Identity, Subjectivity, and Schooling: Portugueseness and the Educational Deselection of Portuguese-speaking Students in Toronto.

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract
The academic trajectories of Portuguese-speaking students in Toronto, Canada, have been characterized as underachieving and truncated. Concurrently, the voices of Portuguese-speaking students themselves have been relatively absent from reports on their rates of underachievement and school dropout. This critical school ethnography explores Portuguese-speaking students’ school experiences in a Toronto high school to contextualize these statistics and expose how identity and subjectivity inform their school (dis)engagement. While peers and parents inform aspects of said (dis)engagement, thus far these have been the main if not only factors to explain this underachievement phenomenon. This ethnography, however, demonstrates that school personnel and their expectations appear to also play a role in some students’ decisions to deselect schooling.

This dissertation exposes discourses that circulate in classrooms and other school spaces that construct Portuguese-speaking students and their parents in Toronto as working class immigrants. These discourses (inclusive of phrases and actions) draw on language, nationalism and diaspora, and class and labour to construct dominant
depictions of what I and others (da Silva, 2012) have termed portugueseness.

Portugueseness becomes a subjectivity that marks the Portuguese-speaking student subject for certain experiences in schools.

In addition to reflecting on their experiences to illustrate how portugueseness is constructed, participants’ experiences and narratives revealed that association with portugueseness (or being marked as Portuguese(-speaking)) placed them disproportionately at risk of experiencing certain disciplinary practices in school. These disciplinary practices reference dominant depictions of portugueseness, namely disciplining language, dropout and disability. And, participants recounted both their defiant and compliant responses to these disciplining practices. Finally, disciplinary practices appear to inform educational deselection, a process that sees some students drop out of school and others remain enrolled despite deeply disengaging with school and putting forth a bare minimum of effort to be pushed through, rather than be pushed out of, their high school trajectory.
Acknowledgments

There are many people to acknowledge for their part in this project. First and foremost I want to thank the students at Westside High School and in particular the participants of this study. Their willingness to engage with me, one another, and to open themselves up to the critical research experience was key to this project’s success. They inspired me to continue to understand their experiences and their identities in the context of their schooling, and to delve deeper into those experiences as Portuguese-speaking youth at a working class school with a large population of students who both self-identify and are identified as Portuguese-speaking. I want my participants to know that I relished the opportunity to spend my days with them in their classrooms, engaging with them in the hallways and elsewhere in and around their school – it as the best part of a generally wonderful research experience. I also wish to thank the teachers and other school personnel at Westside. These individuals welcomed me into their school and classrooms in order to improve the educational experiences and academic success of Portuguese-speaking students. So many of these professionals revealed themselves in order to help the youth in their schools. It is with tremendous respect that I offer these critical reflections and findings to join in the effort to improve the schooling experiences of Westside’s Portuguese-speaking youth.

I am fortunate enough to have been supported and guided by scholars who value my work and approach. Thank you to my supervisor, Lance McCready, and committee members Tara Goldstein and Diane Farmer. This committee consistently demonstrated faith in my work. Your ability to offer specific and constructive feedback has benefited my work and, more generally, me as a scholar. Additionally, Roland Sintos Coloma was
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Chapter 1
Introduction

This critical school ethnography chronicles a research journey to explore the schooling experiences of Portuguese-speaking high school students at Westside High School, a school with a predominately large Portuguese-speaking student population that is located in a working-class neighbourhood in West Toronto, Canada. My interest in researching the schooling experiences of Portuguese-speaking students in Toronto is informed by the many anecdotal stories I have heard from Portuguese-speaking parents, youth and service providers about the schooling practices and experiences Portuguese-speaking students have endured and continue to endure that inform their resistance and/or resignation to their perceived failing and underachieving schooling trajectories and educational outcomes. The following excerpt, contained in a letter written by a Portuguese Canadian student in Toronto, represents one such anecdotal story that describes an interaction between a Portuguese-speaking student and a teacher (in this case a guidance counselor). I came across the excerpt thanks to a teacher at another high school in Toronto with a large Portuguese-speaking population. I frequently attend community and school meetings concerning education as an advocate for Portuguese-speaking students and parents. The student had drafted the letter as a testimonial of her encounter with a guidance counselor. Her parents presented the letter to administrators at a school meeting convened to address the advice she was given concerning the courses she had selected for the following year, which gestures to systemic discrimination encountered by Portuguese-speaking students at the school.

1 Pseudonyms were used for all schools, participants and other individuals in this study.
“Students are being discouraged to enter academic courses. I knew exactly what I wanted to take in grade 10; I still do now that I’m graduating. I got called down to the guidance office to talk about my course selection, which had no issue with scheduling. Instead what was raised was that I probably shouldn’t take sciences and maths because I’m gonna have a difficult time because it will challenge me in a negative way and present too many obstacles for me to overcome. Thanks to my intense persistence (met with quite a bit of resistance) now I’m graduating with a 91% average in sciences and maths, heading for chemical engineering in the fall.”

This Portuguese-speaking student’s story is not unique, and while many, including those in Toronto’s Portuguese-speaking community, expect that such low expectations or streaming practices are a thing of the past, hers and other students’ experiences in schools today reveal that teachers and administrators continue to have particularly low expectations of and detrimental responses to ethnoracial linguistic minority youth. Portuguese-speaking youth are no exception, evidenced by persistently low rates of academic achievement, post-secondary enrollment, and disproportionately high rates of early school leaving, truancy, and special education identification.

I am not alone in my insistence that the schooling experiences of Portuguese-speaking students in Toronto are negatively informing their schooling trajectories and academic outcomes. On another occasion of community activism and advocacy, thirty or so students, parents, teachers and community members, many but not all from Toronto’s Portuguese-speaking community, gathered in a school library with their Trustee, superintendent, principal and other school staff for a meeting to discuss a course on world issues from Afro, Luso and Latino/a perspectives that the above student’s school had failed to approve (denied) for the forthcoming academic year. I sat quietly towards the back of the room and listened as students, parents, and teachers from the community discussed and often debated with school and board staff about “their” course being
denied. One student pointed to how much of the conversation was on whether or not students were and are interested in taking the course but that at the time it was denied this question was not asked of students, and instead the assumption was made that such students would not be interested in a course on world history from Afro, Luso and Latino/a perspectives. Another student presented a petition he had produced with the signatures of approximately 37 of his peers who indicated that they would be interested in taking such a course. Finally, as school staff and administrators explained why such a “singleton” course was denied, a Black parent of non-Portuguese descent interjected and said,

“Y’all are missing the boat. You see this, right? And you hear the cultural dynamic. I'm born here. I'm mixed, born here, I went to school in this area. I understand the importance of cultural identity. I cross many cultures. I'm not Portuguese, but I worked in Portugal. I understand the Portuguese scenario. My son takes Portuguese. The teacher tells me that if he has his back to him he thinks it's a Portuguese person speaking. I think you guys need to listen to the parents, to the students, and listen to this teacher, who teaches this course, and maybe step it up.”

Referencing the explanation the staff made about why this course was denied and a French Drama course was approved, he continued, “I don't care about the calculations you're going through right now. If someone came here saying, oh we're gonna do this course, and he/she represented a different strata of society, that course would be approved in a heartbeat, it would be approved tomorrow. No, I'm not listening to the calculations. Make it happen. Make it happen for the kids and for the parents.”

The excerpt from the student’s letter and the meeting these parents and students demanded with school officials reflect the schooling landscape surrounding Portuguese-speaking youth academic underachievement despite social and institutional beliefs that Portuguese-speaking parents and students care less about their education. While many
have and continue to locate the underachievement paradox within the community, these experiences, along with so many others, inform my determination to see how these educational narratives of low expectations, streaming practices, and administrative responses to community requests play a role in this educational phenomenon for Portuguese-speaking youth. After all, ethnoracial and linguistic minority youth in North American schools have long been acknowledged as disadvantaged by systematic education of white, Eurocentric, middle-class knowledge and values. For Portuguese-speaking youth, however, these systemic disadvantages have not been empirically studied as having an impact on their academic underachievement, largely due to their generally assumed white, albeit minority, European identities.

The practice of streaming children based on their ethnoracial and linguistic backgrounds remains common in Toronto. Recent Toronto District School Board (TDSB) statistics show that a disproportionate number of Black students, 48% versus 19% of white students and 21% of others, are “streamed to the lowest academic level classes, specifically Applied or Essential programs in secondary schools” as well as being overrepresented as requiring special education support and individual education plans (TDSB, 2017; 25). Similarly, a disproportionately higher percentage of Portuguese-speaking students are enrolled in Applied vs. Academic Programs of Study (Brown, Newton & Tam, 2015). Beyond this practice of nudging students into a particular program or reduced academic level of study during a one-on-one consultation throughout their secondary school trajectories, often less formal and quotidian engagement with, comments to, and disciplining of ethnoracial and linguistic minority youth in schools negatively informs their attitudes and behaviours towards schooling as well as their
likelihood to continue or leave schooling. Positive exchanges with teachers and school staff, on the other hand, profoundly impact the lives of ethnoracial linguistic minority youth. In the hearts and minds of these youth, however, such positive exchanges are dwarfed by persistent and historically rooted narratives that circulate in education. Such narratives of Portuguese-speaking students in Toronto are familiar to parents, siblings and other family and community members in Toronto’s Portuguese-speaking communities.

Not surprisingly, therefore, high rates of academic underachievement and early school leaving characterize the educational trajectories of many of these youth. Statistics from the TDSB reveal that 30% of Portuguese-speaking students, nearly one in every three, leave school early or fail to complete their secondary diplomas (Brown, Newton & Tam, 2015). While this represents a graduation rate that has improved by 20% between the 2000 and 2007 Grade 9 cohorts, it must be understood within the context that “in the 2010-11 academic year, a lower percentage of Portuguese-speaking students took the majority of courses in the Academic Program of Study (52%) and a higher percentage took Applied (36%) when compared to the overall TDSB results (66% Academic and 25% Applied)” (2015; p.23). In other words, while some might focus on how graduation rates have improved, students such as the one who drafted the above letter are increasingly being directed from an academic program of study and towards an applied program of study, and perhaps in spite of their capacity to achieve (91%) in their final year and pursue postsecondary studies.

On the other hand, Portuguese Canadians are “touted as having made a successful transition from a predominantly rural, under-educated and unskilled immigrant

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2 Although the Toronto Catholic District School Board does not report race-, ethnic- or language-specific data, their statistics are said to be similar.
population, to an economically stable, hardworking and self-sufficient community” (Nunes, 2008, 121). Higher than average levels of annual income above the poverty line as well as higher than average rates of homeownership inform the successful immigrant transition narrative above (Teixeira, 2008) However, these indexes fail to account for the persistent academic underachievement paradox in Toronto and potentially elsewhere in Ontario and Canada.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the largest waves of Portuguese migration to Canada. Persistent economic growth and employment throughout those years, for which many Portuguese Canadians were specifically recruited as labourers, has since sustained a rather economically stable community that is frequently praised for its work ethic. However, pursuing such economic stability resulted in serious absences in other areas of social and political life. Despite Portuguese-speaking Canadians representing over 5% of Toronto’s overall population, they remain disproportionately underrepresented in higher income groups, have fewer elected politicians, and of course, continue to demonstrate disproportionately low levels of academic achievement in both secondary and post-secondary education (Andrew-Gee, 2013; Presley & Brown, 2011; Ornstein, 2006; Siemiatycki, 2008). Moreover, the economic, social and political climate has changed since those years in the ‘70s and ‘80s of abundant labour and intensive earning opportunities, and the stakes are now higher to be engaged in other areas of the economy as well as social and political activity. As a result of this context, I thought it important to draw on the experiences and knowledge of Portuguese-speaking, working class youth to understand and complicate their definitions and understandings of success. I initially entered this yearlong ethnography asking the following questions: (i) What defines
success for ethnoracial language minority youth in a working class Toronto high school and neighbourhood; (ii) How do their definitions of success inform school participation, school to work transitions, and post-secondary aspirations; (iii) How do race, class, and gender inform, limit, or improve their ability to be successful; and (iv) What tensions and conflicts do these youth encounter related to the success binary both inside and outside of school?

Those original research questions, however, were reconsidered as a result of my observations of and conversations with students, and in particular I reconsidered the meaning and focus I had assigned to the notion of success. I anticipated my research questions about success to reference participants’ lives after high school. While participants expressed that success after school includes having a family, getting married, owning a nice car and being financially stable and secure, and “settling down”, these answers were rather generic and their responses for the most part suggested that although they were concerned about their futures, participants were more interested in discussing what success, academic and otherwise, looked like at Westside. This was unexpected and redirected my research and reframed my research questions. Previously I was focused on whether their future goals and aspirations informed their current educational engagement. Thanks to them, I became less interested in the future motivation and more interested in their current conditions and whether students perceived any links between Portuguese student identity and (lack of) success, particularly through their school experiences. This process occurred after my first few interviews with participants, about halfway through my time at Westside, and reframed my research questions as follows: 1) How are Portuguese-speaking students at Westside represented using dominant depictions of
Portuguese Canadians or discourses of portugueseness? 2) How might Portuguese-speaking subjectivity or portugueseness affect a student’s schooling experiences and trajectory? Despite reframing my research questions in this way, I continued to be curious about what thoughts and tensions, if any, participants had regarding school success and life and career success. My thinking and research remained informed by theoretical and conceptual frameworks that explore and unsettle the complex, constructed, and interconnected reality of identity. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks that I outline in this chapter are helpful in interrogating race, class and gender, among other categories that inform identity and power relationships in school.

Literature Review on Portuguese-speaking Youth in Toronto

The literature on Portuguese-speaking youth in Canada predominately focuses on Portuguese Canadian youth (ignoring Portuguese-speaking youth who do not claim Portuguese ancestry) and geographically centres on Toronto, home to Canada’s largest Portuguese population. While this literature review draws heavily on the Portuguese Canadian context in Toronto, it will also include some literature on Brazilian youth.

Fernando Nunes (2004) offered a comprehensive literature review on Portuguese Canadian youth and their academic underachievement. He argues, “despite the alarming statistics and the community’s growing calls for action, the question of why Portuguese children have been failing in such proportions has generally been ignored by educators and researchers” (p. 44). Since 2004 there have been several MA theses (Gomes, 2008; Pacheco, 2004) and one doctoral dissertation (da Silva, 2011) on Portuguese Canadian youth, and five theses that tackle the educational concerns Nunes raised (Kwiczala, 2012;
Libertucci, 2011; Morgado, 2009; Pereira, 2011; Santos, 2006). Moreover, fewer of these studies have been published in peer-reviewed journals (Pereira, 2014; da Silva 2012a, 2012b). Rather than replicate Nunes’ (2004) literature review, I draw on key texts since the mid-1990s concerning Portuguese Canadian youth or students and the few relevant texts on Brazilian, Angolan, Cape Verdean, and Mozambican youth in Canada to capture a broader contemporary understanding of Portuguese-speaking youth in Toronto. Additionally, I will review scholarly articles, papers, theses, dissertations, and reports published on Portuguese-speaking youth and students over the decade since Nunes’ (2004) review. Before turning to this, however, I will briefly comment on the history of colonialism and the Portuguese migrant’s context.

Portugal’s colonial history and its role in shaping European expansion and slavery in North America is a lasting and shameful legacy. The migration of large numbers of Portuguese to Canada and to Southern Ontario and Toronto in the mid 20th century, however, was a result of push and pull factors that carefully constructed the Portuguese Canadian identity at the time and may contribute to persistent references to Portuguese in Toronto and their descendants as blue-collar, unskilled but hard workers. While a deep exploration of this context extends beyond the scope of this study, it is worth noting the economic and social poverty that many Portuguese escaped by migrating to Canada and elsewhere in North America. Evidence suggests that the political position of the dictatorship was to distinguish the Azores from the European mainland, often in ways that reflected other Portuguese colonies (Cairo, 2006). Gramsci (2005) points to internal colonialism, or the complexity of colonialism and indeed that colonialism can even exist within a nation state, with certain regions experiencing very different relations to the
colonial entity and project. The regional divisions that persist among Portuguese Canadians gesture to such colonial complexities in Portugal’s history. Canadian officials oversees described those migrating from such conditions with disdain and contempt. In his report on the situation in the Azores, L.A. Griffin, Canadian Medical Officer in charge in Lisbon, wrote the following about Portuguese immigrants and Azoreans in particular,

The general impression of the people is that they are mainly of a peasant type, living in a very backward environment. Four elementary schooling classes have been made compulsory in recent years so that the previously high rate of illiteracy is gradually being reduced. Nevertheless, I would consider that careful screening for mental retardation is indicated. The people are apparently quite hard-working and law-abiding but not over-robust and their cleanliness leaves much to be desired. They seem to be somewhat poorer types than found on the mainland (National Archives, 1962).

Past politicians have framed the Portuguese, particularly in Toronto, as knowingly violating Canadian immigration laws. More recently, the mass deportations of Portuguese in Toronto throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, as well as the legal case referenced by Razack (1999) gesture to the (at times undocumented) labouring identities of the Portuguese particularly in the construction industry. Peter Ferreira, former president of the Portuguese Canadian National Congress, argued, “We need a made-in-Canada policy to regularize these people. They are filling a labour need here” many of who are from Azores and Madeira where unemployment remains high (Jiménez, 2006). According to Jiménez, a total of 409 Portuguese were deported from Canada in 2004-2005. Framing Portuguese migrating to as well as those in Canada, and particularly Toronto, in these ways continues to impact the identities of Portuguese-speaking youth in schools. Participants at Westside were frequently constructed through labour and deficit logics
that reflect these historical and less distant references to blue-collar work and intellectual inferiority.

Immigration continues to shape Toronto’s Portuguese-speaking population. After waves of Portuguese immigration since the 1950s, today’s Portuguese-speaking population, particularly in Toronto, continues to grow and change. Neighborhoods in Toronto that in the past were home to many Portuguese Canadians and Portuguese newcomers, have seen significant changes. Several areas have seen significant migration out of Toronto as children of Portuguese families raised in Toronto have sought more affordable housing elsewhere (Murdie & Teixeira, 2011, 2015; Teixeira, 2006, 2007). While out-of-town migration has reduced Portuguese concentration in some Toronto neighbourhoods several processes are at play that preserve Portuguese-speaking presence downtown. First, out-of-town Portuguese Canadian parents who work downtown still enroll their children in Toronto schools in order to benefit from the free childcare offered by grandparents who live in their childhood homes in traditionally Portuguese neighbourhoods. According to a Toronto Star article (Andrew-Gee, 2014) as much as 33% of “Little Portugal” is Portuguese and 25% speak Portuguese at home. Second, non-Portuguese Portuguese-speaking newcomers benefit from Portuguese-speaking businesses, landlords and services, and civic and religious organizations, as many businesses in Little Portugal continue to be managed if not owned by Portuguese (Takahashi, 2015; Teixeira, 2008). Third, new communities and neighbourhoods that attracted new and old Portuguese-speaking families have emerged. Brazilians have established a visible presence along Dundas Street and in the “new Portuguese area” (Santos, 2006) roughly north and south of St. Clair Avenue between Dufferin Avenue
and Caledonia Street, with restaurants, shops, travel agencies, bars, and remittance services to send money to loved ones particularly in Brazil. Angolan, Mozambican and Cape Verdean migrants have also situated themselves in Toronto for much of the same language-related reasons as Brazilians (Teixeira, 2008). Moreover, elementary and high schools in these neighbourhoods continue to enroll large numbers of Portuguese-speaking youth.

The literature concerning the school lives and educational experiences of Portuguese-speaking students can be divided, according to Nunes (2004), into three categories. The first category is inclusive of Portuguese-speaking youth in broader historical and sociological studies of Portuguese migration to Canada, which tend to pre-date the early 1990s. The second category consists of news and journalism coverage and educational reports, but the majority of these consist of anecdotal evidence of questionable validity. Finally, the third category tends to maintain, according to Nunes (2004) a “cultural conflict” or “deficit paradigm” which is far too common when discussing Portuguese-speaking academic underachievement. This third category consists of empirical research studies, including several of the unpublished theses listed above, that present youth narratives and complicate the problem of Portuguese Canadian youth academic underachievement. However, along with failing to account for the cultural and national diversity that constitutes Portuguese-speaking youth in Toronto (the exception being Pacheco, 2004), few of the texts in these categories adequately address issues of discrimination in schools (Kwiczala, 2012; Morgado, 2009; Noivo, 1997; Nunes, 1999; Pereira, 2014) and only three authors approach the topic from a lens of racialization (in schools) (Nunes, 2010; Morgado, 2009; Aguiar, 2001; Noivo, 1997).
Among the most referenced texts on Portuguese Canadians, Edite Noivo’s (1997) study reveals the central institution of the family, gender-relations particularly between spouses and among parents and children, and immigrant aspirations of homeownership that continue to resonate among Portuguese Canadians. It also provides a reading, albeit dated, on class within the Portuguese community; specifically their working class social and economic position due to unstable employment and absence of skills upgrading to improve opportunity for social and economic mobility (16). Noivo points to the overwhelming financial and personal sacrifices made by first generation Portuguese immigrants to provide for their children all the opportunities and comforts they were denied. To this point, Noivo asserts that the younger generation enjoyed social and material conditions atypical of their class. “It is not so much their overall lifestyle as their consumption levels that resemble middle-class patterns” (1997, 90). Such an analysis supports a Marxist framework inclusive of economic and social factors informing class identity (Bannerji, 2000). More recently, Teixeira’s (2007) and Murdie & Teixeira’s (2011, 2015) studies on the movement of Portuguese Canadians away from Toronto and into neighbouring suburbs revealed that community conflict is experienced among the Portuguese who remain in Toronto given that gentrification attracts white collar urban professionals, suggesting that they are worlds apart from the blue-collar world of Portuguese neighbours. I contend that despite higher earning and consumption levels, not that this is true for all or even the majority of Portuguese Canadians, overwhelmingly Portuguese Canadians continue to be seen as working class and that this perception informs dominant depictions of portugueseness and negatively effects Portuguese-speaking students in school.
While class remains a relevant category of analysis for Portuguese-speaking communities in Canada and for Portuguese-speaking students in schools, Nunes also points to how the schooling trajectories of Portuguese Canadian students share a similar path (academic failure, applied programs of study, and early school leaving) and multi-generational underachievement to the schooling trajectories of youth of colour. Nunes asserts “Luso-Canadians, who are a white minority, suffer under the same structural racist barriers, which scholars such as Dei and Ogbu have shown to be contributing to the school failure of visible minorities” (2011, 16). When it comes to race, Nunes avoids expanding on his choice to label “Luso-Canadians” as a white minority. This move by Nunes to gesture to the “structural racist barriers” that possibly inform the minority (albeit white) identities of Portuguese students is what inspired me to apply racial and ethnic analyses when considering the lives of Portuguese-speaking youth in Toronto. Like the TDSB, Nunes’s use of Luso-Canadians perpetuates the same conflation of students who speak Portuguese with Portugal (both language and culture), and fails to account for the Luso-Canadians of colour, one of whom is a participant in my study. Additionally, Portuguese-speaking youth from Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, and elsewhere from Portuguese-speaking countries, not to mention their racial identities, are rendered invisible through the use of this label. Moreover, notwithstanding the racial privilege afforded to those who are not identified as persons of colour, the experiences of white minority students, like some Portuguese Canadian youth, may in fact include racializing discourses and encounters that more closely resemble other ethnoracial, linguistic minority youth. Aguiar (2001) and Januário (1995) both explore the racialized subjectivity of Portuguese migrants in Canada. Aguiar (2001) forwards the provocative
possibility that the immigration experience to Canada rendered the Portuguese in Canada a non-white racial subjectivity, citing in particular “job ghettos”, poor academic performance and streamed educational trajectories, and unfavourable media characterization/representation as similarities with Black communities. This is not dissimilar to how white Jews were racialized in Canada (and elsewhere) prior to a time well after WWII when they became honorary whites (Brodkin, 1998; Vallières, 1971). Despite said honorary status, instances of anti-Semitism remind Jews, and others, of the precarious location of honorary whites in relation to those whose white status is never questioned (or as one former prime minister once coined: old stock Canadians). Outside the context of schools, Razack (1999) reflects on a legal proceeding, which I return to in another section of this chapter, in which Portuguese migrants in Toronto were racialized as non-white and characterized as deviant and dishonest.

Empirical studies since 2004 reveal that Portuguese Canadian youth understand their racial identity as contingent on context, whether situational, spatial, social, or otherwise (da Silva, 2011; Pacheco, 2004; Gomes, 2008; Libertucci, 2011). In his research on the Portuguese community, da Silva (2011) describes in a footnote coming across graffiti during his data collection that racialized Portuguese Canadian identity. “I myself”, da Silva writes, “saw the words “Portuguese = White niggers of Europe” spray-painted on the back doors of a church in Toronto’s “Little Portugal” (2011, 73). While her analysis does not necessarily engage a race critique, Libertucci (2011) provides narrative data from teachers of Portuguese Canadian students that can be analyzed to reveal processes of racialization that fundamentally inform schooling practices and policies, and remind us of not-so-distant concerns about streaming minority and
particularly racialized youth (Curtis, Livingston, & Smaller, 1992; Krahn & Taylor, 2007; Hamlin & Cameron, 2015).

Pacheco’s (2004) work on race and ethnicity among Portuguese-speaking communities is important in that it diversifies the Portuguese-speaking category and differently applies race and ethnicity to these categories. One aspect of Pacheco’s work critiques “racial ambiguity” for ethnic-white Portuguese individuals, particularly in contrast to Portuguese-speaking people of colour. This important work is done through a theoretical framework that foregrounds an anti-racism ideology to address issues of white privilege and racial othering. There is no denying that this remains an important contribution to the critical analysis of race and racism within Portuguese Canadian studies, and takes a firm theoretical position on the definition and boundaries of race as a category. However, in doing so, this approach limits if not disregards Nunes’ call to interrogate the “structural racist barriers” that exist and processes of racialization and oppression that impact Portuguese-speaking youth in schools, including “white minority” or ethnic-white Portuguese-speaking students, and constructing a racialized, classed and gendered Portuguese-speaking subjectivity or portugueseness (2008, 2011b).

The value of such a study to the lives of Portuguese-speaking students in Toronto is evident. Additionally, however, an exploration and critique of the discursive practices informing the processes of racialization experienced by Portuguese-speaking students in schools, as well as the complex range of ways these students identify racially or as racial subjects, is critically important for several other reasons. First, it expands an understanding of how racialization (through disciplinary practices and policies in school) operates in schools to inform social relations and communities’ access to quality,
equitable education. Second, it provides insight into how communities that are typically considered unaffected by race and racialization might advocate for and benefit from policies and practices that promote social justice in schooling. Lastly, it can ignite generative solidarities between Portuguese-speaking communities and communities of colour, those in socioeconomically under-resourced neighbourhoods, or other groups that experience systemic racism on the basis of religion or ethnic origin by exposing systems of oppression that are perceived as annexed to only certain groups or communities. The racial diversity found in Toronto’s Portuguese-speaking communities coupled with the persistently troubling rates of academic underachievement and early school leaving, as well as the minimal visibility afforded to this population despite these realities, all contribute to why Toronto’s Portuguese-speaking communities are ideal for this study.

The literature concerning Portuguese Canadian youth in Canada, and their Portuguese-speaking peers, offers a glimpse of this relatively underexplored youth population. Moreover, their experiences in schools and their narratives and accounts of schooling remain undocumented. Existing literature nevertheless gestures to issues of ethnicity, race, class, language and immigration as relevant in the schooling lives of Portuguese-speaking youth. Therefore, together with my research questions, the existing literature, and its limitations as it were, propel me to consider the following theoretical framework.

Finally, while the next chapter describes critical ethnography as a methodology, I also consider critical ethnography to be a body of literature. Consequently, my work is in conversation with a substantial legacy of critical school and language ethnographies, as well as working-class and racialized youth ethnographies, which in some cases merge the
concerns, populations and contexts of both (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Dei, Mazzuca, McIssac & Zine, 1997; Farmer, 2017; Farmer & Labrie, 2008; Gerin-Lajoie, 2011; Goldstein, 2003; Heller, 2006; McCready, 2010; McLaren, 1999; Valenzuela, 1999; Willis, 2000). These scholars and their works inform my approach and analysis of this study’s participant experiences and narratives. Worth noting, too, is how my work draws on, and to an extent is in conversation with, the work of Bourdieu, particularly because of his extended immersion and interviews with youth in schools, and how youth articulate their status as “outcasts on the inside” and the violence (symbolic and institutional) they experience as a result of schooling (Bourdieu & Champagne, 1999).

**Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

Consistent with a critical ethnographic methodology, the theoretical framework for this study is inductive, and centres the narratives and experiences of Portuguese-speaking students to make meaning of their school lives and identities. The theoretical framework also aligns with the thesis’s overall narrative arc. Participants’ experiences reveal that discourses circulated by school personnel as well as students draw on dominant and frequently disparaging if not contemptuous depictions of the Portuguese in Canada, thereby constructing, or consolidating, a notion of portugueseness. Portugueseness is accordingly attached to certain student bodies and populations who then are subject to disciplinary practices in school. The narrative arc I present in this thesis demonstrates a dynamic process in which subjectivity and identity are constructed, attached, disciplined. I suggest that both identity and subjectivity are at play in this dynamic because those who self-identity as Portuguese-speaking and/or with portugueseness construct their own identities and others also construct their subjectivities outside the identities that these
youth themselves construct. The following attempts to briefly explain this dynamic process.

At Westside portugueseness is constructed using dominant depictions of the Portuguese in Canada, but specifically those in Toronto. These depictions frequently disparage the capacity and interest of Portuguese Canadians to further themselves or their children via education. Portuguese-speaking youth are frequently met with low academic expectations from school personnel and thought to prioritize entering the labour market, if not directed to Applied Programs of Study as a result of said expectations. Reminiscent of deficit logics, the dominant depictions of Portuguese-speaking youth, as the forthcoming data illustrate, are at times contemptuous of their and their community’s inability or refusal to integrate into English-speaking Canadian society and appropriately value and prioritize schooling to secure their children’s futures. The aforementioned not only constructs portugueseness, but it selectively combines and establishes a rigid notion of portugueseness, or a consolidated notion of portugueseness, especially in schools where Portuguese-speaking youth and communities are increasingly present.

In addition to consolidating (combining and rigidifying) portugueseness, these dominant depictions of Portuguese in Canada are attached or ascribed on to youth. This occurs as assumptions are made about a student who is presumed to be Portuguese or Portuguese-speaking. Finally, the Portuguese-speaking student and portugueseness itself is disciplined in classrooms and elsewhere throughout the school in a variety of ways that I elaborate in chapter four as disciplining language, dropout and disability.

The process of consolidating, attaching and disciplining portugueseness informs the educational trajectories of many Portuguese-speaking youth, particularly those who
struggle to achieve academically. Portugueseness, therefore, is key to assembling my theoretical framework for its consistent and salient presence in the identities and experiences of my study participants. Portugueseness functions as both an analytical and conceptual tool in and of itself, and as a hub that connects several theoretical concepts and tools.

The construct of portugueseness is rooted to people, and, while I might speculate that this is more widely present elsewhere in Canada (Nunes, 2003) and abroad (Abreu, Silva & Lambert, 2003; Barradas, 2003; Nogueira & Porteous, 2003), for the purpose of this study portugueseness is rooted to dominant depictions of Portuguese in Toronto, and draws on their ancestral connections being predominantly those of agrarian and rural continental Portugal and to an even greater extent the islands of the Azores, and particularly São Miguel. As I demonstrated in the literature review, and to the extent that they have widely been considered as contributing to Canada’s social, political, and economic fabric, Portuguese Canadians in Toronto continue to be understood and constructed as under-educated, if not uneducated, un- or under-skilled, politically disengaged, culturally and linguistically isolated but economically integrated and sustainable. Within Toronto’s K-12 education system, the children of Portuguese Canadians have remained among the lowest academically performing student populations for several decades as well as disproportionately among the least represented in postsecondary education. In Toronto, Portuguese Canadians are periodically recognized for their contributions to “building” Toronto (a choice word given their prevalence in Toronto’s construction industry), ethnic infusion given the presence of Little Portugal particularly during international soccer tournaments, and periodic political engagement.
given current representation of one Portuguese Canadian Toronto city councilor, and past representation of one Portuguese Canadian MPP and one MP. Despite these ostensibly positive portrayals, dominant depictions of Portuguese Canadians have hardly changed from those outlined previously. Such dominant portrayals of Portuguese in Toronto, both within and outside of schools, therefore, reflect marginalized identities that require critical reflection and analysis using the following theoretical concepts.

My participants, both immigrants and those born in Toronto, expressed that at Westside they are subject to being identified, either accurately or mistakenly, as Portuguese. Participants who were newcomers to Toronto made this most apparent by describing how in Portugal they were simply students whereas here they are known as Portuguese students. The process of identification is accompanied with a simultaneous process of subjectification, or an assigning of portugueseness and those dominant depictions previously discussed. Brazilian participants who insisted on correcting misidentification revealed the undesirability of being assigned or associated with portugueseness. Identities appear flattened. Therefore, a theoretical framework is required that reveals the multiple dimensions of Portuguese-speaking student identities and accounts for how the student subject (subjectivity) is constructed.

To explore participants’ complex and intersectional identities (race, ethnicity, social class, language, gender, and citizenship or immigration status) and experiences requires theoretical concepts that explain how their identities come to be shaped by and attached to portugueseness in schools, and how portugueseness informs their school experiences and interactions with teachers, administrators and other students. I begin by drawing on Foucault’s theoretical concepts of discourse, power and subjectivity to
illustrate how discourses that participants consistently encounter at Westside, from school personnel as well as those they at times enact themselves, consolidate portugueseness using dominant depictions of Portuguese Canadians that come to shape and define Portuguese-speaking students’ subjectivities. Additionally, I mobilize intersectionality to analyze how categories of identity come together to inform particular lived experiences (both of privilege and marginalization) but also to connect the translocations of Portuguese-speaking youth through diasporic connections and historicity that continue to inform the construct of portugueseness.

I follow this by discussing the role Portuguese-speaking students’ subjectivities (which are attached to portugueseness) play in their school experiences and interactions with teachers, administrators and other students. In explaining the schooling experiences and trajectories of Latino/a, Spanish-speaking youth in Southern Texas, Valenzuela (1999) forwarded the concept of subtractive schooling, which draws on both Cummins’ (2001/1986) work that focuses on the role of language in subtractive assimilation, and Noddings’ (1984, 1992) politics of care. These theories reveal how the marginalization and decimation of language and culture in schools leads to lower levels of achievement, increased rates of discipline including suspension and other factors that negatively impact these youths’ life trajectories. In Toronto, research on Latino/a, Spanish-speaking youth reveals how language and culture, as well as nationality through anti-Mexican rhetoric, inform the marginalization and reduced educational outcomes of Latino/a students (Gaztambidez-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011).

Finally, as the identities and subjectivities of Portuguese-speaking students suffer the consequences of discourses that position their language and culture as antithetical to
learning and academic success, I draw attention to the resistances that Portuguese-speaking students exhibit in the face of such power. Eve Tuck’s theoretical concepts of humiliating ironies and dangerous dignities (explained in this chapter) urge me to consider how, where, and when students point out discourses (language, policies, and practices) that construct and discipline portugueseness. Participants manage to uncover and explore if not fully construct counter-narratives about their identities or portugueseness, and engage in practices that intentionally resist and defy subjectivities that reconstruct them as at-risk.

**Foucault: discourse and subjectivity**

I draw on Foucault from a sociological imperative; concerned with the lived experiences and encounters of Portuguese-speaking students at Westside, which is rooted less in philosophy and firmly in sociological inquiry and social interactions and relations, or bottom-up sociology Hacking (2004) attributes to Irving Goffman, and how these interactions and relations or “forms of discourse become part of the lives of ordinary people, or even how they become institutionalized and made part of the structure of institutions at work” (278). How Portuguese-speaking youths come to understand school success and their schooling experiences is likely informed at least in part by their subjectivities. Foucault’s definition of the subject, which I draw from Prado (2000), is informed by internal and external forces and has two aspects: being subject and experiencing subjectivity, or as Coloma (2008) terms “self-making and being-made” (11). First, in the context of school, students are subject to regulations and regimes of discipline by others, institutions and the state. While it may or may not be the case that all students are subject to the same regulations and regimes of discipline, some students are
disproportionately surveilled according to, and therefore suffer the effects of certain regulations and regimes of discipline. In other words, not all students are subject to the same school experiences. In addition to being subject to, students experience subjectivity or an awareness or consciousness that informs their aims, desires, and self-image. Bourdieu’s notion of habitus suggests that to a great extent our upbringing, surroundings, and those who make up our closest networks significantly influence our future opportunities and sense of support. On the other hand, Foucault suggests that discourse – including language, images, and policy, among other practices and techniques – constructs our subjectivities. Subjectivity informs how one perceives oneself and how one perceives that others perceive one. Portuguese-speaking youth may define success in relation to what they perceive themselves capable of and what they perceive others think they are capable of.

Foucault’s concept of discourse is generative in its ability to account for what is said and done to construct how we come to know ourselves and how others come to know us. Discourse refers to “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; 80). In other words, discourse includes utterances, statements made and questions asked, as well as a set of practices. Formal education and schooling was a particularly generative place where Foucault identified many discourses in schools that regulated students’ lives and identities (Foucault, 1991). “Discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, ‘docile’ bodies. … It dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an ‘aptitude’, a ‘capacity’, which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of energy, the power that might
result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection” (138). Discursive formations, or discursive practices, operate to maintain the regulated students’ schooling lives and identities, as well as to exclude those who resist or fail at schooling and its discursive regime. Foucault uses discursive formation to refer to the regular associations and groupings of particular types of statements by institutions (schools) that have effects on individuals (students) and their thinking. More than merely a set of statements aimed at regulating students, Mills (2009, 54) suggests that discourse has effects on the subject and that we should “think of a discourse as existing because of a complex set of practices which try to keep [a set of statements] in circulation and other practices which try to fence [an other set of statements] off from others and keep those other statements out of circulation”.

Foucauldian scholars themselves frequently critique Foucault for superficially or altogether ignoring the role of categories of race, ethnicity, and gender. While Foucault’s theoretical concepts and tools of discourse, power and subjectivity have been mobilized by many race and gender scholars, there is a need to attend to these categories of social identity and meaning, among others, using frameworks specifically designed to address the social, economic, and political consequences and outcomes of complex intersectional identities.

**Intersectionality**

As discussed earlier, Portuguese-speaking Canadians constitute a racially, socially, and economically diverse group. The use of language categories to gather student information by the TDSB has thus far unacknowledged this diversity. As a result, a study of this population requires a critical theoretical framework that can account for and engage the
complex dynamic of multiple identities and subject positions (race, ethnicity, class, gender, immigration status, language) and the contexts, spaces and settings, if not translocations (Anthias, 2012), that inform these identities and subject positions. Moreover, the usage of a language-based category to group students “at-risk” needs careful critique. Intersectionality offers such a dynamic framework. Feminist theory and critical legal studies produced some of the more significant theoretical interventions in studies of race and gender; marking a shift from reproducing deficit thinking to critically analyzing race-based and gender-based systems of domination and oppression.

From its early focus on the failure of race-based and gender-based research to account for the experiences of women of colour in particular, intersectionality has evolved to employ various lenses to analyze how multiple systems of oppression (social, political and economic) link or interrelate to inform the experiences and lives of marginalized individuals and groups. Scholars, such as Leonardo (2012), insist however, that race be central and foregrounded in any intersectional analysis, as this has not always been the case. His insistence respects the epistemological and ontological traditions of Black Feminist Theorists from whom intersectionality emerged (Collins, 1990, 1993; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989, 1994). A focus on race brings a new dimension and a new challenge to a study of Portuguese-speaking youth, given that race is among the least employed analytical categories for this diverse population. One must acknowledge that despite the racial diversity present within this category, many Portuguese-speaking Canadians are racially defined as white. This racial complexity can nevertheless be interrogated using an intersectional framework, and many new directions in intersectionality have opened space for such a project on race, ethnicity, class, and
gender with such a population (Gilborn, 2010; Anthias, 2012). Moreover, by framing dominant depictions of portugueseness, particularly but not exclusively in schools, as a racialized identity construct, I contend that portugueseness and therefore Portuguese-speaking youth who are associated with portugueseness are constructed as non-white in schools.

These and other scholars employing intersectional analysis resist, interrupt, and strategically employ categories such as race and ethnicity. Of McCall’s (2005) three approaches to the study of intersectionality this study adopts a hybrid of an anti-categorical and intra-categorical approach, consistent with an ethnographic methodology. Of the three, these two approaches are intimately linked. In this study both approaches are used to interrogate and interrupt if not resist Portuguese-speaking as a category, as well as to complicate a binary understanding of academic and non-academic success. The category Portuguese-speaking has revealed little concerning the lived school realities of those youth the category Portuguese-speaking supposedly represents. Instead it has created an insidious association between Portuguese language, diasporic nationalism, and class and labour, and by extension Portuguese culture or portugueseness, and lower levels of academic achievement. This form of categorization has effectively created a homogenous identity for those who speak Portuguese or have Portuguese ancestry, which is further insufficient given the racial, cultural and other differences among Portuguese-speaking communities that this study has raised. Moreover, the success binary, which esteems academic success, does not account for the economic success that many Portuguese-speaking youth have achieved and continue to pursue, particularly in favourable economic and employment conditions.
This reveals the contextual and locational factors that inform intersectionality more recently. Anthias’ (2012) work on hierarchies of social location introduces a translocational frame that accounts for social locations and historicity, as well as attention to boundaries, both crossed and reinforced through categories of exclusion and inclusion. Intersectionality embraces a definition of marginalized groups as “those who have been deemed illegitimate; that is, groups for whom one of their primary identities has come to signal inherent inferiority” (McCready, 2010; partially quoting Cohen, 1999). From the opposite perspective concerning race, “Whites do not experience marginalization within a society whose edifice verifies their existence” (Leonardo, 2012, 444). I contend that one can interpret Leonardo’s quote to also include institutions, such as education, in place of society. Within the space of schooling and the field of education, Portuguese-speaking students in Toronto are positioned within a hierarchy of academic success that has consistently and historically located them among the lowest achieving students. Such low achievement levels are often explained by the agrarian origins and low levels of schooling attained by Portuguese immigrant parents. Crossing the achievement threshold is often regarded as exceptional but acceptable within a multiculturalism ideology that privileges and associates educational success with whiteness. The process some Portuguese-speaking students engage in to cross that achievement threshold reveals practices of distancing oneself from portugueseness, adhering to language disciplining, and thus demonstrating an active investment in whiteness (Lipsitz, 2006). Conversely, some students manage to achieve academically despite resisting institutional responses to portugueseness. Their accomplishments are significant in light of their schooling
experiences in a subtractively assimilationist school where their cultural wealth and knowledge are frequently questioned and dismissed.

This leads me to consider the persistent, multi-generational academic underachievement of Portuguese-speaking students particularly in Toronto but also elsewhere in Canada. Earlier evidence and more recent anecdotal accounts of streaming of Portuguese-speaking youth into terminal and applied programs of study (Curtis et al., 1992) leads me to conclude that indeed despite being racially categorized as White, Portuguese-speaking youth are racialized (through dominant depictions of portugueseness such as language and comportment, class and labour, and at times their national or diasporic connections to Portugal) as non-Whites, albeit contextually and locationally, I argue, in schools. Furthermore, those who manage to excel academically are regarded as exceptional, similar to many other racialized youth including Black and Latino youth, further confirming that within the space of schooling and field of education, Portuguese-speaking youth are deemed illegitimate and signaled as inherently inferior. Education and schooling has long been mobilized as a tool to exert social control to “[maintain] the hegemony of those of high intelligence in a society in which the mass of the population was believed to be at best of average intelligence” (Apple & Franklin, 2004; 75). Race, culture and disability continue to converge in ways that see minority students, especially students of colour, disproportionately represented in Special Education classrooms and remedial programs or identified with a learning disability or an Individual Education Plan.

Nevertheless, White minority Portuguese-speaking youth experience degrees of privilege and passing. Data on ethnic white Portuguese-speaking youth reveal that some
occupy a liminal racial identification, particularly in school. Intersectionality provides a conceptual framework that accounts for racial and class oppression as it intersects with other systems of oppression to interrogate instances of white privilege and passing, as well as instances of racialization (Gillborn, 2012). This will be immeasurably important for this population that demonstrates both persistently low levels of academic achievement and high school graduation, and youth whose educational trajectories lead to economically stable jobs. It is necessary to account for the investment many Portuguese-speaking Canadians have in whiteness (Lipsitz, 2006). Whiteness is the unmarked category that anchors not only the Black-White binary but also relationally constructs difference and the Other (Lipsitz, 2006; Razack, 1999; Thobani, 2007). Ethnic white Portuguese-speaking Canadians, particularly Portuguese Canadians, have economically benefited from their possessive investment in whiteness. Indeed their most defining qualities; economic stability and higher than average levels of home ownership, are material benefits resulting, at least in part, from whiteness. This investment has not, however, paid dividends in education. Like people of colour, the challenges faced by Portuguese-speaking Canadians in education continue to be explained through cultural factors (read deficit models) as opposed to structural social problems. Intersectionality offers a framework with which to interrogate racial, class, and gendered systems of oppression that inform this phenomenon in the context of schooling.

Returning to Anthia’s analysis of contextual and locational factors that inform intersectionality, while global racial and class contexts may share similarities there are local (take Quebec for example) and national contexts that inform specific race and class, even gender dynamics in Canada. A variety of social, professional, community, and
research experiences, as well as literatures inform my thinking about race and racialization related to Portuguese-speaking subjectivity in Canada. Too often to ignore, I, as well as others (Gomes, 2008; Pacheco, 2004), have heard ethnic White Portuguese-speaking youth in Toronto either or both dis-identify with White racial subjectivity or/and identify as racialized. Their narratives suggest that race is salient in their lives, if not always then in certain circumstances and spaces (read school). This represents a symptom of a multicultural society, where immigrants and their children, not only newcomers, are encouraged to continue to identify with their cultural and ethnic origins. The promise and legacy of multiculturalism policy\(^3\) is a (slow) shift from tolerance to valuing diversity of culture, experiences, and knowledges. This is distinctly different to the American model, despite recent and emerging U.S. categories that acknowledge cultural hybridity. Benefits of Canadian multiculturalism include greater cultural diversity and inclusion, but multiculturalism fails to account for the fact that not all cultures are tolerated, appreciated or esteemed equally, that inequalities exist at a structural and cultural level, and that institutional and structural mechanisms exist to maintain these inequities. Moreover,

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\(^3\) Language, specifically English and French, has played a key role in official multiculturalism policy in Canada, and is framed in the 1967 Final Report on the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. Haque traces “how a national formulation of “multiculturalism within a bilingual framework” emerged to install a racial order of difference and belonging through language in the ongoing project of white settler nation-building” (2010: 4-5). She goes on to explain how “language was identified as a fundamental element of culture by the commission and mobilized as an essential component of culture for the “founding races”, even as it was deemed to be a private and peripheral element of culture for “other ethnic groups”. Furthermore, by fixing narrow definitions of “multicultural” and “integration” in federal legislation, claims for substantive and collective forms of recognition from the state for other ethnic groups could be limited. In this way, with the concurrent changes to immigration legislation that were also taking place in the 1960s, language and culture were mobilized through the national formulation of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework in order to incorporate people into the contemporary, racialized hierarchy of belonging and citizenship rights” (Haque, 2010: 6). Education and schooling continues to play a significant role in privileging bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada. In this sense, unlike the cultural and linguistic diversity suggested in multiculturalism policy, the B&B Commission reflects an assimilationist approach to language and culture in schools, impacting Portuguese-speaking students whose “mother tongue” is neither English nor French. In Toronto, the struggle at the elementary level to secure international languages instruction that is integrated into students’ school day (no equivalent exists at Westside) reflects the deprioritizing of non-English language instruction.
multiculturalism fails to account for the fact that certain material consequences are felt as a result of maintaining one’s culture and language, such as employment discrimination and, of course, educational marginalization.

Portuguese-speaking Canadians have historically been constructed as traditional, religious, pre-modern, and at times illegitimate whether through the religious symbols that adorn their homes, traditional patriarchal gender-relations that restrict the freedoms of women and girls (Barata, McNally, Sales & Stewart, 2005; Noivo, 1997 Giles, 2002), the lower levels of formal education (Nunes, 2012), or pre-modern customs that imperil their children. In an analysis of legal proceedings in Toronto - that constructed Portuguese in Canada as illegitimate and threatening to Canadian values - Razack revealed how the immigrant bodies in the court room (Portuguese-speaking spectators, as well as herself, and the lawyer, a woman of colour on trial and accused of collaborating with the migrants) were positioned as “degenerate, that is to say, uncivilized, irrational, and immoral” as compared to the judge and white crown attorneys who were constructed as “respectable – that is to say, civilized, rational, and benevolent” (1999, 162). Through his verdict and accompanying decision the judge not only rendered a judgment

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4. The tragic murder of Emanuel Jacques, also known as the Shoeshine Boy, drew unwanted and unparalleled attention on parenting in Toronto’s Portuguese community. Anthony D’Sa, a celebrated Portuguese Canadian writer, admits that after Jacques murder, his parents “felt real guilt that they had to work so hard and yet they couldn't protect us from what was going on out there” (MacDonald, 2018). Jacques, like so many of his peers, was permitted an independence that frequently saw him working (shining shoes on Yonge Street) to help support his family’s expenses. More recently, I spotted a poster at an LCBO on Dundas Street, West of Dufferin Street and in the heart of Little Portugal, that read: “Did you know that only people 19+ can legally handle alcohol in LCBO stores?”. I have never seen this poster at another LCBO, and its placement at this store in a dense Portuguese-speaking neighbourhood struck me as suspicious. Instead of speaking to underage youth, this sign seeks to correct parents (likely Portuguese-speaking) whose children accompany them when shopping at the LCBO. Such a sign risks imposing judgment on these parents for allowing their children to handle alcohol, which is culturally understood differently elsewhere in the world.
concerning professional standards and practice, he also took significant liberties to judge immigrants and their lack of suitability and respectability within a white nation.

The immigrant/migrant/refugee subject is constructed through a binary construction of relationality based on many factors including the historicity and social encounters that construct subjectivities (Anthias, 2012). The courtroom, like the classroom, constitutes contextual and locational specificity where marginalized bodies are othered. In the court case Razack describes, the white judge and lawyers assume a normative status whose qualities become the measure of human worthiness. The courtroom is just one institutional setting in which immigrant bodies, including Portuguese-speaking bodies, are subject to certain regulations that render them illegitimate. Given my interest, I look to explore if and how immigrant and diasporic subjectivity informs the school outcomes and constructions of success of Portuguese-speaking students.

Foucault’s definition of the subject, which I draw from Prado (2000), has two aspects: being subject and experiencing subjectivity. First, one is subject to regulations by others, institutions and the state. Second, one experiences subjectivity or an awareness or consciousness that informs one’s aims, desires, and self-image. While all individuals are technically subject to the same regulations within the nation state, the subaltern subject disproportionately experiences the effects of those regulations. Subaltern subjects experience subjectivity through a racist and classist multiculturalism framework that privileges Whiteness, not necessarily as a person, but as a group of values, knowledges, traditions and behaviours that represent Whiteness, which touches on which cultural wealth is valued (Yosso, 2005). Schools consistently reproduce racial, classed and
gendered hierarchies. For example, student achievement, intelligence, and success, according to Ladson-Billings (1998), are conceptual categories that become normative categories of Whiteness. The effects of privileging Whiteness have been shown in many studies for youth of colour, but not for Portuguese-speaking students, at least neither compellingly nor conclusively. Additionally, experiencing subjectivity (being aware) is not always self-apparent, and even when it is, it is not always problematized or critiqued, which can be the result of the degree of oppression one experiences, often mitigated by White privilege. This may explain relatively low levels of activism among Portuguese-speaking Canadians in Toronto concerning the educational phenomenon that characterizes their youth. Leonardo (2012) states “a minority group whose plight has not been fully acknowledged and whose struggle is not yet resolved, the drive for recognition remains strong” (433). One might say that this has not characterized Portuguese-speaking Canadians when it comes to education.

An intersectionality framework centres race while addressing concurrent and linked systems of oppression such as ethnicity, class, and gender. This framework must be situated within a Canadian multicultural context to account for how not all “Canadians” are afforded the same experiences and opportunities. This is a common critique of multiculturalism policy that identifies the material and symbolic differences that continue to limit the education and employment trajectories of marginalized ethnoracial, language minority youth.

**Subtractive schooling: missing educação in education**

Youth narratives such as the one that opened this chapter richly illustrate an aspect of subtractive schooling that Valenzuela (1999) outlines in her ethnography. The
teacher-student relationship in the opening narrative of this thesis fails to demonstrate respect and care for the student by drawing on dominant depictions of Portuguese Canadians and consolidated portugueseness to direct an otherwise bright, motivated and capable student to an applied program of study and disciplining disability, which I illustrate in chapter four. Such a discursive practice constructs Portuguese-speaking youth subjectivity as underachieving using deficit logics. These same discourses construct teacher-student relationships through subtractive assimilationism that these youth continue to encounter in their schooling experiences at Westside High and elsewhere in Toronto. Deficit theory explanations for the disproportionately lower levels of achievement for ethnoracial linguistic minority youth have rightly been critiqued for their racist, essentialist and eugenicist origins. Generally, Valencia and Solorzano (1997) describe a rubric of deficit thinking that includes the following variants: “genetic pathology; culture of poverty; cultural and accumulated environmental deficits” (160). Social reproduction theorists (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Willis, 2000) and cultural ecology theorists (Ogbu, 1978, 1991, 2008; Matute-Bianchi, 1991) have offered generative tools and concepts to explain the schooling trajectories of ethnoracial linguistic minority youth using broad social and cultural theories. Yet, many scholars since continue to imply, both explicitly and/or implicitly, that cultural norms or traditions, if not genetic deficiencies (Hernstein & Murray, 1994), influence academic (under)achievement and reproduce deficit, racialized notions of people of colour (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

While the current study had only limited engagement with parents and outside community through a few participants’ experiences, I acknowledge that community
actors and factors can play a role in the low educational achievement levels among Portuguese-speaking youth. Parental engagement and educational expectations play a crucial role in academic success (Glick & White, 2003), and this has more frequently been used to explain Portuguese-speaking student academic underachievement (Nunes, 1999). Parent engagement and dominant perceptions of the Portuguese community in Toronto have also frequently been the source of school- and community-based interventions, as I illustrate in the final chapter. Similarly, much of the current literature and increasingly the popular media locate the source of the Portuguese-speaking student underachievement problem in the community. Leading scholar on Luso-Canadian youth, Fernando Nunes, however, insists that Portuguese Canadian parents care deeply about their children’s education and points to the need to better understand these youths’ schooling experiences in order to complicate the current underachievement narrative concerning Portuguese-speaking youth. To this end, the same student narrative that opened this chapter and suggests deficit thinking in schooling also points to the subtractive assimilation and ethics and politics of care in schools that significantly inform the schooling trajectories of Portuguese-speaking youth in Toronto.

In her ethnographic study of U.S.-Mexican youth in a Texas high school, Valenzuela (1999) describes subtractive schooling in two major ways. The first is how schooling dismisses the Other’s definitions of education. In Valenzuela’s case, school dismissed a definition of education that was/is thoroughly grounded in Mexican culture, which more closely reflects Noddings (1994) and other caring theorists’ definitions of education. The second way schools subtract resources from youth is through “subtractively assimilationist policies and practices that are designed to divest Mexican
students of their culture and language” (1999; 20). A key consequence of these
subtractive elements of schooling, according to Valenzuela, is the social de-capitalization
of Mexican youth.

Valenzuela’s use of the concept and term educación, which draws on Mexican
culture, forms the basis of Mexican youths’ critique of school-based relationships.
Forming a concept of education beyond the schooling practices they experience in
schools, the Mexican youth in Valenzuela’s study reflected the idea of educación.

“Though inclusive of formal academic training, educación additionally refers to
competence in the social world, wherein one respects the dignity and individuality of
others” (23). The Portuguese term educação (note difference in accents) similarly reflects
on non-formal education that occurs in the family, or one’s upbringing. This might be
exemplified by the expression “Não sejas mal educado (which can be translated
depending on the context to “Don’t be rude, bad mannered, impolite or disrespectful”) or
as Valenzuela writes “a person who is mal educado/a is deemed disrespectful and
inadequately oriented toward others” (23). Educação similarly reflects moral, social and
personal responsibilities, as does educación. In Portuguese culture and language,
especially in the narratives of Portuguese-speaking youth, respect and education go hand
in hand. Teachers unfamiliar with the conceptually broader meanings of educação will
likely not understand the meaning and educação that Portuguese-speaking students derive
from engaging in reciprocal relationships as an integral part of their schooling.

Language plays a central role in subtractive schooling, and for some Portuguese-
speaking students language also plays a central role in engaging in reciprocal
relationships in school. Cummins (1984, 1986) described “subtractive assimilation” as a
non-neutral process that negatively impacts the economic and political integration of minorities, which in Canada, and Ontario in particular, Eve Haque (2012) explains, is highly informed by a bilingual and bicultural framework in education. “A key consequence of these subtractive elements of schooling is the erosion of students’ social capital evident in the presence and absence of academically oriented networks among immigrant and U.S.-born youth, respectively” (Valenzuela, 1999; 20). At Westside, networks are further eroded through the disciplining of linguistic practices and cultural values contained in the concept of educação.

A caring ethic, which Valenzuela asserts is contained in educación, fosters trusting relationships through commitment and continual expression of caring behaviours (Garza, 2009; Chaskin & Rauner, 1995). Caring behaviours for teachers, scholars contend, include high academic expectations, student advocacy, and implementation of pedagogical practices and tools that facilitate student achievement. (Garza, 2009, 2007; Nieto, 2004; Gay, 2000). In addition, however, Valenzuela insists that a caring ethic also account for the definitions that students bring to education that might otherwise not be accounted for in formal notions of schooling. Such an ethic does not privilege an aesthetic caring (Noddings, 1984) and differentiates between technical and expressive discourses on education; the latter being an ethic of caring that is situational and “has proper regard for human affections, weaknesses, and anxieties” (Noddings, 1984; 25).

It would be disingenuous of me to suggest that teachers at Westside do not care about their students. When asked, participants readily named one teacher at Westside, but rarely more than one, who they described as caring. Their narratives and my observations over my time at Westside, however, reflect many moments of a lack of caring ethic both
on the part of teachers and students, and an educational context that undermines and
dissmisses the community cultural wealth of Portuguese-speaking students (Yosso, 2005).
However, there were many ways that teachers and other staff at Westside demonstrated
care for their students. The atmosphere at Westside would not be described as generally
hostile or fearful. Many teachers were generally pleasant with their students. Some
dedicated considerable hours to athletics and arts-related extracurricular activities that
significantly improved the schooling experience for many of my participants and their
peers. Spaces, though irregularly supervised, were provided for students to play soccer
and basketball during lunch period. A caring ethic goes beyond such actions and
dispositions, however, and is sustained through trust and continuous expression of caring
behaviours expressed by high expectations (in the classroom and not only in the soccer
play room), advocacy and pedagogical practices that facilitate academic success.

At the same time, participant narratives and my observations reveal certain
practices and policies in school that illustrate teachers carelessly relate to their students in
ways that needlessly and negatively reproduce dominant depictions of portugueseness,
dismiss or belittle community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and generally lack a caring
ethic. Students often admitted their part in teachers’ uncaring responses, whether because
of their poor attendance or uneven interest in assigned schoolwork; some even suggested,
“it must be hard to teach [us]”. However, participants sought validation for their
individual circumstances that inform certain orientations and responses, or dangerous
dignities (Tuck 2012) to schooling, and the lack of “respect” (or expressive discourses)
they receive from adults at school who have already consolidated an image of
Portuguese-speaking students as academically underachieving and inadequate, and
generally disinterested in school. Yosso (2005) references six forms of capital that youth
draw on to nurture cultural wealth, including aspirational, navigational, linguistic, social,
familial, and resistant capital. For Brazilian and Portuguese participants in this study,
these forms of capital reveal for some a possessive investment in whiteness (Lipsitz,
2006) that informs their life trajectories and economic opportunities after high school and
beyond.

Concerning care that promises to validate and leverage community cultural wealth
(Yosso, 2005) to benefit ethnoracial, linguistic minority youth, Rolón-Dow (2005)
forwards a “color(full)” critical care praxis that centres the role race/ethnicity and racism
continue to play in shaping the schooling lives and trajectories of marginalized youth in
schools. Valenzuela (1999) foresaw the need for caring theorists to account for “the racist
and authoritarian undertones that accompany the demand that youth at places like Seguín
High “care about” school. The overt request overlies a covert demand that students
embrace a curriculum that either dismisses or derogates their ethnicity and that they
respond caringly to school officials who often hold their culture and community in
contempt” (24–25). This critical care praxis therefore extends and is distinct from an
ethic of care because it is “grounded in a historical and political understanding of the
circumstances and conditions faced by minority communities, … seeks to expose how
racialized beliefs inform ideological standpoints, … and translates race-conscious
historical and ideological understandings and insights from counter-narratives into
authentic relationships, pedagogical practices and institutional structures that benefit
marginalized students” (104). Rolón-Dow’s critical care praxis emerges from LatCrit
Theory, a branch of Critical Race Theory, and as a result, the experiences of Portuguese-
speaking youth might contentiously be explored using this framework as a result of their liminal racial identities and consolidated ethnic identities. By drawing attention to the dominant depictions of portugueseness as well as its effects - as I do in this study - the racialized identity is placed in a suite of characteristics, dispositions, and behaviours, which transcend (while not excluding) the student’s body and race as it is understood, for example, as phenotype. My intention is not to situate Portuguese-speaking youth as youth of colour. Instead, I attempt to expose the essentializing aspect of portugueseness through certain dominant depictions that are beyond and at times misrepresent the attributes of a community. This is exemplified in how Portuguese-speaking youth and their parents are expected to not care about their education or assumed to not be graduating from high school. This process resembles in practice the racism that is experienced by many minority youth of colour, acknowledging that the effects of racism on the lives of the later have devastating consequences that are not necessarily experienced by Portuguese-speaking youth.

Several differences also exist between the experiences of U.S.-Mexican youth in Texas and Portuguese-speaking youth in Toronto, Canada. One example is that while Valenzuela found considerable differences between the cultural and schooling orientations of U.S.-born Mexican youth and U.S.-immigrant Mexican youth, there was not such a clear demarcation between the cultural and schooling orientations between immigrant or newcomer Portuguese-speaking youth and Portuguese Canadian youth, although there was considerable differences between the schooling orientations of Brazilian Canadian youth and Portuguese Canadian youth both newcomer, immigrant and Canadian born. Valenzuela’s finding in this regard is consistent with many scholars
looking at Mexican and other Latino/a youth in the U.S. (Rosa, 2014). Important
differences in Canadian and American territorial expansion may be at play. Ogbu (1991)
theorizes that involuntary minorities (which he describes as those in the U.S. as a result
of slavery or colonial occupation of indigenous land) demonstrate a different orientation
to education than voluntary minorities. The extent to which U.S. territorial expansion into
Mexico in the American South-West informs the dispositions of U.S.-born Mexican
youth in Texas where Valenzuela conducted her study is not my point, but, that the
Portuguese-speaking youth in Toronto and throughout Canada do not have a similar
involuntary/voluntary status which may account for the lack of difference between
newcomer/immigrant and Canadian born. However, whether a Portuguese-speaking
student identifies as newcomer, first- or second-generation in Canada, one’s association
with dominant depictions of portugueseness, on the other hand, is more indicative of the
subtractively assimilationist policies and practices to which one is subjected in school.
These dominant depictions of portugueseness also distance the individual from
whiteness, which this study exposes and unpacks through Intersectionality. While many
Portuguese in Canada and elsewhere consider themselves white, this identity appears to
be relational (compared to a British-Anglo racial identity) and conditioned on other
categories, such as social class. In other words, one’s ethnicity, at times, is not enough to
secure a white racial identity, and, in the absence of other categories to secure whiteness,
one’s identity shifts to a form of ethnic-whiteness or non-whiteness in certain contexts
and spaces, particularly in schools (Arruda, 2001; da Silva, 2011; Morgado, 2009; Noivo,
1997; Nunes Ari, VerCetty, & Branco 2018; Pacheco, 2004; Pereira, 2011, 2014; Reiter,
2012). Brazilian Canadians inherit an equally complex socio-racial structure from Brazil
(Barbosa, 2009). Notwithstanding the white privilege experienced by many individuals in Toronto’s Portuguese-speaking communities – an analysis offered by anti-racism scholars – the effects of racial liminality and uncertainty on schooling and success need to be interrogated if for no other reason than to clarify contributing factors to high rates of academic underachievement and early school leaving for Portuguese-speaking youth.

**Dropout, Pushout, Push-through.**

The average person in Toronto has little awareness that nearly one-in-three Portuguese-speaking students in Toronto fails to complete a high school education. Within some Toronto schools, however, Portuguese-speaking youth are particularly associated with this dropout rate, which indicates overall academic underachievement and troubled schooling trajectories. Concerning dropout, many scholars have weighed in on this topic, developing a field of study that conceptualizes early school leaving under the broad categories of dropout and the more recently pushout (Fine, 1991; Dei, et al., 1997; Tuck, 2012; Ogbu, 2008). The dropout has largely been conceptualized as a student who fails to complete the necessary requirements (academic grades and course credits) for a high school diploma. This may be for a variety of reasons peripherally related to achievement, including early entry into the labour market, truancy, complications with law enforcement, immigration status, or a host of other reasons. Ultimately, school success, and by extension the success of its educators, administrators and other school personnel, is measured by graduation rates and standardized test scores. Unlike dropout, the notion of pushout draws attention to the role schools (cultural and social) and broader education
structure and policy play in the early school leaving of ethnoracialized and linguistic minority youth.

While Tuck (2012) generally uses the term pushout to “describe the experiences of those youth who have been pressured to leave school by people or factors inside school, such as disrespectful treatment from teachers and other school personnel, violence among students, arbitrary school rules, and the insurmountable presence of high stakes testing” (61), her use of the term pushout, she admits, is not without conflict among her peers and in her own research. As one of her participant’s expressed it “I was never pushed out, I stepped out” (61). Tuck’s concept of school pushout, she writes, is “defined by a dialectic of humiliating ironies and dangerous dignities” that inform the academic outcomes and schooling trajectories of its students (60). Humiliating ironies are the “unintended consequences of school policies and the disrespectful interactions between school personnel and youth … because the ironies do not just serve to exclude youth from schooling, but assault their dignities in the process” (68).

Tuck suggests that the complexities of school pushout are “more than just a clash of institutional and personal responsibilities” (69). The consequences of school policies and disrespectful interactions between students and school personnel reveal and reproduce at-risk student subjectivities if not school outcomes including pushout. According to Lefebvre, Tuck writes, “dialectical logic gives this abstraction a concrete meaning” (68). What is described in this dialectic is a process of simultaneous cause and provocation of the other. The dialectic of pushout, therefore, is defined through the two notions: humiliating ironies and dangerous dignities; to explain how the former not only
excludes youth but assaults their dignities, while youth take up the latter as a “response to and in anticipation of this ongoing humiliation and hypocrisy” (68).

The notion of humiliating irony is revealed in students’ narratives as a result of school policies and practices (often difficult to expose) that exclude and assault their subjectivities and dignity. The other side of the dialectic, dangerous dignity, “is a stance of informed defiance”, “can be understood as a sense of justice and injustice that is felt in or on the body”, and “encompasses strategies employed by youth to re-vision who they are because of and in spite of their schooling” (85). According to Six Nations scholar, Taiaiake Alfred, dangerous dignity draws on anti-colonial, anti-imperial and indigenous epistemologies. Citing Alfred, Tuck writes, “the way to defeat the colonial state…is to struggle in creative contention to delegitimize it and to weaken belief and commitment in the colonizer’s minds, not by conforming the state on its own terms and playing to its strength, violence” (85).

Drawing, as Tuck does, on an Indigenous framework to situate dangerous dignity in particular, I am both curious and cautious to see whether this notion helps unpack the experiences of my participants and their location within a White, British and French settler colonial historical and present setting, and normalizing an educational institution that purports to educate youth through schooling. I am cognizant that Tuck specifies that “there are personal, professional, economic, safety, and health risks for the person with dangerous dignity. At the same time, when one stands in her own dangerous dignity it is risky to institutions and societies because hypocrisy, corruption, exploitation, and greed are exposed” (85). The consequences particularly faced by Indigenous and Black youth in schools more closely reflect the notion of dangerous dignity that Tuck defines.
Nevertheless, my participants suffered personal and professional consequences, and in some ways expressed concerns regarding economic consequences as a result of their experiences in school. Many too, however, referenced their personal, social and economic privilege in being able to pass as White, and for the males particularly, that the informal networks to blue-collar labour that they might access even without school differed from the experiences of their peers of colour.

As a researcher, Tuck’s notions of humiliating ironies and dangerous dignities also helped me to understand what I was seeing and youth were telling me about their experiences with school personnel at Westside. These terms, as descriptive and evocative as they are, no doubt more fully account for the schooling experiences of Indigenous and Black youth. However, I am hopeful that mobilizing these concepts to reveal and explain some of what these Portuguese-speaking participants experienced at Westside does no disservice to other marginalized youth. “By examining the extreme options to push and be pushed as a dialectic of humiliating ironies and dangerous dignities, we can begin to understand … pushed-out youths’ exits from schooling as not at all extreme, but rather as acts of self-preservation and political critique and defiance, even as repatriation” (Tuck, 2012; 69).

In the case of Portuguese-speaking students at Westside, I look at several humiliating ironies that students themselves point out as a result of processes of disciplining language, dropout, and disability. The dangerous dignities that some Portuguese-speaking students (portugueseness) take up at Westside are a response to schooling that is irrelevant to and disinterested in them, and sees them fully or partially deselect education. Educational deselection (chapter 5) is a process of disengagement
with school that is coupled with the belief, whether real or perceived, that they can access gainful employment in specific employment sectors as a result of social capital (labour networks) installed in their family and/or community. This belief affords many Portuguese-speaking students some security to (dis)engage with what they perceive as irrelevant curriculum. Their belief of access to particular blue-collar labour, in their minds, effectively mitigates the consequences of educational deselection. While these students disengage from irrelevant curriculum and school personnel that disrespect their dignity, they do not necessarily result in leaving school. Many of my participants saw school as fulfilling a social and community role in addition to academic. They understood the reduced expectations and policy-informed practices of teachers as requiring the bare minimum for them to remain in school despite being disengaged. As Tuck’s student gestured to the relationship between pushout and “stepped out”, this new reality offered some a third option; what I call push-through. My participants referenced their sense of being pushed through school, represented by the minimal effort demonstrated by many teaching personnel, the combination of policy-informed practices that permitted student truancy without removal from high school, and recognition for completed work regardless of when completed throughout the course. Many participants referred to the skills and knowledge they felt they ought to have obtained as a result of their high school education but lacked. Some participants framed this as feeling as if they passed a class to prevent them from repeating a grade (likely with the same instructor) or delaying their graduation to save the school’s damaged academic reputation.

Chapter guide: documenting and illustrating portugueseness at Westside
The theoretical framework I have just described is generative and provides me with several tools and concepts to analyze and unpack the data gathered over the period of a year as well as historical contexts that necessarily inform and have informed the schooling environments and lives of Portuguese-speaking youth today and in the past. The chapter that follows outlines the methods and methodological commitments that informed the study’s design, data collection, and analysis. The method chapter is followed by three data chapters that represent a narrative arc that illustrates the discursive constructions of portugueseness and Portuguese-speaking students, several practices that discipline portugueseness and reveal humiliating ironies experienced by Portuguese-speaking students, and finally what outcomes and dangerous dignities surface as a result of having to navigate such a schooling landscape. I conclude by applying the analysis of a politics of care and critical care praxis on to community activist work undertaken with two boards of education since 2011. The conclusion reflects on my involvement with two community-focused committees with the board and how dominant depictions of portugueseness prevail at the administrative and community levels as well as the school level, and how these ideologies inform policy interpretation and efforts aimed at improving the educational outcomes of Portuguese-speaking youth.
Chapter 2

Critical Ethnography and other Methodological Commitments

The critical ethnographic methodological approach used in this study reflects my concern with excavating the daily experiences of Portuguese-speaking students in a high school with a large Portuguese-speaking student population. It also reflects my concern with caring for Portuguese-speaking youth. I chose critical ethnography because as a qualitative researcher I sensed that maintaining a sustained presence in my participants’ lives at school would offer me greater access to their deeper feelings and thoughts about their schooling experiences. I was concerned with what Portuguese-speaking students might need me to know about their educational experiences, which for so long have been characterized as failing and/or underachieving, but, with the exception of McLaren (1999/1986), have never been researched within a school context. After all, “critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain” (Madison, 2005; 5). Additionally, qualitative researchers “interpret and make sense of the meaning people attach to their experiences or underlying a particular phenomenon” (Mayan, 2009; 11). I was committed to maintaining, if possible, a sustained presence with Portuguese-speaking youth in their school setting. It was abundantly clear to me, having volunteered for eight years as a peer-tutor for Portuguese-speaking students that more time and presence was needed to develop the sorts of relationships I would need to do this work. Previously, only Peter McLaren’s (1999) research originally conducted in 1986 had substantially engaged Portuguese-speaking students in a Toronto high school. Given the timely release of statistics on Portuguese-speaking youth underachievement (Brown, Newton & Tam,
2015; Presley & Brown, 2011), and the time that had passed since McLaren (1999) originally published his study in 1986 or Portelli, Shields & Vibert’s\(^5\) (2007) study, I knew that I had to work with Portuguese-speaking students in their school contexts.

Critical ethnography is a rich qualitative approach that “aims to expose power relationships through in-depth and sustained involvement in a research setting” (Fitzpatrick, 2013; 25). This sustained and in-depth involvement is key in order for the ethnographer to attend to the culture of the research site, or what Willis (1981) termed as the “logic of living” (121). The critical ethnographer “takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the status quo, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control” (Madison, 2005; 5). In education, critical ethnographies and ethnographers have understood the logic of living for ethnoracial (Dei, 1997; Fine, 1991; McCready, 2010; Yon, 2000), language minority (Farmer & Labrie, 2008; Gaztambide-Fernández, 2011; Goldstein, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999), and working-class (Willis, 2000; MacLeod, 2009; McLaren, 1999) youth within schools and in their wider societal hierarchies or structures, and questioned seemingly stable categories of race, ethnicity, language, ability, class and gender, among other categories, to reinterpret success and labels such as dropouts and academic underachievers (Anderson, 1989). The work of critical ethnography, or critical theory in action (Kinchloe and McLaren, 2000) requires political and theoretical lenses informed by its early beginnings “of dissatisfaction with social accounts of “structures” like class, patriarchy, and racism in which real human actors never appear” (Anderson, 1989, 249). Therefore, critical ethnography represents a robust methodology to engage

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\(^5\) Through a community connection I came to know that Dr. John Portelli conducted a study in a Toronto high school with a large Portuguese-speaking youth population. However, findings and analysis were not specific to Portuguese-speaking youth.
and foreground a race and class analysis on how schooling and subjectivity inform the academic lives and “failing” trajectories of Portuguese-speaking youth in Toronto.

Traditional ethnographic methods (interviews, participant observation, and deep hanging out) were employed in this study. However, more than a package of methods for collecting, observing, and recording social relations and the lived realities of participants, I use critical ethnography for its critique, which “implies that by thinking about and acting upon the world, we are able to change both our subjective interpretations and objective conditions” (Thomas, 1993, 18). As a way of working towards both subjective and objective change I aimed to include an aspect of counter-storytelling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) in this ethnography. Inspired by the articles that introduced me to the counter-stories of Black and Latino/a youth, I imagined, perhaps naively, that Portuguese-speaking youth would readily have stories that depicted an alternative image to the dominant failing or underachieving narratives. While a few participants easily accessed such narratives, others benefited from one-on-one interviews, informal conversations, and the group interview, which challenged them to reflect on and recount their daily experiences at school, thus revealing and self-articulating dominant narratives of Portuguese-speaking students that they were aware of only subconsciously. Perhaps because of its roots in Critical Race Theory, I was unsure whether the counter-stories that my participants recounted, such as Beatriz’s frustration of being asked time and again “Are you even graduating?”, counted as legitimate counter-stories. As a result of many of my participants’ liminal or ambiguous racial identifications, I questioned whether a necessary condition of and for counter-stories (from the practice of counter-storytelling that emerged from CRT) is a legitimate and consolidated individual and/or collective
claim to a racialized subjectivity or identification as a racialized subject. This remains an area of inquiry for my ongoing research in this area in critical whiteness and critical race studies.

My sustained presence at Westside allowed me to both talk to participants about their responses to certain inquiries as well as observe if, when, and how their behaviours and experiences revealed elements of disparate and divergent discourses that were active all at once. This posed a distinct advantage to a survey or even interview study that is less likely to encounter and interrogate such (in)consistencies. By gathering data through multiple methods (semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, daily classroom and school observations, and gathering a variety of texts including their assignments, reports and other records) I was able to document and later analyze and critique these (in)consistencies to further validate the findings in this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). These methods allowed for data triangulation by comparing participants’ words in both formal in-depth interviews, focus groups and casual conversation with observation notes and with textual and visual materials (such as photographs) gathered from the school and its surroundings (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe & Neville, 2014). In addition, my participants and I engaged in a reiterative process of knowledge production where I would revisit their past narratives and claims to ascertain whether or not I was accurately understanding their words and experiences. At times this produced contradictions, particularly, for example, when students in one breath would complain or speak disparagingly about their school or teacher and in the next breath would defend or praise them. Instead of dismissing and ignoring participants’ disparate or divergent discourses that are active all at once, I describe these in the analysis chapters and
maintain the messiness that is typical in a rich and complex ethnography and qualitative research.

Ethnographic methods also fulfilled an important ethical concern and commitment to youth, which was to be present with and for Portuguese-speaking youth in a sustained and deeply engaged manner. The little scholarly attention on the experiences of Portuguese-speaking youth in Canadian schools, despite the statistics-driven narrative of underachievement and dropout, indicated to me that these students are spoken about but not with. Student responses to school board surveys in which they identify as Portuguese-speaking are cross-referenced with achievement data, interpreted and distributed with lasting and painful consequences on their cultural identities and student/youth subjectivities. This is not meant as an indictment of the collection and use of ethnoracial- or language-specific data. Instead, I mean to acknowledge that despite the work of caring and committed teachers, including those at Westside High, students in Toronto’s Portuguese-speaking communities have long felt the absence of researchers who demonstrate an interest and concern for their academic well-being and success, and by engaging in an ethnographic project I could, to some extent, and certainly more so then through other methods, demonstrate that sustained emotional as well as intellectual interest and concern. I found myself helping a number of students, participants and non-participants, with their assignments and homework, discussing their concerns and confusion about secondary and post-secondary education, and navigating school and scholarship applications. This was only possible because I was available, day after day, where they went to school.
Describing Westside High School.

Westside High School is a multi-story building in West Toronto that has long served as a feeder school for the neighbourhood known as Little Portugal and the surrounding neighbourhoods, particularly along Dufferin Street. This geographic area is home to large Portuguese and Brazilian populations, and smaller Angolan, Mozambican and Cape Verde Islander populations (Teixeira, 2008). Major and active train tracks bisect this urban landscape, and the school’s industrial and concrete surroundings shroud any green space besides the schoolyard, which is rarely used by students for activities other than gym class or team practices and matches.

Its age and condition are revealed though the layers of yellow and blue pale-coloured paint covering the cinderblock walls, speckled concrete floors, lowered and discoloured paneled ceiling tiles the peeling paint in its stairwells, the crumbing steps at its main entrance and the ribbon of small sealed windows that wrap around the building just below the ceiling of each floor, preventing sight-lines, fresh air, yet allowing a crack of daylight in each classroom. Hallway display cases, with a few exceptions, appear mostly forgotten and unchanged for years; displaying outdated programs and images that no longer entice students. In contrast, however, small nooks and landings feature colourful and creative murals and an arts open house displays student art throughout the school annually, including decorated and repurposed lockers. Students and teachers drop off their cars for servicing in the school’s large and relatively well-resourced automotive shop, senior-level construction classes build outdoor furniture in a well-equipped workshop which they submitted for competition and later donated to a local school. Several flat-screen televisions are located throughout the school and feature student-
produced programs. Despite these and other features that make Westside a combination of new and old, typical and uncommon, students and teachers regularly complained that they lacked a plethora of resources in their school. Many leave school for lunch, and those who stay gather in awkward spaces, often sitting on the floor in the hallways. Several teachers purchased and towed around projectors and speakers for class.

I selected Westside High because currently and historically it has had a significant Portuguese-speaking student population. In October 2014, 28.8% or 260 students at Westside reported Portuguese as the language spoken at home. School records at the time of my data collection, in 2015, indicate that Portuguese-speaking students made up nearly a quarter of Westside’s student body. However, these statistics are based on students’ survey responses and rely on self-reporting as Portuguese-speaking, which underestimates the number of Portuguese-speaking youth and youth of Portuguese and other Lusophone ancestry at Westside. Unofficial reports from a Community Relations Officer for over 20 years and teachers at Westside suggest that upwards of half of the student population is somehow linked to Portuguese language or culture. While the latter is likely overstated, the prevalence with which Portuguese was spoken in classrooms, hallways and other common areas at Westside indicated a significant presence of Portuguese-speaking youth at Westside.

**Gaining school access.**

The access that I enjoyed at Westside High was facilitated by several personal and professional connections, as well as the generosity of my informants and their teachers. My membership on a school board committee meant that several senior board
administrators knew me as a student researcher whose work focused on Portuguese-speaking youth. Through this work I came to know the former principal of Westside High who offered to introduce me to its current principal, whose consent to conduct my research at Westside I obtained in the summer of 2015 (see appendix). In addition to the lengthy ethical review process at the University of Toronto, I was required to complete an internal review process for the board. This delayed my ability to begin formal data collection until mid November 2015, however the principal granted me access to begin attending Westside one month earlier in October 2015 in order to develop relationships and establish myself as a part of the school community.

While the school board and principal at Westside represented one set of gatekeepers to enter the school, teachers were the ultimate gatekeepers of their classrooms. From the beginning I was forthright with teachers, staff and administration of my intention to listen to and observe the daily experiences of particularly Portuguese-speaking students at Westside in their classrooms and elsewhere in the school. Suspecting that teachers may be apprehensive to a stranger observing their classes, I assured them that my purpose was to observe students and not to assess their pedagogy or teaching. I observed students engage with teachers. The nature and content of these interactions were recorded and while I frequently spoke to teachers about those encounters the data in this study was drawn from the voices of students. I would often ask students about those encounters to better understand their impressions of those interactions and experiences.

More often than not I arrived at Westside High for first period; occasionally arriving before the bell at ten minutes to nine but mostly arriving as students, many of whom I came to know by name, were trickling into their classes within the first 10
minutes. I divided my time between several classrooms and maintained a sustained presence in these classrooms throughout the term. Besides being granted access, by which I mean a teacher agreed to have me as a regular observant and at times participate in his or her class, classrooms were selected for several factors. They were classrooms in which my participants were enrolled or present on a regular basis, as some students spent time in a classroom despite not being officially enrolled and others regularly were absent despite being officially enrolled. Another important factor was that the nature of the class might be conducive to classroom discussion and or group work, and therefore more student-student and student-teacher interaction to observe. For instance, my first classroom observation experience at Westside was in my colleague’s Grade 9 Science class (we had met in graduate school). While there, it became evident that the architecture, subject matter and content of some classrooms would be less conducive to my research. Whereas classrooms organized with rows of desks, oriented around independent and quiet work as well as extensive and formal lessons, were less conducive to student-student and student-teacher interactions, classrooms that were organized in small groups, involved collective and group work, and allowed students to work independently but in their groups generated a different atmosphere for my work. To be certain, the former was not exclusively representative of advanced level courses nor was the latter exclusively representative of non-academic oriented classes. In fact many university-level English courses were organized in small groups and involved collaborative group work. Additionally, students shared their experiences in classrooms in which I was not an observer, and, whenever relevant these experiences are also included as data in this study.
I spent a total of 89 days at Westside from the day I arrived in October 2015 to the graduation ceremony on June 29, 2016. I returned to Westside on several occasions in the Fall of 2016 to visit a few participants, but certain changes to leadership and teaching staff limited my access. Many of my participants had graduated, a few remained at Westside, and several left either to work or return to Portugal, or because they had been removed from Westside and placed in an alternative education program in a school elsewhere in the school board.

**Research participants.**

Unlike large-scale quantitative research methods (often involving surveys and statistical data) intended to produce broad generalizations and macro narratives, ethnographic (qualitative) research tends to reveal the specificities of a particular setting or context as well as deep and nuanced narratives of the relatively fewer participants it includes. The number of participants varies from ethnography to ethnography. For example, McCready’s (2010) study of Black queer youth participation in physical activity in urban schools focused on four participants, whereas Gaztambide-Fernández’s (2009) study on how elitism is constructed in elite boarding schools included more than 30 participants. This study on Portuguese-speaking youth involved 10 participants. Ultimately, elucidating the stories of a few raises important questions about the taken-for-granted and general assumptions of certain populations and phenomena.

Participant eligibility criteria for this study were minimal; yet, several key considerations informed the recruitment process. These key considerations reflect the diversity implicit in students who may identify as Portuguese-speaking, especially racial
and class diversity. Additionally, participants (inclusive of any gender identity or expression) were (1) between 14 and 19 years of age; (2) possessed a personal and/or familial connection or association (linguistic, ancestral, or cultural) to the category Portuguese-speaking. In order to achieve the racial, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity that I describe is inherent in the category Portuguese-speaking, I drew on purposive sampling (Palys, 2008) to strategically select participants who reflected the diversity listed above and who were able to engage on an ongoing basis in an ethnographic study.

The ten participants in this study represent a diverse range of Portuguese-speaking youth (see Appendix for a demographic chart). In mentioning the diversity of my participants my intention is not to suggest that these findings are somehow generalizable. Rather, I caution the reader who may have constructed a dominant depiction of Portuguese-speaking students in his or her mind to consider the racial, class, ethnic, linguistic, (dis)ability, immigration status, and other forms of diversity among these participants before making any assumptions about or perhaps dismissing who is and is not included in this study. Rather than painting a picture of each participant, which I leave to the data in the following chapters, the participant chart included in the appendix, along with its details, is provided as a tool for the reader to quickly reference each participant.

The study’s ten participants (four who identified as female and six as male) demonstrate national and regional diversity through either their place of birth or cultural and ethnic influences based on their parents’ places of birth. Three participants were born in continental Portugal, and one was born in the Azores, a semi-autonomous archipelago 200 kilometers to the West of Portugal. A single participant was born in Brazil. The
remaining five participants were born in Toronto. Of these, three had parents who were born in continental Portugal; one had one parent who was born in Portugal and another parent who was born in the Azores; and one participant had parents who were born in Brazil. Despite the ethnic and regional diversity that I anticipated self-identifying as Portuguese-speaking, I did not manage to recruit anyone from anywhere other than Portugal or Brazil. However, one of my participants had ethnic and cultural ties to Angola, where his grandparents were born. The absence of participants who identified as neither Portuguese nor Brazilian warrants investigating. As previously mentioned, a very limited notion of Portuguese-speaking informed the youth referred to me by teachers. The confusion others expressed having with the category Portuguese-speaking may have also contributed to why non-Portuguese and non-Brazilian students of Portuguese-speaking ancestry did not respond to my recruitment efforts. As a visibly White researcher studying Portuguese-speaking youth, my outwardly visible racial positionality may have deterred students from seeing themselves in my research. Finally, the eight classrooms that I observed and other spaces that I frequented at the school connected me with some youth at the school, but not all.

Nearly all of the participants lived in working-class neighbourhoods North of their school, which required a commute to school of 30 minutes or more. Two of my participants, however, lived closer to the school, in more recently gentrified neighbourhoods. During the study, one participant reflected on how gentrification was the reason he would be moving out of his family’s home. According to him, his family had decided to sell their home to take advantage of Toronto’s sizzling housing market. This left him lamenting both the neighbourhood he was losing and where he would move
Categorical confusion and recruitment

The category Portuguese-speaking, as noted previously, is riddled with confusion. The study’s recruitment poster targeted students who “self-identify as Portuguese-speaking”. At times I found myself explaining to students who my study was recruiting, correcting them on their assumptions about whom the category Portuguese-speaking included. Some Brazilian students, despite speaking Portuguese, assumed that the study targeted Portuguese students, as did an Angolan student who I only met near the end of my time at Westside. Students of Portuguese ancestry also confused my target audience. Canadian-born Portuguese students along with those born in Portugal but raised in Canada who questioned their linguistic fluency assumed the study targeted newcomer or fluent Portuguese-speakers. Still, some students were not confused by the category Portuguese-speaking. While these experiences indicated the complexity and confusion in the category Portuguese-speaking, the dominant perception from teachers, staff, administrators, and students was that my study was focused on Portuguese youth either from Portugal or of Portuguese ancestry. In fact, teachers exclusively referred Portuguese students to participate in my study, the vast majority of whom were underachieving despite clearly indicating that I was looking for the diversity I described earlier. The assumptions those at Westside surfaced about the category Portuguese-speaking troubled me, and present serious limitations and concerns about the utility and consequences of using this term, for example, in policy and program development.
Sourcing data

In this section I briefly list and provide some figures concerning the data sources for this study. Sections that describe each source in greater detail follow. Over the course of my 89 days at Westside I clocked over 500 hours of classroom observation, one-on-one interviews, a group interview, and informal discussions with participants and deep hanging out with participants and their friends, as well as spent time talking with teachers and staff. I regularly observed participants in eight classrooms over two semesters and attended school events, theatre and other arts performances, sporting activities (including indoor soccer over lunch), presentations, fieldtrips, assemblies, and graduation. I was asked to help plan and execute Westside’s Portuguese Heritage Month celebration, an experience that does not get explored in this text but that left me quite concerned about how portugueseness continues to be essentialized at Westside. I collected 14 formal semi-structured one-on-one interviews with participants that lasted an average of 80 minutes each. Participants completed a demographic survey prior to their first interview. Seven of the ten participants participated in a group interview that lasted approximately 150 minutes. While at Westside I regularly took pictures of the hallway art and displays, participants’ work with their permission, and photo documented the condition of the school. Finally, I collected newsletters, pamphlets, departmental, school and student reports when made available, and newspaper articles that discussed Westside High School and its students, programs and events.

Demographic survey

Participants completed a demographic survey prior to their first interviews that provided
some preliminary information on them and their families. An overview of the survey results is provided in the appendix. The purpose of this is twofold: (1) it collects certain data that can be tedious and unnecessarily occupies precious time throughout an interview; (2) it acts as a way of discussing certain results during the interview; (3) it introduces the participant to some of the topics that will be explored in the interviews. The majority of participants completed the survey without issue, but a couple struggled. David was unlikely to complete the survey unless I helped him. When I asked him the questions he was more than happy to talk about his responses. Miguel asked if I would scribe his responses while he answered the questions in Portuguese.

Field notes
Informal interviews, conversations, observations, and reflections in the field started as scratch notes and, when time permitted, expanded notes in my field notebook (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002). These included text as well as diagrams and maps. Students were initially very curious about my field notebook, a black, 2”x3” moleskin flipbook that I constantly carried in my back pocket and frequently added to through the school day. They were amazed by how much I wrote in such tiny yet neat print. In one classroom, students started referring to it as the “book of knowledge,” which I reminded them contained their words and experiences, which meant it contained their knowledge. Their enthusiasm was such that with their teacher’s permission I offered them their own book of knowledge (the same moleskin flipbook I used) in which they could leave advice for future students on life at Westside. My field notebook was logged by date and at times included reflections on my emotional response to a student interaction. Scratch notes were typed out into
lengthier field notes on my laptop at the end of the day, especially on days when I was unable to compose expanded notes in the field (Spradley, 1980). I kept voice-recorded notes when I was unable to write that I would include in those end-of-day field notes. Together, these strategies helped me to accurately reconstruct my conversations and observations.

**Interviews**

One-on-one interviews were critical to the findings of this critical ethnography. Participants would frequently discuss their schooling experiences in public, whether in class or surrounded by their friends. However, it was in the privacy of a one-on-one interview that some students revealed sensitive, often critical opinions about certain experiences and individuals, as well as how their schooling experiences impacted them emotionally and academically. It was not uncommon, therefore, for participants to express themselves emotionally during interviews. Several cried, some swore in frustration, yet others displayed the weight of the conversation by pausing and retreating in a moment of silence to consider their thoughts and feelings. I made space for such silences, giving participants time to consider their responses and to connect with the emotions that might otherwise be left buried. In every instance the interview deepened my relationship with each participant and their relationship to the study, to the extent that they would look forward to the next time we could talk.

Such intimacy was made possible because interviews were conducted in a locked room that was made available by the head of the English Department. Known as the “book room” to those in the department, it was a deep narrow room with a solid wood
door and a small window just below the ceiling that let in some natural light.

Bookshelves lined one side of the room, stacked with multiple copies of novels used by the English Department. It contained three chairs and a desk as well as some audio-visual equipment. Besides a few infrequent interruptions (despite placing a note on the door asking others to not disturb), the room was private and offered a suitable atmosphere for the interviews.

Scheduling interviews required a lot of patience on the part of the researcher, and perhaps too, although no one said so, on the side of the participant. Cancelled or missed interviews due to shifting work schedules, social commitments, or for no reason at all, was a common occurrence. On several occasions interviews were interrupted for one reason or another. In one instance this required me to schedule and meet with the same participant three separate times to complete one interview.

**Group Interview**

I originally envisioned two workshops for this study in which students would be shown how to use digital technology to document their counter-stories to the dominant narrative of academic underachieving Portuguese-speaking students. This never happened. One reason was that participants generally lacked interest in this collective activity, indicating when they started the group that they were uncertain whether they would commit to the focus group. A second reason was that I encountered several administrative barriers to preparing and using the iPad collection owned by the school. For one, adding applications on the iPads that might facilitate documenting their counter-stories, using images, video and sound, needed to be requested through the board. Additionally, the use
of the iPads was restricted to the Learning Commons, where I could not secure the participants’ privacy. Finally, the students were not able to save their works in progress on the iPad or work on them outside of the two workshops I had envisioned coordinating. The last reason was that as the second semester progressed I was increasingly competing with a myriad of activities and responsibilities that would keep participants from being present. Either sports games or practices, class projects, or their own work schedules, among other commitments kept them non-committal. Eventually, I coordinated a formal group interview or focus group with participants to discuss and unpack several topics that had arisen in the research. Fontana & Frey (2005) describe the formal field group interview as somewhat directive, semi-structured and phenomenological. In addition to being semi-structured, my group interview, as well as my one-on-one interviews, was informed by Paulo Freire’s (1993) use of focus groups as sites of critical pedagogical practice and exploration. I scheduled such a group interview to overlap with lunch and third periods on a shortened school day and provided food. A total of seven participants were able to attend a group interview that lasted roughly 150 minutes. A few arrived on time, others trickled in minutes late, one needed to leave early, and a couple only arrived some 30 minutes late after their friends messaged that the pizza had arrived and that they risked not getting any if they failed to arrive soon. At the time that I was emailing their teachers to excuse them from class, one teacher cautioned me on precisely the two students who were late, saying that their punctuality left something to be desired. Heeding his advice I planned to start with lunch followed by the discussion. Despite being warned, the students’ tardiness annoyed me slightly, a reflection that drew empathy for their teachers.
The proceedings of the group interview were audio-recorded and transcribed. Responses to activities during the group interview were recorded using a flip chart to visually capture their comments in order to provide them the opportunity to review their responses and confirm or correct my interpretation of their thoughts and beliefs.

**Documentary evidence**

In addition to the data that I collected from participants and through my observations at the school, I accessed several documents, some publicly available and others made available to me as a researcher at the school. Articles from local newspapers provided limited exposure to the historical context of Westside High. Other documents included yearbooks, departmental and classroom reports, and programs from events including graduation. A majority of documents collected, however, were informational and provided me with details about various events and schedule changes throughout the year. School staff and teachers also forwarded me emails that alerted me to school events and internal memos. At times, these memos discussed internal issues that reflected some of the complaints students had expressed to me. For example, one email discussed teacher absences, and how late arrivals by teachers with first period spares was resulting in first period classrooms without teachers. While students acknowledged their own attendance issues and at times made excuses, they also reflected on the examples offered by many of their teachers, who they complained were frequently late or all together missing from class. Absence or attendance was an issue on all fronts at Westside. Some memos alerted me to the scheduling of school events that administrators intentionally keep from students given their concerns about decreased attendance and participation on the day of certain
Data analysis: approaching data analysis as a critical ethnographer

It is impossible to describe my data analysis process without referencing my intellectual commitments to critical theory, post-structural epistemologies, and the generative insights from intersectionality. As a middle-class (but previously working-class), queer, male, gender-conforming, able-bodied, trilingual, Canadian-born, first-generation Portuguese Canadian doctoral student, I entered this project with my own experiences and biases. Throughout my own schooling I recall incidents and experiences of Othering, and I also submit that these were few as a result of rather successfully performing the expected role of the obedient student subject. This meant that I had to work hard and at times struggled to not impose my understanding of a “good student”.

Post-structuralism interrogates discursive constructions of the subject and how these are produced; how the ways that we talk and write about certain groups of people consolidate dominant depictions that frequently oversimplify, ignore or even deny more complex and accurate identities. The similar educational outcomes of racialized and poor youth in Toronto and Portuguese-speaking youth in Toronto made me question whether class analysis could fully account for the underachievement phenomenon. The tendency to explain Portuguese-speaking youth academic underachievement using class analysis displaces other lenses. For example, Nunes (2008) cautions that programs and resources allocated by race-based statistics exclude Portuguese Canadian youth from academic success interventions in schools. This gestures towards the need to expand our analysis of Portuguese-speaking youth underachievement to issues of race as well, which left me
wondering how else the experiences and needs of Portuguese-speaking youth in schools might be misunderstood and misrecognized. These represent my earliest forms of data analysis and inform how I proceeded to collect and analyze my data.

Several forms of analysis started early in the data collection process. I made marginal and reflective notes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) on the articles and other publicly available materials that I could find that discussed Westside High and its students. While in the field and after school hours, I produced reflective and marginal notes as I composed lengthier field notes from my scratch notes and brief field notes in my field notebook. These marginal and reflective notes often contained working codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Memoing (Glaser, 1978) occurred throughout my fieldwork, when possible, and was expanded after school when composing lengthier field and reflective notes. Memos became very important post-data collection when moving from working codes to pattern codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Analysis also informed and refocus aspects of the redesign of my study. For example, by analyzing how participants discussed and thought about “success”, informed by my early experiences socializing and observing students at Westside, I narrowed my investigation and refined my initial research questions (as elaborated in the study’s introduction). The casual resistance and disinterest with which students responded to my counter-story digital workshop informed the design of my work by instead seeking counter-stories within the interview and focus group process.

My participant observations continued to be focused on student (dis)engagement in classrooms, while also being attentive to how they articulated (through their words and actions) success in school. I observed their individual behaviours, peer-to-peer
engagement, and how they engaged with and discussed their relationships with the adults in the school. The data in this study are not presented as collated lists of the various ways participants went about saying the same thing. Rather, after disaggregating the data into various themes, certain categories and discourses emerged as central to the story I needed to tell about the educational experiences of Portuguese-speaking youth through critical ethnography. To do this, I selected rich and captivating narratives told by participants during interviews and informal conversations or recorded through my observations that represent those categories and discourses. All one-on-one interviews and some informal conversations were audio-recorded. This coupled with my practice of composing lengthier field notes in my field notebook and after leaving the school each day, and recording audio notes when necessary, contribute to the accuracy of the data. While the majority of my participants chose to conduct interviews in English, many used Portuguese phrases or words when they were not able to express their thoughts or emotions in English. Miguel was the only participant to speak Portuguese throughout his entire interview. Throughout the school day, however, many conversations were had in Portuguese in classrooms, hallways and elsewhere in and around the school.

Post-data collection, analysis involved translating working codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) into pattern codes, (Miles & Huberman, 1994) or code clusters that I organized in spreadsheets, assigning certain participant quotes and lengthier narrative exchanges, as well as observational field notes to categories in the spreadsheet. Pattern codes, or code clusters, emerged through the process of memo writing (Glaser, 1978) that inspired certain relationships between codes as a result of applying my theoretical framework to (theorizing) the data. In other words, as I wrote memos to make sense of
the data I was collecting in relation to my theoretical frameworks, the code patterns were emerging in my thinking. This is evidence of on-going data analysis, particularly in a field where one spends months and months observing and speaking with students and participants.

Despite the confines of my conceptual frameworks and research questions, I was presented with, as all critical ethnographers are, a multitude of information, and necessarily engaged in a selective process to determine relevant and irrelevant data (Miles & Humberman, 1994). This occurred throughout the data collection process and once the data was collected in field notes and reflective memos that simply were not going to answer the research questions.

**Chapter guide: the story arc of the data chapters**

The three data chapters that follow present a narrative arc, or a story, that emerged from the data analysis process. It is noteworthy, however, that despite the selective process, my analysis is informed by many data encountered throughout this year-long ethnography that is beyond the scope of this study. Most noteworthy are the countless interactions I had with teachers that presented Portuguese-speaking youth, including participants in this study, in ways that confirm the analysis put forth in the following chapters. The first chapter explores the discursive ways that dominant depictions of portugueseness are constructed and circulated at Westside High. The second chapter reveals some common responses, or disciplinary practices, to these dominant depictions of portugueseness. Finally, the third chapter considers the consequences these discursive and disciplinary factors have on the educational trajectories of Portuguese-speaking youth.
Chapter 3
Discourses of portugueseness and Portuguese-speaking student subjectivity

“You Gotta Meet Francisco”

After meeting with Westside High’s Principal, Mr. Hughes, I was invited to present my research project at the next faculty meeting. I was eager and nervous about the opportunity to discuss my research with Westside’s teachers. How might they receive me in their school, or their classrooms, how would they feel about the questions I was asking and my desire to observe Portuguese-speaking students’ experiences? I knew very well that teachers ultimately determined whether I would be able to observe my participants in their classroom or whether I would be left to simply interview students one-on-one. I knew the richness of students’ experiences included being in their classrooms and elsewhere on school property, which buy-in from staff and faculty would allow.

I arrived at Westside’s resource commons the evening of the faculty meeting and was greeted by Mr. Hughes, who invited me to take a seat anywhere I felt comfortable. Staff sat chatting and eating around clustered tables in front of a projection screen where Mr. Hughes stood. Further back in the resource commons was a long table with a variety of snacks and drinks; new and leftover treats from a previous school event. Staff gathered around here and at tall, cocktail-height worktables surrounded by four stools each. Casually scanning the room for a place to sit, I saw the only other person I knew, a friend from graduate school and teacher at Westside. With no spare seats around her table, I sat in the group next to hers. After struggling to get everyone’s attention, Mr. Hughes reviewed the meeting’s agenda and immediately got to introducing me and that he had
asked me to present my research study that he thought promised to be beneficial and well suited to Westside High. This was it, my first and perhaps my last opportunity to pitch my research to those who managed the spaces that I wanted to access. I knew that I needed to give them a sense of who I was and what I wanted to achieve. After briefly describing my academic and personal background as a Portuguese-speaking student, and how I was moved to engage in research in my community as a result of persistent rates of underachievement and drop-out, I turned to my study, the students that I wanted to engage and the questions that I wanted to ask about. I clearly articulated that I was interested in better understanding how Portuguese-speaking youth define and enact success. I clearly expressed my hopes to engage a diversity of Portuguese-speaking youth, including newcomer and second generation youth from Portuguese and other Portuguese-speaking backgrounds, including Brazilian, Mozambican and other ancestries. I highlighted an interest in both those who are struggling and succeeding with their academic studies. Then I discussed where I wanted to be in the school, and how one-on-one interviews only provide one perspective concerning the experiences of Portuguese-speaking students and how I wished to observe participants in this study in the classroom as well as elsewhere in the school. It was at this moment that I felt it necessary to assure them that my presence in their classrooms in no way was to assess their performance as educators, especially considering they were much more qualified as teachers to assess the performance of another teacher, and that that was not my area of specialty. My talk ended with a brief mention of how this research can inform the community as well as the school community and administrators about what Portuguese-speaking students experience and how they define success inside and outside of school. I
thanked Mr. Hughes for the invitation to speak and hoped to work with many of them in the forthcoming year. I took my seat and the meeting continued and I was invited to stay, which I did in hopes of speaking with a few teachers at some point during a break in the agenda.

Mr. Hughes continued with the rest of the agenda, but as soon as I reached my seat the young male teacher sitting next to me said in a hushed voice that I did a good job, and that he was surprised by how eloquently and clearly I spoke about my project because he could not recall having heard a Portuguese person speak like that. He added how the Portuguese students in the school could learn a thing or two from my example and extended an open invitation to visit his class anytime. Still feeling the rush of presenting - what in my mind and heart was a high stakes do-or-die presentation that could determine the viability of my research - I thanked him for the invitation and took down his name and room number. But, I distinctly recall feeling uneasy by his comment. What expectations of a Portuguese man had I shattered, especially since at least two work at the school? How had he expected me to frame my project, and what exactly could every Portuguese student in the school presumably learn from my example? And, what specifically was I an example of or for? Later, I would come to learn his colleagues and students that this teacher was a gifted and engaging educator. Nevertheless, in that moment I was reminded of how good intentions are not always enough to mitigate the damaging effects of certain discursive constructions of students’ subjectivity. His comments reconstructed Portuguese-speaking youth as more often than not inarticulate and in desperate need of my unique example that was otherwise missing in their community.
I sat and listened to the subsequent presenters, including an English teacher whose presentation drew on three themes from the Wizard of Oz (mind, heart and passion) to inspire teaching and learning among his colleagues at Westside. During a break in the agenda many teachers made a dash for the snack table, which those sitting near the back of the room had already been enjoying throughout the meeting. As I made my way to greet my friend and fellow graduate student I was intercepted by several teachers, one after another, who invited me to their class if it would help my project. I quickly jotted down each teacher’s name and what each taught. Pleased with their response I thought to myself that Westside’s was a generous and welcoming faculty. Indeed, many proved to be just that. Others approached me to share their own opinions or concerns about the academic underachievement of Portuguese youth (never referring to the population of concern as Portuguese-speaking, but, rather, Portuguese). One teacher repeated a common explanation; that the Portuguese community itself seems to care less about education. Another suggested that Portuguese students themselves do not seem to care about school and are spoiled by their hardworking parents. And, these and other teachers frequently named a student that I had to include in my study.

“Oh, you gotta meet Francisco. He’s perfect for your study; Portuguese student and without a doubt the biggest handful at Westside.” This is how one teacher referred me to Francisco while others around him agreed. Despite expressing in my presentation that I was looking for a diversity of Portuguese-speaking students for my study, what came to mind was the underachieving, troubled, and often male, student subject. Throughout the year, teachers continued to refer me to students who were struggling to achieve academically or were at risk of failing. Following my introduction, not a single
teacher came to me suggesting I interview a Portuguese-speaking student who was excelling in his or her academic studies, and in fact only once did a teacher suggest a student who was not struggling in his or her studies. Already, Francisco represented portugueseness in the minds of teachers at Westside High. Although Francisco spoke English, he was frequently heard speaking Portuguese inside and outside of class. He had an abysmal attendance record, which Francisco later revealed was because he worked part-time with his father in construction (in fact demolition). He was assigned an Individual Education Plan prior to arriving at Westside, and diagnosed with a behavioural exceptionality, meaning he frequently acted out, and did not socialize with others in ways commonly considered typical. These nuances were not widely understood and Francisco was generally identified as a “Resource” (or Special Education) student. If not in the Special Education room (commonly referred to as resource or the resource room), I regularly encountered Francisco walking the halls or loitering in an alcove just to avoid returning to class. Francisco remained skeptical about being a participant in my study, so you will not read much more about or from him in the chapters that follow. In a sense, however, the enthusiasm teachers expressed when insisting, “you gotta meet Francisco”, meant that Francisco represented the quintessential Portuguese (male) student at Westside High and exhibited dominant depictions of portugueseness.

**Discourses of portugueseness in education and rendering visible an invisible minority**

Portuguese students and Portuguese-speaking students are not one and the same, and these two categories are frequently conflated. While many students identify as both Portuguese and Portuguese-speaking, students who identify as Portuguese-speaking are
often generalized as Portuguese. While Portuguese Canadians are considered a predominantly White, Southern European-minority group in Canada, Nunes (2008, 2012), among others, proposes they inhabit a liminal identity and constitute an invisible minority community (De Abreu, et al., 2003; Januário, 1995; Santos, 2006). Generally excluded from the category of visible minority, Portuguese-speaking youth represent a racially and otherwise diverse population. For the most part, Portuguese Canadian youth are not always immediately identifiable and undoubtedly access many privileges associated with whiteness. That is not to suggest, however, that Portuguese Canadian youth and those thought to be Portuguese are not negatively impacted (by responses to their ethnic, cultural and racial heritage). Their invisible minority status is thwarted once their portugueseness is revealed. Da Silva (2011) sees portugueseness as defined through nationalism, language, diaspora, class and labour. Portugueseness is relationally informed by discourses of what constitutes Canadian. In the context of education, the participants in this study recount the many ways (including but not limited to the ideologies raised by da Silva) in which their portugueseness is revealed in school on a daily basis, the ways that some conceal their portugueseness, and the consequences that revealing their portugueseness has on their schooling experiences and academic success. Unlike the general invisibility of portugueseness within society at large, the presence and discernibility of portugueseness at Westside is frequently made visible through nationalism, language, diaspora, class and labour.

Participants in this study were asked to articulate how their portugueseness was revealed to others and whether revealing portugueseness had consequences on their schooling. In other words, students were asked to think about how their invisible minority
status became visible in their daily activities, whether at school or elsewhere, and what if any consequences resulted from being identified as Portuguese or Portuguese-speaking. While language, specifically speaking Portuguese, tended to be participants’ most immediate response, there were several other responses that were much less easy to communicate but that seemed equally important to their experiences. Of all of the ideologies that inform existing dominant constructions of portugueseness in the context of education, an important one was academic underachievement, or that portugueseness was associated with an unlikelihood to complete high school or pursue post-secondary education. More specifically, portugueseness was associated with cultural and community deficit in education and academic ability. This chapter follows the themes that emerged from participants’ narratives of revealing portugueseness. These themes reveal the dominant ideologies that participants perceived to be associated with Portuguese and Portuguese-speaking youth at Westside High. It is important to note that according to participants these views are not exclusive to Westside given that many could identify being exposed to these ideologies throughout elementary school if not in other high schools prior to arriving at Westside. Similarly, the experiences and challenges I observed through my involvement in community activist efforts with Portuguese-speaking youth at another high school in Toronto resembled the experiences of the participants in this study.

**Language**

Visible minorities are those who are immediately recognized as different in a White normative landscape. More often than not this is determined by visual cues including
dress, hair, and of course, the colour of one’s skin. However, visibility also comes with what one hears. A White normative landscape, particularly in Canadian schools, presumes English as the dominant and privileged language of instruction and sociality. As a result, one is rendered visible through speech acts. Speaking a language other than English can have important positive social and emotional consequences for students. Simultaneously, being heard speaking certain languages can have negative consequences and mark one as Other (Goldstein, 2003). While some are immediately identified as a visible minority even before they are heard speaking a language other than English, for others this becomes a primary mode of rendering them a visible minority.

Students felt they were most associated with portugueseness by being heard speaking Portuguese in school. Whether in class, the hallway, at social events, on the soccer pitch or at a local shop around the neighbourhood, speaking Portuguese immediately marked them as a Portuguese student. Those speaking Portuguese represented a large range of students, from newcomer to second generation, Portuguese to Brazilian to Mozambican, even from a Jamaican youth to a White Latino. Although certainly not everyone, anyone could be heard saying something in Portuguese. Beatriz admits that it is sometimes helpful to use Portuguese.

Sometimes I don't know words in English and I say them in Portuguese, and I’m like, oh I don't know how to say this word in English, I only know how to say it in Portuguese. Then you ask the Portuguese person beside you, how do you say this in English? And they won't know either, and then you're like oh well, I can't tell you, I can't describe it to you.

(Interview, April 23, 2016)

The use of Portuguese for Beatriz expands her vocabulary. Her efforts to connect what she knows to an official language of instruction in her school necessarily reveal her portugueseness. It also reveals the portugueseness of the student beside her, or any other
Despite being born in Toronto and learning English from the very beginning of her formal education, Beatriz claims she regularly struggles to translate some of her thoughts into English, and ascribes this to the fact that she only speaks Portuguese at home with her mom and only started learning English when she started school. Struggling to express her Portuguese thoughts using English words is a common and frustrating experience for Beatriz and many of her newcomer Portuguese-speaking peers, especially those who were registered as ESL students. Rodrigo often lacked the vocabulary to express himself in English, particularly, he admitted, during his first few years in Canada in elementary school. “If the teacher wrote on the board something to do and I didn't know what it meant I would just ask a friend in Portuguese what does that say, what are we supposed to do, and they would basically explain to me what we were supposed to do, what we were doing.” Having spent a full year with Rodrigo in his ESL class followed by his applied level English class, I observed how, on the few occasions he did participate, he provided the briefest of answers. This was characteristic of Rodrigo anytime he spoke English even in the hallways, with the exception of when we spoke one-on-one, which revealed that Rodrigo had much more English fluency than he openly demonstrated in class. Throughout the year I noticed Rodrigo grow increasingly silent. He slowly stopped speaking both Portuguese and English at school, whether in class or in the playroom. When I asked him about this, he admitted that after a Westside teacher told him to speak English or go back to Portugal (discussed in greater detail in chapter four), he stopped talking as much, in both Portuguese and English. Rodrigo was personally
affected by this indictment for speaking Portuguese. In a private conversation he
confessed that as a result of not speaking Portuguese at school it is hard for him to be
connected with his closest friends; friends with whom he would never speak to in English
because they are all native Portuguese speakers. Speaking English to them, he said, feels
weird and wrong. As a result he is careful when to engage with these friends at school.
As a result, he elects to keep to himself most of the time, engaging with others, including
his teachers, other staff and classmates, selectively using brief, if not curt, language.

Half way through first semester in his ESL class, and prior to his self-imposed no
Portuguese language policy, I observed Rodrigo engage much more boisterously with
Frederica, another Portuguese-speaking student. The students’ desks in the ESL
classroom were grouped into clusters of four or six, and although their teacher
infrequently rearranged the seating, for the majority of the time students sat with their
same-language peers. Four Mandarin speaking students sat close to the front and centre
of the class. Behind them towards the back of the classroom and next to the teachers desk
sat a group of four Filipino students who all spoke Tagalog. In the opposite corner
furthest from the teacher’s desk and closest to the door at the front of the classroom was a
group of four Portuguese-speaking girls mostly from Portugal but also a student from
Brazil. Finally, immediately in front of the teacher’s desk furthest from the door were two
sets of four desks occupied by six Portuguese-speaking boys and some empty desks. A
student from Romania generally occupied one of these spaces too. Several Latino
students occupied the other cluster of four desks next to the Portuguese-speaking girls.
From time to time students would move from one group to another, but unless instructed
by their teacher, rarely did they elect to sit with students who spoke a different language
than them as it was regular to hear Tagalog, Spanish, Mandarin and Portuguese spoken in class.

One afternoon as the students worked in groups, which they typically did, a slinging match in Portuguese of increasingly nasty insults ignited between Rodrigo and Frederica. It seemed to start with Frederica belittling Rodrigo’s intelligence but quickly escalated into an all out war of words, across the room, in which the two insulted one another’s birth places, looks and intelligence. An animated Frederica half stood, her hands stretched out on her desk to support her weight, physically lunging forward with her verbal attacks. Rodrigo’s words and tone were equally animated but he remained seated. After half a dozen comments from each, their teacher, quite suddenly and aggressively lashed out at Rodrigo, and not Frederica, telling him she was sick of him and for him to take a walk, a common timeout strategy at Westside that results in a familiar community of students who wander the halls in an effort to avoid being caught by a hall monitor and having to return to class. Rodrigo did return to class, however, and immediately his teacher asked the educational assistant (EA) sitting at the back of the classroom to sit next to Rodrigo to ensure he behave himself and refrain from speaking in Portuguese. Begrudgingly, the assistant moved a chair next to Rodrigo and the group of four desks at which I was sitting. As she sat in the chair, letting off a huge sigh, she said to Rodrigo, “What a heavy burden you are on me”. In his curt and brief style, Rodrigo replied, “Same”. Perhaps unsatisfied with his response she asked him, “Do you know what that means?” He replied, “Yes.” Rodrigo sat relatively silent for the remainder of class. Only when his EA asked him what he wanted to do with himself after school did Rodrigo go to speak. Before he could, however, he was interrupted by her reply to her
own question: “Construction? I hope not.” Rodrigo immediately remarked, “Ms. that’s racist,” to which she replied, “Yeah, I guess that is quite racist. I’m sorry.”

This brief scene richly illustrates several discourses that consolidate portugueseness through Portuguese language, and particularly speaking Portuguese at school. To begin with, Rodrigo is disciplined it appears not for the volume of his voice or for the content of his words, but for the language he was speaking. In fact, upon returning to class his teacher places the EA next to him to ensure he does not misbehave. She qualifies misbehaving as speaking Portuguese as opposed to speaking so loudly across the room that he disrupts class. Moreover, the content of the dispute is irrelevant to Ms. Lombardi as neither she nor the EA speak Portuguese. In this sense she has no idea of the content that the two students were hurling at one another, but nevertheless singles out Rodrigo for his behaviour and not Frederica.

The gender implications of such discursive constructions of Portuguese-speaking students is not to be ignored. In the above scene, and elsewhere at Westside High, Portuguese-speaking boys suggested they are singled out more for their behaviour than their female peers. Frederica belittles Rodrigo’s intellectual abilities, evidenced, she claims, by the fact that he has an EA who helps him in class. In a conversation after class their teacher, Ms. Lombardi, confessed to me her concerns about Rodrigo and Frederica. Her concern about Rodrigo was that he struggles to settle down in class. At a loss about what she and (EA) are going to do with him, she shares that he is just too much to handle and not retaining the English language or generally benefiting from class. Ms. Lombardi’s concern about Frederica on the other hand is that she is a bit lazy but intellectually capable. At times she slips into her more familiar ways of being stubborn.
and resistant, but that she intends no malice. Frederica’s misbehaviour is attributed to her personality and disposition to learning, not her intellectual abilities. Ascribing such gender-based meaning is a practice that reconstructs girls as differently situated in school compared to boys. Rodrigo, on the other hand, is discursively constructed in stereotypically gendered ways by characterizing Rodrigo’s misbehaviour in terms of a learning disability and deviance, even malicious intent. Despite previous interactions these two students have had with their teacher and whether academically the two students perform similarly in class seems beside the point in this scene. Their behaviour in this scene had very little to do with intellectual (dis)ability but their teacher applied such a discursive explanation on one of them and not on the other despite their similar and equally engaged misbehaviour.

Unlike Frederica, Rodrigo did not escape this scene without visible changes to, or reification of, his subjectivity. Rodrigo was told to leave the classroom to cool off, but Frederica was not, despite her being the one to rise from her desk throughout the exchange. This suggests gendered ideas of who and what bodies physically remain in class and those that are ejected from class. Furthermore, by locating an EA directly next to Rodrigo, a decision announced for the class to hear, Ms. Lombardi marked him as deviant and needing supervision. More specifically, she clarified that supervision was needed to prevent Rodrigo from speaking Portuguese, which was characterized as the source of his misbehaviour. Despite Frederica equally sparring in Portuguese, she was not removed from class. While this might suggest to other students that speaking a language other than English in class will be disciplined, participants claimed that rarely was another group called out so publicly for speaking a language other than English despite
groups frequently speaking in either Tagalog, Spanish or Mandarin. In other words, Portuguese-speaking students in the class, and especially Portuguese-speaking boys, felt disproportionately targeted for not speaking English.

Ethnicity was frequently raised in the ESL class. Ms. Lombardi raised her and the EA’s Italian ancestry especially to explain, in her words, her short and explosive temper. The EA’s comments to Rodrigo illustrate the presence of toxic constructions of ethnic identities, particularly Portuguese-speaking students at Westside High. Rodrigo’s mere presence, and by extension portugueseness, represents a “heavy burden” to the EA, whose specific role is to work with students in need, specifically those registered with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Special Education. The EA’s comments also reflect the heavy burden many students, including many Portuguese-speaking students, represent in Westside High’s oversized Special Education program. Over a third of the school’s population (more than 300 students) has a registered IEP. This redirects considerable resources as well as students away from the classroom and into the resource room (discussed in Chapter 5). Rodrigo’s reply to his EA reveals how her presence is equally a heavy burden on him. The EA’s presence was one of the things that Frederica pointed out in their exchange, and how that reveals Rodrigo’s intellectual disability.

Positioned next to his desk in class, the EA marks him as deviant, intellectually disabled and generally other to students and teachers alike. The fact that the EA was placed next to Rodrigo to squash his use of Portuguese connected deviance and disability to portugueseness.

I fully observed and agree that Frederica and Rodrigo’s teacher needed to frequently intervene and address their behaviour in class. The two, although not alone,
often spoke out of turn and interrupted their teacher’s lesson or the group work going on around them - a source of great frustration for Ms. Lombardi and students alike. However, Ms. Lombardi’s focus on Portuguese language as the problematic and disruptive quality of Frederica and Rodrigo’s behaviour reconstructs portugueseness as the problem, despite the fact that their behaviour would be at least equally, if not more, disruptive to her class if they had been speaking English, given that many more students and Ms. Lombardi would have understood the content of their feud. Furthermore, the intersection of disability and gender that is implied in her reasoning for disciplining Rodrigo and Frederica differently, discursively constructs Portuguese-speaking males, and portugueseness generally, as visibly deviant. While common in this ESL classroom, I observed similar practices elsewhere at Westside High.

I joined Rodrigo and his closest Portuguese-speaking friends on a school field trip and witnessed a stark contrast to Rodrigo’s self-imposed no Portuguese language policy while at school. Throughout the day he appeared to be a different person, both enthusiastic and chatty while hanging out with his Portuguese-speaking friends. The group of us, several dozen in total (two school buses full), waited in a lobby area where student groups typically gathered before being ushered to individual classrooms. The group was boisterous, with some students gathered in small groups, others sitting silently fixed on their phones, and some engaging with the exhibits on hand. Standing next to Rodrigo’s teacher and one of the site employees, I overhead his teacher describe his class as the most challenging group of students the employee would have all day. He pointed specifically to the group of eight or so guys who are all buddies with one another and just speak Portuguese all class, claiming that they’re the absolute worst. I noticed a student
sitting on the bench next to us look up at the teacher then look to me, slightly shaking his head as he returned to his phone, which suggested what he heard was something noteworthy but not unexpected. Although dozens of students filled the space, the teacher chose to single out this group of Portuguese-speaking boys. At this moment I was reminded both of how Rodrigo internalized caution about speaking Portuguese and how he could not imagine engaging with his Portuguese-speaking friends in English. In terms of portugueseness, the site offered a false anonymity for Rodrigo from the typical school surveillance of Portuguese language. Indeed, despite claiming to have refrained from speaking Portuguese at school, his portugueseness was nevertheless a source of trouble, challenge and deviance, to the extent that the teacher felt that the site staff needed to be warned about these Portuguese-speaking boys.

In this vignette, Rodrigo’s teacher specifically invoked language and gender to establish the deviant, at-risk, challenging student. The decision to specifically identify the students as Portuguese-speaking was key in associating trouble, challenge and deviance with portugueseness. If his teacher wanted staff to keep a watchful eye on that group of students it was unnecessary for Rodrigo’s teacher to identify them as Portuguese-speaking boys. While language became a marker of deviance, so too did gender. Boys are frequently immediately associated with trouble, challenge, and deviance, and in this case they were Portuguese-speaking boys. Although Portuguese-speaking girls also participated in the field trip, Rodrigo’s teacher felt it only necessary to identify boys who speak Portuguese. While frequent, if not automatic, however, at-riskness is not exclusively associated with males.

On another occasion, while seated with several familiar students and a resource
teacher at an octagonal-shaped table in Resource, a student approached another Portuguese-speaking participant named David from behind and whispered (loud enough for everyone to hear) a naughty expression in Portuguese. Instead of the teacher, half Portuguese herself and able to comprehend the language (a quality few students were aware of and that she rarely revealed), reprimanding him for what he had said, she immediately expressed confusion because she had known the student for years and as she said, “I never suspected that you were Portuguese.” Another student immediately responded, “Yeah, maybe that explains why you’re here in resource and suck at school.” After everyone including their teacher shared a laugh, the resource teacher left the group instructing everyone to get back to work. The student took a seat and socialized for a while with David and his friends before I decided to ask him about his Portuguese heritage. His reply, although friendly, was dismissive. “Look at me, I’m not Portuguese. What are you thinking?” I asked him how he came to speak Portuguese and he replied, “I attended elementary school in the area and my school was full of Portuguese kids. It was like a Portuguese apocalypse. This is a Portuguese school too,” he said about Westside High. He explained how being in Portuguese schools surrounded by so many Portuguese kids his whole life it was impossible not to pick up some Portuguese. David quipped, “Yeah, we’ve rubbed off on him, but you only know the naughty shit. But, doesn’t he pronounce it well, sir?” The student’s comments and how his ability to speak Portuguese was interpreted by his teacher and his friends revealed for me how language remains an instantaneous marker of portugueseness and constructs the Portuguese-speaking student subject despite other factors that might suggest otherwise.

To fully unpack this vignette one must consider that a student of colour of Afro-
Caribbean heritage spoke the naughty Portuguese expression. While my initial question did not foreclose the possibility of Portuguese ancestry based on race, I along with the resource teacher managed to assume his Portuguese subjectivity based on his ability to speak Portuguese with a Portuguese rather than a Brazilian or another regional accent. Despite knowing the student for years, the resource teacher never ‘suspected’ the student of being Portuguese. His ability to speak Portuguese instantly changed that perception in her mind, particularly because he did not correct her in that moment. Furthermore, the laughter shared by the students and resource teacher as a result of another student’s comment, that him being Portuguese explained why he was in resource and why he sucked at school, again reveals a discursive strategy of associating Portuguese-speaking subjects and portugueseness with academic failure and intellectual disability. By associating portugueseness with Special Education and with academic failure, Portuguese student subjects are marked with certain failing and disability discourses once heard speaking Portuguese. Demonstrated in this vignette, Portuguese language presumes portugueseness. For some, therefore, such discourses inform a strategy of not speaking Portuguese to avoid being associated with portugueseness.

**Avoid speaking Portuguese; avoid being stigmatized**

Participants, like Guilherme, recognize how speaking Portuguese identifies them to others as Portuguese and with portugueseness. For Guilherme this means he consistently reminds people that he is Brazilian, in part for national pride, but also because not doing so conjures assumptions of portugueseness and underachievement in the eyes of his teachers. As a result, Guilherme has decided to avoid speaking Portuguese.
in class and at school in general. Unlike Rodrigo, however, Guilherme remains very social with friends and did not suggest that he avoids engaging with certain people, including friends, as a result of deciding to not speak Portuguese. Having spent many hours with Guilherme and his Portuguese-speaking group members as they completed their class project in their construction class, his strategy of not speaking Portuguese in class became evident.

The students were busy measuring the wall-studs they needed to cut for a scaled model of a cottage they had designed. Frustrated by several incorrect measurements made by his colleagues, resulting in both wasted time and materials, Guilherme decided to intervene. After measuring the stud lengths himself and heading over to the band saw, he returned confident that his studs would be the correct length. Realizing that his studs also came up short, Miguel began teasing him in Portuguese, and with a Brazilian accent to mimic Guilherme’s accent. “Você não fazê erros nenhumas, não senhor. O Guilherme vai nos mostrar como é que se faz.” (You don’t make any mistakes, no sir. Guilherme’s going to show us how it’s done). Frustrated with the fact that the studs were too short, only made worse by Miguel’s taunts, Guilherme, facing the door with his back to the majority of the class and where the teacher usually sat, looked over his shoulder and quickly scanned the room for his teacher before replying “Pare com isso. Deve haver um problema com a serra.” (Quit it. It must be a problem with the band saw). Immediately Miguel replied “Ai, deve haver um problema, sim, por-que o Guilherme sabe muito bem como medir.” (Oh, right, it must be a problem with the band saw, because Guilherme knows how to measure very well). Instead of replying in Portuguese, Guilherme switched to English and said, “Oh yeah, cause the Portuguese think they know everything there is
to know about construction.” Miguel’s taunts continued for a short while, but in his responses Guilherme never shifted back to Portuguese, which I found odd and decided to ask him about.

I asked why he tended to respond to his Portuguese-speaking peers in English and in particular why he switched back to English during the above exchange with Miguel. Guilherme’s immediate response was to deny that that was what he did. After reflecting a bit on my question he said two things: “I don’t speak Portuguese in class because of my speech impediment, but also, teachers don’t like it when you speak Portuguese, they think you’re stupid or that you don’t know how to speak English. It’s better to speak English because teachers respect you more”. Guilherme first reflected on how others frequently comment on his accent, as both a Brazilian speaker and someone with a speech impediment. But, interestingly, Guilherme’s speech impediment was discernible whether speaking English or Portuguese. Secondly, he reflected that it does not help him to remind the teacher - who may or may not be paying attention - that he speaks Portuguese because of the assumptions he perceives them to have about Portuguese students. He added, “I’ve been told before by (a teacher) to not speak Portuguese in class; that I should be speaking in English. So, I guess I’m just doing what I’ve been told.” When I asked Guilherme to reflect on how he chooses not to speak Portuguese in class and how he wants to make sure others know he’s Brazilian and not Portuguese, he paused and said,

Yeah, I think in class I’m trying to fit in as best I can. Portuguese students are always getting in trouble for whatever, so I don’t try to stand out. Outside of class I don’t really speak Portuguese with my other friends either, even my Brazilian friends. My girlfriend speaks Spanish so we speak English with each other.

The above scene and my exchange with Guilherme confirm the circulation of
several discourses of portugueseness at Westside High and how these can inform the behaviours of Portuguese-speaking students and their instinct to distinguish themselves as other than Portuguese and as not Portuguese-speaking. Guilherme clearly articulates that he’s come to understand that speaking Portuguese marks students as “stupid”. His perception is informed by his experience of being told (by his teacher) to speak English and not Portuguese in class. Unacknowledged by Guilherme is how his impulse to switch into English may have served the purpose of expressing authority in an exchange that had been, up until this point, between Portuguese-speaking equals. Switching to the dominant, official language of the school and distancing himself from Portuguese further emphasized Guilherme’s distance from his claim that “The Portuguese think they know everything there is to know about construction”. Expressing the same insinuation in Portuguese rather than English might have implicated himself to anyone who might have overheard his remarks.

Despite the large number of Portuguese-speaking students at Westside High, Guilherme acknowledges that speaking Portuguese prevents students from fitting in, but specifically fitting in in class. Presumably, this suggests a dominant and privileged English-speaking subjectivity at Westside despite the vast majority of students speaking a language other than English at home. Guilherme claims he has also gone to the extreme extent of not speaking Portuguese outside of class, either with his Brazilians friends and his Spanish-speaking girlfriend. Guilherme claims that he is doing what he should be doing, what he has been told to do by his teacher. The idea that he should only be speaking English in class equates English with obedience and success and Portuguese with deviance and failure. While this study did not investigate the linguistic experiences
of non-Portuguese-speaking students who spoke languages other than English, participants expressed and I observed an absence of classes, programs, or spaces in which Portuguese was a welcome and valued addition to students’ capacities. As Guilherme expressed, “I should be speaking English. So, I suppose I’m just doing what I’ve been told.” As a result, this Portuguese-speaking student carefully considers where and when to speak Portuguese and primarily censors expressing himself in Portuguese as a result of teacher influence and his own understanding that being identified as Portuguese may have a detrimental effect on his academic success and integration.

These participants’ experiences illustrate how Portuguese language in classrooms at Westside clearly reveals a visible and marginalized minority subjectivity as well as subtractive schooling. Not only are Portuguese-speaking students told to refrain from speaking Portuguese, their identities are constructed by discourses that according to Rodrigo and others equate Portuguese linguistic expression, and not simply non-English linguistic expression, as exhibiting problematic if not deviant behaviours. While I agree with Rodrigo and his peers, their claims need further contextualizing especially regarding my observations in their ESL class. While it is not true that Portuguese-speaking students were the only ones to be called out for speaking a language other than English, the discourses attached to speaking non-English in class differed from one group to another. The disciplining Portuguese-speaking students experienced was different than those directed to Chinese, Latino/a, and Filipino students. The tone and manner in which these students were instructed to speak English - which happened much less often – did not indicate a disciplinary tone and manner. This was reflected in the fact that the only students consistently asked to leave class for speaking a language other than English were
the Portuguese-speaking students, and never did a student other than a Portuguese-speaking student get an EA placed beside him or her to monitor their language use.

Portuguese language operates as a marker of portugueseness and frames those students, who are associated with portugueseness through language, as less intellectually capable and less likely to underachieve academically. Finally, they encounter resistance as a result of using their cultural knowledge via their ancestral language or mother tongue in institutional spaces and practices that prevent and devalue their linguistic and cultural abilities. This reflects subtractive schooling through de-ethnicization, subtractive assimilationism and social de-capitalization on the basis of language, which figures prominently in one’s identity as well as social, cultural, and economic capital (Conchas, 2001; Cummins, 1997, 2001; Ruiz, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999; Yosso, 2002). While some Portuguese-speaking students stop speaking Portuguese altogether, others experience conflict about whether to conceal or refute their portugueseness. Indeed, the desire, or need in some cases, to speak Portuguese to function and socialize in a school with a large Portuguese-speaking population potentially informs students’ resistance to these discursive constructions of portugueseness by developing a proud diaspora and nationalist Portuguese identity. However, given the messaging these students receive from teachers, administrators, and other students, the desire to embrace their portugueseness places them in opposition to school.

**Diaspora & Nationalism**

Immigrant, first- and second-generation youth often have complicated associations with and affinities toward their or their parents’ ancestral homeland (Oliveira & Teixeira,
Portuguese youth exhibit deep familial and emotional connections to their country of origin, and second-generation Portuguese youth in Toronto even feel nostalgia for countries they have never visited and a language many can hardly speak (Oliveira & Teixeira, 2004). Similarly, the participants in this study exhibited considerable pride in either Portugal or Brazil and expressed that they were connected to either the Portuguese or Brazilian diaspora in Toronto. In schools, however, visible (and audible) markers of national and diaspora pride and affinity can reveal the Portuguese-speaking student subject and necessarily associate her/him with dominant depictions of portugueseness.

Those of Brazilian ancestry evoked their national pride by consistently asserting their Brazilian identity when assumed to be Portuguese. Both Guilherme and Sabrina felt a sense of pride as Brazilians. Sabrina was born in Toronto and was less connected to Brazil. Guilherme on the other hand was born and raised in Brazil. His mother immigrated to Canada without him, leaving Guilherme to be raised by his grandparents. He eventually joined his younger stepsister and his stepfather, a man of Portuguese ancestry, in Toronto. While Guilherme reflected on the difficulties he experienced with winter and how dark their home was compared to his life in Brazil, neither Guilherme nor Sabrina spoke about Brazil with the same nostalgia and affection as their Portuguese peers.

Those of Portuguese ancestry frequently expressed pride in being Portuguese and connected this pride directly to Portugal and occasionally to the contributions Portuguese have made to Canada and more specifically to Toronto. One may reasonably expect that first and 1.5 generation Portuguese youth in Canada maintain a sense of connection to and even pride in Portugal, the country in which they were born. However, less expected
was that second-generation youth expressed deep connections and nostalgic affections for a country that some infrequently or never visited. Having never visited Portugal, Sara demonstrated an outward affection and pride for being Portuguese despite her mother’s disapproval. She frequently wore Portugal soccer jerseys when going out so that others could see her as Portuguese. Of her mother, a Hungarian woman who divorced Sara’s Portuguese father, Sara suggested that,

She's gotten over the Portuguese thing by now. I have a flag in my room. She doesn't like it when I go out wearing a Portugal jersey when I’m with her, just for the sheer fact that if someone tries to talk to me, which is more likely in a jersey, it will be in Portuguese, and my mom doesn't like hearing it. It makes her think I dealt with your father whose parents only speak Portuguese and she's heard it for so long so she just associates it with all things bad. (Interview, April 13, 2016)

While she can understand her mother’s dislike for her father and perhaps even her disdain for her connection to things Portuguese, she wonders if others beyond her mother also see things Portuguese as inferior and undesirable.

My mom was laughing at me the day I went to go buy work boots, because I may have been wearing my Portugal jersey. It was kinda stereotypical, going to buy work boots wearing my Portugal jersey, because a lot of Portuguese people do construction. My dad does construction. So, my mom kinda looked at me and said what are you doing with your life? I was in Adidas pants and a Portugal jersey, because I was lounging around the house before we went to buy these work boots. So she kinda looked at me and said what are you doing with your life, in this disapproving way.

Rather unexpectedly, Sara connected her mother’s disapproval - of her choice of clothing and place of employment - to the messaging she receives at school. She gestured to her perception that her visible pride for Portugal and things Portuguese may hurt her in school. “I think that teachers have the same expectations for [a non-Portuguese student] as they do for a Portuguese student, but I also think they don’t [have the same
Asked to explain what she meant by that, Sara replied,

At Westside, Portuguese students are expected to get 50s and are not necessarily expected to graduate. But it's like, it's a stereotype and when people aren't encouraging you… I know from my elementary school they don't encourage Portuguese students more than they do anybody else, right? It's mostly equal. If you're gonna do it you're gonna do it. If you're not, then oh well for you. And it's just when you have that stereotype on you, oh you're Portuguese you're just gonna do construction all your life, these kinds of expectations and stereotypes are harmful, and remind me of my mom asking what am I doing with my life when she sees me doing something that is associated with Portuguese. I would just hope that they wouldn't. Ok, I know this person's Portuguese so I have these expectations in my head, they're not gonna do good, they're gonna do bad, they're just gonna be troubled children. But if someone knows you're thinking that, that's what you're gonna do. If you're a little kid and you're told you're not gonna amount to anything, what are you gonna think? You're not gonna amount to anything? So by them thinking it, like you wanna hope that they wouldn't think that and that you'll be ok, and they'll be like ok, this person has the same potential as this person, but they don't. You'd hope they would but they never do. And it's like, for example, Asian people, they're more towards education, and that's just a known fact, and you see it in everybody. I have yet to know an Asian who hasn't graduated, to be completely honest. But how many Portuguese people don't graduate? There's one child here that's been here for the last 2 years and he should have graduated already. (Interview, April 13, 2016)

Sara’s reflections on her mother, schooling, and Portuguese identity relate to her Portuguese visibility; a visibility that materializes, among the other factors in this chapter, as a result of her pride in Portugal and being Portuguese and her desire to be a part of a Portuguese diaspora, by being recognized as Portuguese by others who speak Portuguese while she is wearing her jersey. Clothing, social networks and relations, even employment (Sara purchased those work boots as part of her uniform at a local hardware retailer) represent symbols other than language that reify dominant depictions of portugueseness, thus rendering the invisible minority visible. Whether intended or not, her mother’s comments conjured, for Sara, associations of one’s precarious if not failed future and portugueseness. Sara drew connections with her mother’s judgment of her
choice of clothes and employment with the expectations placed on Portuguese youth at school. Similar to other participants and Portuguese-speaking youth at Westside, Sara brushed off such comments as harmless and rationalizes them as fuelled by her mother’s dislike for her father. Nevertheless, the connections she drew to educational failure and reduced expectations were not her mother’s and were instead informed by discourses and practices she witnessed and potentially endured in school. Language was not the main way of rendering visible her Portuguese identity - Sara admittedly understands more Portuguese than she can speak. Instead, Sara’s pride in her Portuguese culture, which she intentionally displayed by wearing Portugal soccer jerseys and socializing with Portuguese-speaking youth especially after school, rendered her minority identity visible.

For the most part, however, Sara manages to conceal her identity as a result of certain conventions at her school. A mandatory uniform prevents her, on most days at least, from wearing something that shows her pride in her Portuguese ancestry; alludes to her portugueseness. Sara spent much of her time, particularly outside of class during lunch and breaks, confined to a secluded space in the school where she felt safe and part of a small group of students, particularly after a specific incident that subsequently alienated her from her peers. Opting for Advanced-level courses, including Arts courses, meant that, according to Sara, she was less likely to encounter Portuguese-speaking students throughout her school day.

Portuguese-speaking youth manage to express their national pride in a variety of inventive and familiar ways while at school. Fashion, whether through soccer jerseys or other sports paraphernalia, are a staple means of expressing national affiliations. Flags, as

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6 The nature of this incident is beyond the scope of this study. Although it may not be entirely unrelated to her identity as a young woman of Portuguese ancestry, to reflect on this incident might compromise the participant’s anonymity.
badges or tied to backpacks are present as well. The most interesting and unexpected way first generation Portuguese-speaking students who had experienced schooling in Portugal intersected national pride and education or schooling was to compare their schooling experiences in Portugal to those in Canada. Generally, participants who experienced school in Portugal reflected more favourably on their education in Portugal and gestured to features of educação that are absent at Westview. They suggested school in Portugal was more rigorous, structured, and demanding than the Canadian equivalent; that their connections with other students and teachers in their schools and classes reflected a greater sense of community and care; and that their student identities are differently constructed in Canada than they were in Portugal. Their reflections reveal an ethic of care in terms of school’s accountability to fostering community and to critical care praxis by noting how their student identities are differently constructed at Westside.

I frequently sat with Frederica and her friend over lunch; seated on the floor in the hallway outside their lockers. On this occasion the two were discussing the provincial literacy test being administered later that week. Frederica’s friend explained to me that students are individually responsible for their own success. She described how last year, for example, she elected to not write the literacy test and how she wished she had. Frederica interrupted and questioned the idea that it is all the individual’s responsibility and how the school culture has a role to play. Frederica said,

Here, teachers, the school really, is more interested in numbers and how well they’re doing. If they don’t think you’re gonna do well, they’ll hold you back, not necessarily because it’s best for you, but because it’s best for the school’s reputation. Back in Portugal the stakes are higher. No one is encouraged to not write a test because they might fail. The stakes are higher. If you need to repeat a subject or a grade then that’s what happens. (Fieldnotes, March 29, 2016)
Frederica went on to provide a specific example of how the consequences are different here than in Portugal. “I’ll probably skip school after I write the literacy test this year because most people will be away (they will also skip) so nothing will be taught or taken up in class. In Portugal I wouldn’t skip. Here, I hardly have to try because there isn’t much expected and nobody really cares.” When I asked her if those expectations represent a barrier to success, she said, “My ambitions are a form of barrier. I apply too much pressure on myself to do well and succeed, which isn’t helpful and isn’t expected of me in my classes. My teachers don’t place this same pressure on me. In Portugal I was just a student. Here I’m a Portuguese-speaking student, and that comes with some assumptions; lower expectations.”

Like Frederica, Thiago, a peer in her ELL class, is incredibly disenchanted with school and suggested to me in an interview that he is just barely going through the motions at school because he does not believe he is obtaining the skills and knowledge that would radically improve and redirect his future from the likely prospect of joining his father in construction after graduation. I asked Thiago to tell me about starting school in Canada. He explained that when he first arrived students were generally nice to him because there were a lot of Portuguese kids at his elementary school and he was good at soccer, so that automatically made him likeable. Initially he suggested that students were generally nice when he first arrived in Canada. As I got to better know Thiago, however, he admitted that in fact he was bullied a lot in school once he got to Canada, which he thought might have contributed to why he was, and to a certain extent continues to be quite shy. Concerning academics however, Thiago had this to say:

I find a big difference between school in Portugal and here in Canada. Over here, it's kinda like you know they don't push for you, you know.
And there’s no recognition for trying. I hear all the times, oh, he’s just gonna go into construction. I don’t know if they’re using it as a threat – I know I’m probably going into construction, they don’t need to tell me that. You just give up because they don’t really push for you.

Asked who doesn't push for him, he clarified that “the teachers, you know. They make it too easy, and then you're like, ok, I don't need this, I’m not really learning anything useful, it's nothing important, so you just give up (he sighs).” Later on in our interview when I asked Thiago what is preventing him from doing better in his classes, he admitted,

Everything. It's the surroundings. At school, like I said, they don’t expect much from Portuguese-speaking kids. At home, well, I have two siblings, and if I want to study it's gonna be big noises, that kinda pushes me down all the way too. I don't want to blame it on them either, it's all me, it's all me, you know, I made that choice. I could go to the library and do it, but no, I don't want to be stuck here, you know, that's not me. (Interview, March 10, 2016)

Frederica and Thiago contrast schooling in Portugal with their experiences in Canada as newcomers. Frederica’s observation that in Portugal she was just a student and in Canada she is a Portuguese-speaking student illustrates how school culture continues to reproduce a normative student subject through language, ethnicity, and culture. There is something specific, however, that accompanies the identities of Portuguese-speaking students that might not necessarily accompany all newcomer youth. Specifically, Portuguese-speaking students, according to both Frederica and Thiago, and confirmed by countless others in this study, are met with lower expectations and automatic assumptions about their future career trajectories given historic and perceived ongoing employment trends in their community.

The ways that participants, particularly those who had experienced education in Portugal, articulated differences between education in Toronto compared to Portugal gestured to a different and more expansive understanding of education that may be
contained in the concept of educação that I reference in the introduction and draws on educacion. For these youth, their education and schooling lacked a connection to them and their community, and more importantly, the school’s interest was on the school’s reputation and not on their best interest, evidenced in Frederica’s critique of why students are held back from writing standardized tests in Canada compared to not being held back in Portugal: “Here, teachers, the school really, is more interested in numbers and how well they’re doing. They’ll hold you back, not necessarily because it’s best for you, but because it’s best for the school’s reputation”. The low expectations, according to Thiago, demonstrate a lack of care for student effort and dignity, “they don’t push for you … there’s no recognition for trying”.

School personnel’s low expectations also reveal a lack of caring ethic, but, the caring ethic framework places little if any emphasis on the connect between low expectations and Portuguese-speaking student identity. Critical care praxis, on the other hand, foregrounds the role race or ethnicity plays in these low expectations. Portuguese-speaking youth are expected to not only do poorly in school, but the reason for this draws on dominant depictions of portugueseness; namely concerning class and labour. Portuguese-speaking youth are consistently encountering references to their community’s role in construction and the expectation that these youth will assume those same jobs. Additionally, it draws on theirs and their parents’ intersectional translocational identities, both in socio-economic location and historicity as immigrants from Portugal. Those born in Portugal are frequently considered poorly educated and arriving from a country that underemphasizes education, and while the Portuguese in Toronto are considered economically stable, this is a result of their presence in blue-collar jobs.
To suggest that it is only teachers who reproduce low expectations for Portuguese-speaking students is disingenuous. Like Beatriz’s mother, Thiago’s father, he admits, reminds him what is waiting for him if he fails to complete high school. “When I was looking for a job, my Dad was like, maybe Thiago, if you come and live with me (Tiago lives with his mom) I can get you a job in construction and you can save your own money.” But, Thiago has other ambitions.

Maybe I'll do that. And I think I'm gonna save up for college. I want to go to college. I want to study something, not because I want the job, but because I want to know something. For example my English, it's not very good, but I'm sure in college the teachers will be way more harsh, I mean they have to be, and I'm sure I'll improve. (Interview, March 10, 2016)

Attachment to Portugal and/or Portuguese nationalism and culture is complicated for many Portuguese Canadian youth at Westside High, and identifying as part of some Portuguese or Azorean diaspora was not exclusively reserved for first generation youth. Those born in Portugal with some experience of schooling there frequently reflected on how their schooling in Canada negatively compares with their educational experiences prior to immigrating. Ultimately, national and diaspora visibility represented a deficit for Portuguese-speaking students because it connected them with what all agreed were teachers’ lower expectations for Portuguese-speaking youth. Many participants shared Sara’s explanation of teachers’ expectations of Portuguese youth. While participants would like to think that teachers have the same expectations of Portuguese-speaking students as they do for others, their experiences and perceptions, however, indicate that this is not always the case.

Class and Labour
While subjectivity exists in the realm of the unconscious – in that one may be unaware or unconscious of the internal and external forces (discourses) that construct one’s being subject and experiencing of subjectivity - it is also highly informed by the conscious. Whether Portuguese Canadians in Toronto are widely considered and known as working class, un- or under-skilled labourers, though I contend they are given consistent nods by politicians, media personalities and average Torontonians about the role the Portuguese played and play in “building Toronto”, it is certainly the case that in Toronto schools with predominantly large Portuguese-speaking student populations, the class and labour identities of Portuguese Canadians is attached to many Portuguese-speaking youth and remains a dominant depictions of portugueseness.

One afternoon I was approached by a teacher who suggested that I talk to her Grade 12 English student who composed a story in her class that caught her attention and reminded her of my study. Sensing my curiosity, she fetched the student from the auditorium where students viewed on a large screen the seventh game of the Toronto Blue Jays playoff series. She asked him to show me his story and illustration. The student appeared in the hallway with his binder, which was rather organized compared to others I had seen. The illustration depicted a construction worker, dressed in overalls and a hardhat and holding a lunch box, and the accompanying story was brief, only 3 lines and perhaps 2 sentences. It essentially narrated that the character in the illustration was a Grade 9 Portuguese student who will leave high school to be a construction worker. When his teacher asked him why this was the case, he didn’t have an answer and just shrugged his shoulders. She asked if he was Portuguese (she knew that he was) and he replied, “Ms. my name is Medeiros. Obviously I’m Portuguese”. When she asked him
why he was still in school and had not left school and gone into construction, he replied after a moment of uncertainty, “Because I don’t speak Portuguese”. I confirmed with him that the reason he had not left school and gone into construction was because he did not speak Portuguese. He nodded in agreement. Then I asked him whether the character in his illustration was Portuguese-speaking, to which he did not have a response. When asked what language he speaks at home, he immediately replied English, and quickly clarified, that his grandmother speaks to him and his parents in Portuguese, but that he only speaks English. When I asked him to say more about what he meant by his story, it became evident that he was not interested in having a longer conversation, and we let him return to watching the rest of the baseball game being screened in the auditorium.

Along with language, nationalism, and diaspora, the social categories of class and labour interact to define and be most immediately associated with portugueseness. While class and labour represent economic indicators, it is the capacity for these categories to elicit certain social and cultural meanings and impose those on Portuguese-speaking youth that is of interest in this section. Throughout my time at Westside I was inundated with messaging that links Portuguese-speaking youth with construction. The above illustration was but one example of how students themselves associate Portuguese language with a social understanding of class and labour. When pressed to explain his illustration and caption, the student connected speaking Portuguese with construction, a connection not unique to this student and that tended to reflect a newcomer or immigrant identity that remains to be integrated into the Canadian mainstream. As described earlier, language is a key factor that constructs and reveals portugueseness and at times confounds Portuguese identity with those who speak Portuguese but do not identify as
Portuguese, including Brazilian youth.

Portuguese-speaking students, and particularly those who were participants in this study, articulated how their identities as Portuguese students were all too frequently associated with working class jobs and labour; especially construction for males and domestic and industrial cleaning, as well as working in bakeries for women. This tendency to conjure a class and labour identity anytime portugueseness is revealed informs expectations of educational achievement and trajectory. Class and labour infuse the school experiences of Portuguese-speaking youth. In the vignettes that follow, teachers and support staff, as well as parents and students themselves are revealed to discursively construct portugueseness as classed through labour.

**Meeting Beatriz’s mother at parent-teacher interview night**

Parents, as illustrated in the following vignette when I met a participant’s mother, construct portugueseness through reduced social class and labour, as well as academic ability.

As it drew to a close, I heard teachers express their shock with the larger than expected number of parents that turned out to parent teacher interview night for the second term. Usually, they confessed, teachers see many fewer parents in second term because they may have attended in November and do not see the need to return in second term, if they choose to attend at all. I attended the parent-teacher interview night both as a curious observer and as a volunteer translator. I sat inconspicuously on a couch in the learning commons observing the activity. I was never called on to translate. Few students accompanied their parents in the learning commons, so I was unable to gauge whether
my participants’ parents or the parents of other students I had come to know at Westside
High were in attendance. The one exception was Beatriz, who immediately came up to
me and introduced her mother, who I was thrilled to meet having not met any parents
until this point. Beatriz, in Portuguese, explained to her mother who I was and that we
come from the same area in Portugal. Her mother, speaking in Portuguese, asked
questions that further pinpointed my parents’ place of birth with respect to hers. Despite
not knowing the tiny mountaintop villages in which my parents were born and raised,
there was enough of a shared geography and culture to generally reminisce on that region
of Portugal and how much they miss it, despite Beatriz being born in Toronto. I drew
attention to the parent teacher night and asked how it was going. Beatriz replied, in
English, that it was fine and that she takes her mom to the teachers that she likes. I
praised Beatriz to her mother for her thoughtful and enthusiastic contributions to my
study. She seemed at once both surprised and not surprised. She said that her daughter is
a hard worker when she is interested, so that must mean she is interested in my study.
Knowing that Beatriz aspires to be a teacher I asked her about what her plans were for
next year while her mother was there. She suggested that she would go to university
eventually but that she was taking a year off to work. Her mother quipped “Se não for
para escola, há sempre construção” (If she doesn’t go to school, there’s always
construction). When I asked Beatriz’s mother what she meant, she replied “Nem todos
tem cabeça para estudar. A minha filha parece que tem, mas nunca se sabe” (Not
everyone has a head for studying. My daughter seems to have it, but you never know).
Beatriz rebutted with how she planned to continue working at the bakery for a year to
save up money for university. I later asked Beatriz what she thought of her mother saying
she can go into construction if she does not go to school. While she did not remember her mom saying that, she remarked that that kind of sentiment is common among Portuguese parents. When I asked whether construction was considered a viable career for girls as well as boys, Beatriz suggested that maybe not in the Portuguese community, but at Westside it certainly was considering how there had been a concerted push via school assemblies, posters and information sessions for girls to enter the skilled trades. As for the Portuguese community, Beatriz continued, “It’s a figure of speech to suggest you either go to school or get a job,” but, she admits, “Construction ends up being an automatic assumption for Portuguese kids, especially for boys.” (Fieldnotes, April 28, 2016)

Indeed, what Beatriz describes, and her mother demonstrates, as a rather automatic assumption can be found in popular media and literature concerning Portuguese-speaking communities in North America\(^7\), and it is particularly ubiquitous in Toronto schools. Despite sensing that her daughter appears to have the intellectual ability to achieve academically, Beatriz’s mother still questions whether her daughter has what it takes to succeed in school, perhaps informed by the powerful and ubiquitous deficit narrative that is attached to youth in her community, a deficit narrative that is perpetuated by automatically connecting Portuguese-speaking youth to construction and other blue-collar employment and reproducing dominant depictions of portugueseness through social class and labour. Teachers and students further concretize this narrative by repeating it in schools. While a few students I spoke with claimed to work part-time in

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\(^7\) During the 2014 FIFA World Cup, a Toronto radio DJ joked that that afternoon no one should expect that any roads be repaired or buildings be built because Portugal was scheduled to play their first game. Despite being situated in the US, Santos and Pascoal are recurring characters on The Family Guy who are characterized as non-Americans in working-class precarious work that require little to no professional skills.
what is commonly referred to as construction (often for independent contractors who are either family or friends of family), by all accounts this appeared to be a minority of students from my experience at Westside. Many more, including the participants in this study, worked in other industries, such as retail (grocery stores), service (bakeries) or caretaking (domestic and corporate cleaning). However, Portuguese-speaking students tend to work more part-time hours (Andrew-Gee, 2013) compared to their peers. Despite being an honour roll student who works 20-30 hours a week, however, Beatriz is consistently confronted, both inside and outside of school, with the idea that as a Portuguese-speaking student she lacks what it takes to succeed academically and assumptions about what might be her future employment.

“Anyone off the street can learn the skills to work in construction”

While Portuguese-speaking students insisted that there is nothing wrong with going into construction, essentially validating the work of their fathers and uncles, the way that they discussed construction was in opposition to academic ability and reflected an unappreciated, working class, unskilled Portuguese labourer identity in Toronto.

In my interview with David I was given a clear picture of how labour is central to constructing the Portuguese-speaking student subject and consolidating portugueseness.

Teachers here expect Portuguese students to take certain courses more than others. Well, to be racist here, they expect more of us Portuguese students to take construction because typical Portuguese kinda goes to construction. But, auto for example, is a lot more multicultural. Construction (class) is based on Italians, Portuguese, a few Black people here and there. I'm not trying to be rude here. This is just how I see it.

In my many conversations with David he always emphatically and completely rejected the idea of going into construction. He disliked the idea of being in construction so much
that as soon as he became aware that an auto class was being offered in second semester
he dropped the construction class in which he claimed he had been “forced” to enroll and
started attending auto even before the guidance department had adjusted his schedule.
One day during lunch, David returned to the conversation we had during his interview
about construction. He shared with me how he is focused on proving wrong those who
think, including his brother, that he’s just another Portuguese-speaking male who sucks at
school and will end up in construction. Instead, David insists he is going to be a
mechanic. David articulated how besides being less demanding on one’s body, a
mechanic represents a status and respectability that is a step up from a construction
worker, as it requires very specific skills, knowledge and training. While he admits the
work can be dirty, David claims mechanics have a place of employment in an auto shop,
work indoors and can often take their work, whether taking apart an engine or other
specialized task, to a table and work in better conditions compared to the back breaking,
filthy and frequently changing outdoor environment of construction.

David’s analysis of specifically construction through a labour and class lens,
combined with his personal knowledge - given the fact that his father worked in
construction and seemed to suffer, according to David, debilitating pain - fuelled David’s
and several other students’ desires to avoid construction at any cost. Additionally,
however, David frequently expressed his frustration that, “Everyone assumes that just
because I’m Portuguese, a guy, and do poorly in school, that I’m just going to work
construction.” While few students would disagree with David, given Beatriz’s comments
above and her experience that I discuss in the following chapter, whether a student
achieves academically or not does not always deter this association of portugueseness and

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manual labour and working class identity.

David’s focus on construction as a specific form of manual labour that conveys a specific working class identity is not insignificant and particularly informs dominant depictions of portugueseness. In a conversation with his friends, David expressed that, “Anyone off the street can learn the skills to work in construction. All you need is a body you are willing to abuse and overwork in shitty work conditions.” David’s comments reflect what Miguel and Thiago also said about construction, and how the quality of and abilities required for the specific labour in construction positions portugueseness below other working class jobs. Moreover, all three of these participants feel as if they need not take a course in constructions because it is something they can learn on the job.

David’s impression that the skills required for construction are not necessarily learned in school is shared by many of his peers and is a source of frustration for David’s former Construction teacher. Frustrated by how his students dismissed the class assignment on taking and converting measurements he had assigned a day on which he was absent, David’s former Construction teacher reprimanded his students (which at the time included Miguel, Thiago and Guilherme) for not completing the assignment by saying that students assume knowledge and ability based on background given the number of times he has heard, “We know that sir, we’re Portuguese” even when they do not know how to measure. Once class was dismissed, I asked this teacher about his experience with students assuming some ability in construction. He shared with me that while the Romans (Italians) might have a legitimate claim to possessing a natural ability in construction given their history, this is not the case for the Portuguese. Portuguese kids in his class, he claimed, tend to “take less pride” in their work as evidenced by the lack of
precision in what they produce.

The sentiment expressed the participants’ Construction teacher is reflective of neither a caring ethic nor a critical care praxis; care that promises to validate and leverage community cultural wealth to benefit ethnoracial, linguistic minority youth. Linking a “lack of pride” in one’s work to one’s race or ethnicity reveals a belief, regardless of its intention, that reproduces reduced expectations for certain students as opposed to others. This example demonstrates the role racism continues to play in shaping the schooling lives and trajectories of marginalized youth in schools (Rolón-Dow, 2005).

Natural ability notwithstanding, Portuguese-speaking workers are highly represented in Toronto’s construction sector. Given their fathers’ experience learning their trades on the job and not in a classroom, my participants gestured to how, for them too, relevant skills and knowledge for work in construction are not necessary to learn at school. Their suggestion that their ethnicity bestows them with some innate ability, however, does little to challenge discourses that associate them with non-academic trajectories. While reproducing eugenics theory, suggesting that Italian youth might be predisposed to excellence (in this case in construction) despite not knowing whether these students have ever held a hammer, much less their parents, the participants’ former Construction teacher also reproduces the idea that career-related skills are primarily if not only learned in the classroom. Moreover, this teacher’s comment reproduces deficit thinking by suggesting that the lack of pride his Portuguese-speaking students demonstrate in the work they produce is because of a lack of natural ability as opposed to a lack of interest or engagement. Miguel, who as part of a group built a scale model of a cottage, expressed to me the following: “Sir, on the weekend and over the summer I’m
helping my dad do finish carpentry on thirty-thousand dollar kitchens. Tell me what I’m learning here that I’m not learning there, but for real?” While David was not working in similar settings as Miguel, he shared with me that his auto class was much more engaging because he was working to take apart and reassemble a real engine; skills he could then take to his co-op placement at a mechanic shop. Rather than suggesting some deficit in natural ability, the “lack of pride” these Portuguese-speaking students presumably demonstrate in their work may suggest, given my interaction with them, their concerns with the relevance and applicability of the what and how they were being taught.

**Canadians work in banks, not building them**

During my year at Westside High I heard people describe Portuguese students as different from other students, sometimes, as depicted by David’s Construction teacher, even equating their academic performance and (in)abilities as inherently or culturally inferior to others. When it came to social class, Portuguese-speaking students regarded their automatic association with unskilled labour, particularly construction, as complicated, eliciting both pride and resentment for themselves and their communities. Miguel, however, articulated how labour necessarily speaks to racial and class divides as a newcomer in Canada.

About the teachers at Westside High, Miguel8 confirms, “There are teachers here that are 5 stars. Then there are others. [A gym teacher], he's racist towards Portuguese, he doesn't like us.” When I asked him what experiences he had had to suggest that, he said,

At the beginning of the year he said this year we're not gonna play any soccer, this class is all Portuguese, and we’re not playing any soccer.

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8 Miguel was the only student to almost entirely speak Portuguese throughout his interviews and in our interactions, and I translated his narratives.
When I left the class of course they played soccer. He asked for me one day in class, and my friends said that I moved classes. Then he said, oh blessed. He’s probably more suited to construction anyway. (Interview, April 21, 2016)

Before I could ask Miguel how that made him feel, he said,

I hear that all the time, either to me or to someone I know. In one sense I feel proud because it means we're praised in the construction industry and that we hold the keys to that empire. But on the other hand I feel like we’re Blacks or slaves, (the terms he uses are pretos and escravos) you see, because we're working, and working, and working outside for what, so that other people can work inside in their offices and stuff. We're the slaves for others, for example, a bank for others to work in those banks, cause it's not gonna be Portuguese who are going to be working inside that bank. They're just good for the construction. They work outside, suffering in the cold or heat, doing heavy, manual work. Canadians, they don't work like us. They stay home, receive their pensions, like I said, they work in banks not building them. (Interview, April 21, 2016)

While Miguel was not the only participant to suggest the working conditions in construction at times reflect slave labour, working outdoors and withstanding extreme temperatures, Miguel’s language was unexpected, and made me curious. Preto is likely the most used pejorative word in Portuguese against those of Afro-Caribbean decent. While Miguel was not the first to reflect the difficult work conditions many Portuguese are subjected to in construction, even so much as to say that they work like slaves, Miguel was the only participant in my study to illicit this racial slur. This is interesting because Miguel was born in Portugal and is Black of Angolan and Mozambican ancestry. When I asked him why he used this term, he explained

Not that they are Black. I said that in the sense that they work and they're just treated like animals for labour. Canadians no, they stay home receiving pensions, you know? I guess what I’m saying is that here in Canada; I think many people see Portuguese as labour, good workers. Many people ask my dad, for instance, are you Portuguese, when he’s starting a job on a house and they seem relieved when he says that he is. Their faith in them being good workers means that when they know you're Portuguese they just leave you to your work. Why do they ask this
question, and make these assumptions about Portuguese workers? I’m not complaining, but it’s interesting, isn’t it? (Interview, April 21, 2016)

I agree with Miguel; it is interesting.

Again, Miguel’s experiences and reflections raise how class and ethnicity converge, in this case through labour, to describe the material existence of Portuguese youth in schools. Though Miguel uses the terms Black and slave, he contextualizes this by explaining that it is not that Portuguese in Canada are Black, but that their specific experiences at work (and at school) reveal a value to others precisely for their manual labour. While in fact the experiences of people of colour in Canada are in many ways dissimilar to and disproportionately worse than those of Portuguese-speaking ancestry, Miguel’s narrative illustrates the raceclass concept forwarded by Leonardo in that the identities of Portuguese-speaking youth are always already wrapped up with labour and assumptions based on ethnicity. The extent to which this is true throughout Canada is uncertain, but the participants in this study, and many of their peers at Westside High agree that in the neighbourhoods in which they live in Toronto’s West End, they and those in their community are commonly perceived as working-class immigrant labourers.

In addition, and again like his peers in this study, Miguel articulated the division between what he calls Canadians and Portuguese-speaking folks in Canada. While Miguel is a newcomer with precarious status in Canada, his peers with less precarious status, including those born in Canada, differentiate themselves from what they call White Canadians or, as Lucas calls them, mangicakes. These youth articulate Canadian-ness through whiteness in terms of (social) class, specifically according to wealth and occupation, and how it suggests a phenotype which some of them as youth of Portuguese, Brazilian or African ancestry did not possess. Unlike the majority of participants,
Guilhereme and Sara exhibited markedly less hesitation in identifying as White.

Guilherme raised his German heritage and how he looked different, lighter in colour, from his Portuguese father, and Sara discussed how she sometimes is not considered Portuguese because of how she looks, which she attributed to her Hungarian background. When I probed this a little further with the other participants, with the exception of Miguel, participants found it difficult to explain what exactly they would identify as marking them as phenotypically different or non-White, with many suggesting hair (including colour and quantity of body hair, eyebrows) and darker skin as well as facial features such as nose and eyes.

Given that participants defined White Canadians in this way, their impulse to differentiate themselves from White Canadians, particularly in school, reveals another way in which (social) class, race, and ethnicity operate to Other Portuguese-speaking students. As a result, several participants perceived themselves to not belong in school. Not in so much that they were not permitted to be there, but that they were not the kind of student that teachers and principals wanted in their schools, a sentiment reflected in Beatriz’s earlier reflections in this chapter. Raceclass has a way of mapping onto the Portuguese-speaking student’s identity (through language and other means) a marginalized subjectivity that informs school (dis)engagement and non-belonging.

Whether through language, nationalism and diaspora, or through social class and labour, Portuguese-speaking students continue to encounter discourses in schools that construct their identities as somehow failing to achieve the obligations attached to a normative, White, English, Canadian and non-working-class (manual labour) student subject. Participants revealed instances when their portugueseness alienated them from
successfully performing the rites and rituals of schooling. In other cases their identities were constructed outside of school, to which Portuguese-speaking students respond by connecting their success to pursuits other than formal education and schooling.

**Portugueseness and the Renegade Learner**

It was the last week of school and like many students I roamed the halls to escape the sweltering summer heat. In their efforts to combat the rising temperatures several teachers mounted fans in their classrooms and kept lights turned off. Nevertheless, the hallways were cooler than many classrooms, as a faint breeze could be felt on the third floor north corridor. In an alcove, students listened to music amplified from a smartphone. The song “Renegades” by X Ambassadors played. A student from an English class I had observed throughout second semester nudged me and said, “See PhD Dave, that’s us, renegades”, pointing to the students listening to music in the corridor. Immediately I asked how come, and as he walked away he said, “We’re the underdogs, we’re not expected to do well in school, so they give up on us.” His words carried a familiar message. Renegades might conjure the image of the lads in Willis’ landmark ethnography. Unlike the lads who actively resisted school culture and embraced the working class shop floor culture familiar to them and their fathers, almost all of the participants in my study admitted if not affirmed that school was important to one’s future success, and the majority expressed an interest in achieving academically. Portuguese-speaking youth feel like underdogs, but unlike the fan phenomenon where underdog status is enough to gather cheering fans and supporters, these students perceive their teachers to have reduced their expectations and demonstrate little enthusiasm and
hope for their academic success. I carried this idea of the renegade, unclear as it was, into my analysis about Portuguese-speaking youth at Westside. As renegade learners, their defiance ought to more closely reflect their resistance of dominant depictions of portugueseness and how these are used to predetermine their schooling trajectories as opposed to resisting education more broadly.

A renegade is defined as a person who rejects one set of religious, political, or philosophical beliefs for a set of new and opposing beliefs. In the North American context, the renegade has a militaristic depiction such as the soldier turned enemy, or turncoat. More generally, however, a renegade is one who denies certain beliefs and is frequently associated with a disregard for the rules of law. The origins of the word renegade can be found in Portuguese and Spanish. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the Medieval Latin word renegar in Portuguese (or arrenegar, an alternative form) means to 1) renounce, 2) disown, 3) renege, or 4) reject or detest; and in Spanish renegar means to 1) complain, 2) deny vigorously, 3) detest, abhor, 4) apostatize, or 5) swear, blaspheme. A synonym to renegar is quejarse in Spanish and queixar in Portuguese, which means to quarrel, complain, or grown and moan. The Latin etymological reading of the term renegade therefore suggests a defiant and vocal individual. Throughout my time at Westside Portuguese-speaking students complained about their education, moaned and groaned about their school and schooling, particularly about the lack of classroom resources, their disrespectful or otherwise apathetic and absent teachers. Those same students also at times went to great lengths to defend their school and those same teachers, often blaming themselves for the state of their educational reality and their school. Many would complain about a racist comment one
teacher said, while another student would defend the teacher by suggesting, he’s just joking. Sitting with David one day as he worked on an assignment in the Resource Room, he confessed, “I never get help like this,” referring to how I asked him questions and jotted down his responses that he could later type out into full sentences in his essay. Later he reflected that if I worked at Westside I would go crazy with students like him, suggesting that he empathizes with teachers because he knows he is a challenging student. These and others contradictions left me puzzled but it also reminded me of the renegade; the student, at times defiant and/or vocal, who struggles within a schooling system that seems to at best inconsistently demonstrate a caring ethnic and foster the values and principles of educação. Students queixam-se (queixar) about irrelevant material and schools in which they simply do not fit and that simply does not fit their needs. Their language, their ethnicity, and their (dis)abilities seem either undervalued, devalued or to pre-determine their capacities and their educational trajectories. These students are renegades in the sense that they betray the expected rules and rites of schooling and are defiant towards those who maintain and uphold those rules and rites. Consequently, the renegade learner is marked at-risk and considered unlikely to succeed in school - particularly the formal academic focus schooling has come to and in many instances continues to represent - and are directed towards remedial and skills-based studies.

The renegade learner at Westside is constructed along three axes: 1) linguistic, specifically as speaking a language other than English; 2) ethnic, in terms of being Other to the dominant culture; and 3) disability, in the sense of being non-academically capable and aspirational. All three of these axes intersect with and are informed by race, gender
and class dynamics that necessarily construct portugueseness and correspondingly the Portuguese-speaking youth as a renegade learner. To be sure there are youth who are both Portuguese and speak Portuguese who are not constructed as renegade learners. What the renegade learner exemplifies, however, is a non-English language identity that is ethnically constructed not only through language but also through national and/or diasporic attachments to Portugal or elsewhere, and as academically disabled or incapable through deficit logics of class, race and ethnicity. Certainly there is an element of self-making for the renegade learner, but there is also an element of being-made or experiencing subjectivity (Coloma, 2008; Prado, 2000). Unlike the ‘lads’ in Learning to Labor, renegade learners in this study articulated the important role education and school play in securing success. The objection their behaviours (at times defiant or resistant) might suggest towards schooling was more specifically to the quality and purpose of schooling they perceived to be available to them at Westview.

Conclusion

This chapter has used youth narratives and experiences to illustrate how language, nationalism and diaspora, and class and labour are mobilized to construct or consolidate a dominant depiction of portugueseness in Toronto, and how portugueseness circulates at Westside. All the while, a lack of caring ethic and critical care praxis by school personnel is revealed in the experiences and narratives of Portuguese-speaking participants. Dominant depictions of portugueseness regularly reveal humiliating ironies and the dangerous dignities of Portuguese-speaking students’ acts of defiance (Tuck, 2012), which the following chapter illustrates. Through portugueseness, students are understood
to be defying schooling. But, might their responses be resisting the continued and consistent reduced expectations and deficit logics that regularly reproduce their at-risk identities?

If the renegade learner reneges on the assumed contract (the expected rites and rituals between student and schooling or education) it is because he/she has established little value in the current conditions of schooling, been made to understand their identity as outside the desired and acceptable student subject, and/or found meaning elsewhere outside and/or without formal education. Reneging is a response to repeated moments of Othering, many of which have already been described, but also the process of disciplining the Portuguese-speaking student subject, or the renegade learner. The chapter that follows explores how Portuguese-speaking students at Westside, or the renegade learner, are disciplined through language, ethnicity and disability.
Chapter 4
Disciplining portugueseness and Portuguese-speaking subjects: intersecting language, drop-out, and disability with race and class

In this chapter I discuss disciplinary practices that are encountered when students’ portugueseness is revealed and known. Interactions between students and school personnel can be formative. But, when these interactions lack an ethic of care and draw on dominant depictions of portugueseness, whether intentional or unintentional, these formative interactions exploit youth vulnerabilities, diminish student dignities, and result in negative outcomes. The following chapter describes and analyzes several disciplinary practices and experiences that commonly occur at Westside High. I observed these disciplinary practices and later asked participants and other students about their experiences. In many cases they voiced their frustrations with felt targeted by school personnel for being considered “bad kids”. Some were quick and sure to associate their experiences to being Portuguese, while others struggled to explain why they were targeted in these ways. I analyze their experiences and specifically certain disciplinary practices through subtractive schooling and the absence of an ethic of care (Valenzuela, 1999), and as humiliating ironies (Tuck, 2012). These practices often reduced cultural knowledge and language, and cultural wealth in general (Yosso, 2005), and largely exposed ironies that gesture towards the targeted discrimination of portugueseness at Westside.

As I outline these disciplinary practices throughout this chapter, at points I discuss when and how participants’ portugueseness and Portuguese-speaking identities become visible, and how this informs their perceived racial identities. As a category of analysis, race does not exist in isolation. Race, therefore, manifests in the lived experiences of
students (for the purposes of this project) through language, class, and disability. To be certain whether or not youth of Portuguese linguistic or cultural backgrounds, otherwise known as Lusophones, are racially non-White is not the purpose of my project. However, it is their personal perceptions and lived experiences, particularly in schools, that inform their impulse to construct and understand their identities as other than White that interests me most. Such an approach draws on the tradition of interpretive sociology and intersectionality.

Participants identified racially in rather unexpected ways. There is some sense from the data that Portuguese youth consider their ethnicity to be their race, since they have been told that it is indeed what defines them as Other. When urged to consider standard categories of race, many participants only agreed to being White in comparison to communities understood as communities of colour, specifically Canadians of African and Caribbean or South(-East) Asian descent. When asked if participants would identify as White, few agreed, many hesitated, and others resisted. Whether students agreed, hesitated or resisted to being categorized as White was not consistently determined by generational status. One newcomer, first-generation student considered himself White, while many second-generation students hesitated and resisted defining as White. For the vast majority of them, White represented a racial category to which they did not always belong, and their race was frequently determined by markers that revealed portugueseness, specifically language and more broadly culture and nationality.

This ambiguity suggests that their racial identities are not always already visible, which is an important difference from youth of colour whose racial identities are always already visible. However, the racial identities, for example, of mixed-race youth, whose
racial ambiguity is more broadly accepted, may not be immediately visible in their day-to-day lives despite the effects of the racism around them being no less toxic and destructive to their identity and dignity. Nevertheless, many Portuguese-speaking youth derive much privilege from their White racial passing in ways that they themselves recognized. In those moments when they are outed as Portuguese or Portuguese-speaking, as well as subsequent moments after being known as Portuguese, their experiences reveal discrimination, disciplinary action and deficit thinking that persistently follows Portuguese-speaking youth at Westside.

**Disciplining Language: “Go home if you’re not going to speak English”**

Portuguese-speaking students, particularly, but not exclusively, during moments when speaking Portuguese with peers, were made to feel like unwelcome foreigners and poor examples of immigrants in Canada and even non-citizens in their own country of origin. Rodrigo told me about a time when a teacher told him to “Go back to Portugal if you want to talk Portuguese” when he was chilling with his friend over lunch while watching soccer in the playroom. Beatriz was told by a different teacher to “go home if you’re not going to speak English” while spending her lunch period in the hallways with a friend. Each of these students was speaking Portuguese at the time. Rodrigo admitted to me that he “didn’t expect to be told that in the play room where so many Portuguese guys play soccer and so many Portuguese kids watch them”. Beatriz hypothetically asked, “are we still living in Toronto? I mean this is such a diverse city”. While these xenophobic comments may be infrequent – likely because many educators recognize the problematic nature of these sentiments and refrain from raising these thoughts in schools – these
instances, and others like them, were not isolated. More frequent, however, were the concealed and disproportionate disciplining of Portuguese-speaking students for speaking a language other than English. This language disciplining occurred in many of the classes and school spaces where I observed participants, and it was most evident in the ESL classroom.

Rodrigo was quick to tell me how Portuguese-speaking students were unfairly disciplined for speaking Portuguese at school. “We (Portuguese-speaking students) are always picked out when other students who speak their languages in class are never told to go for a walk, to speak English or yelled at for being too loud.” Frederica agreed and suggested that she too has been disciplined for speaking Portuguese. While she admits to at times speaking loudly, which she suggests is customary in Portugal and common among her peers, she says “when Ms. Lombardi yells at me it’s not only about speaking loudly, it’s also about speaking Portuguese. I’m told to speak English or to leave the class”.

Indeed one might deduce that these students were being disciplined for disruptive behaviour in class and elsewhere on school property. However, while not always, often Portuguese-speaking students were told to speak English or stop speaking Portuguese when the issue was the volume at which they were speaking. Implied here is not that their behaviour is unsuitable in a classroom setting but that the language that they are speaking is problematic and unwelcome in the classroom or other school setting. In a conversation with Frederica and her friend, an exchange student from Brazil, I learned that from the Brazilian perspective it is surprising that Portuguese students might be discriminated against in Canada because in Brazil they’re considered European and therefore
privileged. This exchange student, having only been at Westside and in Toronto for that matter for a few months, explained that her experience is that teachers do not expect Portuguese students to do well. Juliana added that they don’t expect them to be smart. The exchange student confessed that she is often thought to be Portuguese because she speaks Portuguese, and that teachers are shocked by her grades. When she confesses that she is not Portuguese, but, in fact, Brazilian, that seems to somehow explain her academic achievement and they seem to adjust their perception of her. The two continue to discuss Portuguese language and its consequences on the experiences of Portuguese-speaking students at the school. Frederica and her friend agreed that some teachers discriminate against Portuguese-speaking students, and that the source of this discrimination was speaking Portuguese in class. They recounted how frequently Filipino students speak Tagalog (they said Filipino) in class and Chinese students speak Mandarin or Cantonese (they said Chinese) in class, but that only Portuguese-speaking students would be singled out. Miguel overhears our conversation and confirms, in Portuguese, that we are the only ones who are ever kicked out of class or called down to the office for not speaking English. Humiliating ironies are policies and interactions between school personnel and youth that serve to exclude youth from schooling and assault their dignities. The humiliating irony of being disciplined for speaking Portuguese in an ESL classroom when so many others are speaking other non-English languages is not lost on these three.

Both Frederica and Rodrigo discuss how speaking Portuguese was silenced in class and made them vulnerable to reprisal and/or being told to leave the classroom. “Vai dar uma volta” (or “go take a walk” in English) was frequently uttered by Portuguese-speaking hall monitors, education assistants, teachers, and students themselves. Many
described it as a strategy used to calm or settle down the student, and according to Frederica and Rodrigo was a frustrating and embarrassing exercise, especially when it came to returning to class. The practice placed a disproportionately higher number of Portuguese-speaking students in the hallways, which were typically occupied by Portuguese-speaking and Black students who meandered the halls between classes avoiding being seen by hall monitors and administrative staff, particularly the Vice Principal, Mr. Brown.

Hall monitors at Westside tended to be some of the most liked school personnel by many of my participants. On the many occasions that I accompanied students walking the halls, the students’ interactions with hall monitors revealed that monitors understood these students’ need to either briefly escape their classrooms or tolerate teachers who placed them there. This demonstrated a caring ethic that administrative staff and Mr. Brown failed to demonstrate. While many students found lingering in the halls were not sent to take a walk, those who were were subject to the same monitoring as the Others, despite being instructed by their teacher’s to do just that. To students, this represented another humiliating irony. Or, as Rodrigo put it, “I get in trouble so the teacher tells me to take a walk to cool off, but then I get in trouble for cooling off in the hall, which my teacher told me to do.”

Hallways during class time at Westside, according to Frederica, are spaces where those who misbehave are “sent to serve their sentence”. Those who speak Portuguese and their peers come to associate portugueseness with delinquency and deviance. The strategy of “vai dar uma volta” notably removed the student from the classroom and from being taught the lesson. And, “vai dar uma volta” effectively removed Portuguese language
from the classroom and established speaking Portuguese as a delinquent act and the student who speaks Portuguese in class as a delinquent. This was further reinforced by their presence as aimless meanders in hallways. Rodrigo and Frederica admitted that they did not welcome such forms of language disciplining in their ESL class, and that it only made them more insistent on speaking Portuguese, in part to express to one another their frustration with their teacher, who did not speak Portuguese, as well as to resist the notion that they must not speak Portuguese in school.

One student revealed that language disciplining is not a practice exclusive to Westside High. Sara attended another school with a large Portuguese-speaking student population before moving to Westside High. According to Sara,

Teachers show their low expectations of Portuguese-speaking students in their own ways. And then Portuguese-speaking students need to be faced with that while they're trying to learn. At [name of previous school] that was evident because if the group was talking Portuguese the teacher would be like you guys have to stop it (where it, she said, was speaking Portuguese) and if you're not gonna listen, you're not gonna listen. So instead, if two English people were talking and having a conversation in class, they'd be told to zip it and pay attention. But, if they're speaking Portuguese, the message is if you're not gonna listen, you may as well get out of school. That was at [name of other school] all the time, and so Portuguese-speaking students were frequently lingering in the halls if they bothered to stick around school at all.

The same can be seen at Westside. While Sara suggests that the form of disciplining she described at her previous school is less prevalent at Westside, other participants can attest to the fact that language disciplining is frequent and frustrating. While some participants resisted language disciplining and insisted on speaking Portuguese, others responded using a different approach.

I observed how Brazilian students in particular were less likely to speak Portuguese in class. When asked, Brazilian participants said that they avoid speaking
Portuguese because teachers dislike when students speak Portuguese. Guilherme, commenting outside the context of the ESL classroom, said, “I don’t speak Portuguese in class because of my speech impediment, but also, teachers don’t like it when you speak Portuguese, they think you’re stupid or that you don’t know how to speak English. I find it better to speak English because teachers respect you more”. A Brazilian exchange student who occasionally engaged in Portuguese with Frederica and Rodrigo banter in her ESL class said, “I know that if I’m speaking Portuguese I’ll get in trouble, so to avoid getting in trouble I just avoided speaking Portuguese if I can, but it’s hard when other students talk to me in Portuguese”. Brazilian Portuguese-speaking students tended to adhere more to the language disciplining, adopting English more frequently and with less resistance than Portuguese Portuguese-speaking students. While speaking Portuguese instantly identifies a student as Portuguese, and not necessarily as Brazilian or another ethnic origin, the resistance that Portuguese Portuguese-speaking students exhibited to language disciplining identified them as problem students, unable and unwilling to conform to classroom and school norms, and instead as insistent on maintaining cultural practices that are devalued in education. Much like the Latina/o youth in Valenzuela’s (1999) ethnographic work in the borderlands of Texas or the Latina/o students enrolled in Proyecto Latino in Toronto (Gaztamide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011), Portuguese-speaking students’ linguistic capacities were valueless in their classrooms and educational contexts. Some participants perceived an institutional desire and academic advantage to subtract speaking Portuguese in school, and certainly in the classroom, and to assimilate to English speaking even among peers whose primary language was Portuguese. Others, like Rodrigo and his friends, had been told at some point or another
to stop speaking Portuguese. Moreover, teachers and other school personnel always associated speaking Portuguese with being Portuguese and portugueseness (as opposed to another cultural or ethnic identity from a Portuguese-speaking nation or diaspora). As Frederica’s friend from Brazil revealed, only by revealing she was Brazilian, rather than Portuguese, was her teacher able to reconcile her excellent grades with her identity, gesturing to a direct association of academic underachievement with portugueseness. These and other experiences may very well have been what some Portuguese-speaking youth so ardently resisted.

This resistance consistently surfaced for renegade learners: Portuguese-speaking youth who acknowledged yet resisted the idea that not speaking Portuguese would positively impact how they are perceived and disciplined by teachers. Instead, these students actively, but not exclusively, used Portuguese while at school and in some cases demanded respect for their linguistic and cultural differences. In the following focus group excerpt, Guilhereme contextualizes for his Portuguese peers his earlier realization of why he avoids speaking Portuguese in class as part of an overall strategy to avoid being disciplined in school. The focus group exchange also reveals the resistance some Portuguese-speaking students have to Guilherme’s approach. I initiate the discussion by drawing on Beatriz’s earlier claim in the focus group that, “Guilherme is always with the good kids. He's always with people who do well in school, you know, cause he's dating (names Guilherme’s girlfriend). They're like, oh you're dating her, he's good, he's got his stuff together. Then they see us, and they're like, ‘Oh god, these kids’.”

Me: Guilherme, do you feel you're one of the good kids?

Guilherme: If the teacher is telling me something, like to take my hat off, get into uniform, or getting me in trouble for speaking Portuguese, I will
say I'm sorry sir. Even if I disagree I wouldn't be like, oh why are you giving me a hard time, kinda thing. I don't. It's like a lose and win, you know?

Beatriz: Can I ask you something? When you hung out more with (she names a Portuguese student at Westside), didn't you get into more problems than now?

Guilherme: No! They got, but I would be just like outside looking at them fighting. He talked back to everyone (the others laugh in agreement).

Lucas: It's not about talking back, though. You should respect. The same way you’re gonna get respect is the same way you should give respect. You shouldn't be talking down to someone and then expect them to be like, oh, I'm sorry, sir (Beatriz laughs as Lucas mocks Guilherme). It’s about the way they talk to you, and about you. What is a good kid, anyway? I go to class, I'm passing, I'm hopefully getting honour roll. But, if you disrespect me I’m gonna disrespect you the same way. What is a good kid?

Beatriz: Yeah, what is a good kid?

Guilherme: I find no point in fighting with the teacher because anything you say they'll just say you're wrong. There's no point fighting, say sorry and they think you're smart.

Lucas: I don't kiss ass though. You see we get into more trouble because we stand up for ourselves, putting people in their place. Know where you stand. If you're gonna talk down to someone and act like you're Jesus, I'm gonna talk down to you the same way you talk down to me, saying no, you're not above anyone else. Even if you're a teacher, you're not above giving respect. I don't know what respect is, to be honest. I don't see it here.

Beatriz: Respect is in the way you speak, though – the way we’re spoken to. It’s the tone of their voice, gestures.

David: A lot of people here are judgmental. They see you in the hall between classes, they hear you speaking Portuguese to your friends, they see you in the Resource Room, then they judge you as a bad kid.

Guilherme: I just do whatever it takes to not get in trouble.

Lucas: See, you're just a kiss ass, eh? (snickers)

Guilherme: Yeah, I guess. (laughs nervously)
Beatriz: (to Lucas) He's a good kid, let him be.

Me: (to Beatrice) Are you not a good kid?

Beatriz: I'm a good kid but they don't think I'm a good kid. But they think Guilherme is a good kid. They just give up on some of us.

(Focus Group Interview, May 20, 2016)

When contrasting Guilherme’s words in the focus group with his one-on-one interview it is apparent that language is experienced by Portuguese-speaking students as a deficit and that at times speaking Portuguese is disciplined for suggesting resistant student subjectivities and intellectual capacity. The social benefit Guilherme enjoys by being associated with the “good kids” is not sufficient to explain how his experiences as a Portuguese-speaking subject differ from those of his peers. Guilherme linguistically passes by avoiding speaking Portuguese. Despite his accent that reveals his ESL status, the effort he puts forth in speaking English, he claims, garners him more respect from his teachers. Whether or not he feels as if he is a good kid, Guilherme is focused on being perceived as a good kid, and he is confident that the strategies he outlined to his peers in the focus group achieve that perception in the minds of his teachers. His linguistic and other practices differ from his Portuguese-speaking peers. As a result, and in Guilherme’s words, “Teachers don’t like it when you speak Portuguese, they think you’re stupid or that you don’t know how to speak English. I find it better to speak English because teachers respect you more”. Part of the answer to Lucas and Beatriz’s question about what defines a good kid is not speaking Portuguese, however, the emphasis several participants placed on respect is worth exploring especially through the framework of educação and an ethic of caring.
In their discussion about what makes a good kid, Lucas and Beatriz both pose a question about what (a lack of) respect looks like at Westside, which references notions of educação. Lucas and Beatriz both allude to the absence of a commitment and continual expression of caring behaviours from their teachers. Lucas gripes about the grief he encounters for standing up for himself. In a way Guilherme, a “good kid” agrees that there is a need and impulse to stand up for himself, but describes this as a losing battle at Westside; “There’s no point fighting, say sorry and they think you’re smart”.

Unlike Guilherme, Beatriz and Lucas see something wrong with not calling authority out on their failures to show respect to Portuguese-speaking students. They suggest that Guilherme enjoys a level of respect for adhering to certain expectations and submitting to certain forms of discipline, or in Lucas’ words, he “kisses ass”. They also maintain, however, that along with his adherence and deference to authority, his current association with a group of students who are recognized in the school as “good kids”, drawing specific attention to his girlfriend’s reputation for academic achievement, garners Guilherme more respect from his teachers and other authority figures at Westside. Lucas and Beatriz insist that respect is a two-way street, and that teachers need to show up if they expect students to follow through on their end of the contract. Instead, as Beatriz says, “They just give up on some of us”.

Ultimately, their critiques of what (a lack of) respect looks like at Westside focuses on teacher-student relationships, as it seems critically attached to student success and well-being. David gestures to broader notions of relationships (inclusive of teacher-student of course) that informs how individuals (fail to) show respect for students, which specifically reflects a lack of caring behaviours including high academic expectations,
student advocacy and pedagogical practices that facilitate student achievement. David suggests that people at Westside are “judgmental” and that what they are judging includes language, but also the spaces and roles that students take up at Westside. Specifically, David suggests that being seen in the halls and the Resource Room marks some students as “bad kids”. Having already discussed how being removed from class through disciplining language, and the practice of “Vai dar uma volta / go take a walk”, frequently situates Portuguese-speaking students in the hallways, later in this chapter I take up David’s suggestion that the Resource Room may represent a way in which reduced academic expectations may be connected to special education needs of Portuguese-speaking students.

**Disciplining Dropout: “Are you even going to graduate?”**

According to participants, language disciplining was not the only form of Othering commonly directed towards Portuguese-speaking students. Participants as well as their peers articulated practices that communicated teachers’ and administrators’ low expectations of Portuguese-speaking students. Senior students were frequently made aware of these low expectations by being asked whether or not they would even graduate. The question “Are you even graduating” appeared indiscriminately posed by teachers and administrators, in the sense that they seemed to not have evidence as to whether the students was at-risk of not graduating other than them being Portuguese-speaking students. I witnessed this many times over the year, but according to the following participants it is a practice that haunts their educational experience. Beatriz shares the following that demonstrates not only the experience of being met with low expectations,
but also how this process is linked to disciplinary practices that re-construct the
Portuguese-speaking student subject and consolidate the renegade learner along the axis
of diaspora/nationalism.

Sometimes Portuguese people say that they're Portuguese and people look
at them and say, ‘You're Portuguese and you still go to school (in
disbelief)?’ A lot of people are like, ‘Oh Portuguese people just drop out
and they do whatever their mom or dad does, they drop out and do
construction.’ It's a generalized thing. It could be anybody, even a
Portuguese person would say it. They ask me why don’t you just drop out
of school, and I ask, ‘What (in disbelief)?’ It's here at school too. I get
asked, ‘Are you even graduating this year?’ all the time. The Principal
asked me that. The VP asked Lucas and [another Portuguese friend] that in
the hallway. Some other teacher - I don’t even know who she is - asked if
we were graduating. And then, Lucas and [the other Portuguese friend]
looked at her and said, ‘Of course we’re graduating. We have more than
enough credits to graduate.’ And she looked so surprised when we said,
‘Yeah we're graduating this year.’ But, I don't know why they ask. They
have no hope for us. When they look at us they don’t think we go to
school. They think we’re just a bunch of kids that come here whenever
cause we’re not always in uniform, or we’re talking Portuguese. They
think we’re all dumb or something, and we’re just here to be here. Like of
course I'm graduating. I'm not gonna stay here for the rest of my life. I
don't even understand why they’d even ask that. You can tell we're not... I
have an 85% average. Like, I'm not a bad student. So why would you ask
me whether I'm graduating or not.

With frustration in her voice, Beatriz begins recounting the story of when the Principal
asked her this seemingly innocuous question.

Like I actually looked at the Principal, I was in his office, and I looked at
him and asked, ‘Did you just ask me that?’ And he replied, ‘Excuse me?’
And I said, ‘Did you just asked me if I was even graduating this year?’ I
said, ‘Of course I’m graduating. Did you not see my grades?’ Not that
grades are all you should look at, but I've never like failed a course. He
said I was giving him attitude. But I said, ‘Ok, I'm sorry, but you can't just
ask people that. You can't assume things.’ I find that it's not fair. You can't
just assume that because I’m not in uniform or that I’m spending some
time in the hallway with my friends that I’m a bad kid or that I’m the
 kinda kid that fails. You don't need to come to school in uniform. It
doesn't determine your education. We're all just kids and trying to get
somewhere in life and they just ask that, it's so rude.
Emotional throughout, Beatriz begins to cry.

I just find like they don't have hope for us because we go here and like it's not like a big school, you know, like no we don't go to [another school] (she names a well-resourced school close to Westside High that has a reputation for academic excellence) or something, but you know we're not dumb. It just bothers me. There are people I don't even talk to who are like outstanding students and like what if they got asked that, you know? It's as if they don't even acknowledge the fact that we even go here, that our excellence doesn't mean anything to them but it means so much to us.

She eventually concludes with saying:

Honestly when they ask if we’re even graduating this year I don't even think they care. They just want, cause you know how there's a certain graduates per year thing, they just want to have a good thing to show that they're a good school. It’s numbers. I don't even think that they care about us as individuals, they just care more about them and their status. That's what I perceive here. (Interview, March 23, 2016)

Beatriz describes what appears to be a practice of (re-)constructing and disciplining at-riskness and specifically the Portuguese-speaking student always already at-risk of dropping out of school. In this lengthy excerpt Beatriz reveals the ways in which Portuguese-speaking subjectivities, youth and adults, are reconstructed as drop-outs, unlikely to finish school and instead take-up manual labour like their parents. Of equal importance is how she perceives teachers and administrators as not caring about them or their success other than to support school statistics. In all fairness, students both praised and lambasted their school and expressed that teachers both did and did not care about them. Their impulse to protect their school’s reputation, however, seemed to have something to do with it being their school, for better or worse, and that by criticizing it they were also criticizing themselves. They also valued the meaningful relationships each
had with at least one teacher, but often not more than one or two.

The importance of caring teachers and administrators is common to other at-risk racialized language minority student populations. Most notably I think of Latino/a students in Valenzuela’s (1999) ethnography in South Texas. Closer to home, however, are the experiences of some Spanish-speaking students in Proyecto Latino, who suggested that caring and attentive teachers make all the difference in them feeling as if their success matters and that thanks to those teachers they are more likely to achieve academically (Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011).

Additionally, the class considerations that Beatriz asserts are necessarily attached to Portuguese-speaking youth – that they will drop out of high school and work construction with their parents – concertizes the intergenerational class status and stagnancy of Portuguese-speaking youth in Toronto. The tendency to construct Portuguese-speaking students as drop-outs destined to take up the labour their parents fulfill in society reveals that Portuguese-speaking students are considered inferior academically. Considering Beatriz’s account alongside the sentiments expressed by several participants’ Construction teacher, the concept of raceclass appropriately draws a link between class and race (Leonardo, 2012) and how race and class inequalities cannot be fully understood in isolation (Gillborn, 2010). Drawing conclusions of inferiority, particularly in error, about a group of students as a result of their ethnic identity is a group of students that is being racialized/racialization. With Portuguese-speaking youth, class appears so intimately tied to ethnic identity, in ways that racialize youth through class. While this may not necessarily be the case everywhere Portuguese-speaking students exist, racialization of immigrants and what Bonilla-Silva (2015) terms local
racial formations, might account for why it happens in Toronto.

It is important to note that neither Beatriz nor her peers were asked about graduation in a counseling appointment or other setting where concern and care for them was being implied. Instead, the tendency to “assume that because I’m not in uniform or that I’m spending some time in the hallway with my friends that I’m a bad kid or that I’m the kinda kid that fails” occurs in the context of a student being disciplined. Not being in uniform and lingering in hallways are practices that are subject to disciplinary action. While being disciplined, Beatriz was (re-)constructed as a student “at-risk” of failing to graduate. For defending her academic achievement and pointing out the implication in such a question, Beatriz was perceived as “giving attitude”. The term renegade is reflected in Beatriz’s experience. She vigorously denies her subjectivity as a bad, at-risk, failing student, and she complains to and quarrels (ela queixa) with her Principal about the assumptions that compel him to ask whether “she’s even graduating this year.” A seemingly innocuous question about whether a student is graduating becomes a harmful practice of disciplining the presumed Portuguese-speaking drop-out student.

Beatriz is not alone in expressing frustration with this practice. In her narrative above, Beatriz references Lucas and his friend. While his friend was not an official participant in this study, he was present at an assembly where his interaction with a school administrator revealed this practice and its connections to how race and class come together to define Portuguese-speaking youth subjectivity. The following story taken from observation notes describes the experience.

Graduating senior students were called to the auditorium for a rehearsal assembly. The boisterous group listened to teachers who listed, among other details, information
regarding when and where to pick-up gown and cap rentals, how to purchase graduation photographs, and the date, time and location of their graduation ceremony, stressing that it would not be held at the school. Among the most pressing and time-consuming parts of the assembly was rehearsing the order for the graduation procession. Students’ names were read aloud in pairs. Each pair of students rose when they heard their names and proceeded just outside the auditorium, in the hallway, where they joined the end of the line, paying close attention to those ahead of and behind them. It was a tedious exercise. Throughout the assembly, it was impossible to ignore how frequently teachers would mispronounce students’ names, and how many of those names were Portuguese. The pronunciation was so obscure in a few instances that students were unsure about whether their name had been called. After a lengthy process that nearly emptied the auditorium, a hand full of students, all Portuguese, remained along with an administrator near the exit. The administrator asked, “Who are you, and why weren’t your names called?”, which assumed not only that the students were the source of the problem, but that they also knew the answer to her question. A slight redirection of the eyes offered an indication of who was to speak next. The first of the four students explained that he was at the assembly despite not planning to attend graduation because he plans to travel to Portugal for national soccer tryouts. The second student, a relative newcomer to Canada from Portugal, explained in English with a Portuguese accent that he was in Grade 11 and not graduating, but that he skipped class because he wanted to be with his friends at the assembly. The third student missed hearing his name, which he claimed must have been mispronounced like every other Portuguese student’s name. And, finally a fourth student explained that his name might not have been read because he had not paid the one
hundred dollar fee for graduation. “Are you even graduating?” the administrator said directly to the fourth student. The student retorted, “Of course I’m graduating; why else would I be here?” Asked if he had paid the one hundred dollar graduation fee, the student replied, “not yet”. Waving her finger across the group of four students in front of her to suggest a collective you, she said, “Why not? Don’t you work? You know you can’t graduate without paying the fee. It was due a while ago”. The student answered in a markedly different tone after noting with widened eyes that she had somehow offended him, “I don’t like giving the school my hard-earned money. I don’t like paying you guys before I have to.” The administrator turned to me and, in a sarcastic tone that suggested the forthcoming remark would be heard as an acceptable joke, said, “Well sir, they represent your race well.” Before I could react, the student angrily replied, “What are you saying, are we like monkeys or something to you? What’s wrong with you?” The administrator ignored the student and walked away. I raised this scenario with Lucas, knowing he had discussed the situation with his friend, and he told me, “Yeah, he was so pissed. He had the money for graduation, he has a job and everything, but I don’t know what [the admin]’s problem was. He told me he’s not even gonna go now. We’re tired of them always thinking we’re failures and drop-outs. I wish I had been there.”

The familiar practice of disciplining drop-out is present in the above description. The administrator asks the question, “Are you even graduating?”, that Portuguese-speaking students at Westside High frequently encounter to (re-)construct the “at-risk” Portuguese-speaking student subject. This time, however, statements that inscribe race and class on the Portuguese-speaking student followed the question. This was one of several times I was reminded of my Portuguese-speaking subjectivity by those in
positions of authority at Westside High, and this time portugueseness was associated with
the unlikeliness of graduating from high school. The sarcastic expression, “they certainly
represent your race well”, not only referenced the all too familiar academic
underachievement associated with Portuguese-speaking youth, but it also reinforced the
notion that Portuguese students are distinctively different from and inferior to others who
are expected to graduate from high school. As Beatriz lamented earlier, there are students
who are never asked this question. Yet, Portuguese-speaking youth repeatedly hear and
feel the consequences of this question as they are reminded of the ways in which they
differ from some and simultaneous resemble others at school.

Concerning class, no care or concern is expressed in either words or tone about
whether one hundred dollars is affordable for this student. The ultimatum is given: either
pay the fee or do not expect to be at your graduation. For some, one hundred dollars is
never a nominal fee. However, one hundred dollars in addition to other fees throughout
one’s graduating year - with year-end expenses such as prom, graduation photos and the
parties to celebrate the milestone of graduation - even those with more financial means
might feel the pinch. This is all too familiar for many in a working class school. The
student in this scenario has a part-time job as a janitor, a job he came by through his
father who does similar work. The working class backgrounds of many students at
Westside high are not unknown to teachers and admin. The school operates a frequented
breakfast program and has many youth in need of financial assistance. Some of the needs
are met through programs hosted by the school board and local charities, while others are
funded through “civies” day, where students each pay $2 for permission to be out of
uniform, and during holiday drives for non-perishable goods and gift cards to assemble
hampers for families in need in their school community. Ultimately, the ultimatum appears insensitive considering the working class background of the school and many of its students, and the connection it explicitly implies between class and race is difficult to ignore.

The assumption - indicated through the collective you in her question - that all four of the Portuguese-speaking male students work part-time jobs and thus should be able to afford the graduation fee, discursively reproduces the same notion of working class identity among Portuguese-speaking students. I regularly heard teachers comment on the part-time work habits of Portuguese-speaking students; not in ways that reflected empathy for their late attendance or assignment, but that this indicated to them that these students prioritized work more than school and were more likely of eventually dropping out of school. Beatriz offered a counter-narrative. “I feel like work helps me stay determined to get somewhere in life, but it also helps me get money so I can get somewhere, you know what I mean, to pay tuition and stuff. So that's why I like working so much.” Like Beatriz, other female participants suggested that work helps to structure their time, making them more productive. When I asked Sabrina whether her grades and studies were impacted once she stopped working part-time, she said, “You’d think it would help… with me not working that I’d spend all that time doing homework, but I don’t. When I used to get off work at 9:30pm, I knew my schedule, I would come home and do homework. Now I have from 3pm to whatever time to do homework and I waste a lot of time. It is much easier to get the work done now, but I was getting it done before too. I'm not so tired and it's easier for me to get up and go to first period. When you're working you get really tired and first period is kinda a struggle so now it's easier for me
Youth of Portuguese ancestry in Canada tend to work more part-time hours compared to their peers (Andrew-Gee, 2013). For Beatriz and Sabrina, part-time work afforded certain benefits. Despite certain drawbacks, the majority of my participants talked about how work helped to achieve their educational aspirations, whether by motivating them to stay in school, helping to pay for school, and structuring their time, especially for those who self-identified as procrastinators. I do not mean to dismiss that increased hours of part-time work can negatively impact educational achievement. Six of the ten participants worked an average of just over 16 hours per week, on both evenings and weekends. Four of those six agreed that they had at one time or another sacrificed school for work. Overwhelmingly, however, perceptions persisted that Portuguese-speaking students work part-time jobs because they prioritize work over school, when in fact many participants accessed part-time work with school in mind. Imposing on Portuguese-speaking students that they prioritize work over school reconstructs theirs and their parents’ class identities. That the four boys left behind at the graduation assembly should be able to afford the graduation fee as a result of their presumed part-time jobs, however, points to a class consciousness about their families, who are not cited as being able or willing to pay this fee, which again reproduces notions of Portuguese-speaking families not caring about education. Responsible for their own financial needs and obligations rather than reliant on their families as most youth their age renders these boys as adults instead of youth or dependents; adults who are offered little understanding for the conditions that bring them to work part-time in the first place.

Concerning race, I do not mean to suggest that the Portuguese-speaking student
subject is suddenly and permanently racially (re)defined as non-White at the mere
mention of race by this single administrator. Nevertheless, unless raised by the
administrator, race might otherwise be absent from this incident, and, as a result, it is
undeniably present and attached to them, and in the case of the fourth student, to class.
The double bind of race is exhibited in this scene by the administrator’s decision to
comment that these students represent my race well after reprimanding them for a variety
of reasons (skipping class; missing graduation for soccer (travel to Portugal); being
distracted or inattentive during the assembly, thus missing their name being called; or
failing to pay the graduation fees in a timely fashion). Her lack of response to the fourth
student’s series of questions: “What are you saying, are we like monkeys or something to
you? What’s wrong with you?”, leaves great uncertainty about what she meant by her
statement. The ways in which participants discuss race and their experiences as racialized
subjects in school, however, provided some insight into the administrator’s comments.
Most participants struggled to articulate how they differ phenotypically from normative
White subjects. According to Lucas his good friend, who was the fourth student in the
aforementioned scenario, appears “more White” than him, but when pressed to explain
himself more, he reflected on the lightness of his skin, the colour and quantity of his hair,
facial hair (particularly eyebrows) and body hair, and the shape of his head. They all,
however, understood their experiences of difference through language, class and
immigration status. This, of course, points to the inherent privilege of being in an ethnic
White body. But, it also points to the less recognized non-phenotype ways in which race
is understood, and as Leonardo reminds us “language and immigration status matter at
least as much as skin colour for non-Black minorities” (2012, 432).
Language plays a significant role in both the exchange between the students and the administrator and in the proceedings of the assembly. That four Portuguese-speaking male students were the only students left behind in the auditorium and addressed by the administrator is noteworthy. Similarly, that many Portuguese-speaking students’ names were mispronounced was not an isolated event. Such repeated mispronunciations reify the unimportance and valuelessness of Portuguese language and their individual and cultural identities. An example of this is how one day I called out to Beatriz as she was waiting to cross the street. She turned to look at me, smiled, and said “I like the way you say my name.” When I asked what she meant, she told me that everyone calls her Beatrice, or by the anglicized version of her name, to the extent that she stopped correcting people a long time ago. I was the only person in the school, she admitted, who bothered to pronounce it in Portuguese.\textsuperscript{9} Beatriz’s poignant reflection gestures to how names, when mispronounced, mark some as Other, and either legitimize or delegitimize one’s cultural and linguistic identity and sense of belonging.

Administrators and teachers repeatedly discipline dropout by questioning whether marginalized students’ prioritize their educational success, and ultimately whether they have the capacity and commitment to finish high school. “Are you even going to graduate?” represents an all too familiar sentiment felt by Portuguese-speaking students at Westside High. While it is also reproduced in the community, there’s no doubt that it also is reproduced at their school. Students’ decisions to work part-time while in high school were questioned and frequently assumed to reaffirm the Portuguese-speaking community’s deprioritizing of education. Raceclass interacts to imprint on Portuguese-

\textsuperscript{9} Beatriz, like all the names in this study, is a pseudonym. The participant’s actual name also reflects the anglicization reflected in her story, an experience shared by several other participants and countless students.
speaking youth a working class identity as well as a racial identity in which I was implicated as Other. The ways in which the four male students represented my race well are myriad, and this statement was no doubt informed by deficit logics concerning the Portuguese-speaking individual, family and community in Toronto.

**Disciplining Disability: “I just walk in, I don’t even sit down, and I’m sent directly to Resource.”**

Along with having a large Portuguese-speaking student population, Westside High has a large Special Education or Resource Program, and staff estimate that a third of students have Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Congruent with my experiences in Resource and reviewing departmental reports, a disproportionate number of students with IEPs are Portuguese-speaking. Speaking with the director of Special Education at Westside High, I learned that these students’ IEP designations are nearly always related to a learning disability and transferred with their elementary record, suggesting that the structural processes of determining disability is effecting Portuguese-speaking youth before arriving at high school. A great number of those students are labeled with learning disabilities who receive withdrawal assistance from their regular classroom.

Having worked closely with the On Your Mark Tutoring and Mentoring Program for Spanish and Portuguese-speaking students in Toronto, I recall one time in particular when the coordinator of the program felt particularly exasperated by the lack of tutors for the growing number of students in the program. She explained that she had just spoken with an elementary teacher, at a school with a large Portuguese-speaking student population, who asked how she could get tutors for her Portuguese students. When asked how many students that was, the teacher exclaimed, “Well, all of them”. As I have
illustrated, portugueseness is immediately associated with academic underachievement, a result of deficit thinking steeped in the school culture and history of underachievement and vocational programs at Westside. Teachers routinely receive reports of students who have IEPs and whether or not the nature of those IEPs are as a result of learning disabilities. According to some participants, Resource appears to be a method of addressing behavioural issues by removing Resource students from class.

Guided by teachers’ recommendations for where to find participants for my study, I spent period B in the Resource Room for the first few months of my time at Westside (more forthcoming on why this only lasted for the first few months). Many students who have IEPs never access the Resource Room, and others go consistently. While there, I got to know several Portuguese-speaking students who frequented the space for a variety of reasons. It became evident, however, that many different students used this space to, for example, access a computer in order to complete an assignment, get some help from their assigned Resource Teacher or Educational Assistant, write a test for which they were being given extra time. Indeed, this program and space fulfilled a variety of purposes that supported student success and well-being. Additionally, during the ninety or so minutes of period B that I was in the Resource Room I consistently encountered several Portuguese-speaking students who directly came to the Resource Room instead of reporting to their scheduled class. This section presents student behaviours, practices and experiences that reveal how the Resource Program at Westside High often functioned as a means of disciplining Portuguese-speaking youth through their perceived and documented educational disabilities and frequently removed them from the classroom into the Resource Room, an alternative and often less structured space that while
intending to supplement their educational journey effectively annexed them from it.

If at school during period B, David was regularly in the Resource Room, expecting to see me, and letting me know if he was there and I was not. It was so consistent I felt a duty to let him know in advance if I was unable to come the following day. This meant, however, that he was rarely in his period B class. When I asked him about this, he explained “I hate my teacher. I don’t even bother going up there anymore. I just come directly to Resource.” As I came to understand it, students were expected to report to their class for attendance and then they could come to Resource with their teacher’s permission. When I asked David about why he was not showing up for attendance to his period B class, he explained, “I don’t go anymore. Last time I was there the teacher saw me walk in, pointed at me and said, ‘Ah, ah, ah, off to Resource’.” I just walk in, I don’t even sit down, and I’m sent directly to Resource.” When I asked him to explain why, he said, “I honestly don’t know. I hardly get into class and I’m told to leave. I don’t even know what we’re supposed to do; I don’t have a chance to write down the homework that’s on the board.” David has an IEP and a learning disability. While he knows that he has a learning disability - others have told him so - he is not sure what it is. Instead, David has internalized that he is not smart, that teachers think that he is dumb. The only place he feels a sense of accomplishment is in his automotive class, working on cars using his hands. Perhaps my expression reacting to this stereotypical characterization of Portuguese-speaking youth compels David to confess; “Now I know what you’re saying. Like, all pork chops only work with their hands. But, I don't know, I like working with my hands. I don't like, I can never sit at a desk and write an essay.”

According to David, various external forces, both inside and outside of school,
inform his belief that he is dumb, however, outside of school no one knows that he has a learning disability. Sitting in Resource with David that day that his teacher immediately directed him to Resource, he vented his frustration saying,

A lot of times [teachers] know that we’re Resource students so they just think let them deal with [us]. They think Portuguese-students are dumb anyways and then being Resource students it’s even worse. But, in a way it’s better cause I don’t have to stay in that class. I’d rather be in Resource. (Fieldnotes, November 19, 2015)

The fact that upon entering the classroom David is immediately directed down to Resource, a space he only accesses on account of his learning disability, works to solidify for him this division between mind and hands; a division as clear and visible as his grease-stained hands from his part-time job at an auto shop. According to David his teacher provides no context as to why he is not welcome to remain in class, and the practice of sending him directly to Resource, regardless of its intention, sends a clear disciplinary message concerning him, Resource, and his identity as a student with a learning disability.

Being good with his hands is what David clings to in terms of his worth as a student but it potentially forecloses any ambition he might have to excel in his other classes, particularly when an exclusive division between being good with his hands and being good with his mind is re-constructed in the messages around him. During my time at Westside High I frequently overheard teachers and administrators referring to the educational aptitudes and needs of the student body. Notions that vocational programs, rather than arts or STEM programs, better suit Westside students were common and reminiscent of Westside’s history of vocational focus that provided culinary arts and other skills-based programs. This may also inform why most recent reports suggest that a
lower percentage of Portuguese-speaking students (52% compared to 66% of overall students) take the majority of their courses in the Academic Program of study and a higher percentage take applied courses (36% compared to 25% of overall students) (Brown, Newton & Tam, 2015). Beatriz mentioned earlier that Westside is not like their neighbouring well-resourced school with a reputation for high academic achievement. Surely teachers’ and administrators’ intentions are to best serve the needs of the students and the community. However, characterizing student populations as more suited to vocational rather than academic trajectories - or as David understands, being good with his hands rather than his mind - has certain consequences on David and perhaps on his teacher’s decision to keep a student with a learning disability in class or to direct him to Resource.

While Resource offers a less conventional structure and organization than typical classrooms, David’s experience demonstrates the lack of understanding, among students at the very least, of the purpose of Resource, and directing certain student bodies to Resource as a result of certain behaviours confuses if not conflates the meaning and purpose of Resource. It is understandable that teachers and students struggle in a disruptive learning environment and supports are needed depending on the students and their individual needs in the classroom. Francisco is known as a “Resource student” and a “hand full”. He has an Educational Assistant (EA) who meets him daily during period B. Francisco, unlike David, tended to report to his English class for attendance and then head to Resource after being sent there by his teacher, a new and eager hire, for behavioural issues, which admittedly were difficult to manage while managing a classroom. Frequent interactions and disagreements with his teacher, however, lead to a
two-week stretch where he would report directly to Resource. His EA started meeting him in Resource instead of in class. Nearing the end of term, I noticed that I had not seen Francisco for a week or so, and the other boys in Resource had little interaction with him as they were starting to doubt his far-fetched stories and get annoyed with his flaky disposition. When I asked his EA where he had been she also did not know. I happened upon his teacher in the hallway one day and asked about him. She said that, “Things have turned around, but I don’t know how. He now isn’t being as disruptive in class and he’s actually been doing some work.” While this study cannot explain Francisco’s turn around (modest and short-lived as it may have been), it can critique the use of Resource as a place where those who disrupt class and require a certain degree of discipline are directed. But, it is not a place for just any disruptive student. It is also a place where those requiring learning accommodations are directed. As a result these two categories, neither necessarily co-dependent nor independent, become conflated, and the disproportionately high numbers of Portuguese-speaking youth in Resource are constructed as being disciplined for both their behaviour and disability, which becomes attached to their identities as at-risk Portuguese-speaking students and portugueseness more generally.

While David said he no longer goes to class, and Francisco, with the exception of that brief episode of reported productivity, only goes to be marked as present, essentially both of these students are annexed from their classroom experiences through the Resource program. For example, David’s Resource teacher would at times instruct David to go to class to find out what he was expected to work on. David would complain that his regular period B teacher never provided handouts of the assigned work and that he was not permitted to take a photo of the chalkboard containing the assignment. His
absence from class had a negative impact on his studies, and it became increasingly clear to me that he was no longer engaged in the learning of the class, but, rather, in this back and forth routine that placed him neither firmly in the Resource Room nor the classroom. This reality did not seem lost on Special Education Program administrators. Westside’s Special Education Program, referred to as Resource, was scheduled to more closely reflect practices found in other Special Education Programs in the school board, specifically, reducing withdrawal from classrooms. In other words, instead of removing students from the classroom and sending them to Resource, Resource was scheduled to come to the classroom. As a result, the Resource Room essentially closed at the beginning of second term, and I found a new space to occupy during period B. The sense among staff and students towards this change, however, was generally one of resistance, and eventually, less than 2 months later, Resource re-opened, which meant that students were once again being directed to Resource.

There may in fact be legitimate and productive reasons for why David and Francisco were consistently sent to the Resource Room, and suggesting whether or not withdrawal is the appropriate practice for student success is beyond the scope of this study. However, whether or not and how discourses that withdraw students like Francisco and David are explained and communicated to them, and therefore to their peers, inform how students generally perceive this practice of being excluded from the classroom and delegated to the Resource Room. Along with many of his peers with whom I engaged while in Resource, David was convinced that his teacher hated him, thought he was stupid, and as a result sent him directly to Resource. The labeling of students such as David and Francisco as Resource students - who remember teachers immediately
conjured as the perfect subject for my study - associates notions of deviance and
disability with Portuguese-speaking youth identity, and positions them and
portugueseness in opposition to academic success.

In the previous chapter, David’s peer reasoned that speaking Portuguese “explains
why you’re here in resource and suck at school”, which then associates those notions of
deviance and disability with portugueseness and Portuguese-speaking student identity.
For Portuguese-speaking students who are not immediately perceived to be
underachieving in school it is evident that there are certain conditions and practices
required to ensure this is the case. Guilherme demonstrates how not speaking Portuguese
in class prevents him from being perceived as stupid and unable to speak English, as well
as from being disrespected by his teachers. Beatriz reminded her teacher of her honour-
roll status to avoid, at least for the moment, the assumption that she was an academically
at-risk Portuguese-speaking student. For David and Francisco, their status as Resource
students became an obstacle to being seen as anything but deviant and intellectually
disabled. Therefore, even if these associations do not affect the educational trajectories of
all Portuguese-speaking students (many go on to pursue post-secondary studies where
they may still be impacted by these associations) for many this is an association that they
feel they need to overcome, which for many proves to be an insurmountable obstacle.
The year following my time at Westside I caught up with David. He had not been
permitted to return to Westside and instead had been enrolled in a remedial program
elsewhere in Toronto. He never attended and expressed that although he was
disappointed, he knew that it was unlikely that he would attend and therefore would not
obtain his high school diploma. Several months later I happened on a news article about
the same remedial program David refused to attend. To my surprise and delight Francisco was attending the program. What did not surprise me, however, was that in the article Francisco suggested that this is the first school he had attended where he felt like the teachers cared, demonstrated more patience with him, and genuinely wanted to see him succeed.

**Conclusion**

While clearly the disciplining of Portuguese-speaking students through language, drop-out and disability was not always, in every instance, experienced by Portuguese-speaking students, the threat remained present in their minds, consistent with other insidious disciplinary and surveillance practices. For some, however, the disciplining became rather familiar; either being questioned whether one will even graduate or being directly sent to Resource immediately before taking a seat in class. Often, whether they know it or not, the reality is that the experience and threat of being disciplined for being Portuguese-speaking is a part of Portuguese-speaking students’ educational trajectories. In the previous chapter Guilherme had not considered why he avoided speaking Portuguese until I questioned him about his switch from Portuguese to English, which he reflected on and connected to not wanting to be seen as academically inferior and treated disrespectfully. While these practices may in large part be unintentional they nevertheless have significant impact on the lives of some Portuguese-speaking students and appear to simply become part of the institutionalized culture in a school with so many Portuguese-speaking students. In fact, as exemplified by one student, these disciplinary practices are also performed by students themselves when associating speaking Portuguese with
sucking at school and being in Resource.

All three disciplinary practices represent humiliating ironies, which are the “unintended consequences of school policies and the disrespectful interactions between school personnel and youth … because the ironies do not just serve to exclude youth from schooling, but assault their dignities in the process” (68). (Tuck, 2012).

Disciplining language, dropout and disability often involve contradictions between school policies and staff practices (i.e. vai dar uma volta or use of Resource to remove behaviour issues from the classroom) and disrespectful interactions between students and teachers or other school personnel that exclude students from schooling and the classroom and assault their dignities in the process. Rodrigo is told to leave his ESL classroom for having an argument in Portuguese only to return to the class with an educational assistant seated next to him who considers him to be “a heavy burden”. His response to her: “same”, reveals his awareness of the irony that her role to monitor his behaviour and particularly his language use is a burden on him. Moreover, in a school with over a quarter of students self-identifying as Portuguese-speaking, not to mention the sizeable Spanish-, Tagalog-, and Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking students, in a city that is considered one of the world’s most multicultural, students point out the irony in being told to speak English or go back home, and how this assaults their dignity as multilingual students being framed as unwelcome foreigners and poor examples of immigrants in Canada and even non-citizens in their own country of origin. In retelling her experience of being constructed as a future dropout, Beatriz points out the irony of asking a student who is on Westside’s honour roll about whether she is even graduating while being disciplined for her non-uniform shoes. Finally, David’s awareness that he is
thought of as dumb because he is Portuguese, and how that is exacerbated because he is a Resource student is ironic because David is convinced that in any case he wants to work with his hands. Being removed from class, and being neither fully situated in Resource nor the regular classroom actually affords him, detrimental as it may be to his chances of graduating high school, the space to go to work on his engine in auto class. For all three of these students these disciplinary practices and experiences represented assaults on their dignities as Portuguese-speaking students as well as portgueseness.

These practices have a profound impact on the schooling trajectories of Portuguese-speaking youth. In the chapter that follows I look at the consequences and outcomes these disciplinary practices and dominant depictions of portugueseness have on Portuguese-speaking student identity, subjectivity and on whether or not they select or deselect education. I also make policy recommendations based on the evidence that inequitable practices in schools maintain a disadvantageous learning environment and culture for Portuguese-speaking students in Toronto.
Chapter 5
Identity, Subjectivity and Educational Deselection

Portuguese-speaking student identity and subjectivity have material and psycho-social consequences on students’ lives at Westside. Chapter 3 traces what reveals Portuguese-speaking identity at Westside and how Portuguese-speaking students’ subjectivities are shaped by dominant discourse of portugueseness. Chapter 4 illustrates how portugueseness is shaped by three specific practices that discipline Portuguese-speaking students at Westside. In chapter 5 I look at specific outcomes of portugueseness at Westside.

Specifically, I explore the effects portugueseness and associated disciplinary practices have on student identity and subjectivity, as well as how portugueseness for some Portuguese-speaking students at Westside informs certain attitudes and dispositions towards schooling. These include participants’ perceptions that they are being pushed-through, in addition to those who feel they are being pushed-out of, their secondary education as well as several ways in which the consequences of portugueseness at Westside bring students to deselect education and reproduce at-risk student narratives.

Some participants in this study successfully graduated high school. Of those, several had thoughts on the process of being pushed through or deselecting education, which I argue takes place in spite of completing one’s high school education. Other participants in this study did not complete high school, and their narratives and experiences feature prominently in this chapter. It is important to contextualize early school leaving. Scholars have described this phenomenon as drop-out (Kelly & Gaskell, 1996; Rumberger, 2004; Ogbu, 1989) and push-out (Dei, et al., 1997; Tuck, 2012), and several of my participants would be understood as either, depending on the person. Rodrigo - a Grade 10 student who arrived from São Miguel, Azores, just a year before starting high school - never
returned to Westside the year following my study. David, a Grade 12 student, was pushed out of Westside and into an alternative school as a result of his attendance record, and Thiago, a Grade 12 student, did not complete his high school diploma by a single credit, and entered the labour market. Still, as I have gestured to in previous chapters, others described schooling trajectories and opinions on their schooling experiences that lead me to theorize the notion of push-through; where despite “successfully passing” year after year, they felt that the bar was set so low that their passing hardly represented any degree of success. Throughout this process of being pushed-through high school, many participants reflected on how they had checked out of schooling for a variety of reasons, including, irrelevant curriculum, poor instruction, disciplining language, dropout and disability, and considering their real or perceived available employment options without school. This process, and in particular the later reflection on employment options without school, briefly summarizes what I term educational deselection, or the process of reshaping the notion of success in the absence of success in school.

The chapter first outlines several success narratives that challenge dominant notions of schooling and education, particularly highlighting participants’ critiques of (the value of) schooling in relation to subtractive schooling and an ethic of care contained within the concept of educação. I conclude by outlining a theory of educational deselection that occurs through several processes at Westside, and critique the often-presumed unique intersectional identity location of Portuguese-speaking students that provide them with the social capital to access sustainable employment with or without a high school diploma. In addition to revealing humiliating ironies in schooling, Portuguese-speaking students’ ability and willingness to identify and articulate the
various discourses and disciplinary practices that negatively affect students associated with dominant depictions of portugueseness (their sense of being pushed through schooling, and finally their belief that their future opportunities are not solely predicted by academic achievement and school completion) constructs their dangerous dignities that question the value and purpose of schooling as it currently exists.

**Success not as schooling, but as survival**

As I have argued, dominant depictions of portugueseness are constructed using language, nationalism and diaspora, and class and labour, and students associated with portugueseness are discursively constructed as renegade learners at Westside and arguably elsewhere in some Toronto schools with large Portuguese-speaking student populations. School practices and policies at Westside that discipline portugueseness frequently inform students’ dispositions (including resistance) to schooling and predict their failing school trajectories and at-risk subjectivities. This happens amidst subtractive schooling that dismisses and disciplines important aspects of educação that are valued by participants. For some Portuguese-speaking students, such as participants Sabrina and Guilherme, this leads them to conceal or minimize portugueseness to improve educational opportunities and evade negative stigma. Other Portuguese-speaking students, such as Lucas, Beatriz, and Sara, refuse to minimize or conceal their portugueseness and actively engage in practices that frequently call out educators and administrators for making certain assumptions based on a student’s perceived or actual Portuguese ancestry. While the most vocal of these students struggled at times to endure the consequences of portugueseness, their resistance and ability to call out authority functioned to an extent as a form of survival. Other Portuguese-speaking students
associated with portugueseness, particularly those who neither conceal their
portugueseness nor actively engage in the aforementioned strategies of resistance and
advocacy, however, experienced an increased sense of school disengagement. Not
surprisingly, in this category were the three participants who left Westside, Rodrigo,
Thiago and David, the latter two not completing their secondary education. In other
words, it is not, as Lucas suggested, those who are standing up for themselves that
necessarily feel the greatest consequences to their schooling trajectories. In this study,
those Portuguese-speaking students that neither actively avoid having their
portugueseness detected nor actively resist dominant depictions and disciplining of
portugueseness experienced the greatest effects of reduced academic outcomes. For many
students, their Portuguese-speaking identities and portugueseness are constructed as
incongruent with academic achievement and schooling. As a result, several participants,
particularly males, contemplated life without schooling and their career and life
trajectories without a high school diploma, and how this might inform their ability to be
successful in life.

While none of the participants rejected the idea that education is a path, if not the
path to success, many also articulated alternative paths to success that did not include
school. These alternative paths to success focused on ensuring certain financial and
personal satisfaction, particularly in circumstances where schooling was neither engaging
nor relevant to the outcomes they thought were important. In this section, I present
several success narratives that participants articulated in this study that challenge
traditional associations with school success and life and career success.

**When traditional school as success narratives fail**
All of the ten participants in this study agreed that education leads to success, but many also believed that school was not the only way to ensure success. In other words some part of them questioned the school as success ideology. Moreover, many felt that education, while a worthwhile pursuit, was not exactly what they were obtaining in school. Specifically they questioned whether the knowledge they were learning was relevant. Only three of my ten participants seemed determined to pursue post-secondary education. Sara and Sabrina attended college or university in September immediately after graduating high school, and, after working for a year to save some money, Beatriz attended university. The other seven participants generally echoed what everyone said, that education leads to success. However, despite claiming to want to finish high school, many did not engage with schooling in ways that demonstrated this commitment. For those determined to pursue postsecondary studies, their success in this pursuit often required considerable resilience in several ways, which Beatriz narrates in previous chapters and will again below.

“I'm good with my hands, so with or without school, I'll be ok”

Despite expressing that they wanted to finish high school, both David and Thiago continued to inconsistently attend classes, often missing days at a time, and exert minimal effort to complete class assignments even after being cautioned that they were at risk of failing a class. Both students felt that they had fallen too far behind in school and that they simply could not change the course of things. David found himself in a worse predicament than Thiago. I asked David to describe his academic journey in high school.

Not good. Not good at all. I'm failing every single class, and I'll have to
stay an extra year in high school because I failed too much classes, and I'm behind. It's always bad. Since grade nine I've been failing. Grade 9 I failed English, Grade 10 I failed English and Civics, Grade 11 I failed Math, English, Auto. What else did I fail? Religion for grade 11. And I don't know about grade 12 yet, but I'm pretty sure I failed a few courses too. I'm pretty sure I failed OLC (literacy). I probably lost one credit in Co-op and gym. (Interview, February 26, 2016)

I asked him why he suspected that he failed OLC, a course that others had said was pretty easy to pass. He replied “[The teacher] told me my mark before the exam was not good at all, it was a 34. So, it was like no, that's not happening.” Finally, when I asked when he would find out his grade, David said “I don't know. I think they mailed it to me but my mailing address is still my old address. I never changed it so my mom doesn’t get the report card before I do. She only really speaks Portuguese so there’s no way she will be calling the school to ask for it. What can I say, when it comes to bad things, I'd rather avoid them than talk about it or show my mom. Or talk to my teachers or do something about it.”

Later in our conversation I asked David how his academic failure leaves him thinking about what success might look like in the future. David admitted, “I understand what I do, what I’m able to do with my hands and everything as success. My brother, he kinda-ish sees my abilities as success, but other people don’t at all.” When I asked him who those other people are, he said,

“People around Westside. Those people who judge me by my marks. They just don’t understand that I’m not a writing-reading guy. I can't really write a paragraph in like an hour like other kids can do. I need like, more like a few days. English is really hard. And teachers tend to do, ‘Oh today we're gonna prepare a paragraph and it's due by the end of period’, and I just can't do it.” (Fieldnotes, March 2, 2016)

When I asked about his Mom, he said, “She definitely understands. She's proud of me. She understands that I can't really do what my brother does, but she also understands that
my brother can't do things that I do. But, she's proud of me, yeah, either way."

David approached me in the hall one day nearing the end of the school year. He looked upset and asked if I could talk over lunch. We made our way to the falafel place we had visited several times throughout the school year. This time, however, we skipped going for lunch and he told me that he was told by Mr. Brown, the Vice Principal, that he could not return to Westside in September because of his academic and attendance records. He told me that he pleaded to stay at Westside and return in September, promising to do better and expressing how this had served as a wake-up call for him, but, to no avail. David felt as if things had finally caught up with him. He also felt betrayed by the school that kept him floating along through 4 years just to be passed off to an unfamiliar institution. David confessed,

I’m not a good student based on my grades and stuff, but I’m not a bad student, I don’t get into trouble. What would be the harm of letting me come back for one more year? When they do things like this it proves they don’t care about us. They just want their numbers to look good and I’m dragging them down. They should ask my co-op teacher, sure I don’t really do the assignments, but my placement will say that I’m there everyday. I show up on time, never call in sick and I work hard. That doesn’t seem to count for anything to this place. All that work doesn’t count for anything. I don’t count for anything. (Fieldnotes, June 17, 2016)

David so dreaded the idea of having to start the fall at the alternative school. He was concerned about bullying, not having any friends or the support of his Resource Teacher. He also felt ashamed at the thought of telling his mom and family in Portugal on a summer trip he now felt himself regretting. David was so anxious about going to another school where, in his words, he knew nobody and nobody knew him, that when I caught up with him in October of the following year he had not attended a single day of school at the alternative school. He told me during that walk at lunch before the summer break that he would not attend that alternative school, and he expressed sorrow and
remorse that he would likely not finish high school. But, he also decided to turn his 
attention to being successful without school and repeated what he had said to me in his 
interview “I’m good with my hands, so with or without school, I’ll be ok.”

“I don’t want to be that dumb person who doesn’t know anything.”

Success as school is also contested when Portuguese-speaking students cast doubt upon 
the purpose or relevance of pedagogy and curriculum. Those associated with 
portugueseness and most at-risk of academic underachievement, but unlikely to exhibit 
defiant behaviours such as calling out school personnel, tended to find the dignity in 
pursuing a career in construction. Unlike those acts of defiance and resistance exhibited 
by participants such as Lucas and Beatriz, the resistance to discourses of deficit thinking 
exhibited by these students instead illustrated an act of personal resilience; an alternative 
understanding of success in school as survival.

Thiago sat at his computer, staring at his monitor that dis-
by-step instructions of how to reproduce an image using a specific, and some might say 
slightly out-dated, architectural software. I entered the classroom unannounced – the back 
of his head facing me – and watched for several minutes as he stared at text that required 
much less time to read if he were paying attention. The classmates he typically sat beside 
were not around, which gave Thiago and me a chance to talk while the class 
independently worked on their assignments. He confessed to me a short while after I 
arrived that he was not really reading the screen but instead he was contemplating the 
purpose of these assignments, eventually concluding they were busy work and stupid. In 
my interview with Thiago, I asked him whether finishing high school was important to
him. He answered,

Um yes, to get into college. But, finishing high school is moving on, it means that I’ve passed through that. … I just find it meaningless, meaningless. Everyone compares grades, but in the end no one really cares, it’s just a mark on the paper. It only matters if you learned something from it or if you didn’t. On a report card, I’d rather it be full of 50s and I learned something from that than be 90s and have learned nothing because it was easy. I feel like I’m learning in some classes, but not many. School is mostly a waste of time. (Interview, March 10, 2016)

When referring to the class in which I found him at his computer, he says, “I’m not really learning anything, but – it’s just lines and following instructions and that doesn’t really teach me anything. If anyone knows that program anyone can [follow the instructions] so you’re not really learning or building anything.” Later in our conversation he says,

Sometimes I tell myself I can’t do it, that it’s not worth it. It’s also the money. I kinda think about it. My mind is always changing, so I can’t just be like yeah, I’m going to college or no, I’m going to work and if I get all the money, if it’s not too expensive, if it’s what I really want, then I’ll go to college. Giving up that money for some knowledge that I need for the future is important to me. You don’t want to have a lot of money but then you can’t get another job because you don’t know anything. I want college for my own info but also to get some knowledge so that I can get a job out of that. (Interview, March 10, 2016)

Thiago’s concerns about money, particularly the cost of going to school, both the tuition and other expenses and the opportunity cost of not immediately entering the labour market, are common among many of the participants in this study, particularly how this might impact their family. Thiago’s mother and father separated when he was in Grade 11, which is when his mother placed more pressure on him for financial support.

There was this one point when I was worried about everything that I wasn't gonna get a job, that I'd be all alone, this was in Grade 11. But, I realized... I was experiencing a lot of pressure from my mom because she wanted me to get a job, to help out at home. My parents broke up about a year ago so around that time, yeah. A lot of things changed for me when that happened. (Interview, March 10, 2016)

These domestic financial stresses must not be neglected, and yet other factors, including those at school exacerbate a student like Thiago’s indecision about the future.

When Thiago talks about studying in college he is confident it will be different
from his experiences at Westside, and that the teachers will have different expectations of him.

In college, the teachers will be way more harsh, and I’m sure I’ll improve. I need someone to give me that push. The teachers that do give that push at Westside, it happens, not a lot, but it’s over right away. My one teacher, he just sits there and it’s like, ok guys, independent work. He says he [pushes us] but, well, what he says and what he does are two different things. He can say whatever, but then it doesn’t really matter to them. It’s about saying, do this, do that, and if I need help I’m not sure they’ll be there, right.

When I questioned whether or not he asks for help, he replied,

I’m not that shy anymore so I just say out loud that I don’t understand this, and so they can’t ignore me, but it depends on the teacher and whether they actually help. A lot of times they just say the same thing over and well that didn’t help the first time, so, no, not really. It’s like it’s our fault for not understanding or something. But I make the decision to not pay attention or whatever too, so, yeah. (Interview, March 10, 2016)

Thiago quickly and frequently dismisses the negative thinking that creeps out of him from time to time. He equally dismisses the humiliating ironies that he regularly encounters in schools on account of his portugueseness, which he explained was thrust upon him in Grade 9 when he arrived to Westside speaking very little English. Thiago thinks it is ironic that he completed 4 ESL credits and Grade 11 and 12 English and yet struggles to express himself in writing. When I asked him about whether he is ever discouraged from going to college or university, he explained,

No, it’s kinda like jokes. It’s jokes. Other students and teachers just say you’re Portuguese so you’re going to go to construction. That doesn’t bring me down, because I probably am going to go into construction. There are a lot of people that work in construction and they’re paid a lot. So, I can be one of the head managers of that, who knows. (Interview, March 10, 2016)

When I asked him to clarify whether people assumed he would go into construction or whether they discouraged him from continuing in school, he explained,
Some of them assume. No, they don’t assume, but they make a joke out of it. They know your capabilities, everyone is just kinda funny, and you don’t want to assume that someone’s gonna become something else. For example, just because someone’s Black I’m not gonna say they’re gonna steal cars or they’re gonna be drug dealers, no. … I don’t think me being Portuguese can be a way to bring me down to not go to college. (Interview, March 10, 2016)

Not withstanding the socio-economic concerns that he raises, which similarly inform some of his peers’ deliberations about whether or not post-secondary education is financially possible and beneficial, Thiago struggles, perhaps as an act of resilience, to acknowledge the toxic quotidian messaging that he endures at school. By describing discouraging and overly deterministic messaging that link portugueseness with academic weakness and the trades labour market rather than post-secondary trajectories following high school, Thiago reveals the conditions that partially inform his seesaw orientation to schooling and work, despite his clearly expressed value in learning when he says, “I’d rather [my report card] be full of 50s and I learned something from that than be 90s and have learned nothing because it was easy.”

My conversation with Thiago also surfaces how dominant depictions of portugueseness inform student subjectivities through deficit logics that are immediately connected to ethnic identity, which become deeply internalized. The exchange from our interview that follows captures the effects of Thiago’s internal perspectives of himself as a student as well as his resistant epistemologies concerning the purpose of education and schooling.

Thiago: I don't want to be that dumb person who doesn't know anything. I want to be someone who knows something, but I don't have that action to do it.

Me: What do you mean by that?
Thiago: What I mean is you know you can do it inside but outside you just don't, not because you're shy or because of others, it's just you. You want to become that knowledge person but you don't care about others, it's just your own perspective.

Me: Do you think others think you’re dumb?

Thiago: I don’t know. If someone asks me a question, I want to know that I'll know the answer, or I'll know how to get the answer, I'll know how to solve that problem. Whether I do or not doesn’t matter, it’s the fact that I know I can. (Interview, March 10, 2016)

Throughout our conversation Thiago blames himself for his poor academic performance and he dismisses the negative messaging linked to portugueseness he endures at school as just jokes. Thiago asserts that he doesn’t want to be that dumb person who doesn’t know anything, and later he admits that he is uncertain whether other people see him as dumb. It is true that Thiago’s educational aspirations are informed by his desire to be employable. But, his aspirations are also informed by his desire to realize his internalized perception of himself as capable if not to alter prevailing external perceptions of him as incapable or dumb. It is important to him that he acquire the knowledge and skills that he might need in the future. Currently, Thiago sees schooling as irrelevant because it fuels rather than extinguishes his internal doubt about his abilities and capacity. Thiago’s self doubt is reinforced at school through what he considers to be meaningless assignments, inconsistent and often ineffective support from teachers, and the very acts or jokes that he simply dismisses.

Despite being quick to acknowledge that education leads to success, both David and Thiago understand success as possible without school, particularly for David because his abilities and talents seem to not count academically, and for Thiago because he perceives his education as largely irrelevant and poor in quality, and as reconstructing his
subjective portugueseness as incapable and deficient. Ultimately, both students are engaged in a process of educational deselection. David’s educational deselection commenced long before being prohibited from returning to Westside and directed to a remedial program, which he vowed never to attend. Believing that neither he nor his work count at Westside, he directs his future aspirations and source of future success towards the real or imagined truth that he is good with [his] hands, so with or without school, [he’ll] be ok. Similarly, Thiago’s educational deselection is evidenced in the fact that he shares that he is likely to go into construction after high school and that he articulates an alternative value of education distinct from what he is receiving through his current schooling experience.

Dominant depictions of portugueseness feature in both students’ educational trajectories. Thiago reveals how others comment on how being Portuguese likely means he will go into construction. Dismissing these comments as jokes, Thiago confuses such assumptions, that portugueseness signifies a deficit, as jokes. He says, “They make a joke out of it. Everyone knows your capabilities.” However, Thiago responds that construction workers are paid a lot of money. I increasingly hear this response or tendency to defend the benefits of construction as a personal form of resilience, which should not be confused with the outward resistance demonstrated by Lucas, Beatriz, and Sara. Not surprisingly, the assumed trajectories of portugueseness (particularly construction for boys) somewhat strong arms students like Thiago to re-define success outside of academic achievement and schooling. Statistics on whether Portuguese-speaking males actually access construction to the extent that they are perceived to is something I have not been able to statistically (dis)confirm. Given the 34% dropout rate, however, what
might the lives of Portuguese-speaking students be if they were forced to only see success as school? Their ability to re-define success in their given circumstances may in fact be a survival strategy that thus far has continued to work, or at the very least, this appears to be the overwhelming perspective and expectation from within and outside the community.

The various costs of schooling

The rising cost of post-secondary education causes many students, particularly those from ethnoracialized populations who also find themselves in lower socioeconomic circumstances, to consider the value of schooling. All the participants in this study somehow considered the financial costs of post-secondary education. These included the cost of tuition and books, as well as the opportunity cost of not immediately entering the labour market. However, another cost of schooling, in the form of emotional cost, occupied considerable space in the minds and hearts of some participants. According to Beatriz and Rodrigo, schooling exerted some emotional distance with immediate family and friends that they carefully considered when asked to describe and define what constitutes success.

In Rodrigo’s mind and heart, schooling exacted an emotional cost and negatively impacted his social and intellectual life. More specifically, the consequences he experienced for speaking Portuguese at school have informed his intentional and conscious decision to avoid speaking Portuguese. As a result, he says he can not really socialize with his Portuguese-speaking friends at school because it feels wrong to be socializing in English when they share a culture and language that draws them together. Silencing these youth in this way, though language, represents an emotional and
intellectual pain. Upon first glance, Rodrigo gives little indication of his sadness. This was revealed to me when in the first few minutes of our first meeting, Rodrigo broke down crying for finally being given the opportunity to talk about his experience as a Portuguese-speaking newcomer student at Westside. Fighting back deep sadness, Rodrigo musters the courage to tell me that not only has his decision to not speak Portuguese with his friends caused him emotional distress, it has also caused him to be more introverted and silenced intellectually at school. Rodrigo shared that it is painful to think of how he is not able to be himself with his friends at school for fear of reprisal. “I keep to myself. I stopped hanging out with my Portuguese friends, or anyone really, but especially them cause it keeps me out of trouble, yeah. … In class I don’t say much. The less I say the better off I am. If I’m asked a question, I answer the bare minimum.” I have noticed this throughout my time observing Rodrigo in his ESL and then English class at Westside in Rodrigo’s classes. He admits that he contributes little to class discussion and activities. After being disciplined for speaking Portuguese in a variety of settings at school, he finds it difficult to socialize. As a result, he has disengaged intellectually in his classes, evidenced by his brief manner of engaging in class and increasingly elsewhere at school.

Beatriz discussed how the way in which school is structured impacted her ability to sustain and nurture the meaningful relationships with her friends and mentors at school. Too often classes seemed to get in the way. One might dismiss this as a lazy student, but Beatriz is anything but, having achieved high academic standing as an honour roll student in her final year. Beatriz admitted that her priorities demand that she greet her friends when she arrives at school in the morning even if that means being
slightly late for class. Running late one morning, I saw Beatriz in a relaxed state and asked her if she had class and if she’d be late. She said, “Yeah. I’m was just saying hi to my friend.” Later I caught up with Beatriz and asked her about our morning exchange. She explained, “I’m going to see my friend in the hall and not take the time to say hi and see how she’s doing? No. I’ll make it to class, but after I take the time to greet someone. You have to show that you care.” In addition to the sensible notion that Beatriz might arrive slightly earlier to school to greet her friends, she is also saying something else about nurturing caring, trusting and supportive relationships as well as the emotional and moral obligations that epitomize educação. Rodrigo’s response to the language disciplining he experienced at Westside caused him to reduce his contact with his Portuguese friends because he struggled to imagine speaking to them in language when they share a native tongue and culture. This caused him considerable emotional pain. For Rodrigo, language disciplining represented a form of personal and social de-ethnicization. This also reduced his ability to nurture and grow his social capital and cultural wealth. Rodrigo once mused out loud with me on the idea of returning to Portugal due to his deep dissatisfaction and sadness at school, partly because of the language disciplining he described. For a boy who rarely showed much emotion, he spoke of returning to Portugal with much yearning. He said that he had discussed it with his parents and that they asked him to seriously consider whether that was what he wanted. When I returned to Westside the following year, no one had seen or heard from Rodrigo, and I continue to wonder if he returned.

Frederica and Rodrigo, the youngest participants in my study, both reflected that despite finding their schoolwork and schedule in Portugal more challenging and
demanding compared to Canada, the social atmosphere with their peers and teachers also differed, and left them enjoying school. Rodrigo shared,

Back in Portugal, in my school we were basically all around a soccer club and we would sometimes do a winter, what’s it called, Christmas dinner, and [the school] bring all the families together around the dinner table and it was pretty nice with all the players and their families. Back in Portugal we were a small city. Well, not small, but kinda small. We all know each other very well, and I don’t have that here. I miss that most about Portugal. (Interview, February 25, 2016)

Ultimately, Rodrigo expresses a general disconnection between his life at school and his life at home. The expectations these students had of schooling in Canada as a result of their experiences in Portugal gesture to how education and schooling might fulfill a larger role in society that more closely resembles educação.

The theme of family as an absent ingredient from school and the schooling lives of students is but one cost school presented to participants. Beatriz shared how she highly valued time with her mother, family, and friends, and that at times school prevented her from seeing these people for a variety of reasons. Her mother’s shift work meant that at times she would only see her mother briefly at all for a week. On the weekend she would catch up with her, but doing so was painful when considering the time they had lost throughout the week. She also expressed frustration about not having more time for her boyfriend, but fortunately the two worked at the same location. Beatriz managed to successfully balance her work, social and school obligations despite her busy schedule, but she admitted to looking forward to the summer and following year when she planned to take a break from school and dedicate more time to her family, loved ones, and simply nurturing relationships with the Portuguese women with whom she worked.

Sitting down with them before our shift begins, it seems like the right thing to do, I mean it feels right. We work together, for hours of our day, we should know something about one another. I feel like I want to be
more connected to them than just show up, do my tasks and leave work.
(Interview, September 12, 2016)

It is not surprising that Beatriz privileges greeting her friends at school each and every
day. This echoes the moral and social responsibilities contained in educação, that all three
students seem to lament about their overall schooling experience at Westside.

It is also necessary to raise that in addition to a general disconnection between
their domestic and school lives, several participants complained about how they spend
less time with their parents as a result of the hours they work. For those who lived in
Portugal, the situation appears exacerbated by family and networks they left behind and
that appear to work more hours in Canada than they did in Portugal. Rodrigo laments the
time he misses spending time with his family since coming to Canada. His older sister
remained in Portugal in their family’s home. His parents, he says, “Work like a lot [in
Canada]. In Portugal it was a normal job from 8 to 5, but here my mom works until 8,
sometimes 9 or 10 [at night], and my dad works until 6 or 7 [at night]. And they leave
early in the morning before I get up.” While his later complaints cannot be attributed to
schooling, Rodrigo resents the fact that he feels less connected to his loved ones since
coming to Canada, and not being able to make those connections with peers with whom
he shares a culture and language at school further alienates him.

**Educational deselection**

This chapter is dedicated to outlining a theory of educational deselection, albeit it still
eerging and informing my future program of research, that describes a dynamic process
of school (dis)engagement that accounts for the reduced and truncated school trajectories
of Portuguese-speaking students. Participants associated with portugueseness were
particularly affected and influenced by educational deselection. By reduced school
trajectories, I refer to the reported levels of academic underachievement, as well as the disproportionately higher number of Portuguese-speaking students in applied courses, which reduce their opportunities to pursue university and in some cases college programs, and the disproportionately high number of students who are enrolled in Resource, frequently removing them from their classroom experience. Many participants, as well as other students, saw this as being pushed through the high school system to improve overall metrics for the school. Regarding truncated school trajectories, I refer to the dropout or pushout of Portuguese-speaking students, which was certainly the case for David, and potentially too for Rodrigo and Thiago.

I first forwarded the notion of educational deselection (Pereira, 2014) to explain the dropout rate of Portuguese-speaking male youth in Toronto. This theory suggests that cultural factors, most prominently but not exclusively masculinity, informed the truncated educational trajectories and persistent academic underachievement of Portuguese-speaking males. While this theory emerged from interviews with Portuguese-speaking males who had either already completed or left high school, the present study’s participants were enrolled in and attending high school throughout data collection. As a result, my thinking about educational deselection has expanded to illustrate and account for how even while enrolled in high school, Portuguese-speaking students actively deselect education as a response to discourses that construct and discipline their subjectivities, or portugueseness. These everyday schooling experiences particularly effect the renegade learner, and disproportionately males, whether they defiantly or less visibly resist the disciplining of portugueseness in school.

Educational deselection also gestures to Portuguese-speaking youths’ resistance to
dominant ideas of schooling, its structure and presupposed benefits, as well as the de-capitalization of their cultural wealth and social capital in school (including linguistic and familial capital). Participants questioned the value of their schooling as a result of dissatisfaction with the skills and knowledge they were obtaining, or not, and the fact that often despite their deselection and minimal effort they still managed to pass a class while moving to the following year without the knowledge and skills required to succeed.

Instead of being pushed out of schooling, several participants saw themselves as being pushed through with little concern for their ability to succeed the following year. A frequent solution (or form of advice from counselors) that many students identified was to move to an applied stream of study, or temporarily, if not permanently, defer writing the provincial literacy test. This, to participants, represented a humiliating irony given that despite obtaining a high school diploma, many still anticipated, along with many school personnel, that they would access the jobs that they assumed they could easily access without high school. This chapter therefore also discusses the phenomenon of educational policies and practices that push students through schooling.

Educational deselection represents a gradual two-part process by which youth who are disengaged with and demotivated by schooling deselect education and redirect their attention and future intentions to other pursuits. This redirection of attention is an important aspect of educational deselection, in that an alternative to school, whether real or implied, exists. The first part of educational deselection happens as a result of a complex combination of structural and cultural factors that disengage and demotivate youth in schools. This involves both student disengagement, frequently perceived as giving up on school, and a school culture that from the student perspective gives up on
them. According to the majority of participants in this study, this represented the school culture at Westside, and participants expressed how teachers, administrators and other support staff expected less from students who were associated with dominant depictions of portugueseness. With persistent references to reduced expectations, relationships that lack trust and care, and soil the dignity of portugueseness, it is not surprising that a theory of educational deselection is informed by subtractive schooling and an absence of an ethic of care and color(full) critical care praxis.

Reduced expectations was most clearly articulated by the expression “are you even graduating this year”, which was frequently heard by Portuguese-speaking students. The following exchange during a focus group illustrates why this is such a harmful discourse to Portuguese-speaking student success.

Lucas: I understand that if I don't do the project then I’m getting a bad mark. But I do all the work and I still have the lowest mark and I see other kids who don't do anything and they get the same mark as me, so I want to ask [my teacher], how do you mark. He thinks I'm just the stupid Portuguese kid who doesn't want to do anything, like oh this kid is just a fuck up. He didn't think I was even gonna pass high school this year. He was like, oh are you even graduating this year?

Beatriz: Oh my god I hate it when people say that.

Lucas: Are you fucking kidding me.

Guilherme: My accounting teacher said that to me, and I said yes sir, I am.

Lucas: He's just joking around, he's the bomb teacher.

Beatriz: I get asked that all the time.

Me: Why does it bother you?

Guilherme: It doesn't bother me.

Beatriz: It bothers me because it's annoying, like
Lucas: They think you're stupid.

Beatriz: Yeah, is that what you think of all of your students in this school, that they're all not gonna get anywhere? They don't think that about everyone of course, they think that about some of us, and not about others.

Lucas: They don't expect anything from us except that we're going to fail. Right after high school you're going into the real world so they should be trying to help us with that, not just passing us with 50s and then tossing us into the fire and being like, are you even going to graduate this year? You're stupid. Get a bunch of thoughts in your mind, like what is this? They want me to treat them with respect but they don't treat me with respect.

Beatriz: The guidance counselor came to ask me if I was graduating this year with my grades in her hand. I'm like my lowest mark is a 76%.

Lucas: My teacher was handing me my report card, and he was like do you really want it? I don't think you're going to graduate this year. I told him to shut up, I'm graduating with 31 credits bro. I said look at it, and he looked at it and he shut up. And I said yeah, you're the only friggin’ one that's a 50, the only reason I won't make honour roll. He looks at me and then he looks away. I ask him questions and he doesn't even answer.

Beatriz: There are so many kids that fail his class.

Lucas: He plays favourites. He's not a proper teacher, he shouldn't be a teacher.

Guilherme: I'm getting a 76% in his class. I don't do any work and I'm getting 76%. Lucas does more work than me, but I have the 76% (he laughs). I don't know, I just make friends with him.

Lucas: Cause you kiss ass.

Beatriz: Cause he's nice.

Lucas: I tried that.

Beatriz: No, I can't do that. I will do what I'm asked to do if it relates to my work. Whether I'm nice or not shouldn't have anything to do with whether I do well or not in school. Nice can be fake.

(Focus Group, May 20, 2016)

These participants described a culture of low expectations that pervades Westside. An
internal Westside student voice survey from 2016-17 revealed that only 59% of students felt their teachers had high expectations for them. The participants in my study believe that these expectations are even more reduced for Portuguese-speaking students. I have outlined 3 categories to describe strategies for school survival used by my participants. The first is to assimilate and reduce visibility of behaviours and practices that associate one with portugueseness. The second is to defiantly resist and vocally challenge the discourses and disciplinary practices that negatively affect the subjectivities and educational trajectories of Portuguese-speaking students. The third is to endure these discourses and disciplinary practices. Many students endure these by predominantly shrugging off the quotidian remarks such as “are you even going to graduate”, “aren’t you just going to go into construction”, or “go home if you want to speak Portuguese”.

The result of these survival strategies is in many cases one form or another of educational deselection. To think, however, that educational deselection is an all or none process – resulting in a student deciding to drop out of school - misses the complexity of the deselection process that can occur in a variety of ways throughout a students’ schooling experience. It is true that one outcome of educational deselection is to leave school without obtaining the necessary requirements for a high school diploma, or in other words, to drop out. Not a single participant in this study dropped out of school while they were part of this study during my time at Westside. Notwithstanding the six who graduated, three participants did not return to Westside the year following this study, despite not completing the requirements for their high school diploma. All three of those students engaged in some form of educational deselection throughout the year as did several of their peers who managed to graduate.
In the paragraphs that follow I describe several forms of educational deselection. Much of the evidence for each of these forms of educational deselection has already been offered in this and previous chapters. Nevertheless, I draw on specific data to evidence these categories and animate these processes through student narratives.

**Pushed through: educational deselection in the midst of schooling**

Even while attending high school, behaviours and attitudes of some participants revealed that they had deselected education. David would report directly to Resource knowing that his teacher would immediately direct him there as soon as he showed up. Beatriz, frustrated with her teacher’s frequent absences and disregard for Beatriz’s work, suggested that she too was not going to show up for class for two weeks. “If they’re going to disrespect us and our work, why should I show respect in return?”, Beatriz declared, which her friend, Lucas, expressed in similar terms during the focus group. Educational deselection for David, which was similar for Thiago and Miguel, was made evident in his tendency to avoid classes and assignments through absences and frequent trips to the Resource Room where little work was accomplished. This strategy negatively impacted his educational trajectory and ultimately resulted in his being removed from Westside High and placed into a remedial program. Educational deselection for Beatriz, on the other hand, was made evident in her tendency to speak to teachers and administrators in a way that made them accountable for her disengagement. Whether she was

Educational deselection was also evident through the contested ways that participants perceived success as schooling. When asked to define success almost every participant repeated the idea that education leads to success. Yet, many admitted to
repeating this answer because they thought it was what others expected them to say. When they actually spoke of education they were less confident that what they were learning, as well as the cost and debt associated with post-secondary education, would in fact secure future success. Lucas and I spoke about how he defined success and he described for me the ways in which family members and neighbours achieved financial wealth and security through the stock market or real estate. According to Lucas he just needed $10,000 to purchase a house that he could renovate to generate rental income needed to pay off the house. Or, he said, he would invest the money, like his uncle, in the stock market and have it grow. In any case, Lucas felt that what he was learning in school had no relevance to what he would do afterward.

One afternoon during English class when their teacher happened to be away, David said the following to his peers, “I like that [teacher’s name] doesn’t give us homework. We get time in class to do the work that is required. I mean I don’t always do it, but he gives us the time and he still manages to teach us.” His peer agreed, and added, “If there’s gonna be a test, then I guess they expect us to study at home, but that makes sense.” I asked them, what the difference was between homework and studying for a test? Another student got up and scribbled the following simple acrostic on the chalk board. The acrostic was HOMEWORK, and it stood for Half Of My Energy Wasted On Random Knowledge (Figure 1).

Several students and I had never been introduced to the acrostic, and expressing to one another their delight in the wordplay, everyone agreed that it summed up why they felt so disinterested with what they were learning at Westside. When I asked them a bit more about homework, they reiterated that it is usually meaningless busy work. One
student admitted, “If it doesn’t get done in class, it usually doesn’t get done.” In some classes,” David interjected, “you get assigned so much homework that you start falling behind and then you think, what’s the point, I’m never going to be able to catch up.” While the group’s board conversation about the meaning(lessness) of homework gestures towards a general disengagement with schooling, or educational deselection, David’s comment particularly connected to a moment when he disengages from his classes.

The boys’ discussion reminded me of my interview with Rodrigo. During our conversation, Rodrigo reflected on the difference between studying and doing homework, and how the work, particularly the amount, he is made to do at Westside pales in comparison to what he was made to do Portugal.
Me: It sounds like in Portugal the work was very hard, but if the work was very hard, what made you do it?

Rodrigo: When something is hard you try your best to do it so you can be proud of yourself that you did something that you could have like passed through, even though it’s hard, but yeah. And, in Portugal my parents knew if I was falling behind because they would get a call from my teachers. Here, I do the homework, I just don’t bother studying for it. I can usually get the homework done in class. In Portugal, I didn’t have time to do it during school so I just did it at home. And, it would be like a lot of homework, like 3 times Canada’s homework, so it would be like a lot of hours just for homework. Basically my life was play soccer, study, do homework, and go to sleep, and go back to school. It was like during weekends and sometimes when I had a test on Monday I would stay all weekend to study.

Me: You said study and do homework, what’s the difference between those two things? Is there a difference?

Rodrigo: It’s like, studying you’re always repeating yourself so you can remember for the test. And homework you’re like some activity you have to do so that you can be successful during the class, so you can understand what is the meaning. Here, I do my homework, cause I can do it in class, but I don’t bother studying. (Interview, February 25, 2016)

My objective throughout this study has not been to evaluate or critique pedagogy or curriculum at Westside. I assured teachers of this at the first faculty meeting that I attended. Data are available regarding Westside’s provincial testing on which to speculate about the quality of pedagogy and curriculum, although I would caution that often performance results at any school is a result of a complex system of factors, which are not always accurately discerned through standardized testing. However, participants’ and students’ reflections on their classroom and schooling experiences were certainly part of this study. David and the students in his English class, who included other Portuguese-speaking boys, justified their disengagement by arguing that the homework they are assigned is pointless. Rodrigo argued that his experience at Westside leaves him convinced that not much is expected of him, which means he puts forth minimal effort. These findings point to the lack of an ethic of care, in that students perceive, whether
accurately or not, that the pedagogical and curricular practices at Westside are not conducive to their overall success and achievement, which ultimately informs their educational deselection even while they remain in high school.

As they approach their senior years, Portuguese-speaking students increasingly recognize that they have not gained the skills and knowledge they need or should have by the end of a particular course or grade or by the time they complete their high school education, indicating to them that they are simply being pushed through school. Throughout their high school education, they have learned that they can do the minimum work and receive the Westside High-Five Oh\(^\text{10}\) and that little more than that is expected of them by their teachers and other school personnel, and in some instances, by their parents as well. I caught up with Miguel over text message the year following my study. He told me that he was enrolling in an ESL course to improve his English. He explained how despite receiving his secondary diploma, his English language skills remained poor and inadequate to pursue a better job and certainly to apply to college. Despite working with his father in finish carpentry, which he said pays well; Miguel aspired in the future to be a police officer. While in high school, however, Miguel reflected on how he “checked out” because so little was expected of him and as long as he was passing he assumed he was doing well enough. He also pointed out that in Portugal you don’t pass if you are not ready or capable of moving onto the next level. In Canada, he reflected, they just put you in an easier class, alluding to the difference between applied and academic level courses. In other words, Miguel, along with so many of his peers, feel as if they are\(^\text{10}\)Westside High Five-Oh is a phrase used frequently by students that indicates that students at Westside are expected to graduate, if at all, with 50%, having put in the minimum effort. It reflects Westside’s and its students’ reputations for academic underachievement, keeping in mind that Westside is also known for its large Portuguese-speaking student population.
pushed through high school. Throughout my time at Westside, however, this realization by Portuguese-speaking students spurred one of three survival strategies. By concealing their portugueseness, some students managed to earn more respect from their teachers and in turn perform to their raised expectations. Others defiantly and aggressively resisted those expectations, and made school personnel aware of these injustices. Finally, a third group did little to disassociate with portugueseness and pretended to deflect or simply accept the lowered expectations they perceived from their teachers; frequently assuaging their worries about their futures by gesturing to the ways in which those in their communities have managed to secure their futures through manual labour.

Educational deselection also takes the form of students deselecting education by being annexed from/to certain spaces in school. At times this includes being annexed to hallways, through practices such as “vai dar uma volta / go take a walk” or from returning to classes because of perceived unfair discrimination. Educational deselection through annexation may also take the form of removing a student from class and sending them to the Resource Room. Early in second semester I noticed David was arriving late to school, I would find him casually wandering the hallways towards the end of first period. Wondering what class he was avoiding I asked him what class he had during first period. He shared with me that he was enrolled in construction but that he needed to see guidance to fix his schedule. Immediately I wanted to know more. David explained that at the time that he enrolled for classes an option to take automotive did not exist so he begrudgingly selected construction. Later in the semester, a Grade 12 automotive class was offered, and David decided that rather than construction he wanted to take automotive, and that therefore, it made no sense for him to go to construction, a course he
never wanted to take to begin with.

While I knew that David’s disdain for construction was informed by seeing the physical strain such work has exacted on his father’s body, and partly because he cannot bare the idea of being just another Portuguese kid in construction. Given my conversations with David and how personally offended teachers’ comments left him in the past, I wondered whether there was another reason he avoided construction class. David confessed that he was also avoiding construction because of an incident with his construction teacher. “The teacher hates me. He thinks Portuguese kids are stupid. He handed us back a quiz or something at the beginning of class and said, I guess you Portuguese kids know less about construction that you think. I mean, why single us out?”

David insisted,

I’m not offended that I’m Portuguese. I would gladly go on stage in front of the whole world and say I’m Portuguese – I don’t really care. But, I wanna be that odd Portuguese guy and not another typical guy in construction. I want to basically be the odd one showing how us Portuguese people are not just there for construction. We know how to do other things not just construction. We can be amazing mechanics, amazing plumbers, amazing electricians, amazing chefs, if you want, not just amazing construction workers to prove everyone wrong. (Interview, February 26, 2016)

Sensing his lack of focus at a certain point in our interview, I suggested to David that we get together another day to pick up where we had left off. He agreed. I asked him to think about why he feels so strongly about “prov[ing] everyone wrong”. A few days later we revisited this topic and David made a point to clarify why he wants to be a mechanic. His tendency to speak at length about this issue left an impression on me.

I’m not [not] going into construction because I’m ashamed of that or anything. It’s fine if someone wants to go into construction. I enjoy working with my hands. In automotive class I’m taking apart an engine, cleaning it and putting it back together. It’s hard work but I like it. When everyone expects for me to go into construction, my family, and even at
school when guidance tells me that I might like construction class, I mean, what do they know I like? Yes I like to work with my hands, and ok, I’m not the smartest student, but don’t put me in a box just because you know I’m Portuguese. It just bugs me. (Interview, March 3, 2016)

David explained that he stopped going to construction for these reasons, and that he doubted his teacher noticed his absence. In his defense, David felt annexed from his class because of the insensitive comments his teacher made towards Portuguese students. He justified his decision to not return to construction, not that he needed to, by convincing himself that it made no sense since he intended to rearrange his schedule to get him into his automotive class.

For some students, the structure of the Special Education program at Westside may also facilitate educational annexation. According to its director, the Special Education program at Westside continues to operate on an outdated model of dedicated programs for resource. In other words, where as other schools in the board have transitioned to a model of integrating Resource Teachers into students regular classes, the model at Westside involves bringing students to the Resource Room where during each period a Resource Teacher is present to support students. David’s narrative in the previous chapter illustrated disciplining disability, or how he was sometimes sent to Resource for reasons not entirely clear to him. For this and other reasons, students use resource as a refuge from the classroom or use Resource as a way to get out of their classroom responsibilities. Being mindful that for some students Resource was a productive space in which they could focus and get support to complete their work, for many others, Resource became a means of being annexed or annexing themselves from the classroom, which represented a form of educational deselection in the midst of schooling.
Educational deselection and whiteness

An aspect of accepting that they are being pushed through high school or annexed from classrooms and to certain spaces in the school, and key to my theory of educational deselection, appears to be the idea that Portuguese-speaking youth have access to a middle-class economic future. By being pushed through school, these students do not see a threat to their ability to access that economic future that affords them a White (economic) respectability.

Educational deselection requires a system of perceived supports outside of school that will alleviate or mitigate the negative economic effects of lacking a high school diploma or the skills it represents, such as reading, writing, arithmetic and critical thinking skills. Every one of these study participants knew enough about mainstream notions of education and schooling to say that school was important to future success. However, nearly as many participants implied in some way or another that with or without school they would be alright because they could just start working. Their teachers and other school personnel also deferred to similar thinking, implying the foregone conclusion that Portuguese-speaking boys would work a blue-collar job, particularly in construction. The implication that they could access said jobs, often praising the handsome pay scales of these positions, provided students and school personnel with less urgency about their educational deselection and academic underachievement. This, to me, marked an important factor in the educational deselection process and in the schooling experiences of Portuguese-speaking youth compared with other minority youth who struggle to do well in school, particularly Black youth. For this reason it is crucial to theorize what part whiteness plays in educational deselection and in the educational
trajectories of Portuguese-speaking youth.

Educational deselection and connecting whiteness to class, labour and success

The field of ethnic studies has a long history of critically reflecting on whiteness (Brodkin, 1998; Frankenburg, 1993, 1997; Guglielmo & Salerno (2003); Ignatiev, 1995; Wray, 2006), however, for the purposes of this study, I reflect on how in the case of Portuguese-speaking Canadians, labour is key to their claim, albeit tenuous, to whiteness. George Lipsitz (2006) traces the ways in which immigrant labour and identity politics in the U.S. reveal a possessive investment in whiteness, both for Anglo-American Whites, and for many ethnoracialized non-White immigrants.

David Guiterrez shows how the value of “whiteness” and its concomitant imperatives of racialized exclusion have divided Mexican American communities between those who favor citizenship and cultural incorporation in the United States and those oriented more toward maximizing group resources by maintaining solidarity with all people of Mexican origin on both sides of the border (Lipsitz, 2006; 62).

One can observe a similar divide in Toronto’s Portuguese community in regards to the academic underachievement of Portuguese-speaking youth. Some Portuguese Canadians resist narratives of academic underachievement and dropout. Daniel Kitts (2008), producer of “The Portuguese Paradox” – the title of a debate on Portuguese-speaking student underachievement on TVO’s The Agenda - published a blog post titled: “To all Portuguese: Please don’t hate me”, as a response to feedback from the community. The desire to presumably be normalized as integrated and assimilated immigrants despite the rates of academic underachievement raise questions about our investment in whiteness, where as we know student achievement, intelligence, and success, according to Ladson-Billings (1998), are conceptual categories that become normative categories of whiteness.
While whiteness is certainly about race, it is also about more than race. As a concept, whiteness is constructed through class and ability in that these too are normativizing structures. The persistent need by my participants, their parents, community members and school personnel at Westside and elsewhere of reaffirming that construction is a well-paying if not lucrative job prospect for many Portuguese-speaking youth points to a discourse of whitening labour and therefore class. That working in construction is well paid was something that I heard all too frequently in any form of engagement with or about Portuguese-speaking youth. While acknowledging this fact, I remain mindful that these jobs are highly unionized and that the Portuguese community benefits from an informal network that uses referrals to maintain a significant presence in this industry. According to Roediger (2006) unions in the U.S. context have historically excluded certain bodies while providing above average wages for its members. The expectation that Portuguese young men in Toronto will find work in such a unionized environment illustrates a possessive investment in whiteness through labour.

Finally, with such labour - to which many assume access based on little more than ethnic connections - comes financial means. Portuguese Canadians in Toronto are touted as economically stable, which is predicated on exhibiting higher than average levels of home ownership (Andrew-Gee, 2014; Teixeira, 2007). The desire for home ownership - and the economic mobility it affords - has forced many Portuguese Torontonians out of Toronto and into neighbouring suburbs as a result of the inflated prices of Toronto homes (Murdie & Teixeira, 2011, 2015; Teixeira, 2006, 2007). Roediger (2006) highlights home ownership was a targeted way for immigrants to become White in the U.S. There is no denying that construction has provided many Portuguese in Toronto with this whitening
economic mobility, although, as Miguel reminded us this has not equally offered social mobility; “Canadians work in banks, not building them”. Here, Miguel gestures towards the precariousness of drawing on blue-collar labour and working class identity to secure whiteness. These wages of whiteness through celebrated and defended labour furnish tax-paying homeowners, which helps to establish a Little Portugal in downtown Toronto and a dedicated community for Portuguese Canadians, but it does not guarantee White subjectivity in schools.

I raise the concept of whiteness and Portuguese-speaking youth’s presumed access to this blue-collar labour sector because the theory of educational deselection identifies this as a factor informing academic underachievement and early school leaving. Essentially, I propose that the praising of construction and the presumed access to this labour sector may in fact mitigate the consequences and effects of academic underachievement and early school leaving particularly on Portuguese-speaking male students. The ways in which participants defined success both in terms of education and labour, or through excelling in school and making an income through construction that would provide them with the economic mobility to live as many of their parents have managed to live, suggests that success is being re-defined, when necessary, through this mitigating factor. Educational deselection becomes an option precisely because an other option presumably exists.

**Conclusion**

Throughout the three data chapters I have forwarded narratives and observations from Portuguese-speaking students’ experiences that illustrate a general disengagement with
their schooling and a variety of accounts about why and how these students disconnect
with their school personnel. Lucas mentioned his dissatisfaction with the quality of his
high school education. Surprisingly, Miguel and Thiago both reflected how they intended
to improve their English language skills once they graduated high school because they
were not adequately learning English at school. The fall after his graduation, Miguel
shared with me that he planned to enroll in an English course to improve his chances of
getting into college. Similar to Miguel and Thiago, David reflected an awareness of his
learning style, which he perceived to be under- if not de-valued in school, when he said
“All that work doesn’t seem to count for anything. I don’t count for anything”.
Poignantly expressing her thoughts along this theme, Beatriz claimed about her
experience with school personnel at Westside, “They just give up on some of us”.

In addition to being left with these perceptions of their schooling experience,
there exist material consequences to constructing portugueseness through dominant
depictions of Portuguese in Canada and disciplining portugueseness in school. For some
participants, and for many of their peers as far as I could tell throughout my year at
Westside, Educational deselection is a consequence of if not a response by some to the
experiences of reifying and disciplining portugueseness. Feeling pushed through and the
need to redefine success as a result of their disillusionment with schooling, many
participants and their peers disengaged with schooling and/or engaged in particular
responses. While some, particularly Brazilian identified participants, Sara and Guilherme,
concealed portugueseness, others like Beatriz, Lucas, Rodrigo and Frederica defiantly,
and at times aggressively resisted those expectations by contesting racializing or
otherwise discriminatory discourse. Finally, those like Miguel, Thiago and David did
little to disassociate with portugueseness or resist the dominant depictions on which it relies. Although frustrated by dominant depictions of portugueseness, those participants pretended to deflect or simply accept their teachers’ and others’ lowered expectations.

Throughout this ethnographic process I have been actively engaged in community activism related to Portuguese-speaking youth academic achievement. The following and final chapter offers critical reflections on these community-based activities while drawing on the narrative arc of this school ethnography. In particular I look at how the concept of portugueseness continues to be activated and reproduced on committees and activities related to Westside, and how portugueseness becomes implicated as an explanation for the disengagement of Portuguese-speaking youth in schools.
Chapter 6
Portugueseness and the school-community dichotomy: a community activist’s perspective

In nearly every discussion I have had or read concerning the academic underachievement of Portuguese-speaking youth in Toronto I am quickly reminded of the role youth themselves and their families and community play in this underachievement. While I recognize that there is very likely some truth to this, perhaps a qualitative research project that meaningfully engages with families and their communities could provide some conclusive evidence as to if and why this might be the case. The frequent absence, however, of concern or attention regarding how educational and schooling dynamics might potentially contribute to this persistent educational context partially informed my interest to instead conduct a critical school ethnography engaged with youth in their classrooms and school spaces. As a result, Portuguese-speaking youth participants themselves seized the opportunity to reveal their experiences - many through rich narratives and counter-narratives - about teacher-student relations, or what Paul Willis terms the cultural level of schools, circulates their and other Portuguese-speaking students’ subjectivities in ways that contribute to increasing the likelihood of certain educational outcomes (Aronowitz, 1981).

As a result of my sustained presence at Westside and engagement with Portuguese-speaking students there, and particularly with the ten participants in this study, I am left with at least the following three thoughts about Portuguese-speaking students at Westside. First, forms of discourse concerning and surrounding Portuguese-speaking students have become part of the lives of ordinary Portuguese-speaking students, if not many of their non-Portuguese-speaking peers, and certainly many school
personnel at Westside. Second, Portuguese-speaking students, and in particular those who are most immediately associated with dominant depictions of portugueseness, are met with disciplinary actions of various kinds expressly connected to their portugueseness. And finally, the dominant perception that Portuguese-speaking students and their communities do not care about their education is simply untrue and needs to account for the desire many of these youth express to excel academically and the frustrations they feel as a result of the barriers they experience to their academic success.

In recognizing that any solution to improve the academic achievement of Portuguese-speaking youth is not solely situated in either the community or in schools, too frequently the community rather than schools become the site for intervention, neglecting to acknowledge that any sustained solution requires both community and school interventions. This concluding chapter will expand on these three thoughts and consider some policy implications and interventions as a result of what Portuguese-speaking participants at Westside have shared throughout my study. First, however, I draw attention to the decades throughout which community and school boards have engaged to improve the school trajectories and achievement of Portuguese-speaking youth. Drawing in greater depth on my more recent activism serving on two community advisory committees, I trace how dominant depictions of portugueseness, specifically language, class and labour, inform the work of the board with Portuguese-speaking communities.

**Revisiting a familiar process: community engagement in Portuguese-speaking student success**
Around the time I started my doctoral studies in 2011, I became involved in two initiatives organized by school boards in Toronto that brought together Portuguese community members and agencies concerned about Portuguese-speaking students’ academic underachievement and dropout rate. Prior to this, the last few decades had seen periodic interest, concern and action from some community-based researchers and the community itself concerning the educational outcomes of this youth population. By all accounts, this included limited involvement by educators and school and board administrators. The Portuguese Interagency Network (PIN), and from 1995 to 2005 the Portuguese-Canadian Coalition for Better Education (PCFBE), two groups comprised of staff at agencies that serve the Portuguese community, Portuguese educators and researchers, as well as parents, emerged precisely to address these concerns. Januário, Marujo, and Nunes (2005) documented the history, purpose and achievements of the work of CFBE, which I do not intend to repeat or review. Instead, I reflect on (relatively) recent efforts by myself and other community members along with the two largest boards of education in Toronto to address the issues contributing to the Portuguese-speaking student underachievement and dropout rates in Toronto.

The results of dozens of meetings with school board administrators and community stakeholders since 2011 can be characterized in two ways. First, there is a better understanding of the concerns of the Portuguese community, and a positive working relationship has been nurtured between community representatives and school board representatives. However, and secondly, few concrete actions have been taken to materially, tangibly and measurably improve the lives of Portuguese-speaking youth in Toronto schools, and only within the last year, 2017, have certain projects been initiated
that suggest promising results. The reasons for this are twofold. Education in Ontario remains underfunded, and coupled with a regrettable board budgeting error, even fewer funds remained to expand or introduce new programming, particularly for students, such as Portuguese-speaking youth who are not targeted by funding for at-risk youth based on race (Nunes, 2008). Second, and perhaps most important, the focus of “best-practices” already in effect within the school board, while productive in terms of generating good relations with administrators and other staff, generated little in terms of new and expanded programming for Portuguese-speaking youth and the schools in which they enroll in greatest numbers. Committee members from the community would reiterate the need to focus on 9-to-3, referencing the need to address what is and is not happening throughout the day at school, and the board would remind us that parent involvement, which for a variety of factors is lower in the Portuguese population, is key to student success. In other words, at the risk of generalizing, the community wanted to talk about schools, the Board wanted to talk about the community.

The content of many meetings provided more nuance and complexity than the above summary. Yet, the dichotomy I suggest between school and community provides the structure for this chapter. The composition and characterization of and discussion concerning Portuguese-speaking students and their communities throughout these meetings gestured to the construction of certain dominant depictions of portugueseness, acknowledged and skirted discussions about certain experiences of Portuguese-speaking students in schools, and, thus far, simply have not responded to the school lives of, and ultimately improved the outcomes for Portuguese-speaking students in Toronto.
Portuguese community activism involving Toronto’s school boards: a brief history

Rather than a comprehensive history of the school board-community initiatives mentioned earlier, the following intends to provide some context surrounding the extensive volunteer work done by me and a number of committed community members and parents, as well as the efforts of school board staff, since being re-engaged long after the work of those who were part of PIN and PCFBE, to address the persistently and disproportionately low educational outcomes of Portuguese-speaking youth in Toronto.

In order to maintain anonymity of the school boards, their efforts, and the staff involved, I do not specify which engagement or consultation initiatives belonged to which board.

    In 2011, then Superintendent of Equity for one Toronto school board gathered a group of community members to develop a list of demands the community thought might address the needs of Portuguese-speaking students and improve their educational outcomes. Encouraged to “dream big”, a group of us tabled a suite of resources and programs, including commitments to continue and increase support to an existing community tutoring and mentoring program, On Your Mark, that operates in both school boards. Shortly after the school board received our list of recommendations, a controversy emerged with the then Director of Education. Whether related or not, our demands appeared to be indefinitely shelved. Years later, several invitations were sent to community members, including those involved in the process mentioned above, to participate in one of several small focus groups, “one of 10 equity-focused task forces”, to revisit the issue of Portuguese-speaking student underachievement. Until recently no findings from these focus groups seemed to be produced, and no direct communication between the Board and the community stakeholders involved in this Portuguese-speaking
task-force occurred. In December 2017, the Enhancing Equity Task Force report was released (TDSB, 2017). Presumably, this report encompassed the comments and concerns gathered from those focus group proceedings. Despite these limited windows of engagement, the report lists no specific programs or initiatives currently or soon to be in place that will material change the schooling lives and educational outcomes of Portuguese-speaking youth. In this way, the equity-focused task force never revisited or responded to the recommendations from the community consultation initiated in 2011. Had Portuguese-speaking youth not been on the school board’s radar since 2010 (if not earlier given the work of the PCFBE), one might consider their inclusion in this report to enhance equity a positive step forward.

Shortly after developing and submitting a community-inspired list of recommendations in 2011, another school board initiated a separate community stakeholder process called Partners In Motion (PIM). PIM gathered members of several communities, as well as staff from agencies that served those communities, to engage in a consultative process to better understand certain academically struggling communities and the needs of their youth. The first meeting was a round table with representatives from Toronto’s Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking communities. The round table aired a number of grievances and revealed the different approaches these two broad community groups wanted to take to address student achievement. Attendees agreed that similar challenges and cultural concerns were informing schooling experiences, but a few prominent voices decided that it was critical for community activists be the ones to address their students’ needs, which divided the group. It was decided that moving forward, despite these similarities, two separate groups would be consulted and that each
would submit a list of recommendations to improve student outcomes. There appeared to be no possibility of joining the two groups given the political and economic interests in the room. Such a position represented, in my opinion, a missed opportunity for inter-community collaboration and solidarity to address similar issues within schooling and the board. Ultimately, the school board established a community-based advisory committee to maintain dialogue on these issues for both Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking communities.

The remainder of this chapter will reveal how the proceedings of the Portuguese-speaking focused committee have gestured to the construction of certain dominant depictions of portugueseness and have acknowledged but largely skirted discussions about certain experiences of Portuguese-speaking students in schools. Additionally, thus far the work of the committee has not responded to the school lives of, nor improved the outcomes for Portuguese-speaking students in Toronto. Ultimately, despite very good intentions and genuine concerns, understanding of the source of strain on student outcomes has resulted in little action, and the dichotomous thinking between school and community persists. In the process, I draw connections and synthesize knowledge that was derived from my time at Westside with my experiences as part of this advisory committee while highlighting policy implications and recommendations likely to benefit Portuguese-speaking youth.

Language as identity: advocating for, and (re-)constructing, Portuguese-speaking youth and parents.

As I observed when recruiting Portuguese-speaking youth for this study, Portuguese language was always already associated with the Portuguese community. This was
evident by the community membership of the committee referenced above, which exclusively consisted of individuals of Portuguese ancestry. The committee was commonly referenced, both formally and informally, as the Portuguese advisory committee, which fails to encompass the linguistic category (not to mention its associated communities) that informed its inception. To be clear, all committee members, both Staff and community members spoke in ways that demonstrated they consistently conceived of Portuguese-speaking as Portuguese, whether they were talking about students, parents or the community generally. On several occasions I recall emphasizing the importance that all Portuguese-speaking students, not only Portuguese students, be the centre of our focus. While this diversity was superficially acknowledged, there was nevertheless a tendency to reconstruct Portuguese-speaking as Portuguese. The persistent practice of renaming a language-based committee, in both written and verbal form, to reference a single ethnic community is not merely careless but suggests a symbolic and deep-seeded assumed association of Portuguese with the Portuguese-speaking student academic underachievement and dropout crisis and the parent population that is considered to be under performing in supporting student success.

As conversations continued to centre Portuguese youth, parents and the Portuguese community, the committee both frequently failed to acknowledge the diverse Portuguese-speaking student population that might be considered in our thinking and discussions, and consolidated existing notions of which students were falling below ministry mandated achievement thresholds. If dominant depictions of portugueseness were being constructed and disciplined in school, Portuguese students, to an increasing extent regardless of their language speaking capabilities, were being depicted as
academically underachieving and disproportionately more likely to drop out by this committee, thus rearticulating and reifying similar dominant depictions of portugueseness. Additionally, Portuguese-speaking parents were not the ones less likely to engage with their children’s education, but rather, Portuguese parents represented these disengaged parents, regardless of the language barriers that the Portuguese-speaking category might suggest. This, therefore, continued to construct a dichotomy of school-community by focusing the source of underachievement in communities and not in schools.

Concerning language, the committee spoke extensively about the language barriers Portuguese-speaking parents need to navigate in schools to advocate for and engage with their children’s education. Much less discussed, however, were the language barriers that Portuguese-speaking students may (and do) face in schools. Community committee members argued fervently and persistently to preserve a family literacy program that engaged in rudimentary phonics to support English language learning among parents and their children. In both cases parents were always depicted and discussed as Portuguese parents with extremely rare reference to Brazilian and no reference to Angolan, Mozambican, Cape Verdean or other Portuguese-speaking minorities. As a key but not essential feature of portugueseness, language was nevertheless given little value in re-imagining how to improve school-community relations for parents (with the exception of translating materials that are sent home and providing translation services if requested) or the education experiences and achievement of Portuguese-speaking students in schools.
Finally, the dissonance between Portuguese language and the institution of education and by extension schooling in Toronto came to a deafening crescendo when, after extensive efforts by community committee members to increase parents’ level of participation in the committee, two Portuguese-speaking parents newly joined our meeting. Up until that moment all members and guests of the committee were capable of communicating in English. These two parents, both mothers from Brazil, joined the meeting via conference call rather than attending the meeting in person due to childcare demands. Throughout the meeting, the community committee member with the two women translated the proceedings, which were and had been until this point in English. At some point in the meeting the two women decided to share some reflection on their experiences and the discussion around the table. As a Portuguese-speaker I understood the women with little trouble, but none of the board staff sitting around the table understood a word of what these two mothers said save for the community committee member who translated. This technical and procedural rupture also represented a cultural and linguistic divide between school and community. Up until this point we had only named the challenges Portuguese-speaking parents continue to experience engaging with their community schools. Here, in the midst of this Portuguese-speaking community advisory meeting, Portuguese-speaking parents struggled to participate in the proceedings as a result of language, and the fact that these mothers were Brazilian and not Portuguese should not be lost on the diversity in the category of Portuguese-speaking that is often lost in how the category is consistently conceptualized. The many complaints Portuguese-speaking parents and students had with the inability to communicate with schools and their staff revealed itself in this equity- and community-focused committee.
Validating school trajectories while depicting portugueseness through class and labour

While empirical data concerning the career trajectories and outcomes of Portuguese-speaking youth were never presented in the meeting, assumptions were plentiful that Portuguese-speaking students for one reason or another accessed working class jobs, particularly that boys accessed work in construction. I was among those who, for one reason or another, defended Portuguese-speaking students’ choices to pursue work in the trades despite an absence of evidence, other than anecdotal, to suggest that that was their destiny. Part of my felt compelled to do this in an effort to not disrespect parents, spouses, siblings and other men in the lives of those around the table who might be trades labourers themselves. Additionally I and others, evidenced in their comments, could not seem to deny that working in construction has offered many in Toronto’s Portuguese-speaking community economic gains that they may not have otherwise realized in other areas of employment without or even with a high school diploma.

The former principal at Westside High attended the first PIM meeting where she suggested that there was nothing wrong with and we should not necessarily discourage youth from pursuing work in the trades once they complete their high school education. She did so again at a subsequent meeting of the Portuguese-speaking community group. I, and many around the table, agreed with her, but I felt it necessary to offer the following clarification. While students should be made to feel, by teachers or other schools staff, that making a decision to pursue a career in the trades is wrong, he or she must feel that there are options other than the trades for him or her to pursue. In other words, school may not be for everyone, but students must know that school, and particularly an
academic-focused high school trajectory is for anyone. This need or impulse by the former principal and many before and after her to assert that there is nothing wrong with pursing work in the trades suggests to me a dominant depiction of portugueseness, specifically through working-class status and trades labour, that circulates in education and in the Portuguese Canadian community in Toronto.

Youth avert a significant hurdle to accessing gainful employment if they obtain a high school diploma. But, the committee’s focus on improving the academic achievement of Portuguese-speaking youth in no way denied the validity of pursuing a career in the trades. Yet many, both outside and particularly inside Toronto’s Portuguese community, sense a need to defend this pursuit at the mention of the academic underachievement of Portuguese-speaking youth. Despite all but 2 participants ranking the importance of a high school education either a 9 or a 10, where 10 represented the most important, many felt the need to defend their and their peers’ choices to enter construction after or even before finishing high school. Dominant depictions of portugueseness, either at Westside or in the community advisory group, were strongly associated with working-class status and trades labour. Not only does this reveal a reification of portugueseness, it also suggests an investment in whiteness through labour (Lipsitz, 2006).

I maintain that the perception within the community and its schools that Portuguese-speaking youth are able to access labour, particularly construction for males, with little difficulty thanks to community contacts and networks, is a mitigating factor in the Portuguese-speaking youth academic underachievement and dropout phenomenon in Toronto. This also gestures to a privilege that does not exist in other ethnoracialized communities that see disproportionately lower educational outcomes for their youth.
While I cannot speak to the extent to which this happens in other ethnoracialized communities (defending certain perceived if not real employment trends and opportunities for their youth simply based on their race or ethnicity), I suspect it does not occur to the same extent. Consider the impact the academic underachievement and dropout rate might have on the Portuguese-speaking community in Toronto if these networks, perceived or real, did not exist? The oft-touted economic stability and sustainability of the Portuguese Canadian community might seriously be challenged if nonexistent. I mention this to reference the reinforcing of dominant depictions of portugueseness, as well as the privilege and possessive investment in whiteness that is spoken every time one defends a Portuguese-speaking student’s choice to enter the trades.

The skilled trades in construction, which accounts for those careers that I have suggested are so adamantly defended, are highly unionized work environments and as such tend to be well remunerated according to my participants and just about anyone else I have heard defend the trades. As of 2018, the average construction wage in Ontario is $30/hr or nearly $60,000 annually. Such figures do not include overtime and may be higher in Toronto, which is and has been experiencing higher levels of construction development. Unions have a role to play in why these wages exist. Nevertheless, I raise this to illustrate that in many ways working class jobs can provide middle class incomes, yet one must also consider that those who are non-unionized in this industry and particularly those without legal status or on temporary work visas in Canada may not experience similar economic outcomes. Lipsitz (2006) and Roediger (1991, 2006) have

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11 These figures by Neuvoo.ca are an average of the salaries of 3,696 online job listings for construction in Ontario.
traced how historically unions have effectively preserved whiteness for some while excluding others. The extent to which we, Portuguese Canadians in Toronto, feel the need to defend the choices of youth to pursue skilled trades like construction when discussing rates of academic underachievement and dropout that reflect the schooling lives of our youth, gestures to how we may be clinging to an employment sector without which we may be stuck with some of the same economic difficulties that are experienced by many economically disadvantaged ethnoracialized communities. In other words, to what extent does the community’s stability rely on dominance in one well-remunerated labour sector? What is not heard when discussing academic underachievement and dropout is a similar need to defend many of the working class jobs held by women in the community, or how girls have presumed or real access to certain labour sectors. The dynamics of gender, class and even race (Leonardo, 2012; Lipsitz, 2006; Roediger, 2006) are fully engaged in this impulse to defend and depict portugueseness through labor and class.

**Portugueseness and low expectations: dropout, pushout, and push-through**

Many community advisory group discussions concerning Portuguese-speaking student underachievement and disengagement replicated the school-community dichotomy, and while these discussions at times acknowledged that schools, including Westside High, play a part in these educational trajectories, ultimately efforts to improve the schooling experiences of Portuguese-speaking youth predominately focused on empowering the community and skirted addressing schooling practices and cultures that contributed to the underachievement phenomenon. Admittedly, school board administrators occupy a difficult position given the highly autonomous and unionized employment landscape in
schools. Regardless of this reality, however, student experiences must not only be acknowledged, but, in an equity-minded institution, action is required to address the impact schools and school personnel have on student underachievement. The reality, however, is that little has been done to address several of the experiences my participants and board survey findings raised about students’ schooling lives at Westside.

High expectations are critically important to the overall success and achievement of ethnoracialized linguistic minority youth. Communities play a role in nurturing high academic expectations for their youth (Griffith & Smith, 1990; Ogbu, 2008). But, when lacking in the community, high expectations from teachers and school personnel have a significant impact on student success (Fergus, Noguera & Martin, 2014). In addition to my study, the community advisory committee had ample evidence that Portuguese-speaking students perceived school personnel to have low expectations of their academic abilities and educational trajectories. This was contrasted with clear policies to suggest such a culture would not be tolerated in any school. Board reports indicate that in 2016-17 only 59% of students at Westside felt as though their teachers had high expectations for them. Such a figure challenges the effectiveness of such policies. While community members advocated to address a culture of low expectations in schools of interest (those with high numbers of Portuguese-speaking students, including Westview), administrators, despite acknowledging the findings of their own reports, focused little attention or resources on adjusting expectations and overall culture in schools of interest and instead supported community-focused programs that were likely to nurture high expectations among parents. For their part, Portuguese-speaking students and committee members rarely expressed concerns about low expectations from parents. Persistently
promoting community- and parent-focused solutions gestures to certain assumptions around the table about the expectations Portuguese-speaking parents place on their children.

Low expectations by school personnel appear to haunt students in low-income or working-class and racialized neighbourhoods (McMurtry & Curling, 2008). The stories in previous chapters from Westside students who were asked whether they were even graduating illustrate conjectures about their schooling trajectories and their family and community priorities. My intention here is not to belittle or disparage the many excellent teachers at Westside. Rather, each one operates in a school culture of reduced expectations for the youth in their school. What happens in one space of the school can negatively effect how students proceed with the rest of their days. Participating in a class with a caring and motivating teacher immediately after a class in which one’s dignity has been demeaned necessarily affects how that student orients to the class and teacher that follows, not to mention the students in earshot or eyesight of that student. While at Westside I got to know and even developed friendships with several teachers who shared with me their own frustrations with the culture of low expectations in their school. Such a culture not only wears on students but their teachers too.

I recall one instance where I had arrived in class before morning announcements and a teacher appeared at the door of the classroom to chitchat with the classroom teacher who sat at his desk across the room from the door. Standing with his hands on the top mantle of the doorway, bracing his body that slightly leaned into the classroom, he spoke to the classroom teacher across the room and asked if he had seen the posting for a position at another school. Responding that he had, the teacher at the doorway said,
“Finally. I’m definitely applying. I can’t wait to get out of this place. I’ve done my time.”

Shocked that this was being spoken out loud, I looked for the expression on Rodrigo’s face, as well as the faces of several other students. A few students expressed outward dismay by his comment, one even retorting, “See ya!” Rodrigo continued expressionless on his phone not even indicating that he had heard the comment. Later, I asked him whether he had heard the comment that the teacher had made, and he responded that he had and that it was nothing new. He said,

I’ve heard a few teachers tell students, and my friends heard it too, that they’re looking to get out of Westside. I mean, who can blame them, we all want to get outta here, but do they even think about what that says to us, like are we the reason they want to leave so bad? That’s what it says to me anyway.

These along with the practices of disciplining dropout, language, and disability in particular, communicate to students a message of low expectations and non-belonging in school, and neither demonstrates a politics of care nor engages in a critical care praxis.

Teachers reveal their caring ethic by fostering trusting relationships through commitment and continual expression of caring behaviours (Garza, 2009; Chaskin & Rauner, 1995). Caring behaviours include communicating high academic expectations, student advocacy, and implementing pedagogical practices and tools that facilitate student achievement (Garza, 2009, 2007; Nieto, 2004; Gay, 2000). The evident lack of high academic expectations according to my study and board surveys, among other behaviours, at Westside points to the overall absence of a caring ethic. Teachers must be aware that a caring ethic requires sustained and committed expression of caring behaviours. Neither teacher in the above vignette demonstrated a caring ethic. As Rodrigo gestured to, one teacher is not responsible for the overall culture of low expectations that haunts Westside. Many teachers, even good teachers, and other school
personnel collectively foster a culture of low expectations through their lack of a caring ethic, however episodic individual transgressions might be. Moreover, teacher practices of outwardly expressing a desire to leave a school, like described above, betray critical care praxis by suggesting inferiority and degeneracy about the school, its history and the community it has historically served.

Rolón-Dow’s notion of a color(full) critical care praxis is a direct response to the role race/ethnicity and racism continue to play in shaping the schooling lives and trajectories of ethnoracialized youth in schools. It is “grounded in a historical and political understanding of the circumstances and conditions faced by minority communities, …seeks to expose how racialized beliefs inform ideological standpoints, …and translates race-conscious historical and ideological understandings and insights from counter-narratives into authentic relationships, pedagogical practices and institutional structures that benefit marginalized students” (104). Westside has a storied history of serving Toronto’s Portuguese community (McLaren, 1999). Recent migration to Toronto from other Lusophone countries, including Brazil, mean these Portuguese-speaking newcomers settle in and around established Portuguese neighbourhoods (Barbosa, 2009; Teixeira, 2008). Westside also, however, has a reputation for academic underachievement and vocational programming; a history that continues to inform the ideological beliefs about Portuguese-speaking youth held by a number of its teachers. The above teacher’s enthusiasm for what he sees as an opportunity to escape Westside reveals such beliefs and historical awareness of portugueseness in schooling. Westside is not just an underachieving school; it is an underachieving school that has historically enrolled a large number of Portuguese-speaking youth. Public expressions by teachers of
desperation if not exasperation to leave Westside like the one above: “I can’t wait to get out of here. I’ve done my time.”, frame Westside as a sort of purgatory or inferior teaching experience. Or, as another teacher shared about being moved from an applied course to an academic course in second term, “maybe now I can actually start teaching”. As a result of these sentiments and outward expressions, students, if not others, understand that teachers are eager to leave them or leave a school that teaches, and for decades has taught, Portuguese-speaking youth. Ultimately, the critical care praxis I argue was/is missing at Westside was/is also missing in the committee for Portuguese-speaking students that, faced with the labour and resource constraints that exist, focused on raising expectations in the community rather than in schools.

(P)Raising portugueseness: expectations, visibility, and resistance.

Since initially meeting with and delivering separate lists of recommendations to board staff in 2011 and 2012, little evidence exists that action has been taken to improve the educational outcomes and schooling experiences for Portuguese-speaking youth in either of Toronto’s school boards, including at Westside High School. While one board continues to convene a community-focused committee, action is required in schools, particularly those with large Portuguese-speaking populations, to address the ideological and practical responses to students who are associated with dominant depictions of portugueseness. In its planning documents for 2017-18, Westside’s administrators acknowledge that fewer than 60% of students feel as though their teacher has high expectations for them and anywhere between 25% to nearly 50% of students depending on their grade have a credit deficit. These numbers along with participant’s narratives
indicate that it is time to praise portugueseness in schools. What would it mean for Portuguese-speaking students to see their language and culture practiced, celebrated and valued in their school and in their classrooms? As opposed to linking youth identities with a propensity to leave school or underachieve academically, portugueseness must be engaged for learning and success. At the moment neither Westside nor any other school in its board offers high school level Portuguese language courses despite over a quarter of Westside students identifying as Portuguese-speaking and Portuguese being the third most spoken language other than English (4.3% or 3,946 students in 2012-13) in the board. Moreover, the school’s 2017-18 planning documents clearly outline that culturally responsive pedagogy is necessary professional development for its staff; an optimistic goal should necessary resources be made available. What would it mean to see significantly more students present in classes with increased and integrated support from Resource Teachers? According to internal school reports, in 2016, nearly a third of students at Westside had an IEP, of whom nearly three-quarters received class withdrawal assistance for reported learning disabilities or non-identified withdrawal status assigned in elementary school that rolled over into high school. What might the impact on academic trajectories be if students were automatically directed into an academic level course upon entering high school as opposed to relying on elementary school assessments? As part of its equity in action plan the TDSB has instituted a policy in roughly 15 schools that students will no longer be directed to an applied English class in Grade 9, ensuring “all incoming students will get the same taste of university-bound learning to start high school” (“High Expectations for Grade 9s at Westview, n.d.). And, what might be the impact of raising greater awareness of and skills and language to
respond to discrimination based on portugueseness among Portuguese-speaking students?

It is imperative that portugueseness, Portuguese-speaking youth and their achievement be (p)raised in schools.

In the introduction to this chapter, I proposed three take-away messages that reframe and dispel how the underachievement context of Portuguese-speaking students in Toronto is understood. First, many Portuguese-speaking students are confronted with and made aware of the ways in which dominant depictions of portugueseness are reproduced and continue to circulate in schools. Such discourses contribute to a daily process of (re)producing their identities as Portuguese-speaking students who are likely to underachieve in school. Whether by, for example, concealing or embodying these notions of portugueseness, Portuguese-speaking students recognize and observe this context when they think about their place in the school and the possibilities for their future educational and career trajectories. Furthermore, the quotidian association of Portuguese-speaking students’ identities with dominant depictions of portugueseness is recognized both intellectually and emotionally by the study’s participants.

Secondly, while Foucault’s concept of discourse accounts for what is said, it also accounts for what is done to construct how we come to know ourselves and how others come to know us. As a result, mobilizing portugueseness as a way of disciplining Portuguese-speaking students also contributes to discourse that permeates school and classroom culture. Whether by disciplining language, drop-out or disability, and by connecting these practices to portugueseness, participants understand their peers and school personnel to limit their capacity as a result of their ethnoracial identities. Being asked “Are you even going to graduate?” by school personnel, or being rebuked for
speaking Portuguese and/or supervised by school staff to avoid speaking Portuguese, or being overrepresented in Special Education classrooms where portugueseness represents the evidence of belonging in Special Education, if not having a learning disability, are some examples of the frustrations the participants in this study expressed and experienced time and again.

Thirdly, Portuguese-speaking students in this study suggest that those other than themselves and their families also contribute to the Portuguese-speaking student academic underachievement paradox through discourse that positions Portuguese-speaking youth and their communities as not caring about school and education. Through their narratives and responses to teachers and other school personnel, the participants in this study demonstrate that they comprehend and when required decipher discourse that communicates low academic expectations of them and/or those Portuguese-speaking students associated with portugueseness, as well as their parents and communities. Such insight on the part of Portuguese-speaking students is not surprising given the experiences they encounter in schools, which my earlier two points help us to understand.

In his efforts to reframe and dispel deficit minded assumptions about Portuguese Canadians and the importance they place on education, Nunes (2008) claims that more evidence exists to confirm rather than contest that Portuguese-speaking parents care about their children’s education, contrary to popular belief. Nearly every participant in this study confessed that their parents in one way or another have expressed their wish for their children to have better opportunities, jobs, and careers than they have experienced. In many cases, education is articulated as the way to secure such a future. Perhaps the extent to which their parents push them to achieve academically should not be taken as
any indication of whether or not they value or prioritize education, as it so frequently seems to be in the media (Andrew-Gee, 2013). Instead, I argue that critical consideration of the many barriers Portuguese-speaking youth and their families encounter to engaging with schools is required. Language remains a considerable barrier to community-school engagement (as eluded to earlier). Parents’ inability, intimidation or embarrassment to access parent-teacher interviews through interpreters is a frequent concern, while the process to request an interpreter remains confusing or unclear. When I met with Beatriz and her mother at parent-interview night they were without an interpreter other than Beatriz herself, who admitted she was only introducing her mother to the teachers she liked. Asked whether she requested an interpreter, Beatriz replied that her mother would not come by herself or with a stranger.

Working-class families work working class jobs and hours, often making it difficult to participate in school activities that might benefit the academic success of their children. Portuguese-speaking youth also tend to work more hours than other students (Andrew-Gee, 2013). However, this must not be immediately interpreted as a disinterest in school and education. Moreover, the underachievement context that surrounds Portuguese-speaking youth is not fully explained using class-based analysis. This study has demonstrated how class status is one of several factors used to reconstruct and circulate dominant depictions of portugueseness that negatively impact Portuguese-speaking youth’s academic and school trajectories. To suggest that Portuguese-speaking students and their parents care little about education and school ignores these social and structural barriers to their success and itself reproduces such dominant depictions of portugueseness.
Directions for my work that praise and raise portugueseness and Portuguese-speaking youth in schools

While this ethnographic study focuses on the schooling experiences of Portuguese-speaking youth in Toronto, Canada, its findings offer critical commentary beyond its geographical and cultural borders. This study offers insights into the potential experiences of Portuguese-speaking youth elsewhere in Canada and abroad. It also complicates how Portuguese-speaking youth identity in schools, or what I and others have termed portugueseness, interacts with categories of race, ethnicity, language, immigration status, class, and disability to impact their educational and school trajectories. As a result, there is an urgent need to trouble, interrupt, and resist the circulation of dominant depictions of portugueseness in schools. Moreover, equipping Portuguese-speaking youth with the knowledge and skills to do this work is likely to be the most effective and transformative path forward.

As I mentioned earlier, this study’s ethnographic approach was not only appropriate given my research questions, but, it was also appropriate as a result of my research population and my political commitments as a researcher and activist. The process of collecting narratives and counter-narratives from my participants required a level of consciousness-raising among my participants and many of their peers. My expectation prior to entering this research was that students would have already identified and found ways of articulating their experiences of marginalization and the counter-narratives they wished to replace existing dominant narratives of Portuguese-speaking youth underachievement. These were the expectations I was left with when reading the
compelling counter-narratives of Solórzano and Yosso (2002) and so many others. However, this research instead was as much about learning and educating as it was about fact-finding. This learning and educating must not be understood as one directional. By engaging with and urging students to work to articulate their experiences and think through the meanings of certain encounters and discourses, I learned from students about their experiences, and students learned from me, and more importantly from one another, about how to differently understand their experiences and the school culture that continues to make those experiences common. This left participants feeling empowered by having their experiences validated and affirmed particularly for those who felt that their experiences were somehow less legitimate than those of, for example, students of colour.

While participants in this study gestured to a sense of being made to feel as if they do not belong in school as a result of their Portuguese-speaking identities or portugueseness, the data do not fully speak to whether or not these perceptions of (non-)belonging extend beyond the school or field of formal education. Understood intersectionally through class, ethnicity, race, language, immigration status, gender, among other categories, Portuguese-speaking youth identity in schools consistently confronted dominant depictions of portugueseness that automatically construct them as school dropouts or underachievers; “Are you even going to graduate?” Yet, participants also gestured to how a sense of non-belonging also crept into their lives outside of school, whether in their work or social environments, which is rather unexpected given the long presence and generally perceived integration of Portuguese Canadians in Toronto. This specifically critiques multiculturalism policy and discourse, which gestures to an
openness to ethnic diversity and difference but rarely accounts for or recognizes the 
material effects of difference in a bicultural and bilingual national social and political 
landscape (Haque, 2010; Thoani, 2006). Future research must critically unpack where, 
why and how Portuguese-speaking youth develop a sense of (non-)belonging and to what 
extent do their Portuguese-speaking identities inform this reality. Given this study, a 
particular focus for a more expansive study on (non-)belonging among Portuguese-
speaking youth in Canada ought to be placed on the three categories used to describe and 
understand dominant depictions of portugueseness in Canada: nationalism and diaspora, 
class and labour, and of course, language.

Although its centrality in my research has now taken on different meaning, I 
initially failed to fully appreciate the role language would play in my research prior to 
entering the field and beginning to analyze my data. While acknowledging language as a 
feature of identity and more immediately a criteria of eligibility in that participants 
needed to self-identify as Portuguese-speaking, I never anticipated that language would 
be so intimately implicated in the social and emotional construction of identity. Language 
remains a means of outing and constructing student identity in a school with a large 
proportion of self-identified Portuguese-speaking students. Students were outted as 
Portuguese because of their language practices as well as constructed as Portuguese even 
when they were Brazilian or some other ethnicity by merely being heard speaking or 
known to speak Portuguese. Language also constructed certain ideas about (dis)ability. 
Students engaged in responsive strategies to this knowledge by, for example, adhering to 
or resisting language disciplining to be differently perceived by their teachers depending 
on the language they were speaking or known to speak.
One direction that my research program is likely to take is in the field of sociolinguistics. Specifically, the experiences of Portuguese-speaking participants in this study promise to contribute to unsettled language and race through raciolinguistics (Alim, Rickford & Ball, 2016; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa, 2014). Given the Canadian focus of my research, I anticipate my future research within the area of language and identity and (non-)belonging to engage closely with the francophone experience. Montreal’s relatively large Portuguese-speaking population represents a rich opportunity to see whether the experiences in Toronto reflect those in Montreal and how the bilingual and bicultural framework of the country similarly and/or differently impact minority languages. On the other hand, scholarship on the minority language experience of francophones in Ontario may also provide insight and reflect or differ from the Portuguese-speaking participants’ experiences in this study. Minority language practice and identity and how these are taken up in schools and elsewhere in youths’ social and political lives is a rich field to further understand the integrated and/or segregated lives of Portuguese-speaking youth as my research evolves.

In their descriptions of how their schooling fails to meaningfully include them, value their identity, and engage their interests, participants gestured towards a vision of education that not only nurtured their minds but also nurtured relationships of mutual respect. Participants consistently raised that overall they felt that school personnel did not respect them, and that their reactions and responses in many instances reflected their frustration with this lack of respect. Valenzuela’s reflection of educación inspired me to consider the Portuguese understanding of educação. Thus far, I have not been able to locate scholarly texts that explore the history of the term educação, even in Portuguese,
and I am hopeful that engaging more deeply in a research project that seeks to better understand this term’s etymological and socio-historical roots might contribute to the critique of western, neoliberal systems of education and schooling that ignore if not reject certain cultural and indigenous values and priorities inherent in the Other’s understanding of education.

Conclusion

Many factors continue to inform decades of disproportionately higher rates of academic underachievement and early school leaving among Portuguese-speaking students in Toronto and the problem remains complex. While socio-economic factors inform these outcomes, the schooling experiences of Portuguese-speaking youth point to how class interacts with other salient categories to inform educational trajectories. Leonardo (2012) speaks to this in his concept of raceclass, and intersectionality is a powerful framework through which to explore how class and race (among other categories) impact the lived experience of ethnoracialized youth. Ultimately the schooling experiences and (counter-) narratives of Portuguese-speaking youth at Westside – their voices - revealed data that could be understood and unpacked through a class analysis alone.

The construct of portugueseness – how participants saw their Portuguese-speaking identities revealed through dominant depictions of Portuguese Canadians – reveals that class is but one part of constructing and consolidating the Portuguese-speaking student subject. My participants described being subject to regulations and regimes of discipline by the institution of schooling and its personnel. In these moments they also experienced subjectivity as Portuguese-speaking students, differently treated as
a result of their ethnoracial identities. Ultimately, various forms of discourse (language and practices) left them convinced that their school cared little about them or their success as Portuguese-speaking students. Portugueseness (language, nationalism and diaspora, and class and labour, in particular) was understood as undesirable and in some cases subtracted from the classroom and schooling in general, informing the ways in which they (dis)engaged with/at school or otherwise deselect education.

My hope is that this work and the youth voices that it showcases will move teachers and administrators to consider how schools inform the educational trajectories of Portuguese-speaking students. In the end, however, this research has left me convinced that much effort must be put towards working with Portuguese-speaking youth to (p)raising portugueseness among themselves and within their schools and communities. This includes (p)raising Portuguese-speaking student achievement through setting high expectations and providing the supports required for their success as opposed to asking, “Are you even going to graduate”. (P)raising Portuguese-speaking includes raising visibility by celebrating but not essentializing Portuguese language, historic local contributions (labour), and their identities as part of a diaspora. And, finally, there is a need to (p)raise Portuguese-speaking student resistance and defiance.

This study gathered Portuguese-speaking participants in a process of critical reflection concerning the schooling experiences of Portuguese-speaking youth. Participants were supported to more deeply consider and reflect on their schooling encounters and experiences to discern whether and how dominant depictions of portugueseness were being reproduced and their effects.

Moving forward, I am convinced of the need to equip Portuguese-speaking youth
in Toronto to be able to identify and address these discourses as they appear in their everyday lives. I am inspired by my participants’ defiant responses to disciplining language, dropout, and disability that render visible and interrupt these problematic practices. As a result I am left optimistic that the future schooling of Portuguese-speaking youth at Westview will benefit from listening to these defiant youth voices, continuing to explore the role their identities (and how those are constructed in school) have on their schooling experiences and academic success.
References


Garza, R. (2007). She teaches you like if she were your friend: Latino high school


High expectations for grade 9s at Westview. (n.d.) Retrieved from http://www.tdsb.on.ca/About-Us/Equity/Equity-In-Action/Westview-Grade-9


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th># of years in Canada</th>
<th>POB</th>
<th>Domestic Status</th>
<th>Generation in Canada</th>
<th>POB Mother then Father</th>
<th>LOE Mother then Father</th>
<th>Parents been in Canada</th>
<th>Importance of High School and Why</th>
<th>Future plans</th>
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<tr>
<td>Miguel</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Married / Lives with parents</td>
<td>New immigrant</td>
<td>Portugal, Lisbon (both)</td>
<td>not sure</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>NN. Yes, because I want to be successful</td>
<td>Policeman / Uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabrina</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Married / Lives with parents</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Brazil, Minas Geries (both)</td>
<td>high school / grade 9</td>
<td>20+ years</td>
<td>10. Plans to go to university for psych</td>
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<td>Thiago</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Portugal, Caldes</td>
<td>Separated / Lives with parents</td>
<td>1st, arrived at age 12</td>
<td>Portugal, Lisbon (both)</td>
<td>elementary (both)</td>
<td>4.5 years</td>
<td>9. It's important but I just don't do shit. There's no recognition for trying - there's nothing to go for.</td>
<td>work and then possibly college. I have no idea what I'll do for work but whatever comes up.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Rodrigo</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Portugal, Azores, S. Miguel</td>
<td>Married / Lives with parents</td>
<td>New immigrant</td>
<td>Portugal, Azores, S. Miguel (both)</td>
<td>grade 6 / grade 12</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>10. It's important because without it you can't have the job that you would like to do.</td>
<td>Policeman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beatriz</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Separated / Lives with Mom</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Portugal, Barcelos / Braga</td>
<td>grade 6 / unknown</td>
<td>23 years</td>
<td>10. Always planned to finish high school because I've always decided to get a degree and a career.</td>
<td>going to university and trying to maintain contact with my family and friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Separated / Lives with Mom</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Toronto, Canada (both)</td>
<td>grade 9 or 10 / High school diploma</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>10. My parents didn't really pursue anything after high school, well one didn't graduate at all and I want to better myself</td>
<td>I plan to go on to university or college and eventually become a teacher or lawyer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guilherme</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Married / Lives with parents</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Brazil / Portugal</td>
<td>elementary / high school / grade 10</td>
<td>24 years</td>
<td>10. High school is very important. You need education to have a successful life. Always have intended to finish because I want to have a good future and a good job.</td>
<td>work with Dad for one year and then go to college for police foundations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frederica</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Portugal, Porto</td>
<td>Married / Lives with parents</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Portugal, Porto (both)</td>
<td>grade 6 / grade 10</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>10. Education provides a better future.</td>
<td>University to be a doctor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Divorced / Lives with mother</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Portugal, Porto (both)</td>
<td>grade 6 / grade 8</td>
<td>24 years</td>
<td>6. I plan on finishing within 6 or 4 years</td>
<td>OYAP to become a mechanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucas</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Divorced / Lived with Grandmother</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Ponta Delgada / N. Portugal</td>
<td>college / no high school</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>9. Without it you can't go anywhere in life - no job, no future. Only in Gr 12 did it become apparent that I needed to &quot;pull up my pants&quot;</td>
<td>apprentice as electrical and find proper employment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N/A: born in Canada; POB: Place of Birth; LOE: Highest completed level of formal education; NN: No number given; OYAP: Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program
(Appendix A) Information Letter to Principal

DATE

Dear [Principal's Name],

My name is David Pereira and I am a PhD Candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. I am interested in conducting a research study on Portuguese-speaking youth at [School Name] from November 2015 – June 2016 for my doctoral dissertation.

This research is timely as renewed efforts are underway to continue to improve and address Portuguese-speaking youth academic achievement in the [Neighbourhood Name] is an ideal site for this study as it enrolls many Portuguese-speaking youth, and it is a large and historically important school in Toronto’s Portuguese-speaking neighbourhood.

My study will be guided by the following questions:

1. How do Portuguese-speaking students define success?
2. How do their definitions of success impact their school participation, school to work transitions, and post-secondary aspirations?

I focus on these questions because while success likely motivates the career and educational decisions of Portuguese-speaking youth, the reality is that it remains unclear what they mean by success, what and who informs their definitions, and how their ideas of success impact their school and life trajectory. Educational and career aspirations will be informed by how success is understood and achieved by this student population.

I will use qualitative research methods to document and understand the schooling and community experiences of 10 Portuguese-speaking students at [School Name]. These students will complete demographic questionnaires, and will participate in two one-on-one interviews on their past and current schooling and community experiences, and on their ideas about success and their educational, career, and general life aspirations.

With your and their teachers’ consent, I would also like to observe the 10 students in their classes and pay attention to their quality and levels of engagement. The teachers and non-participating students will not be the subjects of my observation. In these classes, I can either assist the teachers as a teacher/educational assistant to support student learning or observe students from the back of the classroom to minimize disruption.

In addition, I would like to offer 2 digital storytelling workshops at [School Name] that will include the 10 Portuguese-speaking study participants. These workshops will not only provide participants with technology and media skills necessary for the workplace, but also allow them to narrate themes of success and aspirations through digital media. Our use of [School's] iPad collection and some support staff hours will be requested for these workshops.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
Finally, I would like to work with you and/or your designated staff to examine selected student documentation, such as report cards, attendance reports, and other materials, that could help identify patterns of achievement or underachievement. I understand the sensitivity of this information, and will closely work with you to guarantee strict confidentiality and only if there is parental consent.

Throughout my research at [Blank], you will receive regular feedback from me. At the end of the first semester, my initial report will be more general and outline non-identifying details about the participating students and their parents/guardians (for participants under the age of 18). At the end of the second semester, my next report will contain preliminary findings based on interviews, observation, and digital workshops. More urgent matters related to participants, parents, staff, and teachers will be brought to your attention in a timely fashion. Within 6 months of completing data collection, my final report will provide you with a more detailed report outlining major themes, findings, and implications for my doctoral thesis. A pamphlet outlining a summary of findings will be created for your use and distribution among the [Blank] community.

Before starting this research project, I will obtain ethics approval from the [Blank] and the Research Ethics Board at the University of Toronto. Informed consent will be obtained from participants and their parents/guardians if they are younger than 18 years of age. My preference will be to meet with both participants and their parents/guardians to ensure they understand the study and their rights as a participant to withdraw from the study. I speak English and Portuguese fluently, allowing me to answer any questions or concerns that they may have.

I appreciate the importance of working together to meet the needs of my research as well as the needs of your school. I welcome the opportunity to speak more with you about my project. Finally, I am confident that together we can positively contribute to improve our understanding of Portuguese-speaking youth and their success at [Blank] and beyond.

Warmest regards,

David Pereira,
PhD Candidate, Department of Social Justice Education,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto
252 Bloor St W. Toronto, ON, M5S 1V6
david.pereira@utoronto.ca [Blank]
Information and Consent Letter for Parents and Students

N.B.: This letter will also be made available to parents and students in Portuguese.

This letter will provide you with more information on a research study on Portuguese-speaking youth titled (Re)Defining Success. After reading this letter you should understand the main objective of the study, what participation includes, and your child’s rights as a study participant.

My name is David Pereira, and this research study is part of my PhD work in Education at the University of Toronto. This study asks 1) How do Portuguese-speaking students define success; and 2) How do their definitions of success impact their school participation, school to work transitions, and post-secondary aspirations?

To answer these questions I will follow 10 students between the ages of 14-19 who consider themselves Portuguese-speaking at [Redacted]. During the school year participants will each be interviewed twice, observed in their classes, and have frequent conversations with me during their school day about the above questions. In addition participants are encouraged to participate in two full-day storytelling workshops to further think about success and their aspirations. I will consult reports on attendance and academic achievement (report cards and credit completion reports) for each participant to compare participants’ perceived academic journey with their actual academic record. Participation in this study is voluntary, and as a token of appreciation each participant will receive a $20 gift card after each interview (for a total of $40) as well as a catered lunch during each workshop.

Your child’s part in the research, if you agree, is to participate in the above activities by sharing her/his thoughts, experiences and opinions on the topic of success. In addition, with your consent, the researcher will also access school reports on your child for the purpose of analyzing how they perceive their academic success as compared to these reports. The following paragraphs provide more information on the study’s activities and your child’s role.

Interviews:
This study involves two individual interviews between each participant and the researcher (one at the beginning and another at the end of the study) at a time and location that your child finds convenient and comfortable. Each interview will be informal and last approximately 90 minutes. Interviews will be casual and resemble a conversation. Participants will be asked to reflect on her/his definition of success and her/his aspirations, what informs her/his definition of success and aspirations, as well as how she/he achieves success and what barriers she/he has encountered in achieving success. This interview will be audio recorded with the participant’s permission.

Workshops:
Study participants are asked to attend two full-day workshops (each approximately 5-6 hours) during winter of 2016. Participants will need to obtain permission from their teachers to attend these workshops. These workshops will be facilitated by the researcher and supervised by [Redacted] staff other than a participant’s teacher. Lunch and snacks will be provided for workshop participants at both workshops. In the workshops, participants will be guided through group and individual activities that ask them to reflect on their identity and subjectivity, and on their...
schooling experiences. It is alright if these terms are unfamiliar. Together we will define and work to understand their meanings. Participant reflections will help to produce digital stories using iPads. Rest assured that no prior knowledge or skills are required to participate in these workshops, only your child’s willingness to explore and share whatever schooling and life experiences s/he feels comfortable sharing. The workshops will be video recorded to allow the researcher to analyze the workshop proceedings at a later time. The digital stories your child produces will be collected and analysed as data for this research, and any use of this data in presentations or publications will first be de-identified so that your child’s identity remains anonymous.

Classroom observation:
Participants can expect that I will observe them in their classes. My presence should not distract or interfere in their learning. I will be located at the back of the classroom so that I will not have eye contact with the students. Participants will participate as s/he normally would in class. I will take notes on how participants engage and respond to the material so that I can ask about their thoughts and opinions at a later time. Depending on the class and the teacher’s comfort, I may serve as a tutor to help participants with their work. There will be no audio or video recording during classroom observation.

Daily social engagement:
During times when I am not interviewing or observing in a class I will be part of the community. Your child will see me at school assemblies, mass, and other events. At times when there are no organized events I will be very interested to socialize and talk to participants and other students over lunch and other spare time. During these moments I will casually talk with participants, often clarifying something I heard them say or do during observation. Participants should not feel obliged to always talk to me. It is perfectly understandable if at times your child wishes to talk and at other times they have other priorities. I do not wish to interfere with your child’s success or enjoyment at school.

Risks and Benefits:
It is important that you and your child know about the potential risks and benefits of participating in this study. Your child will talk and hangout with me during spare time as frequently as s/he feels comfortable. As a result, other students may identify your child as a participant in this study. Rest assured, however, that what participants share with me will remain anonymous - that is your child’s real name will never appear in the research - and any accounts and stories that may uniquely identify your child will be changed to protect her/his privacy. Despite these efforts there remains the possibility that someone may recognize a story that s/he shares. By participating in this study others may identify your child as Portuguese-speaking and may or may not make assumptions about her/him based on this identity. If at any time your child feels that her/his participation in this study leaves her/him feeling uncomfortable or unsettled, I encourage her/him to speak to you (their parent/guardian), to a Community Youth Worker or other school support staff, and/or to me so that we can work to change this situation for the better.

There are several benefits to your child and others as a result of your participation in this study. Your child will learn more about her/himself by talking about success and exploring her/his aspirations. By engaging in the workshops participants will get a chance to tell her/his story from her/his unique perspective and hear from others about their stories. Throughout this process your
child may experience moments that are emotionally and mentally difficult, but s/he will be supported and it is likely, though not guaranteed, that these experiences will positively contribute to her/his intellectual growth and emotional development. Also, participants’ thoughts and contributions as part of this study will help me and others understand what success means for Portuguese-speaking youth, a population that is under-researched and has historically struggled in Toronto’s education system. Finally, as a token of appreciation participants will receive a $20 gift card for each of the two interviews s/he completes for this study.

Hopefully the above paragraphs have provided you with more information about this study and the activities and opportunities your child can expect as a participant. Your child’s participation in this study is completely voluntary. Participants may not wish to participate in the workshops, which is perfectly fine. However, to be a participant in this study your child will need to complete the 2 interviews listed above, but even so s/he can refuse to answer any questions for whatever reason. Also, participants can withdraw from this study at any time with no negative consequences.

Confidentiality and Data Security:

It is very important to me that your child’s confidentiality and anonymity is protected. Participants’ names and the name of your school will never appear in the research and all the data that is collected will be kept locked in a private office at the University of Toronto that only I can access. I will not share any identifying details of any of the stories or interviews participants share with me throughout this study. When I quote something your child said in a paper, conference presentation or other community or professional presentation or publication of this research, it will be generic and not specific in a way that could identify a participant. The data that is collected for this study will be destroyed after 5 years.

If you have questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at [redacted] or david.pereira@utoronto.ca. There are also other people you can speak to if you wish. You can speak with my supervisor, [redacted] by emailing [redacted]. You may also contact Research Oversight and Compliance Office - Human Research Ethics Program at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273, if you have questions about your rights as a participant.

By signing below you consent to your child participating in this study. There is also a place for each participant to indicate his or her desire to participate and to add any stipulations. Should you decide to participate, please return one signed and dated copy to me and keep the other for your reference.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

David Pereira, PhD Candidate
Social Justice Education, OISE/UT
252 Bloor St. W., 12th floor. Toronto, ON M5S 1V6

[redacted]
To Be Completed by Participant’s Parent/Guardian and by Participant.

I have read through this document. Regarding this research, I understand and am satisfied with the explanations offered and I feel that my questions have been answered.

Please indicate your consent by checking the following (you can consent to some or all of the following):

☐ I consent to my child’s participation in this study for the duration of the school year.

☐ I consent to the researcher accessing my child’s reports on student achievement/attendance for the purposes described in this document.

☐ I consent to the raw data (interview transcripts, field notes from observation and workshops, workshop videos) collected from my child in this research to be used by the researcher for analysis purposes.

☐ I consent to my child’s de-identified/anonymized visual, auditory, and textual data collected in this study (excluding workshop video recordings) to be used by the researcher for presentations or publications, and I have signed the accompanying [message redacted].

Please disclose any stipulations regarding the above agreement:


(Signature of Parent/Guardian)

(Printed Name)

(Date)

I have read through this document. I understand my role and rights as a participant and agree to participate in this study.

(Signature of Participant)

(Printed Name)

(Date)
(Appendix D) Information and Consent Letter to Teachers

DATE

Dear [Teacher’s name],

My name is David Pereira and I am a PhD Candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. I am conducting a research study on Portuguese-speaking youth at [School Name] for my doctoral dissertation. This research is timely as renewed efforts are underway to continue to improve and address Portuguese-speaking youth academic achievement in the [School Name] is an ideal site for this study as it enrolls many Portuguese-speaking youth, and it is a large and historically important school in Toronto’s Portuguese-speaking neighbourhood.

My study will be guided by the following questions:

1. How do Portuguese-speaking students define success?
2. How do their definitions of success impact their school participation, school to work transitions, and post-secondary aspirations?

I focus on these questions because while success likely motivates the career and educational decisions of Portuguese-speaking youth, the reality is that it remains unclear what they mean by success, what and who informs their definitions, and how their ideas of success impact their school and life trajectory. Educational and career aspirations will be informed by how success is understood and achieved by this student population.

I will use qualitative research methods to document and understand the schooling and community experiences of 10 Portuguese-speaking students at [School Name] These students will complete demographic questionnaires, two storytelling workshops, and will participate in two one-on-one interviews on their past and current schooling and community experiences, and on their ideas about success and their educational, career and general life aspirations.

With your and their parent/guardian’s consent, I would also like to observe the 10 students in their classes and pay attention to their quality and levels of engagement. The teachers and non-participating students will not be the subjects of my observation. In these classes, I can either assist as a tutor to support student learning or observe students from the back of the classroom to minimize disruption. Following this letter is a section where you may indicate your consent to me observing participants in your classroom. Participants will need to obtain permission from their teachers to attend the workshops and one-on-one interviews.

It is a privilege to be conducting my study at [School Name] I appreciate the importance of working
together to meet the needs of my research as well as the needs of your classroom and school. I welcome the opportunity to speak more with you about my project. You can be assured that I will maintain a respectful and collaborative presence in your classroom.

Sincerely,

David Pereira, PhD Candidate
Social Justice Education, OISE/UT
252 Bloor St. W., 12th floor. Toronto, ON M5S 1V6

To Be Completed by Teacher.

I have read through this document. I understand and am satisfied with the explanations offered, feel that my questions have been answered, and consent to the researcher observing my class in the manner described above.

Course Details:

Course name: ________________________________ Semester: □ first □ second

Frequency: □ daily □ weekly (circle all that apply): M / T / W / R / F

______________________________
Teacher Signature

______________________________
Date
(Appendix E) **Demographic Survey**

*To be formatted so that students can complete this electronically (paperless)*

Please provide answers to the following questions. As always throughout this study, only answer questions and participate in activities in which you feel comfortable.

**Personal Information:**
- What is your name?
- What is the closest intersection to where you live?
- How old are you?
- Where were you born?
- What is the most reliable way to contact you (cell, home, email, Facebook)? *This information is to contact you for study-related purposes (reminder of meeting, workshop, etc.)*

**School / Education**
- What grade are you in?
- How many years have you been at [school name]?
- What elementary school did you attend?
- On a scale of 1 - 10 (1 being least and 10 being most) how important to you is your high school education? Please explain and provide examples of things that are more or equally important.
- Do you plan to finish high school? Has this always been the case? Please explain.
- Do you have any future plans after finishing/leaving high school? Briefly describe this in a few sentences.

**Work / Extracurricular**
- Have you ever received an allowance from your parents? Describe the arrangement and when it started/ended.
- Do you have a part-time job?
- If so, how many hours a week do you work?
- Circle the days of the week in which you work at your part-time job: Monday AM / PM; Tuesday AM / PM; Wednesday AM / PM; Thursday AM / PM; Friday AM / PM; Saturday AM / PM; Sunday AM / PM.
- Have you ever sacrificed getting your schoolwork done because of your work/job commitments?
- On a scale of 1 - 10 (1 being least and 10 being most) how important is it to you that you work part-time? Please explain why?
- Do you participate in any extracurricular activities (sports, dance, theatre, homework clubs, tutoring, committees, etc.)?
- How many hours do you dedicate to these activities every week?

**Family / Home:**
- When were your parents born (Year)?
- Where were your parents born (Country and region/province)?
• If your parents were not born in Canada, how long have they been in Canada?
• What is the highest level of education for each of your parents (if you aren’t sure, what do you think)?
• In a few sentences can you describe your home and living arrangements (Who lives with you, the layout of your home/apartment, your bedroom or where you sleep (whether it’s shared), where do you do your homework, where do you relax, etc.)
(Appendix F) Semi-structured Interview Guides

Reminder to participants: a) you do not need to answer any question that you do not feel comfortable answering and b) anyone you name during this interview will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Interview ONE – ASPIRATIONS and SUBJECTIVITY

Description: In this set of questions I want to get a broad sense of participants’ past and current educational experiences. I will also explore participants’ aspirations (career, life, social, educational, personal, professional) with a focus on education. This will help me to begin to understand factors relevant to their subjectivity that are connected to their Portuguese-speaking ancestry. I want to know whether and how participants’ aspirations resemble or differ from those valued among their community members, family, and peers. The theme of aspirations is necessarily connected with how participants construe and enact success. Individual questions will ask whether participants aspire to ((post-)secondary) education. Whether their aspirations are limited in some way, by who/what, and why? And whether and how their aspirations are informed by how they perceive themselves in their communities, schools, and more broadly in society (being subject and experiencing subjectivity). This line of questioning aims to explore experiences, factors and ideas linked to success and aspirations that construct subjectivity.

PAST/PRESENT SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES:

1. Can you tell me some of your clearest memories of your elementary schooling experiences? These can be both or either positive or negative.
2. Why do these memories stand out to you? How do they make you feel?
3. What are some key memories of high school? These can be both or either positive or negative.
4. Who are among the most important people at school? What makes these people important? Tell me a story that describes their importance.
5. Describe for me your academic journey up until this point. Has it been easy or difficult, and what in particular has made it so? Do you have, or would you like supports in class, for assignments and to understand and complete homework?

SUBJECTIVITY:

6. Describe how other people come to know that you’re Portuguese-speaking? (at school, at work, socially - in person or online)
7. Do others perceive you in the same ways that you self-identify? Tell me how so, or why not.
8. Tell me in your own words how you identify racially? In other words, do you consider yourself white, non-white, a racialized person, a person of colour, some combination of these or other categories? How did you come to see yourself this way? Is there a story or experience that you can share with me that illustrates how or why you (others) see you this way?
9. When you meet someone for the first time, does (and how does) your race and/or ethnicity get talked about? Tell me about an experience when someone was right
or when someone was mistaken about your identity? Why do you think this happened and does it continue to happen to you?

10. Describe for me your group of friends. What do you have in common with them? How are you different from them? Do you think your race and/or ethnicity matters to your friends, classmates, co-workers, teachers, etc.? Is there an experience you can share to illustrate what you mean?

11. Is your race and/or ethnicity an important part of your identity or how you identify yourself?

12. Describe what, if anything about you reveals your race and/or ethnicity (white, non-white, Portuguese, Brazilian, Angolan, other)?

13. How do people typically know or find out that you're Portuguese-speaking ancestry? (surname, self-reveal/confession, clothing or jewelry, heard speaking Portuguese)

14. What are some of the reactions you experience when you tell someone you're of Portuguese-speaking ancestry?

15. Describe what you think people associate with Portuguese-speaking people and students? And, what do you think about these associations?

16. Have you ever not shared with someone that you're Portuguese-speaking or [insert ancestry]? If so, describe the situation and why you chose to not share.

ASPIRATIONS

17. Describe your plans after graduating high school, or, if you don’t plan to finish, after leaving high school.

18. Is obtaining your high school diploma important to you and/or someone else? Describe what makes it important to you or someone else in your life. Are you and this other person or persons in agreement or in tension about how important high school is?

19. Do you plan to apply for and attend college or university? Why (not)?

20. Have you ever been encouraged/discouraged from pursuing higher levels of education? Describe this experience to me (who, when and where). What were the reasons given?

21. Describe aspirations other than education and how you plan to achieve or obtain these aspirations (work, life, social, personal, career/professional). Why are these important to you?

22. Which of these aspirations have been encouraged/discouraged? By who, when and where? What were the reasons given? Tell me about a memorable experience when you were encouraged/discouraged to achieve a particular goal or aspiration.

23. Have your aspirations changed as a result of these interventions? When did this happen and what was the impact on you? How did this make you feel?

24. Do your aspirations resemble or differ from the aspirations of people in your family, community or group of peers? How are they similar or different?

25. What steps have you taken, or do you plan on taking to ensure you achieve those things you aspire to? If you haven’t taken any steps, what/who has kept you from doing so?

Interview TWO - SUCCESS and BARRIERS
Description: In this set of questions I try to get a better understanding of how education and schooling factor, if at all, into notions of success. If either or both were incorporated into the answers in the previous section, I wonder how instrumental these are to success. If neither factored into the answers in the previous section then I wonder why not and the origins, possibilities and limits of success without education.

1. How, if at all, has your definition of success changed since the beginning of the year? How do you currently define success? Tell me what success looks like for you. (i.e. success on an individual project or task, success in life, etc.)
2. In your mind is there only one definition of success or can/do you envision multiple definitions? Tell me how this informs how you think about and plan for the future (career, education and life trajectories)?
3. What makes one definition of success more desirable than other definitions?
4. Describe what part your parents or family play in your definition of success.
5. Describe one thing (action, achievement, gesture) you’ve done that has made your parents the most happy or proud? What did you do, what was their reaction, and why do you think that had such an impact?
6. On the other hand, what has been the most disappointing thing that you’ve done in the eyes of your parents?
7. Now, independent of your parents, describe your single greatest achievement, and single greatest failure?
8. Tell me about a time when you can remember questioning a choice that you made in life (whether you went to school, applied for/accepted a certain job, didn’t finish something you started, lied to a parent or friend, cheated on a test, purchased something expensive)? How did you came to make this choice, and what feelings and thoughts did this choice cause?
9. Describe the key ingredient(s) ensure your success in the future? (ideas: people, financial, education, opportunities/luck, attitude/persistence…)
10. Is education or schooling connected to your future success? Explain your answer or what you mean.
11. When have you felt successful at school? Tell me about that moment. If never, why or why not?
12. In your mind what would make you feel successful at school? (think about this from within and outside of school – are there things in your life broadly that impact your ability to succeed in school?)
(Appendix G) **Participant Recruitment Poster**

**Participants Needed for a Research Study**

*(Re)Defining Success* is a research study about what Portuguese-speaking youth define as success, how these definitions come to be, and if and how these definitions inform schooling experiences and academic success.

**Eligibility:**
- self-identify as Portuguese-speaking;
- be between 14-19 years of age; attend

Participants will be interviewed, participate in workshops, have frequent discussions with the researcher, and be observed in class.

You will receive a $20 gift card for each interview and lunch during each workshop.

If you are interested or would like more information contact
David Pereira

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twitter @iamdpereira
snapchat iamdpereira
email david.pereira@utoronto.ca
IM/text

This study has been approved by the Toronto Catholic District School Board and by the Research Ethics Board of the University of Toronto