Cariño in the Borderlands: Pedagogical Relationships in a Community-Based Education Support Program

by

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This dissertation examines the development of pedagogical relationships between tutor mentors and students, parents, and staff in a tutoring and mentoring program dedicated to decreasing the push-out rates among students of Spanish- and/or Portuguese-speaking descent in the Toronto public school system. Using a Transnational Latina Feminist framework, I examine program documents, observation and interview data to understand how these relationships develop, and how tutor mentors navigate issues of cultural and linguistic identity in these relationships. Furthermore, I examine how discourses of identity and community are articulated by the tutor mentors in the development of these relationships.

Identity featured prominently in participant narratives, and participation in the program was often positioned as an enactment of cultural identification. I found that discourses of linguistic and ethnic identity were often conflated in participant narratives, constructing a homogenous community of Portuguese-speakers at the exclusion of other
lusophones in the city. Latinx tutor mentors identifications as Latinxs featured prominently as motivators to enter the program and engage in these mentoring relationships with their students.

Discourses of community critically shaped the program, which utilized its relationships with the Lusophone and Latinx communities to function as a bridge between the communities and an alienating school system. Thereby providing important spaces for the creation of counter-narrative for the parents in the community, building the social capital necessary for Lusophone and Latinx families to effectively engage with the education system. Authentic caring relationships, characterized by cariño and consejos were a critical part of the program experience. These relationships provided a positive learning environment for students, as well as a place for tutor mentors to heal from their own negative schooling pasts.

This dissertation contributes to our understandings of the importance of relationships in pedagogy, and how these relationships can help educators to heal from past experiences. I highlight the benefits of community-based education. My dissertation contributes to the growing fields of Latinx-Canadian and Luso-Canadian studies. I also offer a different reading on Latinidad as it is lived in Canada and how the different reading of the Canadian context can enrich our understandings of mestizx consciousness.
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Chapter 1- Introduction and Context

In 1995, inside the unassuming two-story school building that sat just outside the boundaries of Little Portugal in Toronto, a group of approximately 60 volunteers from different walks of life – activists, non-profit organizations, academics, parents, university students and educators – came together with the single interest of bettering the academic achievement of Portuguese-Canadian students. They were here at the request of the Toronto Portuguese Parents Association (TPPA), a parent advocacy group that had been active since 1981, working with the Toronto school boards.

After the results of “Every Secondary Student Survey” in 1991, volunteers from TPPA circulated a petition around the Portuguese community in Toronto to be sent to the Ontario Ministry of Education calling for action to address the teaching of Toronto’s Portuguese-Canadian students. This petition garnered over a thousand signatures and had the effect of bringing media attention to the situation of Portuguese-Canadian students in Toronto public schools (Januario, Marujo & Nunes, 2005). The executive of the TPPA called a public meeting, enlarging their scope to include other members of the community with an interest in education. It was from this meeting held at a public school that the Coalition was born. A meeting in 1995 with the then Minister of Education initiated a collaboration between the two school boards in Toronto with the highest numbers of Portuguese-Canadian students (the Toronto Board of Education (TBE) and the Metro Separate School Board (MSSB)) and the newly established Portuguese-Canadian Coalition. This collaboration began through a series of meetings intent on addressing issues such as academic underachievement; placement of students in special education services; standard testing in inner-city schools; International languages; parental involvement in the school system; School Community Advisors; making available to the community statistical data on income, educational achievement,
Based on these meetings and the perceived “inability of the school system to deal with the problem of Luso\(^1\)-Canadians and their academic underachievement” the Coalition decided to apply for a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The grant would fund running a community-based tutoring and mentoring program in schools that had a high concentration of Portuguese-Canadian students and a low academic standing (Januario, Marujo & Nunes, 2005, p.11). This “crowning achievement and legacy” (Januario, Marujo & Nunes, 2005, p.3) of the Coalition’s work is the Our Youth Success Tutoring and Mentoring Program\(^2\) (OYS), run since 2001 by one of the Coalition member groups, the Family Matters Community Centre.

According to OYS documents, the program started with around 30 students, increasing each year until they reached about 100 students by their seventh year. The program struggled to keep up with the demand, with close to another 100 students on a wait list to access the service. At the same time, Portuguese-speaking students continued to struggle in the school system, and other communities were also identified as sharing the same negative outcomes. In 2006, another TDSB report identified Spanish-speaking\(^3\) students as another group that was underachieving in the public system. Students from both communities were shown as struggling in the Toronto public education system, as

\(^1\) “Luso” is a term designating Portuguese and/or Portuguese descendants. Lusitania was an ancient Roman province, encompassing what is now Portugal and parts of western Spain; territories which were originally inhabited by a people called the Lusitanians, who fiercely resisted the Roman occupation. This historical connection gave rise to the term “Luso” being applied to the Portuguese and “Lusophone” to all Portuguese speakers.  
\(^2\) All program and participant names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms.  
\(^3\) Term used by the TDSB census and report at the time
evidenced by higher than average dropout rates and lower than average enrollment in post-secondary institutions (Brown & Sinay, 2006, Ornstein, 2000 & 2006).

Further studies, such as Abada, Hour and Ram's (2008) examination of university completion amongst children of immigrants in Canada found that Latinx\(^4\) and Portuguese-identified\(^5\) children reported some of the lowest completion rates; with 26.3 and 25.8% respectively. These rates were below the average of children with immigrant parents, who reported a completion rate of 37.6%, and children with Canadian-born parents who had a completion rate of 27.5%.

These numbers, although not a complete picture, pointed to the fact that there is something that is not working for youth in these communities. The two populations have different immigration histories (which will be discussed in chapter two), settlement patterns, and languages; yet share this challenge in the education system with other marginalized populations. A handful of studies have been conducted into the underlying causes for these alarming figures (i.e., Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011; Januario, 2003; Schugurensky, 2009). These authors point to the lack of relevance in the curriculum, overrepresentation in special education classes and applied stream courses, and the low expectations that educators have of students from these communities. Clearly, there is still room for improvement as students continue to struggle academically, be pushed out of schools, and lack access to post-secondary education.

\(^4\) There is much debate in the Latinx community about the language that is used to identify with the group: Latino, Latin@, Latin American, Hispanic, Spanish-speaking. In this work, I use the term Latinx to signify the inclusivity of the gender spectrum embodied by the diversity of the community, the rejection of the coloniality of the Spanish language imposed upon the continent as well as acknowledging the language diversity in the community. However, I also use ‘Spanish-speaking descent’ to mirror the term used by OYS within their program administration and implementation; given that the families who attend this program self-identify with the term.

\(^5\) In the census category used by Statistics Canada
When the second report came out in 2006, the Coalition no longer existed, having folded in 2004. Family Matters again decided to mobilize to create a community space in response to a community issue. In 2008, the centre applied for a new grant through the Ontario Trillium Foundation that would allow them to hire a Spanish-speaking Program Coordinator to begin serving the community of Spanish-speaking descent. The program has since then been running with two program coordinators and serving both Spanish and Portuguese-speaking students in over 50 public schools throughout Toronto.

This dissertation focuses on this program. The Our Youth Success Tutoring & Mentoring Program (OYS) that was established in 2001 continues to serve two of Toronto’s ethnocultural communities today. Run almost entirely by volunteers, the program has contributed to improvements in students' academics, their social skills and self-esteem, aided in their language acquisition, and fostered their academic aspirations. Ultimately, this program has helped improve students' perceptions of education and helped students explore their own interests, and hence their future academic and vocational goals. (Kwiczala, 2012, p.128)

My interest in the program lies in examining how tutors articulate the pedagogical relationships they develop with their students in this program, given the importance of relationships in teaching and learning. Because of the program’s focus on linguistic communities, I am also interested in how tutors’ linguistic and cultural identifications figure in those relationships, and how their notions of community are articulated in reference to building relationships within the program.

Research Question(s)
My dissertation focused on the following central research question:
I. How do tutors articulate the pedagogical relationships they develop in the program?

In order to look at this question, I also focused on two sub questions in the tutors’ narratives:
   a. How do tutors’ linguistic and cultural identifications figure in their stories?
   b. How are notions of community articulated in reference to their pedagogical relationships?

In my analysis, I focus on these two research sub questions first, and then bring it back to the larger research questions around how relationships are described.

**Significance**
This study contributes to the study of education in Canada in three ways. Firstly, it addresses the need for further inquiry into the area of Latinx-Canadian experience (Guerrero & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010). As a growing immigrant community that differs in several ways from the existing community in the United States, it is becoming more pressing that the experiences of this group of immigrants in Canada be understood in its own right, as the theoretical work that exists from the United States does not adequately encapsulate the Latinx experience in Canada. Due to the different immigration histories and circumstances, we cannot continue to rely solely on United States-based literature to theorize the Latinx-Canadian experience. This study will contribute to the recent work that is being done with Latinx students in Toronto (i.e., Proyecto Latino, 2011; Pueblito Canada, 2013). Similarly, it will contribute to our understanding of the Latinx and the Portuguese-speaking community in Canada, which are often homogenized under the linguistic categories but which in fact are made up of very heterogeneous groups. Further
elucidating the nuances in both communities will also contribute to our understanding of the different struggles faced in the school system by both groups.

Secondly, this study contributes to the understanding and knowledge of the increasingly common issue of culturally relevant and responsive practices in education (i.e., Ladson-Billings, 1993, 2014). As immigration continues to be a driving force of population growth in Canada, our student (and teacher) populations will continue to become more and more diverse. Understanding what this means within the Canadian context and how to practice a pedagogy that respects and values each student for what they bring to the classroom and not perpetuate harmful stereotypes becomes increasingly important in this diverse society. Examining relationships in a program that foregrounds linguistic and cultural identities of students with tutors that may or may not share those identities, allows us to see how this type of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy can be practiced in the Canadian context.

Thirdly, this study contributes to the literature on after-school programs (ASPs) by examining the critical aspects of relationships within this program and also the experience of those relationships in a Canadian context. Most literature on ASPs is focused on program evaluations of outcomes or effects, and is based in the USA. The existing literature points to both the importance of relationships to these programs (i.e., Noam & Bernstein, 2013; Rhodes et al, 2006; Haynes, 2004), and the need to examine participant's experiences of the programs (i.e. Deschenes et al, 2010; Weiss et al, 2005). This study would answer to both needs by looking at the experiences of participants’ relationships in an after-school program.

**Conclusion**
This first chapter of my dissertation introduced the context relevant to my study of the Our Youth Success program. Chapter 2 will provide a discussion the research literature tracing how after-school programs and relationships in these programs are important to the schooling experience of people from marginalized communities. Chapter 3 will outline the Transnational Latina Feminist theoretical framework I am using in order to look at the relationships within this tutoring program. Latina feminist theory will support the way I make sense of how tutors’ articulations of their linguistic and cultural identifications figure in the relationships they develop in the program. Using a transnational frame will shed light on how the context of migration in which many tutors live shapes their relationships with students and the pedagogy that happens in the transnational space of the OYS program. Chapter 4 will detail the ethnographic methodology used in this study and how data collection was implemented. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are dedicated to the data analysis. In Chapter 5, I focus on the second research question; how participants articulate their linguistic and cultural identity and the complex interrelationships between language, ethnicity and culture and their impact on the process of identification. Chapter 6 answers the third research question, by tracing how the notion of community figured in participant narratives, and the ways in which the notions of community shape the program and the relationships within it. Chapter 7 brings the analysis back to the larger central research question, how tutors describe the relationship with their students; how these are positioned as relevant to the program and to the tutors’ experiences within the program. Finally, Chapter 8 puts the previous chapters in conversation with each other, to discuss implications of the research as well as limitations and future directions.
Chapter 2- Literature Review

In order to understand how tutors understand and develop their relationships with students within the context of the Our Youth Success program, we must take a step back to better understand both communities the program serves. What these communities look like in Toronto, but also their histories of arrival into Canada and the city of Toronto itself. In addition, it is important to also understand how after-school programs have evolved and the place they hold in countering the deleterious effects of discrimination for youth (both students and tutors) in marginalized communities. To this effect, this chapter will first trace the histories of Spanish and Portuguese-speaking communities in Toronto, paying attention to how their historical differences have affected the current composition of these communities in the city. I will also give an overview of after-school programs, and how they have changed from a strictly academic support endeavor to encompass cultural and linguistic activities and services for marginalized populations. I will also point to the importance of relationships within these programs, which holds particular relevance to this dissertation.

**History of Spanish & Portuguese Speaking Students in Toronto**
The Portuguese and Spanish speaking populations in Toronto, although served concurrently by this program, have different immigration histories in Canada that shape their presence and relationship to the mainstream Anglo Canadian settler society in different ways. Both histories are marked by the role of labour in immigration policies, particularly the ways in which immigrants have been exploited for menial labour and how international professional degrees are rarely validated in the Canadian context. It is therefore important to consider the individual histories and trajectories of these populations in Canada.
Portuguese-speaking immigration to Canada

Portuguese immigration to Canada began in the early 1950s as temporary labour from Mainland Portugal and the Azores archipelago. Attracted by the promise of agricultural work in Canada many Portuguese families applied to cross the Atlantic (Anderson & Higgs, 1976). Fleeing from the dictatorship of Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, these immigrants came from a country strangled by social and economic policies that had left little to invest in education. Between the 1940s and 1960s, Portugal had significantly lower mandatory education levels than any other western European nation (UNESCO, 1973, cited in Nunes, 2003), as well as the highest rate of infant mortality (Gallagher 1983, Melo 1997).

The immigration process into Canada destined these Portuguese immigrants to menial, manual labour, while simultaneously hindering their social participation. As agricultural workers, most of the newly arrived Portuguese immigrants were destined to rural locations, in which they had only limited access to Canadian cultural and social support systems. This limited access to Canadian social systems limited their exposure to the language and thus any hopes of acquiring English proficiency or benefit from any of the existing social institutions, such as the public education system (Fonseca, 2010).

These labourers, mostly men, migrated to urban centers when their contracts ended seeking more employment opportunities, higher wages, better housing options and access to support systems from the Canadian state but also from fellow Portuguese immigrants who had begun organizing into communities by the late 1950’s (Anderson & Higgs 1976).

Heterogeneity within the Portuguese Community
It is also important to note that while the broad category of “Portuguese” is often used to refer to lusophone speakers (e.g. TDSB census), this can lead to the misconception that this is a homogenous community. While some immigrants came from mainland Portugal, more than two-thirds of the Portuguese immigrants to arrive before 1980 came from the Azores (Ribeiro 1986; as cited in Da Silva, 2011). The Azores archipelago, some 1500km away from Portugal in the Atlantic, was a strategic bastion for the Portuguese empire since the 15th century. The islands were mostly populated by poor, rural settlers from mainland Portugal, as well as settlers forced to the back-breaking labour of settling the uninhabited, isolated land (i.e. Arab prisoners, African slaves, Portuguese criminals, political exiles, European refugees, Romani and Jews) (Rogers, 1979). Small contingents of Flemish, French (Bretons), Spaniards, joined them along with some English (Costa 2008, Chapin 1989). While the islands played a key role in the Portuguese empire’s trade and accumulation of wealth, the island inhabitants themselves rarely saw any of the profits. Instead, they were indentured into feudalistic system of labour well into the 20th century, exploited by the Lisbon elite (Costa, 2008; Santos, 1995). It was not until 1976 that the Portuguese Republic recognized the Autonomous Region of the Azores, with increased administrative, political and financial autonomy (Alves 2000).

Among the Azorean immigrants that settled in Canada between 1950 and 1984, more than two-thirds came from the island of São Miguel. This particular island is the largest and most populous, accounting at that time for more than half of the archipelago’s population. It was also home to its largest urbanized centres, many of its poorest communities, and perhaps the Azores most distinguishing characteristic, “Micaelense”, a local variety of Portuguese that is popularly known across the lusophone world as the ‘Azorean accent/dialect’ or just “Açoriano” (Higgs 1982).
In the early 1960’s, a second wave of Portuguese and Azorean immigration began, this one characterized by family reunification. More women, labeled as the dependents of men who lived here or were immigrating, arrived in this wave (Marques & Medeiros, 1980). While the demand for unskilled laborers declined, immigration from Portugal and the Azores continued due to the sponsorship system, which allowed immigrants already settled in Canada to sponsor their immediate family members to join them. This type of immigration, also known as “chain migration” was particularly common among Azoreans, and it slowly relocated entire families and communities across the Atlantic. (De Sousa 1986, Teixeira 1995).

As the demand for unskilled work declined, Canadian immigration policy began to shift towards a system that would evaluate an applicant’s education, professional skills and other criteria to satisfy other kinds of labour market demands. During that time, in the early 1960’s, Anderson and Higgs (1976) and De Sousa (1986) report that a small number of highly skilled Portuguese professionals and middle-class entrepreneurs arrived and settled in Canadian urban centers like Toronto and Montreal. These authors argue that this group eventually structured some of the current Portuguese communities in these cities by establishing cultural associations and ethnic businesses such as restaurants, real estate agencies, driving schools and travel agencies. While these authors do not elaborate on the region of origin of this group, Da Silva (2011) indicates that from 1961-66, the number of Mainlanders immigrating to Canada rose from 30% to virtually 50% alongside the number of Azoreans. However, Anderson and Higgs (1976) maintain that this small group of mostly of middle-class mainland Portuguese men distanced themselves both geographically and socially from the working-class cohort preceding them. They did so by moving to the suburbs shortly after arrival, away from the concentration of working-class Portuguese
immigrants and their enclaves in downtown urban centres. This is an example of social class difference intersection with regional differences during the formation of the Portuguese communities in these cities.

As immigration continued to rise in Canada, the government, reacting to the linguistic diversity of the arriving immigrants, implemented its first national language training program in 1978- the Canadian Job Strategies Program, which was replaced by the short-lived Secretary of State Citizenship and the Language Training Program, and the Citizenship and Community Participation Program. These were followed by the Settlement Language Training Program in 1986, which continues today through Citizenship & Immigration Canada. This last one was more flexible than its predecessors in meeting some of the communities' needs such as childcare and transportation costs, and being offered through local school boards (Burnaby, 1989; Fleming, 2007). Nevertheless, Nunes (2003) shows that many Portuguese immigrants were not able to benefit from the program as the class time cut into their work schedules.

This history encompasses the longest immigration history from a Lusophone country. Brazilian immigrants began arriving in the 1980’s, and while their numbers have increased eight-fold from 1986 to 2001, Canada is not the most popular destination for Brazilian immigrants (Barbosa Nunes, 2009; Itamaraty 2002). The 2011 census listed approximately 20,670 Brazilians living in Canada in various legal statuses, compared to the approximately 800,000 in the United States (Itamaraty, 2002; Statistics Canada, 2011). The largest immigration to Canada from Lusophone countries has been from Portugal and the Azores, followed distantly by Brazil. There has been small immigration from the other former Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, East Timor and Sao Tome & Principe (Statistics Canada, 2011).
Da Silva (2011) notes that the differences in these Lusophone groups can be exacerbated in the context of migration, where the mainstream society will often essentialize social categories (such as “Portuguese”) as a way of managing difference. The discourse around a certain group can highlight one category while obscuring other intersecting ones, such as race or gender. In the case of the Portuguese-speaking community in Canada, this is perhaps best exemplified in Kenedy’s (2006) finding that Angolan women of color immigrants felt that settlement services for Portuguese were for “Portuguese from Portugal,” and did not in fact represent them or help them (p. 23).

While some research has been done into the intricacies of the Portuguese community, especially its academic underachievement, these disadvantages are still not completely understood and remain relatively unknown to mainstream society. This is partially due to the Portuguese-Canadian population constituting an "invisible minority" (Santos, 2006). Being a predominantly white, European minority, data on the Portuguese-Canadian community have until very recently been amalgamated under headings of 'European', 'Southern European' or 'White'. This contributes to the community's issues being neither highlighted nor discussed, and thus continue to be unseen by the mainstream society (Nunes, 2008). However, some scholars would argue that these racial categories do not encapsulate the Portuguese experience, not only because of the racial diversity within the Portuguese community, but also because they do not consider themselves to be the same as mainstream, Anglo, White Canadians (da Silva, 2011). These scholars argue that Portuguese-speakers continue to be constructed as non-white (see Noivo, 1997; Aguiar, 2000; and Nunes, 2010). This is a particularly important point for this research project, since the loose label of “Portuguese-speakers” is used to identify the community that the OYS program is meant to serve, and the families that come to OYS self-identify as
Portuguese-speakers. This would also include Portuguese speakers from former Portuguese colonies in Africa and South America. This process of identification is itself fraught with complexities and negotiations. As Gerin-Lajoie (2016) observed in her study with Anglophone teachers in Quebec, their process of identification was marked by constant negotiations with the majority group and with their own minority language community. The relationship between language and culture, and its effects on how individuals negotiate these identifications are complex and fluid (Gerin-Lajoie 2016, 2013, 2011). Therefore, an important part of the relationships being built in this program is the way in which both students and tutors negotiate this identification.

*Latinx immigration to Canada*

Latinxs also have their own distinct history of migration to this country tracing back to around the 1950’s. However, the Latinx immigration has been increasing in recent decades unlike Portuguese immigrants (Mata, 1988). In the 2016 census, Spanish was fourth amongst the "immigrant languages“ spoken at home, with over half a million Spanish speakers (Statistics Canada, 2017). While the public discourse tends to group Latinxs as a homogenous group, their immigration history includes people coming from over 20 countries and various ethnic groups. Therefore, their experiences of immigration and acculturation will be very different.

The largest population of Latinx immigrants to Canada comes from Latin America - as defined by Spanish-speaking countries of Central, South America, and the Caribbean

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6 According to the StatsCan website, “The expression "immigrant languages" refers to languages (other than English and French) whose existence in Canada is originally due to immigration after English and French colonization. This expression excludes Aboriginal languages and sign languages, in addition to English and French.” (Statistics Canada, 2017)
(Statistics Canada, 2011). However, as Veronis (2006) demonstrates, it is hard to delineate social categories in hard lines. In her comparison of the 2001 census tables counting the country of origin of Latinx immigrants, it is apparent that nationality and ethnic identity are two different categories negotiated on their own terms. More specifically, her analysis shows that while Spain was not a country of origin in one table, many Latinx immigrants subscribed to an ethnic identification of Spanish. Immigration funding as prescribed under the multiculturalism policy means that often Spanish immigrants are tied with Latinx immigrants in cultural events (Hispanic Fiesta, Si-Si Latin American Film Festival) and in service organizations for the Latinx community (Veronis, 2006), further obscuring the difference between the two. This points to the heterogeneity of the Latinx community in Canada.

Mata (1988) arranges the pattern of Latinx immigration to Canada into four different waves according to circumstances that produce migration; the Lead wave (1950’s-1970), the Andean wave (1971-1975), the Coup wave (1973-1979) and the Central American wave (since 1981 to present). Veronis (2006) adds to this classification a fifth wave of “professional immigrants,” situating their arrival from the 1990’s to the present. This organization of the five waves help to understand the history of immigration from Latin American countries to Canada, particularly how the different patterns affect who are the immigrants that arrived and under what circumstances they came to Canada. These waves were shaped by both the socio-political events taking place in Latin America and the shifts in Canadian immigration policy during the last sixty-four years. It is important to note the context that shaped these waves in order to understand part of the heterogeneity in the Latinx community. For example, while the first wave was a highly politicized group consisting of mainly Chilean political refugees, the second and fifth waves are mainly the
result of economic and labour opportunities, and third and fourth are mostly due to refugee phenomena. This means that the demographics of immigrants and their assimilation into the political and social sphere will vary.

While Latinx immigration to Canada during the 1950's and 60's was not particularly voluminous, it coincided with Ontario's industrial expansion and increased need for labour, which lured more migrants from Latin America. (Mata, 1988). The need for skilled employees attracted many white-collar workers from some of the more developed economies at the time; most immigrants came from the south cone, including Argentina and Uruguay. (Mata, 1988). Canada’s immigration policy at the time, which was focused on “traditional” immigrants of European origin, may have advantaged some Latinxs of European descent (read: White) (Veronis, 2006).

This pattern began changing with the Andean wave, aptly named to reflect the high proportion of Ecuadorians, Peruvians and Colombians who immigrated during this period. Because of a special amnesty program, there was an unprecedented flow of 50,000 immigrants in a period of two years. While all Latinx immigrants benefited from this legislation, Ecuadorians and Colombians made up 30% of the Latinx immigrants during that time. (Mata, 1988). During the 1970’s, Chileans, Argentines and Uruguayans again rose in numbers, many fleeing the oppressive dictatorships in power at the time.

After 1983, Salvadorians totaled almost half (42.5%) of the Latinx immigration to Canada; thus the term Central American wave. This wave is a product of a series of social and political events that created unrest in Central America. While most of these political refugees were urban poor or rural middle class, and therefore arrived with lower levels of education and skills, they possessed a high degree of political awareness, organizational
capabilities, and social cohesion (perhaps due to their displacement and politically unstable countries), all of which aided in their adaptation to Canada (Mata, 1988).

The refugee programs that the Canadian Immigration Ministry put in place in the 1970’s and 1980’s benefitted refugee immigrants as they allowed them a quicker path to residency and eventual citizenship (Hispanic Development Council, 2003). This provided immigrants a feeling of security in their new country, as their legal status was not as precarious during the existence of these programs. Al-Ali, Black, and Koser (2001) argue that migrants’ status within a host society largely impacts their transnational practices, how willing they are to continue engaging with the world “back home” if they feel secure in their host society. Veronis (2006) posits that partly due to the security afforded by the refugee amnesty programs, Latinx immigrants during the 1970’s and early 1980’s engaged in transforming their host society as well. During this time, influential Latinx institutions and groups such as the Centre for Spanish Speaking People and the Hispanic Development Council were established. These groups continue to work today to serve the Spanish speaking community in Toronto.

During the early 1990’s, as mentioned earlier, immigration policy shifted to focus on “skilled” immigrants. The point system that was introduced in 1960’s was modified to place a larger emphasis on levels of education, occupation, experience, and knowledge of Canada’s official languages. The programs put in place for refugee immigrants also ended, and while this does not mean that refugees do not continue to migrate to Canada, the immigration policy meant that immigrants with specific professional training and skills were given priority for residency. This has brought about the fifth wave of Latinx professionals (Veronis, 2006). These immigrants are professionals with high levels of education and some familiarity with one of Canada’s official languages. While many have
been in a way forced to migrate due to the socioeconomic situations in their home countries, these immigrants could be considered ‘voluntary’ immigrants as they apply and undergo the traditional immigration process as opposed to refugees who are sponsored by the Canadian government (Veronis, 2006). However, many of these immigrants have still been forced into manual and unskilled labour due to the non-recognition of their professional accreditations (Houle & Yssaad, 2010; Mata, 1999).

When thinking of the Latinx population comprised of all these different nations and ethnic groups, who have come to be in Canada for such varying reasons, it is clear this is not a homogenous immigrant community. What we have in a city like Toronto, which receives a high percentage of the immigrant influx to Canada every year, is a group that represents many different ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, political and religious groups. Veronis (2006) notes that this has resulted in a micro representation of the larger Latin American context, including the reproduction of divisions along class, racial and ethnic lines, and unequal relations of power legacies of Latin America’s history of colonialism. They differ in demography and history, face different issues in schools, and should therefore, be understood as such (Suarez Orozco, 1987).

While Suarez-Orozco's research focuses on a different Latinx population in the United States, this caveat is also important for research with Latinxs and Portuguese-speakers in Canada, as they also arrive here from different countries and under different circumstances. The variety in their origins means they will also have different experiences of their migration to Canada (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997). Some families have more social capital than others do, some have more linguistic capital, and some may have more cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, 2001). These differences will give them more or less access to resources when arriving into the Canadian social systems.
In addition, the importance of the subsequent generations of immigrants must also be considered, especially as it pertains to schooling. This is particularly pressing as we experience the second, third and even fourth generation of Latinx-Canadians and Portuguese-Canadians. In the OYS program, most Portuguese-speaking students are born in Canada, and for many their parents are also Canadian born. The case is different for the Spanish-speaking students, but this is slowly starting to change. As immigrants establish their own families, their children will be attending schools in more and more numbers. An analysis of the TDSB census points out that while the majority of Latinx students are foreign-born (74%) there is a growing second generation (18%) and third-generation (8%) cohort of students in the school system (Yau, Rosolen, & Archer, 2015).

Not only can we not assume that the experience will be the same for first and second-generation immigrants, but the heterogeneity in their countries of origin and migration circumstances must also be considered. Portes and Zhou’s (1993) concept of segmented assimilation is helpful in this regard. As they point out, second-generation immigrants (those born in Canada or arrived before they were twelve years old) are affected by different risks and vulnerabilities depending on the context to which they arrive as well as their own backgrounds (social capital, linguistic capital, etc.). That is, depending on how hostile the host society is to immigrants, the prejudice that the youth may experience (particularly in terms of race), and access to an established co-ethnic community which facilitates economic opportunities and support. In this instance, access to resources like the OYS program, which is possible because of the establishment of a Portuguese-speaking community in Toronto for many decades. This program is a direct response to the schooling situation for Latinx and Portuguese-speaking youth.
Schooling for Latinx and Portuguese Speaking Students in Canada
As stated previously, Latinx and Portuguese-speaking students are consistently included amongst the lowest achieving groups in Toronto. This phenomenon is consistent with some of the literature from the United States that has identified certain immigrant populations as having lower academic achievement than their peers have. Research in that context has found that some second-generation immigrants perform better than their non-immigrant counterparts do, and that there are differences amongst immigrant groups. Namely, that Chinese, Koreans, South Asians and Cubans in Miami, have a higher achievement while Blacks, Mexican Americans, Laotians and Hmong consistently report lower achievement. (Zhou & Kim, 2006; Xie & Goyette, 2003; Portes & MacLeod, 1996; Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Miller, 1995). Often, this phenomenon has been explained through theories of assimilation and immigration. For example, Ogbu’s (1978) concepts of involuntary and voluntary minorities point to the importance of immigrants’ migration context to their attitudes and behaviors in the host society. Portes and Rumbaut (1993) point to the importance of context and time of immigration to argue that second generation immigrants differ from their parents because the younger generation is exposed to different contextual forces that may help or hinder their assimilation to the mainstream society. Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco (2001) have focused on the “ideologies of opportunity” and “cultures of optimism” that second-generation students share with their parents that have enabled them to perform equal or better than their United States-born counterparts. Taken together, these authors all point to the need for educators who work with a first and second generation students to better understand their culture and the particular circumstances they may be experiencing as first or second-generation immigrants.
Nunes (1998) also notes that the historical context has had profound effects on the Portuguese-speaking immigrant community. I would add that this is equally true for the Latinx community in Toronto. For example, compared to other ethno-cultural minority groups in Canada, the Portuguese reported the highest percentage of individuals who possess only a primary school level of education. Furthermore, they also reported one of the lowest percentages of any type of schooling beyond the level of a secondary trade certificate (Nunes, 1998, 2003, 2008; Matas & Valentine, 2000; Ornstein, 2000, 2006a & 2006b). Within the TDSB, they still represent one of the groups highest at risk of early school abandonment, with a dropout rate of around 17% and a graduation rate 10% lower than the TDSB average (Brown, Newton & Tam, 2015). While the Spanish speaking community in Canada represents a more heterogeneous group, similar patterns of socioeconomic and racial divide can be observed that mirror those in Latin America (Veronis, 2006). However, their dropout rate of almost 21% is almost double the 12% of their white Canadian-born peers, and one of the highest in the TDSB, second only to the Somali community (TDSB, 2012), and a graduation rate 10% lower than the TDSB average (Brown, Newton & Tam, 2015) ⁷. Latinx students also underperform in the standardized EQAO and OSSLT tests, and are less likely than their TDSB peers to have accumulated the required credits by Grade 10 (Yau, Roselen & Archer, 2015).

*Early School Leaving*

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⁷ It is important to note that the graduation rate reported from the student census, while showing improvement also showed a change in how the information was collected. From the census reported in 2006 (where the dropout rate was 40%) to the most recent census the demographic category of “Latinamerican” was included. The variation in the drop out rate between Spanish-speaking students (21.5%) and that of Latinamerican students (20%) shows that these categories might encompass slightly different pools of students.
Educators, scholars and community members all express a growing concern for the wellbeing of Latinx youth as their achievement in schools declines while their push out rate increases (Mantilla, Schugurensky, & Serrano, 2009). Early school leaving is not a simple issue that can be traced back to a single determining factor. Indeed, it is the culmination of a "process of disengagement with academic activities that takes several years" (Schugurensky, 2009, p. 9). There are many different influencing factors, including familiar relationships and pressures, teacher expectations and stereotypes, streaming tracks in school, school disengagement and identity issues (Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2010; Community Health Systems Resource Group, 2005; Yau & O'Reilly, 2008.). The lack of differentiated learning and experiential learning, both related to individualized attention from teachers, is also often cited as a reason for early school leaving (Alberta Learning, 2001; Ferguson et al., 2005; Satchwell, 2004). Nunes (2003) found that Portuguese-Canadians reported a lot of negative schooling policies and practices. These included the devaluation of Portuguese-Canadian students and their culture, the use of culturally-biased assessment procedures, low teachers' expectations, the cultural irrelevance of the curriculum. Therefore, it is clear that the school environment plays a critical role in student engagement.

Similarly, the relationship between teachers and students holds particular importance. This relationship has been a main through line in the field of curriculum studies (i.e., Grumet, 1988; Greene, 1973; Lather, 2007). Negative school relationships with teachers and school guidance is one of the risk factors for early school leaving.

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8 I use the term “push out” as opposed to the term “drop out” to signal that the forces that drive students to abandon school are structural and within the school system, which actively force the student to leave school. This is in opposition to the connotation of a passive action on the part of the student (dropping out).
Most importantly, one of the most cited school related reasons for early school leaving is students' perceived lack of relevant curriculum (Fonseca, 2010). The cornerstone of a supportive and positive school environment depends on the relationships between students and school personnel (i.e. Fonseca, 2010). Scholars have also pointed out that students are very much aware of the low expectations that teachers held of them (Romo and Falbo, 1996; Carger, 1996; Valdés, 1996). These low expectations coupled with unchallenging work, created boring and meaningless schooling experiences. These findings are in line with this dissertation’s understanding that relationships matter in teaching and learning.

**Relevance of Curriculum**

Scholars such as Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995) have long pointed out the importance of the relevance of curriculum to students' identities and engagement. Research within both the Spanish and Portuguese speaking communities supports this idea. Specifically, the way in which irrelevant curriculum has fostered student disengagement with schooling for racialized students (Fonseca, 2010). Latinx students in the TDSB reported wanting to have their culture reflected in the curriculum at a larger percentage than the rest of the TDSB students (Yau, Roselen & Archer, 2015). This makes sense since historically curriculum in public schools has been constructed to largely reflect the norms and values of the dominant class, which is overwhelmingly white and middle class (Eddine & Sanchez, 2006; Finkelstein, 1984; Stewart, 2007). Valenzuela terms this phenomenon “subtractive schooling,” where students' culture and language are de-valued in schools compounded by their experience of lack of caring teachers. These two processes leave students academically vulnerable (Valenzuela, 1999). This means that students who do not
identify with the dominant group are largely omitted from their own schooling. This erasure ranges from the actual omission of histories in textbooks and curricula, to the mobilization of cultural deficit models to justify the overrepresentation of students of colour in lower curricular tracks and special education classes (Stewart, 2007). These tactics work to effectively limit and control access to resources and knowledge, especially of minority students, and thus continue to reproduce existing social, economic and political structures and inequities (Goldberg, 2002; Finkelstein, 1984).

Often times, this assimilationist belief is experienced through the “hidden curriculum” in classrooms and schools; social values and norms that are transmitted to students through the myriad of social interactions that happen in the classroom (Apple, 1971; Jackson, 1968). For immigrant students and students of colour, this hidden curriculum may conflict with the social and cultural norms that they know. Particularly since, as Villenas and Deyhle argue, this requirement for assimilation of students of colour is based on "the ethnocentric folk belief that mainstream middle-class White ways are the only 'correct' ways of living" (2009, p.430). This view becomes another tactic to dismiss minority students and cultures, entrenching the "normalcy" of the dominant culture’s norm. This is harmful for students' experience of the classroom, as their culture and worldview is dismissed and positioned as ‘abnormal’. In addition, Villenas & Deyhle point to how this ideology also informs some of the education movements in the United States like the anti-bilingual education movement, demonstrating the wide-reaching effect that ideology has on curriculum. It not only affects what happens in the classroom but can also inform the larger scale structures of education.

These assimilationist views then create structural barriers for students of colour and their families. For example, parental involvement is not enough to combat the way in which
institutional racism excludes students (Romo & Falbo, 1996; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995; Trueba et al., 1993). Valdes (1996) argues that the narrative of parent involvement becomes meaningless when faced with the way in which schools are entrenched in dominant values and norms. Parental involvement will only be understood in the ways in which the dominant culture perceives parental involvement to exist- not all other kinds of involvement that parents may engage in are seen by the school. The narrative places the responsibility (and ultimately the blame) on the families for being involved or not. In the end, this places the students in the awkward position of feeling as if they have to choose between their family/ culture and school success (Nieto, 1996). In his exploration of Portuguese-Canadian settlement in Canada, Nunes (1999) concluded that this systemic exclusion has led Portuguese-Canadians to become marginalized from the various social, political, cultural, economic, and educational expressions of Canadian society.

**Streaming**

"Streaming," also referred to as "tracking" in the United States, refers to the practices of creating different categories of school subjects, at different levels of difficulty, for different students. Currently in Ontario, high school students in Grades 9 & 10 are offered courses in academic, applied, or locally developed 'pathways'. In grades 11 & 12, students can choose between courses designated 'open', 'college prep', 'university prep', and more options for technical, cooperative and experiential learning opportunities (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). While the provincial ministry of education theoretically abolished streaming in 1999, researchers have questioned whether this change was more a matter of form than of function, and in fact argue streaming has been entrenched in school policies and discourses in ways that lead to different educational outcomes along racial and
class lines (Brown, 2010; Galabuzi, 2014; Livingstone, 2014). In reality, students in Grade 9 applied or workplace streams were less likely to graduate and apply for post-secondary than those in the academic or university prep streams (Brown, 2009 & 2010; Brown & Parekh, 2013; King & Warren, 2010). Once students choose courses in Grade 9, it is extremely unlikely they will change streams after grade 9. In a recent survey, 91% of school principals reported that students "never" or "not very often" transfer from applied to academic courses (Brown & Parekh, 2013; People for Education, 2015). In addition, these tracks are heavily grouped by social class (family income) as well as race (Krahn & Taylor, 2007; Caro, 2009). These researchers have shown that low income and non-white students are more likely to be over-represented in applied courses. In their review of school demographic information and percentage of students in applied classes, People for Education (2013) report that the schools with the highest percentage of students in Grade 9 applied math also had the lowest family income, and most significantly, the highest percentage of English Language Learners.

In the United States, Villenas & Deyhle (1999) argue that both teachers and school administrations use cultural deficit models as a way to justify the placement of minority students in lower academic tracks, and of White Anglo students in upper tracks. Strand (2012) also notes that low teacher expectations can influence the entrance of students into different tracks, further pointing to how relationships between educators and students can influence student outcomes. Some administrators view vocational tracking as the only solution to the limited academic success exhibited by many of the high school Latinx students, however tracking students lowers their academic performance as well as increasing school pushout (Romo & Falbo, 1996). Therefore, streaming serves as another way to reproduce existing social inequities that are attributed to cultural deficit (Krahn &
Taylor, 2007; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2002). This perceived cultural deficit involves lack of parental involvement or knowledge of school system, lack of resources at home, fewer role models in family or community. James (2005) points to the ways in which the practice of streaming disproportionately affects visible minority immigrants, placing them in less demanding academic tracks that hinder their ability to attend university or other postsecondary institutions. Nunes (2003) similarly found that there was a concentration of vocational programs in working class areas and that this streaming discriminated against racialized students and reproduced social hierarchies that marginalized, amongst others, Portuguese-Canadian students in Toronto. In response to this structural marginalization, programs focused on supporting students affected by streaming can play a critical role in mitigating the harmful effects of streaming.

After School Programs
The research outlined above shows the complex challenges facing many marginalized youth in schools. The structural nature of many of these challenges mean change can be slow and often difficult to obtain- as experienced by the Coalition when trying to work with the school boards in the city. Oftentimes, communities will work outside of the system in order to respond to the needs of the youth. In this instance, OYS exemplifies such a response. In this section, I will give a brief overview of the literature around after-school programs, including tutoring programs, and then situate OYS within this field.

History of after school programs
Although tutoring programs, often referred to in the literature as after-school programs (ASPs), have been around for over 100 years, their aims and emphasis have shifted during this time (Halpern, 2006). ASPs were widely perceived to be an effective
approach to raising academic achievement of students from economically advantaged or disadvantaged families (Bridglall, 2005). With the advent of for-profit programs, ASPs then became used as enrichment for more wealthy families who could afford them. This trend changed dramatically with the advent of the Civil Rights movement in the United States, when they became a site of cultural resistance (Farmer-Hinton et al, 2009). Later on, they gained ground with the phenomena of 'latchkey kids' as a way to keep children occupied after school. In the growing "educational standards and accountability movement" of the United States, their focus has been made more and more explicitly remedial for marginalized students (Gayl, 2004, p. 2).

While they have been established for some time, ASPs in the United States have seen an exponential growth in the past couple of decades, mostly attributed to liberal funding from government and non-profit organizations, the climate of accountability, and changing demographics in the United States (Davies, 2004). Similarly, in the largest Canadian urban centres, after-school programs have grown between 200% - 500% over the past three decades; a growth that is not related to school enrollment or economic factors (Davies, 2004; Davies, Aurini & Quirke, 2002).

Types of after school programs

Although I have been referring to ASPs under the general name, it is helpful to note that there is a diversity of programs that exist, how they are structured, and their focus. After school programs can be: (a) tutorial one-on-one, (b) small group learning, and (c) big groups. If they are tutored, these can be: (a) lone tutors, (b) learning centers, and (c) specialists. They can be focused on different areas such as: (a) academic-related subjects (b) performing arts program, (c) sports or athletic related activities, and (d) socially-related.
Finally, the goals of the program can be: (a) for enrichment, (b) for acceleration, (c) for reinforcement, and (d) for remediation (Lim, 2010).

The literature on the effects of these programs on students generally falls along three lines: (a) the outcomes of after-school programs, (b) findings related to after-school program quality, and (c) program evaluations. In my review of the literature, with the exception of mentoring programs, it was hard to find a study that looked at other effects or components of tutoring programs.

Outcomes of After School Programs

Stewart (2007) points to critical factors that her literature review on ASPs revealed to promote students' personal, social, physical or emotional development and growth. These factors include: (a) sufficient facilities and teaching resources; (b) dependable relationships with qualified staff; (c) a supportive atmosphere in which students feel approved and secure; have potential for introspection, discovery of self-identity and ideas, and find channels for self-expression, responsibility, and empowerment; (d) individualized and tangible goals for each student; (e) assimilation of enrichment and intellectual activities; and (f) culturally sensitive activities.

Hall and Gruber (2007) also summarized the following essential elements of quality programs: continuity of teaching staff; small group classes; cooperation with schools; evaluation for program effectiveness; variety in modes of instruction; potential for cognitive growth; clear objectives; and independence of children and highly educated program directors and staff.

If these criteria are met, and the program is of good quality, then most research coincides on positive effects on participants. These range from academic improvement
(Farmer-Hinton, 2009), school retention and increased graduation rates (Gorke, 2006), to behavioural changes (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001), and social, life skills and personal identity positive development (Bridges, Margie, & Zaff, 2001; Chung, 2000; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Greenberg, Domitrovich, & Bumbarger, 1999; Hair, Jager, & Garrett, 2001; Redd, Cochran, Hair, & Moore, 2002; Schinke, Cole, & Poulin, 2000; Villarruel, Perkins, Borden, & Keith, 2003).

There is a clear indication then, that participation in these programs have numerous and varied positive effects. However, because the research has tended to focus on program outcomes as measurable, there is less specific research on the 'how' of these programs, and the specific ways in which these programs can most effectively achieve positive results for their participants (Buland & McCrea, 2013). It's important to understand participant (both students and tutors) experience in order to uncover what it is about the programs that is meaningful for them, and foster increased and sustained participation (Deschenes et al, 2010).

*Relationships in After School Programs*

Although there is little research in this area, reasons for participation let us understand what draws youth to these programs (Weiss et al, 2005). Reasons for participation are varied and complex. There is an interplay of relational factors, such as family acculturation, parent endorsement and modeling, and peer involvement (Davalos et al, 1999; Fletcher, Elder & Mekos, 2000; Huebner & Mancini, 2003). In addition, relationship to the program such as feeling safe and a sense of belonging are also cited as reasons to participate, along with the development of positive behaviours and self-esteem (Carrusthers & Busser, 2000). Borden, Perkins, Carleton-Hug, Stone & Keith, (2006) echo
these findings in their interviews with high school Latinx youth in Michigan, who cite a safe place but also caring relationship with program staff as their reason for participating in community-based youth programs in the city.

In their work with ASPs that worked specifically with immigrant communities, Lee and Hawkins (2008) found that these programs, which were staffed with people familiar with the families and cultures of the community, were very important untapped resources for schools. Looking at three community centres that ran ASPs focusing on low income Hmong immigrant youth, they observed that the staff,

drew upon their knowledge of participants' cultures, communities, and families to design program structure and activities, but, perhaps most important, to create an environment where children and youth felt a sense of belonging. Through interactions, modeling, and overt conversations, participants constructed and enacted new identities together. It is precisely this relational aspect that is missing from schooling for immigrant youth. (p. 56)

These authors are not directly advocating for tutors to necessarily be of the same ethnic or linguistic background as their students, but rather to be familiar with and sensitive to it. This relational aspect is important to counter the negative relationships that many marginalized youth develop with schools and their teachers. However, the question arises as to who these tutors should be. Wasik & Slavin (1993) found that one-on-one tutoring programs that were staffed by certified teachers were more effective than those with paraprofessionals were. Given this, it is important to examine the work of volunteer
tutoring programs that do not rely only on certified teachers for their tutors, as is the case of OYS (Moore-Hart & Karabenick, 2009).

The OYS Program

Earlier I gave a brief overview of the history and work of the Portuguese-Canadian Coalition for Better Education. This volunteer group comprised of Portuguese-Canadian community organizations and associations, parents, educators, and university students came together after the periodic reporting of Portuguese student under-achievement in Toronto (Januario, 2003; Januario, Marujo & Nunes, 2005; Every Secondary Student Survey, 2006). The work of the Coalition revolved primarily around discussing with the school boards issues affecting the Portuguese-Canadian students. These issues included assessment and placement of low-achieving students in Special Education programmes, the role of Portuguese as an International Language in the primary curriculum, parental involvement in the school system, teacher, parent, and school board social worker expectations, and development of best practices in target area schools. The Coalition was aiming to change some of these issues through their conversations with the school boards.

When these conversations with the school boards did not produce any visible change, the community-based organization took matters into their own hands. The coalition applied for and was granted an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant for a community-based tutoring/mentoring project in schools that had a high concentration of Portuguese speaking students and a low academic standing. In 2001, a project coordinator and assistant were hired; four schools (two from the public board, two from the public catholic board) were selected for the first year and outreach for the volunteer tutors began. As explained earlier, the program began with a focus on Portuguese-speaking students, but expanded their scope
in 2008 to include Spanish speaking students after the report indicating Spanish speaking students were being pushed out of high schools at an alarming rate was published (Brown & Sinay, 2006). The program now runs with a focus on both Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking students, and is partnered with nine schools in both the public and the Catholic school boards. In the following section, I describe some of the aspects that make OYS a unique tutoring/mentoring program and a particularly interesting site for research.

Culturally and linguistically specific

Following their report by the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine's Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth, Eccles & Gootman (2002) recommend ASPs be made available for all youth, given the value of their involvement in such programs. However, researchers such as Brown & Evans (2002) note that not all youth participate equally in these programs. Particularly, youth from ethnic minority communities (namely Latinx) and those living in economically distressed communities participate less (Brown & Evans, 2002; Yau, Lorensen & Archer, 2015). Others have also found lower rates of involvement in these activities for youth in urban low-income areas (Weiss, Little & Bouffard, 2005). Even though researchers have noted that this is precisely the population that needs these youth programs (Schinke et al., 2000).

In a way, OYS responds to this need namely by focusing on students who self-identify as being Portuguese or Spanish speaking. In their outreach documents as well as in their registration forms, the first eligibility criteria listed for students is “Be of Spanish or Portuguese speaking descent.” Likewise, the registration form is available in Spanish, Portuguese and English formats, and all written communication is made available in all three languages. All the Parent Workshops run throughout the year are also offered in the
three languages, and accommodations are put in place to ensure accessibility by all parents (i.e. interpreters when facilitators do not speak one of the languages). In these ways, OYS strives to not only serve specific linguistic groups, but also ensure that all communications are accessible to families. As Lee & Hawkins (2008) noted, this flexible and relational effort is critical in building a sense of belonging for participants of the program.

Run by the community

As noted in the community-based education section above, having a program based out of community site can be beneficial for a number of reasons (i.e. Eccles & Barber, 1999; Villenas and Deyhle, 1999; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). A community centre runs OYS and although it is partnered with school boards in order to provide adequate resources and space, the school boards do not run it. This enables not only flexibility in the curriculum, but also that tutors are recruited from the community and are not necessarily teachers themselves. This particular context gives the opportunity for students to be able to develop relationships with their tutors outside of the power dynamic of the teacher-student dyad constructed by the traditional classroom context. Given the literature on the importance of relationships between educators and students both within and outside of schools (Carruthers & Busser, 2000; Borden, Perkins, Carleton-Hug, Stone & Keith, 2006; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Pianta et al., 1995; Roeser et al., 1996, 1998; Wentzel, 1997, 1998; Wentzel & Watkins, 2002; Klem & Connell, 2004), I am interested in seeing how these relationships develop, and how both students and tutors navigate that relationship.

Moore-Hart and Karabenick (2009) suggest that volunteer tutoring programs, such as OYS, might be one way to address the lack of equitable funding, resources, and harmful interaction between adults in the school system and youth. Morris (1999) actually refers to
volunteer tutoring programs as a "lifeline" to literacy for children who otherwise would not learn to read. One of the ways in which I see OYS helping to address these inequities is through their partnership with local universities. Through these, pre-service teachers in York University and University of Toronto serve as tutors and site supervisors during their practicum experience. For some of the pre-service teachers who have grown up in the suburbs, these practicums serve as their first experience in Toronto schools.

**Mentoring aspect**

The OYS tutoring program also has an important aspect that differentiates it from other tutoring programs, and from many that have been studied in the literature, which usually focus on academic achievement, or fostering specific skills such as literacy, arithmetic, or athletics (i.e. Farmer-Hinton & Sass, 2009; Moore-Hart & Karabenick, 2009; Halpern, 2006). This is their focus on mentoring (full name of the program is the OYS Tutoring & Mentoring Program). This mentoring focus is part of the reason that students are specifically matched to their tutor based on areas of need and strength, and if possible on interests. The students remain with their tutor for the entire academic year, meeting once a week. Whenever possible, and if the match is a good one (based on tutor accounts, student accounts and parent accounts) then the match is repeated the next year. This gives tutors and students a chance to build a relationship through the year. This is significant as the literature indicates that mentoring relationships can result in significant changes for the lives of mentees and mentors, and are an important factor in youth’s social and emotional development (Noam & Bernstein-Yamashiro, 2013; Rhodes et al, 2006). For example, Haynes (2004) found that in addition to improving academic achievement, it was the mentoring relationships fostered in an after-school program- focused on reading- that
students and tutors mentioned as a critically important part of their program experience. While these changes are mediated by a variety of factors, the foundation of an effective mentoring relationship lies in a strong interpersonal connection that is characterized by trust, empathy and mutuality (Rhodes, 2002). These changes include more positive educational results as well as career choices (Dubois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002).

Researchers note that mentor relationships produce these positive effects through helping youth grow intellectually. Furthermore, they posit that these mentoring processes also aid youth to develop a strong sense of identity (Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006). Namely, through support, advocacy, and positive examples, by promoting self-esteem, and by developing intellectual skills through dialogue and instruction, promoting the student's academic interests or general learning and exploration. These mentoring relationships are more likely to satisfy youth than the relationship they hold with their school teachers, which most often is not a positive one (Kahne et al., 2001). Therefore, youth are more likely to trust their mentors and learn from them. In one Chicago after-school program, participants felt that they were more inclined to explore their self-identities and to pursue new activities due to these trusting relationships (Halpern, Barker, & Mollard, 2000).

Community Based Education

Due to its history being steeped in community mobilising and organizing, I consider OYS to be a case of community-based education. This term broadly defines a variety of approaches to education, namely partnerships between schools, students, and their surrounding communities, programs or organizations; community ownership of schools.
through the provision of services; and experiences in which communities and community-based organizations are used as sites for vital learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007; Smith & Sobel, 2010; Tompkins, 2005). At the centre of this approach is the belief that learning is best achieved when students are interactive within communities, and boundaries between classrooms and society are not strictly drawn (Smith & Sobel, 2010).

The potential and importance of community-based education has been described in the research, along with the specific factors that make community-based educational organizations successful. Heath and McLaughlin (1991) argued that overall the most effective organizations have a view of students that differed from the common deficit-framed institutional conception. These organizations saw "students as resources to be developed instead of problems to be managed" (p. 626). In turn, this view generated activities that both respected and valued the abilities that students brought with them, and that at the same time were developmentally and culturally appropriate while providing academic support.

Villenas and Deyhle (1999) similarly make the case for the importance of community-based education in developing counter-narratives that challenge the dominant cultures stereotypes and only legitimize worldviews of the dominant group. As other Latinx researchers have pointed out (i.e., Delgado-Gaitan, 1996; Trueba et al., 1993), families and by extension communities are the front line in enacting resistance to this assault, by "valorizing and (re)creating a family education which stresses dignity and pride in language and culture" (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999, p. 441). In this sense, after-school programs (ASPs) can be a site of community-based education that fosters this kind of cultural resistance. Particularly as situated within a community response, ASPs can be seen as a vital part of a
larger network that connects family, schools, and community in a quest to cultivate youth
development & learning opportunities (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

James (2005) challenged the assumption that students from working class and
immigrant backgrounds in Toronto lacked the experience, aspirations, and social and
cultural capital needed to pursue postsecondary education. He determined that with the
support of their parents and communities, these students could develop the incentive,
knowledge, determination, and commitment that make high educational and occupational
goals possible. Organizations can assist in the acculturation process by providing
information, support and encouragement needed to counter the different discouraging
experiences youth had in schools. In addition, James argues that community involvement
plays a significant role in the way in which these students reflected on their educational and
occupational aspirations; particularly, these community-network support and resources
allows students to develop attitudes, values, and behaviours that enable them to break
through the systemic barriers they face.

Similarly, Zhou's (2005) analysis of community-based organizations’ role in social
mobility of New York’s Chinatown residents, found that effective community organizing
could mobilize resources to counter the negative effects of structural disadvantages faced
by ethnic groups. Furthermore, she argued that community-based organizations could
provide a protective social environment and through relationships, help instill cultural
capital, particularly around knowledge of educational choices and opportunities. She
specifically pointed to after-school programs, and tutoring programs, as examples of
organizations that facilitated this process. Tutoring programs, particularly those created by
communities for themselves, can mitigate some of the harm of marginalization in the
Conclusion

In this chapter, I have documented the different arrival histories of Spanish and Portuguese-speaking communities to Toronto, and how their negative schooling situations are similar. After-school programs have long been used to complement and academically support students. They have more recently evolved to also include focusing on specific marginalized communities and providing spaces, which promote a view of students that differs from the common deficit-framed institutional conceptions (Heath & McLaughlin, 1991). These programs, many of which can be considered community-based education, feature relationships that both respect and value the abilities that participants bring with them, and provide a space for counter-narratives to harmful stereotypes and narratives (Valenzuela, 1999). One of these initiatives is the site for my proposed doctoral research project. The Our Youth Success program (OYS), which focuses on working with Spanish and Portuguese-speaking students is now on its 13th year of operation, and serves over 200 families in the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking communities in Toronto. I have detailed how OYS, as a community education initiative, can be a site for relationship building that counters the deleterious effects of marginalization for the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking tutors and students who participate in the program. I will now move on to detail how I will examine the relationships developed in this program through a Transnational Latina Feminist framework.
Chapter 3- Theoretical Framework

In order to examine how tutors develop pedagogical relationships with their students within the Our Youth Success program, I will draw on a Transnational Latina Feminist framework (TLF) to guide my analysis. Specifically, the framework that informs my analysis utilizes Latina feminist thought (particularly Gloria Anzaldúa’s work) within a transnational context, and provides a unique perspective on border theorizing that “maintains the specificity of the local and hemispheric” (Villenas, 2014, p. 206). From Latina feminist thought, I will draw on the concepts of testimonio, borderlands, and mestiza consciousness to examine the fronteras intersecting within Toronto and OYS, which I understand as the intersections of knowledge, race, migration, language and identity in the particular context of Toronto. Toronto’s unique transnational space shapes how tutor mentors, students and their families think about themselves as Portuguese-speaking or Latinx and come to understand their relationship to each other and to both their communities. A TLF framework helps us understand the importance of the everyday experiences and how building relationships and community play a role in shaping pedagogical relationships in OYS.

Moreover, a TLF framework also sheds light into how the local context shapes the way the program is situated within the communities and the larger education system in the city. TLF’s unique framing of these global and local movements and relationships makes it particularly well suited to contribute to perspectives that arise “from alternative sites of knowledge production and coalition-building” (Villenas, 2014, p.206). Latina feminist thought is helpful for making sense of both the Portuguese and Spanish-speaking communities participating in this study because of its commitment to dialogue construction across diverse communities. Although this project did not mobilize gender as a specific
analytic lens, TLF remains a useful framework for this work given its focus on knowledge production by and for marginalized communities within a transnational context. This framework shapes both the theoretical underpinnings and the methodology of the project. In this chapter, I will first give an overview of my theoretical orientation of Latina feminist epistemology. I will then move on to explain how Latina feminist thought has been used in empirical work that takes up the experience of Latinx students, focusing on three theoretical areas, or pillars: migration, race and ethnicity, and language & identity. This will situate the specific way in which I am using the Latina feminist concepts of borderlands and mestiza consciousness as an orienting theoretical framework to guide the analysis in this dissertation.

**Latina Feminist Epistemology and Anzaldúan Thought**

In examining how tutors describe the pedagogical relationships they build with their students and how their cultural and linguistic identities figure in their narratives, I will be using Latina Feminist epistemology Anzaldúan thought to guide my analysis. In particular, the concepts of borderlands (*la frontera*), mestiza consciousness, *testimonio* and Latina feminist pedagogies are relevant to my work. In this section, I will begin by elaborating on these concepts, how they shape identity-making and identification processes, and how this is relevant to the context of Toronto and the OYS program. I will then bring in how Latina feminism and Anzaldúan thought guide my thinking around relationships, the importance of relationship building to community and the role of *cariño* in this process.

*Borderlands*
Latina feminist theorists argue that Latinxs are constantly situated between two (or more) cultures- their own and the dominant one- and must survive and function in both (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Because identities are co-constructed by both the subject and the society, this leads to a double consciousness- seeing oneself as an outsider and an insider, a Latinx and a Canadian, and seeing oneself through the eyes of the dominant other (Du Bois, 1903). This concept is articulated in Anzaldúa (1987) concept of ‘borderlands’: “the psychological, geographical and emotional space occupied by mestizas, and a metaphor for living in between languages, cultures and spaces” and which by its nature counters any “dualism, oversimplification and essentialism” of these cultures (Elenes, 1997). This is a key orienting concept in this thesis, because the students’ experience I am interested in examining relate to their Spanish/Portuguese speaking identifications.

We can think of youth as existing in between their Spanish/Portuguese speaking heritage and the Canadian context in which they are (and what that might entail). This is a consciousness that encompasses relationships to cultures, races, languages, nations, sexualities and spiritualities; it requires that these youth live with ambivalence while balancing opposing powers (Delgado Bernal, 2006). Villenas articulates this “consciousness at the crossroads” as centering the ways in which “systems of oppression such as racism, sexism, linguicism, heterosexism, immigration surveillance, and class subjugation have impacted their lives and ways of knowing” (2014, p.208). This living in the borderlands requires that Latinx and Portuguese-speaking peoples constantly negotiate the different intersections they inhabit and embody (the crossroads). Therefore, as I will discuss in the next section, a Transnational Latina Feminist (LTF) framework posits that youth become adept at fluidly and strategically labeling or shifting between those intersections. This concept helps me better understand the ways in which tutors navigate the
categories of Spanish/Portuguese speaker and Canadian, and how this informs their cultural or linguistic identity. This will allow me to answer my second research question: how do tutors’ cultural and linguistic identifications figure in their narratives?

Mestiza consciousness
In order to think through some of these nuances of race and ethnicity within this diverse and transnational space, the concept of mestiza consciousness is useful. Hybridity is also fundamental to Latina feminism, because our bodies often have several different identities inhabiting them simultaneously. It is not possible to separate our colour from our gender, from our sexual orientation, from our upbringing. Part of the significance of the borderlands discourse and the ‘border identity’ is in this understanding that the mestiza identity lies in the “interstices of Chicanx culture, patriarchy, homophobia, and the Anglo-American domination” (Elenes, 1997, p.365). The mestiza consciousness lies in the spaces between all of these intersections, it is the self that inhabits the fronteras/borderlands. All of these identities live within us at the same time and we are exposed to discrimination on several levels while we also oppress on others. As Ortega (2016) describes, the mestiza lives “between cultures, races, languages, and genders— as a subject with various in-betweens” and as such, she can “question, mediate, translate, negotiate, and navigate these different locations and thus be able to form a critical stance” (p.27). The liminal position of the mestiza allows her to transcend paradigms and form new identities, new ways of understanding the world, all rooted in her experience of the frontera. Lugones (1992) argues that the possibility and power of resistance lies in the paradigm-shifting mestiza consciousness, through the breaking of “dualistic thinking” (p.34). Though the frontera is a
violent space, Latina feminist scholars remind us that this experience also bears the fruits of resistance and resilience.

For tutors in Canada, their *latinidad*, or their Spanish/Portuguese speaking heritage intersect with their ‘Canadian-ness’ in creating a different way of living in Canada. As articulated by Anzaldúa in reference to the *mestiza* identity:

A kind of dual identity- we don't identify with the Anglo-American cultural values and we don’t totally identify with the Mexican cultural values. We are a synergy of two cultures with various degrees of Mexicanness or Angloness. I have so internalized the borderland conflict that sometimes I feel like one cancels out the other and we are zero, nothing, no one. *A veces no soy nada ni nadie. Pero hasta cuando no lo soy, lo soy”* (Anzaldúa, 1987, p.63).

The quote above refers to the intersections between the two cultures that Anzaldúa grew up in as a daughter of Mexican parents. From this Latin feminist standpoint, this work seeks to highlight how for tutors involved in OYS, this same kind of hybridity is critical to understanding how they navigate their linguistic and cultural identities as Portuguese-speakers or Latinxs in Canada as well as how they form pedagogical relationships with their students.

*Testimonio*

A starting point in working with Latina feminism is the theorizing of the everyday experience. Storytelling and other informal social practices are at the forefront in this theorizing. In learning how to navigate white supremacist colonial systems and institutions while in a racialized body, Latinas’ everyday experience is necessarily implicated not only in how they learn but also in how they construct the world around them and in turn how
they share that knowledge. Therefore, students must be allowed to work with their experiences as legitimate sources of knowledge.

Using storytelling as pedagogy provides a way to reaffirm students’ identity and is helpful for all minority students in several ways. For example, they are able to come to recognize their social and cultural location without being constrained by it (Holling, 2006). Students are able to explore their culture/ethnicity and their history without falling into essentialized notions of culture or stereotypes of ‘others’ and construct themselves as agents who can reconstruct their own positionalities. Employing this type of pedagogy in the classroom also counters the hegemony of ‘academic’ knowledge as superior to experiential knowledge by uniting them and not privileging one over the other for students. Latina feminist scholars also argue that it allows students to build their understanding of the importance of community and relationships as sources of knowledge and acts of resistance (Burciaga & Tavares, 2006; Delgado Bernal, 2006).

Understandings of borderlands, mestiza consciousness and testimonio help me in thinking through the identification processes that tutors might be engaging in when articulating their cultural and linguistic identities. In particular, this orientation attunes me to the interstitial spaces between cultures, languages and homes, and the ways these spaces might figure in tutors’ narratives. In order to answer my first research question, about how they articulate the relationships they develop with their students, it’s also important to consider how these identities are related to relationship and community making. To guide my thinking and analysis around this process I find Latina feminist pedagogies, including the notion of pedagogies of the home and cariño relevant concepts.
Latina Feminist Epistemology & Pedagogy

Latina feminist theorists brought into focus the particular experiences of Latinxs and chicanxs in the United States, breaking with the binary black-white racial discourse and theorizing the embodied experiences of the those who lived in and through la frontera (the border) every day (Anzaldúa, 1987). For Latina feminist scholars, the body itself is a site of knowledge production, since as ‘others’ we cannot be seen as separate from the bodies we inhabit, which are always-already read as different (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981). Similarly to much of feminist epistemology, Latina feminist epistemology stands in contrast to the epistemology of Enlightenment where the object to be known is outside of the knower and there is a clear divide between them. In that view, knowledge could be understood from a “neutral” and “unbiased” position. Enlightenment epistemology assumed that since knowledge resided outside of the person, then every person could come to know the same thing, in the same way. This dichotomy was further applied to other concepts, so that emotion was opposite to reason, male to female, mind to body, etc. In addition, concepts were also gendered along this dichotomy, so that a rational mind of objective facts was corresponding to male while bodies of emotion were necessarily female and could not know reason. Therefore, much of the epistemological assumptions in Latina feminist theory are based in countering the norm as defined by white males of who can know and what is knowledge.

As with other feminist of color theory, Latina feminist theory also developed as a response to white women's feminism and the lack of voice for women of colour in the feminist movement (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981). There is a real centering of situated knowledges, as Latinas recognize that their experiences are different from other women’s experiences (i.e. Anzaldúa, 1987). In this sense, it keeps with the feminist mantra of ‘the
personal is political’ and deepens it by accounting for the diverse experiences of people of colour and their often-silenced voices. There is a clear focus on honoring women’s stories, and demonstrating that the personal story can have political meaning (Latina Feminist Group, 2001). Valuing individual experiences allows for the heterogeneity of both communities to be highlighted, instead of flattened. While it is tempting to speak of either the Portuguese-speaking or the Latinx communities in Toronto as homogenous ones, this often results in obscuring their diversity, as I will show in this thesis. The centering of situated knowledges allows for more than one kind of experience to take the place of the Latinx or Portuguese-speaking experience.

**Latina feminist pedagogy**

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) pointed to the under-theorization of race in the field of education, even in the face of obvious inequities in schools. They argued for the use of critical race paradigm within education to examine issues of race and inequality, and specifically to counter deficit frameworks being used to explain these inequities. The basis of Critical Race Theory then is to challenge the idea that the experiences of whites are the normative standard, and instead to focus on the distinctive experiences of people of colour. In 1998, Dolores Delgado Bernal’s article “Using Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research” paved the way for Latina feminist thought to be used in the field of education to theorize families’ experiences in the classrooms and think about a pedagogy based on Latina feminist theory.

Once the conventional epistemology is challenged, we must think about how conventional knowledge is shared and constructed with others. If we counter the norm of an abstract knowledge that exists immutable to an individual’s experience, we must necessarily also challenge a teaching practice that is based on this epistemology. The knowledge articulated
by Latina feminist scholars can be used to understand the unique schooling experiences of Latinas, but also bring in the everyday experiences of these women as knowledge, and provide theoretical tools for conceptualizing diverse forms of pedagogy. Linking Latina feminism to pedagogy can “propose different possibilities and theories of pedagogy, epistemology and education [...] rooted in the diverse and everyday living experiences of Chicanas/Latinas as members of families, communities and a global society” (Villenas, Godinez, Delgado Bernal, Elenes, 2006. p. 3). In working with the ideas of these Latina feminist scholars based in the United States, I wish to further explore what these different possibilities might be in our Canadian context.

I am interested in the pedagogical relationships that develop in the OYS program. For this purpose, I will be using the definition of pedagogy as put forth by Gaztambide-Fernández and Arraiz Matute (2013), understanding pedagogy to be a practice that is intentional, relational, and ethical. Pedagogy is then understood in this way as “a relationship that is driven by intentions and desires for particular kinds of shifts in subjectivity” and in which there is always an “ethical imperative” (p.53). This definition of pedagogy is useful in this work as it maintains the focus of pedagogy on relationships. While my main focus is on the relationships themselves, using this framework for understanding pedagogy is useful in thinking about how tutors approach their intentions to participate as educators in the Our Youth Success program.

I am starting from the understanding that learning is a social practice, and therefore related to tutors and students’ cultural experience and identification. However, it is also important that in this practice of thinking about cultures we do not hold a fixed or static view of culture, as this can actually do more harm than good by reinforcing stereotypes and alienating tutors or students. I wish to highlight the importance of challenging essentialist
notions of culture that fail to address the complex cultural identities of students whose experiences in a multiracial and immigrant hub like Toronto have resulted in hybrid identities. Rather than being informed solely by their race or ethnicity, tutor identities have also been created in their relationships with others, who oftentimes do not identify with the same ethnicity or race. The ways in which these practices are perceived and enacted in schooling contexts require attention, as they may have a significant impact on the way in which these people from these communities experience schooling (Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011).

**Pedagogies of the home**

Part of developing relationships within and across community lies in being open to different ways of knowing and learning. Delgado Bernal (2006) pose what she terms ‘pedagogies of the home’ as a way of conceptualizing ways of teaching/learning that happen outside of formal schooling. Although informal, these social practices transmit cultural knowledge shaped by collective experiences and memory, and are therefore a valuable cultural tool. They are transmitted through stories, legends, and behaviour. Delgado Bernal argues that these pedagogies provide a cultural knowledge base to help Latinas negotiate the daily experiences of microagressions they might experience in white-dominant institutions and provides them with strategies of resistance and empowerment. In light of this, Delgado Bernal further counters that building educational policy on the understanding of these pedagogies and strategies can enhance Latina’s academic success and participation in colleges.

Very often stories and informal ways of knowing are delegitimized in the formal schooling setting. However, being in a non-school environment, OYS is in a perfect
position to counter this devaluing by capitalizing on these ‘pedagogies of the home’ to bolster students’ self-esteem and counter dominant narratives that position these students as deficient. Moreover, thinking of pedagogies of the home as a process of cultural knowledge building, helps me understand the ways in which OYS tutors value students’ funds of knowledge and how they contribute (or not) to how students articulate their cultural and linguistic identities.

Furthermore, relationships are key in building these funds of knowledge. Knowledge is co-constructed by building bonds of *cariño, respeto* and *confianza* between institutional members and families (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Moll & Greenberg, 1990). The networks created by families and the community are all vital in the creation, and development of these funds of knowledge. The importance of *cariño/caring* in these relationships is also related to the experience of tutors and students in these environments. I will be drawing from the work of Valenzuela (1999) and Bartolomé (2008) in order to analyse how authentic care and *cariño* shape the relationships that develop within OYS.

*Cariño*

Valenzuela (1999) identifies the importance of *cariño* in pedagogical relationships, “caring theory addresses the need for pedagogy to follow from and flow through relationships cultivated between teacher and student” (p. 21). These caring relationships are understood as the basis of all learning, and are critical for students’ development of their sense of self as well as a transformational praxis that values students holistically (Prieto & Villenas, 2012). In this sense, enacting *cariño* involves cultivating students and tutors’ wholeness by not disconnecting the intellectual from the emotional (Rendon, 2009). A pedagogy of *cariño* honours the understanding that negative experiences of marginalized youth influence
their development as learners and as people. These authentic care pedagogical relationships can therefore be critical in fostering positive experiences that counter the deleterious effect of discrimination, not just for students, but for the tutor mentors they may grow up to be. As I argue in this dissertation, for OYS tutors these caring relationships are equally important for them as they are for their students.

**Examining Educational Experience: Transnational Latina Feminist Framework**
In exploring these acts of resistance from Latinx students and their families, scholars in the US have utilized Latina feminism to describe the experiences of Latinx and other marginalized communities in the US. In the following section, I trace how this has been done in three conceptual areas, or ‘pillars’: migration, race & ethnicity, and language & identity. Understanding how Latina feminism has been utilized in empirical work that speaks to the experiences of Latinx youth and their families is an important part in laying out how I use a Transnational Latina Feminism as an orienting theoretical framework.

*Migration & Transnationalism*
A first ‘pillar’ I engage in this work and for which I find transnational Latina feminism a useful framework to think through is the concept of migration. Both the Latinx and the Portuguese speaking communities have distinct histories of migration and settlement in Canada (and Toronto in particular), which shape the ways in which they assimilated into white mainstream society, and how they come to think of themselves as Latinx or Portuguese speaking within this context. The transnational context of Toronto and the program in particular, also shape the way in which members of the Latinx and Portuguese-speaking communities come to think of themselves and each other in relation to Canada. The concept of borderlands is useful in thinking about the development of identifications in
these communities, and how these communities’ experiences in the educational system and community-based education can foster environments that benefit their youths.

From my experience in the OYS program, the transnational context in which its students, families, tutors and even staff operate is a significant part of the way the program is designed, implemented and used. As culturally focused, the program is mainly used by either first generation immigrants, or descendants of immigrants. Transnationalism allows us to examine not just immigration, but the daily diasporic experiences and the ways in which these transnational sites give rise to new and multiple identities (Blanc, Basch & Schiller, 1995). Therefore, beyond the physical migration between countries, transnationalism gives us a lens through which to examine the many relationships - social, cultural, political and economic - that are carried out daily and how these relationships develop.

Transnationalism also allows for studying identity formation, role of the nation and cultural narratives through a different lens (Mitchell, 2003). Tutors and students may live in households where there is constant communication with family members in another country (Smith, 2006), and where they experience a constant flow of goods, money, people, advice, information between both countries (Sánchez, 2004). The OYS program, for example, has had to adjust its operations timeline to accommodate the movement of families to different countries during the school breaks. The program and its practices must therefore take into account the hybrid cultural practices of the families, which might transcend geographies and even generations. Even though the program is focused on working with Spanish and Portuguese speaking families, the ways in which youth experience this identity, the way their parents or other caregivers might experience this identity could be very different. We
cannot assume a stable Spanish speaking or Portuguese speaking identity for students, parents or their tutors (Villenas, 2007).

Some scholars have pointed to the importance of gender, social class, ethnicity in the different transnational practices of immigrants (Vertovec, 2010; Mitchell, 2003). This is important to the material realities of transnationalism, and Mitchell (2003) exhorts us to think about transmigrants in more than just abstract terms- but to engage in research that takes into account how structural inequalities shape the transnational experience. Skribis (2008) notes the importance of emotions in transnational communities, and links this to feelings of belonging that immigrants might or not have to places where they live (or countries of origin). Paraschivescu (2010) links this to the importance of emotional transnationalism in identity formation. How connected families and tutors in OYS feel to Canada or their country of origin, and how this impacts their identifications will be of interest to this project. While transnationalism has been theorized in areas of immigration studies or political science and economics, Sanchez and Machado-Casas (2009) point out there is a dearth of research in the area of transnationalism and education, and the ways in which these youth experience schooling; this work would contribute to this gap in the literature.

Race & Ethnicity
In this section, I lay out some of the ways in which a TLF framework allows me to analyze how race & ethnicity function in the Latinx and Portuguese-speaking communities. Taking into account the context of Canada and the diverse city of Toronto, I trace what ideologies of race might look like within these two communities. I then propose the TLF concept of mestizaje as a tool to understand how Latinx and Portuguese-speaking tutors might
articulate their ethnic identities in the context of Canada. Understanding how tutors navigate their ethnic identities is an important part of understanding how they navigate issues of identity in developing relationships with their students.

*Latinx Community*

Another way in which a Transnational Latina Feminist framework is useful in this work is by allowing me to complicate the binary of black-white racial frameworks, particularly those theorized in the United States. It also allows me to look more in depth at the relationship and sometimes conflation of race and ethnicity. This intersection is particularly important in the context of Toronto, and in the racial landscape of Canada given this country’s public discourse on multiculturalism and inclusion (Joshee & Sinfield, 2010). Toronto, as a hub for immigrants from around the world, presents a context in which the intricacies of race and ethnicity are important to keep in mind.

It is important to note here that the construction of the Hispanic or Latinx identification in the United States, while useful to understand, is not directly relatable to the context of this dissertation. The presence of indigenous peoples in the land now known as the United States antedates the formation of an English colony, particularly along the southern part of the continent (Anzaldúa, 1987, Fuentes, 1992; Jimenez, 1994). The history of invasion and oppression of these communities is integral to understanding the umbrella terms under which they are now grouped. This is an important caveat as while the understandings of these terms, and their associated stereotypes, are relevant to the Canadian context (Guerrero & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010), they do not reflect the same understandings as they do in the United States context. Wendy Roth’s (2012) work traces how migration changes the way people perceive and understand race. In her research, we see how the context in which
these classifications are deployed, impacts how people understand each other, and more importantly—how their identifications change as a result. For example, the way that Latinxs are talked about in mainland US as a distinct group from Blacks or Whites may shift how someone in Puerto Rico identifies as racially Latinx instead of *mulato*.

It is important to keep in mind how racial hierarchies, legacies of colonialism, play out in the Latinx community in Canada in ways that mirror the hierarchies in Latin America (Veronis, 2006). This racial hierarchy positions lighter skinned people as superior to their darker skinned or indigenous counterparts; and is based on the colonial hierarchy of white supremacy. As Telles (2014) notes, this hierarchy continues to inform how people understand race in Latin America, and how they perceive social inequality. It also informs how they come to self-identify, as discourses of *mestizaje* or race-mixing (particularly of white colonizers with indigenous and black populations) in nation-building projects since the late 19th century have shaped how people think about race and ethnicity (Telles, 2004; 2014). The larger historical forces that have shaped how race operates in Latin America will be relevant to understanding how race operates within the Latinx community in Canada.

*Portuguese-speaking community*

In the context of Toronto, Portuguese and Azoreans immigrants and their descendants primarily make up the lusophone community. Due to their immigration and settlement histories in the city, they have headed most of the lusophone community organizations and service providers. This tends to erase other Portuguese-speakers, and as DaSilva (2011) notes in his sociolinguistic study of Portuguese-speakers in Toronto, the Portuguese spoken by immigrants from Brazil, Angola and Mozambique was often derided as a bastardization
of the language, and not legitimate Portuguese. Therefore, the larger “Portuguese-speaking” community is oftentimes thought of as homogenous without taking into account the linguistic, social, cultural, racial, ethnic and class differences between members of the community. In the context of this dissertation, participants were exclusively from Portuguese or Azorean migration or descent, reflecting who were the participants in the program. I delve into this issue more in detail and in the context of the Our Youth Success program in Chapter 5.

Race and ethnicity are equally entangled within the Portuguese-speaking community. As other immigrants from southern Europe, people from Portugal were seen as less desirable immigrants than those from Northwest Europe and in contrast to immigrants from England or France. Within the Canadian context, the Portuguese are categorized as a white ‘ethnic group’ (Anderson & Higgs 1976; Higgs 1982; Teixeira & Da Rosa 2000; Giles 2002; Pacheco 2004). That is to say, they are different from the mainstream white norm (i.e. the British and French settler groups), but they do not experience the same systemic and systematic racialization that people of colour experience. This can lead to some ambiguity in the identifications of Portuguese descendants within the context of Canada.

Previous work with Portuguese descendants in Toronto has found that, like Latinxs in the United States, this group struggles with situating themselves within the multicultural mosaic of Canada. Sardinha (2011) points to how many 1.5 and second generation Portuguese youth use strategies such as hyphenation or territorial attachment and visibility in order to navigate the borderland between being ‘Portuguese’ and being ‘Canadian’. However, differently to some of their Latinx counterparts they are able to choose the situation in which to claim a Portuguese identity, and often mobilize symbolic indicators (such as historical or cultural ones) in order to claim ethnic pride. I argue this points to the
ways in which white passing privilege operates predominantly in the Portuguese community. While Portuguese descendants may not identify as white (and according to my participants they often do not), this is a case where ethnicity and race are conflated. It is almost as if by articulating an identification as Portuguese, they negate the possibility to also identify as white. In part, this is due to the otherisation that Portuguese immigrants and their descendants do experience, where being asked “but where are you really from?” positions them as forever foreigners. It is also due to Canada’s multicultural mosaic policy, and how the expectation of ethnic identity retention promotes an imagined Canadian subject who is a white Anglo-Saxon (perhaps francophone) man, positioning those that do not fit this category as always forever foreign.

Race and ethnicity are both socially constructed categories, and sometimes hard to elucidate. However, this does not mean that they are purely hypothetical, as in fact both race and ethnicity have very real and concrete impacts in people’s lived experience. Smelser et al. (2001) note, “the concepts of race and ethnicity are social realities because they are deeply rooted in the consciousness of individuals and groups, and because they are firmly fixed in our society’s institutional life.” (p.3).

Therefore, we cannot deny the influence that these categories have on our social reality. More importantly, we have to acknowledge the important role that self-identification and perceptions of others have in the construction of ethnic identity (Fought, 2006). The ways in which others see us and come to categorize us influence our identity in a similar way that our own understanding does. This is important to keep in mind when working with visibly diverse communities such as the Latinx community. However, it is also an important point when trying to understand the experiences of a community that presents primarily as white
or European, but might not understand its experiences as such, as is the case of the Portuguese speaking community in Toronto.

The context of Toronto is also important to keep in mind, since ethnicity is something that is most clearly highlighted when the in-group/outgroup boundaries become present. Therefore, people may decide to highlight their ethnic identity more or less depending on the context they are in. Latinx feminists remark about the importance of intersectionality of identity because of this contextual contingency- and how ethnic identity construction cannot be thought of us separate from gender, class, or other categories (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; Anzaldúa, 1987).

In addition, it is important to keep in mind that people may not have a single ethnic identity. The lens of transnationalism also allows me to understand that as settlers in Canada, youth may come from families where one parent identifies as Latinx/Portuguese-speaking and the other does not. The global movement of people, as well as the immigrant hub that is Toronto, results in a highly diverse city. For many people born in Canada, this means that their families may have come to Canada from different places, and met in Toronto. For some tutor mentors and students in this study, only one of their parents identified as Latinx or Portuguese-speaking. It is therefore important to consider how as communities settle for generations, ethnic and racial identities may shift over time. As Fought succinctly notes, “we cannot expect ethnicity to be essential, static or uncomplicated” (2006, p. 16). It is important to keep in mind the social, historical and ideological factors that come into play within the particular community with which we are working.

*Language & Identity*
The third conceptual pillar in which Latina Transnational Feminism framework is helpful for this work is around the area of language and identity. Whether as new immigrants arriving to a new country and a new language, or as second and third generation Canadians, language and its relationship to identity will be an integral part of this investigation; particularly as the program identifies its participants by the language they presumably speak (Spanish or Portuguese speakers), even though often the participants do not actually speak either language, a point to which I will return later in this thesis. This might be in part due to the labeling imposed by school boards in their census data collection, where students are identified as “Spanish-speaking” or “Portuguese”. These categories may or may not reflect the tutor or student’s identifications, since some may prefer to identify using an ethnic or nationality category (such as Latin American, or Nicaraguan). Due to the heterogeneity in these communities, however, language is sometimes used as a common denominator, in terms of grouping students as Spanish or Portuguese speakers. Our Youth Success program has taken this language, which is imposed by these census categories and instead of constricting access, opened it up to include any family that self-identifies as being of Spanish or Portuguese speaking descent. While tutors may be from any community, due to the program’s advertising of its focus on Spanish/Portuguese-speakers, many of the tutors identify as being from one of these communities. Therefore, given the focus on language speakers as primary criteria for student eligibility in the program, the question of language and its relation to identity is an important focus in this work.

Language organizes the way the world and our experiences in it are classified, it ascribes meanings to actions and occurrences, and it transmits cultural values and discourses (Anzaldúa, 1981; Bourdieu, 1991; Corson, 2001). Bourdieu’s notion of
linguistic capital is helpful here to understand the imposition and preference of a 'standard' (thereby dominant) language over another one, and how this sends a strong and clear message about groups' statuses in relation to one another (2001). Bourdieu points to how the political project of nation building necessitates the construction of a standard language that becomes the official language. The normalization of this language, to the derision of other modes of expression is intimately bound with the education system- where teachers are the authority in charge of transmitting the standard language. These messages about status and a group’s language are internalized, and reinforce identities within both majority and minority groups. For example, they can be mistakenly understood as statements on a groups' abilities or qualities, and affect people’s self-esteem and self-image.

Language is therefore intimately bound up with identity and identity development. In this work, and in line with a TLF framework, I take the notion that identity is not rigid, simplistic or fixed, but rather fluid, complex and changing. Through the daily activities that shape our social practices, individuals construct their identification to a particular ethnic group. An individual’s rapport to language will also influence the relationships they form with ethnic groups, including their own (Gérin-Lajoie, 2011). Therefore, identity must be understood within the social context in which it is being constructed, and the intersections of race, class, gender, ethnicity, which influence it (Collins, 2002). Individuals that identify with one ethnic group might still experience that identification differently, giving a heterogeneity to these social categories (Li, 1999).

Language and Ethnic Identity
Language ideologies also shape the ascription of ethnicity. Fought (2006) points to six linguistic resources available for speakers in multiethnic communities to indicate ethnic
identity. Heritage language, code-switching, specific linguistic features, suprasegmentally features, discourse features, and using a borrowed variety are all resources that speakers may use in indicating their ethnic identity. These resources are pertinent to work with Portuguese-speaking and Latinx communities, and to understanding how language and identity construction operate in this context.

Both Spanish and Portuguese play a heritage language role in these communities, meaning the language is tied to the ethnic identity. In Bailey’s (2000) study of Dominican-Americans, this ideology is explicitly stated through a participant’s explanation that “they speak Spanish, so they are Spanish” (p.556). In the United States context of the study, speaking a language makes people members of a specific ethnic group. I contend that the same language ideology operates in the Canadian context, particularly seeing how students in these communities were identified by their heritage language in school census and reports.9

Transnational Latina Feminism provides a useful framework for thinking about language and ethnic identity, by situating identity and language as intrinsically linked. Anzaldúa’s (1987) call, “if you want to hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity- I am my language” (p. 81, emphasis added) demonstrates the intimate relationship that exists between our sense of self and our language. Identifying students by their language- much like OYS does- replicates this discourse.

In her description of the rise of Chicano Spanish in the United States, Anzaldúa posits “language is a homeland” (p. 77), particularly for those who were born and raised in the

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9 Although this was later changed for the Latinx community (students were identified as Latinamerican in later census and reports) in response to research and pressure from the community. The terminology has not been changed for Portuguese-speaking students. However, the initial terms used demonstrate the insidiousness of the same language ideology.
borderlands. Language, and the evolution of language in these border spaces, gives people a way to connect with their identity and their everyday experiences and realities. This linguistic evolution is understood in the context of what Anzaldúa terms “linguistic terrorism” (p. 80), through which the dominant language (English) marginalizes the other language (Spanish or Portuguese) leading to *deslenguados*—those without a tongue. Internalizing the negative stereotypes and beliefs about the ‘illegitimate’ language leads to believing those things about ourselves—our language is us.

Internalizing those beliefs held by the dominant culture can also be problematic; it can lead us to turn our language differences against each other (Anzaldúa, 1981). Considering the migration and settlement of individuals and their families, and the transnational context in which these generational shifts happen, having language be a defining characteristic of an ethnic identity makes it harder for members of the community who do not speak the language to be seen as ‘authentic’. For those who are second, third, or fourth generation (and beyond) settlers, their language acquisition can play a vital role in constructing their ethnic identity. In English speaking contexts, such as Los Angeles, monolingual English speaking Latinxs are often criticized for not speaking Spanish (Fought, 2003). As Schechter and Bayley (2002) demonstrate, the maintenance of a heritage language is a long process of commitment and choices made over an individual’s lifetime. This opens up the possibility of framing a person’s relationship to their ‘heritage’ language as a fluid and changing one, in the same way their ethnic identity construction is fluid and ever changing.

As Anzaldúa notes, “there is no one Chicano language just as there is no one Chicano experience” (p.80).

Other linguistic resources such as code-switching and specific linguistic elements allow for speakers to voice different identities (such as a local community) or different
aspects of identity such as gender or class. Recognition of these resources also allows us to maintain an intersectional perspective when viewing the construction of identity, and acknowledging that individuals’ context and circumstances will shape the way they understand and enact their identity.

Language ideologies can also interact with ideologies about class and race. In the Portuguese community, we see how this becomes a marker for race and class in similar ways that these ideologies interact in the Latinx community. Urcioli’s 1996 study demonstrated how language ideologies are inextricable linked to race. Puerto Rican listeners were played tapes of speakers with different ethnicities and asked to identify the ethnicity of the speaker. When listeners were surprised at learning one particular tape was of a Dominican, because it lacked any of the linguistic characteristics they associated with this group, one of the listeners concluded “she’s probably a light-skinned Dominican”. Thereby signaling how race and language ideologies operate concurrently.

The relationship between language and identity is complex, and language can shape how people come to articulate specific identifications, such as ethnic ones. This is of particular interest for this dissertation, seeing how OYS is a space that is marked by language and ethnic identifications. How the relationships built in the OYS program navigate this relationship is part of my interest in examining the program.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the transnational Latina feminist framework that will guide the analysis in this dissertation. This framework fits within the scope of this work as it provides a theoretical approach to engage with issues of ethnicity, race and language in relationship to identity, which is important to understanding how tutors navigate these in the relationships they develop in the Our Youth Success program. The
focus on the intersectionality of lived experiences for tutors from Latinx and Portuguese-speaking communities makes TLF particularly useful for this project by highlighting the hybridity of living in this transnational space of Toronto, and how that shapes the community and context of the Our Youth Success program. Using storytelling and people’s narratives of informal social practices is another feature of Transnational Latina Feminist framework that is suited for this work, as my analysis will focus on participants’ narratives and observations of their everyday interactions.

The concepts of borderlands, *mestiza consciousness*, and *testimonio* will help me to make sense of much of the lived experiences of the tutors, whether they were born in Canada or not, and their relationships. TLF’s focus on the importance of the everyday experience and the building of relationships and community is also critical to my understanding of the relationships in OYS. Particularly the building of relationships of authentic caring/cariño, and how these develop in the transnational space of a community centre in downtown Toronto. I have also described how I use a Transnational Latina Feminist framework to understand more specifically at three areas: race and ethnicity, language & identity, and migration. Using this framework will allow me to complicate the binary of black-white racial frameworks. It also allows me to look more in depth at the relationship and sometimes conflation of race and ethnicity. TLF understands the intertwined relationship between language and identity, particularly ethnic identity. Looking at the ways in which language can shape ethnic identity and how ethnic identity can shape language and how it is deployed will be an important consideration. Lastly, TLF will allow me to keep migration as an important force within my analysis. In the next chapter, I describe the methodology I used for this research project.
Chapter 4- Methodology

In this dissertation, I am interested in participants’ voice and experience, and how they narrate their cultural identities and their relationships within the program through what Latina feminist scholars call testimonios (Latina Feminist Group, 2011). We depart from the notion that knowledge is not an objective truth separate from the bodies that construct it, and the experiences of those bodies, but a socially constructed phenomenon (see Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; Anzaldúa, 1987; Latina Feminist Group, 2011). Departing from this point means thinking of knowledge as being produced through the relationships that people engage in their every day, and the meanings they attribute to their actions. In this case, I am interested in the meanings that are constructed through the relationships built in the tutoring and mentoring program, whether in the tutoring sessions themselves or through interactions outside these sessions. Given my interest in understanding the pedagogy of a specific site, I have chosen to use the methods of ethnography to examine this phenomenon. Ethnography, and its concern with "everyday events and its emphasis on meaning and action", relying on insider accounts that recognize “the subjective reality of the experiences of those people who constitute and construct the social world” (Pole & Morrison, 2003, p. 5) is a good fit that allow the participant's perspective to remain at the centre of this research.

Ethnography stems from a naturalistic research approach (not method), in which observing people in their natural environments and understanding the meanings and practices in their everyday settings is seen as more important than studying people in artificial situations created in laboratories (O’Connell-Davidson & Layder, 1994). However, since its beginning, ethnography has had a problematic relationship with its participants. Namely, ethnographers have often objectified and othered participants, being
complicit in furthering and perpetuating imperialist colonial views of the world (Said, 1978; Rosaldo, 1989; Fine, 1994; King, 1997; Marker, 2005). Rosaldo (1989) points to the figure of the “Lone Ethnographer” who would disappear into the sunset to ‘study’ other cultures, then come back home to interpret and explain these cultures to others—without input or acceptance from the very people (objects) being ‘studied’. Erickson traces how ethnography evolved to attempt to capture the meaning that participants (as opposed to objects) attributed to their daily lives (2011). During the ‘crisis of authority’ in qualitative research, critical social theorists weaved an analysis of inequality of social systems into critical ethnography, and the relationship between participants and researcher changed from an objective outsider—object to one of solidarity (Erickson, 2011). Postmodern critiques of qualitative inquiry, however, question the authoritativeness of an academic researcher in general and focus on deconstruction of texts and the inclusion of the researcher’s voice in the research. Erickson’s review of the historical changes of ethnography demonstrates the evolution of this methodological approach as social sciences themselves have changed.

Ethnography has been influenced by the rise of cultural studies, feminist theory and social theory concerned with diversity and difference (Gordon, Holland & Lahelma, 2002). Since this postmodernist turn, it is less usual to see the kind of realist ethnography that prompted the harsh critiques about objectivity, researcher power dynamics and the perpetuation of colonialist viewpoints. Gordon, Holland and Lahelma point to the engagement that some educational researchers have with political and emancipatory goals that permeate some of the educational ethnography research (2002). Given this engagement, some educational ethnographic researchers are concerned with understanding what goes on in the classroom, and how interactions between teachers, students and other participants are related to student outcomes. This kind of ethnographic approach used by some educational researchers is now
more concerned with how people understand their daily lives and the world around them, and centering their voices in this research (Gérin-Lajoie, 2006).

In line with this approach, and highlighting the importance of relationships in the research process, Delgado-Gaitan proposes an ethnography of empowerment (1993). In this approach, the researcher gives choices to the participants, who may choose to change themselves and the environment around them, while the researchers themselves are also changed by the participants and the environment. This kind of ethnography is rooted in the relational that is so important to LTF, and seeks to do ethnography in a way that researcher and participants are co-creators of knowledge. As a researcher of colour, this is also an important point for me as I wish to engage in a research practice that facilitates a process where Latinx and Portuguese-speaking folk become subjects and creators of knowledge.

Ethnography as an approach is concerned with providing an account that recognizes people’s subjective realities and experiences as they constitute and construct the social world around them (Pole & Morrison, 2003). Since I was interested in looking at the experiences of tutors and families in OYS, and how they understand those experiences, ethnography is a fitting methodology to do this. As Gérin-Lajoie also points out, ethnography is also uniquely suited for research looking into participants’ identities, as this one does (2006). It was also important that I undertake this ethnographic project with the commitment to centre the participants’ experiences and the knowledge that was created through our conversations, interviews and time spent together in the program. In order to ethically engage in this project, it was imperative that I first understand my own positionality as a researcher in the program space, and the ‘baggage’ that I brought with me.
Research Relationship

When coming into the space of OYS, it was important that I acknowledge my own position in the program. At the time of the research, I was a part-time staff member for the program, focusing on outreach and program support. As such, I was responsible for the recruitment of volunteers, although I did not have any authority to 'hire' any volunteers or to remove them from the program. This responsibility lies with the Program Coordinators, who do all the interviewing and placement of volunteers. I also assisted in the development of workshops for students and parents, as well as coordinating training sessions for the volunteer tutors, although not facilitating them. In this capacity, I met stakeholders of the program on an occasional basis (volunteers, parents, students), while being in more constant contact with the program staff (Program Coordinators and Programs Manager). I was therefore very familiar with many of the families that participate in OYS, and knew many parents by name as well as recognizing more of them from participating in parent workshops, or seeing them in the office or the school where the program ran. I knew a handful of parents and their children in more detail, from holding conversations with them about post-secondary options and helping them research some programs in universities in the city.

I knew many of the tutors from recruiting efforts that brought them to the program, or from communications during the school year. As a staff member, I coordinated a tutor appreciation event that about half of the tutors attended, where we got to know each other and tutors got time to interact with each other outside of the classroom. I also coordinated tutor orientation and training sessions, where I was present and met many of them as they entered the program or got additional support in learning how to teach literacy or math. While I was not responsible for their placement in the program, this kind of contact gave
me the opportunity to know mentors on a more personal level and often relate to them as educators. Therefore, many of them knew me personally or through email when the research information letter was sent out. In contrast, the student participants did not know me before I began observing their sessions and asked them for an interview, although some communicated that they had seen me in the school lobby before but did not know how I related to the program.

I acknowledge that I am in a privileged and complicated position of also working for the program, and privy to interactions between program staff that I may not be privy to otherwise. However, this also allows me to approach participants with whom I am already familiar and with whom I have an established relationship. I believe this also allowed me to be viewed as an ‘ally’ of the program, and as such program staff were not focused on ‘selling’ me the program and its benefits or justifying why this program is needed (focusing on the academic achievement of Latinx and Portuguese-speaking students, or their lack of access to post-secondary). We began our interviews and other conversations from the shared viewpoint that the program is important and is needed; therefore, the conversations could turn to other aspects of their experience within the program.

Our previous conversations meant that I was not establishing a rapport with participants from scratch, but rather building on already existing relationships and using knowledge of the program and experiences from previous years to deepen them. Building on Delgado-Gaitan’s (1993) notion that both researcher and participant are changed through their interactions and, our previous relationship brought both the participants and I into a space of knowledge construction that was already marked by our previous conversations. We had begun building this knowledge—particularly with the program staff who I worked with regularly—before I explicitly began data collection.
In a sense, I had begun building this knowledge before being involved with OYS as a staff person, as a member of the Latinx community in Toronto. It is important in understanding my positionality in this research not only as a part of the program but also as Latinx. Villenas (1996) draws our attention to the dilemma that many ethnographers of colour face when doing research with their own communities. There is a danger of co-optation by the academy and/or institutions that frame these communities as deficient (such as non-profits or community organizations); thereby bringing researchers of colour into “participating in whiteness” (hooks, 1989). Villenas (1996) then reminds us that “ethnographers of color don’t just become privileged without any baggage”; the privilege that she mentions pertaining to that status granted by being associated to institutions. Villenas’ point is to remark that as ethnographers of colour, we are still subjected to the larger social relations of power existent in our social context. Namely, we are still forced to navigate spaces that are mostly white, male and upper middle class. There is no easy resolution to this ‘messy’ situation, of being “colonizer and colonized” (Villenas, 1996). However, this is another demonstration of the contradictory identities we embody as border-crossers and as borderlands mestizxs (Anzaldúa, 1987). As researchers of colour, particularly doing work within our own communities, we learn to navigate them and live in the fronteras.

In this case, I was part of an organization that is trying to change the way that families are framed as deficient by the larger school system. As we will see in Ch. 4, it is not always successful. However, I did not have to navigate the position of constantly being told that Latinx and Portuguese-speaking families were a “problem”. The frontera that I had to navigate, in collaboration with the families and the non-profit, was with the larger school system that frames these families as deficient. It is pertinent then to remember that working
with a community I myself am a member of, raises the stakes for a research project. It is also my own liberation that is at stake, as much as my community’s (Villenas, 1996). This kind of relationship to my participants is integral to my understanding of an ethical commitment to research. I was able to use my relationships with the program and with participants to engage in a process of knowledge building that produced *testimonios*, which countered the deficit framing that plague our communities.

There was an added relationship that I had failed to consider before beginning data collection. While my interest was in observing the relationship between tutor and student, I had not thought about the social context in which this close relationship develops. When I sat down to observe my first tutoring session between Joao and Moira, I realized that this relationship occurs in an intimate space. Given that they are often working either one-on-one or in small groups, the setting is often tight knit. They are used to talking to each other about personal thoughts without having others hear them. Therefore, my first tutoring session observation was quite awkward, the student was silent when the tutor asked them how their week had been, and they looked at their papers before smiling and giving a noncommittal “I don’t know” and glancing briefly at me before looking down again. The tutor mentor also looked at me, and hesitated before trying to ask the student more follow up questions. Their glances in my direction and the student’s resistance to sharing and talking about their week signaled to me that they did not feel comfortable engaging in conversation freely with their tutor because I was there.

My previous experience doing observations has been in full classrooms, where I did not necessarily engage with students or sit in close proximity to them when they had one-on-one conversations. Therefore, I did not think about how my presence would alter the very relationship I was trying to observe. This was something that I had to adjust in my
subsequent sessions, when I was first observing a tutor and student. I had to introduce myself to the group before I did my actual formal observation, usually the week before. I would say my script and talk to them about the project, give them the consent forms so they could give to their parents if needed, and I would just sit and talk to the group for 5-10 minutes while they were on break (this was negotiated with the tutor beforehand so I would not be interrupting their work time). Often times, these were informal conversations around their schools, what classes they liked best, if they had been in the program a long time, etc. Sometimes the students would ask me about my background, if I spoke Spanish, and if I was a ‘teacher’. With older high school students, we would talk about events in the city such as concerts happening, or summer vacation plans. I found that this allowed me to build some trust with them so when I came to observe the entire tutoring session the following week, the initial awkwardness I felt on the very first observation was not as prevalent.

This intimacy, and the awkwardness I felt when first intruding (as this is what it felt like) into the tutoring session speaks to the trust that is built in these relationships, which is further explored in Ch. 6. There is a vulnerability that is shared between the tutor/mentor and the students as they built trust with each other to share and hold their vulnerabilities in order to learn from each other. Allowing another person to sit in this space shifted the dynamics of these relationships and so it did not allow me the kind observation that I was expecting. Instead, I could indirectly experience the ways in which these learning relationships are developed on such personal terms. I could observe, for example, how a group felt comfortable talking about abortion and the points for debate on the topic; or how a tutor would ask a student about a party that they had mentioned their last session; or how a tutor would pick up on a student’s life story to demonstrate a theme in the book they were
reading. Through these observations, and then through my conversations with both tutor mentors and students, I came to see how these relationships developed over time.

In order to focus on the different meanings made by participants and contextualize those meanings, a lot of emphasis was placed on "the operation of language, the production of meaning, and the ways in which knowledge and power combine to create accepted or taken-for-granted forms of knowledge and social practices" (Fawcett, 2008). For example, by considering the ways in which certain social practices are positioned through language to dominate and invalidate others.

This view of knowledge and reality as dependent on relationships, language, and experience construes the subject as non-uniform, but rather 'decentered.' In turn, subjectivity is taken as changing, sometimes contradictory (Anzaldúa, 1987). We are as subjects formed by our relationships to each other as well as by our experiences which are themselves discursively constructed (i.e. Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1981; Delgado-Bernal, 2006). It is important to keep in mind that participants exist amid a variety of discourses and must navigate social structures that ask different things of them at different times, whether they are at school, at home, in the tutoring program or with peers. Moreover, as non-white persons, many times they are required to navigate structures in which they are placed at a disadvantage, forcing them to develop coping strategies that allow them to successfully navigate these institutions (Delgado Bernal, 2006). Therefore, discourse regulates how participants articulate their identities and their experiences of the program.

**Size and participant selection**

The participants in this study were volunteer tutor/mentors, students, staff members and parents who participate in the OYS program. I spoke to both Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking descent students, parents and tutor/mentors.
The participants were selected through purposive selection, with the aid of the program staff. In the beginning of data collection, a letter was given to the Program Coordinators, explaining the nature of the research project. The coordinators then identified potential volunteer tutors and students, based on their years of participation on the program, pairs that had worked together over a year, and volunteers who were known to the Coordinators as being particularly committed to the program. This usually meant volunteers who had contacted the Coordinators throughout the school year to relay concerns, ask for resources, or who had a strong bond with their students and had asked to be paired together year after year. I purposefully wanted to talk to these tutors as they had demonstrated a commitment to the program and to their students by extension. Those who had worked with their students for more than a year had had time to develop their relationship more deeply, and choosing to work together again meant that this had been a positive experience and that they wanted to keep developing that relationship.

A separate recruitment letter was then distributed to the volunteer tutors and students identified. The letter described the project and included a consent form. All families in the program were informed of the research project through a general letter sent out by the Program Coordinators, pointing out that I would be doing observations in common areas like the lobby of the school. All students (unless they were 18 years old or over) that volunteered to participate in the interviews were asked to obtain consent from their parents.

I was interested primarily in speaking with volunteer tutors who had been with the program for over three years, as this time frame would have demonstrated a commitment to the program, and that they had been successful as tutors, since they have been asked back to the program year after year. Similarly, I was interested in speaking to students who had
been with the program for over three years, as they would have experienced the program for longer. I was particularly interested in tutor-student pairs who had been working together for over a year as this allowed me to speak to participants who had time to develop a deeper relationship and allowed me to answer my first research question pertaining to the development of these pedagogical relationships.

Once out in the field, it became clear that access to the tutor mentors was easier to obtain. Tutor mentors were more likely to respond being interested in participating; to the point that even tutors who were no longer active in the program but who were still in touch with the program coordinators, replied to the original call out wanting to be interviewed. This resulted in my most of my interview data coming from tutor mentors as opposed to students. In addition, the questions that I was asking proved to be of more interest to the tutor mentors, who had much more to say on the subject of their identifications and relationships with their students. Given the iterative process of research, as I collected data it became apparent that my focus was increasingly on the tutors’ narratives. This led me to revise my research questions to reflect that new focus and to guide my analysis in that same manner.

The program staff interviewed included the two Program Coordinators, both of whom had been working with the program for over five years, as well as a Program Manager and Executive Director of the organization, who had been with the program since its beginning as well. The staff interview gave me access to a wealth of institutional and community memory related to history and journey of the program.

The call out for parent participants went out to the whole program, through an email that was sent out by the Program Coordinators on my behalf. The parents who answered the call had all been with the program for over three years.
Tutor-Mentors

I spoke to 13 mentors in total. Some of them were no longer with the program by the time of their interviews, but had been recommended by the Program Coordinators due to their commitment and the relationships they had developed with their students during their tenure in the program.

These previous tutors included four who were no longer with the program at all, and two who were now Site Supervisors instead of tutors. Site Supervisors are in charge of looking after the tutoring site, they take attendance, make sure students are paired up with a tutor, take over in cases where there are not enough tutors, and act as an experienced resource for tutors throughout the tutoring session. They therefore had an additional perspective on the program from being in direct contact with students and from being in a more administrative role of supervisors.

I also spoke to seven tutors who were currently in the program at the time of their interviews. The time they had been with the program ranged from one year to seven years, spanning grade levels from elementary to college. The one tutor who had only been with the program for one year was a former student in the program who had graduated and come back to the program as a tutor while pursuing a university degree. Therefore, I was interested in speaking to him as his return to the program demonstrated a belief that the program was important, and something worth being a part of. Likewise, the commitment of the tutors to participating in the program for years also showed that the program was important to them and they valued it enough to dedicate so much of their time to it.

Below is a list of the tutor-mentors who participated in this dissertation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Identify as</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10 All names are pseudonyms
Students
While my focus did shift on to the tutors’ narratives, I still interviewed students in order to get some of their perspectives on the relationships that they formed with the tutors. There were eight students who participated in the research. Participation was mostly limited by the age of some of the students, since it was harder to collect consent forms for the younger students from the parents. It was not clear to me whether the parents actively did not want them to participate in the project, or whether they did not really understand what their participation entailed. However, I did not find a time where I could address all of the parents at the same time- pick up times were chaotic and parents were often in a rush to leave as they had plans to get to. The parents that I managed to speak to seemed agreeable to the project, but many did not return consent forms and I was therefore unable to include their children in the project. In addition, most the students who had worked with former tutors were no longer in the program themselves, having graduated or quit the program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Identify as</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years in the Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Portuguese speaking</td>
<td>College student</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Marie</td>
<td>Portuguese Speaking</td>
<td>College student</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moira</td>
<td>Spanish speaking</td>
<td>High school senior</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents

Parents were the most difficult participants to recruit. I tried a couple of different strategies, but they did not yield as many participants as I had hoped. In retrospect, I think the parents did not see any benefit to their participation. That is, I did not demonstrate to them how giving me their time would lead to an improvement of the program, or added benefit for their child. I first tried announcing the research project before workshops and in the lobby where there were many parents present. This did not result in any parents volunteering to take part. I then tried asking the Program Coordinator to send emails to all the parents in the program. This led to the four parent participants that I was able to interview. However, given my position within the program, as I described above, I interacted and had informal conversations with about 100 parents in my year of observations. Both the interview data and the feedback I received from parents through my position as a staff informed my analysis of the data in this project. The parents who volunteered to be interviewed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Years in the program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marisol</td>
<td>Spanish speaking</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriano</td>
<td>Portuguese speaking</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beatriz</td>
<td>Portuguese speaking</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonor</td>
<td>Portuguese speaking</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff
In addition to families and volunteers, I also spoke to the staff who worked in the program as well as management in Family Matters Community Centre. The two Program Coordinators have been with the program since it started, for the Portuguese-speaking Coordinator, and since they welcomed Spanish-speaking students, for the Spanish-speaking Coordinator. There have been no other dedicated program staff in the program, only volunteers and my position which was a part-time support position facilitated by a grant program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elena</td>
<td>Spanish speaking</td>
<td>Program Spanish-Speaking Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joana</td>
<td>Portuguese speaking</td>
<td>Program Portuguese-speaking Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beatriz</td>
<td>Portuguese speaking</td>
<td>Community Centre Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Portuguese speaking</td>
<td>Community Centre Programs Manager</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection
This dissertation used ethnographic methods of data collection, involving several forms of qualitative data. Data collected included: program documents; participant observations of regular program activities; a drawing prompt called an “identity portrait” and interviews with tutor volunteers, students, program staff and parents.

The data was collected over a 13-month period, which encompassed the duration of the program year of operation (7 months), and an additional half a year of the program the following year, which was mostly focused on parent interviews. Participant observations were ongoing during the first 8-month period, and included regularly scheduled tutoring sessions, workshops with parents, tutors and students, and key annual events such as the "Adopt-a-Student Day" event and the annual graduation event. Before every event, I introduced myself and explained the purpose of my observations following a script (Appendix J). I built on my visibility within the program, as many parents knew me from
previous years and orientations sessions, to explain how while different from my staff role, I hoped to benefit the program by learning more about it. Written consent was not obtained from individuals participating in these activities, given that no participants were identified and any informal conversations were not audio recorded.

Interviews were scheduled with participants on a mutually convened time, during the 12-month period. Interviews followed a semi-structured format, giving participants an opportunity to provide their own narratives without too much direction from me, and were between 40 to 90 minutes long, depending on how long the participant wanted to talk. The idea was to derive interpretations, and the meaning attributed to events, or relationships, rather than focusing on facts (Warren, 2001). As such, the task of the interviewer in this guided conversation is to actively listen for the meanings that the participant is making throughout their narratives (See Appendix F, G, and H, I for interview protocols). Interviews have long been an ethnographic method, and combining interviewing with the field observation allowed me to examine both the culture and the biographical experience of the participant's world (Warren, 2001). My previous experience with the program was also beneficial in this instance, as I was familiar with many of the program procedures and policies. This allowed me to start with a level of familiarity with tutors and students and dig deeper into their experiences throughout the program. It is also important to treat the interview context as data, as it influences the way in which the interview unfolds and perhaps even what the interviewees choose to focus on. Therefore, interview notes were taken directly after each interview to make note of the context and any non-verbal cues that were not picked up by the audio-recorder. All audio-recordings of interviews were transcribed for data analysis.
I also included a visual task during the interview, the drawing of an “identity portrait”. As Bagnoli suggests, these kinds of tasks can encourage participants to go beyond a verbal level of thinking, and “encourage the narration of a holistic picture of identities” (2009, p. 565). The identity portrait drawing was done at the end of the individual interviews with the tutors and students. I provided them with a paper that had an outline of a body, and asked them to draw in this portrait things that were important to them, that they considered who they were (See Appendix N for template and instructions that were read to the participants). They were free to draw, colour or use text to convey what was important to them and their identity. After they were done, I asked them to describe their portrait to me and that narrative description was audio-recorded as part of their interview. In using this visual prompt, I wanted to get participants to think about their identity and articulate what that meant for them without the verbal cues from me. This also usually elicited humour as participants often remarked they are not often asked to draw things and helped to develop rapport with them. Diane Farmer and Jeanette Cepin note that using visual methods enabled the students in their ethnographic study to reflect and “make explicit their realities and understandings of migration, transnational familial connections, travels, and everyday experiences centered around home and schooling” (2017, p. 75). Therefore using this method to elicit more thoughts around their identity would also help me answer my research question pertaining to how linguistic and cultural identities figured in participants’ narratives.

There was one change that also had to take place in order to account for participant’s ages. When interacting with a group of younger students, it became clear that an individual semi-structured interview would not yield as much data. My first attempts to sit down with them and ask them questions were often met with shrugs, or shy smiles.
before answering “I don’t know”. In order to avoid this, and elicit more conversation, I employed a group interview approach and afterwards spoke to them individually as well. I used a drawing prompt in order to get them to think about the tutoring space and how they felt coming into the tutoring space, so that they would be thinking about the work they do in the session, with their tutor.

Using the identity portrait prompt used with the other participants, we sat down as a group and they colored in the portrait with a different twist: one side of the paper was them in the tutoring session, and on the other side they would draw themselves at home. Again, this was meant to get them to think about being in tutoring and working with their tutor as opposed to being outside of the tutoring space. While we were in the group session, I noticed that one of the students was the ‘leader’ and another student would often copy or repeat what she said. In order to avoid this dynamic while they spoke to me about their portrait, we went outside to the hallway individually and they told me about what they had drawn on their portraits. This kind of adjustment was an example of how important it is to keep the context in mind when collecting data, and adjusting the methods to fit the participants and their needs.

Program documents were collected to partly provide more context to the program, as well as help examine the discursive regimes within which the pedagogical relationships develop. Examining documents can provide contextual and historical data about the program, including the program's values and mission as related to its inception and structure; as well as allow me to track the changes and developments that the program has undergone since its beginning (Merriam, 1990). These documents are produced within a social context, and so analyzing documents can provide information about discourses in which the program is nestled (Prior, 2003). This is of interest given the discourse of deficit
that surrounds many students of colour in schools (i.e. Valenzuela, 1999) and which the 
program is purportedly working against.

**Data Analysis**
Since I am conceptualizing the subject as a non-fixed or essential entity, I am also using a 
mix of two different methods to examine the ways in which participants articulate their 
experiences. I will be using critical discourse analysis (CDA) as well as narrative analysis 
when looking at the participant interviews, and observations. One of the main reasons for 
using these methods is to avoid representing participants in objectifying ways that 
delegitimize their experience and knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2006; Villenas, 1996). By 
using their stories, and their own words, to explore the way in which they articulate their 
identifications and the meaning they give to their schooling experience, I hope to honour 
their subjective and complex personhoods (Gordon, 2008).

**Discourse**
Discourse has a long history as a term, and has been used through a variety of 
academic disciplines (Mills, 2004). Therefore, there are several definitions for the term. As 
Foucault articulated the term is used "sometimes as the general domain of all statements, 
sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated 
practice that accounts for a number of statements." (Foucault, 1972, p. 80). These three 
different ways of understudying "discourse" makes the term both flexible and murky. The 
third definition, concerned with the rules and structures that allow for certain utterances and 
texts to be produced is most often used by many theorists, although the three definitions are 
sometimes overlaid with each other in a theorist's work (Mills, 2004). In this dissertation, I 
follow this same thinking and echo Bloomaert’s (2005) understanding of discourse as a 
practice- encompassing all forms of symbolic human behaviour connected to social,
cultural, and historical patterns. The focus is not on the individualizable statements or solely on language, but in the structures that allow certain social behaviours and knowledge to be transmitted.

Fairclough (1992) similarly provides a definition of discourse that allows us to look at the structures that shape knowledge and social practice. What is important about this way on conceptualizing discourse is that we can see social relations as not just reflecting discourses, but also actually being constituted by them. Discourse is necessarily social, as well as socio-cultural; it is nestled within specific context that give it rise. Since relationships are an important aspect of what I am interested in examining, the way that discourse works in and through these relationships is an important aspect to keep in mind.

As Bloomaert (2005) succinctly puts it, discourse is language-in-action, so in order to examine it, we must attend to both language and action. That is, one must pay attention to language, while also keeping in mind the social nature of discourse and the social, cultural and historical structures that constitute it. Discourse, in the way that it permeates and constitutes our social world, is therefore intrinsic in the creation and propagation of ideologies (Bloomaert, 2005).

Fairclough’s discourse analysis framework allows us to break down an interaction and consider it at three levels. These are the text, the discourse practice and the sociocultural practice (Fairclough, 1995, Chuliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). The first level, the text, is a linguistic analysis, which involves looking at vocabulary, grammar, and semantics. Furthermore, Fairclough (1995) posits that any sentence in a text can also be analyzed through representations of social practice (for example articulations of particular ideologies), identities of writer and reader (i.e., highlighted roles or status) and relationship between reader and writer (for example, formal, informal).
The *discourse practice* level of analysis has two dimensions; the *institutional process* and the *discourse process*, both of which have to do with how the text is produced and consumed. Fairclough understands discourse practices as “straddl[ing] the division between society and culture on the one hand, and discourse, language and text on the other” (1995, p. 60). This becomes clearer in the following figure, where this level of analysis is nested inside sociocultural practices while containing the text level as well.

The third level of analysis, *sociocultural practice*, refers to three aspects of the sociocultural context of an interaction: economic, political, and cultural. Analysis does not need to happen at all three levels, as Fairclough (1995) notes that any one may be relevant to understanding the particular interaction. This allows us to connect specific instances of communication to larger social discourses of immigration and education.

![Figure 1. (Fairclough, 1995 p.60)](image)

*Critical Discourse Analysis*
In order to better examine this relationship, I will rely on critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA was groundbreaking in developing a linguistically oriented analysis that was firmly grounded in social reality and had a deep interest in social problems of inequity (Bloomaert & Bulcaen, 2000). This type of analysis focuses on the everyday textual experiences, such as reading, writing, and talking to examine how these fabricate individual's identities and realities. Analysing these everyday social practices can provide a window into the discourses in which individual's lives are embedded. This emphasis on the 'social' is based on the assumption CDA holds of discourse being socially constructive: language elements of social practices can have an effect in other social practices. It is however, not just constricted to language, but conceptualizes discourse as a whole range of practices, including body language, visual images, policy and text. Mills (2004) notes that critical discourse analysts have been influenced by both linguists and cultural theorists, providing a more complex analysis of the ways in which discourse functions as well as the effect discourse has on participants and at the same time resulting in "an overlaying of the meanings of discourse from both fields" (p.9).

The 'critical' in this approach's name refers to the way it strives to highlight previously invisible connections between language and social practices; the role language plays in constituting and reproducing relations of power as well as in emancipation and social justice (Fairclough, 2004). CDA researchers seek "to identify the workings of power and domination that inhere in discursive practices, and thereby to facilitate emancipatory social change" (MacLure, 2003; p.186). As well, there is a concern for elucidating obscured power relations and ideologies and how these impact social identities and social relations (Fairclough, 1992). In this sense, this analytical approach fulfills my purpose for looking at the relational aspects of the program, and the ways in which students are immersed in a
discursive context that constructs them as students and learners, in different ways, especially when outside of the program.

**Narrative Analysis**

This study will use the framework of narrative analysis as described by Reissman (1993). This approach to narrative analysis focuses temporal and affective elements of the narrative. It focuses on how elements in the story are sequenced, examines why some elements are evaluated differently than others, and then explores how the past shapes perceptions of the present, the present shapes perceptions of the past, and both of these shape perceptions of the future. Some advocates see it as an "empowering" method, as it gives participants the venue to express their own viewpoints (Garson, 2010). It allows the researcher access to an individual's inner worlds, and examining their own lived experiences. Individuals construct their reality by organizing their experiences and memories into narrative forms (Bruner, 1991).

In the process of creating narratives, people construct the stories that organize and bolster the different 'selves' that are used to interact with others and form their identity (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). The experiences that the person chooses to share have their particular role in this development, as they compromise the historical unit that validates why the self has developed as it has (Lopez-Damian, 2008). This posits this method as particularly well suited for studies of subjectivity and process of identification, and useful for revealing particulars about an individual’s social life; including racial oppression and other power relations (Reissman, 1993).

In the broader umbrella of narrative inquiry methodology, the "researcher aims to understand [participants' experience] through a reframing of the past, present, and future of
the [participant] through the [participant's] own perspectives and understandings” (Coulter, Michael & Poyner, 2007). The stories that were elicited through semi-structured interviews are nested within bigger socio-political, cultural, and institutional narratives as well. There is a relationship between the language individuals use to tell us their stories and the bigger discourses in which those individuals are immersed that can be discerned in these encounters. This method then is well suited to answering my questions around how they understand their experience of the tutoring pedagogical relationship.

Data analysis is an evocative and iterative process in ethnography, one that begins at the same time as data collection, rather than at the end (Pelto, 2013). For example, the first interviews conducted may provide some ideas for new questions to be included in the interview protocol with subsequent participants. Therefore, data analysis in this project was an ongoing process, particularly given my position as a staff member, which already guided me to some of the questions, I was asking before beginning data collection. Since I never really exited the site of data collection, my constant contact with the program gave me a unique perspective through which to understand the meaning making that participants engage in throughout the program year. Crossing the border from researcher to program staff, I would often think about participants’ stories when in the office. For example, after talking to several tutors and noticing they all mentioned they had no contact with the other tutors in their classrooms, I asked the program coordinators if they thought putting together an opportunity for the tutors to socialize. They immediately agreed, and this led to a conversation around feeling unable to support the tutors in a more robust way because their time was taken up with the everyday running and coordinating of the tutoring sessions.

All data collected was loaded into ATLAS TI, a qualitative data software, as they were ready (transcribed or scanned). I segmented the transcripts and participant’s narratives
into more bounded stories, which I could analyse for their character positioning, language use and contradictions, silences or turns in the narrative. This allowed me to see words that were absent from the stories (such as mentions of race) but which were important to understanding the stories that people told. Having this more coherent view of the participants’ narratives also provided a tool to follow contradictions which may not have been evident from just looking at language in a decontextualized way. Using narratives in this way kept participants’ stories as authentic as possible, and made it so that context could not be ignored.

In addition, using ATLAS TI, transcripts, documents and field notes were coded, looking for emergent patterns or themes. I chose a mixed model of coding for my analysis. First, I used a closed model of coding, using a preliminary list of codes already generated from the theoretical framework as well as the literature review on tutoring programs and schooling in Ontario. Codes in this list included: Spanish-speaking lack of success, Portuguese-speaking lack of success, arrival to the program, being Portuguese-speaking, being Spanish-speaking, Language, Linguistic Identity, Immigrant/Immigration, Influence of Cultural Identity in Tutoring, Community, amongst others.

Using these first codes, I began exploratory coding of the data using ATLAS TI. I then used an open model of coding. As interactions or articulations that did not fit any code were encountered, new codes were produced. For example, when reading the tutor interviews, the notion of ‘trust’ and ‘caring’ became important. Therefore, new codes were generated for both of these ideas. This was repeated until saturation was reached, and no other codes were generated.

Validity & Ethics
Validity

Validity of the findings is an important element in any research project. In qualitative research, this concept is often articulated as credibility or trustworthiness among others (Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Following the aforementioned authors, validity in this work refers to whether my representations of the participant’s experience resonate with them. That is, how truthfully they feel I have portrayed their experience. Following Creswell & Miller’s (2000) framework, validity was pursued through various ways. First, similar to the ‘research relationship’ section above, I clearly articulated my positionality in the research; and this positionality was also present through the data analysis phase, along with accompanying biases and assumptions. Another way in which the findings were validated was by constantly checking for disproving evidence or alternative explanations as data analysis proceeded. Fetterman (2010), makes note of the importance of the participants' perspective on findings, stating that "the success or failure of [an ethnography] depends on the degree to which it rings true" to both participants and other colleagues in the field (p.11). Therefore ‘member checks’ (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012) were sought throughout the process. These checks happened informally, through questions asked in the interviews and in conversations with program staff or participants, and were a way to also guide part of the data collection. This kind of check in with participants also facilitated the knowledge building between us that is integral to an ethnography of empowerment (Delgado-Gaitan, 1993; Villenas, 1996). Throughout data analysis, findings were compared to the existing literature on tutoring programs, community education, Latina feminist theory and parent engagement, in order to identify any outliers or findings that contradict existing literature as well as findings that are in line with the major tenets of
the body of literature; such as the importance of positive relationships to the experience of
the tutoring program.

**Ethics**

Ethical considerations are integral to any research project, and are encountered in all
processes of the research- from the IRB review to data collection, analysis and
dissemination (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2013; Merriam, 2009). In terms of data collection, for
example, informed consent is central. All participants were informed of the purpose of the
research and my intent in interviewing or observing them. I also strove for participant
confidentiality by making sure that program and all participant identifying information was
removed from the data files, and replaced with pseudonyms and/or participant codes. Only
pseudonyms are used in the research documents. Every effort was made to alter the details
associated with each participant in order to disguise their identity while maintaining
analytic validity. All fieldnotes, interview transcripts and documents were digitized and
kept on a secure hard drive, and a printed hard copy was kept in a locked cabinet to which
only the researcher had access. All data was secured digitally on secure hard drives. All
artifacts, questionnaires, and documents were kept in a locked cabinet at the researcher's
secure office (see Appendix O) for completed Research Ethics protocol).

Furthermore, as I spoke to in the beginning of this chapter, I hold a commitment to
uphold the reciprocity in the research relationship (Villenas, 1996). In this sense, I hope to
give something back to the program that will help in its continued success. The actual
product is to be negotiated with the program, as I want to make sure that whatever is
produced will be of use to them. Some of the possibilities that have come up are a tutor
training module could be elaborated from some of the findings to address issues of cultural
and linguistic identities in the tutor-student pedagogical relationship and aid tutors in thinking through some of these issues, mentoring training, or an executive report that can be used in their program outreach and fundraising efforts.

**Conclusion**
In this chapter, I have laid out my methodology and approach to this research project. Drawing on Latina feminist understandings of research and the research relationship, I have situated myself as a Latinx researcher who is part of the Our Youth Success program and how this positionality afforded me access to relationships that were integral in the research process. After describing the participants who took part in this project, I have laid out how discourse analysis and narrative analysis will be used to look at data collected through an ethnographic approach. This data will include program documents, interviews with participants, a visual drawing prompt, as well as observation field notes. Lastly, I have remarked on the ethical commitment I hold to the program and to its participants, wanting to honour their voices and their experiences as well as contribute towards improving the program and by extension the educational experiences of our communities. In the next chapter, I will begin to present the data findings by looking at how tutor mentors articulated their identifications in their narratives, and how these identifications figured in the relationships they developed with their students.
Chapter 5- Identity

It is a Saturday morning, and I am heading to the program’s Saturday session to observe Tania’s tutoring session with Lisa and Anne Marie. I exit the subway station, walking along Bloor Street to the secondary school where the program is housed on weekends. The street is busy with people running errands, or out for their morning coffee and a stroll to enjoy the sunshine. The smell of freshly baked bread wafts out onto the street from one of the few Portuguese bakeries along this stretch of Bloor. Signs in shop windows inform the public that “falamos português” or “hablamos español”. Waiting at the corner for the light to turn green, I see the specials board for Sol y Luna Café already out on the sidewalk, advertising their pupusas for today. A mix of nationalities, cultures, languages in a two block walk that is in part as characteristic of Our Youth Success program as it is of the city in which it operates.

At the crux of this program, and the relationships between tutors and students, is the question of identity. The program itself rises out of the need perceived by a self-identified group (Portuguese-speaking in Toronto) to serve this community and fill a gap in the educational services available to it. The expansion of the program to serve the Spanish speaking community meant the inclusion of another self-identified group in the city. In addition to these two linguistic categories, participants articulated a slippage between an ethnic (Portuguese/Latinx) and linguistic identification (as Portuguese-speakers or Spanish-speakers), and the development and identification with other social categories. Therefore, identifications feature prominently in the context of OYS.
In addition, tutor narratives revealed that these identifications are a principal motivator in their decision to embark on their work with OYS and by extension the relationships they develop with students. Their participation in OYS is so tied up with their cultural and linguistic identifications that one tutor remarked that her participation in OYS was an enactment of her cultural identity. Therefore, I start to present the data findings of this dissertation by laying out how tutors articulate their identities, in order to trace how these identifications move them to engage in the mentoring relationships that I will discuss in chapter seven.

Identity in this work is conceptualized as a fluid category that is very much intertwined with the social relations and contexts we inhabit. These identities are not stable or fixed, and can change, grow, develop over time and space. They are particularly dependent on social interactions and the meanings we create and attach to them; therefore, recognition is a critical component of how these identities are articulated and claimed. The recognition of others as belonging to a certain group, and being recognized by others as part of the same group are vital to the process of identification. In this particular context, the ways in which participants recognize each other as “Portuguese-speaking” or “Spanish speaking”, and the ways they recognize themselves as such are of central importance. The program itself requires the participants to self-identify in order to participate in the program. It does not require any paperwork or documentation but instead trusts/expects the parents or students to self-identify as belonging to either community. Within the program context, participants also articulated other identities that their experiences in the program highlight or bring to the forefront. Moreover, participants mobilized these identities in ways that allowed them to enter into trusting pedagogical relationships. In this chapter, I begin by looking at how identifications as Portuguese/Spanish speakers were articulated as a reason
for participating in the program. More specifically, tutors mentioned their participation in the program as a way to connect with their ‘Portuguese’ identity.

**Coming to OYS**

*Being Spanish/Portuguese-Speaking*

The most salient way that identity is articulated within the program is by the tutors as a way to connect with or enact their cultural identity. While the program does not require their volunteer tutors to be either Portuguese or Spanish-speaking as the sessions are conducted in English, the identification with these two target communities was for many tutors an important factor in their decision to volunteer with the program. The program encourages this through the language that is seen in their recruitment materials.

*Figure 1. Section of volunteer recruitment flyer*
In the recruitment flyer seen above, this appeal to volunteers who have some investment in the two communities can be observed in the first sentence, a question about wanting to help make a difference in the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking communities. In addition, the words ‘drop-out rate’, ‘Spanish’ and ‘Portuguese’ are in all caps, drawing the eye and highlighting the importance of these three words. This signals to potential volunteers what the program is aiming to change (dropout rates) but also it is a way to signal to those who might be interested in these two communities in particular. It also works to continue to position Portuguese and Spanish-speakers as failing in the school system, through the positioning of these three highlighted words next to each other. I will focus more on the reproduction of deficit discourses in Chapter 6. Looking at these recruitment materials elucidates how identifications with the Spanish and Portuguese speaking community is mobilized even before participants become part of the program.

Estela, a site supervisor who first started as a tutor three years ago, recalls reading this in the recruitment email sent to her. “I got an email from the program like Our Youth Success tutoring and then it sounded like I think it was aimed for Hispanic and Portuguese like they were looking for people from that background and then I was like ‘I’m one of them, I can do that’.” She laughs and runs her hand down her long, straight brown hair, a gesture she repeats often while we speak. She smiles a lot, making her round face even friendlier. In articulating her intentions for joining the program, Estela points to both the focus on the Spanish-speaking community and her own identification as one of ‘them’. For Estela, the focus on Spanish-speaking was immediately a characteristic she could identify with in order to volunteer in the program.

Victoria has been a volunteer with the program for five years and she herself identities as Spanish-speaking Salvadorian. As she talks, she adjusts her thick black paste
glasses on her nose. Her curly black hair is tied into a messy bun at the back of her head, but wisps of it escape and fall around her face. She also explicitly names the focus of the program on Spanish-speaking youth as a reason for joining Our Youth Success. “Honestly, it was that it was geared towards Hispanic speaking kids. It said Portuguese too, but- you know, that’s important, but- you know, being Latin American I was like ‘oh, I think this is great!’”(April 24, 2015). The connection to her own identity as Latin American was a crucial factor in deciding to join the program. We also see in her explanation, the conflation between Spanish-speaking and Latinx that characterizes many of the participants’ narratives. This kind of direct connection to a community they identified with was mentioned by quite a few tutors; however not all tutors who identified as Portuguese or Spanish-speaking articulated such a straight path.

For participants who had struggled with identifying as Portuguese-speaking, or whose upbringing as Canadian-Portuguese had challenged their identification as Portuguese-speakers, participating in the program provided an opportunity to connect with that heritage. Tania’s narrative speaks to this complex journey of identification. We sit in a windowless office inside the OISE building, and as she talks, her slender hands move, drawing figures in the air. Her dark hair is pulled into a ponytail, and she is dressed in the same casual outfit I observed in her tutoring sessions, jeans and a dark shirt. She had volunteered for the program for six years at the time of her interview. In recalling her upbringing, she mentions that growing up she had “shunned” her “Portugueseness”, particularly not wanting to identify as one of “those downtown Portuguese”. Later on, in her university studies, she began to identify more with being Portuguese and wanting to belong to that community. She sees her participation as a way to ‘be’ Portuguese, amongst some of the other things in her life she sees as markers of her Portugueseness.
So I’ve married a Portuguese guy. His parents are from the continent, so they’re very Portuguese. I used to, when we lived with my in-laws, speak Portuguese like a continental did. So I actually started speaking pretty well. And the fact, actually Our Youth Success labels me a little bit like that, because I’ve approached friends and they all know that I do it and why I do it, and what theoretically the program does.

Her participation in the program then creates a space for her to practice “a Portuguese culture by being a part of it [the program].” In addition to some of the other practices she engaged in, being a tutor in a program that specifically served this community was a way to engage her ‘Portugueseness’. We also hear in her narrative a gesture towards the close relationship between the language and the ethnic identification of Portuguese; where speaking Portuguese is a marker of being Portuguese. This close relationship at times becomes muddled in the participants’ narratives, as speaking and being Portuguese become equated to each other.

Similarly, Polina grew up in Markham, a suburb of Toronto. During her elementary and secondary education, she did not have many Portuguese peers; and was surrounded by many people who, like her, had pale skin and light hair. Being second generation Portuguese, she did not have a lot of contact with other Portuguese people outside of her immediate family. She only became aware of some of the barriers that Portuguese-Canadian students faced in public education once she was in University, through her contact with OYS. She sees her upbringing outside of the community as “sheltering” her from knowing some of the difficulties faced by other members of the community. When she learned about OYS, it inspired her to research why the program was needed specifically for the Portuguese community. “And then realized that ‘oh my god like we have some of the highest dropout rates’. And then I looked around, ‘oh there’s not many Portuguese
people in university either’. So a lot of it started to hit home a bit.” She straightens the faded jean jacket she is wearing. This new realization spurred her to participate in the program as a way to be involved in the community, “I’m living in Toronto now. I’m downtown. You know, I may as well try to get involved in the community since I’ve been kind of sheltered from it before.” In her narrative, the distancing from the Portuguese community is reminiscent of Tania’s story. In addition, there is an added negative connotation when she described her upbringing away from the community as being ‘sheltered’. Her further geographical distancing (growing up in the suburb of Markham) was a physical sheltering from the negative element of the community that she is now getting involved with.

Being involved in OYS gave Polina a chance to reconnect with her Portuguese heritage, something she felt “kind of guilty” about not having done before while she was growing up. Having relocated to downtown Toronto while attending university, and finding the opportunity to volunteer for a program with a distinct Portuguese focus, “it’s like oh well now it’s my chance to get myself involved in the Portuguese community and rediscover my roots. How can I not?” Living with her Portuguese grandparents at the time, “I was back in the fully Portuguese household, eating Portuguese food all the time. So the culture was a bit more stronger and it influenced me to want to rediscover it.” Getting involved with OYS was a way to reconnect with her Portuguese identity. Her story positions her participation in the program as a practice to enact her identification as a member of the Portuguese-speaking community in Toronto. We hear again the slippage between speaking Portuguese and being Portuguese. In addition, we hear some of the same race politics that were evident in Tania’s narrative; where she did not want to identify with the ‘downtown’ Portuguese. In
Polina’s narrative, she frames it as ‘being sheltered from it’ as she was growing up, by virtue of being in the suburbs. This spatial tension within the Portuguese community, and its racial and class connotations will be further explored in Chapter 6 However, it is important to note how these conceptions of the community are tied to individual’s identifications as well.

While some of the tutors like Tania and Polina are second generation Canadians, meaning they were born and grew up in Canada, there are tutors who are immigrants themselves as well. For them, participation in the program offers a way to connect to their community in Canada, particularly the Portuguese/Spanish speaking youth. We see in narratives such as Carolina’s this identification with the Portuguese community specifically. She has been a volunteer with the program for 10 years, and is older than most of the other tutor mentors who are in university or are recent graduates. She emigrated from Portugal as a young woman and attended the University of Toronto (UofT) to train as a teacher. She had her second child shortly after graduating from university, which for her meant she “wasn't going to Education anytime soon”. Through another Portuguese classmate, she heard about OYS and was encouraged to go and try it. “For me, it was important also to work with the Portuguese community because I'm Portuguese”. After the recommendation from her colleague, Carolina began volunteering with the program and has been tutoring students ever since. For her, participation in the program was directly related to working with lusophones from Portugal. Her identification as a Portuguese-speaker is rooted in her identification as Portuguese as well.

While staying at home with her kids, Carolina wanted to still be involved in something to keep her mind active, and was interested in something that would still be of educational nature. “I remember I was looking for two very important things. I don't want
just to teach, I wanted to do something that for me, it's important teaching.” Many tutors share this sentiment about the importance, the impact of the program. For them, tutoring goes beyond helping kids achieve academic goals. “It's not just going there and doing your job and teaching kids. It's how your work is going to impact, somebody. Like it's going to make a difference.” She acknowledges that is sounds somewhat cliché, but insists on the sincerity of this feeling driving her motivation to continue involved after all these years. In combination with the focus on identity, for many tutors, their participation in the program is about giving back to their communities.

Giving back to the community

While the concept of community is explored more in-depth in Chapter 5, it became clear from the participants’ narratives that identification with a particular community was also key in their choice to participate in the program. It is also through their articulations as members of a community that the slippage between the ethnic and linguistic identifications becomes exceedingly evident. In their narratives where they mention community as an important reason to participate in the program, most Portuguese-speaking tutors point to the Portuguese community in Toronto as that community that the program is giving back to.

Felipe was a volunteer with the program for 5 years and while he does not currently tutor anymore, he still keeps in touch with the program, trying to find small fundraising opportunities to contribute to the program’s funds. He is an energetic young man in his late twenties, at his interview he is wearing grey loose sweatpants and a track jacket with a soccer team crest on the front. Even while sitting, his hyperactive energy is directed through his leg, which alternates between bouncing and shifting positions. He leans back in the chair, creating an air of informal familiarity in the library room where we are talking.
When recalling his motivations for joining the program, he immediately points to the importance of giving back “Cuz you know what, I think it’s important to give back to the community. Especially being Portuguese-Canadian. So I thought it would be a good thing to be able to help out the future”. His identification with the Portuguese community in Canada, and therefore his investment in its future, drove his participation in the program.

As some of the other tutors mentioned, he became aware of the high dropout statistics while he was in university, and was shocked to see the numbers. Yet, unlike some of the other tutors, he can also remember the stereotypes that were attached to being identified as Portuguese-speaking, “going to the high school that I went to, being the only Portuguese kid, full of like a bunch of Italians and white kids it was always like, “oh, what does your dad do? work construction and your mom cleans houses”. Drawing on his own experience, he wanted to give the youth in his community support to make their own decisions about their post-secondary paths: “I kind of felt like it was my job or my responsibility to help empower some of the young, and future generations and not think that just because mom said you gotta be a doctor or an engineer or a lawyer- that’s not the only reason why you should be going to university… Because I know there’s a lot of stereotypes, especially with the old-school Portuguese; you gotta be a doctor, an engineer or a lawyer.” Not only focusing on the damaging stereotypes held about the community, he also wanted to support youth in fighting the stereotypes within the community about post-secondary education. To give youth more options about what they could do after high school, not limiting themselves to construction or engineering, Felipe “just wanted to help out the future.” In his narrative, this future is tied to the Portuguese (or Portuguese-Canadian as he articulates it) community in Toronto.
Similarly to Felipe, John is a former tutor of the program who nonetheless was interested in speaking to me even though he was no longer actively involved. His narrative also points to the prominence of community in his motivation to volunteer at the program. John is Polina’s brother, and was encouraged by her to apply for the program. “She said, ‘this is a good cause. You’re Portuguese, you should give back to community’ and I agreed.” Like Carolina, John was told about the program through another Portuguese community member. This is not uncommon, tutors and parents often hear about the program through word of mouth in their communities, even though the program tries to advertise and recruit through print and electronic media as much as possible. For example, many of the tutors receive an email through their university listservs to alert them of the volunteer opportunity. Yet it is not uncommon to have siblings volunteer as tutors (or participate as students). Several of the tutors that participated in this project were or had siblings in the program. In these cases one sibling always recruited the other, either explicitly (such as in John’s case) or by example. John cites this idea of contributing back to the Portuguese community as the motivation to first apply to the program, even though it might not have been an important factor in his tutoring sessions.

In contrast, Maria found in giving back to the community a motivation to continue with the program, something she did not expect when she first began. What began as a volunteer experience in order to get some hands-on experience for graduate school, shifted her perception of learning and education all together.

After a while I just I loved it. It's just there was something that I got from giving back to the community. I wasn’t looking at it like that, right? When you do academic work that's something that's just missing. There's no community there.
Likewise, for Victoria it is this feeling of giving back to the community that motivated her to begin but that also keeps her engaged with the program. She works a full time corporate job during the week, and says coming to the program every weekend “keeps [her] grounded”.

We need to, at least for me, I need to be a productive member of my society, I can’t just be a person where I just I’m like, I can’t be individualistic and just think about myself, “I go to work, and I do this and I’m fine and with me and my life” because we’re part of a community, you have to give back to your community and you have to be a valuable contributing member of society generally speaking. that’s why I think it’s really important, to me. That’s why I keep on coming back.

In these cases, Maria and Victoria also point to the importance of giving back to a community as an important personal motivator. Something that keeps them grounded, and that they love to do. In Maria’s case, it also speaks back to the way in which participating in OYS connects her to a community that she did not have a connection to growing up.

Like some of the tutors mentioned, Maria did not know about the barriers facing Portuguese-speaking youth in schools until university. “Growing up, I didn’t really feel like I grew up in a community. From grade 4, I was in a school that was mostly Portuguese but I don’t think I was old enough to understand, ‘I'm in a Portuguese community’. Then I went to Scarborough and I was the only Portuguese kid in my class. I didn’t know what it meant to be Portuguese and I didn’t know about the high dropout rates until I was in university.”

When seeing some recruitment material for OYS she began learning about the statistics surrounding Portuguese students in public education and their high dropout rates. This motivated her to become involved with OYS and ultimately led to her changing her career path to attend teachers’ college instead of graduate school for psychology as she had first planned. In particular, seeing how her own schooling experience was reflected in the
experience of many Portuguese youth, “I know I had a really hard time in school personally but I didn't understand why.” Her work in OYS led her to obtain her Bachelor of Education degree in order to contribute back to her community, to help other children who might be experiencing what she herself lived.

Likewise, Felipe makes a connection to his own experiences as a Portuguese-Canadian student, where he was “just getting bullied and always kind of like [being told] ‘oh, you’re going to amount to nothing’.” He sees his volunteering at OYS as an opportunity to “empower” younger people in his community and provide them with the support to not fall prey to the stereotypes about the community. He is especially concerned with youth “being proud of their culture” and not letting others dictate what a successful Portuguese Canadian might look like. He sees this as a way in which “others” “take away” the culture from young Portuguese Canadians. “you gotta be like this to be successful’ no, you don’t. That’s bullshit. (Interviewer: What do you mean, be like this?) Like, you gotta be like white and Canadian”. In hearing the message that equates success with whiteness, Felipe believes that young people in his community become ashamed of not being white or are encouraged to abandon cultural practices that mark them as Portuguese- such as being a Portuguese-speaker. Instead, he sees his role as a member of the community and in volunteering with OYS as one in which he can reinforce for youth the idea that you can be successful AND Portuguese-speaking. In his narrative, we see then the intricate connection between language and ethnicity that explains some of the slippage between the linguistic and ethnic identifications that were so common in participants’ stories.

This is important for him personally, as he himself had to struggle against low expectations held of him because of his identity as a Portuguese Canadian student. When he
applied and was accepted into university, it reinforced for him the idea that he should not have to settle his ambitions because of who he was.

I’m glad I had the guts to do that when I was younger, it made me who am I. And again with your culture, for me personally that’s very important, because that’s who you are. For me. Being able to give back to community, 100%. And hopefully if I make it, one day (laughs) I’d love to help out the community, and give back, 100%. But until then I’ll do what I can.

Tania mentioned her struggles with coming to terms with her Portuguese identity as a young adult, and how participating in OYS gave her a way to enact her Portugueseness. She also saw her participation in the program was a way to continue to work through that becoming Portuguese, “Because I have a lot of stuff like shunning the Portuguese identity, the whole Portuguese lack of success in school was something that I was very concerned about, that my father had been concerned about, and so I thought it would be my way of helping.” Being a volunteer with the program allowed her to give back to the community she felt she had shunned throughout much of her upbringing.

For the previously mentioned tutors, their upbringing in Canada affected the way they themselves felt about the barriers faced by other Portuguese Canadian youth. For better or for worse, they had a schooling experience in Canada that shaped how they viewed the need of the community for the kind of support OYS provides. Joao had been a tutor in the program for 3 years at the time of his interview. However, unlike the other tutors, he emigrated from Portugal as a young adult, after finishing his high school degree in mainland Portugal. Therefore, his educational experience had been very different from that of the Portuguese Canadian tutors who had gone through school in Canada. Yet his
motivation for joining the program was very much articulated in the same way, “basically it’s just a way to give back to the community.”

He relies on his own experience as a university student in Canada to draw on the importance of the program, admitting that it would have been useful to have a similar program available to him at the time. “Now knowing it might be a bit stressful sometimes to cope with all these responsibilities and all these expectations that being in university entails, I think it’s a really good service that exists, and it’s good that it exists, because sometimes school alone or what exists at school is not sufficient to support the student.”

He sees OYS as providing a service that is needed and not available for students, the same way that many volunteers who went through the Canadian public education system felt they as well could have used the same support. As a tutor, he is able to bridge that gap for his own students.

Participants’ narratives have so far focused on their intentions around the program: motivations for joining or for continuing to be involved with OYS. These intentions are inextricably connected to their identifications with an imagined community of Portuguese-speakers or Spanish-speakers in Toronto and Canada. Moreover, this linguistic category is often equated with the ethnic category of Portuguese or Latinx, particularly for the Portuguese-speaking participants. In their narratives, being Portuguese is equated with speaking Portuguese, with the terms used interchangeably. When the participants invoke the notion of community, this is often referring to the ethnic Portuguese community or Latinx community in the city.

Claiming or developing an identification with these communities, then becomes a source of motivation for volunteers to join the program. For some volunteers, this move is articulated as an enactment of their ‘Portugueseness’, a reconnecting to this imagined
ethnic community that they did not feel connected to while growing up. For volunteers who immigrated to Canada from Portugal, their participation is a way to connect to this Portuguese ethnicity in Canada. DaSilva (2011) points to the importance of language ideologies to nationalist discourses—whereby speaking Portuguese is an essential characteristic of claiming a Portuguese identification. In Toronto, this is further complicated by a hierarchy of Portuguese language that privileges the kind of Portuguese spoken in the Lisbon region of mainland Portugal, with other mainland Portuguese dialects and then Azorean Portuguese being less desirable; and Brazilian and other Portuguese colonies’ Portuguese being thought of as ‘not correct’ Portuguese (Pacheco, 2004; Da Silva, 2011).

This direct conflation between language and ethnicity did not seem as prevalent in the Spanish-speaking participant narratives, where distinctions were made between being Latinx or Salvadorian and Spanish-speaking. Victoria, for example, notes the importance of Spanish proficiency for identification as Latinx, and the problematic it poses for second generation Latinxs like herself who may not be as fluent in Spanish. However, there is still a problematic stance of language and heritage being conflated through the term “Spanish-speaking descent”; where language is taken as an integral part of the experience of Latinxs. This erases English-speaking Latinxs, particularly 2nd or 3rd generation Latinxs who are also experiencing marginalization in the school system.

There is also a large body of literature that speaks to the importance of the Spanish language to the maintenance and development of ethnic identity in the Latinx community in the United States. Sociolinguistic studies have highlighted how language practices exist in a complex relationship with racial and socioeconomic class differences (i.e. Zentella, 1990; Zentella, 1997; Urcioli, 1997). This relationship to language can be paradoxical: both a
source of ethnic pride and a source of stigmatization. Bodella (2003) argues that Latinx youth engage in selective disassociation; distancing themselves from those sectors of the community that they see as the source of stigma- the monolingual Spanish. This selective disassociation was seen in a similar fashion in some of the tutor mentor narratives, where they distance themselves from the “downtown Portuguese”- those who are the source of stigma due to the harmful stereotyping. Beyond identifying as a certain kind of Portuguese-speaker or as a Spanish-speaker, volunteers articulated other identifications as important in their intentions to participate in the program.

*Identification as teachers/educators*

Beyond their identification as a Portuguese-speaking or Spanish speaking person, there are other identifications that motivate tutors to volunteer and stay at OYS. For some tutors, it is their identification as an educator that drove them to seek out work in the program.

Tutoring is an opportunity for these volunteers to enact that educator identity, whether from a formal teaching background or as a more informal educator.

Carolina mentioned in her interview that she had attended UofT for her teaching qualifications, but had her children shortly after graduation and knew that she wanted to stay home with them for the foreseeable future. However, she had sought out opportunities like OYS that allowed her to teach, because this work “reminds me of what I’ve been”. Working as a tutor with children (she worked with elementary aged students) allowed her to reconnect to that identity as a teacher that she had fostered through her studies. In this case Carolina was drawing a connection between her formal training to be a teacher, but other tutors also mentioned their own identification as educators as a motivation to join OYS.
Many of the program’s tutors are teacher candidates or recent undergraduates who are interested in applying to Teacher’s College and so they see their experience in the program as a way to both gain experience that will help their application and see for themselves whether this is something they are truly interested in pursuing. Some, like Maria are inspired to pursue a degree in education because of their experience with OYS. It is therefore not surprising that many tutors cite their identity as an educator as a factor in their joining the program.

John notes this representation of education students in the program, “I think most of the people that work there they were studying to be teachers, they were – that’s like teaching was their focus and that’s why they got into OYS.” He does not identify as one of these tutors whose focus was teaching, but instead he was there because “I had experience that I could share.” This idea that they had valuable knowledge to share with other students permeates much of the tutors’ motivations for volunteering in the program. I see this as an identification as an educator, one that is not grounded in the formal training of a teacher’s college, but rather rooted in the value of sharing knowledge with others, of having something to give to others.

Victoria’s statement echoes this sentiment, “I don’t believe that learning in the classroom is the only way to learn. I love learning in general.” She situates learning outside of the formal institution of school, bringing it to a more ‘general’ arena, including in the tutoring sessions she runs every Saturday. Her understanding of learning as something that happens in all sorts of spaces is tied to her own identification as an educator, “I’m a knowledge sharer. I like to share what I know with people.” Similar to John, Victoria sees herself as someone who can share valuable experience with others, and this is intrinsically tied to her motivations for continuing to drive into downtown Toronto every Saturday.
morning from her house outside the city. The idea of contributing something, giving something ‘back’ to the community through their work with their students was important to many of the tutor mentors. Through the relationships they built over years with their students, this work of giving back was fulfilled. I explore their relationship building in more detail in chapter 7. In their first moves as participants of the program, identifications as members of a specific community (whether linguistic, immigrant, or cultural) were critical motivators for all participants, including families.

Families in OYS

Parents

While this dissertation focuses on the tutors’ experiences, it is important to also hear about the way in which identifications were an important motivator for the families that attend Our Youth Success. Cultural and linguistic identifications were also articulated as an important motivator for parents and students in their experience at the program. The outreach to parents happens in a slightly different way that in does for volunteer tutor/mentors. Families are usually referred to the program in two ways: either by their school, where a teacher/principal/staff mentions the program to them and gives them an application form; or through word of mouth, where a family member or friend is a participant in the program and refers them to one of the coordinators to obtain an application form.

OYS works with about nine schools in the Toronto area, and their partnership with the school boards means they are also, at least theoretically, available to all schools in the city. When outreaching to schools, sometimes they will have spoken with the principal in person, in which case they can go into detail about the program, its mandate and who is eligible. If they do not work directly with the school (if the school is not a program site or...
does not have a high population of Portuguese/Spanish speaking students), then the school might receive the program information through an email from the school board. In both cases, the information includes that eligibility for the program is reserved for students of Portuguese or Spanish speaking descent. Therefore when the parents receive the application form from their school teacher/principal/staff there has been an identification made already that this family would fall under this category.

In the second instance, where relatives or friends refer families, the identification is also made by the other people that the family identifies as Portuguese/Spanish-speaking and thus the program would be for them. There is an additional identification that is made about belonging to the same group- where parents who have children in the program identify other families as belonging to their same community and thus being eligible for the same resources. This second layer speaks to the community building aspect of the OYS program, which will be touched upon in more detail in Chapter 6.

We see then that for parents, their identification as Portuguese/Spanish-speaking brings them to the program in a variety of ways (whether because of school administrations suggestion or on their own). However, it is through their self-identification as members of these communities that they then take the step to apply for OYS. In many cases, because the children are in elementary school, the parents take the decision to enroll them in the program. Many of these students continue to attend the program through secondary school, but their arrival to the program might have been prompted by their parents identifying the family as of Spanish/Portuguese-speaking descent.

*Students*

For students, the ways in which their own identification as Portuguese or Spanish speaking are articulated are rarely in connection with their motivation to join the program.
This was surprising, given the focus of the program and program materials on the students self-identifying as Portuguese or Spanish speaking. However, for many students, the motivation to join the program was mostly driven by their parents. Many of the secondary school students have been in the program for years, and started attending when they were in primary or intermediate grades. The decision to begin in the program was often their parents’ decision. The decision to continue attending, once they reach secondary school and are more independent (for example, once they can walk or take transit home) is theirs. This decision to remain points to an important role in their lives, as many times in a minority setting, youth will try to join the majority group when they have an opportunity (Gerin-Lajoie, 2006). However, when describing that decision, they do not refer back to the focus of the program in being an important factor. Instead, they focus on the relationship they have built with their tutor and the help they receive as the main reasons for staying in the program.

Anne Marie has been with the program since 7th grade. She is in a special position as she was the first ever college student to continue attending the program. This means she had been in the program for 8 years at the time of her interview. Of those eight, she had been working with Tania for the last five years. They had developed a deep bond, one that will be further explored in Chapter 7. However, when speaking about how their identity as Portuguese came up, she shrugged, “Sometimes. It’s not like a major- We know that we’re Portuguese but we don’t focus too much on it.” While there is an acknowledgement that they share a common identification as Portuguese, it is not something that she feels shapes their relationship or their tutoring ‘too much’.

For younger students, and those who do not have a Portuguese/Spanish speaking tutor, this acknowledgment might not even exist. Amelie works with three students, 2 who
identify as of Spanish speaking descent and 1 who identifies as of Portuguese-speaking descent (according to their application documents). When speaking with Elizabeth, she expresses surprise to learn that the program is for Spanish and Portuguese students, “I didn’t know that!” Juan and Daniela, her co-students also did not know about the program’s focus. For them, the program is important because they enjoy their time with Amelie, “it’s better than staying at home being bored”, Juan says.

While this lack of knowledge about the program’s focus on the part of the students’ experience was surprising, Elena is glad that the students do not see this focus as the most important in their program experience. “Qué bueno, me alegra oír eso […] porque así no se enfocan en las diferencias entre ellos, en pensar que son diferentes.” [That’s good, I’m glad to hear that […] because that way they do not focus on the differences between them, in thinking that they are different]. At times, as educators or administrators we might romanticize the work we do with students, thinking that what is most important about that work for us, is also their experience. In her reflection on how memory and knowledge can be a treacherous terrain to uncover with past students, Sonu asks, “How can the research event, given the researcher’s subjectivity, be anything other than inflections of that researcher’s character, preoccupations, unconscious concerns and desires?” (2016, p.483). Similarly, the work we do as community educators can often be inflected with our own assumptions, in this case about the impact that the students’ identifications as Spanish-speaking or Portuguese-speaking had on their participation in the program. While for the parents and tutors this cultural/linguistic focus had some bearing in their decision to join the program, it was less important for the students. As we saw earlier in their narratives, the intimate relationship between their linguistic and ethnic identifications plays a critical role in the intentions and desires that participants have in participating in OYS. Their
identification with the Portuguese or Latinx community in Toronto is what drives most of the tutor mentors and families to be part of the program. These identifications were also important for how students and tutors related to each other, that is on the relationality of the pedagogical relationships in the program.

**Relating through identity**

While students did not think of their Spanish-speaking or Portuguese-speaking heritage as being a large part of their tutoring sessions, they did see these as a way to ‘break the ice’ or relate to their tutor on a superficial level. One way in which participants articulated this is through the ways that being a Portuguese or Spanish speaker gives you a common cultural experience to draw from. This was another instance where the conflation of ethnicity or culture and language was evident; since sharing a language does not necessarily mean that there would be common lived experiences. However, as some tutors and students put it, having a shared language identification meant you do not have to translate certain things: words, practices, familial roles. Anne Marie, whose tutor is also Portuguese, says it does make a difference that her tutor is Portuguese “Because sometimes she understands what I’m trying to get at […] Like a holiday or something Portuguese, if I say something in Portuguese, she might understand what I’m saying so she might be able to help me with it.”

Her tutor, Tania also agrees that their shared identification as Portuguese gave her a “starting point” with her students.

It was an easy start because they’ll talk about, you know they do hongsu, the Portuguese folk dance. Or they’ll talk about traveling to Portugal. It’s just like little things like that… So there’s almost like a, there’s a translation that doesn’t need to happen, I guess…I feel there’s already a base understanding, a shared cultural experience that I feel will help foster a closer relationship more immediately. But I could be
generalizing what is only my experience, so I want to add that caveat. Everyone might experience it differently, but I think that that helped.

This shared based understanding of certain cultural practices, or familial relations gives tutors and students an immediate meeting point, something over which to ‘break the ice’ and build a rapport with each other. For Felipe, this shared experience was critical in beginning to work with students,

To be honest with you, I felt sorry for the white girl or guy that’s working with all these people. Because they’re kind of like, ‘hey man, how you doing?’ And some of these kids are like, ‘I can’t relate to you dude’ And I know it’s tough. And some of these guys I’d see how frustrated they’d get, because they’d work so hard, to be like ‘hey buddy what’s new’ and the kids are just like ‘nah-uh’

Not having this shared experience made it harder for non Spanish/Portuguese-speaking tutors to build a rapport with students, because they ‘can’t relate to you’. His example also brings to light the ways in which these identifications do create an imagined community of ‘us’ and ‘them’, and how claiming them allows you access into groups with a certain ease.

Carolina likewise uses language that is reminiscent of this idea of in and out-groups when talking about the importance of her identification as Portuguese to her work in OYS, “Yeah, I understand that there is no way I'm going from the outside in, I'm in. There's no bridging any gap.” As a Portuguese tutor, she is already ‘in’ the group. With her Portuguese students, it gives her a way to break the ice in the beginning, because of shared cultural practices,

Speaking in Portuguese with him is kind of like icebreaker. We were talking about what he did during the week or something, something that he ate. I remember talking about Christmas, ‘did you have bacalao too, and we have this. Do your mom make you eat the bacalao?’ ‘yeah’, stuff like that. So it's an engaging way of – again relatable. It is
relatable. So every time that he explains how his Christmas is, he doesn't have to explain all the little details to me. He knows how it is because mine is the same.

She expands on this ‘icebreaker’ and the way in which it also reflects a deeper shared experience of being Portuguese-Canadian, and in this shared experience students find a way to begin trusting her.

So we have the same struggles. His parents have the same struggles and incorporating Canadian and the Portuguese because, we're kind of like in between. So when we talk about it, it's already – we know of the little jokes, we know the inside things because we're there. We're the same. So that helps a lot to make the parents, their relationship with the parents and their relationship with students much better. So it's easier to trust you.

This trust is key to the development of a successful tutor student relationship, something that will be explored more in-depth in chapter 7. While this did not mean that tutors who did not identify as Portuguese/Spanish-speaking could not build a relationship with their students the shared identification gave tutors and students an ‘easy starting point’ from which to begin (“I’d see some of the other relationships, it was harder, but eventually they would all get along.” Felipe).

This is particularly important when it comes to relating to parents. Since often they are not comfortable speaking or conversing in English, being able to speak Spanish or Portuguese gives tutors and/or staff an advantage in communicating with them. For example, Felipe noticed this during his time as a tutor, when parents would be relieved that he was and spoke Portuguese so they could speak with him easier, even if the parents spoke Spanish, “I would be like ‘ you can speak to me in Spanish, I can understand you, I’ll try and speak back to you but it’s gonna sound Portuguese, but I understand what you’re
saying’. Similarly, Carolina points to her identification as a Portuguese person having grown up in Portugal as helping her ‘bridge that gap’, with parents, because she can understand perfectly those born and raised in Portugal.” Her narrative points to the over-identification of Portugal-born Portuguese as representative of the Portuguese-speaking community in the city, a tension that is further explored later in this chapter.

Of course, this does not mean that tutors who do not speak Spanish or Portuguese are unable to communicate with parents or that not all parents speak English. Amelie, who does not identity as either Spanish or Portuguese-speaking, admits that while this may be a challenge for communicating with the parents, she has the support of the program coordinators in case this becomes an issue, “in that case I will ask Joana or Elena if I have to explain something”. However, she does not see her language skills as a problem for her tutoring and mentoring, “I don’t feel that it’s a disadvantage not to speak Spanish or Portuguese because otherwise [the parents] would just ask for a tutor who only speaks Spanish or Portuguese.” Furthermore, she sees this relationship building across differences as a life skill that is useful for her students, “I think it is also good for students to have different types of tutors, because in life you deal with different people.” In her example, it is actually advantageous for tutors and students not to share this cultural/linguistic identification, since it prepares them for a future of working productively with others.

As stated above, there are other identifications that are articulated in how the tutors and students relate to each other. While Spanish and Portuguese are the languages most used by the program in its documentation, there is a sub current of other identifications that are encapsulated under these terms. Immigrants is one of these identifications that is often subsumed under the label of Spanish/Portuguese-speaking. While clearly not all students and families who self-identify as Spanish/Portuguese-speaking are immigrants to Canada,
the history of immigration (whether recent or past) is one that permeates many of the conversations about the community and its members. It is this history that is also referred to when making the distinction between Latinx, Spanish-speaking or Portuguese-speaking and ‘white’ people or ‘Canadian Canadians’. Immigration and immigrants as a discursive tool are often used to otherise and decenter people of color from the national narrative of Canada.

What I observed was also these communities using this discourse as a way to build solidarity within this group, and center themselves in this space built by/for them. One way in which this came up was with tutors using this identity as immigrant or children of immigrants to relate to their students. Victoria, whose family emigrated from El Salvador, recounts how this important part of her identity resonates with her students and allows them to build this trust. “Yeah, absolutely. I feel like it’s relatable in that sense. Because it’s the experience growing up with immigrant parents that you can relate to.” She recounts a specific instance where she and her students shared similar experiences about their families,

Where [laughs] even when you travel, your parents are like “yeah, we’re going to bring a luggage full of food” and she’s like “I was so embarrassed!” I’m like, “girl, I know, I’ve been there!” And she’s like “oh my grandmother made sausage” and I’m like, “yeah my grandmother used to kill chickens” [laughs]. She’s like “yeah, links of sausages, and cured meats” and I’m like yeah I totally get it. So yeah, it makes it relatable. You have, the kind of shared experiences being the offspring of immigrant parents which is ah… yeah, it’s lovely. They’re like “yeah my white friends wouldn’t get it” and I’m like, I know, I know! [laughs].

Another way in which students and tutors find a common ground to relate is as immigrants/children of immigrants/other. Through their narratives, we see how their
identification as either Portuguese/Portuguese-speaking or Latinx/Spanish-speaker is a marker of non-whiteness.

Beyond cultural and language practices, the idea that they also share the experience of being a student from non-white immigrant families is also an important way in which tutors and students build relationships. “The students have someone that can relate to them. Being a Latin American person who was once a student and you know, a student in high school”. Specifically, it is the struggles particular to children of immigrants that she understands as being important to relating to her students, “as an immigrant child you understand the struggle of your parents not being the resource for you where like other kids were like ‘my mom sat down with me’ or this and that and you’re like ‘oh that’s cool, my parents don’t understand’ so you can kind of have to figure it out. […]asking my parents and my mom was never- she could never help us with the homework.” In addition, this is something she believes transcends the Latinx/Portuguese-speaking divide, and is something that children of both communities experience, “I have other friends who are Portuguese descent too and it’s the same thing with that, their parents couldn’t help them, their parents didn’t have very much education.” While the tutors and students might have different experiences or histories of immigration, there is the same thread of ‘other’ in their experiences in Canada. This shared experience gives them a way to relate to each other in their marginalization.

It is through this delineation of an otherised ‘us’, different from the white ‘them’, that part of the relationship building in OYS takes place. It also brings to light the different ways in which identity operates as a uniting force within the program. While Spanish-speakers/Portuguese-speaker might not be salient for students, the experiences of otherization are ones that they can relate to easily with their tutors. The sense that ‘we’ are
not ‘them’. For example, Maria discussed in her interview how she often found it hard to find a sense of belonging anywhere, because she was neither Portuguese enough nor Canadian enough. This is a common experience for many immigrants or children of immigrants who grow up in the borderlands, between both cultures (Anzaldúa, 1987).

I don't feel particularly a sense of belonging when I'm with the Portuguese community. I feel like an outsider very much. [...] I get picked on by my – you're not Canadian. You were born in Portugal. And then you go to school and you don't have blond hair and you're not Filipino. So whatever group I went into, I just – I never felt like I was part of it. (Maria)

Latina/Chicana scholars (i.e. Anzaldúa, 1987; Elenes, 1997; Delgado-Bernal 1998, 2002, 2006) have extensively theorized this feeling of never quite belonging in either culture, of straddling an imaginary line between the two. This experience of having to continually move between your home culture and the dominant ‘white’ culture, not being quite accepted into either but having to constantly negotiate your place in both. Anzaldúa termed this space between both cultures the ‘borderlands’, using the analogy of the border space between the US and Mexico to speak of this idea between two places, two cultures. Her theorization of these emotional and psychological borderlands, where we learned to navigate and live in the in-between space, gave rise to the concept of the *mestizx* consciousness. In her work, Delgado-Bernal has demonstrated the ways in which this consciousness affects how students navigate their post-secondary institutions. The belonging to this in-between borderland, not quite of one place or another, shapes both how people feel about themselves and others. They understand the feeling of not being part of the majority culture group, of always being read as foreign. While at the same time, growing up in Canada, this might also mean they are always read other by people in their
own communities as well— they are not Latinx/Portuguese enough. For tutor-mentors and students, sharing this lived experience is a powerful way to relate to each other and understand each other.

For Maria, this borderlands living means finding a place of belonging as well, “there is a sense of finding a place, a spot where I feel comfortable. I feel all right. Not comfortable as in lazy comfortable, but like… I can contribute some things here, not to say that there is never like feelings inadequacy, but like there is definitely a place there.” As an educator, this space is different from other teaching spaces she has been in.

Recalling her teaching practicum experience in (London, ON), she says working with kids there felt “different”. “Those kids were all white except for like one or two kids that were […] newcomers. […] All of the kids, they were awesome, but they all came from home [where] they only spoke English, they all were pretty much the same.” We see in her story the separation again between ‘us’ (newcomers, others) and ‘them’ (English-speaking white people). Interestingly, while she indirectly makes a reference to the diversity and non-English speaking homes of the OYS students by mentioning these as differences in her practicum classes, she does not make a direct reference to them. When she speaks of what is different about OYS students, she uses adjectives such as “timid”, or “intimated by the whole learning. They don't seem as confident.” Relying instead on behavioral or individual traits to describe the students rather than talking directly about race, culture or language. I find this narrative a significant example of the silence around race in many of the Portuguese-speaking participants’ stories. Silencing is an effective way to control discourse, particularly in public settings such as schools. As Fine notes, “inside public schools, particularly low-income public schools, there persists a systematic commitment to not name those aspects of social life or of schooling that activate social anxieties” (1991,
Conversations around race, for example, exacerbate those social anxieties that would force us to look more closely at inequities and tensions within our own communities. This is because in the narratives of participants, there is a clear investment in differentiating themselves (as Latinxs or Portuguese-speakers) from the majority white culture.

We see this clearly in Victoria’s narrative, where the role of Spanish/Portuguese-speaking identifications serve a way to differentiate themselves from the dominant white culture. Her students identify as Portuguese, and she explains how in conversations this provides another way for the tutors and students to share a common ‘other’ experience. “I feel like at least the role that that plays is that they identify themselves as some kind of ethnicity. So Anastasia will be like “oh, you know when White people…” and I’m like “[laughs] what?” and she’s like “well, yeah, I’m Portuguese, I’m not white”. And I’m like “ok”. So she’ll be like “yeah so you know white people, and their white people food” and I’m like “ok, yeah”. In Victoria’s story, we see again the narrative of Portugueseness as an ethnicity, a way to be ‘othered’ and thus a way to distance oneself from the dominant culture. For students, this also means a space where they can build relationships with other ‘others’, whether they identify as Spanish/Portuguese-speaker or not. For tutors, it is another way in which the work they do has an impact.

Tutors see this as an important part of the work they do, being role models for their students. Tania articulates it as being “a representative of success that can happen” and why that is important,

I think there is a value, if you’re a kid from Portuguese or Spanish background, and you don’t really see a value in education or you struggle with it and you’re paired up with some White person who’s like “oh its super easy.” or you’re paired up with someone that maybe shares your cultural background, has some idea of what your family is like or your family life.
We see again in Tania’s statement the idea that OYS provides that space for members of marginalized communities to come together and create significant relationships. These relationships serve as a way for both tutors to connect with cultural/linguistic identities but also as a way to foster resilience and resistance in students. A space that values otherised experiences and centers them as valid and important. However, we also see in their narratives a tension around who is an ‘other’.

**Exclusions and Inclusions-Precarious belonging**

When looking at the various ways participants in this program articulated their identifications, those aligned with the language used in the program (Portuguese/Spanish-speaking) were most commonly used. However, within the ‘Spanish-speaking’ group, there was the most variation- with participants using other terms such as Latinx, or home countries (Salvadorian). This brings to the forefront a tension around these identifications and how they are constructed in relation with other people. Who is included and who is excluded by “Portuguese speaking”/ “Spanish speaking”?

What is the challenge, particularly for those self-identifying as something a bit different from the language used by the program? Our Youth Success uses ‘Spanish speaking’ as an umbrella term for Latinxs, Spanish, or other Spanish-speaking individuals. Within the Latinx community itself there is a lot of variation in what terms people use to identify themselves (i.e. Latin-American, Spanish, Latinx, Latino/a, Hispanic). Likewise, the term Portuguese excludes individuals who are lusophone or of lusophone heritage but are not from Portugal (i.e. Brazil, Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and other lusophone countries in Africa and around the world). In order to address these tensions, the program opts for using the terms “Portuguese-speaking descent” and
“Spanish-speaking descent”, in an attempt to give some flexibility around the names for the communities it serves.

This flexibility is also created by the responsibility that the program holds to the community. When speaking to the Program manager and the Centre director around which language the program uses in its recruitment and documents, the staff are clear around why terms matter. They speak to academics and some of the program’s founding board members around the term ‘lusophone’ and its inclusivity to families who speak Portuguese but hail from other countries. Yet they know that the families that use the program would not necessarily identify as readily with the term ‘lusophone’ as they do with ‘Portuguese’ or ‘Portuguese-speaking heritage’.

When the program first began, the Coalition used the term used at the time by the TDSB report, which identified students as “Portuguese”. Similarly, when the program added the Spanish-speaking community to its mandate, they used the language used at the time by the TDSB\textsuperscript{11}. As the program has evolved, it is now using the terms “Portuguese-speaking descent/heritage” and “Spanish-speaking descent/heritage” in its documents as well as in presentations to donors, other community agencies, etc. In the program’s application package, for example, includes a page where the students’ personal information is collected. One of the questions asked is relating to whether the student is of Portuguese or Spanish-speaking descent.

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
| Is Student of \textcolor{red}{Portuguese} or \textcolor{green}{Spanish-Speaking} Descent? | \checkmark Port | \checkmark Span |
\hline
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{11} Since the publication of the 2006 report, the language has been amended to “Latinamerican students”
This question is the same in both elementary and high school applications. Although presumably the elementary school applications would be filled out by the parents. Most of the students in Our Youth Success begin in elementary grades and continue through high school, as opposed to arriving to the program in high school. This is in part due to the partnership with school boards, which means that teachers or school staff that think the student could benefit from the added support recommend the program to qualifying families. Therefore, there is an initial identification that happens at the school level (by teachers, principals or counsellors) that identifies the student as being of Portuguese/Spanish-speaking descent and therefore eligible for the program.

In these cases, the teacher may recommend the student for the program and give the parents information about the program and the application form to fill out. Where the parents have to themselves identify as one of those checkboxes. There is also an optional box at the very end of the application (the last section) that gives the applicants the option to further self-identify by naming a country of origin.

This last information is collected mostly for the program’s information, in order to have records of which countries are represented. It is not used for any programming or matching between students and tutors. The matching process will be explored further in Chapter 7.
In the conversation around the choice of terms to use for the program, the staff, who both identify as Portuguese, recount their experience in keeping up with the evolving language. From their experience in working with the Portuguese community in Toronto for the past 40 years, these terms also exemplify a cultural tension felt since the first wave of Portuguese immigrants in the 1950’s. This tension was around immigrants from the Azores and those from mainland Portugal. This tension and division in the community was based around class, and manifested in Azoreans being characterized as not speaking proper (“continental”) Portuguese, not being educated or intelligent. Beatriz, who has been with the program since it was first conceived by the Coalition, remembers that this tension arose when academics, who were mostly from mainland Portugal, spoke of the students being served by the program, “For the first five years, the description, everyone in the community, would say ‘oh the majority of kids in this program are Azorean’. The academics, the same group […] for the five years were- they weren’t Portuguese- ‘oh, they’re Azorean’”.

This division within the Portuguese immigrant population lent itself to providing discourses of deficit about the students in the school system. While Portuguese academics made a distinction about the students being Azorean, for the school system there was no distinction made between Azorean and Mainlanders. They were all labeled “Portuguese” and the deficit language stigmatizing the students was applied to all.

The evolution of the terms, from Portuguese, to Portuguese-speaking, to Lusophone, is a process that Beatriz considers more relevant in academic circles. Thinking back to the inception of the program, “it was defined as Portuguese students in the education system. And these are the same academics at that time who are now insisting ‘you have to use lusophone’. […] When we wrote the proposal, it was ‘Portuguese students in the education
system. Then we evolved to Portuguese speaking, and then we evolved to Portuguese-speaking heritage, and now we’re being pretty much told that we have to use ‘lusophone’ because that’s the inclusive term’.

In her remark, “we’re being pretty much told”, we see an imposition of the terms that are considered relevant for the community. However, in their work on the ground, they do not see this as being the case. Beatriz succinctly puts it as, “our parents and students don’t give a shit. They don’t identify themselves that way, and it’s not important to them.” For them, it is more important that the families feel that the program is theirs. “So we’ve gone from being Portuguese students to Azoreans, and now we’re Lusophone. And nobody knows what the hell that means. We’ve had Brazilian kids in the program [Barbara: Angolan, Cape Verdean, you name it] and nobody’s ever said ‘oh, you're from here, you’re from there’ [Barbara: they’re just happy to be in the program].

This can make it hard to navigate interactions within the community itself, when these conversations around language are being mobilised. “It’s hard to cut through that crap. because the academics think they have it figured out […] And you know, they’re supportive of the program, so, I can’t have the same conversation with them that I’m having with you now.” Therefore, Beatriz and Barbara rely on their work with the community and the direct contact they have with families. “The reality is, I don’t think we ever had an in issue with a parent saying ‘don’t call me Portuguese, call me lusophone’ Whether they’re from brazil, or [somewhere else]”. Barbara gestures to the disconnect that exists sometimes between the work that is done in different circles by pointing out that “a community worker would never use that language”. OYS’s roots in community education mean that while it is influenced by the work being done and the evolution of language and its context, it remains firmly grounded in the community organizing that first gave it rise-
community that has an identification with Portugal. The audience that the staff and directors are concerned with is the families that they work with. Therefore, its language and discourse are strategically deployed to speak to that audience. This may shift depending on the context, if for example one of the managers speaks to the “circle of academics” about the program, she may mobilize the term ‘lusophone’ since it is the one that this audience understands. In their day-to-day work, however, they use the one that their families have come to understand and identify with.

This understanding of audience is another strength of a community based education program. While larger institutionalized systems group “Portuguese students” together (as in the above description of Azorean and Mainlanders); the community based aspect of OYS allows it to recognize the differences amongst their community members. Barbara elaborates,

the Portuguese have never been a homogenous group. There’s a lot of—we look at a lot of the kids, and even their names, you look at them, you don’t necessarily know where they are. Because mom is one of thing, dad is something else, depending on who’s who, the kid’s got some crazy ass name. But they’re in the program because they have that heritage. So they have to identify, we know that.

Opening up the language for families to identify with the program’s mandate means that they can recognize the heterogeneity within the group, as opposed to imagining all members of the Portuguese-speaking and Spanish-speaking communities as being the same. It allows for the diversity that is also expected in a transnational context where marriages occur across racial, ethnic, religious, language divisions. Moreover, to accept this mixing not as a ‘dilution’ of identity but as an evolution of it.

This transnational and transgenerational aspect Toronto’s context is also important for the program to recognize. Barbara explains,
For second generation [Portuguese-Canadians], lusophone doesn’t mean anything. So we just talk about Portuguese-speaking heritage. And our purposes for doing it, was how do we frame the work that we’re going to do fairly for the communities that we represent and that we traditionally serve. It wasn't a political statement. it was, we have this issue with this report. We have this client group that we work with, we put these two things together. It encompassed all of that.

We see in her statement the importance of context to the debate around language and terms. While admitting that there is a political imperative to the use of certain terms over others, there is also the ethical imperative of knowing the community and the language that they would consider as representative. Furthermore, there is a practical imperative as well: if second-generation students do not identify with the term lusophone, then using it will not bring students into the program. The primary concern for OYS staff is to be able to reach those students who might otherwise be pushed out of the system by the various structural barriers facing them. Therefore, their choice of language is strategic to represent the community they serve while also addressing the problems highlighted by the school board reports.

Her statements also give rise to another quandary, which was articulated by several participants. This trans-generational aspect of migration, and the ways in which communities develop and evolve, mean that labels and identifications are necessarily always contested and in flux. When speaking to participants in the program, these tensions between who can claim certain identifications, who is ‘in’ and who is not always clear-cut. Although the issue of linguistic competency in either Spanish or Portuguese was mentioned by members of both communities, it seemed to be less of a marker for those who identified as Portuguese.

Victoria, who identifies as “Latin American” or “Salvadorian”, put it this way, “I feel like Spanish is a term that gets tossed around, misused a lot. They’re like ‘I’m Spanish”
but you don’t speak Spanish… It’s kind of a double standard. where you’re like ‘oh, you’re Portuguese”, but do you speak Portuguese? Because my friends that I grew up, speak broken Portuguese- I feel like I speak better Portuguese than they do, but they’re like “no, we’re Portuguese”. But with somebody that doesn’t speak Spanish I feel like then you’re not. (Interviewer: Then they’re like are you really Latino though?) Yeah.”

Volunteer Amelie, who herself does not identify as either Spanish speaking or Portuguese-speaking, also sees this play out with her students, who don’t speak Spanish or Portuguese but whose families identify as such.

Amelie: But your parents come from there. A lot of them say that, but some like Sabina doesn’t speak Spanish, she’s learning now to speak Spanish.

Interviewer: And her parents are Spanish speaking?

Amelie: Yes. But she doesn’t speak Spanish because she was born in the U.S.

Interviewer: But her dad is the one who doesn’t speak English?

Amelie: Yes. So, even though she’s of Spanish decent, her mom speaks Spanish, her dad and her sister, but she doesn’t speak Spanish. She told me she doesn’t even read it, but she’s learning now to speak Spanish, so for her … she can understand a little bit, but she doesn’t speak Spanish, and even Alexandra, I think, who is Portuguese decent from her parents, but they don’t [laughs], which I understand because I don’t speak my native language from Cameroon because I didn’t grow up there. I grew up in another country and I had to learn French. So even though I am always saying I’m from Cameroon, but I don’t speak. In fact, if I talk to my grandmother we need somebody between us.

Interviewer: What would the language be?

Amelie: It’s an ethnic language. It’s called Bassa. So French is the official language of the country, but we have ethnic languages so my grandparents they will not speak French, but I didn’t grow up there so I didn’t get to learn it, to only speak French. So I understand.

There are however, ways in which participants recognize themselves as ‘more’ or ‘less’ Spanish/Portuguese-speaking. Polina, for example, describes her students as being “more
Portuguese than me”. When I asked her to explain what that meant to her, she explained first how she came to know herself as Portuguese, “I’m half. My mother is Portuguese, my father is Polish, they were both born in Canada so I’m third, second generation. My Portuguese is shit. You know I identify as being Portuguese because I have zero kind of understanding of the Polish culture but- so I identify being Portuguese”. In her explanation, we see a distancing from the Portuguese identification from the beginning, by starting with “I’m half”. By seeing herself as a ‘mix’, a discourse of ‘half-breed’ that harkens back to colonial times and the discourse of ‘pureblood’ used to alienate those deemed undesirables is used here to distance herself from being able to claim a ‘full’ Portuguese identity. She then uses her linguistic ability in Portuguese “it’s shit” to further state a non-claim to Portugueseness. Implying that ‘full Portuguese’ speak the language well. Lastly, she sets up her identification as Portuguese sort of as a default, she does not ‘understand’ Polish culture at all, so she is left with Portuguese culture to identify with. In her articulation, identifying as Portuguese is set up as the only choice she has left, but not one she may find personally rings true to her.

By contrast, she identifies her students as being more ‘fully’ Portuguese than she is. “One of them was born in Portugal. They just I guess the stereotypes of being Portuguese sense of family, sense of religion. I don’t really have those as much.” We see in her explanation a reliance on some stereotypes of what being Portuguese is, and how she doesn’t feel she embodies those stereotypes herself, rendering her ‘less Portuguese’. This understanding of Portuguese through the stereotypes is one not necessarily shared by students who do identity as Portuguese.

Anne Marie, when referencing her identity portrait mentioned “being Portuguese” as an important part of her identity. “It makes me who I am. I’ve been Portuguese my
whole life.” Growing up in Portuguese enclaves in the city, hearing the language being spoken on the streets was a normal occurrence. She recalls one instance when her family moved to a different part of the city and she was singled out for speaking Portuguese.

It was in Etobicoke once and my mom always speaks to me in Portuguese so she’d call me when I was playing outside. She’d be like, ‘Come inside for dinner’. She’d say in Portuguese and the other kids are all English like pure Canadians. They have no idea what I’m talking and one day, they were like ‘What language do you speak to your mom?’ I’m like “Portuguese” They’re like ‘Oh my god. That’s so cool.’ I’m like ‘This is so normal for me like eh.’ Because here, I’m used to up here. There’s Portuguese everywhere so everyone knows what language you’re speaking.

For Anne Marie, there is a distinct difference between herself and families she grew up around (“up here”, a reference to the part of the city populated by a lot of Portuguese Canadians) and “pure Canadians” that speak only English. It is this situation where her Portuguese is “exotic” that she is reminded of her ‘otherness’ or in her words not being “pure” Canadian.

The relationship between language proficiency and identity is quite murky. In speaking to participants, there were different experiences in how people came to understand it. While for some, speaking the language was not a requirement for identifying as Portuguese or “Spanish-speaker”, for some it was a marker of that identity to be able to speak that language.

Victoria, for example, speaks of her experience as someone who is bilingual in Spanish and English, having grown up in Canada of Salvadorian parents.

It’s like a marker, where you can ‘oh you’re from Latin America, but are you really? Because you don’t speak Spanish’ and then you’re like ‘oh man’ it’s like in the movie Selena, ‘you gotta be more American than the Americans and more Mexican than the Mexicans!’ And in that example, that’s probably a great example, where they were what Selena was 3rd or 4th generation Mexican and they’re like ‘are you Mexican?’, like yeah. And you have to be more American than the Americans and
more Mexican than the Mexicans. You have to prove that you’re Latino
where as Portuguese you never have to prove you’re Portuguese. With
Latin Americans it’s like ‘yeah, prove that you’re Latin American.
Prove that you’re Mexican or whatever’ And if you’re not then, if you
can’t.

There are several points in Victoria’s story that were of relevance to this complicated
relationship between language and identity. Firstly, Victoria used several words to identify
herself during her interview, she identified as Salvadorian, as a Spanish-speaker and as
Latin American. Her language then is intricately tied to her Salvadorian and Latin
American identity. Yet she sees the problematic situation that this relationship can place
people in if they don’t speak Spanish well, because it becomes a way for others to deny you
access to this “Latin Americanness”. It becomes a marker for who can and who cannot be
Latin-American (Guerrero, 2013).

In the use of this label as a criterion for applying for the program, however, it is
trying to make an intervention in the ways that school boards classify their students. In
the first census documents released by the TDSB, particularly the one that identified this
group of students as having high dropout rates, the students were identities as “Spanish-
speakers”. Therefore, the program tried to use the same language as the school board, but
opening up the category to any family that self-identifies as such. There is no
documentation needed for students to sign up other than checking a box on the application
form; furthermore, these application forms are available in English, Spanish or Portuguese
so that families can use whichever language they feel most comfortable in. Therefore, it
is entirely possible for a family to register and interact with the program in English while
identifying as a Spanish-speaking or Portuguese family.

In opening up these arbitrary categories to fit families as they need them to, as
opposed to having families fit into the categories that the program needs them to fit into is
one of the ways the program not only responds to the needs of the community but also makes an intervention in how Portuguese and Latin American families are perceived. Instead of assuming that all families are not proficient in English and speak Portuguese or Spanish, giving them the option of speaking any of the three languages permits those who only speak English (in Victoria’s example, those who can’t “prove” they’re Latin American) a way to self-identify as members of the “Spanish-speaking” community, whatever that means to them. This rings true to Victoria’s recounting of the importance of not having to conform to stereotypes in order to ‘be’ Latin American.

I don’t act like a stereotype? Am I not dressing a certain way? Should I dress a certain way, to be considered Latina? Do I need to, I don’t know, have a certain… I don’t know, what are the markers! I don’t know! I identify, I AM Latin American, I’m very proud to be Latin American, very proud to be Salvadorian. I’m very proud of my ethnicity.

Her outrage at having to conform to certain ways of embodying *Latinidad* is what community education projects like Our Youth Success address; creating the spaces where this is not the norm (see also, Guerrero, 2013). Instead, these community created spaces allow for the nuances and heterogeneity of these communities to be a strength as opposed to a weakness (or something that they have to ‘prove’).

Creating these spaces allows for the development of counter narratives about what it may mean to be Latinx or Portuguese. In contrast to the centering of Whiteness that occurs in the social spheres outside the program, and which constructs race and ethnicity in relation to the white norm, these community driven spaces do something else. They center Latinx and Portuguese families and their narratives, allowing for a flexible border around what it means to identify as being of “Portuguese-speaking heritage” or “Spanish-speaking heritage” (words used by Centre managers when speaking about the program).

**Conclusion**
In this chapter, I have laid out the complicated ways in which linguistic and cultural identities are navigated in the Our Youth Success program in the relationship between tutor mentors and their students. I began by tracing how a claim to the cultural and linguistic identity of Latinx/Spanish-speaker and Portuguese/Portuguese-speaker is what motivated many of the tutor mentors to be involved in the program because of its focus on Spanish and Portuguese-speaking communities. Through their narratives, it becomes clear that their very participation in the program was a manner of enacting their cultural identifications as Latinx or Portuguese. For tutor-mentors who had grown up in Canada and internalized some of the negative stereotypes about the Portuguese community, or who had not had a lot of contact with the Portuguese community beyond their family while growing up, participating in this program offered a way to connect with their cultural identification as Portuguese. In both cases, linguistic and cultural identifications are a main factor in coming into the space of OYS, and to develop the relationships they do with their students.

While students did not find that sharing identifications (as either Latinx, Portuguese or Spanish or Portuguese-speaking) was an explicit part of their relationship with their tutor-mentors, some shared identifications did come up when speaking of how these relationships were first established. Many tutor-mentors spoke of how similar lived experiences as non-white and ‘other’ were an important way in which they related to their students. This highlighted an interesting understanding of Portuguese as non-white, an ‘othered’ in a majority white society. It also highlighted the ways in which Latinxs are often understood and imagined as immigrants, even when many of the Latinxs tutor-mentors and their students were second-generation Canadian.

For some tutor-mentors, speaking the same language was also an important way to build trust with their students, articulating that it gives them a shared understanding of the
world. We see clearly here the conflation of ethnicity and language which lays at the heart of the problematic of the language used by the program. It conflates the language (Spanish and Portuguese) with Latinx and Portuguese cultural identifications.

In part, this conflation both produces and is the result of the way in which the Portuguese-speaking community is imagined. It is mainly thought of as the descendants of the community established by the first immigrants in Canada from Portugal, who settled in downtown Toronto and are responsible for organizing and founding many of the associations and organizations that now serve the lusophone community in Toronto. Therefore, oftentimes the Portuguese-speaking community is thought of as a heterogeneous group made up of Portuguese and Azorean immigrants and their descendants. While this population is the most numerous, it is not the entirety of the Portuguese-speaking community in Toronto. However, in perpetuating this conflation, the language used by the program continues to exclude lusophones who might not feel welcomed into the space.

There is a similar conflation for Spanish-speaking participants, who use Spanish speaking as a cultural identification as well as linguistic at times in their narratives, although to a lesser extent. Perhaps because it is the language used by the program (who does not use words such as Latinx, or Latin American), participants feel obliged to use the same language when speaking about their identifications. However, many of the participants also used ethnic or national identifications when given the opportunity to describe themselves: Latina, Latin-American and Salvadorian, for example. Participants also spoke of the problematic of equating being Spanish-speaking to being Latinx, further elucidating the difference between the two identifications.

While cultural and linguistic identity lies at the heart of this program, we see that the way in which it plays out is very different for the different participant groups in the
program. Yet it is clearly present in the pedagogy of the program and the way in which the relationships between the different members develop. It is present in the intentionality with which volunteer tutor/mentors and families arrive at the program, and the ways in which they relate to each other through the program. It is also present in the way that as a community based education project, identifications are strategically mobilized by the program in order to achieve its mandate. Having provided a description for what mobilized tutor mentors to enter the program, I will now move to describing the community based education context that they arrive into at Our Youth Success.
I walk into the lobby at Central High School, and immediately I am assaulted by the noise of voices that is magnified by the tall ceilings and cement walls of the space. Parents and their children, ranging from high school down to elementary school aged, are all gathered in the lobby waiting to be called in by the program staff. I can hear conversations in Portuguese, Spanish and English all happening at once. There is an energy in the room as the clock hand slowly approaches 10:00am, and some of the younger kids blow it off by chasing each other or playing games off to the side. One girl, her backpack on her shoulders looking almost half her size, plays with another little girl as their mothers chat with each other, laughing.

Finally, it is 10:00, and Elena comes out, her trusty clipboard in hand. The noise level decreases considerably, but does not silence. Parents and their children know the drill, they are called up by grade, and students say goodbye to their parents as they line up to follow one of the site supervisors to their classrooms. By the time high school grades are called, there is only a handful of parents left, most of them waiting to talk to Elena. Once all the students are inside, Elena begins handling parent questions, requests and concerns; taking notes on her clipboard to follow up later and answering questions about specific students from memory- such as why a tutor was absent last week. Some late stragglers come in and Elena greets them by name before giving them an admonishing “you’re late!” as they rush past to get to their classrooms.

Due to its genesis and its current residence in a social services agency, community is a major pillar of the work in Our Youth Success. In part tied to the self-identified communities that seek its service, as explored in the previous section, the program also
shapes these communities and the discourses around and about them. Given its centrality to the inception of the program, it is not surprising that ‘community’ was a common reference in a many of the participants’ narratives about their experiences with OYS. From its motivation to begin the program, to the relationship that the program builds with families and the school system, community and the ways in which the community is thought about and talked about, is a critical part of OYS’s work. In this chapter, I therefore explore how community is articulated by participants as a context within which they develop relationships in Our Youth Success.

**The raison d’être**
The most salient way that community is referenced in Our Youth Success is as its motivation for existing, its focus and main goal. The origin story of the program is always set around the program filling a need in the community that was not being served otherwise. For the staff, OYS was born in order to fulfill a gap in the community: “We needed a program like this. I think that the community really lacked that education piece. Obviously, we did because we have the highest dropout rate.” (Joana).

The community organizing that propelled the program into existence was a response to this urgent need, but in a way that sought solutions rather than blaming the community for its situation, Joana continues,

> Instead of just further stigmatizing the parents and further saying ‘It’s because of this’, let’s do something about it. I think in the founders who put this together — What they put together — And the fact that that doesn’t happen very often. Often, you have people just talking and nothing is put into action, and this was put into action and continued.

Due in part to this rootedness in community organizing, parents feel an ownership over the program. This resource is for them, Leonor, whose daughter had been with the program for three years at the time of the interview, comments
I think it’s important to have these things in our community you know, and to help out, because I don’t know, it’s important to have in our community because I think everybody has, I think each community has their own, how do you say [Interviewer: Resources?] Yeah, it’s good that each community also has its own resources and you know and its involvement.

This interest in the program as a resource for the community is what allowed it to grow through its first years. Joana remembers the program depending on community donations, and draws a direct link to the need for this program and the willingness of community members to fund it.

I think a lot of programs don’t survive because of lack of funding, so this just goes to show how much in demand this program was. At one point, we were sustained solely by the Portuguese community through gala dinners and working with subsidized… the rest of it — But it was just community business that were — This was before funding [from the school boards] and then finally, it was like ‘Hey. Help us out, here. These are your students.’ I think it’s interesting. It started off as sort of our problem that we looked to fix, and then it’s amazing how — I love the fact that we then expanded into another community.

**Responding to communities’ needs**

One of the ways in which Our Youth Success maintains this close relationship to the community is by ensuring its structure is responsive to the communities’ needs, and is changed when it must to continue to be responsive. Joana comments on this by pointing to the focus on parental engagement that the program has developed over the past few years:

It’s changed so much since we started, where it was just tutoring and it’s evolved to now parent engagement. A huge part is parent engagement and the mentorship part as well for our youth.

That’s grown immensely. It’s changed based on the community’s needs.[…] There have been cuts and liaisons [to the school board] so now, we have to subsidize that. We have to fill in for that.

In her statement, we see not only the way in which the program and its focus has shifted to encompass more than academic support for Portuguese/Spanish speaking students to
include mentoring and parent education; but also the way in which the program positions itself as ‘subsidizing’ the cuts and shortfalls experienced from the public system.

Maria, who sees the program as an example of people creating community, echoes these sentiments,

> It’s a community, like it's community building, right? Maybe not in a traditional sense, but I'm going to put it out there— Poor people freaking taking care of each other, you know? Using whatever they have whatever point in their life. I've been through different points of my life throughout the program, right, throughout the years. Yeah, I like seeing that. Because if we don’t like we--I don’t know the TDSB, like when you look at their website what their values are and all this shh-- you can’t.

Maria points to the urgency of the work that programs like OYS do. They allow communities to ‘take care of each other’ in environments where they do not feel taken care of. In her narrative, we see the place that OYS takes in doing what the school board fails to do, because if ‘we’ don’t, then who will? That is the underlying question in her statement. Community-based programs then, are a safety net for families who might otherwise fall through the cracks in a larger system.

It is this lack of institutional support that prompts volunteers like Victoria to dedicate their time to the program, “that’s why this program in particular really resonated with me and it’s why I keep on doing it. Because it’s geared towards a community that wouldn’t have the support otherwise. I would never go to a Kumon center, it’s not my cup of tea but something like this really hits home.”

Acknowledging the systemic marginalization that both the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking communities face in the public education system is an important motivator for tutor/mentors to participate. In her statement, Victoria also gestures to Kumon centres, which are private tutoring centre franchises. She juxtaposes the work that OYS does with
this kind of for-profit centre, highlighting that the focus on supporting marginalized students is an important part of what makes OYS unique, and what attracts volunteers such as herself. Her statement also serves to bring further attention to the ways in which OYS’s work lies beyond academic support. While this is a big part of what tutors do in their sessions, by helping students with homework or assignments; OYS’s position as a community-based initiative produces an environment of support for families as a whole.

Felipe recognizes this when reflecting on the importance of the program, “they’re [Spanish/Portuguese speaking communities are] not achieving their full potential. That’s what I think. […] I think that’s what OYS does. And they also provide all the other services to the parents too, which no other program that I know of does that, which makes OYS unique.”

Estela also began her work at OYS as a tutor and recently began volunteering as a site supervisor for one of the after-school weekday sites. She arrived at the program because her identification as a Spanish-speaker drew her to OYS’s focus. She continued to volunteer because she sees this work as important to building the larger Spanish/Portuguese speaking communities in Canada.

I think that question goes on to the next years of why I stayed […] It’s to keep helping the community, the Hispanic community and the Portuguese community. Because I don’t know, here in Canada, everyone has their own community. So if we don’t all help out each other or our own community we’re not going to – we’re all going to, I don’t know not have a lot of good stuff.

Estela’s statement gestures to the idea that communities must mobilize on their own in order to gain access to resources (“good stuff”). This kind of thinking is concordant with the ways in which neoliberal structuring pits communities of colour against each other to get scarce resources on stolen land. Similarly to Joana’s statement about the program
subsidizing cuts made to the school board for community support, costs are offloaded to the community for services that should be provided by the institutions. In the discourse of scarcity, where there is a finite amount of resources to go around, marginalized communities are pitted against each other in competition for these resources. Members of these communities, such as Estela, feel that it is their duty to contribute in order to help the community have ‘good stuff’. In this case, access to academic support ensuring students graduate secondary and have options for post-secondary education.

Victoria also gestures to the importance of coming together as a community in order to access resources. She draws attention particularly to the way in which the Latin American community in Toronto can be ‘fractured’, focusing more on nationality than a pan-ethnic identification,

Latin America is huge, massive. And you identify as Mexican, Salvadorian, Colombian, Ecuadorian or whatever […] They’re like ‘oh, but in Colombia, this.” and I’m like ‘yeah but I’m from El Salvador’ It’s so different. But in this circumstance it’s great that as a regional area we’ve banded together and we’re all different kind of Latin America but it’s for the same cause and it’s great. I think it’s amazing because sometimes it can be a fractured community in that you have like ‘oh Chinese people support each other’. But it’s not Asians, it’s Chinese people or like ‘oh the Jewish community’ and that’s different because it’s a religion. But you know what I mean, you have these different communities, like the Indian community, they band together and support each other. But it feels like sometimes with Latin Americans it’s very fractured and they’re like ‘yeah, but it’s a Mexican store’ or ‘it’s a Colombian store’ or it’s this. I’m like ‘But we’re all Latin American!’, they’re like ‘yeah, but they’re from Peru” or Chile… I’m like, we need to band together, because we’re all experiencing the same.

This is in line with Veronis (2010) findings about the Latin American community in Toronto and their efforts to organize in order to achieve equal participation in Canadian society. As she found, community building is a critical part of migrant’s struggles for equal participation, particularly in a community as heterogeneous as the Latin American
community in Canada. In her work with activist and community organizers in Toronto, Veronis found that Latin Americans in this city have a history of community building and advocacy which on the one hand facilitated the community’s participation in Canadian society, particularly through its work in the non-profit sector during the 1970’s and 1980’s when refugees from Chile and then Central American arrived to Canada. As the community became more diverse in the 1990’s (see Chapter Two for a historical account of the different waves of migration from Latin America to Canada), their needs also changed and it was harder to coalesce around a common interest (such as refugee services, as had been the case with the first waves of immigration). Veronis demonstrates how diversity has added to the group’s struggle for equal participation in Canadian society; echoed by Victoria’s statement on the “fractured” community.

It is therefore this sense of community building in the program what volunteers articulate as a reason for coming back to the program for years. Maria, who used to be a tutor and is now a site supervisor on Saturday mornings, reflects on this as she tries to articulate the reasons she has stayed at the program for over 6 years. “I love seeing these kids, get up on Saturday morning and their parents. I love seeing their parents- they care, right? They're doing what they can.” Seeing this parental involvement and community mobilizing in action is a compelling reason for her to continue to stay involved with the program.

This parental involvement has been a growing focus of the program, as Joana mentioned above. This evolution has been in part a response to much of the deficit discourse around the Spanish and Portuguese speaking families, which is that ‘those parents don’t care about education’.
the advocates that put this program together, and the community activist that did that, I think they saw something in our community where it wasn’t just — I think they understood that parent piece, and I think that at that time, a lot of the conversations, there was a lot of stigma around parents, around parents not caring and that’s the reason why [there was such a high dropout rate] — And that was some people’s answer, where it’s much more multi-faceted than that obviously.

This focus is not lost on the volunteers, who see the underlying program philosophy as one of “getting the family involved with the school system and making it less intimidating for the parents.” This work is important, for Maria, not just for newcomers but also for “people who’ve been here forever they just feel like it's not an accessible thing.” While the conversation around the needs of Spanish/Portuguese speaking families can often centre on the experiences of recently arrived immigrants, Maria’s statement reminds us of the importance of remembering that it is not just newcomers who face barriers to access at schools. As she explains, ‘even people who’ve been here forever’ face struggles in communicating with their children’s school or in navigating the educational system.

As was highlighted in Chapter 5, it is important to remark that these systemic issues affect not only “immigrants”, but 2nd and 3rd generation Canadians as well. They continue to be othered and marginalized in social systems like schools. It is important to keep this in mind, since framing it as a newcomer problem obscures the systemic issues at hand as well as invisibilising Canadian-born Portuguese/Spanish-speakers who struggle in the system. It frames the problem as one that disappears once people in these communities are not newcomers anymore. However, we see that youth and families in these communities, as well as other marginalized communities, continue to face negative experiences in schools. Harmful stereotypes are propagated and internalized about not only students but also their parents.
While Joana talks about this being a conversation in the past, when the program was founded 16 years ago, this conversation is still happening. Parents in both communities are still characterized as not caring about education and this being the reason that youth are disengaged from school and being driven out of the system. One of the strengths of programs like OYS is their ability to work against these myths directly.

But a lot of it was ‘It’s because parents don’t care’ and that’s why. This was the answer to that […] For those that were saying it, we then showed that they do care and I think that’s why the program was — I think it’s almost like parents were starving for a program like this. (Joana)

For the entire program staff interviewed, this particular point was an important one in the work they do. It is showing, on the ground, that these discourses about the community are inaccurate. Showing through the numbers of parents that show up every day to drop off their kids at the program, and then through the hundreds more who wait every year on a waiting list to get their children a spot in OYS. Joana’s word for the reaction of the parents, ‘starving’, speaks to the urgency of the issue. Parents are not just interested. They are deeply, desperately invested in the education of their children and in the success of their children in the Canadian education system. For her, this is one of the reasons that the program has been so successful:

I think that’s why this program has grown so immensely because it really started as a simple little idea that tutoring for some of the kids. But [the parents] were really starving for it because there was no other access to this kind of program that would help their child.

The program began as a ‘simple’ idea around providing academic support for students from a community who was reported to be struggling in the public school system. However, as Joana’s words point out, this small idea quickly expanded, going from 30 students to 200 students in the span of a few years. This rapid growth and the increased demand (hundreds
of students in the waiting list each year) point to the need the program fills in the
community. Adriano, whose daughter has been in the program for six years, sees the
programs’ growing need “It’s just getting more—because there’s such a need, there’s so
many kids on the waiting list, there’s so much of a need for tutors.” While the program has
expanded to serve more and more students, the continued and increasing demand for its
work points to needs of the community, but also to how OYS particularly serves this need
in ways that other programs do not.

The high retention rate at OYS is also evidence of the program’s success in
responding to the communities changing needs in the past 16 years. This successful
development has been possible because of the care and commitment the program has to
creating a relationship with the community it serves. This relationship works to fill a space
that the school board has neglected. The program often ends up acting as a bridge between
the families and the public school system, occupying a borderland position that straddles
both worlds. The metaphorical place that the program occupies is one where community
can gather and build relationships around a shared identification based on their common
experiences of othering, similarly to what hooks calls using the margin as a site of
resistance (1990). In the borderland that OYS occupies between informal academic support
and the formal school boards is an important site of community building. In it, these two
communities, which are underserved by the education system, can build spaces of
resistance and resilience. It does so through the counter-narrative creation, and relationships
of cariño observed in the very physical spaces that the program carves out within school
buildings across the city.

**Building relationship to community**
One of the observable ways the program actively builds its relationship with the community is using Portuguese and Spanish language to communicate with the families. All the program’s documents are available in three languages (English, Portuguese and Spanish) and communications are often sent in triplicate or in the language the family indicated in their application form. In addition, the program coordinators are fluent in both English and either Spanish or Portuguese, therefore parents can communicate with them in whatever language they are most comfortable in.

Anne Marie points to this language practice as one of the reasons that her mom placed her in the program when she first began “I think it probably helped my mom because she could talk to the people so it’s easier for her to communicate with people and the fact that they send Portuguese newsletters, not just English. It’s better. That was probably the perk that moved me going there.”

Victoria, who has been with the program for over five years, comments “I think a program like this is beautiful and so beneficial to the parents who do speak Spanish or Portuguese and it provides them the resource and also having people like Joana and Elena, who even if the tutors don’t [speak Spanish/Portuguese], Joana or Elena do. So, the tutor doesn’t necessarily speak the language. If the parent has any concerns they can ask Elena or Joana and they’re always talking to a million and a half parents, and they’re always available.

Likewise, Victoria sees her language ability as an important part of her involvement in the program for both students and parents.

“I feel like it’s super important for someone who is, who’s English is a second language as a student. It’s helpful and beneficial if they have someone who speaks their first language to help them with the second language, and also with the parent to help them understand. So I do see all the time the parents with the broken English trying to talk to the tutor
and the tutor’s like “I only speak English” and the parents are like “I kind of speak English” and I’m like “can I help?! Can I translate anything?!”

As a Spanish speaker, she sees her role in the program as a bridge for parents as well as an important way to relate to students who have English as an additional language. Language then is an important symbol not just for communicating with families but also for creating relationships within the program and the community.

Particularly on Saturday mornings, the lobby of the school is a cacophony of noise, parents talking to their children, to each other, to site supervisors, searching for either Joana or Elena to ask a question or hand in paperwork. Often after the students are called in to their sessions, parents will continue talking to each other as they head outside to run errands before coming back to pick up their children. It is this social space that Joana points to as an important part of parental engagement, “I think that often for parents, maybe their social piece where they interact with other parents is in a social setting. They go to a Portuguese club or whatever you call it social club. But here, they’re getting together in a social setting and it’s focused on education, which I don’t think they often get anywhere else.” The program physically creates a space for parental involvement every day inside schools.

This kind of close contact with schools is important because parents might not always feel welcomed in those spaces. It is particularly helpful for parents who feel that the school is not servicing the needs of their children, like Gloria who often hears her daughter complain about how the teacher “only wants to know of the children who know more, you know, those who know more and let others apart”. With her daughter feeling less valued in the classroom because she is not one of the higher achieving students (those that ‘know more’), Gloria feels that “there is an attitude of failure on the part of the teacher” which
could affect the way her daughter feels about school and more importantly, how prepared she will be to go on to high school the next year.

However, even though as a mother she feels that this kind of behavior from the teacher is not right, she hesitates to talk to her about it before the end of the school year, as she fears “she can put my daughter apart for the rest of the year”, singling her daughter out in some way that could be detrimental. She vows to “really talk to [the teacher]” at the end of the year so she does not continue to treat students the same way in the following years, but only after she is not her daughter’s teacher anymore. This kind of fear of retribution is a reaction that program coordinators often hear from parents, “yes, parents are afraid to complain or be seen as troublemakers, and that then their kids will be labelled or singled out by the teachers” (program coordinator). This reaction belies not only the lack of communication that exists between some families and the school, but also the lack of trust in that relationship.

OYS’s position allows it to bridge that gap, by using the trusting relationships it builds with parents and the communication it has with schools. Adriano for example, feels “that [the school] can do a lot more, especially with the Portuguese students, Spanish students, African-American students; they can do a lot more. They kind of leave us to the side you know?” Similarly, Rosa agrees that the support at the school is “never enough to attend all their needs, so this program gives [them] that advantage…you can see the progress”. This progress is not restricted to the students’ academic marks, but also pertains to the work done with the parents and how this effort impacts the family’s relationship to the school.

The parent workshops and their evolution is another example of how the program maintains a responsive relationship with parents. In the beginning of the program, one
workshop was held once a year, concurrently in all three languages. The workshop content focused on navigating the schools; who to talk to if you had a concern, who was in charge of what aspect of the school, and what rights parents had in the schools.

The workshops were often facilitated by teachers who donated their Saturday morning and spent it answering questions from concerned parents who felt alienated from their child’s schools. Elena describes it as a “catharsis session”, where parents really used most of the space to vent about their frustrations with a certain teacher or the lack of results they saw from the school. While the volunteer teachers were able to answer some of their questions, “the parents needed more, they wanted someone to listen to them but also they needed advice that went beyond ‘talk to your teacher/principal’” (Elena).

At the same time, the program’s contingency on grant funding and the grant’s ‘measurables’ meant that they needed to create some mechanism to increase the parental involvement. Therefore, the program implemented a mandatory attendance policy for one workshop a year for parents wishing to continue to re-enroll in the program. This gave the program the opportunity to begin offering more workshops on a variety of topics. Given the experience of previous workshops, the concerns that were voiced as well as the issues that the program coordinators dealt with every day, a new offering of workshops covering different topics was devised. In addition, the workshops are offered both on Saturday mornings while the program is running as well as weekday evenings in order to accommodate the variety of working schedules that the program’s families have. The topics and dates are communicated at the beginning of the year, and parents can plan to attend one or all of the workshops offered (See Appendix S for a workshop flyer).

The workshops then provide a space for parents to address specific concerns and discuss with guest speakers who might be more familiar with the area. For example, the
IEP and learning disabilities workshops are facilitated by a former Special Education teacher who now works for Learning Disabilities Association Toronto District. Parents can therefore ask more specific questions and receive an answer from someone with intimate knowledge of the system. For Adriano, OYS helps to “open doors” by using the space it has with parents, to “explain what you need to do in order to help your kid”. The parent workshops that focus on parent advocacy have helped parents become more actively present in their children’s schools. Adriano notices that

the guidance counsellors, if you don’t get involved, if you don’t go to the school, if you don’t show your face, they don’t care about your kid, it’s just another number. So this program helps us learn how to get involved in our kids’ education and go there and go to school and be like a lever to get the ball in motion, to get things going.

This idea that parents have to ‘be a lever’ in order to see responses to their concerns is constantly mirrored in OYS’s work. Program coordinators receive calls from parents “literally every day” (Joana) trying to get help in resolving an issue at their child’s school. The issues range from speaking to the teacher about the students’ progress to making sure supports mandated by the student’s IEP are in place. The program coordinators have had to educate themselves not only on the School Board’s structure, but also its politics and build a network of allies within the board that they can count on to support their families.

Felicidade, for example, felt “it took a long time to push and it took many years for [the school] to give her the help that she needed. But OYS has really accelerated everything.”

The program often mobilizes its contacts within the boards to help parents receive a response from schools and access programs or resources needed to support their students. The program then uses both its own social capital as well as tools like the parent workshops in order to connect parents with the education system.
In doing so, it addresses a gap in the way that parental involvement is often spoken about—particularly in regards to marginalized communities. In a discourse analysis of the parental involvement policy of the Ontario Ministry of Education (2010), Antony-Newman (2016) points to the discourse of barriers and absent teachers that permeates the document. These discourses continue to position parents from underrepresented communities (in spaces such as parent councils) as parents who ‘don’t understand the language of the school’. In addition, it speaks of the responsibilities of parents for school involvement, but makes no mention of equipping teachers to collaborate with parents or work with parents from different cultures. This discursive move places the onus of parental involvement on the parents, not recognizing the importance of staff and teacher attitudes in making the school a welcoming space for all families. In his evaluation, Antony-Newman concludes that this policy document and others like it in the United States and the UK deploy narrow definitions of parental involvement that privilege White, middle-class parenting styles and continue to frame racialized communities as deficient. This finding echoes much of the previous research on parent involvement literature (e.g. Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lareau, 2011; Thomas, Keogh, & Hay, 2015; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson; 2013).

The OYS parent workshops then are a mechanism to build the cultural capital of the families in the community, giving them the knowledge and the skills they need to make access those spaces where they did not feel welcomed or listened to before. While both school boards have formal parental involvement structures, such as school councils or parental involvement committees, these spaces are not accessed by all parents equitably. In a recent report on schools in Ontario, People For Education noted that the fundraising (one of the main ways parent councils are involved in schools) differences between schools had grown to the point where the top 10% of schools fundraise more than the bottom 83%, to a
ratio of $49:$1 (People for Education, 2017). Pistiolis (2012) shows that these differences in fundraising affect not only student achievement but also equity in educational opportunities across schools. To open up these spaces, OYS equips parents with the cultural and social capital that is needed to access these spaces, in order to challenge the idea that parents from these communities are not as engaged and invested in their children’s education as other parents who are represented in these spaces.

Creating Community Counter-narratives
The most immediate reason, and the most direct result of the workshops is to increase parental involvement, as parental involvement is directly related to student engagement and academic achievement (Epstein, 1987; McNeal, 1999; Fan & Chen, 2011; Hill & Taylor, 2014). When the workshops first began, this relationship was often the starting point for the conversation; how parents can help bolster their children’s educational experience without it looking like the typical sitting down and helping your child with homework. This was a response to the realities that many families faced and that was often voiced by participants whose parents were immigrants, where parents who did not have a mastery of English or who had themselves not gone on to secondary education did not feel comfortable helping their children with homework. Instead, the workshops give parents resources and tools, “your workshop explain a lot how we can advocate for kid's rights at school, and everything. When I grow up, we didn't have any of it, right? It would have been nice.” (Adriano).

He goes on to explain why he feels this kind of space is so important, when I was going through high school, you know, being Portuguese, there was, the guy in the counsel didn't really look for you anyway. Like when I finished high school, that was it. I went out for work, right? If I have been better counselled, better guided, and if my parents were more
involved, maybe, I would have gone, I would have gone onto a university. Not that my parents didn't want me to go. It's just there was no, there was a lot. You guys, prepared Caterina very well, and ourselves too through the workshop, what to do, what university, all that stuff. I didn't have that, I didn't get that.

Adriano’s comment about his experience in high school, where ‘being Portuguese’ meant that the guidance counsellor did not ‘look for you’, is not a relic of the past. Talking to tutors who recently went through high school, their experience mirrors that of Adriano’s. Felipe, for example, spoke of going “through my stuff as a kid, Portuguese Canadian just getting bullied and always kind of like ‘oh, you’re going to amount to nothing’”, and his guidance counsellor’s low expectations of him, “you shouldn’t apply to these hard universities, you should just go here. You should go to Laurier Brantford and study criminology. Or go to Windsor and study criminology’. But I got accepted to Queens, UofT, like right away.” It is precisely this kind of harmful stereotyping that OYS tries to work against by providing these workshops for parents.

In a way, these stereotypes go both ways: there is a tension between the community and the school because of experiences such as those articulated above. Parents feel the school does not have a positive view of Portuguese/Spanish speakers and so they do not have a positive view of the school system themselves. The workshops offered by OYS to both students and parents aim to dismantle some of these negative beliefs about education by providing both information and a space for community members to collectively organize and receive support.

Adriano: This year you enlighten me, like with these workshops I’ve learnt quite a bit. I know where to get the information to prepare, because my kid’s in grade 10 and two more years and she has to start figuring out what she wants to do with college or university and this is going to help me. through all these seminars, its helps me to try and guide her and even OYS has helped her. Because I came to one last time, where this lady was here from Seneca College, I’ve already
listened to this. You guys had one for students, and I came to that one as well. Because I wanted to hear about what her options were, because she doesn’t know what she wants to do after high school. So, I wanted to be there and see what she thought about it. It helped me to start preparing for her future.

Even for community members that are not parents, such as Maria, these workshops are an exciting proposition in community building. A lawyer from the Portuguese-speaking community facilitated one of the most popular student workshops. During the two hours, she talks about how it was possible to choose a high school outside of their catchment area and the ways in which secondary school class levels narrow or open up your choices for post-secondary. Standing in front of a chalkboard in the large cafeteria space of Central High, she addresses both students and some parents who have decided to stay. “You don’t have to say yes just because that’s what the guidance counselor wrote down”, she turns back to the chalkboard and draws lines from the word “academic” to the words “university”, “college” and “work” that are on the other side of the board. She then goes down to the word “applied” and draws one line to the word “college” and another one to the word “work”. She repeats back to the group the importance of thinking about class choices and how they lead to more or less options. Maria reflects back on this workshop as one of her favorites as well:

There's something very exciting about just education. I think that's the real equalizer, has the power to be like an equalizer. So here's a community that tries to share wealth, right, resources and like through education and helping families navigate through that education system and instilling confidence. What was her name, Eunice was it? The lawyer who came in and did that. I'm like wow-- I didn’t know OYS was doing that sort of thing, […] but I was great to see that. She's trying to instill confidence. I don’t know how confident these families are. I'm sure I'm projecting a lot of what I felt what my family did but I know I didn’t feel a lot of confidence going through usually my last year of high school and like university.
These spaces also function as places to create counter narratives about the communities. Instead of beginning from a place of deficit—these parents don’t care—the program has an asset-minded starting point:

So, here was a program and then from that, we took advantage of the fact that we have these parents that care, that bring their child, rain or shine every Saturday or every Friday after school so now, let’s make use of that. Let’s use them. Now, let’s get them engaged. Because they needed the program. They wanted it. And that’s what I sort of—When people would say ‘Parents don’t care.’ They do care. I have thousands of parents that can introduce you to that do. It’s just that we provided them with information, tools, access… (Joana)

Rather than seeing the problem as residing in the parents (as is the “these parents don’t care” narrative), the program understands the problem as living in the systems that prevent parents from gaining access. Therefore, it focuses less on lecturing them about how good parents help their kids with homework, and more on practical information that the parents can act upon. In a way, this shift in focus is more resource-intensive to implement, because it requires researching what the points of disconnect are. However, due to OYS’s history of engagement with parents, it already had a trove of information on what parents needed most. In building its relationship with families, including listening to and responding to their needs, it had documented what the major issues were. They were then able to connect with facilitators that could come in to speak to specific topics, inside the schools.

The workshops for families highlight the importance of cultural and social capital to access, and demonstrate how community-based education initiatives can be an organic and powerful site to build that capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The acquisition of knowledge about the education system, its processes and how to navigate them, is an important part in breaking down the barriers that make schools inaccessible to many parents. The workshop on academic pathways, for example, gives families and tutors the language to speak about
course selection and its impact on post-secondary options- making it easier for parents to have this conversation with their children. These conversations have been shown to be a major stumbling point for parents of racialized and low-income students, where the knowledge about the system is lacking (Social Planning Toronto, 2017).

In addition to knowledge, these workshops build up parents’ skills in navigating the school system. Taking again the example of the academic pathways workshop, the facilitator pointed out how counsellor recommendations were not decisions and were not final, but that this final decision power rested with parents. This kind of self-advocacy skill is crucial for parents and their children to successfully navigate the school system. The same report by Social Planning Toronto (2017) showed that students were often not aware that they could tell their counsellors to change their course selection from applied to academic, and neither were their parents. Through the parent workshops, OYS build the community’s capacity to engage with the systemic discrimination in the school system by giving them the cultural capital to do so. This is part of the program’s mandate to change not only the attitudes of the school system towards the community, but also of the families towards the school system.

Beatriz and Barbara agree on the importance of the program in changing attitudes and beliefs about the community in the education system. It is one of OYS’s main goals in mobilizing the community and in creating a space dedicated to mentoring Spanish/Portuguese speaking youth and giving their parents tools to advocate for their families. In this quest to change the conversation around these families however, the program sometimes falls into repeating the deficit discourse that constructs these families as lacking the education or time to be involved in their children’s education. This is in part, due to the way in which they must position the youth as failing to recruit volunteers and
continue to advocate for the program’s existence. The advocacy for students’ rights and their position as struggling in the education system is mixed with discourses from the dominant culture around the reasons why these families are struggling.

**Reiterating harmful discourses**

This reproduction of negative stereotypes can be heard from many of the tutor mentors, who see the program as “providing support to at risk students because they might not have that at home.” Polina explains that as a tutor you have to make sure “that they have that support so that they can be almost equal with other students that maybe have very educated parents or have the financial ability to you know, afford tutors or speak English perfectly so that they can always ask a question. You know, and not kind of be hesitant about that. So just kind of leveling the playing field a little bit for students [so] that they’re not limited by their English proficiency or their cultural background or socioeconomic status”. Her statement is telling in the way it portrays the community: as poor, speaking little English and uneducated. This is highlights how the community is continuously characterized as having the problem. If these things are fixed, for example by receiving extra support, then students should be able to succeed in the system. The problem in this reasoning is that it ignores the systemic issues within the system.

Some of these narratives are also imbued with the class difference that Barbara and Beatriz mention in the history of Portuguese settlement in Toronto. One tutor, when describing growing up in Toronto, referred several times to the ‘downtown Portuguese’. When asked to elaborate, she explained:

> I see a very clear- the cousins that I have that grew up on College, around St. Helen’s area, none of them went to post-secondary. And I feel like the kids who grew up there and went to school with other Portuguese kids who were similar, maybe getting similar messages at home, they didn’t really see anything after high school except for “get to work” in like construction, or be a receptionist in a doctor’s office. I
think the messages that they were getting were different. I don’t know
if it’s from their parents directly but from the other kids, the other
Portuguese kids? I don’t know what it would have been like to go to
school with so many other Portuguese kids. I did one of my internships
at Bishop Morocco, so it was fascinating and disheartening to me to see
the number of Portuguese kids like- so now we’re in our third
generation or fourth generation, like people my age who’d had kids or
maybe a bit older than me and their kids are having the same ideas. I
had kids in my class, a girl with the same name that I have, never met
her in the month that I was there. She didn’t show up for one single
class. And I would call her mom and her mom would be like “what do
you want me to do about it”…. And so I remember thinking, “yep,
downtown Portuguese”. It’s totally judgmental, and it’s totally
prejudiced, but…

Tania’s story points to several things. First, it highlights the heterogeneity within the
Portuguese community. This is an important point to keep in mind, as discussions around
marginalized communities often lump them together into a unified whole, when in reality
there are subgroups and tensions within the larger community that might identify as
“Portuguese-speaking” or “Spanish-speaking”.

Secondly, it highlights the importance of place and space to the development of
identifications and to a sense of belonging to a community. Gerin-Lajoie points to the ways
in which places are tied to how people identify in her study of Anglophone teachers in
Quebec (2016). She points out that for many of them, the place where they group
influenced the way they articulated their identity. I see in many of the participants’ stories
the same importance to place and its relationship to identifications. For several of the tutors
who mentioned coming into OYS because they were not aware of the pushout rates of
Portuguese students in high school, it is significant to note that they all spoke of growing up
in places where there were not a lot of other Portuguese students, if any. The absence of
other Portuguese-speakers around them meant there was a lack of representations for who
Portuguese-speakers are.
This lack of representations leads to a perpetuation of negative stereotypes and
deficit discourses. In her narrative, Tania exemplifies this perpetuation when she lays out
why she believes Portuguese students are struggling in the system:

Because I think that, my personal opinion is that, the problem with the
Portuguese community in education, like the education problem is very
much about the parents and culturally not valuing education. I can
understand the historical reason for it, like you come here with nothing,
you go to work and you had nothing growing up. So accumulating
material security is what matters, not investing 10 years of your life and
thousands of dollars to maybe get some highfalutin job. So there’s that.
And I know, I mean, the Portuguese—there was at least one Portuguese
girl, two Portuguese girls when I was, who I went to school with whose
parents were very against them going to university.

In her story, we see the direct connection to parents and the culture as ‘not valuing
education’, and this being to blame for students’ disengagement from school. This is then
tied to a historical reasoning, which also reiterates the trope of the poor, uneducated
immigrant. In her story, she references the first arrivals into Canada, many who did arrive
from poor rural areas. However, she also mentions in her interview (referenced above) how
she saw this same problem during her student teacher placement at one of the public
schools. She references “now we’re in our third generation or fourth generation”, speaking
to generations that have been born in Canada. She therefore draws an intergenerational line
of blame, laying it on immigrant ancestors whose strife for material security has shaped the
thinking of generations to come. This kind of discursive move also points to the importance
of mobility to identifications and a sense of belonging to a community. As Gerin-Lajoie
notes, places matter to how people identify and position themselves with respect to
community (2016).

Even when faced with contradictory evidence coming from her own life story, Tania still
does not change her belief about parents’ investments in their children’s education.
Interviewer: You mentioned that your parents were very much like “you’re going to university”

Tania: Yeah, my dad. Because he didn’t have those opportunities. In fact, he’s one of 9. He was 1 of 9, he passed away when I was 17. He was 1 of 9, and the 3 youngest or the 2 youngest I should say, one is a university professor at the University of the Azores, and the other one is a bigwig at the Azorean bank. And it’s because both of them were given opportunities to go to school. My dad didn’t have those, but by all accounts, what I’ve heard from my aunts and uncles my dad was always someone that even when he was a kid, if he could have gone to school, he would have. And even just coming here I remember making fun of him for reading the dictionary and he went to English school. My mom didn’t, but my dad was in English school for as long as I can remember, for years, night classes he would go. So, I got that message. And it’s not just him though, like, my cousins, I have an engineer. My first cousins, I have two mechanical engineers, an occupational therapist, like at least my dad’s older sister, my Tia Maria, her kids got the same message from their parents: “You’re going to school- you’re going to post-secondary.”

Interviewer: So, doesn’t that strike you as a bit of a contradiction?

Tania: Yeah, like it’s almost an exception. Because I feel like almost all the other Portuguese families that I know- I feel like it’s also where you grew up, like they grew up in Brampton. My other family, that is still in Toronto, they didn’t grow up downtown. They grew up where I grew up too. (Interviewer: With the Italians) Around the Italians, yeah. And so those cousins, two of them are university educated and the third one had other issues that came up.

In her narrative, Tania frames her experience as ‘an exception’, even though it’s an experience shared by most of her family members, in Canada as well as in Portugal. She reverts to the spatial configuration of the community, attributing her family’s ‘exceptional’ circumstances to not growing up ‘downtown’. Downtown operates as a spatial signifier that encompasses the ‘other’ Portuguese community; that is the one represented by this discourse of the poor, uneducated immigrant. We see again how identities are tied to places that shape how people define themselves and how they might stereotype others (Gerin-Lajoie, 2016).
In addition, we see in her narrative a symbolic notion of ‘urban’ as a particular imagined space (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2011); which is discursively filled always already with ‘lazy’ or ‘unambitious’ bodies to be feared or ‘sheltered’ from as Polina termed it. She is able to explain her family being an exception to the stereotype of Portuguese-speaking families not being interested in education not by challenging the stereotype as inaccurate; but rather by drawing on place as an indicator of her identity formation. Brampton or ‘not downtown’ becomes the place where an identification with educated, or interested in education is able to be drawn. Downtown continues to be a signifier for the place where those who are different and should be avoided, dwell.

Luisa, who does not identify as either Portuguese or Spanish-speaking, has a similar turn of phrase when speaking about her understanding of why students from these communities are struggling. She begins with the same narrative around parents not being invested in their children’s education,

I know that and it’s, I guess it’s bad to say, but I know that in some ways that in that culture education isn’t very- it’s not, it’s not shoved down your throat pretty much so to say. It’s more like if you want to finish, finish. If not, hey there’s construction. [Laughs] You know what I mean? and I feel like I mean I kind of understand that because of a lot of my friends are Portuguese so --

Interviewer: And did they have that experience?

Luisa: Their parents didn’t really – they weren’t involved in their education at all.

At this point, her narrative mirrors the dominant narrative blaming parents for their disengagement from the children’s education. However, there is a turn when she tries to tie this narrative to the example of her Portuguese-speaking student and his parents,

So from that experience to this [student’s] experience where I know like his parents actually took initiative and brought him to a place for
homework help. So I kind of took that and thought you know what, like his parents are serious about this, I need to be serious as well.

Here she changes the way she frames Portuguese parents, instead talking about this parent as being “serious about this”, which made it imperative for her to also take her role as a tutor seriously. Given this turn in her narrative, I push back, trying to get her to see the contradiction in her narratives

Interviewer: Uh-hum. Yeah what I mean it does show some kind of– it’s kind of an interesting contradiction that there is this stereotype around Portuguese parents like not caring about education.

Luisa: It’s not that they don’t care. It’s just that they don’t understand I feel.

Once the contradiction is pointed out, Luisa accommodates by re-framing her characterization of Portuguese parents. Instead of not being invested, it is their lack of understanding that impacts their engagement in their children’s school. I ask her to elaborate more on what it is that these parents do not understand,

Interviewer: They do not understand…

Luisa: I mean they come from a different generation where you work hard, but you work hard like farming. [Laughs] I know it’s so bad to say this but I mean like that’s you know, let’s go back thirty years ago or 40 years ago when you know immigration to Canada was from overseas it gives a whole different perspective of what is education what is the value of money and you know I feel like that plays a part when you have kids. But you know, you teach your kids what you know.

In the conclusion of her narrative, Luisa ties the same historical lineage that Tania traced; going back to the first arrivals (which were more than 30-40 years go) to Canada. She also references the poor immigrant who sought financial stability (the value of money) and thus passed this on to the next generations (you teach your kids what you know); therefore making it possible to continue to lay the blame of student disengagement on parents, since they continue to reiterate what was taught to them.
We see Carolina’s story an echo of the notion mentioned above from Tania and Polina’s stories: the complex and important relationship between place and identity- and the role of transnationalism in this relationship. Both Tania and Polina are second generation Portuguese-Canadian; they were born in Canada and grew up here. Carolina, on the other hand, emigrated from Portugal when she was in her early twenties, being one of those first-generation immigrants who is talked about as not caring about her children’s education. Carolina, unsurprisingly, is as passionate about her children’s education as any other parent. She talks about being “very involved”, with her children’s school, volunteering in her children’s classrooms and helping them at home with their reading and writing. However, when she talks about Portuguese parents in general, the description is very different.

Carolina first draws on the intergenerational differences between first generation Portuguese Canadian parents (like herself) and second generation Portuguese Canadian parents: “First generation Portuguese parents are one thing and second generation Portuguese parents are another.” When elaborating on first generation parents, she herself arrives at a contradiction:

First generation Portuguese parents are generally the ones that are very dedicated to their kids’ education, but they cannot – this is a Portuguese thing, it's a Portuguese thing, culture thing. In Portugal, parents are not as involved in the kids' education as they are there. So they don't understand that, first of all.

She begins by describing these parents as very dedicated to their kids’ education, but because of the ‘culture thing’, they are not as involved. These parents ‘do not understand’ the idea of being involved in children’s education- placing this as a Canadian ‘culture thing’ that is hard for first generation parents to understand.
Continuing her description of first generation parents, she also notes that the Canadian educational system is very different from the system in Portugal. This could make it harder for parents to navigate. However, she promptly moves on to highlighting the educational level of first generation Portuguese parents, saying “most Portuguese parents first generation here come from let's say, they're not as educated.”

In her next sentence, expanding on the levels of education, there is also an indication of the temporality of immigration “so most of them hardly know how to write and read, not all of them not lately.” While making the case for the uneducated first generation immigrant, she suddenly adds that this is not the case in recent immigrants. Perhaps because she herself is a first-generation Portuguese parent, but one who holds a university degree. Her language also connotes the shifting patterns of immigration and the ways that these shifts can alter how the community is conceptualized.

Carolina resolves this apparent contradiction between her narrative of first generation parents by shifting the focus from their levels of education, to their knowledge of English and their knowledge of pedagogy, “They know how to write and read very well, but that understanding of – first, they don't understand the language some of them and that understanding process of education, how the child learns and stuff like that, they don't get it at all.”

In this way, she shifts the blame from valuing education, to understanding English or pedagogy. This allows her to resolve the contradiction of characterizing first generation parents as not being involved in their kid’s education, not being educated, when she herself is an educated first generation parent that is very involved in her kid’s education.

Carolina also has experience in talking to other Portuguese parents about how to support their children’s education through her work on OYS as well as being involved in
her own children’s school. She makes the point that for many of them, it is not a lack of care for their children’s education, but demanding jobs

   It's that they work in very hard physical work, I know that. My husband is one of them. He is a construction worker and by the time they get home, they're so tired. Their demands of the day is so much. They are just exhausted. They have no time.

She brings in her own family’s experience as a way to point to another factor that impinges on parent’s ability to be involved in the ways that schools traditionally consider parent involvement- helping with homework, volunteering at school, etc. By considering these outside influences, the blame is not on the parent or the culture, but in larger, systemic issues such as the status of hard physical labour.

This does not mean that as an educator, she does not communicate with parents about their children’s educational experiences, and try to help them advocate for their families in schools. She is careful to note, that it must be on “their own level, understand where they come from, speak the same language and try to explain to them, see in Portugal are the way we used to do it is this way, but here, they want it this way.” Without being condescending or admonishing them, she tells parents what their children are struggling with in their sessions, and how best to approach this with teachers at school.

Finally, she explains that engaging with parents this way, she can see that Portuguese parents, “more even than Canadian parents, education is very important. They will leave everything else. They will pay for tutors if they have to. They want their kids to learn.” Completely upending her initial characterization of Portuguese parents as not being involved with their children’s education. By posing it as a communication issue, parents are positioned as caring ‘even more than Canadian parents’, which is understood to be the standard against which Portuguese parents are found to be lacking.
It is clear from the explanations of various tutors that their understanding of the challenges faced by the Spanish/Portuguese-speaking communities are influenced by dominant discourses of parental disengagement and lack of valuing of education at home. It is particularly troubling that community members themselves have internalized these discourses, even though their personal experience and that of their peers directly contradicts the myths that parents in these communities do not care about their children’s education. Instead, their experiences bear out what much of the literature says, such as that providing education and a ‘better life’ for their children are primary reasons for immigration and that students often cite their families as a reason to remain in school (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008; Valenzuela, 1999). This creates a paradox for the program, as one of its goals is to change beliefs in the schools about families from these communities—including this myth that parents do not care about their children’s education.

By failing to bring in an explicit critical systemic analysis of the ways in which students and their families are marginalized within the public school system, the program falls into the trap of reiterating deficiency discourses about the same communities it aims to serve. This is consistent with much of the literature that calls for more critical discourses that shift the blame away from individuals (students, parents) and instead focus on the systemic issues that position these families at the margins (Baca Zinn, 1995; Dei, 1996; Delgado Bernal, 1998; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2007; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001).

One way in which this could be tackled could be by providing a tutor orientation that focused on the dominant discourses around the community and how the program aims to challenge and/or change these. Currently, tutor training is focused the academic teaching of literacy and math, with a short orientation on the history of the program and the tutors’
roles and responsibilities. These trainings are necessary and beneficial for tutors, especially those who do not have experience in formal tutoring contexts. They are also cited by tutors as a ‘perk’ of tutoring for OYS since they are free and offered throughout the year. Having a dedicated training session around issues of privilege, stereotyping and systemic discrimination, and how these impact student attrition could help volunteers be on the ‘same page’ as the program in regards to these discourses.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced the way in which ‘community’ is articulated as an important part of participants’ experiences in OYS. As a program that was started by and for members of the Portuguese community and was opened up to members of the Spanish-speaking community; it has retained a grounding in the needs of families to dictate how the program is run. Because of this commitment to both communities, the program manages to create a space for parents in particular to create counter narratives about their families. Specifically around the parents’ involvement and interest in their children's education.

This creation is an important part of the way in which OYS strives to change the perception about the community that is held by schools. However, we see through the narratives of some of the volunteers that the program inadvertently does not make the tutors a part of this conversation. Therefore, many of the deficit discourses that are applied to Spanish/Portuguese speaking descent students are reiterated by tutors, many who belong to these communities as well. The program is then caught in a paradox where its volunteers hold many of the same retrograde views that the program is ostensibly fighting to change. Given the program’s mandate and the history of the community centre in which it is housed, this kind of deficit thinking is antithetical to what the program is trying to do.
While this tension was surprising to hear, it falls within the program’s mandate and methodology to work with tutors on better training, creating spaces to unpack the assumptions that many of them arrive with. OYS has already worked on creating these kinds of spaces for parents, through its workshops series focused on answering the questions that parents voiced about the education system and schools. By centering the families’ needs in its planning and design, OYS manages to occupy a bridging space between the communities it works with and the school system in Toronto. It can modify its plan to respond to the families’ changing needs, while continuing to work to build the social capital of the community. In doing so, it builds the capacity of parents to access spaces they were not able to before in schools and within school governance, to make the systemic change that would make a difference to the communities at large.
Chapter 7-Trust in Relationships

The classroom where half of the high school students work with their tutor mentors is bright and sunny. The whole back wall is lined with east facing windows that overlook an empty lot and a green field behind it. In this spring Saturday morning, the windows are letting in all of the sunshine, also raising the temperature noticeably. I sit with Tania and her students, Lisa and Anne Marie. The three of them are sitting in a row, with Tania in between her students, and I sit in a chair to the side, facing them as they talk. When I first arrive, they are already sitting down and are talking about their week. Anne Marie is finishing describing what she did in her classes and what assignment she will be working on during this session. She speaks confidently and at ease, looking comfortable in this tutoring classroom and with her group. Her calm demeanor is a contrast to Lisa, who shifts in her seat continuously and moves her hands animatedly when she speaks. She begins by talking about her classes, but then shifts to some “drama” that had happened with her friend, “remember how I told you about her?” and how this had upset her. Tania and Anne Marie listen quietly to her story, and Tania tries to redirect her to the assignment she will be working on that day.

After more discussion about their week, both students are ready to work. Lisa’s assignment is to write a persuasive essay. The topic she has chosen is about abortion, and her position is to persuade the reader that abortion should be illegal, but she does not know where to start. Tania goes over some general essay structure and then agrees to help her come up with her persuasive points by having some debate about the topic. Both Tania and Anne Marie then help Lisa strengthen her arguments by posing counterarguments to those she has listed, engaging in a respectful discussion about a sensitive topic. As I listen and
look at their discussion, I am surprised by the openness that Lisa demonstrates in voicing her opinions, even when she is frustrated that she cannot find responses to her peers’ counterarguments. The group of three has an animated conversation, but there is never judgment or condescendence in anyone’s tone. When I later talk to them in their interviews, they all point to this as an example of how they feel comfortable “talking about anything”.

Within the context of Our Youth Success, at the intersection of identity and community, lies the relationships that are built in the program. These trusting relationships are the main component of OYS, and they are the reason that the program is successful in keeping its students and tutors; and in the students succeeding academically. When I first began this project, I thought that the identity piece would be a more salient feature of how participants articulated their experiences of OYS. Due to the program’s focus on cultural/linguistic identity in its recruitment and throughout its documents, it would seem logical that this would also be prominent in the participants’ narratives about the program.

Throughout my conversations with tutors, parents and students, it became clear that what matters most to the volunteers and the students they work with is the relationships they get to build with each other. While tutors who identify as Spanish/Portuguese-speaking descent see this as a prominent part of the work they do, it continues to be the relationships they build with their students that are the centerpiece of their experience at OYS. As tutor John put it, the importance of the program was to “give these kids more help. Chance to connect with somebody. I don’t know if the fact that it’s a Portuguese/Spanish community thing really helps all that much. Maybe for some it does, for some it doesn’t.” This is not very surprising, given that OYS also has a focus on mentoring in their mandate, and sees the program as more than an academic support program for their students.
It is also not very surprising to hear about the importance of relationships when thinking about the literature on relationships and education (i.e., Noddings, 1988; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999; Epstein, 2000; Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Witmer, 2005). We know that both positive and negative relationships are important and have an impact in students’ educational experiences (whether in schools or not). More importantly, we also know that positive relationships have the capacity to undo some of the harm inflicted by negative relationships. In part, this is where OYS’s focus on mentoring is important. The idea of expanding support beyond academics is driven by the many negative experiences that marginalized youth have in formal school settings. Community based education projects like OYS have the capacity to provide a balm against the deleterious effects of these harmful relationships. This is true for both students and their families, who in this case also benefit from positive relationships with the program.

In speaking to students, parents and tutor mentors, it became apparent that the relationships built in the program are integral to its structure. As one parent put it, “they work well together. Victoria [is not] not just a tutor, but also a mentor. […] I think it's one of the reasons for the success of the [program] is actually the relationship between the student and the tutor.” Tutors and students described this sentiment as they cited their relationships with each other as one of the main reasons for continuing with the program.

The importance of these relationships is that they are based on authentic caring (Noddings, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999). Tutor mentors see their students as complete human beings with cultural and community-based knowledge, and students feel validated and reaffirmed by their tutor mentors. Students and tutor mentors speak of the importance of their attachment to each other in their experience of the program. In particular, the way in which this sense of attachment facilitates teaching and learning in their sessions.
As was pointed out by the parent quoted above, more than tutoring, the volunteers in the program mentor their students. Another characteristic that was often mentioned by both students and their tutor mentors was that their conversations often went beyond academics to encompass life after high school and life outside of school. This choice to open up and share more intimate details about their personal lives demonstrates the trust that is integral in these relationships. This trust and personal connection is what both volunteers and students point to as the most important part of their experience with the program.

For many students, being able to have these conversations with their tutor mentor was a part of what made a ‘good tutor’. Volunteers were constructed as good tutors by being ‘authentic’, talking to their students about their lives and giving them advice when solicited. For the volunteers, developing these personal connections was facilitated by seeing much of themselves in their students. This connection prompted tutor mentors to want to share their experience with their students and advocate for their success. The relationship that developed was the reason most of the volunteers and students interviewed stayed with the program for many years.

**Continued participation through relationships**

*Keeps tutors coming back to the program*

John was involved with the program on and off for a few years. While he was not interested in pursuing a career in education, he was quick to identify what he found the most rewarding about being a volunteer, “oh the mentorship connection, relationship”. The idea that he was able to give his students “guidance” and “perspective” made him stay to work with his students. Volunteers felt they had experience that could benefit the students and help guide them in their post-secondary career paths.
For Tania, the reason that she has continued in the program for six years is simply her students, particularly because of the relationship she has developed with her students for the past five years. She mentions how every year there is a conversation about coming back with her students, they’re like “You need to come back!” I want to do it, I mean I want to keep working with the program because I still very much believe in what it does. But certainly, if not for them- because my schedule is so manic- I probably would have stepped back from it but they’ve kept me going with it.

Although she herself is dealing with major life changes, as she shared in her interview, she finds continuing to work with Lisa and Anne Marie is a priority for her; because of the investment into their relationship. So much so that she would have left the program had it not been for her students.

Felipe articulates his reason for continuing with the program as “being able to make that difference in [the students’] lives.” He knows that all the students he worked with, even if they eventually left the program, “at least I helped them”. He points to improved self-confidence, better grades and even better relationships with their parents as results he saw in his students. In his story about a particular student, we see how he positions himself as the mediator between the student, their family and his school:

I remember Milton. He was having troubles in English because he wasn’t understanding sentence structure. So the teacher was telling the mom that he doesn’t get it, while it was [that] he wasn’t understanding the teacher. There was a whole communication error, but the teacher was just like ‘I’m explaining it to him, he’s not getting it’. It’s like, no, you explain it to him a certain way, maybe his brain doesn’t think that way. Try and bring it down a different way. He was educated in Portugal and then he comes here, the sentences are all backwards. So he’s just like, ‘I don’t know how to do this’. Ok, there’s a problem right there. Let’s help the kid out. You can’t just go tell the mom, ‘your kid’s not paying attention, he doesn’t get it’. There’s more to it, right. And
then the kid can’t tell his mom ‘yeah, the teacher’s crazy’ because you can’t tell that to your parents. Your parents are going to trust them over you, right? Most parents are gonna listen to [the teacher] and not a little kid, like ‘oh, he’s lying’. Like the average parent. So at least, I used to see a lot of relationships get better in that way.

In Felipe’s narrative we see how he was able to use his position as an outsider to the school system to see where the miscommunication was happening, and how what a teacher may say about the students’ challenges can be taken up by parents. We also see how his own knowledge of the students’ history (educated in Portugal) came into play when thinking about how to work with him (His brain doesn’t think that way. Try and bring it down a different way. The sentences are backwards). He finishes the story by pointing out that this was not an isolated case, but that he saw “a lot of relationships get better in that way”; highlighting the importance of these relationships not only to students, but also to the whole family.

The students themselves also point to the relationships in the program as reasons to continue attending. Anne Marie has been participating in Our Youth Success for seven years, and she says, “they’re really friendly too so that helps a lot. I feel comfortable there. […] It’s like I just belong there. It’s not like you feel weird walking because everyone’s watching you. And I’ve gotten to know people.” While she attends the program for help with English, it isn’t this academic help that motivates her to wake up early every Saturday morning. Rather, it is the ‘friendliness’ of the program, the relationships with her tutor and other students that make her feel comfortable, have a sense of belongingness in the space.

Similarly, Anastasia cites “I like the people who work there so I keep coming back every year”. Another peer in her tutoring group, Kevin, has been working with her for 4 years. He points out that “going back, my mom kind of makes me”, but says that “at the
same time, I don’t mind because I get to talk to people and stuff”. When asked specifically what he means by “talking to people”, he points to Anastasia and Victoria, meaning talking to his tutor mentor and peer. For students who began when they were young, which is the majority of the high school students who are in OYS, their parents were mostly responsible for them beginning in the program. However, as Kevin points out, the relationships developed in the program motivate them to continue to attend even once they are old enough to come and go on their own (as Kevin does himself every Saturday). His group peer Anastasia agrees on “the people who work there” as a motivating factor to attend year after year.

Like Kevin, Lisa also points to her peer group when discussing the people that make it worth coming back. “I like going [to the program]. It’s fun. We all know each other really well, I like seeing Anne Marie”. In her narrative, we also see an important component of these relationships. Beyond ‘liking’ the people they work with, her story points to why these relationships are meaningful “we all know each other really well”. There is an element of personal familiarity and intimacy that is important to the experiences of these relationships within the tutoring context.

**Relationality**

*Affective relationships*

Working together for an extended period of time, as most volunteers and students do, means that both tutor mentors and students develop an attachment for each other, the basis of the authentic caring pedagogical relationships that characterize Our Youth Success (Valenzuela, 1999). Amelie laughs self-deprecatingly as she explains why she feels that she “takes care” of her students “that’s a little pretentious of me saying I would be the best tutor
for them [laughs] because I think mostly if I’ve been working with them for a long time and I know them. I know what they’re like and I have my routine”. This can sometimes lead tutors to worry about what would happen if they cannot continue in the program, such as when they graduate.

if [other] tutors are taking my place, I want [the students] to have a good session too. Not to feel frustrated and not to feel like, I guess, I abandoned them. And that’s what I’m also worried about because I’m finishing my Ph.D. and I’m thinking “oh my God, I don’t know if I’m going be in Toronto next year.

In Amelie’s expression of concern for her students, we see how she positions her relationships with students as important to the sessions- not wanting them to feel “abandoned” because she might not be there with them. This kind of concern reinforces the idea that it does matter how the student and educator relate to each other; that in order to have a ‘good’ session, this kind of care must be present within the pedagogical space.

Perhaps Amelie’s concerns about her students are not completely unfounded. When Anastasia was not matched with her usual tutor because of an oversight, she felt disappointed even though she still got the help she needed with her academic subjects. Kevin, who is in the same tutoring group, was also disappointed, “I liked coming in on Saturdays and being comfortable with talking to my tutor and Anastasia”. Even though they got help with their academic subject, they both missed the other aspect of their relationship with Victoria, Anastasia says

“[the other tutor] was an older woman so I couldn’t really talk to them. It was like she was just there for Math and nothing else in a way. It was still helpful but it was different. It wasn’t as comfortable. […] Because she’s older and she was a bit more focused on just helping with Math. That was like — We don’t talk about anything else.”

Similarly, Amelie has also seen the attachment that her students have for her,
One time I was late and when you’re late, they pair you with another tutor. So they put Daniela with another tutor and put my other kid with another tutor and I arrived and they asked her if she wanted to see the other tutor and she said “no,” she just took her stuff and ran out of there, which I felt bad for the other tutor, but it was good, because as yet, she’s attached to me and that also makes me sure that if I miss a day that somebody is going to be there to take care of them the way I would do it somehow and make sure they are comfortable. So I get that positive feedback from them and Christmas she wrote me a card and gave me a gift, which is nice. You don’t expect that, but it’s nice. Valentine’s Day she gives me a card or Easter she gave me chocolates. So you really get this feedback from the kids, which is nice, which sometimes adults won’t give you feedback.

Since her students are younger (in grade 4), Amelie feels they give her feedback on how much they care for her and enjoy her sessions by preferring to work with her over another tutor. This feedback also helps to solidify the attachment she feels towards them, as it also makes her feel responsible for their experience. I posit that what Amelie refers to as feedback: the students’ preference for her, the small gifts or cards that she received from her- are the material enactments of the cariño that characterizes the relationships that tutor mentors develop with their students in OYS, and which I will elaborate more in later in this chapter. However, it is important to note here how not sharing a linguistic or cultural identification does not inhibit these relationships from forming. Bartolomé points out in her research of authentic cariño and ideologies of love, teachers do not necessarily have to belong to students’ same cultural group to be effective teachers of minority students (2008).

Tutor mentors can also feel that disappointment when they are unable to work with ‘their’ students. Due to an email server error, Victoria had not received the email asking tutors if they wanted to come back for next year. When she realized it was already October and she had not heard back from the program, she emailed the program coordinator and was told the program had already started. “I was like “can I work with Jake and Catarina again?” and she was like “they’ve already been placed with other people” and I was like
“nooooooo!” She still wanted to be involved, so she agreed to tutor other students, in younger grades. After the first semester, they were able to pair her with another high school student, and then there were a couple of changes

then Kevin’s tutor had to leave the program, they’re like “oh can you work with Jake again?” I was like “yes I can!” And then it was right at the turn of the semester Catarina had another tutor, and I was like “hey Catarina!” and she was like “hiiii”. And then the semester was done and I was chit chatting with her, so how’s it going, oh you have math, how’s that going? and she was like “yeah but my tutor only really does math so I don’t know what’s going to happen next semester, because I don’t have math and my tutor only really does math” and I was like ooooh, okay. You know what, let me email Mireya. So I emailed her, saying Catarina said this, and I’m just wondering if she’s just saying it, but she’s more than welcome to work with my group, you know. I totally would love that. and then Mireya was like “yeah, for sure” and I was like aaaaaaww! I have my kids back! So that was so great, I was like yes my kids are back working with me! and honestly, I was so sad, the attachment you form with the students is crazy.

It is this attachment that keeps tutors like Amelie coming back, year after year, “I actually got attached to my students and I like the program.” Because of this connections with their students, she feels “very protective and I get that feeling back from them, every Saturday […] I enjoy coming on Saturday, it’s not work.” Amelie’s statement gestures to how this attachment is bidirectional, where she gets “that feeling back from them”.

Lisa’s characterization of her relationship with Tania echoes this bidirectionality, “She’s in between motherly and older sisterly. […] She gives so much advice what a sister would say or what a mom would say.” “That’s why I — I don’t like her. I actually love her because she’s awesome. If I could stay until the program until I finish school, no matter how many years of school I do, I want her to be there. I don’t want to change tutors.” Tania also described their relationship in this familial tone, “I remember our first year together-and now I know their personalities quite well- so they would nip at each other, but it was
never anything bad. It actually added to this whole familial kind of feel about it. I became
the big sister and like the two little sisters.”

Part of the attachment that the tutor mentors cite when describing their students
comes from seeing them develop and grow through their time together. Amelie describes
one student she has been working with for 2 years,

So I’d been working with her that whole year and she is very ... at that
time she was very shy, and compared to the other students she was not
as great in English and hated math. She doesn’t like math, but she was
very kept together, but then once we were in the group she just started
opening up. [...] Every year she’s here and so I stayed her tutor until
now. So I know her and she knows me. [...] So Daniela knows my
routine. She knows we come here, she has to do some work and then
after that we can play. It’s fun, because I got to know her and she’s a
very fun person. Once she’s in a group, she talks a lot. So that’s why
it’s not work for me because I know and I think now she’s more
comfortable than the first year and I also know the parents, so it’s
different, because now I want to do a good job, because I want her to
get as much from the session, because I don’t think that they would
bring her here on Saturdays if they didn’t care about her succeeding.

Similarly, Victoria describes seeing the development of her student Anastasia
through the years as a manifestation her attachment with her student. They have been
working together for 4 years at the time of her interview, through all of middle school and
into high school.

So Catarina, I started- I think she was in grade 6 when I started working
with her. She’s in grade 10 now. And just like the development and
change I’ve seen in her, I... Especially this year, I’ve- some of the
answers that come out of her mouth I’m like.. Wow! You’re going- like
you’re going to be all right, kid. You are turning into a great human.
Wow!

Her surprise at listening to her students’ thinking and her enthusiasm are evident in her
story about her student giving her opinion on the debate around the new sexual education
curriculum that was released in Ontario.
She said “I know of too many instances where the girls are getting involved with guys that treat them like garbage and they don’t respect their bodies and they also need to be taught about consent.” and I was like “…. is anyone else hearing this? oh my god, yes! yes! absolutely!

She elaborates on how seeing the change from a “shy little timid girl”, who is “evolving into a young, intellectual”, has been a “beautiful” experience. It is the time that they have spent together that has allowed for this longitudinal appreciation, seeing a young person change and evolve into “their own being”.

**Authentic caring relationships**

The intimacy and personal investment that is evidenced by the narratives of both tutor mentor and student speak to the kind of relationships that develop in Our Youth Success. They are characterized by mutual respect, high expectations and affective attachments; what Valenzuela (1999) termed *authentic* caring relationships. These caring relationships and the benefits to low-income, racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students have been documented in the literature (i.e. Beauboeuf Lafontant, 2002; Noddings, 1984; Rolón-Dow, 2005; Bartolomé, 2008; Thompson, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999) Victoria demonstrates part of this kind of relationship when she articulates why caring for her students is important

It’s important to care because you’re working with human beings that are going to grow up and have their- they’re relying on you, you’re advocating for them. You’re there to help them out because they need the extra support. You’re not their teacher, you’re not their parent. I always tell them, when they’re acting up, you know what guys, I don’t have to be here. I have all of this, I have high school, I have university. I have a job. I don’t have to be here. I don’t even get paid for this. But I do it because I care about you guys. Because I want to see you guys do well. Because the last time we need in this world is to have more youth getting high on the streets, getting involved with the wrong crowd or just having a new generation of people who don’t care. Or think that people don’t care about them. Because I care, I care about you I want you to do well. That’s the only reason I’m here, that’s why I come back Saturday after Saturday, year after year. because I care about you guys, because I want you to do well, I want you to excel and exceed.
In her narrative, we see a few different discourses that are relevant to the way in which she engages her students, and which point to the importance of relationships and *cariño* as laid out by LTF scholars (i.e., Valenzuela, 1999; Bartolome, 2008). Firstly, we have the positionality of the tutor mentor as neither teacher nor parent- that is, they have a unique vantage point in youth’s lives. While they may help them with academic work, they do not have the same connotation or relationship that students may have with their teacher. This is further cemented by her indication “I don’t even get paid for this”, a nod to her volunteer status, and differentiation from a teacher, who is carrying out paid work. It speaks to her desire to be with the students, and to engage with them in a reciprocal relationship. Noddings (1988) describe this kind of reciprocal relationship as the basis for all learning.

Secondly, there is a gesture towards the discourse of at-risk youth who might be “getting high on the streets, getting involved with the wrong crowd” if it was not for the program which keeps them ‘inside’ and ‘safe’. She then brings it back to the affect aspect of their relationship, pointing to the danger of having a generation of people who do not care, and instead clarifying that the only reason she “comes back Saturday after Saturday, year after year” is because of the care that she feels for her students. She also mentions the high expectations that she holds of her students, “I want you to excel and exceed”. This combination of affect and high expectations exemplify the kind of authentic caring that Valenzuela (1999) advocates is beneficial for marginalized students. This kind of *educación* is based on caring and respectful relationships; one where educators (or tutor mentors) both respect and are moved to fulfill the needs of their students as individuals in order for them to succeed.
Estela’s articulation of how she sees the importance of the program also nods towards the positionality of tutors as someone who is ‘outside’ of the parents or teacher role and how this might help better support the students.

I would tell my students, I’m here for you. These hours are set aside for you from my life for you. If you want anything, I won’t tell your mom or dad or I won’t tell your teachers. This is for me and you. We can talk things through and we can work things through. That’s what I’m here for, to help you.

The ‘outside’ perspective afforded by her position outside of the school and the family provided her with a unique way to support her students. It allowed them to confide in her without the fear of repercussions in their grades or with their parents. In her experience, this would motivate her students to work harder or be “more open to accepting the help” that she was there to provide.

Joao adds that this might be due to their closeness in age with their students. As most volunteers are university students themselves, or have recently graduated university, they are only a few years older than their high school students are. He finds that the reason his students often want to confide in him about their lives is because they want to feel basically contextualized. So that would mean that they might have an idea of this issue that they are discussing with you already built in their mind. But they want to revalidate it with someone that is close to their age group. So me being ... I’m a bit older, but not that much older .... [Interviewer: not as old as their parents.] Yeah. So kind of giving them a perspective of whether what they think is kind of in the ballpark of what it should be or what it normally would be rather than just seeming what they think might be correct and making a decision based on that. It might not be the best decision, so it’s like getting a second opinion, right? And each similarity makes it more easy for that to happen, for them to seek out the opinion specifically from me, rather than say their parents or someone else.

Joao sees this perspective that he is able to provide, this ‘second opinion’ as a valuable part of his role as a tutor mentor. He gives students a means to feel ‘contextualized’; and
validate their opinions or thoughts with someone else. Because of their position as an older peer mentor for students means often times their conversations go beyond academics, to include personal stories or dilemmas.

Anastasia articulates her favorite part of being a student in OYS, “being there in a way and just talking because the thing is, I don’t only talk about work. We talk about other things like things that are going on around the world. We talk about our opinions”. This is significant for her because it stands in contrast to her experience in school, where “you don’t really get to do that as much”. In her tutoring sessions, she is able to talk about her opinions without being dismissed as “a kid, a student, like you don’t know much”. She elaborates how the kind of relationships she has with her tutor means she “get[s] to talk and be heard.” This extends beyond academic subjects, to encompass current social and political events,

Even social issues like things that we feel, our opinions on some things. [My tutor] makes you feel like your opinion’s valid. It’s not like you’re just a kid and don’t know any better, she actually listens so I like that about her.

Her co-student, Kevin also points to why he prefers his tutoring sessions to his teachers (“I don’t like teachers all that much”). He describes how in their sessions, when Victoria does not know the answer to a particular question she is honest with him and tells him so; and they will google it together to try and find the right answer. “So it’s kind of like in a way I’m not alone here but she’ll help me figure it out. She’s not like ‘I don’t know the answer, I’m not going to help.’ She actually tries to help and search it.” His response highlights the way that his relationship with his tutor makes him feel supported (not alone) even when academically she might not be able to provide straightforward help. Lisa also speaks to this honesty when she describes what she likes about her tutor as the way she is “authentic”. 
“She presents herself as a real person. She’s not just there like ‘Yeah. We’re going to do this and you’re going to be done and we’re going to get out.’ She’s real. She’s not fake.” This kind of honesty, where students see their tutors as ‘real people’ encourages the kind of relationship where they don’t feel ‘forced’ to do something, even when it is not their favorite activity. For example, Lisa and Anne Marie have a reading club with their tutor, even though they both “hate reading”. This reticence to read was ameliorated by the positive relationship they have with their tutor, where they do not feel that she is imposing something on them for the sake of doing it, “she’s being her true self with us and being fun instead of forcing us to do something.” Lisa’s description of her tutor mentor exemplifies the kind of authenticity that is necessary in these caring pedagogical relationships (Valenzuela, 1999). By perceiving Tania as being ‘her true self’ and not ‘forcing them’ to do something, Lisa describes the respect and caring that ensue when students are not objectified but rather treated humanely and ethically (i.e. Noddings, 1988).

Anastasia also differentiates between her teachers and her tutor in adding how the volunteering element changes the motivation for their presence, “they’re simply there to help you and they’re volunteering so it’s not like they’re obligated to do. They actually help because they want to so that’s great […] That makes it better because sometimes teachers, it’s like they’re helping you sometimes— Some teachers don’t do that.” The fact that their tutor mentors are volunteers lends credibility to the idea that they are doing this because they genuinely care about their students. Lisa mentions this when she explains that Tania “If she could stay the whole program, if she could, she would. She likes doing it even though she’s not getting paid for it. She’s volunteering to do it. That’s what she likes.” In her case, this makes her feel like she can “rely” on her tutor, because her motivation for
being there is intrinsic, it’s ‘what she likes’. This attribution to their mentors’ intentionality is part of what they enjoy about coming to OYS.

In addition, in Lisa’s description of why OYS is such a ‘good environment’, she also highlights the lack of judgment or critique. “They’re all there to help you. You know that they’re there to help you instead of criticizing you.” In her tutoring group, they begin by sharing how their week went “[the tutor will ask] ‘How was your week?’ and I’ll tell her. She gives her opinion on it and Anne Marie gives her opinion on it and I’m like ‘Okay.’ She doesn’t judge me. She’s not judgmental at all.”

She likens it to an experience in her English class where the teacher had them do peer editing of each other’s work, which she found helpful as she knew that people understood her mistakes because they made them too in their own work. Reminiscent of Kevin’s sentiment of not feeling alone, “it’s like ‘You do that too’ kind of thing”. She gestures to how this culture of non-judgement is not reserved for her individual group, but is instead something that characterizes the program as a whole. “They’re all going to help you no matter who they are even though they’re not your specific tutor.” In the case that her own tutor is not there, or she needs help with something that her tutor cannot help her in, she feels like “I know that I can go up and ask because they’re not there to criticize me.” This kind of environment makes her feel supported and understood; fostering the kind of trust that is integral to authentic caring pedagogical relationships.

*Bi-directionality of relationships*

Tania sees that deepening, or opening up of their relationships to each other as the biggest change over the 5 years they have worked together.

we meet together and it’s like.. It’s about the schoolwork, but it’s about the bonding that happens. What’s happened is, they look up to me, I
know they do. There’s a sense of responsibility with that, and also pride I guess? They come and they want to share what their week was like, their success and their—so there’s very much like a... it’s much more of a mentor relationship now. A personal mentoring relationship, than necessarily school. The schoolwork happens, but it’s mostly about that. [...] That has also I think fostered deeper intimacy with our relationship.

This kind of intimacy is developed by both students and mentors sharing about their lives, as Lisa describes how talking about her tutor’s personal life has helped her get to know her better “She was really insecure about it but we were telling her ‘If you want to talk — I know you’re in your thirties. That doesn’t mean you still don’t need anyone to talk to, but even though we’re younger than you, it doesn’t mean we can’t give our opinions on it or judge you because obviously, we’re not.’” This extends to professional life, when their tutor, who had finished her teacher certification was considering leaving the profession, “I was like ‘You wanted to be a teacher for so long. If that’s what you love to do, you shouldn’t give up on it.’” Her narrative shows the ways in which these relationships are not unidirectional, but are pedagogical supportive relationships that affect both students and tutor mentors; where both parties do the teaching and learning. As Lisa summarizes it, “We help her and she helps us. I love the relationship.”

Sharing about their personal lives also means that students feel supported in more than one way. For example, Lisa describes trusting her tutor mentor allows her to share if there is a situation that she is dealing with outside of school,

I could trust her and I’ll tell her what’s going on and if I say that my parents are fighting and I hear it all the time, she’d be there like ‘If something happens, let me know. Just call me even if I don’t answer the phone because I’m at work, call me either way because that does not mean that I’m not going to talk to you. It may take me a while to call back to you but just let me know anyway.’
Of course, this kind of close relationship also has its challenges. Particularly when the relationship is first characterized by the academic support that tutor mentors are giving during their sessions every week. Tania describes how growing this personal relationship to be the centerpiece of what they do each week, rather than the tutoring itself, sometimes concerns her,

> Sometimes I feel that I leave a session and especially with Kelly I feel that I didn’t help her do any work. I feel that maybe I’m failing a little bit as a tutor, that I should have helped her with something very direct and specific. But yeah, that’s the only thing. Sometimes I’ve got that in the back of my head.

It is interesting that in her narrative, Tania describes this personal connection as something that might be causing her to ‘fail’ as a tutor; because there isn’t something ‘direct and specific’, which can be read as academic, that she helped her student with that day. It is ironic that she considers this as a “little bit” of a failure, since it is precisely this kind of connection that students, especially her student, cite as so important to their participation in the program. When Lisa elaborates on why she trusts Tania so much, it is because she knows “so much about her than any other tutor that I’ve ever had. We have this connection.” It is that connection which makes her trust that Tania is there for her, “I can actually count on her tutoring me and not just leaving and be unexpected like ‘Hey. Guess what? Yeah. I’m leaving.’” Therefore while Tania sometimes feels like she is not being a ‘good’ tutor by not addressing the academic support, it is actually the time spent on the personal relationships that make the tutoring sessions better. In part, through facilitating the teaching and learning that takes place.

*These relationships make learning easier*
In thinking about their experience in Our Youth Success, students pointed out how the relationships they had with their tutor mentors made a difference in their learning, and sometimes beyond. In part, this was due to the time that pairs spent together, which led to students being more comfortable around their tutor mentors and opening up to ask more questions instead of letting their initial shyness get in the way. Kevin when remembering his experiences with OYS, recalls that the first month or two he felt “kind of nervous, shy even”. However, after he started opening up, now he is comfortably with “asking any question if I ever have any”. This is a significant change, as it is the repeated exposure and familiarity with Victoria that leads him to feel comfortable enough to ask questions that will clarify his learning. In the case of more traditional tutoring programs, set up as ‘drop-ins’ do not allow for this kind of development to take place (Brufee, 1980). Furthermore, Kevin has found that this has helped him not only in asking questions at the tutoring session, but even outside of it. As he has gotten more comfortable with inquiring and discussing problems with Victoria, this has given him the confidence to “ask better questions when you go to your teacher after class.” There is a direct relationship then between his development and growth in the tutoring sessions and his schooling experience. Growing his confidence during his OYS sessions, engaging in scholarly discussions, has enabled him to ask better, more complex questions to his teachers at school.

Similarly, Lisa gives her reasoning for why having this time to develop a relationship with your tutor is important to her,

I like to know my tutor and I like the fact that the tutor gets to know me. You feel more comfortable with them. That’s the thing that’s really important is building a relationship with somebody. It doesn’t have to be anything big. You have to — If someone’s teaching you, don’t you want to feel comfortable around your students for them to teach you or you teaching them? Because the student teaches the teachers too. It’s not just the other way around.
Her question poses both students and educators as teaching each other, pointing again to the importance of multi directionality in the pedagogical relationship. Part of the reason why that relationship is important is mentioned in the beginning of her statement, “you feel more comfortable with them”. As Kevin’s story also evidenced, this comfort aides in the learning both in and outside of the sessions. The other part of how the relationship enhances the teaching and learning that happens in these sessions is because tutor mentors are able to differentiate their instruction to meet their specific students’ needs.

Using the knowledge they have gained through years of interactions, tutor mentors can devise strategies that will capitalize on their students’ strengths. Lisa explains how her tutor mentor is really good with creating different strategies with different people and how they learn. Because I have a learning disability, and with me, I’m very social like I can talk my way into an essay or report instead of me writing it. She comes up with various strategies and how to work with different people like me and Anne Marie. We both have different learning disabilities.

While this level of differentiated instructions is impossible to maintain in a regular classroom due to the larger student population, the small groups in tutoring are an ideal environment for the level of differentiated instruction that really benefits student learning. This is particularly true for students such as Lisa and Anne Marie who have learning disabilities and as such already learn in a different way than is usually taught in regular classrooms.

As Anne Marie explains, “since she knows how I am, she knows a better way to teach me like if I’m not understanding something, she knows how to teach me instead of just ‘This is the way you have to do.’ And that’s it.” In contrast to other schooling experiences she has had, Tania’s knowledge of her, the way she thinks and her personality;
give Tania an advantage to personalize Anne Marie’s learning. It also means that she can “push more”, during their sessions, because of their relationship the tutor mentor knows what areas need to be worked on, and how far she can “push” her student.

Carolina explains how having that time to work on the relationship with the student “makes [her] work a lot easier, and it’s much better for the student.” The time working together means that “they know me, I know them and they trust me already and I trust “[them].” Similarly to the way that Anne Marie phrases it, Carolina knows how far she can “push” and when to do so. Developing this trust also allows Carolina to deal with any problem behaviours.

if the behavior starts to escalate and like I don't want to do this and then do that, if they have a trust, a very good trust with you, if you get a little bit cross and you cross the thing, that you know that's not appropriate. You know you have to do this though very much easier to do it because they trust you. They have that relationship with you.

Building these relationships is also the bulk of the work that tutor/mentors do when beginning to work with a student. Polina notes that in the beginning of the tutoring relationship, there can be a lot of pressure for both parties, “they’re coming and they have pressure from their parents from their teachers to get their grades up or whatever. And then there’s pressure on me to make sure that they’re doing that”. As she notes, however, her role often goes beyond just raising a students’ marks “not so much that they’re just doing the work but that they’re actually understanding it and that it’s giving them a bit more a positive outlook on school.” As part of that relationships building, it is the changing in attitudes, shifting from a negative outlook on schooling brought on by negative experiences, to a positive one. Highlighting the complexity of this work, she adds, “so it does take a lot of time.” This is in part the reason that volunteers and students are often paired up for more than a year together, if possible.
Program coordinators acknowledge the importance of a successful pairing, “it makes such a difference when you match the student with the right tutor. The work these tutors do… [sigh] it’s amazing. You see a kid completely change” (Joana). Elena remarks on a particular student she still remembers, “ese muchacho, cuando llego al programa, tenía tantos problemas! No quería hacer su trabajo, no le hacía caso a nadie. Ya la mamá no sabía que hacer... Lo pusimos con una tutora, ¡y de repente- zan! No fue un cambio de la noche a la mañana, no. Pero en un año ella logró que él se pusiera a trabajar. La tutora le tenía mucho cariño, y estuvieron juntos por varios años hasta que Miguel se graduó. Esa historia fue muy bonita.” [“That boy, when he arrived to the program, he had so many issues! He didn’t want to do his work, he didn’t listen to anyone. His mom didn’t know what to do anymore. We put him with a tutor, and all of a sudden- bam! It didn’t happen from one day to the next, no. But she [the tutor] managed to get him to work. She cared for him a lot, and they were together a few years until he graduated. That story was very beautiful”] In Elena’s story we see again the elements of these caring relationships, where tutors and students hold respect and appreciation for each other, allowing for a more productive learning relationship.

When describing how the relationship with students develops, Carolina affirms that the first sessions are often the hardest. She clarifies that this has nothing to do with the amount or content of academic work that is done, but “it's in the sense that you're still trying to discover how you should treat the child as a personality and behavior is, how the child learns, their different ways of learning and trying to assess also what is the area of difficulty.” As she gets to know them, it gets easier to prepare for her sessions, and when the students has been working with her for a year “that takes like a couple of sessions and that's it and then back to the normal flow of the session.” As most (older) students and
tutors recognize, the mentoring aspect of these relationships means that conversations and mentoring itself often go beyond the academic subject they are tutoring to encompass more of the students’ life.

Going beyond academics- consejos
Villenas & Deyhle (1999) use the term *consejos* [advice], to describe the primary way through which parents transmit cultural values and morals that will guide their children in making good decisions for their future. These *consejos* live in the everyday conversations and stories that are shared in intimate relations to each other. *Consejos* are an extension of the caring relationships built in Our Youth Success. Tania describes how her relationship with her students goes beyond academics, “Lisa comes with more personal topics, and she runs a lot more personal stuff by me. Like if things are not going well with her parents, or she’s worried about boys, that comes up a lot.” This kind of personal sharing, the intimacy that has developed, means she sometimes thinks of their relationship on more personal terms as well, “I think Lisa sees me more as a big sister that she can turn to.” In this kind of relationship, there is a level of validation that happens for the students with their older mentors “Kelly turns to me almost more for like a personal validation. And Anne Marie does to but it’s more like we do with our friends, you know what I mean, I think she sees me more on the same level with her. Like she sees herself as an adult, and we’re both adults whereas I think Lisa still looks up to me and (Interviewer: sees you as more of an adult than herself) exactly.” While Tania’s students only differ in age by a year, they relate to her in different ways; Anne Marie sees herself as more of a peer to her tutor, a relationship of equals. Her younger student, in contrast, seeks her approval as an elder. Her student Anne Marie echoes this when she describes their relationship as “not a teacher relationship like
student-teacher relationship. It’s more like a friend relationship.” In both cases, however, there is a personal dimension to their working relationship that goes beyond the academic help that Tania provides.

Many times, tutor mentors saw their role as not simply helping their students raise their marks in a certain subjects. The mentoring relationship often meant that tutor mentors saw themselves as “role models” (Tania) who could help mentor their students around education much more broadly. Tania, for example, hopes that she’s

instilled in them that they’re looking at education as having value. And not that they didn’t at the time that we started, but I think that now they see it a little more deeply.[…] it’s really more about mentoring and showing them a positive role model, showing them that education has value, I think that’s what it is. Because it really is about forming; the personal relationships when you’re paired with the same people over and over again.”

While not all tutors described themselves as role models for their students, they did think about their role in a similar way as Tania describes it, as sharing with their students moral values around education as a whole. Amelie, when articulating how she would describe the program to someone who had never heard of it before, mentioned this idea “I would say it’s a tutoring program to mentor and help students with, not just their homework, but also education, also give them advice-mostly I guess for the oldest ones […] about school and their life after school.” As Amelie’s statement suggest, this advice is sometimes more important; John articulated he felt he made more of a difference as a mentor than as a tutor. While he tutored his students in math, “I more was interested in where they saw themselves in the future and just drawing from my own experience just kind of give them any advice to help get them there.” Often times these consejos began with speaking to their students about post-secondary.
As university students or recent graduates of a university/college program, tutor mentors are well situated to share their experience with their students. This is a purposeful move on the program’s behalf. They seek to collaborate with university or college programs in order to draw most (if not all) of their volunteer pool from post-secondary students or graduates. The motivation for this is to give students access to someone with firsthand knowledge about attending a post-secondary institution in Canada. It is part of their mentoring mandate, to provide students with a role model for attending post-secondary, someone who can give them answer beyond what they may hear at a campus tour, if they attend one. As Joana explains, it is a way to make university or college less intimidating, because “you know someone there already”.

Therefore, many tutor mentors’ experience with their middle or high school students included talking about things like course selection, or program options. Similarly, to the parent workshops, conversations with their students around these topics serve to give students the social capital needed to navigate the post-secondary sector. Joao speaks about how this kind of access to that knowledge can be helpful for students,

It’s giving students an opportunity to speak with someone who is currently going through university or through college. Before the student is in the situation, he can kind of have a first-hand relationship with someone that’s encountering those experiences at that precise moment. What I found was- I chose engineering, because my uncle is an engineer in Portugal and he’s already successful and my parents made me think, and other people have made me think that that was the way, an easy way to make good money and it’s really reputable and blah, blah, blah, but I didn’t speak with an engineer before getting into that. I didn’t speak with an engineering student before I got into that. So there were things that I could have gauged by speaking with people before I got into it.

Polina also spoke about how she saw her tutor mentor role as one of making students aware of their options,
When it comes to you know what they want to do in their life; when it comes to if they want to go to university or if they want to just work for their uncle’s construction company which is what their parents are telling them to do. […] Just trying to encourage them to not be afraid to follow their passions, pursue their dreams, but making sure that they have all of the options available. That they’re not limited by only what they’ve seen their family do or what their circle of friends is doing; just empowering them that ‘yeah you know there’s different paths and they’re all open to you’.

While her statement relies on some of the pervasive stereotypes about Portuguese students and their families, her desire to give her students all the information they might need to make a decision about their future was one that was shared by many tutor mentors. It was also voiced by some students as one of the benefits of their close relationship with their tutor mentors. When explaining what she likes about the long time that she has known/worked with her tutor, she says

They’re more open because back then, it was just like you just knew them and afterwards, you start working with them more, you kind of start talking more and you’re more open with them. You’re friends with them in a way. It’s like the person kind of shy so now you can — I feel like I can ask for help to stuff not work-related. I can even ask for advice for universities and anything like that. It’s good to have someone that had experience because in my family, I know that no one really does so it’s good to have someone I can ask those kinds of questions.

Her story exemplifies what Polina’s stereotypical narrative alluded to. Anastasia’s parents were very encouraging of her attending a post-secondary institution, but they did not have the personal experience of the process and she was therefore limited in the advice she could get from her own family. Having a tutor mentor that she trusted means she had someone to ask these questions and get more accurate information.

The trust that is developed, and the conversations that students feel comfortable having with their tutor mentors means that they are also able to give advice about post-secondary when the student faces certain pressures from their family. During an
observation of their tutoring session, Moira mentioned the pressure she feels from her family to attend university for a professional program. At the time, she was in grade 12, and application season for post-secondary institutions was approaching. While she wanted to attend a college, and take a design program, her family didn’t want her to attend a college, but a university. Her tutor mentor, Joao mentioned his own experience, where his parents pointed to his engineer uncle as an example of what he should do. He felt that given his relationship with Moira,

If I see that there’s something that I found similar with my experience, I’ll try to bring that up and alert them of different things that you should consider when you are getting funneled into a certain direction, and you’re not absolutely sure that that’s the direction you should be going in. It’s good to bring up flags earlier, earlier than later.

The experience that tutor mentors have can be useful for students who are in the process of navigating career path choices as they select courses for high school and make university/college program decisions. Given their close relationships, and the trust that is built, often times the mentorship and advice can extend beyond educational issues such as postsecondary institutions; to more personal life matters.

Lisa for example, has her tutor mentor’s phone number, and she can call if she needs someone to talk to, “If I tell her that I did something good in English, or if something happened, I can call her and we’ll talk about it and it could be nothing school-related.”

During her tutoring sessions, they also often talk about things outside of their academic subject, such as the relationship with teachers, (“I was always nervous about asking teacher questions because I don’t want to annoy the crap out of them. […] Then, as I started college, I was more courageous and I would actually go up and talk to teachers”), and she sees how these conversations translate to her life outside of school as well,
The advice she gives us, it helps me through life too. If I see a guy that’s very attractive and I want to go up, I can’t. I could never do it. Now, ever since I started college, it’s like ‘You like that guy? I’m like ‘Okay. I’m going to go.’ And I actually do”

The advice and mentoring that occurs during tutoring sessions have repercussions to her more personal life; so that the same confidence that she gains through her work at OYS motivates her to take on other challenges in her romantic life.

Anastasia comments on why this is different from the pedagogical relationships she has with teachers

I feel like tutors are different because they’re not a teacher, but at the same time, it’s — I don’t know. You feel more comfortable talking to them. You can even tell stories. It’s not like you have to be constantly be focusing on working. Let’s say some days, I’m done with my work early, we’ll talk about yourself. It’s not like with the teacher, you see them for an hour and a half, then you leave. You see this person every Saturday. Some days you might not have much work so you can talk to them.

Various tutors used this practice of spending time talking after the “work” is done, and they found that the students appreciated it. Felipe still keeps in touch with his previous student, who is still in the program, and the student will often say to him “oh, this tutor is too hard on me and doesn’t give me the 5 minutes at the end of the day to just talk about life”.

Felipe’s idea of being a good tutor involved dedicated time to

sit down, talk about the week, about what the goal was for the session. Work hard, let him work […] then towards the end of the session, with 10-15 minutes, we’d just talk about life, see what they’re doing for the weekend and how they were- if they had any questions about what I’m doing with my life, how I came to where I’m at. Kind of like big brother guidance.

There is a comfort level, related to being able to tell these personal stories that differentiates the tutoring mentoring relationship from other educators. This intimate space, where
volunteers and students can be vulnerable to each other creates a ‘transparency’ that for Maria is critical in the learning relationship.

there is a natural mystery to learning, which is fun and exciting, but I don’t like this: ‘I’m the authority figure and you don’t question me or what I’m doing’ It doesn’t help the kids, that’s just ‘the power is in my hand, you have nothing.’ I like it to be more of a mentoring thing. I’m older than you, have more experience and I want to share with you what I know, not ‘I know everything, you know nothing’. It doesn’t work, yeah.

In this vulnerable space, often times what these relationships do for students is provide them with a caring ear to listen to them, without judgment or critique. Joao describes it as “the counseling side of [the relationship]”, where “the conversation many times goes beyond homework and that kind of stuff”. Instead, he describes the work that often takes place as ‘beyond’ the homework or ‘counseling’ (referring to the advice and help with post-secondary decisions); he responds to his needs students of being heard. Responding to this need, having his student feel attended to is enough to have ‘achieved’ something in that session. In contrast to Tania’s concern that not helping her student with a specific academic issue constitutes a failure as a tutor, for Joao ‘many times’ that kind of work is precisely what his role as a tutor mentor is about.

Similarly, for Victoria, having her students “know there’s somebody they can talk things out with them. There’s somebody there who will listen and give advice if that’s what they want.” Is part of what she hopes she is imparting to them. Being a good tutor mentor is growing that relationship so that students know the support that their tutor mentors are offering, “that’s the type of tutoring I’m providing for them” (Victoria).

For Felipe, it was his responsibility as a tutor mentor “from knowing him and knowing what’s he’s gone through” to provide that support, to show Luis that he was cared for by someone. “I think of him of like a friend, like a younger brother […] he can message
me whenever”. Although their tutoring relationship was over, Felipe and Luis still kept in touch, messaging every once in a while and checking in about their lives. Occasionally Luis will ask Felipe for advice on issues going on in his life, “It’s like little life lessons that we’ve all gone through but maybe he doesn’t necessarily feel comfortable talking to his mom or dad about it or is brother or his friends. I guess it’s like a third party, but he still considers me a friend.” Felipe knows that he is not as involved in Luis’s life as he once was, “but at least he has me if he needs something. And that’s cool, because I’ve had so many people for me along the years, whenever I needed something.” He sees his mentorship to Luis as important because he himself has had mentors along the way who have helped him when he needed it.

All of these tutors and students point to the power of narrative to their education Delgado-Gaitan (1994). These narratives are similar to what Villenas & Deyhle (1999) term consejos [advice], and which they posit are a primary way for parents to transmit cultural values and morals that will guide them in making good decisions for their future. In OYS, I see tutor mentors giving these consejos to their students as a way to give their students then skills and knowledge to navigate the secondary and post-secondary world they will encounter. The power of these narratives lies in the protective power they hold, to build students’ capacity and self-esteem. These consejos are meant to help their students avoid mistakes they made, or feel supported the way they would have liked to feel supported themselves at that age. In most cases, we see how tutor mentors relate their students’ experience to their own experiences as high school or university students. It is to that identification with their students’ stories that we turn to next.

Seeing themselves in their students
As tutor mentors talk about why the strong relationship with their students is important, why they consider that work to be such an important aspect of their involvement with Our Youth Success; it becomes clear that a motivating factor is the fact that they see themselves in their students in many ways. Through their common experiences as border-crossers, there is a shared sense of collective identity as *mestizxs* living in these borderlands in Toronto, which makes it easy for tutors to identify with their students (Anzaldúa, 1987). Chapter 4 laid out how these identifications figure in the development of relationships within the program. Often, tutors mentors’ own history and experience of schooling—the thing that in some cases motivated them to become tutor mentors in the first place—is what draws them to see themselves in their students. Their own experiences trying to navigate the systems that marginalize them, whether successful or not, lead them to try and change that experience for others.

As Delgado-Bernal (2006) writes, these experiences of navigating such violent systems impact the way that students feel about themselves as learners and how they come to engage with educational institutions. It is not surprising then, that tutor mentors’ schooling experiences have impacted the ways in which they think about learning, drawing them to an academic support program for students like them. Their identifications as marginalized students drew them to the program, in which they developed these caring relationships with students who in some way they feel a kinship with. Through these relationships, and how they articulate them, we see that this kinship is founded in seeing themselves in their students. In the development of these relationships founded in *cariño* and through their *consejos*, they hope their students can avoid those same negative experiences.
Joao speaks of the way in which he can identify with the experiences of his students because he knows “the mindset is of most of these parents, because I have parents that are maybe a little bit more supportive than the average would be, say within the Portuguese community. I can connect”. Particularly, he can connect to the ways in which it can be hard to get help with questions around post-secondary decisions, like choosing a career. “I had to try to answer the questions by myself to the best of my ability, so try to reason through the problem and try to get to some sort of conclusion.” He feels that especially teenagers like the ones he works with “might have the need to talk with somebody about it, but you don’t know where, where to go. And that’s what I felt with my case.” Because of their shared cultural identity, he feels “I know what it is that the parents are probably telling them or what it is what the parents do not tell them because they are not fit to help. [Because] they did not go through that experience.” He can therefore be that person that he did not have as a teenager to answer the questions his parents could not answer. His role as a tutor mentor is to be a person he himself needed as a teenager.

As has been discussed before, tutor mentors do not have to share their student’s cultural/linguistic identity in order to develop these relationships. Many tutor mentors still see themselves in their students by virtue of their own history of schooling. Amelie, who does not identify as either of Spanish or Portuguese speaking descent, talks about how her own memories of school prompted her to become an educator. “

I had the best time when I was a kid in school. I wanted to be a teacher, because I thought my teacher was the coolest and I liked going to school, because I was such a nerd and school [22:45 inaudible]. I like the environment at school and I think that’s why when I see a kid who is struggling, it hurts because I know that if you don’t ... those are the basics and then everything I’ve learned in school helped me when I went to university.
In Amelie’s case, her fond memories of school, enjoying learning and having positive relationships with her teachers prompted her to be an educator herself. The idea of students not having the same experience as her pained her, so she wants to provide that same opportunity for her own students to enjoy learning and have a positive relationship with their ‘teacher’. Sometimes, it is the negative memories that prompt tutor mentors to become involved in something like OYS.

John was one of the tutor mentors who gave his personal number to his students, so that they could be in touch if they needed to be; extending their relationship beyond the tutoring session into their personal lives. He describes his students as having “a lot of potential”. When I asked him what he meant by that potential, he explains,

I saw a little bit of myself in them because you know, I’m in academia now, but in high school I had awful grades. Like if you told me I was going to end up in a master’s program I wouldn’t believe it. So I understand that position of being unfulfilled in high school and unmotivated and just having no desire or sense of direction, sense of purpose. I know that gets better. […] I saw that in them […] I wanted to empower them and help them get there, help them reach their potential.

In John’s case, it was the struggling student that he identified with; that he saw in himself and his students. Therefore, he wanted to give his students the role model that ‘it gets better’, and you can find direction or motivation in post-secondary like he did. It was this ‘potential’ for changing and finding academia fulfilling that motivated him to mentor his students; develop a personal relationship beyond the tutoring sessions.

This identification with your students makes tutor mentors feel “responsible” for their students. As Amelie says, “I feel for them because I understand.” In her case, she also had to learn English in order to attend university in North America. Therefore, she understands the difficulty and challenge in learning a new language. Additionally, she
herself is an immigrant as are many of the families she works with. “So I understand from
the beginning when you’re a kid, if you don’t get those steps, after in life, it’s not going to
get better, […] and knowing what I know as an immigrant and anything else, I feel for
those kids, because I know that this is very important.” Her own experiences as an
immigrant and an ELL learner cause her to ‘feel’ for her students, seeing how important
these experiences were to her own life. She therefore connects to these identifications in her
students, connecting her to them.

Maria also sees herself in her students through her own history of schooling,
specifically from her own mental health.

I would say all the kids I tutored, I saw myself in all of them in that they
are so anxious and they would come up with--I mean they're all a little
different in terms of how they avoided doing work just to avoid the
anxiety. We'd all start from that point. […] They all started off super
anxious about school. I would always tell them listen, I was so anxious
about like we're going to break it down and I'd be like see you did that.
If you can do that, you can do this and then when I'd finally get them
there or we would get them there, I'd be like “told ya”.

Through her own experience of school as anxiety-inducing, Maria could see herself in her
own students’, whose struggle with academic subjects also meant they experienced anxiety
about school. This allowed her to feel that initial connection to begin developing a
relationship with her students. It also provided her with the perspective of how to approach
teaching and learning with her students in order to address that anxiety. This experiential
knowledge informed her own pedagogy in her tutoring sessions, and allowed her to address
not only their academic needs but also their personal well-being, to reduce their anxiety and
increase their confidence about school.

Tutor mentors’ own schooling experience informed their ‘pedagogical desires’
(Britzman, 1986, 2006) to first participate in OYS and then the development of their
relationships with their students. In narratives like Maria, Felipe or John for example, we see another possibility for these spaces of counter-narrative creation- the possibility of healing through them. In their stories, these tutor mentors (amongst others) position their students as reflections of themselves in their past schooling experiences; and they are now the figure of mentorship that they wished they had had, or that they had in some opportunities. Therefore, their own participation in spaces like OYS, marked as they are by the cultural and linguistic identifications that these tutors often experiences as stigmatizing, provide a space for them to enact a pedagogy of cariño they didn’t experience. Through a pedagogical relationship based on trust, cariño and respect, tutor mentors can symbolically rewrite the negative schooling experiences of the past.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the pedagogical relationships between students and tutor mentors that are at the heart of the work that happens in Our Youth Success. They are a purposeful element of the programs pedagogical mandate and the change it strives to bring to the community and the schooling system. Therefore, it informs everything from their volunteer recruitment to the student-tutor placements every year. These placements demand most of the coordinators time, making the initial placements before the program starts, and monitoring them throughout the year to ensure a good fit. However, they are also one of the coordinators’ favorite part about their jobs, as seeing a ‘good’ relationship develop “is so beautiful” (Joana). It makes sense, therefore, that both tutor mentors and students mention with such regularity and in such important terms these relationships.

They are cited as the reason that participants continue to stay involved in the program year after year. While students also consider the help they get in their academic...
subjects important, the reason to attend OYS specifically, as opposed to a drop in program
or finding other tutors has to do with the relationships that are built session after session.
For many, what makes these relationships distinct is the mentoring that often goes beyond
academic skills to encompass their post-secondary life and their personal life.

The extended period of time they spend together, and the intimacy afforded by
small groups of 3 or sometimes just 2 gives both students and tutors a space in which to
feel vulnerable with each other and develop trust in each other. The tutor mentors seeing
themselves in their students, connecting to parts of their own experiences with schooling
that lead them to identify with their students in some way also facilitates this vulnerability
(Britzman, 2006). In coming together in the pedagogical encounter with each other, tutor
mentors construct part of their understanding of their student through their own student
selves. This opens up a space of understanding from which to begin building a relationship
with their students.

Driven by that understanding, what students characterize as a lack of judgement
from their tutor mentors, students are able to develop a trust in their tutor mentors that also
goes beyond their academic needs. They see in their tutor mentors a friendly figure of
wisdom, who can advise them in issues that sometimes their own parents cannot. Whether
it be post-secondary paths and choices, or dilemmas about personal relationships outside of
the tutoring session. Students also see in their tutors someone who they can relate to,
whether it is by speaking the same language, or identifying with the same cultural/ethnic
group, or sometimes just by virtue of also feeling ‘othered’ to mainstream White Anglo
society. These trusting relationships make students feel heard and validated, that their
opinions and feelings matter. Which in turn feeds their trust in their tutor mentors as figures
who care authentically about them and are invested in their success.
Given the participants overwhelming narratives, it is clear that these authentic caring relationships are elemental in the success of OYS. They provide students with support and trusting positive relationships that counter the negative relationships that they might have experienced in school. They also provide the tutor mentors with the opportunity to give the support they themselves wish they had received as teenagers, or to give students the positive experiences they themselves had in school. In this sense, the relationships give tutors a connection to their own experience and a way to create a counter narrative to theirs.

Authentic caring pedagogical relationships bring with them a host of benefits to the students, and is a critical factor in their success within the program and in their academic school life. It is also clear that it brings benefits to their personal lives outside of school, and that these consequences can last after the tutoring relationship is over, particularly if the mentoring relationship continues. It is also beneficial to the tutor mentors, who are able to more effectively teach their students and adjust their pedagogy with the in-depth knowledge they acquire through these relationships. Moreover, these relationships can be a place of counter narrative creation, where tutor mentors are able to re-write their own stories of marginalization in schools with the support and trust that they provide to their students. Making the pedagogical relationships in OYS important not just for the development of students but also for the tutor mentors who participate in the program.
Chapter 8- Conclusions & Implications

Almost every seat in the auditorium at Central High School is filled with family members. Younger siblings escape to run up and down the aisles, with parents running after them, or calling them back with a stern tone. Many are fanning themselves with the event program as the air grows warm with the heat of all these bodies packed together. The large windows that run along the top of the walls let in plenty of light, but remain closed. Even with the stuffy air, the atmosphere remains happy and boisterous, as attendees chat away and wait excitedly for their children to come in from their classrooms and be called to the stage to “graduate.”

The name “graduation ceremony” is itself a bit of a misnomer for this particular event, held on the last Saturday of the program every year. Students do not graduate out of the program, but rather celebrate the closing of a successful tutoring year. They receive a certificate for their participation and hard work throughout the last 8 months, their name is called and the audience applauds as they come to the front of the theatre to receive their diploma. They shake hands with the program staff and the invited special guests. They pose for a picture with their certificate, some smiling widely and proudly displaying the paper with their names across it; others looking up shyly and running off as soon as the camera flashes.

Local politicians Andrew Cash and Ana Bailaõ are also in attendance, both talking about the importance of this kind of program to the community, and to the larger Canadian society. As the speeches go on, the crowd- especially the younger ones- begin to get a bit restless, moving around in their seats. Occasionally a parent will carry a toddler outside to
run off some energy, perhaps sneak a sandwich from the refreshment table that has been set up in the lobby.

The event is also an opportunity to acknowledge tutors who have been with the program for a long time, their names are called to recognize their years of service, and they stand up from where they sit surrounded by their group of students, to applause from the families. By the time all the student names have been called, and all the pictures taken, it has been a couple of hours in the hot auditorium. Children are ready to go, their parents ready to oblige. Everyone streams out into the small lobby, where the hungry crowd sets upon the refreshment tables. The sandwiches and cookies set out are devoured in minutes.

The Program Coordinators field questions from parents, already handing out registration forms for the following school year. Most of the parents here are experienced hands already, having had their children in the program for multiple years. They thank the Coordinators, take the registration forms and herd their family out the front doors into the late May sunshine, where many of the students stop to hug their tutors goodbye and wish them a good summer. Newer parents stay behind to ask questions about the matching process, and when they will know about their child’s spot in the program, anxious that they will lose the support they have had this year. The program staff patiently repeat the same information out to parent after parent, assuring them that they will do their best to match them again with a tutor.

Slowly, the lobby quiets down until it is just the volunteers and program staff left, piling unclaimed certificates, attendance lists and agenda copies into boxes to be taken back to the office. They tidy up the tables, and the AV equipment, and lastly the resource boxes that have been at the school throughout the year. They help the program staff load everything into their cars and bring it to the office, which is only a couple of blocks away.
There the last site supervisors help unload and cram boxes of files, photocopied worksheet and books into the already crowded program office.

At last, everyone says goodbye for the summer. There is a bittersweet exhaustion to their departure, the event is the culmination of another successfully hectic year but they have grown accustomed to seeing each other every weekend. They joke about enjoying sleeping in on Saturdays for the next few months, but smile as they hug the program coordinators and say they will miss them and to keep in touch. Once all the volunteers have left, the program coordinators take a look around the office; one wall is stacked almost to the ceiling with resource boxes, there is a heap of attendance lists and certificates to go through and record. They proclaim it can wait until Monday, the day’s excitement and frantic pace has taken its toll. They know from experience the registration forms will begin rolling in next week and the new year will begin to take shape. There is little down time between one year’s end and the following year’s beginning.

In my time with Our Youth Success as both staff and as a researcher, I sat through four graduations. They were all hectic, with details coming together and falling apart at the last minute; there were always improvisations occurring behind the scenes as the staff ran around with attendance lists in their hands trying to make sure everything happened smoothly. The self-serving speeches from the politicians always go a little too long, and the crowd begins to lose interest. Then, there is always a slight shift in energy as the coordinators get ready to begin calling the students’ names. Parents sit forward a little, taking out their phones and iPads to snap pictures. It is in this moment that the importance of a program like OYS, and this symbolic ceremony, becomes clear. It is in the celebration of young people of Portuguese and Spanish-speaking descent and their families. In shifting the narrative from a community of at-risk youth to a community of scholars, of hard
workers and of successful academics. It lies in shifting the narrative from a community that is ‘disengaged’ from education to one where academics are celebrated by the whole family, into spaces where both children and their parents can enter and participate- not despite their cultural heritage, but because of it. There is power in these symbolic acts, in these gatherings that bring families together to applaud and encourage each other. Spaces like OYS harness that power to bring about change for their communities.

A large part of this power lies in the program’s characteristic ability to forge and maintain relationships with the communities of Latinx and Portuguese-speaking descent within Toronto, and the relationships built between its participants; it was this ability that drew me to work and then study this space. Through my time spent observing tutoring sessions as well as program events, and the conversations had with families and staff, it has become clear that community-driven spaces such as OYS hold the capacity to foster positive pedagogical relationships that aid in countering the negative experiences many marginalized students have in their schools. While they often act as a bridge between the community and the school boards, they also provide families with the knowledge and tools to navigate institutions and access resources and support more effectively themselves, enabling parents to better advocate for their children in the public schooling system. The program’s priority on cultural and linguistic identity as a requirement for student participation defines the space as one in which these identity markers are valued. However, its emphasis on academics (and English as the medium through which academics are communicated) means that families are free to understand these self-identifications in a way that is authentic to themselves. The program strives to use language that is relevant to the population it serves, which means that identity labels change as the community changes, resulting in exclusions and inclusions as the ‘imagined community’ in Toronto.
changes as well. In this final chapter I will revisit my research questions, and lay out implications for my findings as well as future research directions for this work.

My dissertation sought to understand the pedagogical relationships that developed in Our Youth Success program, and how tutors articulated the different cultural and linguistic identifications in the transnational space of Toronto and of OYS itself. I looked at the following research question through a transnational Latina feminist framework:

How do tutors articulate and understand the pedagogical relationships they develop in the program?

In order to look at this question, I also focused on two sub questions in the tutors’ narratives:

a. How do tutors’ linguistic and cultural identifications figure in their stories?

b. How are notions of community articulated in reference to their pedagogical relationships?

These three questions were addressed in each of the data chapters, although the distinction between each chapter was at times hard to make given the tightly woven interconnectedness of these topics. For example, tutors’ identifications were often tied to their notions of community. The notion of community and identity were in turn also closely related to participating in the program and forming important relationships with their students. The next sections will delve into the significance of the findings and their theoretical and pedagogical implications.

**Significance of Findings**
This dissertation contributes to a few different fields of knowledge, particularly: schooling and pedagogy, community based education, Latinx-Canadian and Portuguese-Canadian studies and Latina feminist thought. In what follows, I lay out my findings along with the significant implications for all of these fields of knowledge. In order to lay out these implications, I return to the three pillars used in the theoretical framework; migration, race & ethnicity and language & identity, and I trace how this work contributes to our understandings of these concepts.

**Migration**
This dissertation contributes to the body of knowledge of Latina feminist thought through its analysis of migration in the Canadian context. Similarly to the field of Latinx studies, much of the current theory of Latinx feminisms comes from the United States and Latin America. My work provides an understanding of how the context of the Latinx migration history in Canada shapes the ways in which first and second generation Latinxs come to understand their *mestiza* consciousness, and the ways they navigate the borderlands, not only between lands, but also between generations and languages as well. Chapter 2 addressed the differences in migration patterns and settlement history that differentiate this community from the Latinx community in the United States. I highlighted the importance of research and theory specific to the Canadian context, given these differences. This work therefore contributes to building the knowledge base of Latinx-Canadians in Toronto, the way they understand their identification as Latinx and how the transnational context they are in shapes this *latinidad*.

OYS students and tutor mentors articulated identifications as Latinxs and Spanish-speakers that demonstrated a complicated understanding of their *latinidad*, as it straddled
more than two countries (for example those with mixed families) and generational migration differences to their parents. Therefore, their experiences of navigating a borderland included more than two countries at times, and complicated the 2-nation bi-cultural context narrative often present in the Latina feminist literature. The differences that characterize the Latinx Canadian population have consequences for how we take up and mobilize Latina feminist thought that is coherent to this context. Taking into account the different histories of migration, and the context of Toronto as an immigrant hub; how does race figure differently in this context than in the US context for example, and how might this advance some of the work around race and Latinxs as has been theorized by scholars such as Villenas, Moraga, and Anzaldúa? I posit that because of the different migration patterns and histories between the Latinx population in Canada and in the US, Latinx-Canadians are understood differently than Latinxs in the US. Even by the community itself, which may think of itself as fragmented and not united (Veronis, 2010). These differences however, do not obviate the stereotypes that are circulated by the media- much of it from the US. Tutors’ narratives illustrate that some of the same stereotypes about “looking” Latinx (i.e. non-white, Spanish-speaking) are present in Canada. As the Latinx community in Canada continues to grow, combatting this kind of stereotypical narratives will be an important part of the work we engage in.

The growth of Canadian-born Latinxs and lusophones and the experience of multicultural families also offer an alternative to the transnational experiences documented by scholars like Patricia Sanchez and Margarita Machado-Casas. Like the Latinx students in Texas and California that they have worked with, youth and families in Toronto hold intricate relationships with their family’s countries of origin. However, the relationship between Canada and many of these originating countries is different from the US, where it
is very likely that families cross a geographical border. This distinct physicality of the borderland takes on a different shape in Canada, where these borders are sometimes behind many other borders. Therefore, I find there are many similarities in the transnational experiences of these families, but there is also a difference in terms of how this distance is lived and practiced in their lives. Trips ‘home’, when they are possible, usually carry a larger economic burden. The Latinx community in Toronto (and Canada) is much smaller than it is in the Southwestern states. This changes the context of arrival, and Latinx immigrants do not have the same support systems already established when they arrive.

In contrast, the lusophone Portuguese community history of migration proved to be integral to the way in which the community has established itself in Toronto. The strong community associations in the city provided a ready-made social network that more recent Portuguese-speaking immigrants could access. For example, the community centre where OYS is housed also offers settlement services in Portuguese, which have been invaluable to Portuguese-speaking newcomers. However, we see as well how the history of Portuguese presence has shaped the imaginary around the Portuguese-speaking community and who belongs. I return to that matter later on in this chapter, when thinking about language and identity. My point in this section is to remark on how migration histories and patterns shape cultural communities such as the Portuguese-speaking one. This has implications for service providers and educators who work with these communities. The Latinx and lusophone experiences of migration and settlement in Canada show that race and its relationship to ethnicity are an important part of how community members come to identify as Latinx and Portuguese-speakers.

_Race & Ethnicity_
While students did not find that sharing cultural and/or linguistic identifications was an explicit part of their relationship with their tutor-mentors, other kinds of shared experiences or identifications were mentioned as important. Many of these shared identifications were not so much about explicitly identifying as Latinx or Portuguese-speaking, but more generally about not being part of the majority culture. Many tutor-mentors and students spoke of having similar lived experiences as “non-white” and ‘other’, and described this as an important part of how they related and identified with each other. When Victoria mentions joking with her students about how family members from abroad bring fruits and vegetables in their luggage, and then her student remarking that “white people” don’t get it, we see how they both position themselves as ‘other’. This positioning of themselves as not “white people” highlighted an interesting understanding of both Latinxs and Portuguese as a non-white ‘other’ in a majority white society. This discursive move to situate themselves as other was tied to a racialization of ethnicity.

I see this discursive move as one operating within the borderlands of white Anglo-Canadian culture and Latinx and Portuguese-speaking culture situated in the context of Canada, a white dominant society. In the experiences of Latinx and Portuguese-speaking youth in the city, students often articulate being marked as other by their language and culture (da Silva, 2011; Guerrero, 2013; Nunes, 1999). I also heard of this experience from participants like Felipe, whose high school counsellor suggested to him he would not make it into a ‘hard’ university because of his ethnicity. Likewise articulated by Tania, who herself thought of “downtown Portuguese” as trashy people with “no ambition,” and who “didn’t care about education.” The negative stereotypes that continue to be circulated focus on
Portuguese culture and language, not on race, since most Portuguese-speakers, particularly those from Portugal (which were all the participants in this study) would be considered white-passing. Therefore, for these participants, their culture and language become markers of otherness, and boundaries they can draw on to differentiate themselves from “white people”. As *mestizx* border crossers, the Portuguese-speaking participants I spoke with had perfected navigating this contradiction of identifying as Portuguese and not-white while being white-passing. This has implications for how we understand the relationship between race & ethnicity in a Canadian context. Particularly, how ethnicity can be conflated with race in a situation where people are othered through their ethnicity. In other words, lusophones position themselves as “Portuguese” but not as “white”.

The situation for Latinx participants was different in how race and ethnicity were navigated. In part, my work suggests that this may be related to the larger heterogeneity amongst Latinxs, even in Toronto. Of the Spanish-speaking Latinx tutor mentors that I spoke with, none of them were white-passing. In addition, the conversation around race in the Latinx community has a longer trajectory, looking at literature that has been created in Latin America and the United States (i.e., Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; Urcioli, 1996; Villenas, Godínez, Delgado Bernal, & Elenes, 2006). Therefore, participants were more likely to identify ethnically as Latinx and also refer to themselves as brown in opposition to ‘white people’. However, participant’s stories also highlighted how they are marked as other by their race, culture and language. As Hidalgo (1998; cited in Villenas and Deyhle 1999) remarked, Latinxs are often racialized as the “Hispanic other”; their racialization is tied to this language marker. The participant *testimonios* also highlighted the ways in which Latinxs are often understood and imagined as immigrants, even when many of the Latinx
tutor-mentors and students were second-generation Canadian. This was different from the Portuguese-speaking participants, who felt othered but were not imagined as having immigrated recently (even though some of them had) but being of Portuguese-descent. In both cases, language and identification as a Portuguese or Spanish speaker featured heavily in their experiences of being other. The common experience of being othered problematizes the public discourse on multiculturalism and of Canada as a cultural mosaic of differences, open and welcoming to all. Rather, my findings contribute to the critiques of multiculturalism and of the national story of Canada as a haven of acceptance. They reify the idea that multicultural discourse introduces whiteness into cultural definitions, “marking the difference between a core cultural group and other groups who are represented as cultural fragments” (Bannerji, 2000, p.10). Thereby centering whiteness in the national discourse, while also invisibilising it.

Part of the implications for Latinx and lusophone youth has to do with their ability to navigate social systems like institutions of learning. Delgado-Bernal’s work explores how Latinxs in the US utilize the knowledge and lessons learned at home and in the community to navigate their way around educational obstacles and into college. Similar to this work, this dissertation offers a view into how these pedagogies of the home may be utilized in community based education for racial and ethnic minorities. Particularly, through the relationships based on cariño and the consejos that the tutor mentors shared with their students. Through these consejos, tutor mentors imparted knowledge to help their students navigate post-secondary institutions of learning. These consejos were often based on their own learnings of growing up in Toronto, or of going through the education system and trying to navigate these institutions as ‘others’.
The field of Portuguese-Canadian and lusophone studies has so far focused almost exclusively on the migration and settlement of immigrants from Portugal and the Azores. Part of the contribution of my dissertation is problematizing the conception of the lusophone community in Canada as homogeneously Portuguese. While the Portuguese population is certainly the largest part of the lusophone community, my research points to the idea that the current discourse around the lusophone community works to exclude other lusophone immigrants from programs such as OYS by actively promoting the idea of a Portuguese-speaking community that is imagined as homogeneously Portuguese/Azorean. The discourse that constructs this imaginary community is also actively silent around race. This silence is particularly problematic, as Portuguese participants position themselves as ‘not white’ very clearly in their narratives, and yet their construction of a Portuguese/Azorean lusophone community excludes people from colonial lusophone countries with mostly black and brown lusophones. I will turn to look more at this imaginary lusophone community in the following section on language and identity.

Language & Identity

In chapter four, I addressed my first subquestion, where I was concerned with how student and tutor mentor identifications are constructed and mobilized. I laid out the complicated ways in which linguistic and cultural identities are navigated in the OYS program in the relationship between tutor mentors and their students. I began by tracing how many of the tutor mentors came to be involved in the program because of its focus on Spanish and Portuguese-speaking communities, and how their participation in the program was a manner of enacting their cultural identifications as Latinx or Portuguese-speaking. For tutor-mentors who had grown up in Canada and internalized some of the negative
stereotypes about the Portuguese community, or who had not had a lot of contact with the Portuguese community beyond their family while growing up, participating in this program offered a way to connect with their cultural identification as Portuguese-speakers. For Latinx tutor mentors, participating in the program was a way to connect with the Latinx community youth, and to contribute or ‘give back to this community’. They also articulated being motivated by the idea of participating in the program and uniting what is sometimes portrayed as a disjointed community. They described their participation in the program as helping to strengthen the Latinx community.

This impetus for participating in the program grounded in a linguistic and cultural identity was different for students, some of who did not know that the program had a focus on working with these communities, and others who did not see it as an important part of their experience in the program. In these cases, most of the students had been brought to the program by their parents, who had themselves an identification to either the Portuguese or the Spanish language and thus chose to bring their children into the program. In this sense, an identification as a Portuguese or Spanish-speaker was critical to the participants’ intention of taking part in OYS. These same identifications were also relevant in the relationships within the program.

I also traced out some of the ways in which culture and language are conflated in the context of OYS. Particularly for Portuguese-speakers, the relationship between their identification as Portuguese and speaking Portuguese was difficult to ascertain at times in their narratives. This was compounded by the fact that almost all (if not all) of the participants in OYS who identify as Portuguese-speakers are connected to Portugal and contribute to the exclusion of other lusophones. While this conflation was present in some of the Spanish-speaking participants’ narratives, there was more
differentiation between being a Spanish-speaker (linguistic identification) and being Latinx/Latin American/Some other national identification (ethnic identification). This was relevant not only to the students and tutor-mentors identifications but also to the discursive ways the communities are constructed in Toronto.

This dissertation then adds to our understanding of how language plays an important role in the process of marginalization of non-white bodies from the lusophone community in Toronto. As I lay out later in my methodological reflections, I was unable to speak to non-Portuguese lusophones who were a part of OYS. In part, this speaks to the low participation rate that this group has in the program itself- less than 1% of the OYS participants in the past 3 years do not have Portuguese heritage but speak Portuguese. Similarly to DaSilva (2011), I contend that this reflects the ways in which language around the Portuguese-speaking community constructs it as a one that originates in Portugal (and the Azores), and has been present in Canada since the 1960’s. This discourse alienates lusophones from other parts of the world, and discourages them from accessing services for the “Portuguese-speaking” community, because it is understood as “Portuguese”. This construction is rooted in anti-Blackness, by perpetuating the myth of a white, European Portuguese subject. As DaSilva’s (2011) participants described Brazilian Portuguese as a “bastardization” of the language, this kind of purity discourse is illustrative of the Eurocentric white supremacist discourse that discourages black lusophones from former colonies to access Portuguese-speaking spaces. This self-selection calls for more concerted efforts to outreach to the lusophone communities in Toronto, and actively work on reaching more non-Portuguese lusophones for services like OYS. In part, this work
involves examining how the community views itself (and deconstructing some of the problematics described above) and how others view it.

In Chapter 5, I traced the ways in which notions ‘community’ are articulated as an important part of participants’ experiences in OYS, and how this shapes the pedagogy of the program and the relationships established within it. As a program run by and for members of the Portuguese-speaking and Latinx communities, the needs of those families continue to drive the program’s design. Particularly, the way in which these two communities are constructed in the public discourse as disengaged immigrant communities is a driving force in the creation of spaces that will counter these narratives. Through its parent education, these spaces address the harmful myth that Portuguese-speaking and Latinx parents do not care about education and are not interested in being involved in their children’s schooling.

These spaces of counter-narratives are one of the principal ways in which OYS strives to change how lusophone and Latinx parents are perceived by the school system. They provide an important space for parents, who articulate that these workshops have helped them to understand aspects of the school system and become more involved in their children’s school. Through this work, OYS and its parent participants can resist the negative stereotyping of disengaged immigrant parents, not by giving up on their culture or language (assimilating) but by claiming these and creating these spaces for themselves. In collectively creating counter-hegemonic narratives of engagement, this will translate into a base of support and empowerment that will ameliorate the negative psychological and emotional effects of navigating a white supremacist society as racialized immigrants (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999, Delgado-Bernal, 1998, 2002, 2006).
The program approaches its work by including parents and caregivers into the conversation about education and academics, instead of restricting its work to tutoring students on academic subjects. This community education program is a site of counter-narrative creation for parents, where the myths about parent disengagement for particular cultural and linguistic communities can be challenged. It provides parents with the social capital they need to gain access to school spaces where they can advocate for their children and other students. These counter-narratives have the power to shift how these communities are imagined as disengaged or apathetic to education, and instead reframe them more accurately. Given the importance of language to identity construction, this reframing is critical to changing how families and youth in both communities also perceive themselves. Furthering the capacity of both communities to engage and intervene in the school system to make positive change that will benefit their youth. In order to examine more closely what some of those changes may be, the next section will lay out some of the pedagogical implications of my findings.

**Pedagogical Implications**

The inequality gap in education continues to be of concern for scholars, practitioners and communities. The systematic and institutionalized marginalization of students and the consequences to their experiences and academic journeys in schools has resulted in numerous approaches to remedy the situation. Many scholars have pointed to the important role of the teacher in how students’ experience schooling. For example, culturally relevant pedagogy theorists point to how teachers’ expectations of students, and how they include students’ experiences in their learning can foster more engagement in their students (i.e. Gladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). This kind of pedagogy calls upon an active and focused effort on getting to know your students and creating a relationship with them in order to
bring their experiences into the classroom and create a better learning environment for them. In addition, scholars such as Valenzuela (1999) highlight that these relationships with students must model authentic caring, as opposed to empathic caring.

As discussed in Ch.7, these authentic caring relationships are characterized by respect, cariño, support and consejos. The importance of these authentic caring relationships to their teaching and learning was evident through the conversations I had with students and their tutor mentors. This dissertation then contributes to the literature on pedagogical relationships and how these shape learning for students. For students who are marginalized within the school system, these positive relationships can mean the difference between succeeding or not academically; and can change the way they think about themselves as learners. Tania’s story about seeing her student Anne Marie become a confident young woman, who was now going on to her second post-secondary degree after struggling in school and thinking she wasn’t smart enough for high school, demonstrates the kind of transformative power that these relationships can have. This dissertation contributes to our understanding of migration, race and ethnicity, and language and identity.

My findings reiterate the need for teacher training on the topic of power, privilege and inequality in education. Tutor mentors in OYS do not necessarily share their students’ cultural or linguistic identifications; however, their cultural awareness, as well as knowledge of issues of marginalization and the challenges that OYS students face made it possible for them to enter into pedagogical relationships from a place of empathy and compassion rather than a place of judgement. This lack of judgment was cited by many students as one of the most important aspects of the program for them.
Teacher education programs are slowly changing to adapt to the reality that most teachers do not represent the classrooms that they teach—particularly in a city as diverse as Toronto. It is also important to remember that many of the tutor mentors who belonged to the Portuguese/Spanish-speaking community held these same deficit frameworks about the families in the community and had internalized them after hearing them for most of their lives. Therefore, we cannot assume that simply having more teacher representation from these communities will solve the problem. It is critical that all pre-service teachers are invested in the conversation of inequality from an anti-oppression and social justice lens. As Hopson’s 2013 study found, racialized teachers were fully supportive in the ideas of equity and inclusion, but many shied away from using the language of anti-racism. In her analysis of Ontario Ministry of Education documents, Hopson also found that while the language of inclusion, diversity and equity is featured in many, these documents rarely go beyond a superficial analysis of those concepts and how they can be applied to education. She concludes that while progress has been made in the past decades, “what remains on anti-racism policy is tokenistic at best” (p.221). It becomes clear that issues of power and privilege must be confronted before these teachers begin working with students who face particular systemic barriers in the education system. This matters not only for the students that they will work with, but also to the system they will be a part of and the dismantling of institutional barriers that their students may face.

The narratives of tutor mentors and site supervisors demonstrated that the program inadvertently does not make the volunteers a part of this conversation, perhaps assuming that they have not internalized these myths. There are no spaces made for the volunteers to engage in counter-narrative creation. Therefore, tutor mentors, many of whom belong to these communities, reiterate some of the deficit discourses that are applied to
Spanish/Portuguese speaking descent students. This creates a paradox as the volunteers hold many of the same retrograde views that the program is ostensibly fighting to change at a larger systemic level. This finding was surprising, as it is antithetical to the program’s mission, and given the history of community organizing of the centre in which it is housed, I was not expecting to hear the same deficit discourse from its volunteers.

However, upon further reflecting on the narratives of these participants, it became clear that these reflected an internalization of the racist discourses that students hear in school. Participants who articulate these deficit thinking were those who had grown up and gone to school in the GTA, where these myths about the Portuguese and Spanish-speaking communities are circulated. It was significant that Portuguese-speaking tutor mentors who had immigrated to Canada and not gone through the school system in this country did not articulate the same deficit discourse. It is within OYS’s ability to extend their counter-narrative work to tutor mentors, creating spaces to unpack the assumptions with which many of them arrive. Such spaces would allow for challenging how tutors construe their selves and by extension the other in the pedagogical encounters in the program.

Challenging the deficit discourse internalized about who is a lazy student, or an ambitious one; and how these discourses map unto linguistic and cultural identities. It would also allow space for the conversations around the responsibility that they hold as tutor mentors to their students- the ethics of their pedagogical relationship. Similar to the “critical ethics” that Gaztambide-Fernández and Arráiz Matute (2013) point to as a marker of public pedagogy, which originate in a responsibility to a community. Having these kinds of critical reflection and conversation spaces also gains urgency when considering the future of many of the tutor mentors in the program.
It is significant to recognize that many of these volunteers are themselves involved in education, or interested in becoming educators. Many of the volunteer tutor mentors are teacher candidates at the universities in the city, and all of the site supervisors are part of the teacher education program in one of the universities. It is alarming to imagine that in not providing this space to challenge these internalized prejudices, the program is facilitating the reproduction of problematic teachers going into the school system. However, it also presents an incredible opportunity to create systemic change by working with pre-service teachers in dismantling some of these beliefs. Creating a space where these internalized stereotypes could be addressed, unpacked and critically challenged, would facilitate the critical education of pre-service teachers before they enter the school system.

OYS has already created these kinds of spaces for parents, through its workshops series focused on answering the questions that parents voiced about the education system and schools. By centering the families’ needs in its planning and design, OYS manages to create a bridging space between the communities it works with and the school system in Toronto. It can modify its plan to respond to the families’ changing needs, while continuing to work to build the social capital of the community. In doing so, it builds the capacity of parents to access spaces they were not able to access before in schools and within school governance, to make the systemic change that would make a difference to the communities at large. Recognizing that some work needs to be done to extend these kinds of critical spaces to its volunteers; the program is in a position to create change in the way that the education system views the communities as well, and making a difference to the future schooling experiences of Latinx and Portuguese-speaking students.

The close identification between participants that was described by many tutors suggests a transference between tutor mentors and students, where unresolved conflicts
from the tutor-mentors’ past schooling can be imprinted on their own pedagogical desires for their students (Britzman, 2006). For tutor mentors who had negative schooling experiences, their tutoring in OYS provides an opportunity to re-write that experience for their students, as participants such as Felipe and John stated, to be that person they wished they had had around when they were growing up. We see that educators’ own past experiences affect their practice and pedagogy in the present, and that they do not come to the classroom or learning encounter free of their own biases (Britzman, 1986). The pedagogical relationship built in OYS provides a way for these tutor mentors to re-write that script, and provide support, encouragement and cariño to their students.

For students, this trust they develop in their tutor mentors is also a significant aspect of their relationship. They value the consejos their tutors give them, and they see in their tutor mentor someone who does not represent the formal school setting where they do not feel comfortable. Their tutor mentors also do not represent their families, or their parents, but instead someone (perhaps from their same cultural community) who validates them, their opinions and feelings, and who is also invested in seeing them succeed.

These authentic caring relationships are then important and beneficial for both tutors and their students. They provide students with a supportive, positive environment in which to learn, leading to the success of OYS students in their academics. We also see that these benefits, much like the relationships themselves, go beyond academics- to encompass the students’ personal lives and their relationships outside of school as well. Similarly, these relationships are also beneficial for tutor mentors, providing them with meaningful spaces in which to enact a more personal pedagogy with their students. Moreover, they create a space for the creation of counter-narratives for the tutors as well, where tutors can re-write their stories of marginalization through the positive and trusting relationships they
develop with their students. This highlights the importance of these relationships to the program’s pedagogy, as a healing practice for students and tutor mentors who participate in the program. Through the fostering of authentic caring mentoring relationships between the students and their tutor mentors, the program also provides a space for the tutor mentors who have experienced the negative relationships in school to make an intervention. For many of the tutor mentors who went through the school system in Canada and experienced marginalization, or internalized harmful negative stereotypes about their community, this community education space is an opportunity to change that story for other youth. In creating this counter-narrative for their students, OYS can be a site of healing for community members.

**Future Research**

Some of the lessons learned through this study would lead me to make different choices in future research in the area. One change that I would make in future projects would be to extend the period of data collection. In order to really observe how relationships develop, the time investment that is put into them should be appreciated. While tutor mentors could speak more articulately about the differences in the relationship with their students over the years they have been together, it was sometimes difficult for the younger students to articulate the same. For these younger students, a research design that included opportunities to observe their tutoring sessions over a longer timeline would have been beneficial.

This also speaks to another fieldwork lesson, which I briefly mentioned in chapter 4. The tutoring session space proved to be a very intimate one, where close personal relationships are developed. This made observation as a data collection strategy awkward. I
was able to modify some of my data collection methods to create some rapport with participants before formal observations, and to include more games for younger participants. However, I still wonder how my presence during the tutoring sessions changed the dynamics of the sessions, and how this affected what I was able to observe.

I also spoke in Chapter 4 about my relationship to the program and how this insider-outsider positionality gave me a unique perspective and unique access to a lot of information about the program and a relationship with its participants. I would not have been privy to as many conversations with families and program staff if it had not been for my part-time staff position with the program. However, this position also meant that participants had an idea of my own investment in the program, and were perhaps hesitant to share negative aspects of their experience with the program because of this. In addition, I cannot help but wonder if this positionality affected which parents and tutors that volunteered to take part in the research.

It is possible that another researcher with no previous ties to the program would get different answers from participants. However, I think my relationship to the program and to the volunteers and families facilitated conversations that would not have been possible with someone else, particularly among program staff who often feel they have to justify the existence of the program and its need for further funding. In that sense, I believe my position within the program was a complicated one, and necessitated a mestiza consciousness of border crossing to navigate the different positionalities I would embody at different times.

One of the biggest surprises as I began this research was the importance of parents in the participation and continued engagement with the program. While I had originally planned to only talk to tutors and students, it became clear through the conversations with
tutor mentors, students and program staff that the participation of parents is a big part of the programs’ success. Therefore, an important future research direction will be including families in research projects that are interested in youth and education- especially although not exclusively in community settings. There is some work happening now in Toronto looking at family’s experiences with discrimination in the education system, focusing on black Canadian families, which sheds light unto how these processes of marginalization happen both in and outside of schools and are felt by the whole family (James & Turner, 2017).

In future research, I will also be more conscious of language differences in the field, my lack of Portuguese language skills was a factor that I did not take into account as most of the parents I had been in contact with before data collection were bilingual. While I was able to talk to bilingual/polylingual Portuguese-speaking parents who spoke English, it was harder to reach Portuguese-speaking parents who did not speak English. Interpreter services were offered for interviews with parents who wished to participate in the project, but I believe this was a deterrent to some parents who might have wanted to participate in the project. From working in the program and helping parents navigate the system, I know that even with interpreter services offered by the school boards, the language barrier is one of the biggest deterrents for parent participation and engagement in the schools; it is therefore logical to conclude may have taken shaped participation in this project. In addition, as was demonstrated by the participants in this project, language and identity are intimately intertwined, and speaking the same language can provide an immediate rapport with participants. Being able to speak the same language as a parent who only spoke Spanish provided me with a basis on which to form a relationship with that mother; who then
became one of my participants. I wonder what experiences and voices were left out because of my lack of Portuguese and what this would have added to the project.

I also see future research possibilities extending to more community education and development fields, Portuguese/lusophone Canadian studies, Latinx Canadian studies and transnational studies fields. There are multiple possibilities of research that are yet to be tapped, and the diverse and rapidly changing Canadian context (particularly Toronto) will continue to be fertile ground to build knowledge, especially in the current socio-political climate we are experiencing.

Another finding that warrants more research are the ways in which the lusophone community in Toronto is primarily imagined as Portugal immigrants and their descendants. More work is needed to look at the ways in which other lusophone speakers engage with the Portuguese-speaking associations and services; such as a program like OYS. In which ways do they feel invited or excluded to participate in these programs? Is it a matter of language or are there other ways in which these processes of exclusion are working? Silva’s 2011 sociolinguistics analysis of Portuguese identified youth in Toronto and the ways in which they articulated their identification as Portuguese began looking at this phenomena, yet more work with non-Portuguese lusophones is needed.

While this work adds to the growing body of Latinx Canadian studies, and continues to build on the knowledge of the Latinx community in Toronto, this burgeoning field is still in its infancy. The Canadian context, and specifically the city of Toronto, bring particular experiences to the field. The understandings of a Latinx identification that break from the two-nation model that is more popular in the United States, with mixed families more prevalent and a more diverse Latinx immigrant community. There is need for more research with this community as symptoms of deeper problems surface, such as the unequal
access to education for youth in these communities. Furthermore, as both the Latinx and lusophone communities themselves change and develop within Canada, studies will continue to be vital in understanding the specific challenges and experiences of their populations. Research continuing to look at how *latinidad* is mobilized and transformed in the Canadian context will advance the scholarship of Latinxs and Latina Feminist thought as well as continue to build on a Latina Transnational Feminist framework.

In addition, an angle which I was unable to explore in this dissertation but which I think is a critical component of Latinx Canadian studies is the understanding of Latinx identity in the Canadian nation-state where the majority of Latinx come as immigrant settlers. How is the Latinx community in solidarity with the indigenous peoples whose lands we arrive into and whose oppression we become complicit in through our participation in the ongoing colonization of the Canadian state? How do Latinxs in Canada understand their role and responsibilities as immigrant settlers of colour? These questions and more will continue to build the field of Latinx-Canadian studies.

Hand in hand with growing the body of knowledge of Latinx Canadians, future research will also build the field of transnationalism. As we understand more about the relationships that Latinx and lusophone Canadians have to their cultural identifications this will continue to build on the ways we understand the movement of ideas, culture and people. How these communities continue to build networks through and beyond two nations will inform our understanding of people’s complex relationships to ideas of culture, language and knowledge. This dissertation contributes a step in these directions.
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