, indeed, there is no mention of it in the girls’ discourse. Le contrat is an agreement that students sign which stipulates that if a student is absent or late a fixed number of times, she/he will be asked to leave the school. It was introduced by the principal who saw that ‘students’ were late and some times absent.

However, because of the particularity and peculiarity of the situation of African students, as discussed above, including no parental support, living and surviving on their own, the ‘students’ that le contrat states are equated in all cases, save for a few exceptions, to continental Africans. Furthermore, owing to the absence of parental and institutional support, African students felt a personal attack and a burden to defend themselves. The burden mounts even higher given the absence of blackness from the professorial and administrative bodies. Even though students can be criticized for being late and absent, one has to contemplate the source and not the surface of the problem, the pros and the cons of why this is so, before taking as severe a decision as pushing students out of school. As one male student in the group-focus interview indicated:

She [the principal] knows that we [African students] will be absent or late because we have problems. She knows that, this is why they have the new law which one day of absence and you are screwed, you understand (...).
Sam: All those who are in the contract are African students, how do I say it, it is the African students who have and all that.
A male voice: I didn’t see any white there.
Musa: There are white students, but the majority, the majority are Africans. But you know why, the majority are Africans? Because white students at Marie-Victorin don’t have problems. They have XX, they have their parents.
Sam: But them, if we make the defense, we, we are by ourselves. It is us who take note for ourselves, you know we have to defend ourselves, but
they have their parents. You know, their mother who comes to the school who says “why this law? I don’t see that in the book you know.” So, there are their parents that are defending them, but us.

Because of his age, read over 16, Mukhi in the following episode received the worst kind of coercion. He was asked to either sign le contrat or else leave the school. Another male student’s chances of correcting his mistakes no longer existed thanks to le contrat which stipulates that once a student reaches his/her quota of absences, this nullifies his/her chances of being at or returning to school:

Mukhi: If you have more than 16 years old, you don’t have the right to go to school. So, this is the only reason why she gave me, what did she say before, she said “you want, sign or leave” [signe ou va-t-on], sign or leave. Me, I don’t have the choice, I don’t have any choice. Sign or leave, if I leave, I don’t have anywhere. Like I don’t have any school to go to, like, and (...) so I don’t have the choice.

One male voice: Listen, me I had some problems before that, two years before. I wanted to come back this year, this semester there, they told me “you had a lot of absences two years ago.” I said, “that was two years ago. What do you think of me now if I will, because I will study hard to pass my test.” She said to me “you had absences before.” (...) She doesn’t even know if I changed and all that, she said to me “no, you had absences before you can’t enter the school.”

Accidentally, at the time of the focus-group interview with the boys, one student from Senegal (Hamidou) was present. In view of his age, he signed le contrat himself, with no parental consultation. He was then discharged from the school for once being late five minutes. At the time of the interview, he had not told his parents yet of the fact that he was no longer in school. He was frightened to death to tell his parents and, indeed, he was staying in Musa’s house to escape this fact. He was out of school in spite of the fact that all of his courses were Grade 12 advanced level. I asked him: “Why did you leave (quitter) the school?” Hamidou responded:
Hamidou: I didn’t leave voluntarily (de ma propre volonté), I was kicked out through the door. It is because of the principal who said to me, it was because I was very very late. I think, (...) it was because I signed the contract. I was in the contract like all all the old [students who are asked] to sign the contract, because of the absences, this is the reason why she kicked me out. But, this is why, because I was only late that’s why she kicked me out, it is because I had signed the contract. Yes, that’s it.

One may already get hints as to a) why the number of African students in M.V. dropped so drastically and b) what kind of structural pedagogy, teachers, and personnel African students have to dialogue with. Age is a crucial factor in ‘pushing’ - certainly ‘pushing’ - African students out of school. Language, in the next section, is another factor in the situation that, despite possessing a highly valuable linguistic capital, African students are streamed in the lower levels in numbers remarkable even to the students themselves.

4.3.5. Race, Language, and Streaming: Blackness is experienced at different levels by the African students with various degree of emotional intensity. In this section, some of students' narratives in relation to language and streaming will be introduced. By and large, African students are fluent in a highly valuable symbolic linguistic capital: a European French, commonly known as un français parisien. Significantly, the school praxis and pedagogy is about enforcing and introducing this language to the students as one of two linguistic norms to follow. The second is the French spoken by the middle class Franco-Ontarians (Heller, 1993).

When continental African students arrived at the school with this capital, there was, however, an astonishment and disbelief on the part of teachers and school counsellors. This scepticism stems from the fact that, as Bourdieu would have said, the legitimate language is spoken in this case by an 'illegitimate' speaker: a refugee who is imagined to be, at least in the dominant mediatic representations, a source of pity and not astonishment and envy. This mistrust of the linguistic capital that African students possess has led to a
patronizing attitude which is easily opened to a racial/racist reading. The following is an extract from the focus-group interview with the girls (Samira is a 16 year old girl from Djibouti):

Amani: The teacher did not stop to thank me every time and tells me "here, your French, you can, it is different than the others. How that happens, where did you learn that? Are you sure that you are not in the wrong stream [this was a general level course]?” You know, things like that. And then, she was really surprise you know. I told her “no, I know what I have to know for my level, my my.

Aziza: And then she was very impressed when we said that we learn our French in our country. And then things like that and then she said “really, in your country, there is really this system?”

Samira: “Are there professors who speak French like that? But my God you have l’accent français!” But of course we have l’accent français, there were teachers that taught us, no? And then this “you are coming from Somalia oh, we never heard that Somalia with...”

Aziza: Is in Somalia, really in Somalia you have this system? You know, they don't accept that (bold added).

In my individual interview with Aziza, she spoke of how teachers' disbelief is patronizing and grossly disturbing, especially given their racial connotation:

Aziza: The first day when I wrote my [evaluation] test, of my French level, he [the counselor] was really surprise because I spoke an excellent French. The good, a rich French you know when you live in Africa. (...) He was really surprise, you see. You have a formidable French you see. Because they it is new you see, an African who speaks a good French, more better than they do. It is a bit [too much?] you see. And also there is a teacher who said to me “where did you learn your French? Your French is good.” And then I said that I learned there where I came from, in Africa. And then she said, she could not believe you see. You see she said that all the time. (bold added).

In spite of their ‘good’, ‘rich’, ‘excellent’, and ‘formidable’ French, continental African students are remarkably streamed in the general level. Ironically, these terms are used by the very same teachers and evaluators who showed an astonishment of African students’ fluency in French yet, at the same time, metamorphosed in streaming them in the lower academic level: the
general level. This is a phenomenon observed by the students themselves. Musa, for example, had caught sight, using his ethnographic gaze, of the fact that "the majority of African students who are in Marie-Victorin, they all take general level courses." Although not all of the African students are in the general level, it is indeed interesting to observe that Musa introduced this observation to the discussion during the focus-group interview with the boys without a request on my part as the interviewer.

When African students came to Canada, given their memory of their homeland school system (see Ogbu, 1983), they could not solidly distinguish between fundamental, general, and advanced level. Students' memory of the school system in their part of the African continent is that all students go to the same class to perform the same academic task:

A male voice: When you come, when you come to the school, you don't know what general, advanced, fundamental course mean. It is them who give that. Because you just want to go to school, to study. They force you to take general courses (telephone rings). You don't know what a general course means (...).
Musa: With general courses you can't go too far.

Moreover, not surprising but extremely disturbing, African students are pushed towards sports given their blackness. Many other studies arrived at the same conclusion (Dei et al., 1995; James, 1989).

Mukhi: But still there is Monsieur Raymond [a counselor] who even if you took five physical education [courses], he is going to give a sixth.
A male voice: Yah, I don't know why.
Mukhi: I don't know why like, to make you lose time or something.

However, using their ethnographic gaze, the girls seem to believe that it is the boys who are streamed more in the lower levels; because of my lack of information, I can neither confirm nor overrule this fact. Nonetheless, it is ethnographically remarkable phenomenon. This, for the girls, has to do with
the exclusivity the boys make between sports and being academically successful. Sadly, always according to the girls, becoming a successful Black athlete for the boys is seen in opposition to performing academic tasks well. When one is doing his/her homework and successfully performing his/her academic tasks, s/he is seen as a ‘nerd’, a term, according to Ogbu (1986), connected to ‘acting white’. The girls in the following extract from the focus-group interview explain that they know the boys ‘backhome’ who used to be ‘first class’ students: (Asma and Ossi are 16 and 17 year old sisters, respectively, who came from Djibouti.)

Awad: I have noticed that at the school, especially there is a very very strong majority [of the African students] who are found in the general level.
Asma: That I know why. You know why.
Awad: Why?
Asma: The majority are the boys. The majority are the boys, they want basketball. Dream Team, I love the basketball (a girl talking), Yes, wait.
Ossi: Yah, what does that mean?
Awad: Yes, yes.
Asma: They really want, they really could, I know them these boys. They are really good. I remember in my country, they were really intelligent students.
Aziza: First class.
Asma: Yes, they know, they know. They know how to do this, how to do that. The problem is that if I start doing my homework, and I am a boy, this means I am a nerd.

If the boys were doing well ‘back-home’, then what is reflected in their behaviour here is a sense of alienation whereby becoming Black is equated with playing basketball. Becoming Black, unfortunately, is entering an arena of exclusivity: basketball vs. academic work. Interesting yet not surprising (see McRobbie, 1994; Amit-Talai and Wulff, 1995), the girls, by and large, tend to do a lot better academically. As for the boys, the ‘lads’ and the ‘Jocks’ rebellion (Willis, 1977; Solomon, 1992, respectively) is what African boys perform, which tends to have its own social boundaries, language, and cultural practices.
However, African boys as well as African girls are both participating in creating their own social boundaries.

4.3.5.1. Race, Language, and Social Boundaries: Whether for boys or for girls, as just cited, the phenomenon of social boundaries created across racial, ethnic, gender, and/or language boundaries and borders needed no second ethnographic observation on my part. In public spaces such as the cafeteria, the gymnasium, hallways, and/or even classrooms students of the same ethnic and language background create almost exclusive spaces that in many cases exclude the Other. However, the Other, as Hassan explains, can and should play a significant role in offering an inviting sense of welcome. (Hassan is an 18 year old boy born in Ethiopia but lived in Somalia and Djibouti; he lives with his single mother and he is planning to go to York University where he will study Political Science and International Studies; hereafter, he will go to University of Ottawa to study Law.) In Hassan's African cultural capital, the Other comes with her food and shares it with the Self as gesture of saying 'welcome home'. In other words, when a visitor or a newly moving person comes in, the neighbours are supposed to take their food or whatever they can afford and share it with her/him as a welcoming sign. A phenomenon that did not take place in Marie-Victorin. On the contrary, African students receive a message of rejection: "We were rejected even by students", one female explains.

Significantly, this rejection in most cases is articulated in and through language. According to students' narratives, it is in and through the language that social boundaries commence to build up. When African students first encountered the phono-syntactical structure of the French language spoken by Franco-Ontarians, they had some difficult paths to go through to understand it, especially given the particularity of its, particularly phonetic, structure. This also coincided with two other factors. The first had to do with Franco-Ontarians' cultural practice of displaying the English language in their everyday social interaction. The second related, corollary, to African students' limited knowledge of the English language. At the opposite pole, whenever and
wherever African students spoke their mother tongues, they were suspiciously looked at. The first of the two following extracts is taken from the focus-group interview with the girls and the second from the focus-group interview with the boys, both of which show the interplay between language and the socially constructed boundaries:

Asma: And the way they spoke French, I understood nothing.
Aziza: That's true.
Asma: They spoke to me they spoke to me, I could see them but I couldn't hear them. (...) and then, little by little I learned very good how they spoke.
Ossi: We were rejected by even students. So,
Awad: Oh yah, it's interesting.
Asma: We had a debate in grade 8, because of the fight we had with students. But, it's not really a fight, it's a dispute.
Aziza: Could you elaborate to him more Asma?
Samira [Samira and Asma are in the same class]: It is that, we were in our corner as Somali girls (...) as persons who did not speak English. We could not have spoken to them though. We felt, they felt more that every time we spoke our mother tongue, we were seen as if we were speaking about them.
A female voice: We were insulting them.
Samira: Or we were looking at them. But, by the way, each in her corner because we were all lost in a ah in a new school, a new world, a new country, all is new, a new quarter, the snow, in a new, we were scared of ourselves. And we were like "oh my God, what are we going to do in this, this school?" In classes, everyone has been in their small corners. If you trace a line, only us, the Others, the rest of the class is them. So, we felt rejected, and (...) the Others were scared of us.

Language, clearly, separated the Self and the Other in ways that a) made hard, if nor impossible, the intercultural dialogue between the two sides, and b) created a context where mistrust is possible if not inevitable. Musa, in the following extract, sees language as a poignant marker that goes beyond race. According to him, Black Canadian born students would feel more ‘comfortable’ with whites than with Africans whose knowledge of English is limited:

There was always the separation between the Black students and white students (...). There are Black Canadian born students who would feel
comfortable with Canadian, even whites. They sit with them, they speak, they communicate with them. We, we are born in Africa. We came to Marie-Victorin and we feel comfortable with the people, who speak the same language as us. If you go, me I cam to Marie-Victorin in 1993, it was my first year. I knew, I knew nothing in English, I knew not [even] one English word. So, I could not go and sit in an anglophone milieu where everyone speaks English. I had to speak in French or in Somalian with people. So, I sat with him, with him to feel comfortable with them.

For Hassan, in the following extract, nevertheless, these demarcated social boundaries are reflections of the modernist notion of individualism which goes contrary to the previously delineated notion of African individualism. For the latter, the Self is always situated within a community; the Self is there for and thanks to the community (see also Dei, 1996). Whereas in the Western modernist liberal discourse, the Self is marked before everything, even the community (see Foucault, 1977). Hassan gave the example of the bus where the Other is the one who is expected to say hello and not the Self. However, because the Self is as well expecting the Other to salute first, this corollary creates a centered individualism that would care less if the Other says hello or not. Carelessness should not, according to Hassan, be taken as a performance of maliciousness; it is a cultural expression:

Hassan: This [separation between groups in the school] is not a fault of one group it is not the fault of the other group. (...) I am going to tell you one small thing it is related to, in the bus when you enter, only and sit, everyone does what he has to do. Everyone looks at the adds on the walls. Nobody says good morning to another person, you see.

Awad: Yah.

Hassan: Even if you see this person every morning in the bus, what happens is that nobody speaks and asks the other person 'bonjour, comment ca ca?' He has to wait for the other person. The other person the same thing (laugh). There is no tension, there is no maliciousness in that, so we find ourselves with the most close [to us], who are the most close to us. This means that they find themselves with the persons who are closer from their culture or their that. So, this is why we find Somalians here, Iranians here and all that.
Opening channels of communication, for Hassan, will be the best departure in the processes of breaking down these barriers which will enable people to intermingle between cultural, linguistic and social borders (see also Giroux, 1992):

Hassan: But me, if you see me in the afternoon, I sit in every chair. There is nobody who tells me "yo, I don't like you, get out of here!" Everyone, I found this character, it is a character that I found: speak with people, become friend with them. They will accept you.

In spite of its simplicity and although Hassan's philosophy does not include the systemic (race, gender, class, and sexual) ways of how people are perceived, looked at, and thus treated, it however gained him not only the presidency of student council in 1994-1995, but also situated him as the most popular student of the school, across races, ages, and genders. Yet, it is precisely for these systemic ways of being that some other students felt the need to create new spaces and markets.

4.3.6. Making Noise and Creating New Markets: In his autobiography, Malcom X (1965) emphatically states that for Black people to be heard, they need and have to make a loud noise, given the short-sightedness and muted nature of the (White) interlocutors. In this section, I show that this was the case for the African students who saw that teachers were denigrating and dehumanizing them in such obvious ways as name-calling. Students told me that in 1993, a physical education male teacher (Monsieur Duras) was brought to Marie-Victorin from an elementary school. He was the coach of the soccer team, except he did not know much about soccer which was the only available game for African students, besides basketball. The other available games were hockey and volleyball, both of which were played almost exclusively by white students. A few of the latter group were also in the soccer team; they, however, missed some of the pre-games trainings, yet they were always chosen for the team whenever and wherever there was a match with other schools. This was done in spite of the fact that some of the best African players were kept in reserve:
Hassan: You see, there were Blacks and Whites. The Whites don’t know soccer, it isn’t a volleyball business you see. So, he [M. Duras] made the Whites play, but not the best who were Blacks. He made the students play, the White students who were absents. Because, how? Absent and you you play? Training, you no longer in the team. But the [African] students who did the same were excluded but he left Whites to play.

Concerning the name-calling, Hassan cited M. Duras calling African students not by their names but ‘you the Black’: “And you the Black, you see. And so pass it the Black there, without calling the Whites.” Aziza as well acknowledged this name-calling phenomenon. Although the teacher did not call names, he nonetheless spoke of their ways of playing which brought to the students the mythical memory of ‘savageness’ which the West had, and still has, of other non-Western ways of being, including African (Said, 1994): “Vous jouez d’une façon sauvage” [you play in a savage way], Aziza (in an individual interview) recalled the teacher’s verbal utterance. African students then decided that they did not want this teacher any more as a training partner and wrote this to the then female principal who did not take any action. One day, I was told, the African students in the soccer team announced that the following day they were boycotting classes and they then sought the support of other students. They distributed flyers to all of the students, particularly Whites. Aziza: “They even gave flyers to White students. The White students didn’t want to know anything (ils veulent rien savoir). In the morning, they went to their classes, you see. So, in other words they don’t care.” To straighten the record, the White female student whom I mentioned before, and who was learning the Somali language as well in solidarity, boycotted classes with Black students.

Though what was by now called the strike (la grève) was about the (mostly African) boys, the girls were emphatic not only in the organization of the strike, but also in seeking the support of other Black female students. The strike day, significantly, became an issue for all Black students whether Haitians, Canadian born, or Africans:
Aziza: Because the boys were few, so all the Black girls there had left the school. They didn’t go to their classes. And those who were in their classes, we went ourselves looking for them. Because we wanted to show them that this problem is a serious problem, a grave problem, and if you don’t do anything with that, we will leave the school, we will go to court. We will go and tell your shames to the newspaper and we will write your shames on TV, things like that you see. So, that day there were journalists who came, they interrogate and we told them everything. They took notes and then then we noted all the shames of the French Board.

As a result of the strike, “all was” then “working well, you see. The teachers became more friendly, they heard us more you see, and Monsieur Armond arrived, a new principal”, Aziza explained. The French-language Board brought in a new principal, Monsieur Armond, a French white male who lived in Africa for a long period of time and who situated his deeds with an anti-racism praxis. For the African students, M. Armond represents a fine human connection to and with the school which was missing before. If there are no Black teachers, there is now someone who understands Africans and their particular experience of displacement. “For me,” Mukhi cites, “Monsieur Armond how do I say it, he has direct experiences with Africans.” He was liked by African students, precisely, because of what he said and what he did:

Aziza: All of a sudden [after the strike], a new a super principal arrived (…), he gave us things, ideas. He told us “why don’t you start celebrating the month, Black History Month?” It was him who gave us the idea (…). A number of African students came in the school after this, because they were told this school is super, the principal is super. And you know what happened, he left, he was fired [after a year of being at the school], and after he left the school, I started to hate the school, because all, which was there, had fallen apart.

The strike incident, for me, is a turning point in the process of being and becoming Black. Although one can not yet firmly state if one is being or still becoming Black, it is nonetheless significant for three reasons. First, this incident made explicit the language of Black and White which itself is an indicative of a level of maturity of being Black. Its second significance stems from the fact that the strike joins a long history of protest of Black peoples in
the diaspora. It is also significant, thirdly, and extremely significant, because it shifted the dominant centers, spaces and markets of the school. It is no longer volleyball that occupies the center of the (physical space of the) gymnasium, but basketball. I contend that, though it does not reflect the power relation, the metaphor of moving volleyball to the margin of the gymnasium is indeed a reflection, at least in part, of the decentering of whiteness.

In other words, the centering of basketball in the gymnasium should not obscure the power relation: it is white teachers, administrators, personnel, and students who hold power within and outside school structures. Nevertheless, from here on, basketball became the most popular sport in the school. For me, this shift to 'Black sports' indicates that the markets and spaces where Black students participate in the school culture are relocated from white dominated markets and spaces to Black dominated markets and spaces. Put otherwise, instead of participating in the same pre-existing markets and structures of the school, African students created their own. Such may include basketball, soccer, and hip hop.

4.4. Conclusion:

In this chapter, I laid out some of the narratives that express the racial experience of African students. This is done with the vision that these racial experiences of becoming Black are significant because they shed light on students' sense of identity and thus raise the question of where do they see themselves reflected and who do they identify with. Students, I showed, have different understandings of what constitutes racism: A) racism is understood as an offered positionality by the dominant hegemonic discourses and groups that restrict one's choices; B) it is the undemocratic processes and decisions taken by the school which implicate student bodies, and C) racism is understood as an accumulative memory of small minute details that when put together, they
tend to leave students with clear messages that they are not trusted, wanted and thus they are subjects without subjectivities. Hence, it should be surprising that African youth will look for alternative identification and representations, namely in Black popular cultural forms. Language, streaming, and *le contrat* were subtle and also evident ways through which the racial experience of African students were lived. I cited some blunt forms of racism experienced by Black students as well as by Black teachers. However, students were not silent in voicing their rage and concerns. The strike was discussed as an illustration of this. Besides being a breaking point in the process of being and becoming Black for African students, the strike was also a moment of disruption and a decentering of the school dominant, legitimate, and authorized capitals, spaces and markets.
Chapter 5

“Si tu allais faire un sondage, ça vient souvent de l’orientation ou des personnels.” 31

L’horreur: Teachers, Curriculum, and Pedagogy

‘I still remember’, I wrote in my field-note diary, ‘on my first day at the school, while standing in the midst of the foyer, the 15 year old girl Najat arrived in sight running to embrace me in a manner of a lost old friend. She then wondered if I was coming to school to teach. “No”, I said. But I was also curious why she wanted me at the school. “Just because there are no Black teachers in this school. All what you see is white white white”, she remarked in English.’

The absence of Black teachers, beside the absence of Black/African peoples32 from the history books, are the two themes that will be discussed in this chapter. The narratives of African students concerning the culture of schooling are introduced to argue for what Ogbu (1990) might have called a comparative system. In it, immigrants, and I will add displaced subjects, compare their schooling experience in their new ‘home’ with what they knew and have already experienced in their home-land. I am using displaced subjects to refer to the ensemble of individuals who are relocated or relocating themselves to a new geo-cultural place such as immigrants, exiled, and refugees. They, expectedly, have an accumulative memory of the school and the schooling culture in their homeland. It is on this memory that they will base their judgment of the school (culture) in the new context. I will then show how the racial experience of African students, discussed in chapter 4, continues again when encountering counselors and teachers in this chapter; indeed, this chapter should be read not as a separate episode, but as a continuation to

31 Amani: “If you are going to do a poll, it will come frequently from whether the counseling or the personnel.” Amani is addressing the source of most of Black students’ problems.

32 When Black/African couplet is used, it is to signify diasporic Africans and continental Africans, respectively.
chapter 4. It should as well be read as another delineation of the processes of becoming - that is, becoming Black.

5.1. Articulating a Double System: the Pedagogy of Teacher-Students Relationship: When students first encountered the culture of schooling in Marie-Victorin, and as part of translating the new context, they were culturally shocked and had a difficult time adapting to what they saw as 'undisciplined' ways of interaction between teacher and students. Some even had the false idea that students were more powerful than teachers. This reading is done in comparison to and with the school system in their homeland. In my focus-group interview with the girls, Amani remarked, using her ethnographic gaze, that (bold added):

I was there [in the classroom] observing (...). So, [I observed that] in the classes, it was the way that, the relationship that was there between teachers and then students. I was surprised. Especially when they say the word 'tu'. I was like (people talking) (…) That is the discipline and then here it was completely lacking lacking. And then for you a person who really had a strong discipline in the school where we were before, you find this as a shock, wouldn't you?

Following the same line of argument, Aziza seems to take the same note when it comes to 'discipline' and teacher-students interaction. Aziza nonetheless had the false notion of the net-like uneasiness in deciphering the ways in which power relations work that eventually might cause her more harm than good. She also believes that giving more than two chances to re-double a course or a year is an invitation to 'laziness' - paresse. She argues:

The first days, that was difficult because we, first of all teachers were not similar because I got used to teachers in in my country who were teachers, very tough, a strict system, you can't say tu (tutoyer) to a teacher. In other words, the teacher is superior in relation to the student. Here, it is the opposite, it is the student who is superior in relation to the teacher, which means that the student can do anything he wants on the teacher. You see, there is no respect, you see. Whereas for us it was like that. Here, it is completely the opposite. There is no respect there is no
discipline (...). You see, (...) here you are given a lot of chances. If you redouble if you lose a course, you restart. You lose you restart it, whereas there [in my country] you lose it once, you are screwed. You see what I mean. (...) Whereas here, you are given a number of chances, you are given chance chance chance. You will become lazy (...) it is laziness. I think it's good to give them one or two chances, but more than that, I think it's too much you see.

To offset this, one has to remark that African students' translation of the more open and interactive relation between teacher and students as a lack of discipline stems from what they see as a false liberatory practice in which teachers seem to be equalized with and equalizing themselves to students, yet the final power of grading and streaming is in their hand. Precisely, it is the overall racial atmosphere of the school and what African students see as "hypocrite" teachers and ungentle practices that makes these students cynical. This cynicism is performed at several levels: personnel and professorial body, counseling, curriculum, and their relation with and to white teachers.

5.2. Who is Teaching What and From Whose Perspectives? African students are not apologetic in taking note of the absence of Black teachers. This absence is, they argue, 'morally discouraging' and it, significantly in addition, expresses the lack of desire for professorial and curriculum change on the part of the school system. In students' narratives, the need for Black teachers stems from the need for 'role models' and the need for someone who can provide academic help, which is not the case with white teachers. As important, finally, students need a safer space and individuals with whom they can share their anger, problems, and to whom they can complain in case of racism or other problems. In my focus-group interview, the boys were quite emphatic:

Mukhi: It is really like morally, it is somewhat discouraging whenever I see a white teacher who doesn't even understand you (people talking), and who want to judge you, who is going to give your grades, and who doesn't even know you. It is really discouraging, even they have a new physical education teacher, they can't even find a Black teacher who teaches us ah sports. It is somewhat discouraging.
A male voice: I was going to say that there has to be a teacher there to defend the cause of, our causes. Like me there because of the contrat business, there is nobody who defends us.

Students also expressed the need for role models because, they explain, in a school where two thirds of the school population are Blacks and students of colour, it is certainly inadmissible not to have at least one teacher of colour. In the focus-group interview with the girls, they were as emphatic in showing l’horreur, the horror, of not having role models:

Aziza: The student needs a role model. When you see a teacher of colour, he is going to say “oh, yes, there is a teacher of colour”, you see. He [the teacher of colour], he give more [a force] to liberate himself [the student] and say to himself “me, I am going to do all what’s possible to really be like a professor or to be like you see I want to see?” But if the student doesn’t see any teacher of colour, all of his teachers were whites, the majority of cases are whites, he feels somewhat pushed out.

On the other hand, students spoke highly of their experience with the Black teachers with whom they interacted. This includes Aristide who used to be at the school, and he was liked even when the students did not have him as a teacher: “he was cool. I didn’t have him for a class, but he was cool”, Najat contended in English. Omer similarly commended Monsieur Aristide for staying after school; this was done in comparison to a white teacher who came to Marie-Victorin from James33 only to teach what Aristide is capable of teaching, science:

Omer: There is this teacher, but he stays to the second period, then he leaves.
Awad: He only teaches two periods?
Omer: And then he goes to James.

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33 James high school is a French-language school with a high representation of people of color in the professorial, personnel, and student bodies. Sam had spent a short time there and these are his reflections on his James’s experience (the original text is in English): in “James there is no general, no classes, everything is advanced [level]. Africans or whatever Chinese, Japanese, or whatever the hell you from you know, it don’t matter, you go to that school. And the principle, he is from where Morocco, Egypt? yah you know. And there is a lot of international you know teachers and stuff like that. So, you feel comfortable and stuff like that.”
Awad: Ah he comes from James, oh it is, I don’t know, he teaches history?
Omer: Science. Because really you know, Aristide, he wanted to always stay after school some times. Helping students, oh, he wanted to stay. Now, there is nobody who you can ask [for help].

On a similar note, Sam ‘couldn’t believe’ that there are teachers with whom one can have human as well as academic rapport and connections. One summer, he took a course in Marie-Victorin with a Black teacher who teaches at James French-language high school and upon remembering how he related to teachers of colour, he contended (in English) that “they [teachers of colour] they know where we from, they know our values, they know our morals and they know our background. So, we can relate to them you know.” Sam hereafter moves on to talk about his experience with one of these teachers (bold added):

‘Cause I had one teacher from James, that was a summer school. I couldn’t believe they had this kind of teachers out there. ‘Cause he was a nice teacher and everything you know. He knew what the deal was, he knows the problem that we have, you know what we go through everyday.

As maintained by these narrated memories and experiences with white teachers, the latter are not expected to be in alliance with Black students, do favours, spend time so they get to know their students, and provide academic help. The example cited in chapter 4 of the undemocratic decision taken by the school administration and teachers attests to this. In it, students were told that they were no longer permitted to do midday Muslim prayer. This example and decision should not nevertheless be read as a separate unit. It should, in contrast, be read as part of students’ accumulative memory of how they are treated before and hereafter.

Aziza: They met, they, the personnals of the school, met. They uniformly agreed like we are nothing. They said ‘Oh, who cares!’ you see. All what we have to do is tell them not to leave their classes because our course is
more important than their prayer. We don't care you see. We don't care about their religion and all that, you see. So, there wasn't even, I am sure that there wasn't even one teacher who opposed to that.

Whether the opposition to the decision occurred or not is significant but irrelevant. The importance of this incident stemmed from how it was read. Students have accumulated enough memories and experiences that assist them to read the incident not by itself, but in cynical terms as part of a larger painting that is getting clearer and clearer. This incident, as part of personal, racial and panethnic group experience, creates a psychic of despair in the students which does more harm than good to students' academic future.

Expressed in terms of role models and safer spaces, the lack of the former and the absence of the latter where students will have a zone of comfort is indeed the horror itself. By a zone of comfort, I am referring to individuals as well as actual geographical spaces where students will have a sense of comfort of not being surveyed. Who will African students talk to in case of a problem is a question that is yet to be addressed.

If Canada is to declare itself officially multicultural, students argue, actions and action-oriented policies are what is needed and not just discourses of tokenism. Multiculturalism, students contend, has to critically approach the question of representation and power which will have to address, for example, the racial, gender, (and sexual) social differences among the personnel and professorial body of the school from top to bottom. In addressing the absence of Black teachers and multicultural representation not only at the school but in the larger Canadian society, Omer asserts that:

It is not it is not only the the fact that there is no a Black teacher in Marie-Victorin, there are not enough Black teachers in the Ontarian and Canadian schools. That frustrates me because me in Marie-Victorin that frustrates me, there are no Black teachers in the Canadian schools. It is like, on the one hand, they talk about multiculturalism, but there is no multiculturalism.
Awad: Ah no?
Omer: There is no multiculturalism.
Awad: How is that?
Omer: To be multicultural, it has to be multicultural at all levels. In the ministry, deputies, it has to be integral you see. Look, if you walk around Toronto, you see one Canadian out of five, who are they? They are the refugees, immigrants who do; you go in factories, you see a lot of immigrants. You go to school, you see a lot of ethnic groups you see. At work you see a lot of immigrants. And you look on top you see only whites, always the head is a white man (un blanc), vice-president, you see a vice-president, an assistant I don’t know but you never see, very very very rare you see a head, a head of a department like he who occupies like a male director (directeur) of a place or a female director (directrice) who is immigrant you see. It is very rare. Wherever you go, always the head is a white male (un blanc). Look at the government, look everywhere [it is always the same]. This bloody idiot came to the school oneday but he said “I am an immigrant.” I know that, but your race.
Awad: Who who?
Omer: Colenette, David Colenette [the one-time Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Liberal federal government]. Because they are selling themselves, “I am an immigrant.” But he is an immigrant but your race, what is your skin. So, don’t tell me.

Omer is indeed performing a cynicism whereby the discourse of being an immigrant should be espoused with an intersection of especially racial, but also gendered and sexual social differences. Here, the lexico-syntactic ‘bloody idiot’ expression should not be taken in an offensive sense but to express his rage. A rage where he is wondering how Colenette, in expressing his immigrant status, can be blind when it comes to race and other social differences. In pronouncing ‘So, don’t tell me’, Omer is in fact saying ‘I know you are an immigrant, but you are also white. And, by virtue of being white, \textit{you are in a position of power without needing even to pronounce a word.}’ Omer, in short, is, on the one hand, calling into question the multicultural tokenism of representation and, on the other hand, he is calling for factual multicultural models where power relations, performed through gendered, sexualized, and racial identities, have to be critically centralized and vehemently represented. This, significantly, entails a reflection of these identities in the school structure, including teachers and counselors.
5.2.1. Teachers, Counselors, and the Trauma of Speaking to: Throughout their narratives, African students are traumatized when they speak to teachers and counselors who are all white, save for one Black counselor who is in the school on a year long contract. The trauma had already started taking its narrative form when, in chapter 4, students narrated that the head of the school - the principal - commented on students' age which was read by the students as her desire to see them out of the school. This reading was done in contrast to their experience with a progressive 'Africanist' principal (Monsieur Armond) who was discharged by the French School Board because white teachers could stomach neither his character nor his progressive and anti-racist praxis which most of the time sided with the students in opposition to teachers:

Mukhi: For me Monsieur Armond, how do I say it? he has direct experiences with Africans. He lived in Bourkina Fasso [Chad, Senegal and Sudan] (...) So, he has he has knowledge, he knows how we are, how we react, how we live. And then how we are here. But, she [Mme Robert - the present principal] knows nothing. She comes from an elementary school, she treats us like children, you know from the way she speaks to us, she lives like a baby man (laugh).

This example shows that students exigently need safer zones to succeed as human and academic beings and that these zones can be created by progressive white teachers, boards and principals. Yet, because these zones have no presence in the school, African students have always already the feeling of being personally attacked in case of a dispute with school authority figures and that they have no academic or social support. Teachers, not surprisingly, are

34 The term 'Africanist' is used in analogy to and with 'orientalist', which was introduced by E. Said in his guru classic study of 'Orientalism' (1978). By orientalism, Said is referring to the discourse that discusses and studies the Orient. The individuals who execute these studies are called Orientalists. I use Africanist in this context to refer to the individuals who live, experience, and study Africa. These individuals can be progressive but they can also be conservative and racist.

35 I am using praxis as defined by Paulo Freire (to whom I dedicate this chapter). Freire (1970/1993) argued that in order for the human liberation to be complete, the word should not be put against the world, and that practice should not be perceived in opposition to the theory. Praxis is then the intersection of the word, the world, the theory, and the practice.
termed 'hypocrite' and 'disgusting'. They teach subjects that they are not qualified to teach. (This is also confirmed in my interview with Aristide who contended that while teachers of colour are qualified to teach a particular subject, they are left out only for the subject to be taught by a non-qualified white teacher). The following are extracts from the girls' focus-group interview:

Awad: But, but with the teachers for example, in the class itself.
Asma: It is disgusting, I can count the teachers whom I like, I can count with my hand, my five fingers. I assure you. (...) Now, the teachers here are hypocrite, they hate me. One woman (one voice: who judge us) I can't say her name. I hate, I hate her like you would not believe. She is going to listen to that ah?
Awad: No, no nobody is going to listen.
Asma: Hdhe [the same Hélène that Aristide talked about]. Hélène (laugh). I, excuse me (laugh) (...) No, really I swear. She is really hypocrite like would not believe. The way she speaks to me, I am sorry, the way she speaks to me it's like I am stupid, handicapped, who understands nothing. (...) 
Ossi: Ah, she has favourites. In fact like how can she have favourites in the class? All the students XX. No, it is no good.
Asma: XX discriminations, she has favourites, she discriminates. (...) 
Amani: How are you going to judge this when you have some teachers, especially there are a lot of teachers who should not even teach the position they are occupying. (...) There are many teachers who had never taught a course. Do you know what they do? They going to pass him a dossier, and tell him "just study this in the summer and then next year you gonna teach the other kids." What happened after? who pays the price?
Ossi: A music teacher.
Amani: [Who] teaches computer ouhahah. Frankly, do you know who pays the price? Who is going to pay the price? This teacher gets paid.

Without dissembling, who pays the price? Students, the answer must be. Students are pushed out of the school in record numbers: "We had 400, 500, now we aren't even 300", Samira observed. Who pays the price is a candid question which implicates not only the principal and teachers but also the French-language Board of Education. Amani is to be quoted here:
If the top [the French Board that is] is malfunctioning, do not expect the bottom of the pyramids to hold and be really strong. In the end it can hold but it is really disgusting. Here the system, when it’s malfunctioning, you know what is happening in the French Board, (...) they didn’t want to pay a lot of teachers, first they don’t look for professors who are from different races. OK, so, that does not interest them. *Put the race on another side.*

However, it is not all trauma when it comes to white teachers-Black students interaction. Some white teachers fathomed and deciphered empowering pedagogical tools which take into account students’ desires and interests. This is the case of one white geography teacher, besides the one-time Africanist principal, who is eulogized (by a number of students36) for being humanly and pedagogically ‘cool’ and ‘wicked’. (In Black English, the lexicons ‘wicked’ and ‘bad’ are used to commend something or someone who is exceptionally good.) In re-telling how ‘boring’ and disengaging her classes were, to the extent that she slept in one of them, in contrast to her geography teacher and his classes, Najat contended (in English):

Najat: I don’t ahm, the school sucks, boring. And everyday, I’m like damn [and] I fell sleep in a class. It was so boring.
Awad: You did?
Najat: Yes, everybody is like sleeping in the class because we got so bored, except my geography class [with Monsieur Laurence].
Awad: You actually slept in the class?
Najat: No, I didn’t sleep in my geography, I’m like so happy, you know. ‘Hi Mr.’ He is so happy you know, it’s like a friend ‘hi Monsieur’. And then he is like ahm Christmas before XX, I was like saying “Monsieur, I wish you can buy your wife a (profile?).” “Where?” “At Eaton’s.” And then he goes “Ok, I’m gonna do that” (laugh). He is so cool, he is so wicked.

36 This is what Aziza has to say about this same teacher, Monsieur Laurence, in comparison to other white teachers: “but I am telling you, all of the teachers in this school, they are all racists, except Monsieur Laurence who is a geography teacher. He is very friendly. It is the first teacher, I always liked him. I had him for geography, physical geography, especially geography. And then he is super good, he is very friendly with every student, no matter who he is white, red, yellow. He is super good (...)”
What Amani is addressing, in the citation before last, is the very complex role that the French-language Board of Education plays in re-articulating the status quo market. In this market, teachers and counselors are two of the major players. The former’s expectations of African students were very low, discouraging, disengaging, problematic, and play with the students’ insecurity.

Asma: Yes, the teachers discourage [us].
Amani: If somebody, if somebody tells you “are you sure you didn’t make the wrong choice [by taking advanced level course]?”
Asma: That’s exactly what they say.
Amani: “Are you sure you’re in the right place? May be you should go (...) may be you should go and check with the orientation (...).”
Asma: OK, I remember in my country [see Ogbu, 1990], if you wanted to do something, the teachers encourage you. They say to you “do that! you can do it.” My mother wasn’t good on math, her teacher encouraged her to do it. Now she is really good. Me, I am not good on math. The teacher [in this school], whoever it is, if you have a test of 50% let’s say, he is going to say “there are some individuals in this class who did not do well. Go, let’s go instead of making an idiot of yourself.” You see? You have 50%, make your effort, you have to do your math. You have to that, don’t go to general. But, instead of saying that, to really encourage you to go to advanced level, he tells you “you know, there is a better course than this.”
Amani: They generalize, discouragement.
Asma: General.
Aziza: For people like you.
Asma: Yes, exactly. Wait please, there is something I want to tell you. We enter in the class, we have the syllabus of the course, it is the first day at the school. They going to tell you what we are going to do. We going to tell these tasks tatata. They are going to tell you the plan of the class and what we are going to do, during the semester.
Awad: Yah.
Asma: The persons who can not be in this class, go to general. I have even, I haven’t even, I have no homework, I don’t know how the teacher does, I didn’t have any test, I don’t know if I am good. They are going to really intimidate you that you are going to say is he right? this teacher is right. May be I am not comfortable that I am not too good because I am not Canadian. I am not like them, It is possible that I go to general level, I am going to. Our French class of the second year, there were a lot of students, we were almost thirty, there is only twenty [now].
At its highest, the state of doubt which was unpleasantly maneuvered by teachers was certain. African students were told in exceedingly complex language that they were not capable of anything but the general level. This language was usually deciphered at the unconscious level. It left the students with this conclusion: it may be they were not capable of advancing academically for reasons related to their not being 'Canadians.' Canadianness, it seems, is more exclusive than ever. In a knotty way, this citation is a certain testimony to the ways in which teachers' expectations of their students work, and their effects in what students expect of themselves.

L'orientation, counseling, is another agonizing domain that African students painfully suffer from. Counselors, African students argued, pushed them to take general level courses time and again, and in some cases, took decisions for them by placing them in courses they did not choose. Counselors, moreover, did not provide the right information, they were too expeditious in taking decisions, too 'old' generationally to know and define, let alone identify with, students' needs. Finally, counselors discourage Black students from going to University by arguing that it is too extortionate for them to afford. In short, in spite of its vitality in the students' lives, counseling is just another unsafe space in the school for African students to encounter. (The following extract is from the girls' focus-group interview.)

Amani: I assure you we have to also take note of, even when you go to orientation, when you are busy making your course choice, you are called so frequent, OK, especially the general level students. They are called, and then instead of seeing what the problem or the difficulty is, they are so mind set that take (snap her finger) decisions very quickly. (...) And then we wonder why are the students from different places who are not Canadians find themselves in the general level. You know, we wonder why? It could be for a number of reasons. I don't say there is no laziness on the part of students, it can be because students are lazy and do not work hard ah? But, but the percentage of these students there really if you are going to do polls, it will come out more often whether orientation or personnel.
5.2.2. Curriculum, Language, and History: As the part of the schooling culture where pedagogy, language, and identities are performed, curriculum is as pivotal and significant. Beside having minute course choices and no night classes, African boys and girls complain all through their narratives about the curriculum being too narrowly eurocentric in focusing on Canada, the U. S., and 'don't forget, as one female reminded me, the European countries which, in turn, functions to exclude the Other: the so called 'Third World', Blacks, people of colour, and First Nations. Sam is quite articulate (in English) in the focus-group interview with the boys: “In the books, they don't even teach you about Black people, that's one thing. They teach you about white people, and they teach you about what white people use to do and what whites you know do, did before, you know.” In their focus-group interview, the girls seem to summarize this point of excluding the Other quite eloquently:

Aziza: (...) You know the students, especially whites, are not educated to learn what is Africa, how many countries are there in Africa, how do Africans live; even other countries in Asia. We hear all the time.  
Asma: Canada, Canada, Canada.  
Aziza: Exactly, Canada don’t forget the European countries also. This is what they know.  
Asma: Listen, when I came to Canada, we learned the history of Canada: grades 7, 8, 9, 10 I continue Canada Canada.  
Aziza: It's true.  
Asma: I assure you. I wanted to have the history of Africa, but they say there aren’t enough students who want. I am sorry, but there were 100s of students of our school who want to learn the history of Africa. But they don’t even offer it in this case.  
Samira: The history of the world is in the inside of Canada and the United States. We have enough of that, the United States and Canada (...)  
Ossi: No, it is good to know your country.  
Aziza: It is good, I don’t, it is really good (...). It is really good to know, but to a certain point (...). The only countries they know more are the European countries. After that they don’t know. They don’t think there are other existed countries. Like us when we told them that we came from Somalia, the first days (...).  
Ossi: Nobody knew, nobody.  
Aziza: Nobody knew what is Somalia or except.  
Ossi: The war, the poverty, starvation.
This citation attests to two phenomena of great significance. The first has to do with the observation that in Marie-Victorin, the history classes seem to be a repetition grade-after-grade. A repetition that centralizes a Eurocentric version of history. In this case and with this neglect, history can only serve nationalist, racist, and colonialist agendas. When students know only European histories, curriculum, and countries, this in itself is a performance and statement about the Other. Put bluntly, pushing the Other off the curriculum is to say this: the Other countries, histories and curricula are not important and thus not worth the effort of being included in the curriculum to be studied. The second phenomenon is related to the last colonialist agenda. Here, the imaginary of students from the dominant culture, read whites, is too colonized by the mediatic and curricular narrow representations, which means the Other can only be conjured in the metaphor of the four horsemen of apocalypse: plague, famine, poverty and death. (A point which will be rendered clearer in the next chapter).

5.2.2.1. Curriculum and History: Yet, it is not only African/Black peoples who are excluded from popular memory representation and curriculum discussion, First Nations also live the horror and the consequences of absence, exclusion, and mis-representation. African students were cognizant of this history of misrepresentation. Their acquaintance with First Nations histories stems, in part, from their own marginal position and, second, from critically deconstructing the racist and colonialist representations found in Western popular culture and mediatic representation that students used to watch in their homelands. In these popular culture representations, 'savageness' is a nominal signifier equated to First Nations. For African students, the exclusion of the Other, First Nations, means a decentering of the latter which, in turn, implies a centering of the Self, French and English, as the founding nations of Canada.
Amani: What does the history of Canada mean? It is like as if you either Anglophone or Francophone, that's what you basically learn in the history class. (...) How am I to know the Canadian history if I am not learning Native, because that's their land, that's one they burned so they stole from. (...).
Asma: You know, before when I was a kid, I used to watch Western movies. And I saw the Apache and the cowboys, and I am like «go cowboys, cowboys!» I didn't know what these people are all about. Then I grew up and I am saying «fucking cowboys (laugh), I hate you.» 'Cause I know the real fact. I know they were fighting for their lands. (...) you know why they are called savage? because they.
Samira: They different, they different, they different.
Amani: Exactly, if you like them, if you kina of the way they are, then you no savage any more.

Amani's remembrance speaks to the issue of representation and to the ways in which representations create reality: who has the power to represent? what do these representations look like? and who benefits from them? Significantly disturbing, what is represented, no matter what the reality is, given its authority, perpetuation, and repetition, constructs reality. The 'savageness' of the First Nations and Africans, on the one hand, and the violent 'nature' of blackness in North America, on the other, are all mediatic representation that addresses a history of colonization, genocide, and dehumanization of groups of people that have not at all, till recently, had access to ways of re/presenting Oneself by Oneself, to and for Oneself. This is precisely why I introduce, in chapter 8, as an anti-racism framework, a way of imagining otherwise, a way of decolonizing the public imaginary/representation.

However, when the girls commenced to introduce their critical deconstruction before their classes, they were considered as fanning the flame not so much by other fellow classmates but by their teachers. One particular teacher utterly denied the historical memory of suffering that the First Nations had to endure when they first encountered, and continue to encounter in our present time, Europeans. Students who raised First Nations' issues in this particular (Law) class, disconcertingly, were called 'romantics' who 'read too
many novels’ from First Nations’ perspectives. For me, this raises the vitality of the question I started with: who teaches what, how and from whose perspective?

Samira: In the Law class, Ossi and Aziza were doing.
A female voice: A composition.
Samira: (A presentation?) the Amerindian, the law, and all that. And we were speaking, we were speaking [on issues that bring painful memories and touch some nerves], and everyone was telling [us] it is their fault and all that (girls were talking in Somali). In reality, it is not their fault. They were rejected by the society (girls continue to talk in Somali). The female teacher told us, “you read too many novels, books of love concerning, on the Amerindians.” “No, Madame it is the reality, it is the facts.” No no, we were completely, as students, we were shocked. She said that «you are dreamers, you. The Amerindians completely brain wash them that you are really, you are really.” ‘No, Madame, they are the facts that Amerindians were rejected by the society.” Even me [know that].
Asma: You know the truth hurts, that’s what they say. The TRUTH hurts, it gets right to the skin.

5.2.2.2. The Need for Change: Curriculum and Language: Truth does hurt when denied. Its denial, however, reflects itself in many shapes, forms, and places, one of which is language. Here, I intersect language with curriculum. To state the obvious, curriculum is represented and taught through language. Knowing and possessing ‘the language’ of the curriculum is power (Foucault, 1980). French-language schools in Ontario, Heller (1992, 1994) argues, use English language as a supportive medium that can be referred to and used whenever necessary. Indeed, it is English that is heard spoken by students more often in corridors and hallways and not French; at least, in the case of Marie-Victorin.

However, when continental African students first came to Marie-Victorin, they realized their limited knowledge, and in most cases their zero knowledge, of the English language. This worked against them as teachers continued to use their bilingual English/French repertoire to teach and talk about academic subjects. Introducing English to newly arrived students from la francophonie internationale is an erroneous pedagogical assumption according to students’ narratives. In their first days at the school, these students are not
only supposed to decipher a) the French linguistic repertoire of Franco-Ontarians and b) the English language, but also c) the ‘language’ of schooling culture and system:

Amani: You know what is really bothering, ah when you don’t know neither English nor how the way the system works. In the class, in grades 8 and 9, they are going to show you videos.
Asma: Yes, documentaries.
Amani: Which are really in English, documentaries. Well, then you are asked questions. How am I suppose to understand this? With, after they are going to judge you on that. They are like, there wasn’t really, they know there are immigrants in this country OK. And the 1990s, it is in the beginning of the 1990s when minority students from other places came especially to French-language system and schools, never did they try to introduce new programs to help these [immigrant] students or to welcome them or to (...).

At stake in Amani’s last point is the notion that newly arrived students are not welcomed in the French-language schools, which is read thanks to the inability for change. That is, by continue ‘doing business as usual’ on the part of teachers, the burden of translating and deciphering too many ‘languages’ all at once can be extremely daunting, discouraging and fatiguing for students. Students raise time and again the need for moral, academic, and social support in their processes of integration.

Amani: You know, it is easy, it is easy for a person to immigrate to another country, but he has to be supported. This person has to be supported in order not to get lost in the system. Because I had to pose a question to the teacher, and she, she had so much, she was annoyed that she didn’t really want to respond. Especially, because, so how am I suppose to integrate myself and make myself you know like the others? You know it’s hard to do it by yourself.

Even though it was natural for African students to have a limited knowledge of the English language given their limited exposure to it, students were looked down to as handicapped and, in many instances, they were patronized. This patronization created an urge in students to learn English
posthaste and when this materialized, a stupendous pleasure was felt. Listen to Asma (bold added):

Asma: If you don’t speak English like me in grade 7, “Oh, she doesn’t speak English! Oh, we are sorry. Can you explain to her, she doesn’t understand English la petite, can you?” They think that we are really stupid, that we are retarded, that we don’t understand the language. Now that I know English, shsh I speak it all the time. I show them that I do understand English (laugh), I show them that I do English. And the girls XX. Oh I got it, it gives me great pleasure.

While Asma may have got her pleasure, others’ dreams and desires are taken away: they are left in the cold, alone, with their agony.

5.3. ‘The Agony of Education’37: Who Pays the Price? The following final section of this chapter is a story of youngsters who see their dreams and desires drifting away; they can resist to resuscitate their dreams, but it is not painless. As one female student contended, teachers are getting their pay check: ‘they are getting paid’. But who is paying the price? African students have to block out and block away white teachers, counselors, and the school system from their everyday conscious processes of schooling in order for them to academically succeed and accomplish their dreams (bold added):

Amani: ‘Am the one who is paying the price.
Asma: They say...
Amani: What happen with them? he gets his check. But ‘am the one who XX you know.
Ossi: The big percentage of people, let’s say Somalisians.
Awad: Ohm.
Ossi: You are told “the University, it is expensive.”
A female voice: And expensive, and expensive.
Ossi: And very expensive. (girls chatting) School is very good, go there; the Somalisans well, they think that they are saying la vérité (the truth).

37 ‘The Agony of Education’ is the title of a seminal work by Feagin et al. (1996) in which the unpleasurable experience of African-American students who go to predominantly white colleges was exposed.
They are the counselors (des orienteurs et des orientrices), of course you know.
Amani: No wonder you see a student playing basketball instead of going doing his homework, because he thinks school is for nothing.
Asma: Exactly ...
Amani: He used to love, he used to have beautiful dreams, but what happened to them? they are taken away from him. Because of the school telling him no it's not like this, it's not like this you know?
Aziza: Exactly!
Ossi: A guy who comes from Africa, OK, who comes, a person, a Somalian. I take the example of the Somalian case. A Somalian who comes to Canada OK. And OK who who Ok, for example Somalians when they finish school and all that, they go to France to do University studies38.
Awad: Yes yes.
Ossi: Here, they don't want to even finish high school. Why? you know.
Asma: Because there is no encouragement.
Amani: It's also happening to me right now you know I realize. That that, you know how every kid has a dream. The dream of becoming this, I will be helping my mom39.
Asma: You can do it if you don't listen to the ass-holes.
Amani: XX you know, but you know what happens you know? it's easy to be influenced when you shouldn't .
Aziza: It's really easy.
Amani: Especially when you are in the school. From one level to another, you go from one level to another, and when you are moving up, you notice that things get harder ah? They are no longer like before, you know. The courses become more and more difficult. So, what is happening with these people who are busy always influencing you in a negative way, what happens? Little by little (Petit à petit), without you noticing it, you back off; from your dreams, the dreams you have. You think you not able any more. You think.
Aziza: Intimidation.
Asma: Yah, it happened to me.
Amani: You know, (hélas?) it happened to me.
Awad: Ah yes?
Asma: Yah.

38 This is to argue that in Africa, these same boys work hard to go to university, even if this would mean a sacrifice to go abroad, France for example. Though the sacrifice is human, yet it is primarily financial.

39 Her mother is a single mother of 10 kids family: 4 of whom are in Marie-Victorin. Two of her sisters and brothers went to two different French-language or bilingual universities. Although all of them go or went to French-language schools, her baby brother goes to an English-language school. I was told this is because he was never exposed to the French language the way they were exposed to it.
Amani: I tried so hard to stay awake. To stay awake and never let go (people talking). It's like a plant you know? It is like the candles, you know how the candles? how the candles, a small plant?
Awad: Yes.
Amani: If you protect her up front, it is going to stay.
Awad: Yes yes (girls talking in Somali).
Amani: So, it's like a dream. If you don't keep your dream alive, you know, and you don't really let anything happened between getting between your dream and you (girls continue talking in Somali).
Awad: Ohm.
Amani: It's gonna stay alive (girls continue talking in Somali).
Awad: OK.
Amani: But you know what happened I realized I tried so hard to stay awake or not influenced by these people. But believe me there are times I cried so much and I said (Aziza: it's not easy, it's not easy) "you know what, may be they are right I will be backing off." There are times it happened to me, but I tried so hard, I tried so hard you know. I tried so hard so hard to be awake and to still have my same goal you know. Still reach whatever I wanna reach. But, with people like that, especially in basic school.
Aziza: It's not easy.
Amani: Because it's really disgusting. I wish I can make a report in a newspaper when I leave the school. But I also have reputation to say IT you know. It's like I can't do it, there are limitations to my actions you know..
Samira: Actions for me have no limits.
Amani: So, it's disgusting. I mean if I really say something about the whole system, IT IS DISGUSTING (girls talking in Somali).

A dream, for Amani, is a plant that needs sun-light, warmth, air, nourishment, and protection to blossom and bloom. If it is not easy to do this, it is because the adverse and the ugly metamorphosed social forces are too strong. The beautiful plants and dreams are not only taken away from some students, but also from their parents. Indeed, part of African students' agony is as well the humiliation that they see their parents go though in their everyday survival strategies. Again, it seems, history repeats itself: the place that is called heaven is turning into a nightmare. Their parents are asked by the present Mike Harris's Conservative Government of Ontario, which passed the law whereby social assistance recipients have to work for their money, to work in menial jobs that, at some levels, become indentured labour. The parents of these
students are obliged to do these jobs if they want to keep their shelters and have food on their tables. It is beyond my imagination, for example, to see what might happen to Amani and Aziza’s family. This is a family of 10 children, in Canada, with only their mother who cannot speak - let aside master - the English language. To ask her to work is to ask her to leave her 3 year old boy at home - with whom and who will pay the baby-sitter? Even if the mother decides to work, jobs are scarce, given the recession in Ontario. This is how heaven - no longer imagined, but is lived.

Samira: I have a question to Harris [the premier of the present Conservative government of Ontario] you said that, there is a new law now this very month. Everyone who is immigrant or refugee to Canada, and who doesn’t work, he should go to school, your mother, my mother, they have education, your father everybody. They can’t, even in Canada, they have education, they speak French or English, but they can’t find job. What are they going to do? social assistance is all what we have. You know what they are going to do? They are going to wash toilet. If he is told to wash the toilet, he has to do it. If they don’t do it, sorry, but they risk that social assistance might be cut off. But, they don’t know that we also have our dignity, we have a memory, a beautiful life backhome where we were. Even the government influence them [by taking away their dreams of a dignified life].

Amani: It’s like this is the thing. If you want me to give you the best job you wanna have, you got to be sacrificing and trying to be like me [Mike Harris]. You know? But, if you really know who you are, deep inside and trying not to lose who you are, then you get to the point you wanna get to the point you wanna get to, without losing [your dreams and yourself].

This last social assistance example, for me, is an utterance of the different ways in which students understand and translate the social conditions under which they live; an understanding that extends beyond themselves to the larger social structure. This understanding is significant in schooling processes because it sheds light on the human subjectivities that students bring with them to school, schooling, and the classroom. It also enlightens our understanding, as anti-racist workers, of where students stand politically, racially, and socially. Students, based on these arguments, are enlightened and
reflexive subjects with agencies, desires, dreams, which can be violently encroached on and profaned, but can never be fully taken away.

5.4. Parental Involvement: In their articulatory performed African philosophy and understanding of education as I, being an African who went all-through an African education, know it, parents' involvement is minimum. It is understood in this philosophy that teachers 'know' what is best for students and that they will do their best in order for students to succeed. If a student fails, teachers and schools take the personal liability as the student's failure is the responsibility of the community, which includes parents, teachers, principals ... etc. Teachers, it is known in the African philosophy of education as I lived it, are authorized by virtue of being a member of the community to take on the role of parents. Parenthood is understood here as a way of emotional and intellectual investments in the well-being of the child. This, of course, goes against what is talked about as education system in North America. In this system, parents are part of the decision making body, at least as far as the law is concerned.

In students' narratives, the African philosophy seems eminently eye-catching. Parents have no participation in the school; and when they are called for meetings with teachers and other school bodies, parents are absent. They may follow their daughters and sons through the report cards, but that is that. They also, in some cases, experience a linguistic barrier by not being able to speak the 'language' of school: in both its linguistic sense and in the sense of understanding the system: its rules and regulation. I asked Najat, in English:

Awad: Yah, yah, what does your mom say about the school?
Najat: The school?
Awad: She she comes to school?
Najat: She doesn't come. First of all, you know, we have réunion [meeting] like anything réunion and everything. My mom doesn't show up.
Awad: No?
Najat: No, she just goes you know, ‘do good on your courses’. She’s just when the report comes she say blablabla. But she doesn’t come, she doesn’t call, she doesn’t do anything.

Some students, as already addressed, have no parental support. This absence is, by and large, due to forced displacement which is interconnected to civil wars and political instability in Africa which pressure and compel African students to leave not only belongings, but sisters, brothers, aunts, cousins, other relatives, and even parents⁴⁰. A number of these students therefore, as young as 15 and 16 years old, found themselves living in Canada alone. And given the unfamiliarity of the school system with situations such as these where there are no parents, let alone parental involvement, African students are left in the cold to feel personal attacks whenever the school introduces new laws, *le contrat* for example. Moreover, the fact of the absence of blackness in the professoriate and among the personnel of the school, makes students’ texture and feeling of the cold and the burden of defending themselves mount even higher:

Musa: (...) Because white students in Marie-Victorin don’t have problems. They have their parents who ...
Sam: But they, if we do the defense, we, we are living by ourselves. It is us who have to take note, you know we have to defend ourselves. But, they they have their father. You know, their mother comes in to the school who says ‘why this law [le contrat], I don’t see that in the book you know.’ So, there is their parents that defending them, but us.
Musa: We, we don’t have parents to defend us. It is you who have to defend.

⁴⁰This is what Aziza has to say about her own and other people’s experience with the civil war in Somalia,: “you know, when the war outbroke in Somalia, everybody disengaged from everything, in all corners, you know. The war outbroke, you don’t think about you aunts and your cousin. You think about getting your kids out from these troops there. You see the war had come. (...) You think about leaving, you don’t think of your uncle, of your mother (...). It is when you come here that that the tension had calmed then you say ‘what happened to my aunt?’, ‘where is my aunt?’ They are already here [in Canada] and you don’t even know, you see. When there is a war, all what you think *getta out here, getta out here, we goda getta out here, you see.*”
5.5. Conclusion:

This chapter is an extension of chapter 4. In it, we saw, again, the ugly structures and the people supporting these structures behind the scene. Students' narrative is emphatic in showing how white teachers, personnel, and counselors discriminated against African students. On the opposite side, I show the pleasantly experienced encounter that African students had with Black and teachers of colour. This raised the question of role models, and the need for an actual multicultural representation which, necessarily, questions the structured hegemonic power relations. The issues concerning the curriculum were also addressed. These include history, language, and the need to pose the question of who is teaching what and from whose perspectives? I concluded by addressing parental involvement. Prior to this, I renarrated students' agony while translating the processes of schooling and understanding the new Canadian social context. In this context, students understood that the racial, gendered, and immigrant status are of great significance in a) the accumulation of memory of becoming Black and b) where one should ally her or himself.
Chapter 6

"Oh, I got it, it gives me great pleasure!" 41

Culture, Language (Learning), and the Imaginary

African students are bilingual in the French language and their mother tongue and, in so many cases, trilingual or multilingual. Hassan, cited in chapter 4, for instance, speaks six languages: Somali, Couto (local language in Somalia), Arabic, Amheric, French, and English; of course, with different degrees of fluency. This chapter addresses memories and histories of language learning, students relation to language, and sites of language learning. Such include (Black) popular culture, particularly when it comes to learning English. By (Black) popular culture, I am referring to movies, music, songs, ... etc.

The second section of the chapter introduces culture as found in students' narratives. This encompasses cultural representation and 'separatist culture'. Cultural representation speaks to the issue of how Africans and Africa are imagined in the popular representation and the impact of this imaginary in students' articulatory sense of belonging. 'Separatist culture', a title borrowed from Solomon (1992), on the other hand, will seek to explore the question of cultural zones demarcated by cultural practices including language and religion.

6.1. Post/Colonial Language, and Language Learning: In the contemporary neo-colonial and post-colonial situation in continental Africa, indigenous languages are unjustifiably mortified and denigrated (Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1986). This is done through and by elevating colonial languages (specifically English and French, but also Portuguese) and equating them to the 'civilized', 'civilization', and intelligentsia. African students in the present study did not escape this context. French is the official language of communication and

41 Here Asma is talking about her pleasure in learning to engage in conversation in English with other fellow students who used to look down on her and other African students because of her/their very limited knowledge of the English language. This is the pleasure of knowing.
schooling in all of the students' national backgrounds, except for Somalia where learning French is a luxury that only the bourgeoisie can afford. Having French as an official language translates into a situation where students' linguistic choices are already institutionally decided by the State. In the case of Somalia, on the other hand, where the official and the national language is the Somali language and English and Italian are second languages, it is students' parents (stated clearly, among all interviewees, it is the father - except for one female whose father's death took place when she was young) who make the decision to send their daughters and sons to French-language schools.

Awad: But but how how you ended up in a French-speaking school in Somalia?
Aziza: Yes, I went to Sisters School (l'école des soeurs).
Awad: Sisters?
Aziza: A religious school.
Awad: Private?
Aziza: Private, religious. Yes.
Awad: Ok, Ok, why a French-language school?
Aziza: Because ahm the choice came from my father, because he he did his training (stage) in French. He went to France, his brother was living in France, you see. It is a choice he made he said that my kids will study in French. So, it was a choice which came from my father, that we study in French, and then all the family is francophone. We also had some friends of my father who who did the same training with my father. Because my father was in the army who did the training with my father. These friends there were French. And then they were living in Somalia you see. And then they had the the, they were opening private schools you see. They also wanted people to speak their language. Because in Somalia we don't speak French, there was the Somali language, the Italian, and the English. The French wasn't recognized like really like like, like the Italian is recognized and like the English is recognized you see. So, it is only you see, it is only, it is only the rich people who were learning French you see. It was the rich families who have money who send their kids to a private school you see.

To call oneself francophone or anglophone, in Africa, to say the least, is to perform the historical memory of the colonial linguistic legacy (Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1986). When the colonial powers decided in Berlin in 1884 to divide
Africa into nations between the West, with, in some cases, no previous knowledge of either who was living in these territories or what was their language, an enigmatic situation was created of rival people finding themselves living in the same geographical spaces. This, as a corollary, produced nations, with different linguistic, cultural, religious, and racial background, inside the Nation. Omer, who is an Ethiopian Somali-speaker, testifies to this:

Omer: Even if even by way of colonization and things like that you see, (...) my languages are added to French and Arabic, while theirs [those who come from mainland Somalia], I think that there is a difference between North and South. I think it is English, Arabic, also on the other hand Italian you see. So, and you will have rival peoples (des peuples concurrents) together, really pure rivals and things like that. But he says, it is said that they don't even speak Somali language. It is said that they are Somalians (laugh). Why? because they are in the Somalian territory. It is for that they are called Somalians.

In reiterating Omer’s arguments, Aziza explained that:

You see, when the colonilizers came to Somalia, they divided the country into two you see. The English caught/got the South and the Italians caught/got the North. So, that is that, and then the people, the Italians were here, the English were there. It is like here [Canada] they divided the country into two [French and English]. They said this part is mine, you, your part is there you see. So, the people who were living there, they had to understand, they have to learn the language you see because they are colonized, they are conquered. So, they are obliged [to learn the language], so you see.

In spite of these imperialist and colonial deportments, indigenous languages and cultures extended to the present. For example, as confirmed by students who came from Somalia, the Somali language, which was an oral language like so many other African languages, was instituted in written form only in 1973 and, hereafter, it was enforced as the national language and the

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42 This is the case of Britain and the Victoria Lake in East Africa in what is now known as Kenya (see el Ghadal - in Arabic - 1992. Tarikh el Sudan el Hadith - History of Modern Sudan.)
language of education. Before 1973, students had to either study in English or Italian language.

In some African contexts, as I myself went through them\textsuperscript{43} (see also Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1986), where indigenous languages are pushed to the margin of the institutionalized processes of schooling, learning the official language (English or French for instance) can turn to a painful experience where memorizing is the only way that permits knowledge re/production. This is because students have very little, if at all, contextual communicative support to learn the language. The curriculum, for instance, will depend on materials imported from European/American contexts which, in most cases, have no relevance to the pedagogical and the communicative ways of indigenous knowledge production (cf. Dei, 1997).

Nevertheless, neither French nor English is considered a mother tongue by students. I differentiate between mother tongue and first language. For me, the latter is the language mastered the most which can be one's own mother tongue or a second language (Apple and Muysken, 1987/1990), whereas the former is the first spoken language. Established on this distinction, African students congruently have declared their indigenous languages as their mother tongues, even though some were unable to say the number 87 in their mother tongue as was the case with one Somali-speaking boy. Although Hassan for instance recognizes French as a key opener to 'a world of communication' and 'a world of business/jobs', French is indubitably not his mother tongue. It is his first language though. Significantly, he feels more comfortable in his mother tongue. In an interview conducted at the school, I inquired "What does French represent to you?"

Hassan: A world of communication, a world of business/jobs (travail) (laugh). It is going to help me in my life like that is going to help me to get jobs. It is going to help my mind. It is going to help me to

\textsuperscript{43}In my case, it was the Arabic language that dominated my mother tongue (Nubian) only to become my first language. I therefore make the distinction between first language and mother tongue (see also chapter 1).
communicate more, but I don’t consider it as my mother tongue. (...) My mother tongue is Somali. So, I consider it like that. I feel more comfortable to speak Somali. (...) Because my mother tongue, I speak it at home. I speak it with my parents, I speak it with my sister, my aunt. But there are some times where I find myself, I can’t find the Somali words which express something, things let’s say modern or things like argot. If I can’t find in Somali, I can express it in French.

Of greater significance are, first, the question of communicative support in the processes of learning French or English in Africa and, second, the question of curriculum materials. In most African contexts, English and French are beheld as unorganic languages which are allied with the authority of the State and the school. They, in addition, are allied with books and not everyday interaction. In some cases, they are only spoken (usually in a highly normative lexicon-semantic scheme44) with those who are unable to speak the indigenous languages.

Hassan: The French language was the only mode of communication with my friends who spoke no other language but French. I had plenty of friends like that who were always speaking French among themselves and all that. But when I find myself with other students who can speak with me, we speak Somali.

As part of the communicative support, books and other curriculum materials are exiguous and scarce, as Ibri has confirmed. (Ibri is a 19 years old boy Muslim from Togo. He was awarded ‘le médaille d’or’ - Gold prize - for being the best student in the school in mathematics and science.) The official curriculum texts, by and large, are the only available texts. For Hassan, for example, cartoons were the only other text at hand exterior to the official curriculum. This raises the question of the need for a more relevant ‘African’

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44 This was why during my university years in Sudan, we used to make our laughing-stock those who ‘spoke like a book’. These are individuals who spoke with lexics that nobody seemed to understand: the longer the word and the more complicated the sentence one used, the more cultured and instructed the person was, or so we used to think.
curriculum which would have to incorporate indigenous knowledge and indigenous ways of knowledge production, and of knowing.

On the other hand, in the Canadian context, one of the recurrent themes in students’ narratives is how easy it is to learn the English language. I will argue that the facility of learning English in Canada is indeed related to three reasons. First, the pure linguistic lexico-grammar of the English language is ‘easier’ than the French language. Secondly, English is communicatively supported in Canada. Canadians, outside Quebec, dialogue in English in their circadian and everyday interaction which presents an opportunity for students to learn new words and perform/produce new semantics everyday, which in turn offers a sense of lexico-grammatical and semantic liberty. Aziza, followed by Hassan (in two separate individual interviews), delineates this notion of lexico-grammatical liberty by contending that (Aziza’s text was cited in English):

Aziza: I don’t know how to explain really but this is how I see it, English is like more liberty than French you know.

Hassan: It is easy, it is more easy than French, English; way easy, a lot more easy than French. (...) I think (...) in English, you don’t need to conjugate the verbs into masculine and feminine, put the accents where they should (laugh), the adjectives and all that. In English, all what is there is he, she, it.

This liberty is, thirdly, connected to the painful memory of how African students learn the French language: uncontextually and through memorization (bold added):

Aziza: When I was pretty young, we had to well articulate. It was hell. When you learn French, it is more difficult than when you learn English.

Thusfar, I showed some of the ways in which African students learn (national/official) languages in Africa. Here, it is safe to contend that the process of learning can turn into a process of drilling and memorization where
the so-called worthwhile while knowledge and knowledge production, in most cases, is irrelevant to students' quotidian communicative interactions. In spite of this, as already discussed in chapter 5, students' narratives show an appraisal of the 'disciplined' school system, students-teacher interaction, and the order of curriculum material and the ways in which knowledge is transmitted. In the following section I first consider language learning in Canada. In it, I discuss the sites of learning English as a second language, specifically popular culture with especial emphasis on Black popular culture. However, because African students are already at least bilingual, English can only be their third or fourth language. I secondly recite some of the student narratives that look at the cultural representations of Africa and Africans and the impact of these representations on colonizing the imaginary of the Canadian born students.

6.2. Becoming Tri/Multilingual: Sites/Sides of Learning English:
6.2.1. The Sine Qua Non of Learning English: Coming to a Canadian Metropolitan English speaking city - Toronto - for African students is often a decision taken by their parents who themselves are bound by circumstances of having relatives in the Metropolitan city; and in the case of students who came to Canada by themselves, they were as well tied to the same latter circumstances of having relatives. I inquired why a metropolitan area which is considered an English speaking city might be considered as a place of sojourn as opposed to Quebec which is a francophone province:

Hassan: First of all, we had relatives who were here. Yes, secondly, because there is French and English. It is more the relative question because you know when you go to a new country, there is a tendency to go towards the peoples you know. Because you don't want to adventure in the unknown. And you can't have, you also want to have help, all the help possible to succeed better. Like a new, it is a new life. So, it is because of my aunt who was here, the people, the friends we knew from backhome, we were able to receive the help, you can enter the community to the purpose of settling there.
In this contextual relationship where African students were to stay, the quotidian communicative medium was/is the English language. In other words, to be understood by the Other, one has to speak in English. This translates into a situation where students have to learn English in order to communicate their everyday necessities such as taking public transportation or getting help in their grocery shopping. Najat’s ‘hot dog’ example (told in English) is an illustration of this necessity:

Najat: I was like what? in grade 2? I don’t know. I was like ahm, it was the hot dog guy. And then I was like ahm “excusez-moi, je veux ça!” And then he is like “par me!” And then it was like “hello!” I just give attitude in French, and then it was like “par me!” And then I was like “dat”. And then my uncles, they speak English right? and then he’s like “I wanna a hot dog.” And then it was like and he gave it to me. I was like “yah, à la prochaine fois alors” (laugh). You know I was like so annoyed, I thought he kina speak French, but he’s like speaking English you know.

The degree of necessity to speak English is highly visible in this instance. If her cousins were not present to help, the calamity would have meant that Najat might not have had something to eat. Najat is not unique nonetheless, other narratives and other stories show the distressful extent of this sine qua non situation of learning English45. In separate interviews, Aziza, followed by Hassan, renarrated and reflected on their early days when their competence of speaking English was limited:

45 In my focus group interview, the boys narrated similar stories (mostly narrated in English):

Sam: L’anglais [English] uff, dad somethin dad I had to you know learn. ’Cause, when I came, when you go somewhere you know around you know, you go to a new country, you know you have to you have to get around.
A male voice: You have to learn the language.
Sam: Yah, you have to learn the language, yah.
A male voice: Yourself to learn.
Sam: Yah, and then to understand what people are saying in, what more people you know their moral or their views on things.
A male voice: That something you need.
Sam: That something that you have to, you know. I didn’t have a choice, so I had to learn English, you know.
A male voice: To communicate.
Sam: To communicate with people, you know. If I didn’t know then I will be deaf you know.
Aziza: If I want to go to the boutique, I have to speak to the Monsieur in English because he doesn’t speak French. If I go to the shop to buy cloths, I have to speak in English, you see. It is something that you have to; you have to force yourself. In the early days, I used to go with my sister because my sister spoke English. So, I always took her with me. Then, I had to go by myself because she was not always going to always be by my side. I had to speak I had to learn to speak English so I can help myself and I can you know, I can deal with anything you see. So, in another words, you are obliged, it is something you can’t escape from. Because the society is anglophone, the country is anglophone, the services are in English, you see, that’s why.

Hassan’s must learn English situation stemmed from a desire of wanting to participate in the new socio-cultural markets, networks, and public spaces:

Hassan: For the first two years, it was distressing, seriously distressing. You hate that, you can’t communicate with people, you can’t go out by yourself, not to go for the movies (laugh). You have to always have a translator, you can’t go to buy something because you have to speak in English. You don’t understand half of the people who are there when they speak. For the first two years, it was more than distressing.

The perturbing situation resulting from the desire for social participation on the part of African students which is blocked by an inability to understand English creates an inevitability to learn it, and to learn it speedily. Popular culture, especially television, friendship, and peer interactive pressure are three mechanisms that make the speed of learning English even faster. I will first look at some narratives concerning friendship and peer pressure. The latter is felt more so in students’ early days in the school when African students were denigrated for not speaking English. Franco-Ontarian students, Heller (1994, 1992) explains, use English in their everyday interaction which means that if African students desire to participate in school markets and in-and-outside classroom activities and public spaces, they are left with no option but to learn
English. This enigmatic feeling of incomprehensibility was over though once students deciphered the lexico-semantic structure of the English language:

Asma\textsuperscript{46}: If you don’t speak English, like my grade 7, “Oh, she doesn’t speak! Oh, we are sorry, you can explain to her, she doesn’t understand English \textit{la petite}\textsuperscript{47}. Can you?” They think that we are really stupid, that we are retarded, that we don’t understand the language. Now I know English, shsh I speak it all the time. I show them that I understand English (laugh), I show them that I do English. And the girls XX. Oh, I got it, it gives me great pleasure.

\textit{Asma}, in this citation, and \textit{Najat}, in the following extract which was told in English, are addressing the threshold desire of teenagers who want to fully participate in dominant markets and public spaces. This full participation, nevertheless, was halted and haunted by an inability to speak English which was \textit{the} way to deploy and organize friendships.

\textit{Najat}: So I am like you know, all my friends like, this people like friends, you know they will be like speaking English. So, I just like tryina learn one by one you know. So, I just learn it fast. It’s like “wa I speak English now.”

At stake in these re-narrated desires and memories is the notion that learning a language contextually certainly facilitates the very processes of leaning. If you have, Aziza below argues (in English), an environment where formal and informal (including human) communication is conducted in English, this may only affix the facility and the pleasure of the evolution of learning.

\textsuperscript{46}In another context, Asma argued that one of the reasons for feeling the urge to speak English “is that I didn’t want people talking behind my back. I wanted to so badly to learn English to show them that I could do it (laugh). And to speak English like they do. And I am really really I’m happy I did that. I’m very proud of myself.”

\textsuperscript{47}This a disparaging expression which usually is used to patronize and disparage someone or something.
Aziza: When I came here, the first days, the first months, I can only speak in French because that's what I always spoke backhome and everywhere else right? I came here, people speak in English, television is in English. Ahm tout à l'entour, environment. It is all in English, so you have to adapt right?

To conclude, for Hassan in the following extract, as it was for Aziza, the everyday communicative support that the English language has in Canada is significant as it is a fixed reminder for African students of the necessity to learn the language. It is also significant in “enriching” their vocabulary.

Hassan: But here you have the communication, you have TV. You have to force yourself because in order to buy something, you are obliged to speak in English. So, you have all the communications, you you are in this milieu which enrich you with new words and all that.

6.2.2. Bilingualism and Normativity: Whether for environmental reasons or individual desires to participate in academic and non-academic markets and public spaces, African students added English to their linguistic repertoire. However, narratives show that students have a subtractive and not additive bilingualism perception in learning English. In cases of additive bilingualism, Lambert (1978: 217) explains, an individual adds a second language to her repertory of skills, while the first language is not in danger of being replaced. This is usually the case when the language is socially and communicatively supported, such as an English speaking Canadian (an anglophone) learning French. When, on the other hand, the first or ‘home’ language is shifted away from in learning the second-language, subtractive bilingualism results (see also Appel and Muysken, 1987/1990). This latter form of bilingualism is the case with Najat. Najat narrated an understanding that losing her Somali language was not her fault and that it was socially and contextually bounded. That is, losing her Somali language is a result, first, of the social context where she speaks only in English and, second, of her age: she came to Canada when she was 7 years old. In reflecting on this loss, she told me (in English) that:
Najat: I like I like lost my Somalian, you know, language. I probably like if I go to somebody talk, they will be like “Oh my God! you don’t know how to speak, from what?” Oh, what ‘m suppose to do you know (laugh), like I came here when I was seven you know (laugh).

Losing her Somali language, as she clearly contends, is as well connected to Najat’s external relation to language. That is, she has no emotional investment in the language. Her significant statement “I just like laughing at languages” is an illustration to my arguments. Moreover, connected to these is the fact that Najat has no investment in the French-language only ideology that French language schools seem to adopt and adapt to. French language school officials fought, and still fight, against using English language by students in their schools (see Heller, 1994). This fight is based on the historical notion that students in French language schools are expected and supposed to use French; here, using English is often read as a sign of assimilation (Heller, 1994). Put in these terms, using English then is a conscious act of resisting this, for Najat, outdated dogma uttered by the school authority, on the one hand; and, on the other, and probably more significant, it is also a performative act against the oppositional (nationalist?) discourse which dichotomizes English and French languages. Put together, Najat is in many ways following the Franco-Ontarian students’ dominant codeswitching practice where English is more often heard in public spaces and not French, particularly in non-classroom sites such as hallways, cafeteria, and gymnasium. The following was told in English. In it, Najat knew she should not be speaking in English, yet she did:

Najat: I was like talking English, English, English you know. Like directrice, the principal comes and it’s like she heard me talking. She said, “c'est quoi ça?” Hhh, “le français Madame.”

Awad: Ya, but you are in a French school.

Najat: Oh, what am I suppose to go ‘bonjour’ you know? Wa because you know you know it’s good it is a good language [French that is]. You have to know. But French with teachers and residents, no way (laugh).
This episode is important because, beside showing the conscious act of resisting using French, it points to another phenomenon related to the notion that French language is not for public space consumption. On the contrary, it is related only to school and school activities. Najat, again in English:

OK, my friend is like speaking French you know in a subway I was like “par me, ahm I don’t know you. What was that question again?” I don’t like speaking French on a subway or anything. And this guy comes “Parlez-vous français?” I was like “No, I don’t speak French.” You know, when I am not in a class or anything, I just speak English, I just speak English.

Although the evidence fell short, it is nevertheless worth raising the link between race and using English language in public spaces. In metropolitan cities in Canada, except for the province of Quebec, blackness is linked to English language. Black people, save for some continental Africans, are by and large English speakers. However, given my arguments that the perception of the Other about the Self influences how the Self performs itself, one may argue that this has a significant role to play in the process of speaking English in public spaces. That is, African students are expected to speak English in public space, this expectation in turn may be an added pressure that might accelerate the speed of learning English, on the one hand, and also keeping French language in the school and out of the public spaces, on the other.

Nonetheless, while Najat works against the ideology of the opposite between English and French, as so many Franco-Ontarian youth (Heller, 1993), which translates into a French-language-only-unilingualism, other African students see learning English not so much as a threat to their mother tongues, but to their French language. Here, bilingualism, as already argued, is perceived in subtractive sense where the second threatens the first language.

Aziza: Ahm I came here and rightaway I learned I started to speak in English. I forgot my French. And then, the more and more I learn English, I learn English words, my French diminishes, diminishes, diminishes, diminishes. I learn more English, I learn a lot of English, my
French diminishes etc., you see. So, the more I learn English, the more I forget my French. You see, it is something. And when I came here, I told myself that I will never learn to speak, I will never, my French will never diminish. I am going to be good in French like I used to be before. And I will never speak in English, and you see now what I’m doing? (laugh) I told myself before and that doesn’t work or what?

As a sign of her ‘weakened’ and dwindled French language, Aziza can no longer, in some cases, find the signification of signifiers that she used to know before: “And it happens to me that some times I could not signify or give signification to French words that I used to know before, you know what I mean?” Other students narrated the same decreased phenomenon of their language and their ‘Parisian’ or European accent. In my focus group interview with the girls, they contended that:

Asma: We lost our accent.
Ossi: Yes, yes completely (Amani speaks jokingly à la Québécoise, laugh).
Asma: When they asked me a question, “Oui Monsieur je veux dire ...” [Asma speaks à la Parisienne]. He, he was looking at me like that. But now “je veux dire ohm, Monsieur c’était vraiment oui ...” [Asma speaks with a relaxed voice]. You see, I lost my accent. And moreover people tell us that we have [European/Parisian] accent. I said “are you nuts (ça va pas)? I don’t even have an accent.”
Samira: Not only the accent, the French language. English, if not we are in an English speaking country. Bilingual, but English dominates you see.
Aziza: It is like you detach from your French side in speaking English.

Nonetheless, not all students see bilingualism in its subtractive faculty. Hassan, in particular, is quite emphatic in refuting the Franco-Ontarian ideology that, first, links speaking English to assimilation and, second, negates watching English-language media, including television. Hassan has an additively neat pragmatic approach to language that does not fear learning new languages as long as they will advance his ambitions in doing International and Law Studies. He explains that:

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... there are some people who say that 'Oh, you should not lose your French. We are going to be assimilated. We should not lose...' And I was really in accord with these, this ideology two years ago. Had you ask me, we should not lose our French and all that, but now I find that I am no longer in accord with this ideology of losing one because I learned another, but I say very simply, learn this, learn the new and guard what you had before. But don't put aside other languages. Guard what you had before because it is ignorance, you understand? Seriously, there are a lot of, a lot of Franco-Ontarians who tell themselves (qui se disent), who fight among themselves (qui se battent) to safeguard the language. 'In any case, I don't watch the Channels, Fox or I don't watch CNN since it's assimilation. I don't watch the televised journal. I don't want to lose my language. I want to watch my activities.' This is good. This is that, but don't ignore the rest you see. For me, it is like music. It doesn't bother me to listen to French music, Somalian, Spanish or Arab music (laugh). I am interested later in International Studies, Law and all that. So, I learn as much as possible.

Even though Hassan argued against the ideology of the French-language-only-unilingualism adopted by the French language school system, he, as well as others, including Ibri, argued that bilingualism is a necessity for Francophones in Ontario and the rest of English speaking Canada and certain parts of Quebec such as Montreal. This is co-related to the dominance of the English language in Canada and the powerful alliances between it and economic super-power in North America and around the world. As a corollary, African students are zealously critical of the Canadian official bilingualism. They contend that the notion that Canada is a bilingual country is a fraudulent one, precisely, because it does not translate into individual bilingualism and it, on the other hand, put the obligation of bilingualism on Francophones' shoulders. Here, the girls were quite explicit in my focus-group interview with them:

Ossi: More and more in this country, they say it is bilingual. Me, I found that this is not the case. If it was bilingual, everyone should have been speaking French. Students here [in English speaking parts of Canada], they don't even speak French.

Amani: Me too. Me who thought it was really bilingual, when I was in the bus, I was busy asking people "est-ce que tu parles français? est-ce que..."
"tu m'aider?" (do you speak French? can you help me?) Because I wasn’t speaking English then right? Everybody will be looking at me like this (laugh).

Ossi: One thing which I believe is this, how can we say that Canada is bilingual while there are people who aren’t.

Asma: And Francophones they have, they have two [languages]. The [francophone] teachers are bilingual. Anglophones are not bilinguals.

On a different note, students’ narratives also show a normative gazing into language. In this gaze, languages can be ‘pauvre’ (poor), ‘rich’, ‘super’, and ‘belle’ (beautiful). With no specification to the market (Bourdieu, 1977) in which the language is used, the adjectives ‘poor’, ‘rich’, ‘super’, or ‘beautiful’, among others, can only perform a value judgment of the language.

Aziza: When I first came from backhome, I had French words. In short, my French was super bon (super good). it was a good, a rich French you see. When I came here, my French became poor. And when I first wrote my evaluation test for French, he (the teacher) was so surprised because I spoke un bon français, le bon, un français riche (a good French, the good, a rich French) you know when you live in Africa. You see, you have un français vraiment génial (a really great French), more beautiful than them.

Since there is no universally ‘beautiful’, ‘rich’ or ‘poor’ language, the latter can only be ‘poor’, ‘rich’ or ‘beautiful’ in relation to a market and within particular power relations. English and French are ‘international’, ‘important’, and ‘beautiful’ languages because of the symbolic and (capitalist economic) material capital they represent in an universe where neo-colonialism, imperialism, and exploitation are pretty much the norm. Significantly however, for me, these same value judgment adjectives perform an evaluation by the students of their symbolic linguistic capital. Students narrated an understanding of the significance of possessing English and French linguistic capitals in a world where language is a vital key to material capital. In separate interviews, Aziza, followed by Hassan, expressed contentment with learning one more universally significant language: English:

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Aziza: [English language] is also a beautiful language. I learn English because, firstly, it is I think dominant in the world. It is a dominant language. So, of course you gonna tell yourself that 'I have to also learn English'. It is one more language for you.

Hassan, on the other hand, beside expressing the same contentedness, shows how the symbolic possession of language translates into material capitals in terms of money and jobs, (bold added):

Hassan: For the time being, it is the future: French [and] English. My two languages to conquer the world (laugh). Seriously, you’ve you’ve English, you understand America, you understand Canada, you see. Like it is international language. I was really happy to have learned English. I am really happy that I have French [and] English. The most important two languages. And then we speak at home Somali. I work as a translator at the school. In the school, I do translation. It is Arabic, French and Somalian.

Awad: Waw, does it pay?
Hassan: Yah.
Awad: That’s good.
Hassan: It’s true. You see, that is one of the advantages.
Awad: Yes, absolutely. It is really marvelous. And then what does English represent to you?
Hassan: A world of business (un monde de travail); la langue, ouverture, l'infini (the language, openingness, the infinite.)

For students therefore, one has to conclude, language is not an abstract category that has no bearing in their everyday life. On the contrary, it opens doors and brings capitals and jobs. ‘Conquering the world’ through language possession is neither a naïf nor a simplistic statement. Hassan, for example, lived the experience of a glimpse of what language can do and what entrance it can lead one into. Other languages, however, are learned for purposes other than money and jobs. Arabic, for instance, was learned by some for religious and identity purposes and necessity. In articulating this necessity, Aziza cites that “You know we are Muslims, and the Muslims there because the Koran is written in Arabic, so we have to learn Arabic. Because Koran is the book; like the Christians is the Bible, Muslims is the Koran.” Beside being an
‘international’ and a language of communication, possessing English is significant in holding jobs and in the ability to participate in private, regional, national and international markets. In what follows, I discuss the narratives and the performance of the sites where African students learn English.

6.2.3. Sites of Learning English: Congruently, the narratives and the linguistic performance\textsuperscript{48} of African students show popular culture, television to be more specific, and in particular Black popular culture to be ample sites where students learn English as a second language. By Black popular culture, I am referring distinctly to music and movies. Students’ narratives show that they had contacts in continental Africa with English speaking popular culture through Hollywood and independent U.S. movie productions. In my individual interview with Aziza, she explains that:

You see, when you watch, when we were backhome there in our country, we were watching films there. Romantic films or action films and the actors were speaking in English. And we said ‘oh what are they saying?’ And I started to imitate them (laugh). At first, we didn’t understand what he was saying, but we also understood as well through the acts, the actions and all of that. And you dream of learning this language one day, you see. I am going to speak like this Monsieur who speaks, or this Madame who speaks, you see. I \textit{wonna learn} it, English you know.

Besides her circumstantial eagerness for learning English while in Africa, clearly the acute and penetrating role of popular culture is quite prominent. This grandiose role of popular culture gets even bigger once African students are on an all-English speaking - except for Quebec and Acadia - soil: Canada. I asked Ibri, Hassan, Najat, Rhama, and Aziza \textit{“où est-ce que t’as appris ton anglais?”} (where did you learn your English?). \textit{“Télévision”}, they unanimously responded. However within this ‘television’, there is a particular

\textsuperscript{48} For reasons of validity, methodologically, all through this research, I intersected narrative - that is the metalanguage of people’s perceptions of their own actions/performances - with what they in fact performed.
representation that seems to attract African students' identity and identification: Black popular culture. As Omer argues, if the U.S. media is so prevalent and permeating, it is the Black American mediatic representation within the U.S. media that attracts 'Blacks' in Canada. In response to my note on the observable linguistic behaviour of speaking Black English by African students, Omer contended:

But they [African students] are influenced by the Americans. Let's speak of Canada. There is an influence of, whether white or Black youth, Canada is influenced by the American television. That means Black Canadians are influenced by the Afro-Americans. You watch for hours, you listen to music, if you watch a comedy with Mr. T., the Rap City\textsuperscript{49}, there you will see singers who dress in particular ways. You see, so.

In amending a discursive support for Omer, Najat cited (in English) that:

Najat: I hang out with all kina people. It could be white, it could be Chinese, it could be e, anyway I do. I hang out with anybody. You see me I hang out with white people, I hand out with Black guys.
Awad: yah ahm if if I may ask you, who do you think influencing the most?
Najat: of course ahh Blacks.

The influence of popular culture however does not stay only at the level of discourse and narratives. It enters significantly as well the level of performance. This is part of the ethnography of performance where I contrast what people say with and against what they do (say). Najat, for example, in explaining to me that she «hangs-out» everyday with her 'girlfriend' who is hyper-'energetic', this is what she produced linguistically (in English): “hanging out with her is like so cool. She talks like energizer, the battery never finishes (laugh).” The Energizer example is illustrative of the role of popular culture: television in this case. Energizer is a battery trade mark which has an

\textsuperscript{49} Mr. T. is an anchor of a local Canadian rap music program called Rap City which depends soundly on U.S. rap music.
advertisement on television where a toy is charged by an Energizer battery that just “keeps going and going and going”, or so the advertisement says. This example gives a glimpse of the influence of popular culture, television, on everyday interaction among youth and their conceptualization of themselves and their everyday lives. This is certainly even more prominent when it comes to Black popular culture. Here, I will first deal with movies and then (rap) music.

Responding to my query about the last movies she saw, Najat cited (in English):

I don’t know, I saw Waiting to Exhale and I saw what else I saw? I saw Swimmer, and I saw Jumanji; so wicked, all the movies. I went to Waiting to Exhale with my boyfriend and I was like ‘men are rude’ (laugh).

Awad: I know I know.
Najat: And then he [her boyfriend] was like ‘no women are rude’. I was like we’re like fighting you know and joking around. I was like and the whole time like (laugh); and den when de woman burns the car, I was like “go girl”. You know and all the women are like “go girl” you know. And then the men like khhh. I’m like “I’m gonna go get a pop corn” (laugh).

This example is significant because it performs the contention that youth have agency and subjectivities which they bring to the text. In other words, youth are embodied subjectivities that have social history, memory, and language. Two important performed subjectivities influence Najat’s reading of Waiting to Exhale. They are, precisely, her race and gender identities. It is the Black/woman, in burning her partner’s car and clothes, that interpellates Najat. The significance of this interpellation is that it raises the notion, the question: ‘which subjectivities within ourselves that are being interpellated, under which social conditions, and how is the interpellation performed?’ The linguistics performance ‘go girl’ is indeed a gendered, but also

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50 I am using language in a broader sense as understood with the field of semiology. Language here encompasses everything from body language, to garment, to, in short, all of what Barthes refers to as ‘complex languages’ (see Barthes, 1967/1983).
a racial performance in that it is an idiom used by mostly Black/females. It is through language that I as a researcher accessed Najat's identities and subjectivities. This example is an illustration of what I have been arguing for when I contended that researchers should look for the ways in which blackness is performed: Blackness as a performed category.

Najat is not unique in performing blackness through language: through Black English/talk. (I use Black talk and Black English interchangeably.) While, for example, conducting the interview with Aziza, a boy passed by, Aziza greeted him through what I call the ritual of hallooing: 'whassup'. In this ritual, even though Aziza as well as other African students have very little contacts with native Black English speakers and do not have a full mastery of Black talk (Smitherman, 1994), there is more of a performance of desire to belong than of mastering a language.

In a different context, another example that demonstrates the impact of Black popular culture on African students' lives and identities is a moment videotaped just before the focus-group interview with the boys. Electric Circus, a local T.V. music and dance program that plays mostly Black music: hip hop, rap, reggae, soul and R&B, had just started. Everything and everyone fell silent, and attentively the boys watched dress, 'the girls', and listened to the music. Verbal exchanges occurred after the show: they were mostly observations of what was the best music, the best dance, and the 'cutest girls'. Rap and hip hop dress were the top two of 'the best' music and dress. 'The girls?', each had his own opinion. Rap music, here, is vitally significant in, first, introducing Black talk and in it, secondly, the ritual of hallooing to African students.

Rap music is an instrumental site where Black talk is learned. It is also a site where identification of African youth with blackness is inaugurated which, in turn, is a significant part of the processes of identity formation. This last point will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter. Here, I will point to the ways in which rap is an influential site for language learning. As a starting-
point, I first encountered Black talk, as found in the rap linguistic performance, in a number of narratives in my interviews with the boys.

The boys (especially Sam) by and large performed on many occasions 'typical' (probably Gangster - a genre of) rap music, language and linguistic style, including name calling. What is noteworthy here is the ways in which students' gendered, racialized, and sexualized identities and desires enter the schemes of learning. Learning corollary is not a neutral act. What we learn is by definition influenced by who we are. Who we are or what we have become nonetheless is significantly articulated through history, memory, language, culture, and socialization. What follows are just two of the many occasions where students articulated their desires for identification with Black America through citation of rap styles and language: both were performed (in English) during my focus-group interview with the boys. (The second example was video-taped at the end of the social gathering when we had just finished our tape-recorded interview. Both extracts are transcriptions from this same videotape. It was a relaxing moment after a two hours interview; it was a moment of saying good-bye, on tape):

1) Sam: One two, one two, mic check. A’ait, a’ait, a’ait.
   Juma: This is the rapper, you know wha ‘m meaning? you know wha ‘m saying?
   Sam: Mic mic mic; mic check. a’ait you wanna taste it. ah, I’ve to take the microphone you know; a’ait.

2) Sam: (laugh) I don’t rap man, c’mon give me a break. (laugh) Yo. a’ait a’ait you know, we just about to finish the tape and all dat. Respect to my main man. So, you know, you know wha ‘m mean, ‘m just representin Q7. One love to Q7 you know wha ‘m mean and all my friends back to Q7. Even though you know I haven’t seen them for a long you know. I still I got love for them you know what ‘m mean. Stop with the tapin boy.
   A male voice: Kick the free style (boys are talking in Somali)
   Sam: So, yo you want me to record it again
   Awad: I don’t want it, I don’t want it
   Sam: Why not?

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(20 minutes of Gangster rap music, Cool J, Boys II men, Brandy. Jamal performs as a DJ while the song is playing to emphasize expressions, lines, or notes "Kim Juma, live put the lights on. Wordap"; people talking in Somali.)


A male voice: Yo, this is Shapir. I am trying to say peace to all my niggers, all my bitches from a background that everybody in the house. So, yo, chill out and this is how we gonna kick it bye and with that pie. All right, peace yo.

A male voice: Peace and one love.

Sam: A'ait this is Sam repres'in AQA XX where it's born, repres'in you know wha 'm mean? I wonna say whassup to all my niggers, you know, peace one love. You know wha 'm mean, Q7 represin for ever. Peace.

(Jamal as a DJ): Crank it man coming up (rap music).

These are undisputedly gendered performances by the boys where Black talk - rap style - is quite permeating: 'peace out', 'wordap', 'AQA', 'Q7', 'my main man', and 'nigger', among others. Significant in terms of strategies used by these boys to learn Black talk, and English as a second language in general through music, were the ones used by Jamal. Jamal was listening to (rap) songs and at the same time following through his eyes the written texts. He then repeated not only words and expressions, but also accents with the performer. The girls, on the other hand, in the boys-girls mixed picnic I went to, were also using the same strategies: that is listening to the tune and following the written text and reciting with the signer. With the girls, however, the music was soft and concerned mostly with love and broken hearts: these included songs by Whitney Houston and Toni Braxton.

As it is clear in the above citation, sexism, lamentably, is part of the boys' gendered performances. (Sexism and gendered identities will be addressed in the next chapter.) In these gendered articulations, the boys are certainly performing problematic ways of being, being Black that is. To be (Black), nonetheless, for the boys signifies as well staging processes of becoming (Black). Black popular culture plays a paramount role in these processes in being a medium through which Black America is re-presented. Notwithstanding, to state from hereon that Black popular cultural forms: hip hop culture and rap
lyrics and language impact African students' linguistic repertoire, what they talk about, and their age and gender performance is to state the obvious. In an individual interview with Omer, I had these verbal exchanges:

Awad: Ah OK OK, and then and then this basketball gang; I observed that they are very influenced by *hip hop*.
Omer: Yes.
Awad: That is to say the way they dress, the English they speak.
Omer: Yes, because ...
Awad: *Whassup whassup*.
Omer: Yes since they listen to music, hip hop; since they watch Black movies; there, you you because you desire something. They wanna have this power because they desire to become That: That is their aim. They desire to become like that.

However, not all mediatic representations are there to help identity formation. Indeed, the hegemonic and dominant media, students' narratives significantly show, are precisely there to negate, castigate, and obliterate students' identities, history, language, and place of belonging - Africa. African students were culturally and psychically shocked by the extent of the negative representations of Africa. Africa, in these representations, is a jungle with no sense of direction, no history, no language, and thus no identity or civilization of its own, and for its own sake. Africa does not exist in its own respect, but always in opposition to the 'civilized' Europe (see also Dei, 1996). This is the 18th and 19th century Europe representing Africa (see Said, 1993, 1978; Oladipo, 1992). The product of this imperialist and colonial European endowment is a presently colonized imaginary passed on in our present days by and through cultural representation, including written texts. In what follows, I discuss the ways in which Africa and Africans are schematically represented in the popular imagination of some of the students descending from dominant groups with whom African students interact and communicate.

6.3. Cultural Representations and Colonizing the Imaginary: the Other: 'Third World' - for lack of a better term, African students contend, is negatively
represented or utterly negated and relegated to the margin of representation (bold added):

Samira: We were totally frustrated because we were totally seen, imagining Africa that we know.
Aziza: You know ah the media always shows/represents (montre) the negative side of the Others (le côté negatif des autres). I already mentioned the media because they, it is not their fault if they [we were talking in the individual interview with Aziza about the students of the dominant blocs - read whites] always see on television the negative side of Africa. Ok, there are some people who think that Africa is a country. They don’t even know that it is a continent. You see what I am tryina say?

I beg to disagree with Aziza in contending that ‘it is not their fault if they always see on television the negative side of Africa.’ It is not ‘their’ fault so long as they are not re-producing these negations. It is, however, ‘their’ fault once ‘they’ re-produce them. Moreover, ‘they’ - the children of the West - are also responsible for the colonial and imperial history they endow. In fact, people are responsible even for the history they don’t know51 (Cixous, 1994). Nonetheless, Aziza’s ethnographic note “they don’t even know” is significant. For it bears the consequences of what kind of questions African students are been asked by ‘them’ (read whites); which performs not only ignorance, but ludicrous racism.

Ossi: There is one person who asked a girl, she comes from Ethiopia; the girl asked “did you have, do you have a house?” she asked that (laugh). The girl, she is like “of course! where do we sleep, outside?”

Beside Ossi, other cited narratives show, on the part of students who are located within the dominant groups, a naivete, even racism, and uncritical cultural, information, and imaginary consumption. To uncritically consume

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51 To illustrate this point, take the slavery and the Holocaust examples. Not to know (about) slavery and its impact on the African peoples, doesn’t take away the historical responsibility from the child of the West. By virtue, that is, of being a child of the West, the historical responsibility is upon her/his shoulders. Concerning the Holocaust, a German who does not know (about) the Holocaust can not be exempted from holding the historical responsibility and the memory of it.
the Other can have wretching repercussions, it can only painfully wound. The Other is not a puppet or a marionette. On the contrary, the Other is there to be engaged with with full subjectivity, history, language, culture, and place of birth. The girls were emphatic in expressing this in our focus-group interview:

Aziza: Like us, when we told them that we came from Somalia, the early days.
Ossi: Nobody knew, nobody.
Aziza: Nobody knew what Somalia is, or except ...
Ossi: The war, the poverty, the famine.
Aziza: The media.
Ossi: They didn’t know Somalia. They even didn’t know that there is a country called Somalia, till the war broke out.
Amani: “Oh, you are different than the Somalians on television.”
Asma: That is what they told us.
Asma: Really different than the Somalians we have seen on TV.
Amani: What is not good, they don’t have an open mind spirit. Ok, they don’t try to question what they receive. So, if they don’t find the exact information on something that they don’t know, what they do is they depend on the media.
Aziza: I even have an example. One person came up to see me and asked me ‘do you really dress like that?’ talking about the way I was dressing when I came here. ‘Do you really dress like that when you were in your country?’
A female voice: It’s true.
Asma: No, we put underwear (petite culotte) and then we walk naked (laugh).
Aziza: And me I said, from my eyes I said “you making fun of me (mon queue), ah who do you think I am”, I said. “Listen, it is also existed the trousers and Jeans and all of that backhome. Do you think it is only here?” So, you see!

Within the dominant representation, students contend, Africa is stereotypically cited in war, genocide, awkwardness, and poverty terms. In the same focus-group interview, the girls re-articulated their encountered experience with the dominant groups and their representations of them and their continent Africa:

Ossi: Africa for them.
Asma: But we are more ...
Ossi: The forest, the jungle, the poverty, the war.
Samira: don’t forget the animals: the lion, the animals, the giraffes
Aziza: There is one person who told me also “do you live, when you were over-there (là-bas), do you live with lions?”

One has to take note, as African students did, of the fact that these negations of the African(s) subjectivities and humanities are by no means unique to the visual mediatic representation. The arts, the literary work, especially novels, and the daily newspaper are just few examples where Africa and Africans are ‘savage’ and primitively represented.

Amani: You know why they are saying what they are saying because in the tales which they are busy reading in the baby books (les petits livres). Ah, Maxime dans le Jungle (Maxim in the Jungle) ah. You know it is it is Ossi: Le Roi dans le Jungle (The King in the Jungle), Le Lion ( The Lion) Amani: it is the impression, and they think that we are a bunch of savages.

These impressions of savageness which are consciously and unconsciously fed by popular culture colonize people’s imagination whereby they are unable to imagine and see Africa and Africans otherwise. For example, the children of the West are too colonized to imagine that their peers who come from Africa can be as rich materially and culturally as they are, if not more in some cases. Some African students fled their homeland only because of civil unrest; leaving behind or bring with them a substantial cultural and material wealth.

Asma: They don’t know Africa the paradise on earth. They don’t know that there we were living like the …
A female voice: The kings.
Asma: Really like princess. But here it is not the same. They don’t even know that, they have no idea of that.
Aziza: Because over-there you know, c’est la vie, it is only because of the war did we have to move.
In an atmosphere of negativity and negation like the one African students just painted, to proclaim an African identity, as students unapologetically did, can only be a political statement, an act of resistance. If this is the case, taking up hip hop identity and learning Black English are statements affixed to the act of resistance. For hip hop identity and Black English are in themselves political statements which denounce their dehumanization through being inspired by the African being, who is not an imaginary essence. On the contrary, the African in the being is what she has become in her daily translation of what being (an African American or African Canadian, for example) means.

6.4. Forging a Separatist Culture: The virtue of being, however, has the social consequence of not being accepted. The moment of unacknowledgement, for me, is the moment when individuals and groups search for alternative identities, histories, cultures, and languages, which can be subversive and which reflect who they are. When people are blotted from the imaginary of the nation, they need to centralize themselves in order to be able to speak. They need to ‘forge separatist culture’ (Solomon, 1992) if they have to. They need to strategically essentialize (Spivak, 1990) themselves, their identities and politics to make sense of a world that certainly does not want to make any sense of them. When African students do not exist, and when they do, they are utterly negated or negatively imagined in mediatic representations, in arts productions, in the school curriculum, and in the publicly sanctioned school activities, it should not surprise us then that they stick to their own cultural, religious, and linguistic groups in public and private spaces.

In Marie-Victorin, African students undisputedly create their own communion by assembling together in the cafeteria for example or in playing basketball or soccer or even in classroom activities. The feeling of needing to forge safer inner communications among Africans nevertheless is influenced by an identifiable external force which has to do with precisely the negative
mediatic representations which create a 'too different to mix with' attitude on the part of students from the dominant culture.

Amani: *just live with your friends*, yah you are going to be with those who understand you.
Aziza: This is why, this is what explain why Somalis are always in their corner because they try in the other corner, they are not accepted. They are not, *they're not welcomed you know. They say, "Oh no, he is too different. Oh, he is from oh, he's from another place. He doesn't really, he doesn't know English."* You see things like that.
Asma: He is going to flee more quickly.
Aziza: This is why, this is why you know you go with your your, your Somalian friends because your are going to understand each other. You could speak the same language, you have the same mother tongue, this is more than good you see. Because they don't want to accept you because you are different, you don't speak English very well, you are immigrant, you know things like that.

What is noteworthy here are the ways in which language plays a major factor in demarcating social and group boundaries. Language, not being able to speak English, is an already exclusionary factor. However, when students are left out in the cold with no infrastructural support such as curriculum material and (Black) teacher representation, they still need to centralize themselves to be able to be. One strategy of doing so is by taking up what 'those' who are already in the 'center' do as a way of combating exclusion and the sense of alienation: do what Africans (this is to disrupt the eurocentric notion of Rome and Romans) do in Africa. Such may include learning English, dressing in normative way, and do what 'they' - those who already in the center - do academically. In short, *play the same game with the same rules in the same field*. "Je joue avec le système ou quoi!" (I play with the system or what!), declared Hassan. Samira, supporting Hassan's arguments, contended in the focus-group interview with the girls that:

(...)*en jouant leur jeu* (in playing their game), you know, I play their game. They tell me «*tu es belle*» (you are beautiful), "Oh, *merci beaucoup*" (oh, thanks very much). "You do that?" "oh yes." "Are you
going to be with me [as a fashion show partner]?” “No, thank you very much, but I already have someone else.” That is the game. They want to play the game.

Given, nevertheless, the hegemonic history of representation of Blacks and people of colour, ‘those’ who are in the ‘center’ of the imaginary of representation and the Nation are often white, male, and heterosexual (Henry et al. 1995; hooks, 1992; Collins, 1990; Carby, 1986, 1992). Taking up (at least in part) ‘their’ cultural practices, including in some cases academic success, brings us closer to the accusation of ‘acting white’ (Oggu, 1986) - I will address this in the next chapter. One final note before concluding is related to the notion that the forged separatist culture is not a luxurious conscious decision taken by students. On the contrary, I will argue, it is chiefly unconsciously pronounced where language, culture, and religion are important paradigms. Here, the history of exclusion, marginalization, and negation is significantly unarbitrary.

By and large, in conclusion then, the demarcated zones of comfort are unconsciously articulated. This articulation takes place complexly in the processes of encoding and decoding. When I, for example, do not need to utter or semantically say too much in order for the Other to understand me, there is then an already performed unconscious decoding of body, gender, race, and cultural language.

Hassan: But the way I treat the Other say Somalians from the Others who are from another race [whites for example] it is a bit different. For when I’m with a Somalian, I speak differently and we understand each other. But it is not in a vicious way this is different you see. But it is different the way I speak with this person, with this person in my culture. It is possible that we critique each other in a way or another, we speak in our tone and all that.

To speak, however, in ‘our’ tone or voice is to assume a history, culture, memory, and language which too assumes positionality, subjectivity, identity, and politics.
6.5. Conclusion:

This chapter was divided into two sections. The first dealt with the memories and histories of language learning in Africa as well as in Canada. In it, I addressed students’ relation to language, and sites of language learning. These sites included in particular popular culture and, especially, Black popular culture. By Black popular culture, I referred to music, T.V. programs, and movies. The second section introduced the ways in which Africa and Africans are culturally represented and imagined and the impact of this on the politics of forging separatist culture. Africa and Africans, I show, are either utterly negated or negatively represented which, in turn, is consequentially implicated in the processes of identity formation whose inaugurated moment is the identification of the sites where the Self -African youth- sees (at least in part) itself.
Let us reiterate IT: the unobliviousness of the language of ‘Black’ and ‘white’ in the discourse of African students thus far is as irrefutable as the politics behind it. This pellucidity is indeed stemming from students’ own consciousness of their racial, gender, sex and class social locations which, I have argued, in the case of immigrants, is a product of socialization, which itself is an outcome of displacement. In other words, what one is or what one has become is an accumulative history and memory that is built on her everyday interaction. Concretely, in this communicative everyday interaction, African students became aware of their particularly racial identity which was, and still is, implicated in how they socialized, and continue to socialize, their gendered, sexualized and classed identities.

Using my ethnographic gaze as a researcher, juxtaposed against their narratives, I want to argue in this chapter that African youth are already in the third space which is a product of the in-betweenness (that is, in-between culture, language, and belief systems) in which they find themselves, by virtue of being displaced subjects. I am depending to too great an extent on my ethnographic gaze, on youth performance in reaching my conclusions. In this third space, nonetheless, racial, gender, and sexual identities are articulated through linguistic and cultural communicative performances. In these performances, what students brought with them from Africa as cultural and linguistic memory and history are not (all) negated, by and large. On the contrary, they are performed concomitantly and in chorus with the new (Black)

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52 This is cited by a Somali speaker boy (in chapter 6) at the end of the focus group interview with the boys. It is a typical rap language usually cited at the end of a lyrical performance to declare an end to a soirée performance.
North American culture and linguistic practices. In fact, the 'old' no longer looks completely like the 'old', and this is a result of its dialectic relation between, to, and with 'new': the 'old' translates the 'new' and vice versa. I will discuss two incidents to elucidate these arguments. Before doing so, we will see the impact of blackness on students' identity formation: identification. Here, it is through language - speaking Black English - can I hypothesize for students' desire to be identified and to identify themselves as being 'Blacks'. Culture, gender, and sexual identities are also performed in this (third) space.

7.1. Possessing a Black Identity: Learning Black English: Identity as a process of identification and citation, I have argued, can only be accessed through performance. I have as well argued that African youths' linguistic and cultural performances are, indeed, citations of the language of 'Black' and 'white'. Put differently, when African students come to North America as displaced subjects, a significant number of whom are refugees, they are positioned and asked through overt and covert mechanisms and structures to racially fit somewhere. As I discussed them, these mechanisms include teachers and professorial representations - being all whites, curriculum - being exclusive and eurocentric, and mediatic representations - being negative and negating. In this section, I discuss the impact of this positionality, particularly in learning English as a second language. Being Black, I undisputedly conclude, is embroiled directly in learning Black English by African students. Through linguistic analysis, I will show first two, which are followed by other, features of Black English that exist in students' linguistic utterances: a) negative concord and b) the absence of the auxiliary be. I will start with the latter. Both features were spotted only in the interviews with younger females (15 years old or younger). This finding supports the argument that younger females are more impacted by hip hop identity than the older females which in turn influences their intensity of learning Black English as a second language. Regretfully however the data is limited to the interviews conducted in English, which are
fewer than the ones conducted in French, or moments of codeswitch. The collected data nonetheless is enough to bolster my arguments.

a) The absence of the auxiliary be as a linguistic phenomenon was, as already stated, detected in the girls’ discourses. In Black English, Labov (1972, ch. 3) documented, omitting the auxiliary be is a feature among others. This is a linguistic phenomenon whereby instead of saying ‘they are jumping’, one says ‘they jumping’. I detected nineteen occasions where the auxiliary be was omitted. Here they are: “they like jumping”, “no, it’s true because we like so mad”, “we like so bad”, “and they like listening”, “it’s not, we not actually nurses, but we like keeping on insulting people”, “and we like doing activities”, “they selfish”, “I just like laughing at languages”, “they so cool”, “everybody has opinion, these people they mental”, “Why? Ok, I don’t know ‘cause they stupid”, “all my friends we like laughing”, “oh and we like ‘oh yah, we playing basketball yah”, “I just laughing”, “and he is like ‘yah you my second wife’”, “and we like all fighting”, “that’s why, and we like running away from you”, “and we like you know, you know I was like ‘prenez la balle et jouez’”.

b) A number of studies (Labov, 1972; Goldstein, 1987) have also shown the negative concord to be a feature of Black English. This is where the negation is doubled as opposed to the ‘regular’ negation in - the commonly known - standard English. Consider this sentence form Labov (1972: 194):

Huey: And he said, ‘Nobody talks about my mother.’
Michael: Well I am not nobody; I am somebody. That’s what he said. ‘I am not nobody; I’m somebody.’

The phrase by Michael ‘I am not nobody’ would have been corrected in a regular school classroom to ‘I am nobody’ or ‘I am somebody’. Michael uttered what would be a norm in Black English. I detected this linguistic phenomenon in four occasions in my interviews with students. All four were also found in my interviews with the girls. The first: in talking about her physical education teacher whom she found unpleasant, Najat cited (italic added):
It's like everybody you know, all he cares about is his daughter you know. If somebody just dies or if I decide to shoot somebody you know, he is not doing nothing.

In the same interview, Najat again complained about her physical education teacher: "It's like 'Monsieur, you don't have no feeling you know"; and, thirdly, in talking about a group of African boys who was immersed in basketball and in producing rap and other Black cultural practices only to be located in see in opposition to doing well at the school, Najat contends "But they don't want like nothing to do with school. They hate the school, they do their own fun like playing basketball and dat all they care about." The fourth and final occasion is when a female cites:

I go 'no Monsieur. We ain't playing volleyball. I'm playing basketball.' And he goes, 'No.' I go 'Wha, too bad!' And we don't do nothing.

Alongside these two, other features of Black English were detected in students' narratives: distributive be. In her study, Lynn Goldstein (1987: 418) defined distributive be as "a form characteristic only of black English in which uninflected be is used to indicate qualities which are permittent rather than permanent." Goldstein gave the example of William who chatted away that "When I watch a movie, a scary movie, right, I be you know, I sometimes be thinking of it, you know, how you sometimes be scared."

I spotted the distributive be in four occasions in my interviews with the girls and in one occasion with the boys: 1) "He be like 'Oh, elle va être bien. Oh, elle vas être bien". 2) "I be saying this tha you know, just because I'm your daughter man you don't have to give me tha you know." 3) In this example, this female is talking about being absent for three days because she is celebrating Muslim's Eid of Ramadan53: "So, I be like staying three days. 'Bonjour', you

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53 In the month of Ramadan, Muslims fast all days of the month from sunrise to sunset. The Eid of Ramadan is a celebration of the end of this month by visiting and exchanging gifts among relatives and friends.
know,' madame'. 'Where were you?' I was like 'Madame, I was celebrating. You have a problem? let's go.' 4) Sam: 'I be back.'

I also noted some lexical expressions that are specific to Black English. For example, expressions such as 'he is wicked', 'he is bad', or 'he is nasty' are in fact used in Black English to signify exactly the opposite of their literal signification. 'He is wicked' is indeed a compliment for being 'so good'. Najat in the following excerpt is addressing the difference between the new student council which is predominantly white and the old which was multicultural and multiracial, she cites in English (bold added):

Last year was like mostly multicultural. They didn't know each other and then they have wicked ap, you know, things. This year is like yak.

In the same interview, Najat talked about her white geography teacher (who was loved not only by her, but by all of the students I interviewed, see chapter 5):

I was like, 'Monsieur, I wish you can buy your wife a (profile?). 'Where?' 'At Eaton's', and then he goes 'Ok, I'm gonna do that' (laugh). He is so cool, he is so wicked.

Added to the thus discussed Black English features is a phonological feature that I took note of, which I observed in the boys' narratives. The boys, one has to emphasize, are influenced more by rap stylistic production. As a rapper, and in his typical rap style, Sam introduced the focus-group interview which I conducted with the boys by taking on the role of the MC (Master of the Ceremony) or the DJ (Disk-Jockey). In rap lyrical performance, given its spontaneity, the rapper usually checks the mic: Sam: "One two, one two, mic check. A'ait, a'ait, a'ait." 'A'ait' is in fact 'all right'. Phonologically, a'ait [aːait] is

54 Admittedly however this observation and finding is based on my own intuition and my own knowledge of Black English (see also DeBose, 1992, for using this methodology).
pronounced à la Black English. The expression ‘a’ait’ is noted in several occasions in the boys’ narratives.

The last feature of Black English is linked to what can be defined as ‘speaking through the female body’. This is a phenomenon that I observed where the female body is utilized concomitantly with the verbal utterance: one claps and snaps one’s fingers, moves one’s head left and right, and utters a sentence like ‘excuse me!’, with a stress at the end of ‘excuse’ which will then sound like ‘excuuoze’ [eksyoooz]. This is done to question the credibility of the interlocutor, what she/he says, or just to “give attitude”. The following is cited in English in my conversation with Najat:

Awad: (...) One thing I noticed is that you speak some kina (Awad snaps his finger), kana attitude.
Najat: That’s like when somebody gives you attitude and that I actually I wanna go and beat ’m up but, some of them do, but ’m not like that

Speaking through the female body is indeed a phenomenon in and through which race is performed. Here again, race is not an abstract category. It is, on the contrary, a communicative performance which expresses people’s desire for belonging. When Najat snaps her fingers and gives attitude à la Black, she is citing her own blackness - taking on the role of being Black55. Race is then a performative category as much as gender, class, and I add geographical space (see Butler, 1990, 1997 for gender and class).

To explain how a geographical space can be performed, I take one example from my interviews with the boys. For example, while having dinner at the moment of the focus-group interview with the boys, some of us discovered that Musa and his roommates had no forks, they ate with their hands. “How do you eat Spaghetti with your hand?”’, some of us wondered.

55 In an another episode, Najat also took on the role of ‘being’ Black and being a resource in music and Black “stuff”. She cites (in English): “Sometimes I hang out with friends you know, and my friends are like when white people wanna come and I will start talking to them, and here it goes: “hey, you guys wanna hang out with us?” And they hang out with us, and I will be like teaching them how to do reggae, how to do Black stuff you know.”
Juma: We don’t have forks, you know (laugh).
Sam: Sometimes you’ve to use your hand you know.
Awad: Oh yah?
Sam: Use your hand.
A male voice: African tradition you know (laugh).

Africa in this example is performed cultural entity: in terms of its customs and traditions. In passing, geographical space can also be performed through language, such as speaking English with a British, Ghanaian, or Australian accent or speaking French with a Parisian accent. As a corollary, Africa, Britain, Ghana, and Australia are not abstract spaces, they are within us when we speak and behave. When ‘I’, for example, speak Parisian French in Canada, I will send my interlocutor somewhere else: Paris.

As found in students’ linguistic utterance, the impact of Black English is quite prominent in the boys, across age, narratives and the younger girls. The former however seem to be influenced more by the stylistic performance of rap language. Rap, given the pleasure of listening to and given African youth’s desire of being (Black, that is), becomes a medium that introduces African students to Black English, Black talk. The processes of learning English as a second language now have a target other than the ‘standard’ English. Learning is now implicating identities, desires, and above all politics. To speak now is say I - am.

7.2. Learning Black English: Revisiting the Impact of Rap: We have briefly seen in chapter 6 the influence of Black popular culture in learning rap style and language i.e. Black style and thus Black English. I want to advance this argument further by contending that there are several levels of linguistic analysis that will help us to decipher African students’ desire for identification with and to blackness. In this section, I mostly use stylistic and lexico-semantic expressions as a way of analyzing this desire. Here, again, is the second example cited in chapter 6:
Sam: (laugh) I don't rap man, c'mon give me a break. (laugh) Yo. a'ait a'ait you know, we just about to finish the tape and all dat. Respect to my main man. So, you know, you know wha 'm mean, 'm just represenin Q7. One love to Q7 you know wha 'm mean and all my friends back in Q7. Even though you know I haven't seen them for a long time you know. I still I got love for them you know what 'm mean. Stop with the tapin boy.

One male voice: kick the free style (boys are talking in Somali).
Sam: so, yo you want me to record it again.
Awad: I don't want it, I don't want it.
Sam: why not.

(20 minutes of Gangster rap music, Cool J, Boys II Men, Brandy. Jamal performs as a DJ while songs are playing to emphasize expressions, lines, or notes. Jamal: "Kim Juma, live put the lights on. Wordap"; speaking in Somali).
One male voice: Yo, this is Shapir. I am trying to say peace to all my niggers, all my bitches from a background that everybody in the house. So, yo, chill out and this is how we gonna kick it bye and with that pie. All right, peace yo.
One male voice: peace and one love.
Sam: a'ait this is Sam repres'in AQA XX where it's born, repres'in you know wha 'm mean? I wonna say whassup to all my niggers, you know, peace one love. You know wha 'm mean, Q7 represin for ever. Peace.

(rap music).
Jamal (as a DJ): crank it man coming up (rap music).

Of interest in this excerpt is the citation of rap language: 'Respect for my main man', 'represenin Q7', 'kick the free style', 'peace out, wardap', 'I'm outa here', 'yo, this is Shapir', 'I am trying to say peace to all my nigger, all my bitches', 'so, yo chill out', 'and this is how we gonna kick it', 'peace yo', 'peace and one love', 'a'ait, this is Sam repres'in AQA', 'I wonna say whassup to all my niggers'. These boys are certainly influenced by rap lyrics, syntax and morphology and, in particular, gangster rap style. In rap lyrical style, by and large, one starts his/her performance with 'checking the mic': 'One two, one two, check mic check'. Then, the rapper either cites an already composed lyric or otherwise 'kicks a free style' - i.e. being spontaneous; rappers usually begin the public performance by introducing themselves - 'yo this is Shapir' and thanks his 'main man' - his best friend - who often introduces him/her to the public.
In gangster rap, however, one doesn’t only represent oneself, but a web of geo-
physical and metaphorical spaces and collectivities which are demarcated by
people and territorial spaces: ‘represenin Q7’, ‘a’ait, this is Sam repres’in AQA’. At
the end when the citation or the free style is completed, one again thanks his
‘main man’ and ‘gives peace out’ or ‘shad out’ (shout out) to his/her people.

Rap for these boys is a ‘language’ that expresses human and cultural
experience of diasporic North American Black peoples; and their identification
with it is, first, generational, i.e., it is related to their stage of life - youth - and,
second, to their lived experience. Such include, among others, police brutality,
human degradation, and the experience of being positioned and thus treated as
an involuntary minority56 (Ogbu, 1983, 1990), which in itself can be read as an
act of racism. This is what Jamal and Sam have to say concerning their relation
to rap in our focus-group interview with the boys:

Jamal57: Rap is created to self-express. It is for this reason that rap, Black
American created the rap to self express, how do I say it? their ideas, their
problems. But, if we are influenced by rap it is because we are young. It is
for that that we have linkages with/to rap. If we could integrate
ourselves into rap, it is because they [rappers/Black Americans?] speak
about or they have the same problems we have. This is why we can
integrate in rap, you know wha ‘m mean?

56 Although African students are positioned and treated as an involuntary minority and, precisely, my research
is about the impact of this positionality on their lives, they articulated a ‘language’ of voluntary minority in
two occasions. First, in judging the education system in Canada as they experienced it, we have seen that their
judgment was based on their experience in their national homeland (Ogbu, 1983); and second, in comparing
their experience with the Canadian and the U.S. born Blacks:

Juma: I think that we [continental Africans] are more lucky, we are more lucky than they [Canadian and U.S.
born Blacks] are or what? Because we were born somewhere, and we believe in something over there. (...) We
are more lucky than them. (...) Sam: we are from the mother land, you know wha ‘m mean?

Juma and Sam are indeed addressing the rupture of the historical continuity that occurred because of slavery and
the slave trade. The question, for me, is not being lucky or not but, more importantly, what kind of historical
memories are available that help one to read his or her present social conditions. Continental Africans are only
‘lucky’ because they have an historical continuity. However, even this is problematic given the history of
colonialism and the continual imperialist intervention in Africa.

57 Jamal is an 18 year old boy from Djibouti. He is one of the students who dropped out of school. He is now
holding a job while going to school part-time.

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Sam: *Wardap* (laugh).

It is worth mentioning that Jamal is now a DJ for CIUT, a local Toronto radio station, where he airs French as well as English rap lyrics. It seems, however, that the boys, especially ‘Shapir’, took on and articulated, in some instances, disturbing gendered roles that can only send us to further explorations.

7.2.1. Gender and Rap: Obviously, not all forms of appropriated and cited language by these boys are there to be uncritically engaged with. Some of it is certainly horrifying, alarming, dismaying, and shocking. The boys not only used language violently, but abused it. They, as well, posited an extremely horrifying category of masculinity. The latter, as it is also often the case with gangster rap, is indeed equated to how ‘tough’ one can or should be. How ‘tough’ one is, can, or should be is articulated in part in abused and abusing language, including name calling - ‘bitches’ and ‘nigger’. If the argument that these boys are influenced by gangster rap is veracious and supported, which it is, then ‘all my nigger and my bitches’ is not coincidentally performed and cited.

The sexist language ‘bitches’, which is been challenged by female rappers like Queen Latifa or Salt ‘n Pepper, is indeed a product of a public space that is predominated by men (Ebron, 1991). It appears that some African boys sorrowfully and unproblematically take up and perform this ‘language’. This however doesn’t go unchallenged. In fact, a number of male and female students show reservations against this sexist linguistic and cultural practice. Omer, for example, in my individual interview with him clearly states that:

It [rap] is *cool* right? You also watch well the songs, but I don’t really like the people, the values of *hip hop*; always insults of, although it is a small group you see, they always speak of violence like *bitches* and things like that. I don’t really like that. That is why I don’t listen very often to hip hop, but I only look around.
Omer’s narrative points to an internal struggle of agency of desiring parts of hip hop and rap and disliking other parts. (Although Omer is not a permanent dweller in rap quarters and spaces, he is however a permanent resident in reggae ones.) I also found this internal struggle within female narratives. For example, even though she produces rap herself, Najat clearly contends (in English): “you know some rappers are like so rude.” Other female narratives as well name this internal subjective struggle of desire:

Samira: Ok, *hip hop*, yes I know that everyone likes *hip hop*. They dress in certain way, no? The songs go well. But, they are really, they have expressions like “*fuck*”, “*bitches*” etc. Sorry, but there is representation (...).
Amani: No no, that’s the wrong side of *hip hop*.
Asma: That’s *rap*.
Amani: *Hip hop*, listen listen, *hip hop* is poetry. Don’t ever insult *rap ‘cause it’s a poetry. It’s something *alife*, it’s it’s *well done*. But you know Awad *there is all kind of styles*. There are many styles, out of which you have to choose one or two.

At stake in Amani’s remarks is the notion of having different styles of rap and hip hop which puts the question of agency in the forefront. That is, there is an agency in what one wears, says and performs. However, one has to point to the hegemony and to the structures that influence, and in some cases inculcate, how one structures one’s life and desire. Part of the hegemonic structures which impact the distribution of capital and resources and which works at the individual unconscious level are the ways in which the capitalist market’s rules and regulations function. As individuals, it seems to me, we hardly stop to ask the question: why are we consuming what we are consuming? Is it because of an individual pleasure or is it because we have to, because we don’t want to be left out and behind?

Being already within capitalist apparatus, rap itself is connected and impacted by the capitalist market which in turn is related to the ways in which people buy and consume it. Rap, in other words, as an art and musical production did not transcend the rules and regulation of the capitalist ways of
consumption. In these rules and regulations, the mere thought of producing a second album depends on, first, how many copies were sold of the first album and, secondly, what were the themes in it. In the following excerpt, Hassan for example thinks that in some cases (gangster rap for instance), rap violates some parts of Black peoples' lived experience by centralizing violence and 'toughness' as a theme of celebration. For Hassan, what to buy is a responsibility located within the buyer. He contended that:

[Occasionally] rap has an inappropriate language for the life in which we live, a world of violence and all that, even if what they do is to sell music. They are in no need for someone to give them moral courage (laugh). Seriously! They want, they want to sell 4 million dollars. They want to do it, even if they put violence (...). But the person who buys has to make the difference between what he should buy and what he shouldn't buy. [Nonetheless] Yes, I think it's influential. A lot of people are influence by them [rap and hip hop]. There are a lot of people who are influenced.

By and large, the most influenced by rap are the boys and the younger girls. The students who re/cite and re/produce rap, I observed, are the boys, across age, and the younger girls. The older girls, on the other hand, oscillate between different genres of music: national traditional music, Rhythm and Blues (R&B), house, techno, and soft rock, among others. They keep an agency of 'liking' and 'disliking':

58 House and techno music however, because they are socially read as 'white' music, brought to these girls the accusation of acting white (Ogbu, 1986). Using his ethnographic gaze, Omer observes that: «But first of all, Amani she is different from the others like Ossi, Asma, and Aziza. They are Somali of the, how is it called, house, you see, techno. (...) Techno is the music tchtchtchich like that you see. They listen to these music there whereas Amani listen to R&B, slow music like Whitney Houston, Toni Braxton (...). Amani, she always liked R&B music, Whitney Houston. So, she prepared, she really chanted you see.» Listening to R&B or house is not exclusive, as Mercer would have argued (1994). On the contrary, one can listen to R&B, soft rock, reggae, and rap all at the same time. Of interest are the notes I took on several occasions in the school where Amani was invited to sing, particularly R&B music. One of these occasions was the African History Month where Amani sang Toni Braxton's Unbreak my Heart. I have also written in my diary that 'this performance by Amani was an illustration of race performance, where she did not only recite Braxton's song but, more significantly, she took on the role of being Black.'
Amani: (...) Don’t ever insult rap ‘cause it’s a poetry. It’s something alive, it’s it’s well done. But you know Awad there is all kind of styles. There are many styles, out of which you have to choose one or two. (...) Aziza: Ok, I might listen to songs, some songs. Some songs I don’t like, [others, I] really really like. There are some songs that I don’t like, and some songs that I like you know.

This agency, for Omer, expresses a maturity that is more disseminated within females than males.

Omer: (...) Girls (...) always think. If you watch a 15 year old girl and 15 year old boy, if they think about the same thing, the 15 year old girl she is more mature than the 15 year old boy. Always girls are more mature than the guys who are of the same age.

Acknowledging the female maturity, whether it is read as an idealization of femaleness or not, is in itself a gendered performance which pronounces the difficult situation within which the African female body is located. This location, as I will discuss in the subsequent sections, is governed by the socially constructed traditions, including religion. In conclusion, thus far, the impact of Black popular culture - including rap, hip hop, and other genres of music - on African students’ lives - including ways of learning and being - does not need any further proof. Listen to the boys in the following extract (bold added):

Awad: But do you listen to rap for example. I noticed that there are a number of students who listen to rap ah? Is ...
Sam: It is not just us who listen to rap, everybody listens to rap. It is new
Awad: But do you think that that influences how you speak, how ...
Mukhi: How we dress, how we speak, how we behave.

Nonetheless, whether being a boy or a girl, old or young, eclectic or totalizing in taking up rap and other ‘Black’ musical production, African students demonstrated a desire for identification with and to blackness.

7.3. Identity and Identification: A Question of Desire: So far, I showed through linguistic analysis that African students were learning Black English as a second
language through taking up, citing, reciting, producing, and reproducing rap language and lyrics and other ‘Black’ musical productions - R&B and soul, for example. We have as well seen the impact of gender and age on what has been learned. Hence, learning does have a politics of embodiment: what we learn is influenced by who we are: influenced by our embodied identities: race, gender, class, age, ability, and sexuality. By politics of embodiment, I am referring to those webs of structures, configurations, and identities that impact the processes of learning - knowledge encoding/decoding - and the outcome of these processes - knowledge production. In this section, I seek to decipher these identities by looking at the impact of desire for representation and the desire to belong on African students’ identity formation which again have significant effects on what they learn.

The category of desire in students’ identity formation is of great significance because it points to the notion that one invests in where one sees oneself. For example, as Hassan pointed out, why would a Black/African person invest in or play hockey? An African student has a myriad of reasons, on the other hand, to play and even appropriate basketball as a ‘Black’ sport. Such reasons include, among others, first, the affordability of basketball equipment which includes a net and a ball and, secondly, the representation of blackness in the basketball courts and among basketball players - including continental African players like Manute Ball and Hakim Olajuwon. In response to my question: why African students play predominantly basketball and soccer, Hassan explores these issues of desire and investment. He explains:

What is good for them [white Canadians] is not good for me. They [African students] liked basketball because (...) it is the only sport where you only need a ball and a net. (...) You don’t need things that would cost four thousand dollars to go to a place that would cost two hundred dollars every month (laugh). (...) Moreover, they are influenced everywhere because a lot of basketball players are Blacks; (...) there aren’t other people, how do I say it? people who are African or Black who play hockey. So, why that, why to adventure in this sport [hockey]?
The question of desire and investment in sports and basketball in particular is also true not only for learning Black English, but as well for taking up hip hop culture and identity. That is, African students' identity formation was anchored by their desire for identification with North American blackness; a desire performed through learning Black English language and taking up hip hop culture and identity. Put differently, why would African youth invest in white Canada, a Canada that seeks to relegate them to the margin and utterly negate them from the imaginary of the Nation?

Let us address first the contention that identification is the starting point for identity formation. In their earlier days, for example, when African students had just immigrated and settled in North America, they identified African American culture and language as viable sites for investment, yearn, and identification. The followings are excerpts from different interviews:

1) Amani: We have to wonder why we try to really follow the model of the Americans who are Blacks? Because when you search for yourself, search for identification, you search for someone who reflects you, with whom you have something in common.
   Aziza: And of course ...
   Amani: What is the grand difference between the Blacks [in Canada] and those who are in America? We have the same past. We have the same history.
   A female voice: Plus the race.
   Amani: And we have the same race.

2) Hassan: Yes yes, African students are influenced [by rap and hip hop] because they want to, yes they are influenced probably a bit more because it is the desire to belong may be.
   Awad: Belong to what?
   Hassan: To a group, belong to a society, to have a mode/fashion; you know, the desire to mark oneself, the desire to make, how do I say? To be part of a rap society, you see. It is like getting into rock and roll or heavy metal [for whites].

3) Awad59: But do you listen to rap music?

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59 This interview was conducted in English.
Najat: Yah, I listen to rap, reggae all kina music, except for classic, heavy metal, and country [typically ‘white’ music].
Awad: No way?
Najat: Not my type.
Awad: Forget it (laugh).
Najat: Not my type, not my type.
Awad: Period. Ahm do you actually, ahm you don’t like them because you kina of heavy ...?
Najat: Heavy [metal] oh God. First of all you don’t make any sense, and then they like coming blablabla. I can just go in there and just go blablabla, and then my head .. yak.

4) Mukhi: We identify ourselves (on s’identifie) more with the Blacks of America. But, this is normal, this is genetic (sic). We can’t, since (lorsque) we live in Canada, we can’t identify ourselves with whites or country music you know (laugh). We are going to identify ourselves on the contrary with people of our colour, (...) our life style you know. We are not rich, for example, so we can not identify ourselves with rich people.

5) Aziza: Ok, ahm me what made me feel good when I came here is that I saw ahm, when I see the Blacks who come from America or Canada, I tell myself or rather I used to tell myself, they are Blacks like me, they have the liberty. They are they are chic, they are good/beautiful and all that. They are dressed up really differently, you see things like that. It is like that that I used to see myself waw. But I never saw, I never thought that they also were living in misery like racism and all that. They were pushed around every time. For example, they go to look for work, he is going to be pushed by you know [whites?], I never thought of that. I always think of the positive side. I told myself ‘Oh, super, they are Blacks like me, my brothers and my sister’, you see. ‘They have the liberty. Oh, waw it is super’, you see. I am going to their side and all that. But also I never understood that they were also living in misery. It was always something hidden that they were as well living with racism. And me, I used to tell myself like when I came here, I have never thought that I will be a victim of racism. But I was.

Evidently, despite the oversimplification in uttering notions of ‘gene’ by Mukhi as a way of connecting Blacks and ‘liberty’ by Aziza as a phenomenon that Blacks experience and enjoy, the moment of identification is patently pronounced across gender and age. Aziza’s narrative is of a particular interest at this juncture for three reasons. First, it underpins the argument that the moment of identification is quite significant in the processes hereafter of
identity formation. Once Aziza named blackness as a site of interpellation, i.e. once blackness interpellated her, blackness became the Other that entered the Self, only to become part of it. Springing from this, secondly, is the notion of racism being part of the processes of becoming Black. In other words, Aziza’s discovery of the Black plight in North America⁶⁰ (U.S. and Canada) is indeed part of her own discovery of her own blackness and the impact of the latter on who she identifies with, which markets she can or is allowed to enter and participate in, which doors are opened and which doors are closed, and what she can or does learn, and how?

Thirdly, Aziza’s sentence “when I see the Blacks who come from America or Canada, I tell myself or rather I used to tell myself, they are Blacks like me, they have the liberty” is of particular significance. It points to a moment of being. Her phrase ‘or rather I used to tell myself’ displaces something that has become a history and names an accumulative memory and experience whereby what ‘I’ used to tell myself has become part of my reality and being now. In other words, I became part of what I used to naively tell myself about: Blacks are my brothers and sisters.

7.4. Identity and Identification: Hip Hop and the Politics of Embodiment: In the aforecited quotation, Aziza observed that “They [Black youths?] are dressed up really differently.” This observation articulates the gaze of an ethnographer who is interpellated by the camouflage and the collage of hip hop dress which makes it, precisely, different from the so-called mainstream fashion. Here, I want to decipher this by looking at the impact of hip hop in African students’

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⁶⁰ Omer argues that the plight of Black peoples in North America, across gender, is worst than whites, including white women. Even though Blacks and white women are both in socially disadvantaged positions, yet white women, he argues, can be found in principal, vice-principal and managerial and top positions, but Black women and men, save for rare exceptions, are non-existent in these positions:

Omer: “Even even women, white women, you see they are vice-president, president, you see. Do you see any Black in these positions? This is not equality. You see even Blacks are worst than women, than white women. Look, this is what I am talking about, you don’t see a Black person as a vice-principal while you see two hundred, wherever you go in high schools, you will see plenty of white women who are principles, or vice-principles. Or, you can also see two women principle and vice-principle. Do you see Blacks as principles?”
lives and the play of gender and age in how their choices came about: the politics of embodiment.

To begin, hip hop is an identity marker that is governed by desire, history, and Black fashion. It is, however, on the other hand, posited within the capitalist market and consumption, as was also the case with rap before it. Hip hop dress is a camouflage of fashion that is primarily based on baggy fashion: baggy trousers, T. shirts, shirts, and baggy sports cloths. Hip hop fashion, in short, is a 'cut 'n mix' (Gilroy, 1987) of pieces of famous trademarks which are collaged in casual but elegant order. Each piece is a statement in itself. But, because they are over-priced, African students stretch their financial limits in putting together these pieces.

Omer: [Hip hop fashion] is only baggy; no pants up to here, just normal. It is baggy but normal with basketball jackets [with trademark] like Polo and things like that, which have become à la mode you see. So, on the one hand, it is a bit gentleman and, on the other, a bit hip hop. It is mixed you see. It is mixed. The vesto on hip hop side like Polo, you see, costs something like 100, 110, 130. It is expensive, but with quality. That is how you dress. (...) My problem is to buy pants, cloths you see. Now I want to buy a Polo jacket which costs 125 dollars at the Bay [a local chain of stores].

Other students, however, contested the need to buy exorbitantly expensive clothes and even the motives behind it. For Hassan, for example, one does not need to buy a piece of clothing for 80 dollars when they can buy it for 8 dollars.

Hassan: You don't need to buy something for 80 dollars. You need to buy something for 8 dollars. Even if it is beautiful, it is convenable, you understand what I mean? (...) because there are a number of philosopher who say that appearance counts, it is our society. (...) I don't dress for other people. I don't think of other people to accept me when I dress.

Not to think of other people, feminists and anti-racists have argued (Collins, 1991; Dei, 1996), is a luxury only those in privileged positions can

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afford. This is not to say that Hassan or any other African student is in a position of privilege; here, discourses should be separated from individual social position. Hassan is discursively locating himself in a position of power that has no materialization in his everyday life. He is in fact socially located at the opposite pole of his discourse.

Hip hop fashion, again like rap lyrics, is as well a racially gendered practice; a practice that is mostly found among African boys and younger girls. As it is found in African students' narratives, hip hop is a 'Black' fashion linked to youthfulness which is also utilized as a self-marker, a signifier for blackness.

Omer: It is called hip hop because it is a fashion, all Blacks dress like that whether you are Haitian or African, all Black dress like that. (...) When we are young, we dress different you see. When we are adult, we dress different. So, only only to see, within the same group, to mark/recognize each other (pour se reconnaître).

Hip hop dress coupled with Black English are in fact two important signifiers in the processes of unity among Blacks. To dress hip hop and to speak Black English is to claim an identity: a Black identity. In my individual interview with her, Aziza contends that Black peoples/youth need both hip hop fashion and Black English:

More because they try to stick together you know. To stay together, they need to preserve their own language, their own culture, their own fashion (habit). (...) When two Black peoples say to each other "yo whassup? Ya ya yo wadab ye ye?" They are going to say things like that, they understand each other. They are like this because they are Blacks you see. On the other hand, when you speak to a white person, (...) he is not going to be comfortable like he will be with his Black brother.

However, it is in deconstructing hip hop fashion as put on by African students do we commence to see multilevels to it. It is a gendered fashion that involves the younger girls and the boys across age. As they already oscillated in their musical taste, the older girls posited the same phenomenon in their garment taste. What they wear ranges from elegant middle class, to Parisian
fashion, to fragments of hip hop clothes, to national traditional dress on the appropriate occasions such as Multicultural Day.

Even though they identify and define blackness as a site for identification, the older girls have an eclectic approach to fashion. That is, there is no totalized approach to blackness as it seems to be the case with the boys and the younger girls. Blackness is understood as an inclusive category that can engulf a number of styles and fashions. It seems that the older girls, by and large, have a liberal discourse whereby “dresses are for everyone” and thus it is up to the individual choice and taste to put on whatever pleases her. The question of choice was emphasized time and again. The following is a fragment of their liberal discourse: “it is just a choice”, “clothes are for everyone. Everyone can put on [clothes] Black, white, Asians, all you see”, “Clothes are for everyone. It is a choice that we made you know, I don’t wanna I don’t wanna dress like that. I wanna rather dress like this you see. It is just a choice. It is it is nothing more nothing less. It is a choice.”

These narratives point to a naiveté in the comprehensibility of what Barthes (1967/1983) calls ‘complex languages’ - fashion and garment. Since, Barthes explains, garments have no linguistic verbal utterance, they are always already open to signification and, moreover, given the different positionalities from which we signify, this only complicates the signification itself. As a corollary, to contend that clothes are for everyone is a contention that has no understanding of the politics of embodiment and, even more significant, does not understand the symbolic semiological signification that fashion (hip hop for example) has. The collage of fashion that is commonly known as hip hop dress is connected, in the semiological reading, to blackness as much as rasta, rap, reggae, Jazz, Blues, dreadlocks, and braids are read as ‘Black’ lyrics, and fashions.

In their fashion, the older girls are impacted to great extent by, first, European and, secondly, by ‘mainstream’ North American fashion. By taking
up forms of the dominant fashion, mostly European and Parisian\textsuperscript{61}, which is read in its semiological and social signification as ‘white’ fashion, the girls are deferring and displacing the North American tension between ‘Black’ and ‘white’ somewhere else: Europe. Europe, however, in terms of representation and imaginary, up to this historical moment, is ‘white’. Nonetheless, Europe is somewhere else; somewhere else - including Paris with its Parisian French - that fascinates not only the girls but North America itself. Deferring and displacing the North American ‘Black’ and ‘white’ tension, the girls are subjectively arguing for a non-totalized category of blackness. They nevertheless contended time and again for the need to play the same game, with the same rules, within the same dominant territories and fields of white people: «we have to play their game. You know [what?] I play their game», Samira emphatically confirmed. One of these fields is fashion. They played the female gendered role in the fashion shows of the school and in fact they were considered la beauté of these shows.

However, deferring and displacing the North American ‘Black’ and ‘white’ tension by taking up mainstream and European clothes, for example, was more wounding in the girls’ relation with other North American Blacks. They were in fact accused by the boys and other Black peers of acting white\textsuperscript{62}. Here, acting white is understood as a phenomenon whereby Black cultural practice is translated by African youth as oppositional social, cultural, and even academic practice to ‘whites’ ways of being (see also Ogbu, 1986). Blackness therefore becomes an exclusive category.

\textsuperscript{61} In fact, at the moment of the focus group interview with the girls, they were looking at the French version of Elle magazine.

\textsuperscript{62} Unfortunately, when it comes to ‘acting white’ academically, some boys took on basketball and hip hop identity in opposition to doing well at the school: «But they [the group of African boys who was immersed in basketball and in producing rap] don’t want like nothing to do with school. They hate the school, they do their own fun like playing basketball and dat all they care about», Najat cited (in English). Here, acting white is understood as a social phenomenon where Black cultural practice is translated by these African boys as oppositional practice to doing well academically or that Black culture is not related to schooling.
Aziza: (...) When I put on clothes, there are some people, there are some Somalians who tell me ‘Aziza why do you dress like white people?’ I say, ‘I don’t. First of all’, I say, ‘there is no such a thing which says that these pants are white, these sweaters are for whites, you see. (...) When people tell me that [I act white], I start to get mad; seriously. You see; I try to explain to them 'listen, clothes are for everyone. There is no such a thing as white clothes, it doesn’t matter to dress black, OK. There are whites in my neighbourhood who dress like Blacks. They put on large jeans, corkscrew, you know, big coats, you know; sport things and all that you see. Clothes are for everyone. It is a choice that we made you know, I don’t wanna I don’t wanna dress like that. I wanna rather dress like this you see. It is just a choice. It is it is nothing more nothing less. It is a choice.

The contradiction in this excerpt is in the fact that although Aziza is ethnographically and semiologically aware of the fact that whites can and indeed do dress like Blacks, she refuses to acknowledge that there is a separate fashion category that can be called ‘Black fashion/cloth’. Nevertheless, the girls are cognizant and familiar with the reality that the very category they refuse to acknowledge - Black fashion - is the same category upon which they are judged and positioned by the dominant groups - read whites. They therefore see the notion of reading the body and garment representation as a representation of who we are as a problematic notion because this is where racism can and in fact does start, or so they contended. In the following quotation, Amani is reiterating a question I asked:

Amani: You [Awad] said, let us suppose that I don’t know you [the girls], right?
Awad: Yes.
Amani: So, when I see you [the girls] like that, and I don’t know you as girls who were born here [Canada], who are racially Black with hair, hands, you are completely identified by me. This already influences me [to know] who you [the girls] are. So, this is really judgment. You think you know the being of this person.
Awad: No, it is not at all that. What I am trying to say is that there are some aspects of racism in it, whites usually.
Amani: (...) That explains why whites react like that. (...) [They] Don’t try to know who you are. They are going to judge instead of knowing you. This is the point. (...) You see that is the problem with Canadians. Instead
of knowing you, instead of asking you questions, instead of knowing the response to their questions, they judge.

For me, the female musical and fashion oscillation is a product of the enigmatic position they found themselves in. On the one hand, they have their own desires, but, on the other, these desires are conditioned. The female agency itself, whether in Africa or in Canada, is governed by the socially constructed gendered identity. In this identity, her body is already prescribed in certain traditions. Such include the notion that women are cultural, religion and language keepers (Heller, 1995, personal communication).

7.5. Performing Gender: Thus far, the play of gender and age in students' degree of identification with 'Black' cultural and linguistic paradigms is evident. In this section, I revisit this by looking at the ways in which traditions are written in the female body which in turn influence how they articulate their desires. The boys apparently are enjoying the leisure of different forms of North American and African patriarchal and heterosexual structures. This leisure puts less weight on the boys' shoulders when translating the new North American context. In other words, they have less 'stuff' to brood and worry about which translates in 'going out' more often and engaging what the new context has to offer - including dating. The boys, by and large, accentuate their (mutual) respect for the African woman (in Africa). They, nonetheless, have enjoyed, and continue to enjoy, a patriarchal social position, and not unproblematically reinscribe these identities through the discursive space they put forth:

Musa: But we had, we also had the respect between women and men in Africa.
Sam: That's it.
Musa: But here [in Canada] there is no respect between women and men; we did we did.
A male voice: That is the milieu, that is the milieu.
Musa: Yes, we had the religion which plays a very important role. Everyone respects the other, the young respected the old, the old respected the young. The family respected the father.

Aside from stating that there is no respect between men and women in Canada, Musa emphasizes religion and the father as a prescriptive discursive space that governs people’s lives and a figure to be respected, respectively. Not to cite the mother as the other important figure, if not the most important figure in their lives because most of the students I interviewed live whether by themselves or with their single mothers, is to reinscribe oneself in a web of patriarchal discourse that can only make problematic how they as males relate to the female body. Concerning religion, what Musa does not articulate are the ways in which the female body is written in these religious discourses and frameworks.

Indeed, the female narratives, on the opposite pole, emphasize the body as a central site of desire: fashion, cosmetics, hair, or even virginity. Before starting my focus group interview with them, for example, the girls were looking at the French version of Elle fashion magazine. In a ‘typically’ female mode (see McRobbie, 1993), this is what can be heard on tape (all in English):

Amani: Do you like it? I like it.
Aziza: This is nice; that is nice.
A female voice: And this too.
A female voice: Oh not the skirt, you know. What kind of a woman? when you do.
A female voice: And of course, you have to have.
A female voice: Like me of course, thank you.
A female voice: The shoes. That doesn’t (Somali) lights and cloths for your head (Somali) and stuff like that ....

The female discussion about fashion comes as no surprise. A number of studies have shown the rococo-relation between teenagers and fashion, cosmetics, and other ‘typically’ female subculture (McRobbie, 1994, 1976/1993; Amati-Talai and Wulff, 1995). In my study, it is (the Islamic) religion that seems to be a central reference on what the girls can do, or should do with their
bodies. For reasons beyond the scope of the study, religion does not seem to be applied the same way for the boys. It is worth mentioning, nevertheless, patriarchal and heterosexual structures as underpinning paradigms for this gendered body surveillance (see also Foucault, 1985). The girls, by and large, are caught in the middle between what the new Canadian context offers in terms of personal freedom - including the control over their bodies - and the prescribed behavioural patterns that the Islamic religion cite. The generational conflict is also of particular significance. Najat, who broke up with her boyfriend who spent some time in a penitentiary because of his gang member activities, illustrates (in English) this generational gap and religious conflicts:

Najat: No, I don't even go shopping with my mom. She is like 'Oh, you have to wear this'. When OK we are going shopping one day oh God I don't know I was in 7th grade I don't know 8th grade. My mom I went wid her shopping you know and then she is like being to this store, wid tide jeans and everything. I was like 'mom that's not my style, bye'. I go to the next aisle (laugh), I put like on ah (continue laughing). She hates it when I wear like baggy clothes.

Awad: Yah? but you like baggy cloths right?
Najat: I like baggy. They so comfortable, you know. But, she is like 'no, and I'm gonna put all your cloths in the garbage'. I was like 'Oh, you can do that because you are buying some, so whassup.' But,

Awad: Does she accept that you have a boyfriend?
Najat: Oh, 'm not suppose to date.
Awad: Why not?
Najat: Till I get married. It's religion but she doesn't know that I have a boyfriend.
Awad: She doesn't know?
Najat: No.
Awad: Wooo.
Najat: I be like dead by now. I be like you know. I don't know people like 'hi, oh my God she is dead oh', you know.

Awad: What happened to her? he mom killed her (laugh).
Najat: Because she has a boyfriend (laugh).

Awad: But do you actually have a boyfriend behind her back?
Najat: Yah, I'm nor suppose like come out and say 'hi I have a boyfriend'.

Awad: But do you go out and meet them?
Najat: Oh yah we go out to the movies, eh you know (...).

Awad: Ahm, you don't have to respond to this if you don't want to.
Najat: OK.

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Awad: Do you actually have sex with him?
Najat: No, that's like the last thing; I won't do that. Ah ah, I respect my religion you know. I'm proud of my religion you know. But first of all it's kina not fair not having a boyfriend you know not having sex you know.

Najat is struggling with her agency between respecting religious codes and her mother, on the one hand, and fulfilling her desires in having sex, a boyfriend and baggy clothes, on the other. When it comes to this desire struggle, or struggle with desires, Najat is by no means an exception. The bounce back and forth between individual female desires and what is permitted by religion is too familiar in the female narratives. The female narratives show that they already dwell within prescribed traditions of surveillance, 'honour', virginity, obedience, reproduction, heterosexuality, and sin. Sex before heterosexual marriage seems to be the sin of sins. The mere fact of the girls talking about sex before marriage is prohibited, Amani, who had a religious tutor during her childhood in Somalia, argues. During my focus-group interview with the girls, I asked them if they will have sex:

Samira: Having sex?
Asma: Oh yah, I will have sex, Ok. Yah, actually actually.
Samira: I can't say yes or no. let us suppose for example.
Amani: But I love our relation and ...
Absan: Now, if I am going to marry this man, but I don't like him in intimate relationship, sexual, I am trapped, I am trapped.
Asma: Ohm, let's say the S word, what's wrong with it? (laugh)
Amani: You not Muslim any more.
Asma: No no, excuse me. Your man, your man, it is not only you have sex; how many have sex before they get married and they are still Muslims? if you do it you are no longer Muslim? is that what you saying to me?
Amani: I'm talking about the way that the religion works. There is one way it works, not too many ways, OK! One way it works. And the way it works is that.
Asma: Get married.
Amani: Is that you not allow to even (frequenter) frequent/associate [with men] ap ap, sorry, before you get married Ok, forget about sex.
Asma: It is not only how Islam is practiced.
Amani: Hold on hold on, let me end, no let me end. And then you you, you are busy telling me, how am I suppose to ahm ahm marry the guy if I am not sexually attracted to him, right?

Asma: Yes, that's what's make a good marriage chérie. A grand passion!

Amani: Hold on, we know that (girls talking).

Samira: I didn't say I was religious. I say I'm Muslim OK? Heart: from toe to toe (girls are talking in Somali). I don’t have nothing, I am still a virgin. So, don't you say (laugh).

Amani: We are talking about the if, we are not talking the facts.

It is precisely the ifs that govern these girls lifves: if they have sex, this or the other might happen; if they lose their virginity, again this or the other might happen. Interestingly, this or the other most of the time turn to be horrible or horrifying things, such as bringing shame to their families. The internal dialogue between these girls is evidently clear. There are religious codes, interpretations of these codes, on the one hand, and situational gender desires, on the other. Evident as well is the disagreement between them which leaves them with personal choices which might go against religious codes and expected female behavioural patterns. Asma, in the focus group interview, is to be quoted here; the original text is in English:

Asma: (...) If I see a guy and I wanna get marry to him, and if I get marry to him and have sex, after the marriage, how am I gonna feel if it's not good? Do I have to get divorced? Excuse me, but I am gonna have to check with him. And I'm gonna see if it feels good, and if I'm gonna commit my life to him. Listen I need a partner to satisfy my needs to life. (...) I am going to [have sex]. I am going to. 'Cause I need 'to be sure, the person I'm gonna commit my life, will be really there. To satisfy my need, every single day of his life. Thank you. I rest my case now.

7.6. Performing Sexuality: Whether male or female there is a bulging and eye-catching heterosexuality in students’ behaviour and narrative. In the above quotations, for example, even though men were not physically present, they permeated all of the female discourses and imaginary. Men, like knights in shining armours, are to come to save the girls from asking questions of 'honour' and virginity: men are to come to secure them financially and satisfy
them physically. Women, on the other hand, are mothers, children re/producers, and physically available. In some cases, Amani and Aziza, African students come from families where men have more than one wife. These female students contended that the polygamy phenomenon is 'disgusting', 'denigrating', and 'abusive' to women. They wondered why can't women have the same right as men whether in polygamic practice or any other human rights. Since, as we have seen, there is no agreement among females when it comes to having sex, the ideal sexual situation will then be in a partnership between a man and a woman, for life:

Asma: Me, I found that a marriage, a marriage is two partners. Two peoples who build a link, who have common feelings for the rest of their lifes.

When it comes to performing their sexually gendered identities in their everyday communicative interaction, African students seem to perform a 'typical' heterosexuality that is specific to their time and age: the boys attract the girls and the girls pleasurably receive their attention. This however might turn into internal battles: the boys protect 'their women', and the girls assault other girls because they are attempting to have 'their men':

Najat: She [Susan - her best friend] is fine. Oh, Gosh she like left [the school]. She is like so sad because she gets the attention of the guys. Awad: Why? guys like her?
Najat: Check, she is nice and this ahm these girls, a bunch of girls, right? and then I was in the candy store and the whole thing, and then after that, what's called? ahm this girl comes to Susan, she is like 'you bitch' [because Susan is a friend of a boy who is the boyfriend of one of the girls]. And then Susan is like 'hi', and then Merry [a West Indian friend of Najat] came came and they like insulting us behind our backs. Merry came, Merry is like giving them attitude, and then they all left (laugh). It was so cool. I go 'wait until I see them, I kill them.'

Here, Najat is addressing the agency and the complex ways in which the socially prescribed gendered sexual roles are reproduced. To call a woman 'a
bitch’ by another woman is to re-inscribe the sexist language that sees women as
seducers. When a man goes out with another woman, his partner, depending
on the circumstances, blames most probably the woman and not the man for
seducing ‘her man’. Friendship between a man and a woman in this case is
understood only in terms of sexuality. There can never be, in other words, an
‘innocent’ relation/friendship between a man and a woman. The bond, on the
other hand, between women is inconceivable. This, for me, has serious
consequences in terms of how men are centralized a) even when they are
physically absent and b) in how women relate to one another.

Regrettfully, on their part, teachers did not escape reinforcing the
heterosexual code of behaviour, first, and, secondly, did not avoid themselves
being positioned as sexual beings by students. Not surprising given the history
of representation of beauty within the Western imaginary, the ideal
heterosexual man for women is white (and blond with blue eyes?).

Najat: (...) And sometimes she [her teacher whom Najat calls the ‘nun’
because she is not in a partnership] is so desperate. Oh, she needs a man, I
swear the God. She always goes like ‘you have guest today’ right? Now
she is like ‘Oh, don’t forget, you know, to bring, you know, your
boyfriend, a white man’ blablabla. It’s like everything that you are telling
you know, we suppose to say no boyfriend at this age, no blablabla, but
she is like ‘oh go get one’, you know.

By and large, sexuality and sex is a taboo not only for the girls, but also for
the boys and, unfortunately, how African students react/ed to homosexuality
and homosexuals was not a question I asked. Nevertheless, I have seen (male
and female) behaviours and I have come across discourses that reinforced
heterosexism and in some cases performed a gay bashing. For example, when
Hassan was addressing how he learned French while in Somalia, he cited:

Hassan: (...) Because I know that before when I was in Somalia, and all
that, I liked looking at cartoons (les bandes dessinées).
Awad: Oh yah? (laugh)
Hassan: The naked women and all that, until now I swear to you.

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In another example, while I was filming Black History Month activities, there was an African (gay?) student who was participating in the activities; Najat approached me wondering: “you are going to put the fag in your camera?” Repentantly, I was unable either to talk to Najat about her statement or to the boy she cited. However, the statement shows Najat’s disapproval of homosexuals, which can also be read as a disapproval of homosexuality.

Najat, in conclusion, as well as other African students, is confronted in the new Canadian context with the public discourse of sexuality, including homosexuality and lesbianism. Building on my own understanding as an African of the African context, sexuality is neither an open discourse nor is it for public consumption or practice. The Islamic religion has a significant role in the lives of these youth: it prohibits *el Liwat wa el Musahaga* - homosexuality and lesbianism - on grounds beyond the scope of this project. Students are thus caught between prescribed religious and social codes and personal choices. As we have seen in section 7.5. of this chapter, African youth did take synchronized positions when exploring and fulfilling their desires that went against prescribed codes.

Nevertheless, there are homosexuals in Africa and homosexuality is accepted, in some sites, as a subculture that is neither practiced nor discoursed about in public, as is the case with all other forms of sexuality. In Sudan, for example, the place I know the best, there are residences designated as *beuoot el lawaita* ‘homosexual domiciles’ that are usually known in the neighbourhood where they are located. Interestingly, lesbianism as a practiced discourse is nowhere to be found in African students’ performances and narratives. In sum, according to Najat’s statement, there are homosexual men at the school, but they are available neither to declare it nor to talk about it in public (see also Dalley and Campbell, 1997).
7.7. Voilà: Performing the Third Space, Culture, and Identity

After what we have seen thus far, will these students’ Africanness ever be the same? What is the role of new Canadian context in translating and re/producing their Africanness? What role does their Africanness play in translating in turn the new context? What is the role of gender, race, and racism in these processes? What are the capitals and rewards⁶³ in this space? Finally, how are these capitals exchanged and performed? In response to these questions, I want to contend that African students choose, in some cases, to be a part and a product of the two African and North American socio-historical contexts. To illustrate these arguments, I take what I consider as two significant moments that might be looked at by others as moments of contradiction. The language of the third space is an attempt to understand these supposed ‘contradictions’. It is to argue that taking up and performing hip hop culture, language and identity does not necessarily mean a negation of being African, because Africanness itself is not an exclusive category. I, first, revisit this language and then offer my illustrations.

7.7.1. Ethnography and Identity:

Sam: I see myself Djiboutian man, I am Djiboutian one hundred percent man. (…) Don’t judge a book by it’s cover you know. But no don’t judge a book by it’s cover. If if someone put on something, you can’t say that this

⁶³ Concerning the rewards, I regret that, as one of the shortcomings of this ‘project’ (Simon and Dippo, 1986), this question is not fully explored, if not at all. Nevertheless, while the female narrative doesn’t verbalize any reward, Omer explored the question by examining the desires involve in allying oneself to and taking up Black cultural and linguistic practices, beside one’ own African identity:

Omer: engaging Black culture in one’s life is on one side fun and on the other it is just to attract the girls. Because certain girls love guys like who dress and talk like that, you see. Guys who speak Black English you see who dress like that and who do rasta, girls like that. Some boys also speak to mark themselves out you know. We live in a city dominated by the Jamaican, so if you are Somalian and you speak Patois, that will put you in advantageous situation ‘cause you have more things and more [fields of] play.

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person is like this or like that. Because you don’t know what he is inside. (...) You have to know the person to judge him.

This excerpt is vitally significant for five reasons. First, it points to the difficulty of reading identity ethnographically. This difficulty stems from the complexity of identities which itself stems from identities’ contradictory nature. Secondly, whether desired or not, students’ identity performances are read semiologically. That is, how they dress, talk, or behave are read by other people; this reading which depends on who is reading can be positive or negative. Students, noteworthy, are cognizant of the fact that people do read semiologically and do judge on what they see:

Hassan: Clothes for me is like, I say, people say that the eyes are the window of the soul. But they also say cloths are the representation of the personality. (...) They say our society had developed, OK. They say one should never, never like judge on appearance of a person, and you think they don’t do it?
Awad: What you think?
Hassan: They do it. My mother does it, my father, the principal, everyone does it. Teachers do it, but they don’t say it you see. (...) This is why you have to respect your outfit: show an image because all what we are doing is we project an image before people’s eyes. (...) And again, you have to play with the system to your own advantage you see.

Thirdly, Sam’s excerpt identifies the tension between the verbal act of identity - that is, the conscious signification that one gives to one’s own identity, actions - and performance of identity - that is the spontaneous act of identity which allows people to read identities semiologically. I believe, in passing, that there is always a discrepancy between the act of verbalizing identity in meta-language, on the one hand, and the act of performing identity, on the other. When it comes to African youth, or any other youth, part of this discrepancy is related to not possessing the ‘language’ which enables them to in fact verbalize and signify, in totalized - or near totalized - ways, their identities. This is precisely why, methodologically, it is important to juxtapose verbalization and performance.
Fourthly, in a context like the Euro-Canadian where Black identities are almost always in the negative, one may strategically, politically, and essentially need to claim an identity to combat and resist these negations and marginalizations. When Sam pronounces himself as ‘hundred percent Djiboutian’, he is in fact claiming an identity that has become: a translated identity. Claiming a Djiboutian identity is significant given the (formally and informally) multicultural Canadian context where, interestingly, students are expected to be ‘experts’ on their cultures. Finally, Sam’s statement ‘You have to know the person to judge him’, and I will add her, is of particular significance as it addresses the issue of the imaginary: how can or should we go beyond what we see to imagine otherwise, to imagine subjects with full subjectivity and agency? In this full subjectivity, Blacks might be middle class, University professors, basketball players, teachers, singers, writers, poets, fashion designers ... etc. and not only imagined as drug dealers, basketball players and singers as it is the case with mediatic representation (Wallace, 1992; Hall, 1992).

Regrettably, some African students were impacted by the negative mediatic representations of blackness. For example, in my focus group interview with the boys, Mukhi contended that “Now, now it is part of their [African American] culture you know, the drug and all that.” This, fortuitously, did not go unchallenged. Some students for instance argued that drug was/is a problem and part of nobody’s culture. Others reasoned economic marginalization as a factor that pushes some members of the Black community to traffic on and purchase drugs:

Sam: OK, me I did not like what Mukhi said because everywhere you go there are bad apples. So, you can’t judge people you know. But the drug you know it is not their culture you know, some of them use, it’s like everywhere. (...) It is not [part of their] culture, it is a problem.

64 In one case, an African boy expressed an internalized pseudo-stereotyped notion about Black peoples. He contended that they always have academic problems. In describing why he preferred to go to an English school, he cites (in English): “the is difference [between English language and French language schools is that] when you go to English schools, they help a lot, you know, the Black students you know ‘cause they know always Black people have problems.”
Juma: You can’t call that style of living you know.
A male voice: You can’t say that. Some don’t have a choice.

Sam is not alone in claiming an African identity. Indeed, all of the students have no doubt about their African identity: here are just three examples where 1 and 2 are cited in English:

1) Najat: ‘Me mean am happy wid Somali, you know, this is who I am, you know. I’m African and am proud of it you know. I don’t know everything in my culture, but you know I love it. I won’t say ‘Oh, am not Somali (...’). I won’t say that.

2) Sam: I can’t say that [that he has the same problems as involuntary minorities (Ogbu, 1983, 1990) - African Americans for example] ‘cause ’m from Africa, you know, straight from there man, hundred percent, you know.

3) Asma: I see myself as African.
Aziza: Hundred percent African.
Amani: I am African Somalian.
Asma: Where you come from? Africa, I said.

Once asked, notwithstanding, to reflect on and verbalize the role African identities and cultures play in their lives and in the process of engaging the new Canadian context, African students tend to vary in their responses from a) not knowing to b) an articulation of the narcissistic and Cartesian category of Self and culture to, finally, c) a verbalization of socially and culturally situated Self and culture where African identities and cultures can not escape translating, being translated by, and engaging the socio-historical specificity of the Canadian context. In this Canadian context, students argue, Canadianness is an exclusive category where Blacks and people of colour will always be immigrant or are always already imagined to be from somewhere else. When, for example, Ben Johnson was found guilty of using steroids in the Seoul Olympics in 1988, he immediately became Jamaican, whereas he was Canadian few hours before the discovery of his steroids:
Asma: I say I am Canadian, I have the nationality, but I am not Canadian, 'cause in my blood I am Black.

Ossi: They’re going to say that you are Canadian, do you understand what I mean (laugh).

Amani: *Immigrant of ah* (laugh).

Ossi: Yes, voilà immigrant or Black or well but I can’t say he or she is Canadian.

Amani: *It is like Ben Johnson*. When he was discovered guilty of using drugs, they said «the Jamaican ah ...» (laugh).

Awad: Born.

Asma: When he won, they said «the Canadian John, Ben Johnson and (laugh).

Amani: Glory, glory, honour.

Asma: Hypocrisy ah?

In this context of negation and negative representation of blackness, African youths’ narratives show that African cultures and identities will either a) always represent a cornerstone in African students’ lives but without certainty of how (that is, shapes and forms), where, or when or b) African cultures and identities are frozen in time and space where one can always slip back into or return to them.

a) Juma⁶⁵: But, I don’t forget my culture. I don’t know what will happen to it, but, for me, my culture will always represent somethin [in my life/to me].

b) Mukhi: [My culture] will always be deep in my heart. I am not going to forget it, one day or the other, I am going to return to my culture or to my language you know.

A third position however is also narrated by students. In it, a) identities are historically and socially specific, b) historical memories can fade away but others can or will either replace them or translate them so that they reappear in different forms and shapes. c) There is no escape from engaging the new context (the question is how?). d) Finally, within these perspectives as a corollary the

⁶⁵ Juma is an 18 year old boy from Senegal who lives with Musa et al. He was planning to graduate in 1996/1997 school year and go to a French-language university.
old is not negated but the new, students argue, is situationally appropriate and specific; (the following excerpts are from different interviews):

a) Sam: (...) However you live and however your life style is and however you know and whatever you do, whatever surrounds you, that's your culture, that's what you will believe in. If you Black in North America, [for example,] your culture is what surrounds you and what affects you in how you live right, now, today, tonight, this second, you know what 'm mean? That's what it is boy.

b) A male voice: Four hundred years, that's was their [African peoples in the diaspora] culture.
Sam: That's something I know, but that's something that was destroyed. That's destroyed now, and you can't [just say they lost their culture].
A male voice: They lost, that's what we are saying, they lost it.
Mukhi: They lost it, but they gain another.

c) and d) Musa: Here, we are in Canada, you see. We are going to keep our culture, but at the same time there is the new technologies, the new musics. There is also glamour and modernization of the cities and towns.
Mukhi: The way we dress, the way we talk, we are in Canada. It is like we can't dress in like Raphar or our Galdoté you know.
Sam: Tight Jeans you know.
Mukhi: The small Angoloté you know, the small cloth we put around [the bottom], it is like the way we dress backhome. We need to mix in different genres of dress here. The way I am dressing now [à la hip hop] is because I am influenced you see, and that is why I dress the way I do. Backhome, for example, we put on Boubou and all that. But, I don't find it embarrassing to go out like that. But I feel more comfortable with cloths like the ones I have on now you see.

Mukhi's last statement draws us closer to the language of the third space. In it, the new 'mixes' with the old in ways that don't put them in opposition or at opposite poles. Given African students' identification with African American culture and language, the third space is performed through these capitals. That is, in the case of African students, the capitals of the third space are African American culture and language which are performed beside students' languages and cultures, including French, Somali, and Arab-Muslim culture and lexicons. Such include terminologies like inshallah, wallahi bellahi which
mean, respectively, if God’s willing and in God’s name. In some cases, I observed the phenomenon of what Rampton (1995) calls ‘crossing’. In it, Creole and Anglo-white British spoke Punjabi in schools and neighbourhoods where the majority are Punjabi speakers. They did so to access material and symbolic resources such as books, academic help and friendship. Juma, given his being-around and his sejour with Somalis, picked up expressions and Somali lexics to access material resources - such as being physically available with Somalis - and symbolic capitals - such as friendship. (Regrettably, in the following extract, I don’t have the translation of the Somali expression):

A male voice: Open the door boy.
Sam: Who told you he will?
Awad: Who is it, what is it?
Juma: (Somali; laugh), It’s true eh?

However, given the socio-historical specificity of the fact that most of the African Canadians, at least in Toronto, are West Indians, first, and, secondly, because they are immediately available to continental Africans, some West Indian lexics and musical genres can also be detected in African students’ musical and linguistic repertoires. (The excerpts are from different interviews: focus-group and individual interviews):

1) Sam: Me, I am African, the true African man, you know. I am Djiboutian man, bumbo clatt you know. I am telling you man.

2) A male voice: Shit, you come closer bumbo clatt [bumbo clatt is an anatomy in Patois; see Solomon, 1992].

3) Aziza: Malcom X, Martin Luther King, they were all assassinated, why? Because...
Amani: Revolution (Jamaican accent) all my people thinking

4) Given the influence of reggae, Omer succeeded in deciphering the Jamaican Patois. With the help of his Jamaican friends, he understood Patois but he was unable to produce it. Omer’s case, for me, raises the issues of desire
in the processes of learning. *We do learn once we desire what we learn and once we could gaze on the rewards and see them in the horizons.* What Omer likes in reggae musical genre is the phenomenon of what Gilroy (1987) identifies as ‘cut 'n mix’ where more than one tune and lyric is played by a DJ. Omer as well likes the beat of the music:

Omer: [After making me listen to a reggae song.] It’s like that, it continues for two minutes, three minutes or something like that. It is for this reason, I like reggae, in one lyric you find more than one song. (…) The Patois, I listen to reggae since 1991 you see. It is not a problem to understand, but I don’t speak it. It is not a problem to understand what the song is about, but there are like some words that I don’t understand. When I am in the shelter, I call sometimes my Jamaican friends and we listen together. I ask them then what this or that means. I have a desire to learn. With them, I can talk and this was how I learned Patois.

Hence, as they are found in the following excerpt, the cultural and linguistic capitals available to African students are (of course, with various degrees of availability which is connected to the moment of production): French (lines 1, 3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 12), Arab-Muslim culture and language (lines 2, 5, 8, 12), Somali (line 12), hip hop identity, dress, and culture (lines 4, 6, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 35, 36, 37, 38, 42, 45, 47, 49), Black English (line 9), and Patois, reggae and rastafari (lines 19, 25). Each of these capitals, I argue, represents a subjectivity, an *I*, within the speaking *I*. When Aziza in the already cited example in chapter six explains that “it is like you detach from your French side in speaking English”, her French side is part of who she is, part of her-Self, her identity. It is a she within her. Thus, there is no one *I* within one-Self, but *I*’s (Cixous, 1994). Each *I*, according to Cixous, is brought out and brought up depending on who one is talking to, what one is talking about, when, where, and how. Tentatively, one may argue that each linguistic codeswitch from English to French to Somali etc. is indeed or can be taken as a metaphor for each *I* within the Self. That is, when a student codeswitches from French into Somali, she is docilely slipping from one subjectivity, one *I* into another. In the following excerpt, for instance, which is taken from a video-tape recorded at
the end of the focus group interview with the boys, African students demonstrated the subjectivities, the Ts available to, into and within them. These subjectivities are performed through linguistic and cultural capitals:

1. A male voice: Alors ferme la voilà ah ferme.
2. Sam: Wallahi, I don't believe that man you know walahi bellahi.
3. One male voice: Ca doit être 50 pièce man. Wardap.
5. Sam: (laugh) Juma man wallahi bellahi.
7. A male voice: Ehha!
8. Sam: Wallahi fuck c'est pas vrai man. I be back (TV: I say it's now four thousands XX).
10. Juma: Oh where you going man, sit down, have a sit man. From your XX c'est quoi? (laugh).
11. Sam: je reviens man XX, you know. It's from Mecca you, e reprezin you know, Mecca a'ait. You ask (laugh). (Somali). Wallahi bellahi, ei ei, (Somali) a'ait a'ait. You know wha a mean? reprez'in, Q seven you know, you know wha a mean?
13. Sam: XX yo. a'ait, this my man Jamal you know wha a mean?
15. Sam: Repres'in AQA you XX dig it you know wha a mean?
17. Sam: It mean you know me. Sam AQA, you know wha a mean.
19. Sam: A'aït!
21. Sam: Kick some free style, yo, wha that is? Shakia you know. Repres'in. Check dem, check the last style 'f me man. Tura tura tur around. Yo da de last style, show dad shit man. Yeeh, wardap.
23. Sam: Da mean you don't have to rap up you know.
25. Awad: Go go, kick it kick it!
27. A male voice: It's just like we 've the XX you know, M U S A.
29. Sam: You know wha a mean?
30. One male voice: Ya mon!
32. Sam: For real for real.
33. One male voice: For real man, for real.
34. Jamal: Niggers (don't ask to come back?).
35. A male voice: Niggers.
36. Sam: Represin-n.
37. A male voice: XX, in the black who the Nigger. All the Niggers wid, dat watch that shit you know wha 'm saying?
38. Sam: So that's a rapper!
39. A male voice: No no no Bob no XX, no Bob XX.
40. A male voice: I told you in those things where they,
41. Sam: Hold on, check 'at a'ait; check, one two my name is SA. Ssa...
42. Juma: ohh!!
43. Sam: Represin for Q seven.
44. Juma: Ohh.
45. Sam: I represen to the foolest don fool around, 'cause amo, you know 'm mighta hit you, so yo, ama, eh you know 'm sayin? I won won, I
don't wanna give all my secrets you know wha 'm mean? So, dat how it is.

46. Juma: I don't wanna give all my secrets. (laugh).

47. Sam: Yo that's enough to rap. So, peace. Yo, time out.

Nonetheless, entering this (third) space, as we have already seen, is neither gender neutral nor is it without hardships. Entering it is certainly the conditioned by gender. This is because the female and male bodies are prescribed differently in the so-called religious and social texts and traditions. Certainly, the female body is not free to float. However, whether as an act of resistance or consciously utilizing one's own agency, I want to suggest that the female body did enter the third space, with a lot of difficulties, restrictions, and reservations. Indeed, the two illustrations for the performance of the third space encompass the female body as a center in the performance. The following is as close a proximity as I can get in terms of verbal articulation of the third space. I then offer two examples of how this space looks like.

'How are African students engaging the new Canadian context, with its multicultural population and policy66?,' I asked the students. These are Mukhi and Amani’s responses: in both answers, clearly, the New is not oppositional to the Old and taking up the former is not a rejection of the latter.

Mukhi: My culture is something I am proud of. I would like to keep my culture, but at the same time you know I am going to be very close to Canadian and particularly Black peoples. I am going to even be friend with them you know but also hold on to my culture.

66 It seems that African students have bought into the ‘Canadian mosaic multicultural’ paradigms and discourses which are situated in opposition to the U.S. melting pot:

Musa: Juma look, in Canada, there is the respect for culture of the Others.
A male voice: OK. in the U.S., there is no respect for culture, everybody has to be Americanized. Everyone has to be American. Here, in Canada, it is different. Once you have a culture, people respect it. You dress however you want. You have your Muslim religion.
Juma: This is also the case in the States.
Musa: It is rare in America, it is rare but everyone has to be Americanized. In Canada, it is called the Canadian mosaic, this is what exists in Canada. This is why Canada, people say Canada is the best country you see.
Amani: You know in any culture, there are advantages and disadvantages, strong points and weak points. I will keep the strong points and leave the rest, there are points we love about our culture and others we don’t like. So, it’s about your choices, do you accept the weak points or don’t you? But that doesn’t mean I am rejecting my culture when I choose a new one, I keep what’s valuable in my culture.

It is obviously clear that in this language of in-betweenness, the old is not just slipped into, just accepted. It instead entered processes of translation and re-understanding where it is not even fully approved. The strong points in the youths’ cultures, as Amani clearly states, are articulated and re-produced in the new Canadian context: this is not done in rejecting their culture, but concomitant to it; the ‘weak’ points in their culture, on the other hand, are to be seriously questioned. However, this ‘new Canadian context’ and universe is now part of the Self. In the following extracts which are fragments already cited in different parts of this thesis, African students perform a Canadianness that belongs to them, they belong to a Canada which is well expressed in the inclusive and encompassing ‘we’ cited by the girls in the second excerpt (bold and underline added):

Hassan: You don’t need to buy something for 80 dollars. You need to buy something for 8 dollars. Even if it is beautiful, it is convenable, you understand what I mean? (...) because there are a number of philosopher who say that appearance counts, it is our society. (...) I don’t dress for other people. I don’t think of other people to accept me when I dress.

Amani: We have to wonder why we try to really follow the model of the Americans who are Blacks? Because when you search for yourself, search for identification, you search for someone who reflects you, with whom you have something in common.
Aziza: And of course.
Amani: What is the grand difference between the Blacks [in Canada] and those who are in America? We have the same past. We have the same history.
A female voice: Plus the race.
Amani: And we have the same race ...

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Samira: The history of the world is in the inside of Canada and the United States. We have enough of that, the United States and Canada (...).
Ossi: No, it is good to know your country.
Aziza: It is good, I don’t, it is really good (...). It is really good to know, but to a certain point (...). The only countries they know more are the European countries. After that they don’t know. They don’t think there are other existed countries. Like us when we told them that we came from Somalia, the first days (...).
Ossi: Nobody knew, nobody.
Aziza: Nobody knew what is Somalia or except.
Ossi: The war, the poverty, starvation.

To belong to a Canada however should be juxtaposed against an affirmation of their Africanness already mentioned in this chapter. As we have seen, African youth have no doubt about their Africanness. Africa now, for the youth, is a rich entity of resources and capitals within them which helps them articulate their desires and their processes of integration in Canada. Nonetheless, when it is juxtaposed against the latter, this is always within the inner-being of African youth, the product is an in-betweenness: a third space.

7.7.2. Performing IT: Are These Really Moments of Contradiction?

The significance of these two moments delineated below stem from the contention that they can be (read as) moments of contradictions. The language of the third space is developed, precisely, to argue otherwise, to make complex the identity reading and the reading of identity; they might be moments of contention and tension, but, as we will see, not of contradiction. As displaced subjects who encountered new social, cultural, and linguistic spaces and practices, I will argue that African youth have become. They have become a product of the translated ‘old’ and ‘new’. To negate one or the other is to obliterate part of what had become. Since, notwithstanding, the third space is a language of in-betweenness, it does not have a fixed shape or form. Its shapes and forms depend on the socio-historical conditions and power relation. Edward W. Said, Salman Rushdie, Stuart Hall, Gayatri Spivak, Samuel Beckett,
Joseph Conrad (the list is too long to be continued and too complex to get into each of these individuals) are just a few examples of what the third space might look like. These are products of in-betweenness, an ambivalent product. The two moments cited below are to show ‘just’ another form of this in-betweenness and its ambivalence. Here they are 1) and 2):

1) The day was February 12th, 1996. It was during lunch and early evening time. The lunch time: I was sitting in the foyer of the school just under the board of the recognized best students by the school. Should I be surprised that all the names, except for two, sounded very French? Dare I say that they brought whiteness to mind? Chapter 4 is forcing me to say No, to the first, and Yes to the second.

Najat and a group of Black girls were holding a tape recorder which they brought with them. They stopped in the middle of the foyer in their way from the gymnasium to the library; two girls were hijabed - veiled. «School sucks», Najat said to me in English. At the beginning of her second sentence, one Black female plugged in the tape recorder: it was Cool J, an African American rapper, who was rapping. Najat turned around and spoke to one female in Somali and hereafter everyone joined in the dance. Hands were moving, bodies were swinging and the girls were talking in Somali, French, and English. Two of the girls, as already cited, were putting on Islamic hijab, others were dressed in Somali national dress: a Boubou - a piece of cloth put around the chest and the bottom part of the body, others were dressed in baggy hip hop dress.

The evening time: it was about 5:30 p.m. Everybody is busy practicing for Black History Month’s activities. A moment of loosening and relaxation, it was, after a very busy schedule of practices. The same afternoon group of girls I have just talked about, plus everyone else, mostly girls, joined the music that was playing on the sound system. It was again Cool J followed by Queen Latifa followed by Toni Braxton followed by African music from Zaire, Egypt, and Somalia. Yusuf (the acting African elder and the organizer-by-himself of the event -that is no teachers to help and no institutional support) was the DJ. Most
girls, including Aziza, Samira, Amani, and Asma, were dressed either in hip hop, costume for the practice or traditional African dress from South Africa, Somalia, Zaire, among others. Those who knew the songs - most of them - seem to mimic and recite them. The hair style seem to vary from dyed to dreadlocks to African braids. During and after the practice, during and after this described episode, everyone was code-switching between, certainly, English and French, but also their mother tongues and first languages.

2) Date: 4th of April, 1996. Picture this: it was during lunch time. Amani, Aziza, Ossi, Asma, Samira, and five boys were sitting on the ground of the second floor revising for a test. The girls were dressed very eloquently and à la mode: tight Jeans with wide bottoms, white and coloured blouses with long or short sleeves, black and white sweaters, and two had Victorian hats. The hair was a fashion show: braids, pony-tails, dyed short hair with a long braid descending by the side, and corkscrew. The faces were beautifully done with soft make up. The boys, on the other hand, dressed either in hip hop with baggy clothes, topped with sports sweaters or basketball T. shirts or in traditional African dress. Interestingly, the two boys who wore traditional African dress also dyed their hair blond and brown à la girls. Boys as well as girls were code-switching primarily in English and Somali and also in French whenever they were talking academically. They were discussing 19th century European major literary trends of thought, among others 'humanism'. Michael Jackson was playing in Aziza’s tape recorder, and some were dancing to his music.

Perceptibly noticeable are the ways in which the 'New' and the 'Old' intermingle in this complex space that can only be a product of in-between. To be, for African youth, is to become: to become a double-edge product, an ambivalent one.
7.8. Conclusion:

This chapter was an attempt to show positively that there are no contradictions in performing multiple subjectivities by the same individual, but also to show how this multiplicity looks ethnographically. African youth, I showed, took up African American culture and language in their processes of identity formation and to express their desire for identification. This was however not done in performative oppositional terms, I contended. Multiple subjectivities, expressed in language and cultural practices, were performed concomitantly. Nonetheless, once African students were asked to verbalize their identities, there were multiple positions among which there was a narcissistic approach to culture and identity whereby one can easily renege on and unproblematically go back to his/her culture and language. In engaging the new context, I conclude, the old translates the new, yet the latter does the same for the former. The language of the third space, nevertheless, should not obscure the question: why African youth, in most cases, do need to claim, to verbalize an identity? For me, in a (supposedly multicultural, yet a) climate of negation, dehumanization, criminalization, and negative representation of blackness, to claim an African identity by African youth is to claim a New Ethnicity (Hall, 1988) that needs language, history, politics, a location where one can locate one-Self in order to be able to speak and desire.
Chapter 8
By Way of Conclusion

How Did It Work?  
Students Articulate an Anti-racism Framework

Hassan: tu sais quoi? des fois je me demande si je pense pas mieux que des adultes  
[you know what? I sometimes wonder if I don’t think better than adults]

Against, in its oppositional and background signification, the repressive hegemonic and paralyzing structures, discourses and racist practices that we discussed, some students were not only able to fracture successfully the barriers and worked their way through these structures, but some were academically victorious, socially triumphant, and politically active. I will, in this chapter, offer their narratives and experiences as an alternative anti-racism framework. The idea is to see how they were able to do and be so in a negatively traumatic atmosphere of negation. In their totality and in their own, students’ narratives should be read here as an anti-racism project that has its own prescriptive dimension.

If the idea of education is to nourish, bloom, and develop human subjectivities, then these subjectivities should be understood in their complexities. African students are full subjects and, as a corollary, they have desires, agency, social positions and politics. These positions, Franco-Ontarians and dominant Canadian groups should be reminded, vary according to class, gender, sexuality, and above-all race. Africans should be imagined and thus treated as subjects that can create change and as subjects that are already busy seeking their as well as others’ well-beings. They, more importantly, are or can be first-class students.

In the graduation ceremony, for example, a considerable number of African male and female students earned and then received a number of academic, social, and sports médailles. For me, this indicated that some of the African students are/were doing well, particularly academically. Regretfully,
because the school did not have statistics divided by ethnic, racial, or national origin, I was unable to see how African students were progressing academically. However, what I have seen in that ceremony, which was one of three ceremonies I attended over three years, shows that some of the African students were academically successful. In fact, one boy in particular of Somali origin, Dema, drew laughter during the graduation ceremony because he received almost all of the médailles d'or of the academic subjects of grade 12, and also because he made people tired of clapping. When I went to congratulate him for his achievements, he jokingly said “I will be back next year to collect the rest.”

Some of the African students were indeed the head of their classes. Ibri, Dema, Yusuf, Hassan, Asma, and Amani were all the top of their classes. Ibri, for example, received three médailles d'or for physics, mathematics, and French. Some of these students were referred by teachers to explain mathematics problems and other academic subjects, particularly French language, to other fellow students. Of Dema, for example, Hassan contended: “il est un maître du français” [he is a Master of French]. Hassan continued:

In French, he had the best grades. This is an OAC class. (...) There are words when Madame doesn’t understand, she says to Dema “do you understand?” Yes, he explained to her. Seriously!

Hassan is of particular interest here because he was not only academically successful, but also politically and socially aware. In fact, when I talked to the principal about some of the issues concerning African youth, she referred to him as the person to talk to about whatever concerned African students, whether academic, social, or otherwise. Hassan, as he chose to put it, said that “I want to make history” in the school. Hassan is a Somali-language speaker who was born in Ethiopia, lived in Djibouti, and speaks more than seven languages. He had a cousin in the school when he first arrived in 1991 who helped him to find his way; he is also considered in the school as one of the most stylishly dressed students, well-spoken, and well-known to all students of the school.
Hassan is the first Black president of the Student Council, the first Black member of FECEFO - a federation of Franco-Ontarian students - a high school student body constituted of members of all of the province of Ontario; he was the vice-president of FECEFO for two years. In the school, Hassan did make history.

His activities commenced since his arrival at the school. He immediately joined the environment committee of the students council. The following year in 1992, Hassan ran for the environment council and lost with a narrow margin of seven votes to a very well known student in the school. He then won his seat in FECEFO and the environment council the year after. In the same year, 1993, he was awarded the médaille of the most active student in the school. In the school year 1994/1995, he won the presidency of the Student Council. According to all of the (African or otherwise) students I talked to, 1994/1995 Student Council was one of the most active and one of the most loved students councils in the school history.

In this council, Hassan was able to bring and 'play' with the multicultural representation of the school population as an asset and capital for his council. His council was composed of an East Indian female, a Métis (First Nation) male, Middle Eastern male, a white male, and himself. I cited 'to bring' because it was Hassan who suggested to the rest of the group to run as a collective team to counter the other all-white group of students who were running as a team and who, obviously, lost the election. During 1994/1995 council, an uncountable number of activities were conducted: social dances, general assembly every two weeks, fashion show, Remembrance Day, carnival, winter carnival, and fund raising through lotto. The council also invited teachers to participate in a fund raising activity which was conducted in the Leslie-York Mills busy intersection streets in Toronto. The council moreover, with the leadership of Hassan who earned his place at the French-language Board of Education as a person to be consulted on matters that concern Black/African students, successfully obtained 15 thousand dollars from the Board for the library of the school. At the end of their terms, Hassan and Patrick - the Métis male - received the médailles of the
most active students at the school; in addition, they received a watch, a pen, and with the rest of the council, they received a) letters of recommendation and b) *Prix d'honneur de l'école* - the prize of honour.

Alone, Hassan was able to form *Le Comité d'Aide* - The Help Committee - to provide academic help to the students in need. This committee was constituted of twelve students who were considered the top of their classes in the particular subjects such as mathematics, science, social science ... etc. They made themselves available one or twice a week at the school library. The idea lay behind the formation of *Le Comité d'Aide*, Hassan explained, was to help immigrants, but in particular diasporic and continental African students «who want to advance their competence and who want to take advantage» of the expertise and availability of those who were well advanced in the particular subjects.

By and large and against all odds, African students were successful in establishing themselves and creating their own space and safe zones in the school. They were able to constitute an African students association - ADEA - *Association Des Élèves Africains* - which was very vocal in voicing African students' concerns. Establishing ADEA was done with the help of the principal who was later discharged by the French Language Board of Education. ADEA is an association between, among and of diasporic and continental African students. It conducted soirées and other social activities - including Black History Month; and at some point, it constituted the only body that students could go to in case of a problem with school administration, a teacher, or other fellow students. *ADEA became*, in other words, *the council of students of African descent*.

8.1. On Whose Market and With Whose Capitals? The aforecited examples are testimonies to the fact that some of the African students were successful in making history, being politically active and academically advanced. Hassan, on whose narratives I base most of what follows, argued time and again (on more than seven occasions) that African students were successful because to participate in exchange in any market one has to
**understand the rules of the market.** But one can not do so, i.e., be able to exchange with others in and within the particular market, without **possessing the capitals that allow for this exchange to take place.**

Hassan: So, there are all these structures of, of differences which you have to play with *(jouer avec)*. Such include the fact that you have to have the competence of playing with others, one has to know how to play with others.

Hassan gave the example of a Black man who is a Ph. D. holder looking for work. Being a Ph. D. holder, for Hassan, does not exempt him from being discriminated against. But, if this man is elegantly dressed with a suit and a tie, he might be a counter representation to how blackness is imagined. Because, for Hassan, **one of the ways to combat discrimination is** not to tackle the moments of discrimination *per se*, although this is necessary, but **to endeavor to deconstruct and expose the deep structures behind discrimination: one of which is the imaginary.** That is, how people are imagined and how can they/we work so that they can be imagined otherwise:

Hassan: (...) To begin with there are all these stereotypes about Black peoples. There is discrimination and all that OK. The only way to combat discrimination is not out of discrimination itself. Why all of these [discriminations]? We have to play their games to our own benefit. We don't have to do the impossible you know. We don't have to do whatever like killing someone because he did something to me. Do you show people the contrary image of what they think, even if you have a Ph. D.? For example, peoples like a Black man *(un noir)* when you enter a place and you are not dressed like you should, with a Ph. D., they are going to reject you. But if you try with a tie, or with an ensemble of treasures, with a Ph. D. diploma, they are probably going to accept you more than before.

The signifier 'probably' in Hassan's last sentence is important for he understands clearly that Black peoples are imagined stereotypically and they are certainly discriminated against even when possessing the required capitals. By suggesting one playing the same game, in the same field, with the same
capitals, Hassan, for me, is articulating a vision of subversion that works from within, from the inside. That is, instead of searching for alternative markets and identities as did some of boys when they chose basketball as opposed to volleyball and hip hop as opposed to dominant identities, one may choose to affirm his or her identity from within the particular market and identity.

Moreover, Hassan’s narratives show clearly that certain people are doomed and damned to struggle all their life. The power blocs and those who benefit from the dominant structures, I argue, are too consumed and colonized to imagine otherwise. As a matter of fact, they have but little lucrative investment in imagining otherwise. For to do so is to question one’s own power and in some cases give it or give some of it up. (Although it is beyond the scope of this project, it is worth asking what is one’s investment in giving up one’s own power?) Therefore, as educators and anti-racism workers, we start to deconstruct these structures of discrimination and negative imaginary and put them in people’s mind’s eyes so that they can see them. If not, the reign and heavy weight and responsibility of struggle will always fall on the shoulders of Hassan and his like, especially the youth. Black/African youth, by and large, endure the disheartening situation of putting forth twice the effort to reach an average position. They also carry the burden of ‘proving’ themselves, which means in some cases one has to dichotomize one’s own desires, one’s own language and culture vs. that of the school:

Hassan: But, I can prove it that I can do whatever by the way I dress67, the things I have, also being myself. [If] you do what you have to do, you have 100% in your classes, you are liked by everyone, and it is really deceiving, it is really deceiving that we have to prove to everyone that we have, or we are, and the others don’t. The African or the Blacks have to prove themselves to everyone because it is the grand-parents of others who prove to them otherwise you see. But our grand-parents didn’t

67 Hassan dresses baggy but very elegantly. In fact, he is considered one of the very elegant (Black or otherwise) students at the school. His dress, grosso modo, is at the border between hip hop and dominant/‘regular’ dress.
prove for us because they themselves were not free to do so. But we have to prove for ourselves.

One way of doing so, for Hassan, is to **combat stereotypes by representing the unsaid, the absent, the silence and silenced**: 

Hassan: (...) And the only way of doing it is not conform [i.e., to resist], not to enter in stereotypes of data: 'oh 50% of African youth had failed, they can’t do it'. What has to happen is to show them that 50% had passed, not only to show them the 50% who failed (...). But they only see the part that failed, they don’t look for the part that passed. We have to show them the part that passed, that’s what we have to do; and this is one of my objectives, to to do more, to leave a dream [history] behind me.

However, representing the silenced is a burdensome task that one puts on one’s own shoulders. It is certainly not without a price. As the African saying goes, if the spirit is high, its highness can only be felt through the body. That is, it is the willingness that guides the body and not vice versa. It is what one should do next for one’s and other’s well-being that should guide one’s life and one’s body.

Hassan: I am sacrificing enormous amount of time. I have been in a chain of committees; there are always prices to pay (...). He who wants something, he is going to pay prices. You want something, you have to pay prices. It could be in terms of proving something, your strength, whatever. Me personally, I know I paid; I missed evenings and there is my mother, anxious (debordée). “You come really late at night. Why do stay after school? Occupied with so much work”, you see.

In the focus group interview with the girls, they expressed the historical difficulty of social change that Black peoples have to submit to. They contended that whenever a Black person endeavored to alter Black peoples’ plight, she/he had to endure suffering, suppression, and even assassination:

Amani: If you are a Black person who is busy trying to lift [people’s spirit], you will be killed.
Ossi: A number of Black people tried to change the world, to change reality.
Aziza: Malcom X, Martin Luther King, they were all assassinated, why? Because...
Asma: Revolution (with Jamaican accent), all my people thinking.

For Hassan, these are the precious prices that Black people had/have to pay to envision a more just and human world. Yet these prices, for Hassan, should not discourage us from taking initiatives for he understands **anti-racism as initiatives taking action**: to be, therefore, an anti-racism worker is to be initiative taker. There are no miracles to be waited for. There are no miracles to begin with. What we as a society envision, imagine, and act upon as individuals and a collectivity is what we produce. Hassan arrived at these conclusions as a product of his own social and national locations: a Somali male who was born in Ethiopia, lived in Djibouti, and speaks more than seven languages. He had, in sum, experienced enough in life to decide his own mind.

Hassan: (...) The ideology I have found, how do I say it? it came out of me, out of how do I say it? out of my origin: I am a mixture of many things (...). For me, there are no frontiers/borders (frontières). (...) For me, there are no obstacles. (...) I don’t wait for, I don’t wait for miracles [to] come from the sky (laugh).
Awad: Which is going to open the door eh?
Hassan: Do you see what I mean? I don’t wait for that day when miracles like arrive to my house and I put my spoon in them; I don’t wait for the day when miracle comes to serve me in the mouth. If this is produced, I am in accord with the idea that all comes from outer space (laugh). I am not this kind of person, I am the kind of person who is ready to experiment everything; not everything like, I am not thinking about drugs or ah (...). I am speaking about the possibilities, I like to take initiatives. (...) This helped me to enlargen my own competence of of leadership.

Another strategy that Hassan had found useful is what he calls **confiance en soi** -- self-esteem. Even though the notion of self-esteem can be problematic because it can have a pathological connotation, Hassan sees it as a way of finding reasons, aims and energy to imagine or work so that others can imagine
otherwise. Hassan wakes up in the morning to tell himself that he is as capable of executing his everyday activities, he is as capable of making friends, and he is as capable of being the best of his class, if not the school:

Hassan: I am speaking about first being comfortable in one’s own skin, being comfortable with one’s own self. (...) Self-esteem is when you have the will, when you have an aim, when you have a reason. Every morning, I wake up and I tell myself that I am capable to do what I have to do way more better. I am capable of reaching my objectives that I set for myself. And I study. I am capable of making plenty of friends, I don’t care about race, colour, language. So, I come to school, and I am here only five years. I know almost every student at the school, I made friends here and elsewhere [like FECEFO].

In spite of his verbal contradiction, Hassan does care and indeed he is well aware of the racial representation, which is clear when he talks about himself as the first Black president of the school Student Council. Hassan’s strategies which he utilized when interacting with others are: be open minded, open channels of communication, and speak to people. But before doing so, one has to accept oneself:

Hassan: You should not sit on your backside, excuse my language, and wait for people because it’s stupid. You have to converse, you have to be social. But before other people can accept you, you have to accept yourself. (...) [M]e, if you see me during lunch time, I sit with everyone and in every chair. There is not even one person who told me ‘yo, I don’t like you, get out of here.’ I found this, it is a character that I found: speak to everyone, become friends, they are going to accept you. There are no people who hate you for who you are, even if it exists, it’s small minority which we don’t have at the school. It may be in the city, but in the school we don’t have idiots who hate you for your colour or your sex or something like that.

Hassan has to be told, through publication or otherwise, that Marie-Victorin is not as rosy and colour blind as he might think. There are serious race, gender, sex and class problems that anti-racist workers have to address: the absence of Black teachers, the eurocentric curriculum, the zero-participation of
parents, the particularity of the refugee situation of the African students: living and surviving by themselves for example, *le contrat* question, and the insensitive treatment of African students by the principal, school administration, and teachers. Such includes how they are streamed, talked to, and graded.

In Marie-Victorin, anti-racism workers have in addition to address the issue of the structures to which students can complain in case of a problem, which has to be a safe space. African students articulate time and again the need for these safe zones, for human connection, and the need for people who care. Here, the example of the principal who was discharged by the board is significant because it answers positively the question: can a privileged person practice anti-racism? This principal was a white male heterosexual of a French background who had a very strong anti-racism praxis which was embodied in his own connection to Africa, given his spending some time there. He was very well loved by all of the African students; and when he was discharged by the board, Hassan as the president of the Student Council mounted a manifestation and a strike requesting his return. Hassan even went to court to testify to the principal’s good deeds. The principal was primarily loved because he showed sympathy, mindfulness, caring, human communication and connection. In an individual interview with Aziz, she cited in response to my remarks:

Awad: And they [the teachers] said that the problem with Monsieur Armond [the principal] is that he was allying himself with African students.
Aziza: Yes, because he understood us very well. Because he was in Africa, and then he already understood Africans. In other words, he loved Africans. He was in good terms with Africans. That’s it! You see? All these teachers here, there is not even one who has being to Africa, you see. They say “where is Africa?” (laugh). It is incredible. They think that Africa is a country, (...) they don’t even know that Africa is a continent.
For me, Aziza was addressing the need for human connection, understanding, and the need for anti-racism praxis and workers. Given his encounter with Africa and Africans, the principal was able to forge new grounds that speak to African students. His praxis, i.e., his vision of words and worlds, showed that, contrary to most teachers, he cared. Nonetheless, one does not need to go to Africa to care, because caring is an understanding that goes beyond borders. In the same interview, Aziza also raised the issue of representation, identification, and role model. She argues:

We need a role model you know. (...) The student is in need of a role model. When you see a teacher of colour, he will say “Oh, yes, there is a teacher of colour.” It give him a sense of liberty (...). But if the student doesn’t see any teacher of color, all teachers are whites, the majority are whites, he is going to feel marginalized (égaré).

The willingness to combat racism and the willingness for human communication and connection, for African students, is not a budgetary concern. On the contrary, it is a will to question one’s own location, power and privilege. It is a will to help, to share, to care. This willingness, however, is not there yet in Franco-Ontarian schools. In my focus-group interview, the girls were quite emphatic in delineating this point:

Amani: What is really stupid is that they organize weeks, a day as international day to combat racism. Bull shit, you know. They only know how to create organizations and you know how to spend big bucks, you know. Francophone schools aren’t doing as much as the English language schools. Really, there are programs which are really geared towards immigrant students who want to integrate [in English language schools], but here.
Samira: Every time we ask the question.
Amani: I have to really blame the French language Board because they are not making the effort to to.

68 As Freire (1970/1993: 68) puts it: Action = Reflection = word = work = praxis. Praxis then is the intersection of discourse and practice. For Freire, “There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world.”

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Samira: There is no budget, we don't have enough money.
Amani: Yes, to integrate you can only give hand and help, it doesn't take much. It is not budget that they need, their teachers could form their own organization to combat racism.

In sum, African students are querying ways of restructuring power relations that allow them to be: to be creative, to succeed, to liberate themselves and Others (the power bloc, the privileged) from oppression. Liberation is dualistic, dialogic: to liberate one-Self signifies that one is at the same time liberating the Other. When African students are free to be, this by definition means the power bloc and the privileged are also free and liberated. Liberation, as Freire puts it:

is thus a childbirth, and a painful one. The man or woman who emerges is a new person, viable person, viable only as the oppressor-oppressed contradiction is superseded by the humanization of all people. Or to put it another way, the solution of this contradiction is born in the labor which brings into the world this new being: no longer oppressor nor oppressed, but human in the process of achieving freedom (1970/1993: 31).

Yet, for Aziza, the liberation will not take place without what can be called critical (media) literacy where the agency of self-teaching about the Other is vital. For if the Other is going to eat the Self, she had better know what she is eating. Critical literacy is deployed here as a way of being analytical and extra-worldly in receiving information. Information is not there to be consumed; on the contrary, it is to be compared, critically analysed, and not unsuspiciously devoured. There is, more significantly, always the unmarked, the unsaid, the silence, and the silenced that we should look for; and as anti-racism workers we should put forth these silent/ced representations and discourses so people can see and hear them.

Aziza: And I sometimes don't blame them [white students] because also there is the media which plays a role in that [negative representation of North American Blacks, Africans, and Africa]. But they should not trust
the media. They have to educate themselves and say "I don't really believe it is like that. I am going to do research, I am going to study Africa. What is Africa?" And when you study Africa, don't study only the negative sides, study as well the positive sides: the two sides you see. That is that.

Aziza is addressing the issue of the 'critical' and 'decolonized' mind that goes beyond what it sees to look for the silenced. This, for me, touches on the need for critical pedagogy whereby historical representations and power relations are not to be glanced over, but critically deconstructed. To deconstruct them is in fact to question one's own knowledge, location, and privileged; this questioning of one's own privileges and how she/he comes to know is as much a students' as it is a teachers' issue. The chief concept of this critical pedagogy is what I term pedagogy of the imaginary.
8.2. Concluding the Conclusion:
Can You See Me Otherwise?
Moving Towards a ‘Pedagogy of the Imaginary’

Silence from and about the subjects was the order of the day. Some of the silences were broken, and some were maintained by authors who lived with and within the policing strategies. What I am interested in are the strategies for breaking it.

Toni Morrison, Playing in the Dark

They were me; they defined me. (...) For all they were concerned, we were so many names scribbled on fake ballots, to be used at their convenience and when not needed to be filed away. It was a joke, an absurd joke. (...) [And now that] I had switched from the arrogant absurdity of Norton and Emerson to that of Jack ..., it all came out the same - except I now recognized my invisibility (differently arranged parts of Invisible Man).

In this - really - concluding section, I give an overview of this thesis project by summarizing it and I then envision an anti-racism strategy that I term the pedagogy of the imaginary which seeks strategies for engaging and articulating marginalized identities and the sites where they are formed and performed.

8.2.1. Summary: This thesis set out to examine the ways in which social identities: racial, gender, and class (among others) enter the processes of learning. It looked at a group of francophone continental African students who were going to school in a metropolitan city in South-Central Ontario: Toronto, Canada. In their processes of translating the ‘new’ Canadian context, African students discovered that, given their blackness, they were already imagined, constructed, and thereafter treated as ‘Blacks’ - with the historical memory and representation of blackness in North America which is mostly, if not all, negative. As a result of this construction and treatment, African students enter

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social processes of 'becoming' Blacks which were reflected in the way they dressed, the way they talked and the way they walked. I am using 'as a result of' not in its cause and effect sense, but as part of desire and identification. That is, African students did desire blackness and thus it was a natural - one male student called it 'genetic' - process of identification. In other words, who else would African students identify with given their negation by the dominant discourses, schooling, representation, and other social practices?

I concluded that in translating and thereafter integrating in the new Canadian context, African youth did not negate their own language, religion, and culture. These, however, were translated and thus performed differently given the impact of the new context with its new culture, language, racial, gender, sexual, and class representation - and other social forms - that African students had to encounter. I showed that both the 'new' and the 'old' are produced in a non-dichotomy: at the same time, in the same sentence, and in the same garment. This metamorphosed production of the 'new' and the 'old' is what I termed the third space. I finally contended that to be for all displaced subjects (African students in this project) - including immigrants and refugees, is an amalgamation of two (probably more) cultures, languages, nations, histories, and geographies. There are (no longer) fixed, Cartesian, and static identities that we slip (back or forth) into. On the contrary, identities are formed and performed: they are socially constructed, and historically, geographically, and culturally specific. Who and what 'I' am is who and what 'I' have become.

8.2.2. A Pedagogy of the Imaginary: against the picture painted in this thesis which is not very pretty, the question of what we as educators and pedagogues should do next is a difficult question. I want to offer the pedagogy of the imaginary as an anti-racism strategy which might bring hopes, which in turn might bring the identities of the margin/alized and the sites where they are partially formed and performed to the classroom so that they can be critically engaged with and not passively consumed. To engage identities
(especially the marginalized) critically signifies, for me, a moment of seeing these identities as full subjectivities with agency and multiple subject positions. It also signifies that those particularly in the privileged and dominant positions and identities should not gaze at their (peer) students and see them as exotica whenever and wherever the issues of minorities and marginalized identities are discussed in the classroom.

In this context, I am introducing the pedagogy of the imaginary as a way of teaching the Self to go beyond what it sees. I am asking these questions: when a (privileged) white person sees a Black woman, can she/he imagine that this female body might be a bourgeois, a middle class, a university professor, or a lesbian? Is the (privileged) white person's imaginary undogmatic, unprejudiced, decolonized, receptive and amenable enough to see that a Black hip hop man with dreadlocks can be of a middle class background, a manager, a business man? In short, can white people see the reality that blackness encompasses multiple social, class, sexual, gender, cultural, national, linguistic, religious, and even racial locations?

The addressee of this pedagogy is everyone70, but in particular those in positions of privilege, governance, and dominance. Freire (1970/1993) called them the oppressors. I am choosing the oppressors as my primary addressee because they possess the power to represent, to restructure nations and narrations, and to falsify and even rewrite history through how they tell it. I am choosing them because they are the ones who decide the worth while knowledge that needs to be studied: who is to be studied, what is to be studied, who is to teach, how and why?

The pedagogy of the imaginary is asking, pointing, and aiming at a way of de-essentializing and de-colonizing the public representation. What we as

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70 Here, I am including Black peoples as well. This may solve the phenomenon of 'acting white', at least in part. That is, if Black peoples can understand that, given the multiplicity of social and class location that blackness may have, then what belongs to white people may belong to Black people as well and vice versa. If they can expect, imagine, and therefore feel that, as C. L. R. James used to say, Beethoven belongs as much to Blacks and West Indians as he does to Germans (see Said, 1994), they can understand that doing well academically can be a white phenomenon as it can be a Black phenomenon.
social actors gaze at and what we visibly ‘see’ as gender or race, for example, have multiple sites that can only be recognized and acknowledged if our imaginary is decolonized to expect that blackness can be gay and middle class and gender can be lesbian and upper middle class. In the case of African students, blackness has different cultural, national, religious, and linguistic repertoires from the ones North American blackness has. However, the dominant public representation and imaginary were too colonized to expect or see these national and cultural differences. Instead, there were the (white) attitudes of ‘oh, they all look Blacks to me’. Put differently, what African students have suffered from were the ways in which the available North American racist discourses and representations were imposed and practiced on them. The inability to see and position African students as a separate entity is in fact, for me, a product of a colonized mind and imaginary. The pedagogy of the imaginary, in this context, then is a Critical Pedagogy that “allows us to affirm multiple black identities, varied black experience. It also challenges colonial imperialist paradigms of black identity which represent blackness one-dimensionally in ways that reinforce and sustain white supremacy” (hooks, 1990: 28).

Within the pedagogy of the imaginary, the encounter is of particular significance in rupturing the normative and normalizing attitudes and gaze71. Since not every white person in Canada, for example, has the possibility of physically and thus culturally encountering a Black person (or a person of colour), texts and representations become vitally important. Here, as an Anti-Racism initiative, I want to suggest that rap, hip hop, and Black popular culture in general which are some of the very important sites where African students’ identities are partially formed and performed can be pedagogical moments and ‘sites of encounter’ with blackness in the classroom. I am pointing here to the possibility of using Black cultural productions, particularly rap, literature, and cinematic representations, as moments of rupture to what hooks called

71 Using Foucauldian language, I understand normalization as a coercive instrument of power that imposes homogeneity, hierarchization, standardization, ranking and classification (Foucault, 1979).
“colonial imperialist paradigms of black identity which represent blackness one-dimensionally.”

The encounter with Black cultural forms that I am aiming at is a Critical Pedagogical moment of examination and not of consumption. It is a moment of encountering knowledge that is historically dehumanized, marginalized, and left in the corridors of our schools. The difficult question though is how we as educators and pedagogues can bring in in our classrooms marginalized individuals, histories, and knowledge without commodifying, exoticizing, essentializing, and incorporate them within already formed social order like the school.

Without pretending to have an answer, I want to contend this: since we as educators, anti-racism workers, and critical pedagogues don’t fully know or predict the impact that bringing in previously marginalized knowledge and individuals has on the latter or on the ‘center’ or those occupying the ‘center, then it is safe to say LET US TAKE THE RISK. For the alternative is the status quo, which has proven not to be productive to some of us who find ourselves time and again in the margin. Let us take the risk because this is our only hope to rupture the norm, the normalizing gaze, the power relations, the notion of worth while knowledge, the historical representation and thus the normative imaginary.

If we continue to marginalize and leave the sites where students’ hopes, desires, identification, and identities are partially formed, we are left only with the privileged who represent only a fraction of the world’s cultures and the world’s population. This is, precisely, why what Roger I. Simon (1992: 22) calls the horizon and the pedagogy of possibility is of extreme significance. This is a Critical project that is:

[T]rying to develop a [P]edagogy that would support the endeavor of creating specific social forms that encourage and help make possible the realization of an expanded set of differentiated human capacities rather than denying, diluting, or distorting those capacities. This [for Simon,] would be a practice devoted to enhancing possibility through enabling
ways of understanding and acting that encourage the transformation of particular relations between social forms and human capacities and hence the expansion of the range of possible social identities people may become.

According to Simon then, school has to play the role of the social institution where identities or possible identities have to be enhanced, articulated, and critically engaged. For Simon as for me, the idea is to arm students so that they can be their own subjects, understand their own possibilities, and more importantly be able to re-articulate history differently by transforming and challenging the present social condition under which they live. That is, if the present is embodied in history and this history is diluting and distorting to students' identities and capacities, then the role of the school, for me, is to equip them with ways of understanding so that they can transform these socio-historical conditions: equip them with the social fact that neither history nor the present is neutral. Student of marginalized histories and identities have to know that their own histories, narratives, and stories have been falsified, distorted, and in some cases completely rewritten. Further, they need to know that those who write history most probably have the control over the present social conditions. Finally, they need to understand that history needs to be revisited and the present conditions need to be challenged and transformed so both can represent the least distorted painting.

But if, as Raymond Williams puts it (cited in Simon, 1992: 20), "We are born into social situation, into social relationships, into a family, all of which have formed what we can later abstract as ourselves, as individuals" and that "More of this formation occurs before we can be conscious of any individuality", should this limit our possibilities of imagining the unsaid, the unmarked, and the silenced? The answer is negatively it should not. It should not if we critically comprehend that our lives, what we read and what we see are neither neutral nor without histories or power relations.

When the West 'sees' only jungle in Africa, only theft and violence in blackness, only a mathematician in Chineseness, only drug dealers in South
and Central America, it creates a colonized imaginary of its own subjects. Here, I am offering the pedagogy of the imaginary as a way for the West’s children to decolonize their imaginary as a way of human liberation which sets the rest of the World free to imagine itself. If not, we are left with the status quo which means violence: violence towards Oneself and towards the Other. The consequences of the symbolic and material violence that the West has inflicted and continues to inflict on the rest of the World, for example, can mostly be felt in how the latter has violently reacted and continues to react to this infliction. It is not, however, the rest of the World that is violent, it is the West. Let us take another example: Black America.

The violence and nihilism against white societies and social structures that is seen in and within the Black communities in the U.S. for example (West, 1994) is not a product of a violent nature linked to blackness (as some want us to believe). On the contrary, they are results of historical dehumanization, slavery, human degradation, economic and social marginalization, and negative representation. As Freire (1970/1993: 37) contends:

Violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognize others as persons - not by those who are oppressed, exploited, and unrecognized. It is not the unloved who initiate disaffection, but those who cannot love because they love only themselves. It is not the helpless, subject of terror, who initiate terror, but the violent, who with their power create the concrete situation which begets the “rejects of life.” (...) It is not those whose humanity is denied them who negate humankind, but those who denied that humanity (thus negating their own as well).

To engage this un/human symbolic and material violence for me is to ‘encounter’ the silenced, the margin, and the unmarked: Blackness. Blackness here is “a metaphor for freedom, an end to boundaries. Blackness is vital not because it represents the «primitive» but because it invites engagement in a revolutionary ethos that dares to challenge and disrupt the status quo” (hooks, 1992: 37). If this is so, the pedagogy of the imaginary is a pedagogy of struggle, of
Anti-racism, of critical cultural re-presentation that seeks to re-present blackness with full agency and subjectivity. A re-presentation that sees blackness complexly as an ensemble of historically formed and performed identities with different socio-historical and class locations, with different sexual orientations, with different ethnic, gender, cultural, and linguistic tongues, and comes from diverse geo-ecological spaces. For, Said argues (1994: xxiv), “Gone are the binary oppositions dear to the nationalist and imperialist enterprise. Instead”, he continues:

we begin to sense that old authority cannot simply be replaced by new authority, but that new alignments made across borders, types, nations, and essences are rapidly coming into view, and it is those new alignments that now provoke and challenge the fundamentally static notion of identity that has been the core of cultural thought during the era of imperialism (italic in the original).

Since we are not fully out of this ‘era of imperialism’, to be, once again and lastly, are continually socially constructed processes of becoming, of reinvention that are built against the backdrop of negation and negative representation of blackness. As a corollary, to be (an African in Canada, an African in the U.S.), however difficult that might be, may need an essential/ized identity and center which allows it to speak: To be able to speak however is to have a language, a history, and a memory. To be able to speak and say ‘I’ am an African (in Canada) is already embodied in history and memory that has become. Therefore, what and who ‘I’ am is a construction of history that is always already there, present, in me: ‘I’ am an embodied history that can be negated or engaged. The choice is ours. I prefer the latter however and, in fact, Critical Pedagogues/Anti-Racist can not afford to do or be otherwise.
References


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APPENDIX 1

Transcription Codes:

All names altered.

All quotations are translated from French, unless indicated otherwise.

"Inverted commas": Direct quotation/citation.

Comma: To indicate a slight pause or break between a sentence.

Point comma (;): To indicate a longer pause than the comma.

Italic: For English language.

Underline: For Arabic and Islamic terminologies, words, and expressions.

Dots (...): omitted text whether for repetition or incomprehensibility.

[ Text ]: My own added texts or comments.

(Brackets & question-mark?): Not totally sure of the audibility of the word, the expression, or the phrase.

(Brackets and Italic): French words that are not easily translatable or have more than one meaning.

Question-mark: To indicated a tone of voice wondering or asking a question.

Capitals (for example: TRUTH): To show stress or emphasis.

Full stop: An end to a sentence/phrase.

Colon (Aziza): To name the speaker.

A male voice: An identifiable male or female voice, but not his/her name.

A female voice:

Two crosses (XX): Inaudible text.
Un/une professeur(e): in the translation, the generic 'un' and 'une' posed a problem because in English 'a' is used for male and female, whereas 'un' in French is masculin and 'une' is feminin. Unless indicated, I translated it literally, that is as pronounced: un = male and une = female.

N.B. In some cases, if the quotations are not as clear as they should be, this is because a) students’ language is not as clear and b) because I try to be as faithful as I can to the original texts. Moreover, it is extremely difficult to transcribe let alone translate ‘natural’ interactive speeches.

N.B. Finally, since the program installed in my computer is a French-language program, the inverted commas «text» is what I have. So, in converting these inverted commas into standard English ones "text", some slipped my eyes. Whenever, then, the French inverted commas are found, they are in fact meant to be in standard English.
APPENDIX 2

An Alphabetical Order of Students’ Profiles:

Amani: is 17 year old girl, in Grade 12, form Somalia. She is Aziza’s sister and has two brothers who are also at Marie-Victorin. Aziza and Amani are coming form a well-to-do, almost bourgeois, family in Somalia. She is considered as one of the most active students in the school and she was awarded for that: *la médaille de l’élève le plus actif.* She participates in sports (volleyball, basketball, soccer) and social (Black History Month, fashion show, and student council’s) activities. She is also the school singer. She comes from a family of 10 kids and lives with her single mother. She has a sister (presently at Laval University) and a brother (York University) who also attended Marie-Victorin.

Asma and Ossi: are 16 and 17 year old sisters, respectively, who came from Djibouti. They, along with Samira, dominate the fashion shows. They are also active in cultural and social activities: *réunion générale* (General Assembly), Black History Month, for example. They live with their single mother and they have especial affinity to ‘Black’ ways of dress and to each other. They, for instance, constitute an inseparable group along with Aziza, Amani, and Samira. They are doing well academically.

Aziza: is 18 year old OAC student of Somali origin. She is very active. She is, for example, one of the founder of the African Students’ Association at Marie-Victorin. She is also a member of the school fashion show, volleyball, and female basketball teams. She was as well an influential organizer of the 1993 students strike. Beside the individual interview, she was also present in the focus-group interview with the girls.

Jamal: is a bit under 20 year old. He is originally from Djibouti and he is one of the students affected by *le contrat.* He dropped out and then dropped in the school. He currently goes to evening classes while working during the day. He is also a DJ in CIUT, a local radio station, where he airs rap in French and English.

Juma: is over 20 year old and came from Senegal. He lives with Musa and it seems like he is not doing well enough academically in the school. However, he is planning to finish his high school and go to York University. He is shy and being in Canada for three years.

Hassan: is 18 year old boy born in Ethiopia but lived in Somalia and Djibouti. He lives with his single mother and he is planning to go to York University where he will study Political Science and International studies; hereafter, he will go to University of Ottawa to study Law. He made history in the school by being the first Black president of the students council. He was recognized by the
school for three consecutive years as the most active student. He is the most famous student in the school and very active politically as well as socially. He is also the top of his class academically.

Ibri: is 19 year old boy from Gabon. He was awarded la médaille d’or - Gold prize - for being the best student in the school in mathematics and science. He is planning to go to York University. He lives by himself and works in the evening. He is a founder of comité d’aide (Help Committee).

Mukhi: is 18 year old boy from Djibouti who has been at the school since Grade 9. He is one of the students who felt the pressure of le contrat because of their age. He was also an organizer of the 1993 strike and he is planning to go to York University. He lives with his single mother.

Musa: is 19 year old, from Djibouti, Grade 13, who lives with three other students from the same school. It is in their house that I conducted the focus-group interview with the boys. Musa also expresses his desires to go to Laurentian University to do his university studies. In the school, Musa, along with Omer, plays the role of the ‘African elder’ who goes beyond the Self in helping the younger students in their academic and social problems. He is a very active in activities pertaining to African students: especially Black History Month.

Najat: is 15 year old Djiboutian girl, who came to Canada when she was 7 years old and whose father passed away when she was 3 years old; she now lives with her single mother and her only sister who used to be at Marie-Victorin and who then transferred to an English-language school. She loves walking around the school joking with everyone which makes her very famous. She is very active in cultural (especially musical) and social (Black History Month in particular) activities. She loves and produces rap and she takes up different hip hop cultural forms.

Omer: is 19 year old Ethiopian boy who came to Canada by himself when he was 15 year old. He is the head of the organizer of the 1993 strike and he usually acts as the ‘African elder’ at the school. This usually means being a liaison between students and administration, including teachers. He loves reggae. In fact, he is the rasta of the school; and, unfortunately, he was living in a shelter (almost homeless) at the time of the interview.

Sam: is 19 year old boy from Djibouti and has been in the school since Grade 7. He is the rapper of the school and ‘the Jordan’ of the basketball court. He participates in activities pertaining to Black students, especially Black History Month. He is quite articulate when it comes to the politics of the school given his long being in the school. He is also the most identifiably identifying with Black America among all of the African students.
Samira: is 16 year old girl from Djibouti. She is la beauté of the fashion shows and also very active socially. She participates in all of the school activities: fashion shows, sports activities, Black History Month, student council’s Green Committee. She is planning to go to a francophone university.

Shapir: is a bit over 20 year old. He dropped out of school. He has a very enlightened political discourse. He dresses very hip hop and had a tick-Nike trademark in his hair at the time of the interview.