

BECOMING FRENCH: EXPLORING THE STORIES OF AN ALGERIAN IMMIGRANT  
STUDENT'S EXPERIENCES IN FRANCE

Janette Metzger

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Doctoral Committee

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Dr. Mary Beth Hines, Ph.D

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Dr. Mitzi Lewison, Ph.D

---

Dr. Barbara Dennis, Ph.D

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October 27, 2022

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Janette Metzger

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In France, dominant discourse officially rejects multiculturalism and frames adherence to *laïcité* (French secularism) as a question of national identity (Bertossi, 2012, p. 251). This has created a harsh environment for an immigrant woman wearing a head veil in public. This study used narrative inquiry to examine how Imane, a 17-year-old Muslim Algerian immigrant to France used her transnationality and cultural flexibility to construct her identities, present them to those around her, and position herself in relation to them. The research is informed by the perspective that Imane, as an immigrant student, has transnational literacies that are the result of maintaining ties with Algeria while living in France and regularly moving between multiple cultures and languages. She lives in an emerging social context and has constructed multiple, contextualized identities connected to her membership in more than one culture and social group (Yi, 2009, pp. 101-102).

The data for this study are the talk and small stories that have been extracted from audio-recorded group discussions and tutoring sessions, personal interviews, and student work that were collected from Imane during her participation in an English study group. Using a five-step small story narrative analysis procedure, this project explores how Imane makes sense of her life, navigates her multiple, intersectional identities, and positions herself in relation to the world and society's discourses (Alexander, 2016, p. 8).

Findings suggest that Imane seemed to be highly concerned about both her personal experiences and current events that were related to publicly wearing a veil in France. She often interpreted her negative experiences as an outward expression of current French discourse which frequently links Muslim immigrants with terrorism. While Imane's choices about wearing her veil impacted her educational experiences and her relationships with her teachers, her transnationality helped her to re-define French cultural values and her understanding of what it means to be French. It also seemed to give her a point of reference for examining what she was being taught in, empowering her to form her own opinions, and enabling her to take critical stance and create a counter-narrative to the public immigrant narrative in France.

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Dr. Mary Beth Hines, Ph.D

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Dr. Mitzi Lewison, Ph.D

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Dr. Barbara Dennis, Ph.D

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Statement of the problem

*“She [my mother] is the only person I’m close to and, uh, that I lived with her much more than with my father. ... because during the years that we got settled in France... we came together she and I”* (Imane, class conversation January 25, 2019, translation mine). This conversation took place in our English study group as Imane told us about leaving her home in the Kabyle region of Algeria to migrate to France with her mother while her father and siblings remained in Algeria.

With her migration to France, Imane joined millions of other transnational migrants who, due to economic reasons or tragic events such as natural disasters or wars have left their home countries seeking refuge, safety, and a better life. According to the World Migration Report 2020, 3.5% of the world’s population reside in a country other than where they were born. The largest portion of these migrants move from developing countries to the United States and nations in Northern, Southern and Western Europe. Of the total migrant population, 14% or 37.9 million international migrants were under the age of 20 (McAuliffe & Khadria, 2019, p. 2, 31, 232). This massive shift in populations has resulted in many communities experiencing an “unprecedented linguistic and cultural diversity of student populations” producing one of the “most salient issues in education” (Campano, Ghiso and Welch, 2016, Kindle Loc. 581).

Campano et al. (2016) propose that immigrant students possess valuable resources gained from their “transnational lives, multiple languages, and comparative frames of reference resulting from global mobility” (Kindle Loc 588) that are needed to flourish in today’s global society. These resources are also known as transnational literacies and are the practices that immerse from their local and global experiences (Hornberger & Link, 2012, p. 264).

Unfortunately, many countries with large immigrant populations do not recognize the cultures

and languages that immigrant students bring with them as either assets or legitimate and continue to attempt to erase them and replace them with dominant cultural ways of knowing (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 87; Mary & Young, 2017, pp. 114-115). Paris (2012) states that:

“It is brutally clear that current policies are not interested in sustaining the languages and cultures of longstanding and newcomer communities of color in the United States. English-only policies; narrow, decontextualized language and literacy programs in poor communities of color; ... are examples of the return of ever more explicit deficit perspectives, policies, and pedagogies.... This climate, and the policies and teaching practices resulting from it, has the quite explicit goal of creating a monocultural and monolingual society based on White, middle-class norms of language and cultural being” (p. 96).

However, for transnational students who move back and forth between countries, cultures, and languages “success does not so much depend on abandoning their culture and language to embrace those of another society as on preserving their original cultural endowment, while adapting instrumentally to a second” (Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt., 1999, p. 229). Skerrett (2012) proposes that “despite a “significant body of scholarship [that] has enabled the repositioning of young people as skillful and purposeful users of literacy and beckoned considerations of how youths’ out-of-school multiliteracies practices may be productively harnessed to the literacy work of school... immigrant youth have been largely left outside the borders of these investigations” (p. 366). Furthermore, because immigrant students are often still learning the language and culture of school, they can be perceived as being linguistically and culturally deficient in academic settings (Roxas & Roy, 2012, p. 469). This can lead to deficit perceptions of them in community and social settings when a lack of academic success leads to lower paying jobs and fewer advanced educational opportunities (Sharokni, 2015, pp. 1053-1054; Rosa & Flores, 2017, 178-181). Ladson-Billings (2017) theorizes that deficit perceptions persist because “student learning is translated as assimilation and narrow forms of success” (p. 142). In other words, when educators have drawn on immigrant students’ existing cultural and

linguistic ways of knowing in the classroom, it has largely been as a means to reach the end goal of students' acquisition of the language and culture deemed necessary to be academically successful (Rosa & Flores, 2017, pp. 176-177) rather than working "in ways that attend to the emerging, intersectional, and dynamic ways in which they are lived and used by young people" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 9),.

The literature that can be found on immigrant students and transnational literacies often focuses on describing the multilingual and literacy practices that transnational youth engage in (Skerrett, 2012, pp. 366-367) as well as the need to value students' cultures and languages of origin as assets to be leveraged in their learning and sense-making (Jimenez, Smith & Teague, 2009, p. 18). Additionally, much of it is centered around the American educational system, particularly, the Latinx community (e.g., Medina, 2010; Rosa & Flores, 2017; Stevenson & Beck, 2017). What seems to be missing in the literature, however, are studies that explore "the processes wherein transnational youth develop and deploy multiple literacies and languages across the international contexts of their lives, for what purposes, and with what results" (Skerrett, 2012, p. 369), the forms of oppression caused by deficit perceptions that transnational students experience in both school and community spaces, as well as studies done outside of the American context. This reveals a need for more research on the transnational literacies of immigrant students and the marginalization they experience to be done on a global scale and with diverse populations of immigrants.

### **Purpose of the study**

This study takes up the issues of the transnational literacies of immigrant students in a global context by examining the experiences of one young Algerian woman, Imane, in France and seeking to understand how the dominant culture and language uniquely affect her emerging

culture as well as the influence of her home culture and language on her interpretation of her experiences. It will demonstrate that despite a hostile environment created by French assimilationist policies, cultural values, and anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic discourse, she uses her language and literacy resources as assets to help her navigate her multicultural, multilingual world and achieve her educational goals. She also demonstrates agency by at times complying with cultural expectations and discourse and at other times resisting them. Additionally, it will show that in a national and political context that increasingly limits her religious freedom, she strategically employs her resources to construct her identity as a French-Algerian Muslim woman and to flourish as she pursues her chosen career path proving that while she may often be marginalized, she is not necessarily powerless.

Since we, as school and community educators, have not lived the same experiences as our students, we do not always understand their needs or how to advocate for those who have been marginalized. We can unintentionally allow our own perceptions of our immigrant students which have been influenced by public discourse and our own cultural expectations to dictate how we relate to them. Exploring the stories and experiences of one immigrant student, Imane, will promote a better understanding of the influence all her languages and cultures have on her learning as well as how she makes sense of her community and school experiences and the power of public discourse to impact her everyday life. Her stories can inspire us to devote the time necessary to reflect on how public discourse has shaped our own perceptions of our students, to provide opportunities for our immigrant students to share their stories and experiences, and to create an environment conducive to the development of their transnational identities (Qribi, Courtinat & Prêteur, 2010, pp. 693-701).

## French Context

This study takes place in the context of an Algerian immigrant student's experiences in France. French public school can be a hostile environment for immigrant students, especially those with North African origins, that is rooted in both the historical context of French colonialism and the current discourse about immigrants and multiculturalism. France has a long and troubled colonial history with many African nations, including Algeria and Morocco in North Africa. Although it has been nearly 60 years since French colonialism ended in North Africa, in many ways it continues to influence French thought and discourse regarding North Africans and can affect the lives of recent immigrants and their children (Laroussi, 2003; Beaud and Noiriél, 2005). In an opinion essay entitled "Pourquoi je suis devenu américain" (Why I became an American), Laroussi (2003) writes: "A North African's feelings about French society and its method of integration... I saw my parents, and those of many others besides, never managing to extricate themselves from the sordidness of colonialism, the kind that perches in the spirit. Shabby jobs, condescending familiarity or ghetto lodgings are their lot [in life], then ours. The elders, born there, accepted it because, somehow, they didn't believe that they were worth more and mostly, that France was doing them a wonderful favor by letting them move there" (paragraphs 1-2, translation mine).

Like the United States and other European countries, France has seen a significant increase in immigration since the mid-twentieth century, especially in recent years. According to the latest demographic information, 9% of the total French population are immigrants. An additional 11% are their descendants, those who have at least one immigrant parent (Kovacs, 2012). Together they comprise roughly 20% of the total French population. 29% of this immigrant population has North African origins, making them the largest non-European group of

immigrants (INSEE, 2017, p. 1; INSEE, 2019, p. 36). Despite this significant population of immigrant children growing up in France, the French national identity rejects multiculturalism and instead adheres to a “republican ideal... that all citizens are French and nothing else—the privileges bestowed by French citizenship override identification with ethnicity or religious groups and stipulate that difference does not exist in the French public sphere” (Langan, 2008, p. 49). In an effort to make “French citizens out of the second-generation immigrants” (Bertaux, 2016, pp. 1503), French public policies maintain that integration and assimilation into the French culture are achieved by publicly conforming to French civic values including societal norms such as language use, social behavior and *laïcité* (secularism) (Clare & Abdelhady, 2016, p. 14; Keaton, 2006, p. 91).

The notion of *laïcité* (secularism) and its incorporation into the French national identity developed out of a historic movement away from the Anglo-Saxon concept of separation of church and state towards “a definition of secularism aimed at cultural domination instead of neutrality and equality” (Bertossi, 2012b, p. 251). *Laïcité*, as it is understood in the French context, considers religion to be personal, confining it exclusively to the private sphere (Clare & Abdelhady, 2016, p. 14). Furthermore, while in the Anglo-Saxon definition of separation of church and state, the burden is on the state to refrain from interfering in religious practice, in the French context, the burden to maintain religious neutrality rests on the individual (Bertossi, 2012b, p. 251). It is to distinguish this unique French definition of secularism from the more commonly understood Anglo-Saxon definition that I retain the French word *laïcité* in this paper.

The French national identity and civic values, including *laïcité*, are rooted in the context of French history and development of the ‘one language, one nation’ ideal which maintains that sharing the same language and cultural values brings equality to all citizens. Historically, schools

were one of the primary institutions tasked with the promotion of this ideology (Hélot, 2003, p. 255; Langan, 2008, pp. 49-51). Lizotte (2020) shows how this ideal was spread throughout France in the late 1800's by training teachers in secular ideology and sending them out to the various regions to mold "peasants into Frenchmen," (Weber, 1976 as cited on p. 3). Modern French public schools retain this mission and "promulgating a 'common culture' remains fundamental to French national education" (Keaton, 2006, p. 91). However, today the focus has shifted away from the rural regions to the immigrant and Muslim populations who have been "denounced as being incapable of accepting such a neutrality rule" (Bertossi, 2012a, p. 437) and therefore in need of lessons in *laïcité* and French civic values (Lizotte, 2020, p. 3). In recent years, the French public school has been called upon to re-assume its responsibility in assimilating non-French populations (p. 2), "to be a 'sanctuary of *laïcité*' and to reemphasize nationalist pedagogy" (p. 4).

In addition to transmitting French ideology and cultural values, the promotion of the 'one language, one nation' ideal in French schools has led to a monolingual habitus (Hélot, 2003, p. 255) that assumes that all students are monolingual and culturally homogenous, growing up within the same social class, culture, and language (Gogolin, 2013, pp. 40-41). In the current multicultural, multilingual reality, monolingual habitus creates unequal social, linguistic, and cultural capital resulting in an educational system that reinforces already existing inequalities that privilege white upper- and middle-class French students and marginalizes the immigrant student population (Shahrokni, 2015, p. 1051). The 'one language, one nation' ideal can also create language-based prejudice resulting in both ridicule of minority language speakers and language policing by educators and students alike (Forsdick, 2017, p. 15).

One recent, localized incident that has once again sparked nation-wide debates on freedom of speech and the historical mandate of the school to assimilate immigrant students as well as discussions over the schools' apparent failure in recent years to achieve this mandate among Muslim populations, was the assassination of middle-school history teacher Samuel Paty on October 16, 2020, by a young Chechnyan immigrant man over his use in the classroom of caricatures of the Muslim prophet Mohammed for a lesson on freedom of expression (France 24, October 17, 2020). In addition to bringing the issues of immigration, multiculturalism, and assimilation to the forefront of both public and private attention, the assassination of Samuel Paty has also contributed to official discourse resulting in political decisions such as the forced dissolving of NGOs in France accused of having terrorist ties and new laws aimed at combatting Islamic separatism in France and reinforcing French Republican values such as *laïcité* (France 24, October 28, 2020; Rich, 2021). Paty's assassination also had international implications as political leaders in Muslim countries entered the debate with some countries such as Kuwait even boycotting French products (Francini, 2020).

While incidents such as the assassination of Samuel Paty provoke debates both in the public and private spheres, national policy and discourse do not necessarily represent the beliefs of private citizens, teachers, and school administrators on immigrant children, the transmission of French cultural values, and the role of the schools in immigrant integration and assimilation. Several studies on official publications and articles published in major French newspapers over a period of 30 years have revealed valuable information about public opinion of immigrant children (e.g., Clare & Abdelhady, 2016; May, 2016; Bertossi, 2012a). In general, their portrayal was not positive, and they were depicted as being marginalized, segregated, and discriminated against by society and the government which “stands in sharp contrast to the

French Republican ideals of equality, fraternity and freedom” (Clare & Abdelhady, 2016, p. 26). These studies included articles covering the period during which the national riots in 2005 by immigrant youth took place. The riots were presented as being “one of many events that exemplify such marginalization” (p. 26). Conversely, immigrant youth were also portrayed as refusing to “integrate to a larger French society ... [by continuing] to be faithful to an ethnic community based on traditional allegiance” (p. 26).

May (2016) proposes that the popular discourse on multiculturalism presented in the French media seemingly suggests conflicting ideas that, on the one hand, value cultural diversity and consider the blending of different cultures as beneficial to French society while blaming the Republican model of integration for problems of segregation at school and discrimination in the workplace (pp. 1341-1343). Yet, on the other hand, the discourse also differentiates between two different populations: “skilled workers considered to be beneficial to the economy in the first case, and immigrants from former colonies seen as unwilling to integrate in the second case” (p. 1343). The negative discourse on multiculturalism also seems to be centered around Muslim immigrants, who were perceived as being unable to accept French civic values thereby preventing their integration into French society and the fear that Muslim extremism would grow and be responsible for destructive social changes (Bertossi, 2012a, pp. 436-437). For many, the outward signs of Islam such as wearing the hijab is seen as a refusal to assimilate the French civic value of keeping religion in the private sector (Croucher, 2015, pp. 307-308) and speaking Arabic “as the language of a minority linked to... the Muslim religion” (Hélot, 2003, p. 257). The transmission of French civic values, especially *laïcité* (secularism) and religious neutrality, is widely considered to be the solution to this lack of integration and laws that reinforce these values are perceived as necessary to restoring the rule of *laïcité* (Bertossi, 2012a, pp. 438-439).

In turn, this seems to reinforce the widespread intolerance of the transnational literacies of immigrant youth (Young, 2017, pp. 16-17) and “the unrecognised, unvalued and undeveloped learning potential of knowledge and skills in languages other than French” (p. 16) in the French schools.

### **Methodology Overview and Research Questions**

This narrative study will explore the immigrant experiences of Imane, an Algerian immigrant student in France who participated in an English as a foreign language study group offered by a local community association that I facilitated. This community association is located in the immigrant urban community northwest of Paris, France where I have lived since 2006 and in partnership with other local associations, uses community spaces to facilitate intercultural friendships and exchanges and to provide educational enrichment opportunities for students. In the French school system, students learn English as a foreign language as part of the national curriculum. Imane came to the community-based English study groups because she wanted to prepare for her national exams.

I chose Imane as the participant in this study to examine the narrative of her personal experience more closely in the hopes that her experiences will inspire educators to inquire about the immigrant experiences of their own transnational students and to reflect on how they might better support them. Imane was an active participant in her study group and would often take the initiative in talking about her immigration and school experiences as well as her thoughts and opinions about them. Since she was twelve years old when she migrated from Algeria to France, Imane had a clear memory of school in Algeria where she was a member of the dominant culture versus school in France where she is a member of a minority culture. Additionally, she had a clear recollection of her first few years in France and of her integration into French society.

Imane also chose to wear a veil through her junior year of high school, in direct violation of the French law that prohibits students from veiling in public schools. When telling stories about her experiences, she openly questioned public discourse on immigration and Muslims, the meaning of *laïcité*, and demonstrated agency by choosing to accept some French cultural values while rejecting others.

### **Research questions**

The purpose of this narrative study is to explore Imane's lived experiences as they are revealed in the stories she tells and as she talks about them and attempts to make sense of them. Approaching this study with the assumption that Imane, as an immigrant student, possess transnational literacies she uses to navigate her multicultural and multilingual social context. Her social context has been created by intersecting power relations which impact her everyday life and affect her knowledge production and sense-making, I use narrative inquiry to answer the following questions:

1. What are the stories and experiences that are personally significant to Imane and how does she make sense of them?
2. What do Imane's stories reveal about French cultural perspectives and current discourse on immigrants and how they impact her life as an Algerian immigrant to France?
3. How does Imane use her transnational identity and cultural understanding to navigate the multiple languages and cultures she encounters in her everyday life as an immigrant to France?

### **Limitations of the study**

This study is limited to one Algerian participant who lives in a suburb of Paris. The outer city/suburb subculture, with its high concentration of North African immigrants, is unique from

other subcultures in France and the participant's experiences may not be relevant to either the experiences of students from other immigrant origins or different communities in the French context. Likewise, French culture is unique from other European countries and has a unique interpretation of secularism. Therefore, it may not be relevant in other countries and cultural contexts. Additionally, conducting the study in a community association/small group context may result in different findings than if it were to be done in other contexts such as in a public school with a larger or more diverse participant population.

### **Positionality**

Seventeen years ago, in July 2005, I moved from a rural community in southern Michigan to the metropolitan Paris region in France having had two weeks intensive training in language and cultural acquisition and having served a one-year internship in a multicultural community in Toledo, Ohio. I work for an international, non-governmental organization and my primary goal that first year was to learn French. In addition to twenty hours per week of language study, I also volunteered two afternoons a week in literacy classes for immigrant women sponsored by a local community association in a multicultural community north of Paris. The students who attended those classes were North African, West African, and Southeast Asian. I spent much of my first two years helping middle-aged immigrant women learn to hold a pen and write letters. I continued to work hard on my French language skills and pronunciation as well as to immerse myself in French culture by seeking out and becoming actively involved in a French church. By January of 2008, I had moved to another location north-west of Paris to teach and direct a literacy program in that community. In the new community most of the students were from Morocco with a few from Algeria and Tunisia. The area was often referred to by some as 'Little Morocco' and even the students would tell me, "This is just like Casa"

(Casablanca, Morocco). In the nine years that I directed that program and taught literacy to North African women, I also immersed myself in their language and culture. I was often invited to their homes and began to learn Darija, the Moroccan dialect of Arabic. On several occasions, I was invited to spend part of the summer vacation in my students' homes in Morocco. While in their homes, I met many of their children, usually the girls, and had countless personal conversations with them about their lives in France. Since English is a required subject in school, I often found myself tutoring them in English as well as teaching literacy in French to their moms. After a few years of trying to do both, in 2017 I stopped teaching literacy to focus on teaching English as a Foreign Language in study groups with high school students.

Throughout these past seventeen years, despite the amount of personal experience I have had with both French and Moroccan cultures, cultural values, and discourse, as a white, Christian American, in many ways I remain an outsider to both. It is not surprising then, that over time, I have formed a personal community of Christian immigrants and their descendants, primarily from the African diaspora, where while the language in common is French, there is no one dominant culture and our point in common is our faith beliefs.

### **Theoretical Framework**

*“Je suis désolée! On oublie que tu es blanche.”* My Ivorian friend has said this to me on more than one occasion. It translates to “I’m sorry! We forget that you’re white.” In the context, I was sitting with a group of Christian friends who met one Saturday a month for three years to study the Bible and pray together. I was the only white woman in the group and none of us were native French. At that moment, they were talking about something ‘white’ people do and making fun of them. My friend’s statement struck me as odd since my German and Dutch ancestry means I have rather fair skin that is hard to miss. As I reflected on that statement, I

realized that for these ladies, to be ‘white’ meant to be French. Since I am not French, this seemed to lead to confusion on their part on how to classify me. This realization and my many other multicultural experiences and relationships have set me on a path of reflection of what it means to be Black, White, or Brown, how cultural contexts influence interpretations of race and gender and the influence of religion or faith beliefs on those interpretations. These reflections, in their turn, have led me to consider how the multiple cultural, social, and linguistic contexts that transnational students regularly navigate which often includes widely different values and interpretations of race and gender impact their learning and sense-making. It has also led me to consider how the larger societal values and dominant discourses have the power to impact the everyday lives of immigrant students. For this reason, this paper integrates critical sociocultural theory, transnational literacies, and intersectionality theory as foundational to its theoretical framework.

### **Critical Sociocultural Theory**

Since Imane, as an Algerian, Muslim student living in France has multiple intersectional identities which influence her ways of knowing and sense-making, I approach this study firstly through a critical sociocultural lens. Critical sociocultural theory accommodates “the intersection of social, cultural, historical, mental, physical, and, more recently, political aspects of people's sense-making, interaction, and learning around texts” (Lewis, Enciso & Moje, 2007, p.2). Taking into consideration these multiple aspects is especially important in the education of immigrant children who may incorporate the different ways of knowing and sense-making of both their culture of origin and the host culture. Unfortunately, the reality is that in many countries like France with assimilationist public and education policies, the aspects of sense-making and learning of the dominant, host culture are privileged at the expense of minority

cultures (Helot & Young, 2002, p. 97; Mary & Young, 2017, pp. 114-115; Young, 2017, pp. 13-19). With a concern for social inequality and how inequality in social systems is created and maintained (Mills, 2016, p. 41), not only does critical sociocultural theory “shed so much light on the education of people whose language, literacy, and very being have been traditionally marginalized or disenfranchised in schools and societies” (Lewis et al, 2007, p. 3), it also specifically focuses on “issues of identity, agency, and power in the production of knowledge” (Lewis et al., 2007, p. 3) and includes a framework of critical pedagogy that is “needed to fully understand the relationship between power, ideology, and schooling” (Gutierrez and Larson (1994), as cited by Lewis et al, 2007, p. 3). Additionally, while schools and educational systems might assume that hierarchical power flows from those who decide educational policy at the top to marginalized students at the bottom, critical sociocultural theory “assumes neither that people who are marginalized are automatically duped or powerless, nor that power flows only in hierarchical and linear directions” (Moje & Lewis, 2007, p.23). Research with immigrant students is incomplete if only social structure is taken into consideration without also examining power and discussing how power, social structure and schooling are entwined.

### **Transnational Literacies**

This study featuring a transnational Algerian migrant student to France would be equally incomplete if it did not incorporate the transnational literacies that Imane brings to her learning and knowledge production. With her relationships that span two nations and involve the back-and-forth movement of “people, money, labor, goods, information advice, care, and love” (Sanchez, 2004 as cited in Sanchez, 2007, p.493), Imane embodies the definition of a transnational.

Transnational literacies “can be seen as literacy practices that reflect the intersection of local and global contexts (Hornberger & Link, 2012, p. 264). These literacy practices go beyond a traditional definition of literacy that is limited to print-based texts and adopts a multiliteracies approach which views literacies in the plural form and includes culture and community social practices (Skerrett, 2012, pp. 368. In this way, transnational literacies take an assets-based approach to transnational students’ community literacy practices that affirms and values transnational students’ cultural and linguistic diversity and considers them to be an important resource for learning (Choo, 2018, p. 7; Lam, 2006, p. 215).

One criticism of studies done in transnational literacies has been its lack of a critical stance when it comes to the power dynamics that shape immigrant students’ lives and education (Abu El-Haj, 2007, pp. 310-311). Nation states retain the power to decide the public policies regarding immigration, citizenship and education that directly impact the lives of transnational students while schools retain the power to implement and enforce assimilationist policies such as language use that impact their educational experiences daily (Lam & Warriner, 2012, p. 195-196; Hawkins, 2014, p. 91). By integrating transnational literacies with critical sociocultural theory and intersectionality theory, this paper takes a critical stance towards Imane’s transnational literacies by not only valuing her community literacy practices and linguistic abilities and viewing them as a resource in her learning but by also considering the power relations that affect her knowledge production, sense-making and identity construction (Collins & Bilge, 2020, p. 2; Lewis et al, 2007, p. 2; Yi, 2009, pp. 101-102).

### **Intersectionality Theory**

Transnational migration can either reinforce existing power relations or create new ones among governments, between established populations and new arrivals, and within communities.

To further explore the affect these relations have on Imane’s everyday life, I incorporate intersectionality theory into the theoretical framework. Intersectionality theory postulates that “intersecting power relations produce social divisions of race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, age, country of origin, and citizenship status” (Collins, 2019, p. 46). Rejecting the idea that oppression originates from a single source, intersectionality theorizes that interlocking and multiple forms of oppression “work together in producing injustice” (Collins, 2000, p. 18).

While intersectionality is often credited to African American legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) who used the term to describe the interconnections of race and gender as sources of oppression experienced by Black women, in more recent years, intersectionality has been applied to an expanding number of research and teaching projects in other fields of study such as education and migrant studies (Baily, Steeves, Burkell, Shade, Ruparelia, & Regan, 2019, p. 1). By crossing borders, migrants have blurred national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries and brought non-Western thought to Western nations. This disruption of both geographical and conceptual boundaries has enlarged the potential intersections of oppressions to include those that are produced when oppressions related to race, gender, and class interlock with those related to nationalism such as country of origin, citizenship, and ethnicity (Bastia, 2014, pp. 238-239).

While intersectionality can explore the marginalization that immigrant students like Imane can experience in school when teachers and administrators, influenced by dominant discourse, make “assumptions about ethnicity, language and religion [that lead] to overt discrimination” (Fuller, 2018, p. 7), it will also takes into consideration the importance of students’ culture of origin on their experiences. Pointing to gender as a social category that is commonly subject to cultural interpretation, Qin and Li (2020) argue that “straddling over

transnational and transcultural spaces, they are often subject to different, sometimes even conflicting, norms of doing gender—those in their country of origin and those in their adoptive country” (p. 1048).

However, intersectionality does not just provide a space to examine how multiple oppressions work together to impact immigrant students’ lives. “The complexity and fluidity of intersectionality as simultaneously oppressive and advantageous, depending on context and circumstances” (Fuller, 2018, p. 8) also allows us to consider how immigrant students’ use their intersecting identities to demonstrate agency by transforming oppressive experiences into opportunities. Approaching this study through the lens of intersectionality allows us to view school as a place where “the interrelationship between [Imane’s] identity, institutional and social practices demonstrates the simultaneity of oppression and opportunity associated with intersecting facets of her identity present in her experiences of the education system” (Fuller, 2018, p. 8)

## **Summary**

To accommodate the entire scope of Imane’s transnational experience, I approach this study through a lens that combines critical sociocultural theory, transnational literacies and intersectionality theory. Intersectionality theory, by rejecting an essentialist view of identity and systems of oppression, emphasizes the interconnected nature of “social problems caused by colonialism, racism, sexism and nationalism” (Collins, 2019, p. 1). Critical sociocultural theory attends to the different ways of knowing and sense-making that immigrant students bring to their learning and knowledge production (Lewis et al., 2007, p. 3). Both account for “the workings of power relations in producing social inequalities and the social problems they engender” (Collins, 2019, p. 46). Transnational literacies view the literacy practices of transnational students that

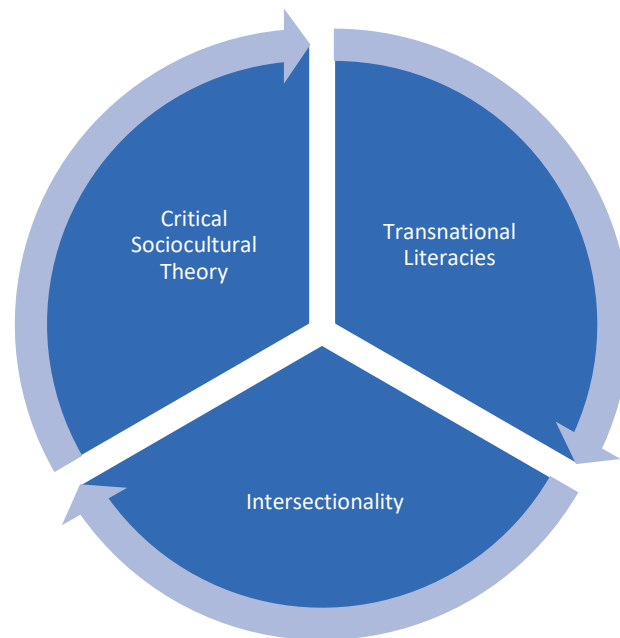
originate from their global experiences of moving between more than one nation and culture as assets and resources to be leveraged in their learning (Skerrett, 2012; Lam, 2006; Hawkins, 2014). By positioning itself in critical sociocultural theory, transnational literacies and intersectionality, this narrative study seeks to understand how the intersections in the life of one female, Algerian Muslim student in France shape her identity and perspective and impact her school experiences and learning.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

With the ongoing population shifts resulting from transnational migration (McAuliffe & Khadria, 2019, p. 2), “the future is a multilingual and multiethnic one, regardless of attempts to suppress that reality” (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 6). This study takes up the issues of the intersectional identities of transnational students as they are revealed in the stories and experiences of Imane, a young Algerian Muslim woman living in France. Despite living in a hostile environment created by French assimilationist policies, cultural values, and anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic discourse, Imane uses her language and literacy resources as assets to help her navigate her multicultural, multilingual world and achieve her educational goals by at times complying with cultural expectations and discourse and at other times resisting them. In a national and political context that increasingly limits her religious freedom, she strategically employs her resources to construct her identity as a French-Algerian Muslim woman and to flourish as she pursues her chosen career path. This contributes to the larger body of research in literacy, culture, and language education by demonstrating that while immigrant students are often marginalized, they are not necessarily powerless and creatively draw on their alternative ways of knowing and sense-making to create opportunities for themselves. While Imane’s experiences are unique to her, examining the stories of one person’s lived experiences can inspire us as educators to explore the stories of all our transnational students, facilitate our discovery of how they use their resources to navigate their everyday lives and motivate us “to view overlapping and intersecting oppressions as opportunities ...[and]... to form strategic alliances against exclusion” (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 9).

To discover how Imane uses her languages and literacies as a resource, how she constructs her identity as a French-Algerian Muslim woman and how she both complies with and resists French cultural expectations to meet her educational and life goals, this paper approaches Imane’s experiences from a theoretical framework that incorporates critical sociocultural theory, transnational literacies, and intersectionality theory. These three theories are interactive and cycle fluidly from one to another, sometimes overlapping, but each adding important nuances that will help make sense of Imane’s experiences.



*Figure 2.1 Theoretical Framework*

### **Critical Sociocultural Theory**

Even though Imane, as an Algerian immigrant student lives in a national and political context that is created by French assimilationist policies, cultural values, and anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic discourse and is often hostile to her, she strategically employs her language and literacy resources to construct her identity and to draw on her alternative ways of knowing and sense-making to create opportunities for herself. Approaching Imane’s experiences from a

critical sociocultural lens accommodates “the intersection of social, cultural, historical, mental, physical, and, . . . , political aspects of people's sense-making, interaction, and learning around texts” (Lewis, Enciso & Moje, 2007, p. 2) while also considering the “larger systems of power as they shape and are shaped by individuals in particular cultural contexts” (Lewis et al., 2007, p. 9). This dual focus allows us to identify, describe, and legitimize Imane’s community and school literacy practices while at the same time, being concerned with issues of power and social inequality that impact her life and exploring the way that power relations mediate her literacy practices and language production (Lewis et al, 2007, p. 2-3; Mills, 2016, p. 36, 41).

However, critical sociocultural theory also gives us a place to explore how Imane strategically uses her literacy practices and languages to forge opportunities for herself, construct her identity and meet her educational goals because it “assumes neither that people who are marginalized are automatically duped or powerless, nor that power flows only in hierarchical and linear directions” (Moje & Lewis, 2007, p. 23). This perspective has shown that “individuals are agentive, and they appropriate or reject practices in purposeful ways that meet their needs—or in some instances, even challenge the practices of those in power” (Perry, 2012, p. 64),

### **Literacy as Social Practice**

Critical sociocultural theory views literacy as a social practice which understands literacy as being socially constructed and shaped by its cultural context. It recognizes that written language is not independent from oral language and highlights the interdependent relationship between language and literacy (Gee, 2015b, pp. 35; Street & Leung, 2010, p. 290). While traditionally, language was viewed as the set of cognitive skills already in existence within a person and language learning was based on acquiring the structure and vocabulary necessary to produce the new language (Hawkins, 2010, p. 97; Street & Leung, 2010, p. 290-291), the

concept of literacy as a social practice is centered on how language and literacy are practiced in their real-world social, cultural, and historical contexts. This includes an emphasis on the relationship between language and power as well as the role this relationship plays in knowledge production, sense-making, and learning (Mills, 2016, p. 35; Perry, 2012, p. 52, 54). As a result, critical sociocultural theory has made a significant contribution to enlightening us on “the education of people whose language, literacy, and very being have traditionally been marginalized or disenfranchised in schools and societies” (Lewis et al., 2007, p. 3).

One of the results of globalization and the increased transnational movement across national and linguistic borders has been the need for migrants to learn new languages and integrate into new cultures. This, in turn, has focused the attention of sociolinguists to the multicultural, multilingual communities that can be found worldwide (Hornberger & McKay, 2010, p. xv). It has also drawn attention to the social and cultural constructions of language and recognizes the home and community-based languages, literacies, and sociocultural practices of students as a resource and something to be valued (Lewis et al., 2007, p. 3; Mill, 2016, p. 18).

For Imane and other immigrant students, school is an important site of social practice, and a place where “the ways in which teachers or facilitators and their students interact around learning to read and write are already social practices that affect the nature of the literacy being learned and the ideas about literacy held by the participants” (Street & Leung, 2010, p. 305). While the cultural and social practices of school are “valued by those in power, and thus privileged” (Perry, 2012, p. 64), they can be in opposition to immigrant students’ home and community social practices. This in turn makes school a site where the broader societal power relationships are played out (Fuller, 2018, p. 8) and has led theorists such as Lewis, Enciso & Moje (2007), to become concerned with social inequality in the school context and to explore the

relationship between language and literacy and issues of identity, power, and agency in knowledge production (p. xi; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015, p. 16).

Critical sociocultural theory, by placing attention on the disparities between the texts studied and the lives that are lived both in and outside of school, has helped researchers and educators understand the links between literacy as a social practice, identity, and power. Additionally, by emphasizing the historical influences of home, community and school sociocultural practices and tracing the lines to lived experiences of students (Gutierrez, 2008, p. 149), it “has yielded significant evidence of patterns of marginalization that are socially and historically constituted” (Mills, 2016, p. 36).

### **Identity.**

Accepting the perspective that literacy is a social practice leads to the recognition that “people’s identities mediate and are mediated by texts they read, write, and talk about” (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 416). Furthermore, the recognition of the value of community literacy practices suggests that “Learning, from a social and cultural perspective, involves people in participation, interaction, relationships, and contexts, all of which have implications for how people make sense of themselves and others, identify, and are identified” (p. 416).

Gee (2015a) explains this shared knowledge as “ways of being ‘people like us,’ having the same way of “behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing” (p. 4). Although language as the medium of communicating beliefs, expectations, and ways of being is an important component of this shared community knowledge, it is much bigger than language and speaks to the nature of identities, which, while lived out by individuals, are socially constructed (p. 2-4; Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 417).

Within the umbrella of shared community knowledge of what it means to be ‘us’ are the community-based varieties of a language or ‘social languages’ that exist in every language and are one way of self-identifying with social and cultural groups. They are used to achieve two goals: “(1) we...make clear who we are and (2) we...make clear what we are doing” (Gee, 2015a, pp. 101-102). So, besides saying the ‘right’ thing, in the ‘right’ way and at the ‘right’ time (language), each person must also have their identity recognized by others by demonstrating that s/he is the ‘right’ type of person to belong to a particular social group (pp. 3-4; Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 418).

Individual people are often members of more than one social group with multiple social identities. Social identities are neither fixed nor static but are active and evolving as one moves between various social groups and contexts. Membership in multiple social groups which might have conflicting values, can result in conflicting identities emerging as one navigates different contexts (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015, p. 7-8; Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 418). This can be especially apparent in immigrant students whose identities have been constructed from the non-dominant discourses in their homes and communities. For Imane and many other immigrant students, learning an additional language at school is not just about learning the structure of the language and using it at the appropriate time and in the appropriate way, but also learning the social language or discourse of the school, to show that they are recognized as having the correct social identity (McKay, 2010, p. 100).

### **Power.**

Questions of membership in social groups and identities bring up issues of ‘Othering,’ the act of adopting an ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ mentality that perceives the identity of other social groups in a negative manner and in opposition to one’s own social group (McKay, 2010, pp.106-107).

This, in turn, leads directly to issues of power. Power, however subtle it might be, is prevalent in society and cannot be escaped when issues of language, social identity and social relationships are discussed. When the dominant social group is engaged in ‘othering’ the minority groups and attaching negative identity to membership in those groups, they are using their power to impose language and social norms on the others and dictating what social identity others must enact to become a member of their group. Members of minority social groups submit to power when they acquiesce to the dominant groups demands (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015, p. 8). In school, the way teachers and students interact is guided by accepted social practices and affects language, learning and literacy. Teachers, when they hold a deficit view of students’ immigrant social identities and when they impose policies that reinforce dominant social practices on the students while de-valuing their students’ languages and literacies, are exercising power that impacts how students learn. So, literacy and language learning are inherently part of the power relationships that are enacted in the classroom (Street & Leung, 2015, p. 305).

Additionally, when teachers hold a deficit perspective of their students’ social identities and consider their language and literacy practices as something to be overcome, students begin to perceive the school and the classroom as hostile and oppressive environments and a manifestation of racism. In these types of circumstances, racism and power have been shown to be not only political issues but also cognitive ones as students begin to disidentify with their teachers and school which in turn, negatively impacts their learning (Gee, 2015a, p. 42).

In the French educational context, France and French public schools hold to a ‘one language, one nation’ ideology and assimilationist policies that do not recognize immigrant students’ multicultural social identities, languages and literacy practices creating what can be a hostile environment for Imane and other immigrants, especially Muslim immigrant students. An

important element of the French national identity and civic values is *laïcité*, which while it is often translated as secularism, as it is understood in the French context, considers religion to be personal, confining it exclusively to the private sphere (Clare & Abdelhady, 2016, p. 14). French national identity and civic values are also rooted in the historical ideology of ‘one language, one nation’ that was employed to unify France. French public schools were given the mission to assimilate students into French ideology (Helot, 2003, pp. 255-256). Modern French public schools retain this mission, but the focus today is on the immigrant and Muslim populations who are perceived as needing lessons in *laïcité* (Lizotte, 2020, pp. 2-3). This mission was reinforced after the 2015 terrorist attacks which were perpetrated by young men who had been born in France and Belgium. A visible Muslim identity in France carries with it the image of remaining separate, both physically and in cultural belonging and has become synonymous with Muslim fundamentalism (Lizotte, 2020, pp. 5, 9). Muslims are often regarded with suspicion because they choose loyalty to a religious, ethnic and/or cultural identity over loyalty to the French identity and cultural values such as *laïcité* (Young, 2017, pp. 16-17). Interpreting the 2015 terrorist attacks as a failure to properly educate Muslim youth in *laïcité* along with other French cultural values and therefore assimilate them into French society, the French Ministry of Education called on the public school system to re-assume its responsibility in assimilating non-French populations by proposing a “set of curricular, administrative, and disciplinary measures” (Lizotte, 2020, p. 2) that were intended to correct the perceived deficiencies in students’ assimilation (p. 4).

Imane, as a female Algerian Muslim immigrant student in France, lives in a complex social environment where school can be a hostile place that reinforces France’s assimilationist and monolingual cultural values and perceives her multicultural identity and literacy practices as

a deficiency that needs correction. This can have a profound impact on her knowledge production, sense-making, and identity formation. Since Imane's language and literacy practices are born out of her membership in more than one culture and country, this paper incorporates transnational literacies into the theoretical framework.

### **Transnational Literacies**

As an immigrant student who maintains physical and virtual ties in both France and her home country of Algeria, Imane possesses transnational literacies and languages which she uses as valuable resources to help her navigate her multicultural, multilingual world and achieve her educational goals. Described as the “literacy practices that draw on funds of knowledge, identities, and social relations rooted and extending across national borders...” (Hornberger & Link, 2012, p. 262), transnational literacies have become an area of interest to literacy and language scholars such as Lam (2006), Jimenez, Smith, and Teague (2009), and Skerrett (2012) in the ways that migrants use language and literacy in their everyday lives.

Since Imane and her family, like many transnational migrants, live “dual lives: speaking two languages, having homes in two countries, and making a living through continuous regular contact across national borders” (Portes et al., 1999, p. 217), her everyday life includes the “various systems or relationships that span two or more nations, including ... systems of power (i.e., patriarchy, Westernism) [that] can be created or reinforced in this process” (Sanchez, 2004 as cited in Sanchez, 2007, p.493). As a result of these power relations that shape her everyday life, this paper will take a critical stance on transnational literacies.

### **Multiliteracies**

Like other immigrants, Imane possesses transnational literacies which emerge from physical and virtual connection of more than one country and culture in her everyday life and,

“can be seen as literacy practices that reflect the intersection of local and global contexts (Hornberger & Link, 2012, p. 264). Although some scholars narrowly define transnational literacies as text-based practices referring “...to the written language practices of people who are involved in activities that span national boundaries” (Jimenez et al., 2009, p. 17), this paper follows the lead of other scholars in grounding transnational literacies in a multiliteracies approach because of its expanded view of what constitutes literacy practices while also affirming transnational students’ cultural and linguistic diversity (Choo, 2018, p. 7).

Following the lead of the theory of multiliteracies, transnational literacies reject traditional definitions of literacy that are limited to print-based texts and considers literacies in the plural form to be culture and context specific social practices. These practices include reading and writing as well as practices involving digital and multimodal texts that are necessary in today’s increasingly diverse and globalized society (The New London Group, 1996; Gee, 2015b, p. 35, 49; Street, 2003, p. 77-78). Applying this expanded view of literacies to transnational migrant students “can capture both the range and depth of the process through which transnational youth bring to bear and further develop their full repertoire of languages and literacies in response to transnational life” (Skerrett, 2012, p. 368).

In addition to an expanded view of literacies, like the theory of multiliteracies, transnational literacies ground literacy in social practices which stress, “the real-world contexts in which people practice literacy” (Perry, 2012, p. 58) and encompass multiple political, cultural, and linguistic contexts while incorporating various cultural and social notions of literacy and the power relationships that shape them (Lam & Warriner, 2012, p.192). Among these real-world social practices are what Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez (1992) term ‘funds of knowledge’. Funds of knowledge can be defined as the “historically accumulated and culturally

developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (p. 133). These resources include their extensive community networks and the reciprocal relationships with others that are based on mutual trust and allow them to exchange the resources necessary to “survive and thrive” (p. 133-134). Sanchez (2007) noted that since transnational migrants’ lives span more than one country and culture, the knowledge, and skills they need to thrive in their home country and culture are often very different from the knowledge and skills they acquire for basic survival in their new, host country and culture (pp. 490-492). She proposed that transnational migrants’ regular back-and-forth movement between two or more very different social environments contributed substantially to the development of their cultural flexibility and their ability to adapt to their social environment (p. 503).

### **Translingual and Translanguaging.**

Transnational migrants such as Imane also possess multiple languages and have the ability to move across them to maximize communication in their multicultural and multilingual contexts (Bazerman, 2013, p. 16; Hornberger & Link, 2012, p. 263). This flexible linguistic skill is what Canagarajah (2013) calls translingual and Garcia and Kleyn (2016) refer to as translanguaging and is considered “a highly valuable asset when combined with other professional qualifications in a globalizing and transnational economy” (Lam & Warriner, 2012, p. 192).

In recent years, translanguaging and translingual have become highly circulated words among those involved in bilingual or multilingual education. In defining translingual, Canagarajah (2013) says, “we have to consider all acts of communication and literacy as involving a shuttling between languages and a negotiation of diverse linguistic resources for situated construction of meaning” (p. 1). While society specifies languages as distinct systems

bounded by vocabulary and grammar rules, translanguaging theory proposes that translingual speakers have one linguistic system or language repertoire composed of two or more distinct languages. The translingual speaker acquires the ability to separate the languages in his/her linguistic system and leverage them for communication and meaning making in various social contexts (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 1; Garcia & Kleyn, 2016, pp. 10-12).

Within the context of education, in schools and communities where multiple cultures and languages are meeting and mutually influencing each other, language is an important resource to make meaning. Daniel and Pacheco (2016) specify some of the linguistic translanguaging practices used by multilingual students as including “code-switching, translating, and language brokering, or interpreting between culturally and linguistically diverse individuals” (p. 654). There are a growing number of researchers who are embracing translanguaging practices as a resource for translingual students in the classroom. Nevertheless, these practices, despite being widely used in the home and communities of students and seen as an asset to be leveraged by proponents of translanguaging, are often rejected in the classroom (Garcia & Kleyn, 2016, pp. 19-21; Canagarajah, 2013, p. 2) and come into direct opposition with France’s ‘one language, one nation’ ideology. In a hostile environment that rejects their multilingualism, immigrant students can be “stigmatized and assigned to remedial education tracks” (Garcia, 2009, p. 140).

### **Citizenship and Belonging**

While Imane uses transnational funds of knowledge, multiliteracies and translanguaging practices as an asset to navigate her multicultural world and to bridge her learning into school-based literacy (Moll et al., 1992), she also lives in a hostile environment created by French assimilationist policies, cultural values, and anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic discourse that are grounded in the criteria of citizenship that links belonging to a national identity (Lam, 2006, p.

222; Abu El-Haj, 2009, p. 275-279). Like many migrants, Imane's transnational literacies contribute significantly to her understanding of global citizenship (Sanchez, 2007, pp. 490-492; Lam, 2006, p. 230). In its simplest definition, global citizenship reflects the ability of a person to live in a local context but have a global vision and loyalty to humanity leading to the acquisition of both local literacy practices and the "multiliterate, multilingual, multimodal skills and abilities" (Bean & Dunkerly-Bean, 2015, p. 49) needed to function globally. A transnational understanding of global citizenship does not refer to "elitist, globe-trotting, frequent-flyer image" (Lam, 2006, p. 230) that is often found in literature (Choo, 2018, p. 7; Prakesh, 2015, p. 28) but is more aligned with an understanding that assumes that "the experience of mobility ... produces ... a unique set of analytic, emotional, creative/imaginative and behavioural competencies and skills that distinguishes them from those who have not travelled..." (Glick Shiller, 2015, p. 107). This mobility between two or more countries, where migrants often preserve their attachments to their community of origin while becoming members of their new country requires that educators and researchers consider issues of citizenship that are tied to a national identity, assimilation, and the meaning of belonging and citizenship for transnational young people (Lam, 2006, p. 222; Abu El-Haj, 2009, p. 275-279).

Two of the questions raised in relation to issues of citizenship and national identity are those related to the criteria used to determine citizenship and the marginalization that many immigrants face. Historically, place of birth has determined citizenship and although some scholars advocate for residence as the criterion of citizenship, Delanty (2006) suggests that this does not solve the problem of the marginalization experienced by migrant residents of nation states (p. 30). Immigrant children, often perceived as outsiders, struggle with both a sense of belonging and feelings of legitimacy (Jimenez et al., 2009, p. 24). The question of citizenship

can be difficult for them because they may not feel that they are citizens of either their country of origin or their country of residence. Sepulveda (2011) describes this lack of belonging as “the fractious and debilitating effects of being outsiders brought on by globalization—whether it was at the moment of crossing the physical ... political border or the various daily social, linguistic, and institutional borders of school and communities” (p. 558).

Questions of belonging and citizenship linked to transnational migration are inextricably intertwined with questions of identity as Abu El-Haj (2009) found in her ethnographic study with Palestinian American youth in post-9/11 America. Their sense of belonging to the Palestinian community and their feelings of obligation tied to their United States citizenship often led to educational experiences that “reinforced the idea that being Arab and being American were incompatible identities, thus exacerbating the challenges of belonging and participation for these young people” (p. 279). Lam (2006) also recognizes the effects that “transcultural flows have ... on how young people develop their identities and affiliations, learn and work, and develop visions of the world in their everyday lives” (p. 218).

Since transnational literacies views literacy as social practice set in specific contexts and involves relationships with people, these issues of citizenship, belonging and identity are also linked to literacy practices and learning (Yi, 2009, pp. 102-103; Moje & Luke, 2009, pp. 416-417). With their attachments to more than one social, cultural, and linguistic context, transnational migrant students are likely to have multiple, contextualized identities that are connected to the various roles they are expected to assume. They use their languages and literacy practices to make sense of who they are, present their identities to others, and to position themselves in relation to others (Sanchez & Kasun, 2012, pp. 85-86;). Given the social and contextual nature of identity, transnational students’ identities change and develop over time as

their beliefs and values develop and change, they participate in multiple contexts, and make sense of new experiences (Moje & Luke, 2009, pp. 417-419).

### **Critique of transnational literacies**

Imane, as an immigrant student, possesses transnational literacies which grounds literacy in her real-world social practices and affirms her funds of knowledge, cultural flexibility, and linguistic diversity (Hornberger & Link, 2012; Choo, 2018; Skerrett, 2012; Perry, 2012; Lam & Warriner, 2012; Sanchez, 2007) and which she uses to make sense of her evolving identity (Yi, 2009; Moje & Luke, 2009; Sanchez & Kasun, 2012). As a mobile, global citizen, Imane can live in and adapt to her local context while maintaining a global vision and a sense of membership or belonging to more than one country and culture (Lam, 2006; Abu El-Haj, 2009). Her experiences and stories are important to show that in the current reality of France, assimilationist public policy and ‘one language, one nation’ ideology have created an educational system that reinforces the practices that privilege white upper- and middle-class French students at her expense as an immigrant student (Shahrokni, 2015, p. 1051) resulting in an environment where her literacy and language practices are marginalized (Forsdick, 2017, p. 15).

This disconnect between Imane’s lived experiences and the literature on transnational migrant students is addressed in the criticism that some scholars have leveled against the studies done in transnational literacies concerning their inattention to the power dynamics that shape the lives of immigrant students (Lam & Warriner, 2012, p. 196; Abu El-Haj, 2007, p. 310; Hawkins, 2014, p. 91). Even though the research and literature on transnational literacies places a positive spin on the cultural and linguistic flexibility of transnational migrant students and their alternate ways of knowing and sense-making while presenting their multiliteracies, funds of knowledge, multilingualism and multiple, contextualized identities as resources to be leveraged in the

classroom, some researchers such as Jaffe-Walter and Lee (2018) and Garcia and Klein (2016) have also shown that most schools, like those Imane has attended in France, continue to operate from assimilationist ideologies that neither recognize nor value immigrant students cultural and linguistic differences and transnational experiences. Immigrant students are implicitly required to hide their transnational ways of knowing, communicating and identities which can lead to silencing in the classroom (Sanchez & Kasun, 2012, p. 84; Garcia, 2009, p. 152).

Lam and Warriner (2012), among the few scholars who take a critical stance, point to the importance of recognizing that it is nation states such as France who retain the power to determine official policies and discourse pertaining to issues of immigration, citizenship, language ideology and educational policies (p. 195). They also draw attention to the power that schools possess to either “make invisible students’ language abilities and binational affiliations, which may contribute to their sense of alienation . . . , or . . . recognize and leverage the existing linguistic resources and migratory experiences of students to promote their biliteracy development and learning” (pp. 204-205). Hawkins (2014) posits that inattention to these power relations between nation state, school and immigrant students results in “discourses and practices that exacerbate misunderstandings and inequities between people and groups of people and serves as a barrier to educational initiatives that promote open and equitable engagement” (p. 91). Intersectionality theory, with its emphasis on the “particular forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation” (Collins, 2000, p. 18) can address the power dynamics that are missing from many of the studies in transnational literacies (Fuller, 2018, p. 10).

## **Intersectionality**

To further explore how the systems of power that can be created or reinforced through transnational migration affect Imane's everyday life, this paper incorporates intersectionality theory which analyzes how social categories of race, class, gender, sexuality, class, nation, ability, ethnicity, and age interconnect and mutually shape one another (Collins & Bilge, 2020, p. 2). Imane, as a female Algerian Muslim student who lives in France, lives in a complex and sometimes hostile social context created by intersecting power relations that arise from her membership in multiple social categories such as race, gender, class, religion, country of origin, and citizenship status. Intersectionality resists the essentialist idea of one foundational oppression as the source of all injustice (Pereira, 2015, p. 2330) and examines how multiple oppressions work together in social relations over time to produce patterns of oppression that become culturally normalized in society (Collins, 2000, p. 18). For immigrant students like Imane, school is an important site of "social practice, and the dominant discourse or official language associated with it" (Fuller, 2018, p. 9) where the broader societal power relationships are played out in the relationships between teachers and administration, teachers and students, (pp. 7-8) as well as between students of different cultures and ethnicities (Roxas & Roy, 2012, p. 470). This can have a profound impact on immigrant students' learning, language acquisition, literacy practices and identity formation (Qin & Li, 2020, pp. 1047-1048).

Since intersectionality can be used to investigate both "how intersecting power relations influence social relations across diverse societies as well as individual experiences in everyday life" (Collins & Bilge, 2020, p. 2), it is an important tool to explore and understand Imane's complex intersecting identities and how power relations have shaped her language and literacy practices and her identity formation as a Muslim, Algerian immigrant student in France (Fuller,

2018, p. 10) which can then serve to give us insight into the everyday experiences of other immigrant students and the potential power relations that have shaped them as well.

### **Intersectionality and Muslim Women**

While Black feminist and legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) originally introduced the term intersectionality to describe how race and gender interacted in the lives of Black women (p. 1242, 1244), in more recent years, intersectionality has been effectively applied in a diverse number of disciplines such as education, migrant studies, ethnic and cultural studies, sociology, political science, and history (Nash, 2008, p. 2) and potential intersectional oppressions have expanded beyond the social categories of race and gender to include, among others, ethnicity, citizenship status, nationality, and ability (Collins & Bilge, 2020, p. 2). In order to explain how intersectionality can be applied over such a broad range of disciplines and include such a large number of social categories, Collins and Bilge (2020) propose six core concepts of intersectionality:

1. social inequality as it is produced by interactions among social categories (pp. 31-32),
2. power as mutually constructed across structural, disciplinary, cultural, and relational domains of power (p.32),
3. the social context within which the intersectionalities are situated (pp. 32-33),
4. relationality as interconnections between categories rather than the differences between them (p.33),
5. complexity due to the multifaceted nature of intersectionality (p. 34),
6. and social justice since social inequality is inherently unjust (p. 34-35).

These core concepts of intersectionality make a place for an increasing application of intersectionality in studies with Muslim women, who, when viewed through a uniquely gender-

based lens, are often perceived as being oppressed by a male dominated culture and religion with the veil often being interpreted as an outward sign of this perception (Avraamidou, 2018; Essers, Benschop & Doorewaard, 2010; McGuire, Casanova & Davis III, 2016). However, an intersectional approach to veiled Muslim women, can “...anchor the formation of subjectivities and agency within a nexus of social relations and structures (of race, class, gender) that work together to (re)produce power and privilege... [and] turn its focus instead to specific contexts and articulated social formations from which different forms of agency and subject positions arise” (Bilge, 2010, p. 23).

Imane, like many Muslim women, chooses to wear her veil in compliance with her interpretation of her religion. Veiled Muslim women in North American and European contexts seem to trigger two responses, neither of which accommodates “the reasons most frequently given by veiled women: questions of piety, morality, modesty, virtue and divinity...” (Bilge, 2010, p. 14). The first response is that the veil is seen and interpreted as a symbol of women’s oppression and a religious requirement that they submit themselves to men. Secondly, the veil simultaneously is associated with radical Islam and the political threat it seems to pose to Western democracies (pp. 14-15; Amiraux, 2013, p. 794). Both reactions stem from approaching veiled Muslim women in a Western context from a purely feminist point of view that equates gender equality with modernity and secularism. From this perspective, religion or in this case Islam, is equated with tradition and backwardness and cannot accept that a woman would freely choose to wear a veil. This takes away her agency by attributing her choice to external forces: male and religious domination (Bilge, 2010, p. 10-11; 20-21; Selby, 2014, p. 446).

### **Intersectionality, French Muslim women and laïcité**

Often missing from the lists of social categories that proponents of intersectionality account for is what Bilge (2010) terms the “religious/secular divide,” (p. 24). This divide is especially evident in the French context and the interpretation of *laïcité* (secularism) that is so unique to the French cultural and social values that make up Imane’s everyday reality. In the French context which enforces the idea of *laïcité* as public religious neutrality, the Muslim veil can be both perceived as a sign of women’s oppression by a male-dominated religion and interpreted as a threat to the Republic. This idea has influenced “not only right-wing rhetoric but also feminist discourse depicting the veil as a proselytizing symbol of religious affiliation created a chain of meanings making veiling anti-secular, hence anti-French...” (Bilge, 2010, pp. 15-16). It is within this context that Imane negotiates and constructs her identity and positions herself in relation to the multiple cultures and discourses she encounters in everyday life. The discourses she encounters come not only from French public discourse against wearing a veil in public but also conflicting discourses within the French Muslim community itself where some Muslim women promote wearing a veil and other French women of Muslim background have publicly spoken against the veil. These French Muslim women’s “portrayal of veiled women as oppressed...[as opposed to] the image of Western women as emancipated, ... also... functions as a mirror to ‘good Muslims’, those who are *les évolués* [the evolved]; unveiled, enlightened Muslim women like themselves and secular, gentle Arab men who accompany them—a couple to be opposed to ‘bad Muslims’; veiled girls and violent Arab/Muslim boys...” (Bilge, 2010, pp. 16). However, in the on-going debate in France about public veiling, the arguments have typically centered around gender relations among Muslims. Taking an intersectional approach to this debate would bring in other social categories, including nationality, class, race, and ethnicity, and examine “how assumptions about gender are racialised and how cultural othering is

modulated by gender” (Bilge, 2010, p. 18). An intersectional approach would also consider the dominant cultural expectations of *laïcité*, how Muslim religious identities have been racialized and the impact this has had on the perception of Muslim women and veiling as well as the public debates resulting in public policies and laws that infringe on Muslim women’s right to freedom of religion and apply them to Imane’s experiences as a veiled female student in France (Lépinard, 2014, p. 125).

### Chapter Summary

Imane, as an immigrant student living in France, is a member of multiple social groups that are interconnected, mutually shape each other and result in intersecting power relations. While critical sociocultural theory views her literacy as a social practice and understands the relationship between culture and learning while also accounting for the larger systems of power which impact French schools, teaching practices, and Imane’s knowledge production (Lewis et al., 2007, pp. 2-3;9), transnational literacies grounds her literacy practices in her real-world, multicultural and multinational social practices and affirms her language and literacy practices and funds of knowledge as valuable resources (Skerrett, 2012, p. 368). In her French context, Imane’s social identities, language and literacy practices are often not recognized, making school a hostile place for her (Hélot, 2003, pp. 255-256; Young, 2017, pp. 16-17). Individuals construct their identities from the communities to which they belong, and as mobile, global citizen, Imane can live in and adapt to her local context while maintaining a global vision and a sense of membership or belonging to both France and Algeria and their cultures (Lam, 2006; Abu El-Haj, 2009). However, group membership and identity can contribute to power relations and marginalization by producing an ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ mentality causing her to struggle with her sense of belonging and in her identity formation when her multiple communities have

conflicting beliefs, values, and membership expectations (McKay, 2010, pp.106-107).

Intersectionality theory can address how these power relations in the context of her educational experiences have impacted her language and literacy practices as well as her identity formation (Qin & Li, 2020; Fuller, 2018). Despite all this, Imane, chooses to veil in secular France where this can be interpreted as anti-secular and anti-French (Bilge, 2010, p. 24), and creatively draws on all her ways of knowing and sense-making to create opportunities for herself demonstrating that while she may be at times marginalized, she is not necessarily powerless (Moje & Lewis, 2007, p. 23).

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Introduction

*“C’était un débat à la télé et tout. ... On n’est pas venu pour ça. On parle des étudiants. On parle des gens qui crèvent de faim à cause du Corona. Ils ont perdu leurs jobs d’été. ... Les étudiants, ils ont pas d’argent ! Et là! ... Leur seul souci est la fille qui est voilée. Ils veulent pas qu’elle reste dans la salle !”* (Imane, tutoring discussion February 15, 2021).

This was Imane’s response to the public criticism in France of Maryam Pougetoux, the vice-president of Unef, the national students’ union, who appeared in September 2020 before the French National Assembly wearing her veil which resulted in multiple members of parliament walking out in protest (Makooi, 2020). Translated it means, ‘There was a debate on T.V. and everything. ... No one came for that. Everyone was speaking about students. Everyone was speaking about people who are starving because of Corona. They lost their summer jobs. ... The students, they don’t have money! And there! Their only worry was the veiled girl. They didn’t want her to stay in the room.’ Imane used this example as she struggled to make sense of what this type of public discourse means for her and the impact it has on her as she wrestles with the question of ‘Who am I?’ as a French-Algerian Muslim immigrant woman living in France.

For this project I chose to do a small story narrative study in the context of an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) study group and private tutoring sessions, where I, as the teacher/tutor, am doing a narrative inquiry on the educational experiences of one of my own students. Narrative research works with one individual participant’s stories, analyzes them, and attempts to understand their experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 18). Additionally, when used with a participant from a marginalized group, it can be a powerful tool in providing a platform for their voice to be heard. (Pavlenko, 2002, pp. 209, 213-214). For these reasons, narrative

inquiry is an excellent methodological fit for the study of one Algerian Muslim transnational student in France.

### **Statement of Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this narrative study is to discover how Imane uses her transnational identity and cultural knowledge to navigate her multicultural world and makes sense of her experiences as a female Algerian immigrant student to France. For this study, Imane's experiences will be generally defined as the stories she tells about events that she lived through, her reaction to them and how she makes sense of them in the larger cultural context and current events.

Drawing from intersectionality theory, critical sociocultural theory, and transnational literacies, I approach this study with the assumption that transnational students live in a social context created by intersecting power relations that have resulted in social divisions of race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, country of origin, and citizenship status which affect their knowledge production and sense-making. I use narrative inquiry to answer the following questions:

1. What are the stories and experiences that are personally significant to Imane and how does she make sense of them?
2. What do Imane's stories reveal about French cultural perspectives and current discourse on immigrants and how they impact her life as an Algerian immigrant to France?
3. How does Imane use her transnational identity and cultural understanding to navigate the multiple languages and cultures she encounters in her everyday life as an immigrant to France?

## **Narrative Inquiry**

In narrative inquiry, the term ‘small stories’ refers to the short stories that emerge in naturalistic settings and are embedded in every day social interactions that emphasize the day-to-day experiences of living (Georgakopoulou, 2006, p. 126). For language learners and teachers, small stories are often the ones told in the classroom and in conversations between students and teachers (Vasquez, 2011, pp. 537-538). Since they are usually not fully developed according to the more formal literary and structural definitions of narratives, they are often under-represented and even discounted in other forms of narrative research (Alexander, 2016, p. 7). However, it is in the social context of the present moment that people, using everyday talk and small stories, make sense of their lives, establish their sense of identity, and position themselves in relation to the world and society’s discourses (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008, p. 379; Bamberg, 2006, p. 144-145).

Taking a small story narrative inquiry approach to this study is ideal because Imane, in relaxed and naturalistic, small study group and personal tutoring settings, used talk and small stories about her experiences as a Muslim-Algerian immigrant student to negotiate, renegotiate, construct, and reconstruct her identity and to position herself in relation to the multiple cultures and discourses that she encounters in her everyday life. Since narratives allow people to “give their lives meaning” (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 213) and make sense of the world around them, this study will explore “the social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives with which [Imane’s experiences have been] constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted” (Clandinin, 2013, p.18 as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 68). Additionally, this study incorporates a critical approach to small story narrative inquiry since many of the social, cultural, and institutional narratives that shape Imane’s experiences are embedded in current and historical contexts of

power and power relations between the dominant French and non-dominant immigrant cultures and discourse. At the time of this study Imane was in high school and college and still establishing her sense of identity and her position in relation to her social context. Consequently, this study concentrates on her small stories rather than focus on her big life story.

## **Context**

While officially France rejects multiculturalism (Clare & Abdelhady, 2016, p. 14), diversity and multicultural communities are alive and flourishing throughout France as can be seen in neighborhoods such Place Voltaire, located in the suburb northwest of Paris where I lived and worked for seventeen years as both a French literacy and an EFL teacher. Sometimes referred to as ‘Little Morocco,’ the North African shops on the four streets that lead up to and circle around the Place Voltaire sell Moroccan dry goods and some common food items such as dried beans, dried fruit, nuts, and green tea. These shops, along with the North African restaurants, clothing, and furniture stores and halal (Muslim) butcher shops are marked with signs in both Arabic and French and are run by owners wearing traditional clothing and doing business in Arabic or Berber dialects as well as French. The outdoor markets which are frequented by veiled women negotiating prices with vendors in their native languages can give visitors and community members alike the sense that they are in Morocco instead of France.

This study took place in the context of an EFL study group offered by our community association as an enrichment opportunity to help students who were struggling in their English classes in school. The group was composed of three students, including Imane, who had grown up moving between their multicultural homes and neighborhoods and their French monocultural schools interspersed with visits to their countries of origin during summer vacations (Kovacs, 2012). All three students in the group were studying for their national exams and met in a

variety of locations. The first year we met in a room provided by the city while the second year and the beginning of the third year we met around a table in my living room. However, the third year, which was during the 2019-2020 academic year, was disrupted by a late start due to my absence at the beginning of the school year, transportation strikes in December and January, followed by France's first Covid-19 induced national lockdown and restrictions from March through May. The final year the group turned into as-needed individual tutoring sessions conducted via Zoom due to France's second and third lockdowns and ongoing Covid-related restrictions. Situating this study in the relaxed context of an English study group and private tutoring sessions not only assisted Imane in preparing for her exams but gave her the opportunity to explore her immigrant stories and multicultural identity.

### **Participant**

This narrative study will focus on Imane, a Kabyle-Algerian student who was seventeen at the beginning of the study. Having arrived in France at the age of twelve, Imane came to the study group with five years of experience in the French school system. The Kabyles are a large but minority Amazigh or Berber group in Algeria. Consequently, Imane speaks French, Kabyle, and Arabic in the home and French in school. Before migrating to France, she studied Arabic and French at school in Algeria. Imane was born with French citizenship thanks to her grandmother who, having been born in France, retained her citizenship when she returned to Algeria to live and raise her family.

Imane was an ideal choice for this narrative study because she would often take the lead in her study group to share about her current and past school experiences, not only when I asked questions to facilitate the group discussion but also spontaneously before the study group started, during times when students were engaged in individual writing activities and after the group was

concluded. Many times, she would start talking about her school day as soon as I opened the door to let her in. Since Imane was twelve years old when she migrated from Algeria to France, she clearly remembered her first few years in France and often referred to them using the French present tense form of the verbs. This occasionally caused confusion in the study group as the other students and I struggled to understand if she was referring to current events or something that had occurred in the past. Additionally, having travelled to Algeria to visit family in February 2020 before the first national lockdown, she was unable to return to France until the end of August 2020. These seven months she spent in Algeria gave her the opportunity to view her home country and culture with the eyes of a young adult rather than relying completely on her potentially idealized memories from childhood. While Imane's experiences are unique to her and not intended to be generalized as the normal immigrant student experience in France, her stories and experiences can help to promote a better understanding of the challenges that she faced and her needs as she navigated her everyday life in France.

### **Data Collection**

Data in narrative studies is primarily in the form of stories collected from individuals, documents, and group conversations where the participants talk about their experiences and reveal how they construct aspects of their identity. Small story narrative studies focus on talk about everyday activities that emerge in the context of natural social interactions. They can be about recent, present, or potential future events (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 68-69; Georgakopoulou, 2006, p. 126; Alexander, 2016, p. 3).

Since this study is interested in what Imane's stories and talk reveal about the larger cultural perspectives of immigrants, public discourse about immigrant students and Imane's intersectional identities, this brings in issues of power and power relations between the dominant

French and non-dominant immigrant cultures and discourse. Because this project took place in the context of an English study group and private tutoring sessions, I facilitated Imane's critical engagement with the written and audio texts that were provided in her exam study manual to elicit these elements and to reveal the impact they had on Imane's identity formation by implementing pedagogical tools such as translanguaging. Garcia (2009) defines translanguaging as "the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features of various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential" (p. 140). Imane and the other members of her study group were multilingual. Integrating translanguaging practices was important because, rather than restricting Imane's communication and critical engagement with the texts to her competence in English, it allowed her to draw on her entire repertoire of languages to express herself.

Over the two consecutive years that Imane's study group met together, we established a personal relationship and often spontaneously shared small stories throughout the study sessions. This relationship became evident when Imane called me after her return from Algeria in the fall of 2020 just to catch me up on what was happening and her subsequent request in January 2021 for private tutoring sessions via Zoom.

## **Data Sources**

**Personal Observations.** Imane first started coming to her English Study group in January 2018 and the other two participants joined her one month later, in February. They met through the end of April 2018 as well as the entire 2018-2019 academic year. Imane's group met one time per week for 1.5 hours and followed the French academic calendar which consists of six to seven weeks of classes followed by a two-week break throughout the school year. They began meeting in November 2019 for the 2019-2020 school year, but the group meeting was

disrupted first by a national transportation strike and then by the national lockdowns imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic. During the 2020-2021 school year, France was still dealing with severe restrictions related to the pandemic, so I met with Imane for weekly tutoring sessions via Zoom from January through June 2021. Since the main goal of these sessions was preparing Imane and the other participants to pass the English portion of their national exams, not all the sessions were audio-recorded but served as an important source for my personal observations of Imane. Another important source for my personal observations was our WhatsApp conversation thread. With this thread, we shared articles, videos and learning support materials as well as personal information such as when Imane missed several sessions because her mother was sick in the hospital. This thread helped provide some context for Imane's stories about her everyday life that she would usually develop the next time she saw me in person.

**Audio-recorded sessions.** Data was collected from the English study groups in March and April of 2018 and from January through April of 2019 and the whole group sessions designed for discussions and speaking practice were audio recorded. Additionally, from January through May of 2021, all of Imane's private tutoring sessions via Zoom were recorded as well as an impromptu group reunion via Zoom in April 2021 with another member of her original study group. These were then transcribed, and Imane's small stories were extracted from the larger context of learning and practicing English.

**Personal interviews.** There were often moments before and after the scheduled group sessions when Imane would spontaneously tell stories. The second year the group met at my home, and it was a normal occurrence for Imane to start talking about her day as I was unlocking the gate to let her in. I was not always equipped to audio-record during these times, nor was it conducive to building trust in our relationship. For this reason and to maintain confidentiality

about the information Imane shared with me, it was also not always appropriate to ask Imane to retell her stories in the larger group context when I was audio recording. Consequently, I scheduled two personal interviews with Imane and invited her to retell the stories that she felt comfortable having me record so that I could have an accurate account. In these situations, I kept careful notes about the context in which Imane originally told the story.

**Student work.** During the English sessions, Imane produced work which included oral presentations and written, oral, and video reflections in English along with accompanying artifacts such as pictures of objects she brought from home, diagrams, and family pictures. In some cases, her work and artifacts would either inspire her to tell a story or she would link it to a current event. In other cases, her work served to enrich the corresponding stories such as when she drew a diagram about segregation which she used to illustrate and explain a story about how men and women can be segregated in her home culture.

**Field notes and journal entries.** As the teacher, I was involved in participant observation of the discussions that took place. In my field notes and journal entries, I kept notes about the stories she told, questions I wanted to ask her for clarification, and the stories that she told before and after class sessions such as when we were walking from the front gate. I also kept notes about the context that the story was told in, what the topic of the lesson was about and the support material that was used in the lesson. These notes were useful when I asked her to retell stories in the personal interviews, for asking corroborating questions to verify her stories, and during our member checking sessions.

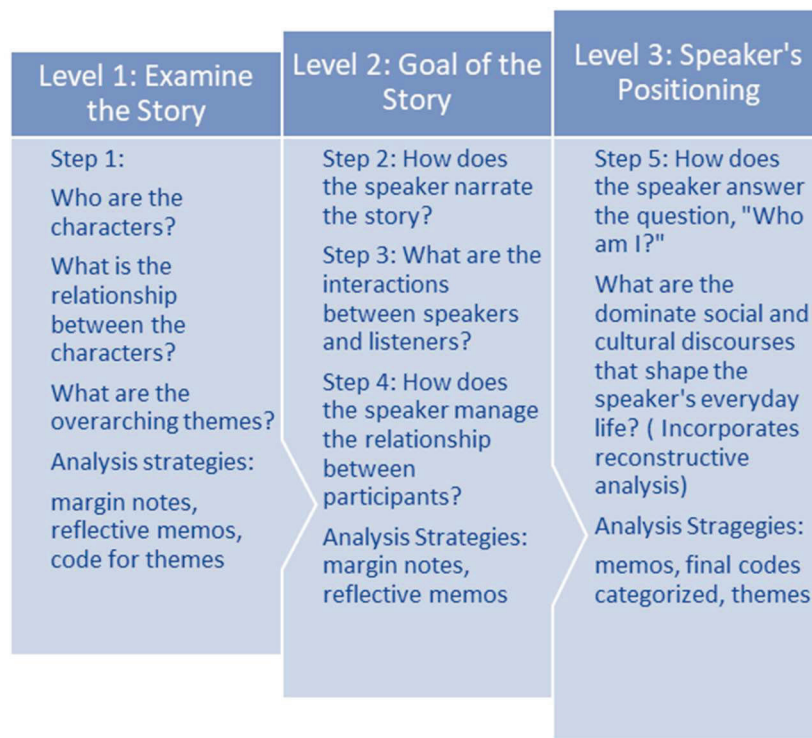
Table 3.1 Data Sources

	March-April 2018	January-April 2019	January-June 2021	September 2021-May 2022
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Personal Observation Source	-Weekly class sessions from November 2017-May 2018 -Message thread in WhatsApp used to communicate attendance, send student work, and convey personal information	-Weekly class sessions from November 2018-June 2019 -Message thread in WhatsApp used to communicate attendance, send student work, and convey personal information	-Weekly class sessions from October 2020- June 2021 -Message thread in WhatsApp used to communicate attendance, send student work, and convey personal information	-Weekly class sessions from September 2021-May 2022 -Message thread in WhatsApp used to communicate attendance, send student work, and convey personal information
Data Source	1 20 min interview	1 57 min interview		
Data Source	11 transcriptions of 1-1.5 hour audio recorded group discussions	9 transcriptions of 1-1.5 hour audio recorded group discussions	-10 transcriptions of 1-1.5 hour recorded Zoom tutoring sessions -1 transcription of 1.5 hour recorded impromptu English study group reunion	
Data Source	12 examples of student work and artifacts to accompany stories	-15 examples of student work and artifacts to accompany stories -7 transcripts of short, 2-5 minute oral presentations	-12 examples of student work and artifacts to accompany short stories -transcripts of short, 2-5 min oral presentations embedded in recorded Zoom sessions	
Data Source	5 Field note and journal entries	17 Field note and journal entries	21 Field notes and journal entries -Memo writing	-Memo writing
Data Source		-Corroborating questions -Member checking stories	-Corroborating questions -Member checking stories	-Corroborating Questions -Member checking stories

## Data Analysis Model

For my data analysis procedure, I used the five-step small story narrative analysis procedure proposed by Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008, pp. 385-392) which I modified to incorporate reconstructive analysis, a critical analytic strategy that examines the power relations that construct dominant social and cultural discourses (Carspecken, 1996, p. 42). This model (Figure 3.2) was based on the positioning model proposed by Bamberg (2006). He postulates that through talk, people establish the subject of their talk, or what it is about, their social interaction and relationships, and how they position themselves in relation to the world and the dominant discourses of society (p. 144).



*Figure 3.2: Data Analysis Strategy Model (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2006, pp. 385-392)*

While level one of the analysis model analyzes the story itself paying attention to the characters and design of the story, level two examines the goal of the story, what the teller is trying to achieve and the interactions and roles of the listener(s) in its construction (Alexander,

2016, p. 8). Level three analyzes how the teller or narrator is seemingly trying to position themselves in the story, society, or the world, and in relation to society's dominant discourses (Alexander, 2016, p. 8). It is in this level that the dominant social and cultural discourses that impact the narrator's life and the power relations that construct these discourses come into play. Thus, for this analysis, I have incorporated reconstructive analysis, a critical analytic strategy that "articulates those cultural themes and system factors that are not observable and that are usually unarticulated by the actors themselves" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 42) into level three of this small story narrative analysis procedure.

Analyzing Imane's talk and stories through the positioning model and incorporating reconstructive analysis into the five step process proposed by Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2006) allowed me to go beyond just the content of the stories and how they are narrated to understand how Imane, as a female Muslim immigrant student positions herself in relation to dominant social and cultural discourses, how she makes sense of her experiences, and how she uses her literacies to navigate the multiple cultures discourses that she encounters.

### **Data Analysis Process**

While Bamberg and Georgakopoulou's (2006) model is presented in a very linear way, my actual data analysis process resembled more of a spiral. At any given time during the analysis process, as I was simultaneously collecting new data, transcribing audio sessions, and organizing data, I was also sifting through the data for Imane's stories and relevant supporting data. Then, while working through the three analysis levels and writing my interpretations and preliminary findings, I was identifying which stories and themes seemed to be the most significant to her and using my preliminary findings to further focus in on the underlying

meanings of her stories. In doing this I was engaged “in the process of moving in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach” (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 185).



*Figure 3.3: Data Analysis Process adapted from Creswell & Poth's (2018) Data Analysis Spiral (p. 186)*

As I describe the data analysis process, I will provide specific examples of each step by using my analysis of the conversation excerpt that was presented at the beginning of this chapter. I began the data analysis process by transcribing the audio recorded English Study Group sessions and organizing the corresponding pieces of data such as Imane's student work, artifacts, and my field notes. It was during this transcription process that I isolated Imane's stories from the larger context of learning English. These stories occurred before, during and after the sessions and were either prompted by my questions or the subjects of the texts we studied and included the stories that Imane spontaneously introduced. While the study group sessions were in English, Imane would tell her stories in French. Therefore, it is important to note that my

analysis was done in the original French. However, because I am bilingual in English and French, my notes, memos, and interpretations were done in a combination of English and French. While, for the sake of my English-speaking readers, my final interpretations are in English, whenever Imane used the word *laïcité*, because of its unique cultural meaning in French, I retained it in the translation and interpretation of her story (Clare & Abdelhady, 2016, p. 14).

### **Conversation Context**

After I had isolated Imane's stories, I summarized the context in which her story took place, including details such as where she was when she told the story, what she was doing and the topic of the text she was studying in English. This helped to identify which stories Imane told spontaneously and which stories she told in response to a prompt or a question.

**Example of Conversation Context.** This conversation took place in the context of a Zoom tutoring session on February 15, 2021, which followed the 2021 American presidential and vice-presidential inauguration events and ceremonies. For the lesson, I used an audio text produced by NPR (National Public Radio) about newly inaugurated Vice-President Kamela Harris and the corresponding written text. Imane struggled to understand the texts because she did not know who Kamela Harris was, nor did she understand the basics of how the American government is structured. She vaguely remembered seeing pictures on the front page of newspapers of Vice-President Harris standing on the steps of the Capitol building in Washington, D.C. near President Biden and had wondered who she was and why she was standing there. While working through several activities to provide her the needed background knowledge, we began discussing Vice-President Harris' ethnic background in relation to her political career. Referencing several articles that remarked on Harris' 'costume' of power suits as well as on her Southeast Asian-Indian heritage from her mother's side, I presented an image of an Indian

businesswoman dressed in a traditional sari to prompt Imane to consider the ways dress influences public perception of people and the effect of Harris' clothing on her public image and career path. I followed this up with two images of Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, a member of the American House of Representatives who immigrated to the United States from Somalia as a child and typically wears a head covering in public. In the first photo she is shown wearing a turban and standing in front of a bank of microphones seemingly giving a speech. The second photo is her official Congressional photograph, and she is seated in front of the American flag, wearing a Muslim hijab (veil). I have translated the conversation which lasted approximately ten and a half minutes from French to English. A full transcript in the original French can be found in Appendix D.

### **Level One Analysis**

The Level One analysis, as described in Bamberg and Georgakopoulou's (2006) and Alexander's (2016) examples, considers the design of the story, the themes, the characters, and the relationship between them. It encompasses Step One in Bamberg and Georgakopoulou's (2008) five step analysis (p. 385; Alexander, 2016, p. 8) which is to ask the question: "Who are the characters and how are they relationally positioned? (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008, p.385). Step One also looks at the overarching themes of the story.

Many of Imane's stories shifted themes mid-story. While they sometimes maintained a connection to the preceding theme, there were other occasions when the shift was rather abrupt as Imane introduced a story that seemingly had very little connection to the preceding theme. Therefore, to make her stories easier to analyze, I divided her stories into naturally occurring segments according to theme.

**Example of Level One Analysis.** While on the first reading through the conversation, there seemed to be three naturally occurring segments when the theme of the conversation shifted slightly but retained a connection to the preceding segment, for the purposes of this example, we will examine turns 5 through 9 of segment one. An English translation of the entire conversation divided into the three segments and noting the conversation shifts can be found in Appendix E.

This conversation takes place as Imane examines a picture of American Congresswoman Ilhan Omar in front of several microphones wearing a turban on her head:

(5) **Imane:** Because, in fact, the, the American critique and the French critique, they aren't the same thing.

(6) **Jan:** Ok. Explain that to me.

(7) **Imane:** You know that this girl, if she had been on French television and she was in France, they would have talked more about her, about what she, about what, how she was wearing, how, how she was dressed than what she was saying.

(8) **Jan:** *Ok.* Why ?

(9) **Imane:** You see, for example, I don't know if she was saying things that were very interesting about politics, about, uh, about a lot of things. And, *bah*, the French, they will more likely, *bah*, say, "*Ah! Bah*, It's a woman, uh, who is wearing a turban, and *nah, nah, nah*, a turban, a turban. Instead of talking about her, about her, about her intellectual knowledge.

The two principal characters in the conversation are Jan as the teacher/tutor and Imane as the student. In this segment, the overarching theme presents the differences between American and French culture and the subsequent public discourse. Imane introduces the idea that in

France, if a woman appears in a public context wearing a head covering, the public conversation will be more about her head covering than about what she has to say.

### **Level Two Analysis**

Once I had identified the principal characters of each story and the overarching themes, I began Level Two analysis. This level examines how the speaker narrates the story, manages the flow of the narration and the relationship between the participants in the conversation. In their five-step analysis procedure, Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) place Steps Two through Four in the analysis of this level. Step Two is primarily concerned with how the speaker narrates the story (p. 386), Step Three examines the interactions between the participants and how the speaker is positioned within the interactive flow of the conversation (p. 388), and Step Four analyzes how the speaker manages the relationship between the participants (p. 389).

It was during this analysis while examining how Imane narrated her stories and how she managed the relationship between participants that I began noticing that the stories that Imane told spontaneously were most often related to the themes of wearing a veil in France and *laïcité*, especially in the school context. This contrasted with the stories she told of her childhood, her arrival in France and her experiences with the French language which were most often told in response to my prompts as her teacher. Consequently, I decided to concentrate on these stories moving into Level Three analysis because I felt that they were indicative of which experiences held the most significance to her.

**Example of Level Two Analysis.** For this analysis example we will look at turns 42 through 48. In this conversation, Jan had refocused Imane's attention on the photograph of Kamela Harris they had been looking at and reminds Imane of a quote from the article they had been reading:

(42) **Jan:** She considers herself to be American and, and, Kamela Harris, the Vice-president (slight pause) when she is asked, she says, she doesn't say that I am, *I'm African-American* or *I'm Indian-American* or *Asian-American*, she doesn't say all that. She says, "*I'm American.*"

(43) **Imane:** *Mmm*

(44) **Jan:** *Like*, all the rest, it's less important for her. She simply says, "*I'm American.*"

(45) **Imane:** *Bah*, I don't know if you know, uh, I don't know any more what her name is, the one that, that, is in the student union. She wears a veil also, (slight pause) She was, she was in the newspaper, the *Charlie* [Hebdo] and everything. (slight pause) Hold on, (searches phone) She is, she is, she is vice, um, student union, she is what? She's in charge or something like that. (pause)

(46) **Jan:** Like what?

(47) **Imane:** In fact, it's, I don't know if you saw the, um, theeee, theeeee, the debate. It's her. (pause)

(48) **Jan:** Oh yes, it's the debate on the law they want to pass?

Step Two asks the question "How does the speaker narrate the story" (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou, 2008, p. 386). In this example, Imane responds to the prompts that Jan provides but she then directs the conversation how she wishes. So, while Jan, as the teacher/tutor, initially directs the conversation, she quickly hands off the lead to Imane and even seems to encourage it by not interrupting and only adding to the conversation when Imane seems to need additional information, an explanation, or to ask Imane to clarify what she has said. In turns 42 and 44, Jan seems to be attempting to direct the conversation to the topic of the texts and photographs they had been studying but in turn 45, Imane rejects this and continues to develop

the theme that she had earlier proposed about the response of the French media to women wearing a veil in public places. So, while her way of narrating the story is generally in response to Jan's questions, her ability to take control of the conversation and deviate from this is interdependent with her relationship with Jan.

In this example, since the conversation is between Imane, as the student and Jan, as the teacher, Steps Three and Four are intertwined. In these steps of the analysis process, which are primarily concerned with the interactions between the participants and how the speaker manages their relationship, Imane technically has the role of student. While this is typically a subordinate position, she demonstrates a level of comfort with positioning herself as equal in the conversation and at times taking the lead in directing the conversation. She shows this in turns 45 when she just continues with her thought without deferring to Jan's attempt, as the teacher, to redirect the conversation. Jan accepts this bid for equality, listens to what Imane tells her and joins her in the conversation by asking for clarifying information.

Another way that Imane shows her comfort in assuming the lead in the conversation is in her choice of word usage. In the original French of turn 45 (see Appendix D), Imane says: "*Je sais pas si tu connais,*" (I don't know if you know). Here, in the same turn where she makes her bid for equality by ignoring Jan's attempt to direct the conversation, she also uses the informal form of you, "tu", instead of the formal "vous." While the informal "tu" is acceptable to use with family and friends, it is not considered respectful to use with teachers who are usually addressed with the formal form of you, "vous" (see also turn 47). So, in summary, we can see that while Imane is positioned by Jan as the primary speaker, she accepts this position and manages the relationship between them by making a bid for equality, assuming the lead in directing the flow of conversation, and using language that indicates equal status.

### Level Three Analysis

Level Three analysis encompasses step five of Bamberg and Georgakopoulou's (2008) analysis procedure which analyzes the content of the story itself and how the narrator, in this case Imane, positions herself in relation to dominant social and cultural discourses and seeks to answer the question, "Who am I in all this?" (p. 391). Since Imane, as an Algerian and Muslim immigrant student is confronted by multiple and often conflicting social and cultural discourses in her daily life, at this level of analysis I incorporated reconstructive analysis to help tease out the power relations that construct these discourses (Carspecken, 1996, p. 42). I began my analysis with low inference meaning field analysis from a first-person perspective to attempt to articulate all the possible meanings of Imane's talk in order to help clarify what biases and cultural and social influences are present that I might be missing or need to analyze further (p. 102). I followed these meaning fields up with reconstructive horizon analysis and examined Imane's talk and stories in the first person for the validity claims she was making either consciously or unconsciously. This was especially helpful in teasing out the claims that Imane is either unaware of or considers so normal that she assumes everyone makes the same claims (p. 119).

Following my Level Three analysis, I wrote up an interpretation of what my analysis seemed to reveal. Following is an example of Level Three analysis and its corresponding interpretation:

**Example of Level Three analysis.** For this analysis example, I will concentrate on Imane's talk in segment three, turns 35 and 37:

(35) **Imane:** *Bah*, they have to accept that everybody does what they want, in fact. ...

(37) **Imane:** If someone wants to go out dressed up, he goes out dressed up. If someone wants to go out with a veil, [s]he goes out with a veil. If someone wants to remind you about *la laïcité, bah*, for me, *la laïcité* it's to have the freedom to practice your religion and to have the freedom, although with respect, on the other hand. I agree that it should be with respect, that it should be, uh, at home. Eh? I'm not saying that I will pray in front of people, uh, cry out "*Allahu akbar*" in front of everyone but beyond that, it's just that everyone is in peace, that we are, we are all equal [singular form], *quoi?* Equal [plural form], *pardon*. That we are all equal [plural form] like everyone and that, uh, to accept the fact that, that we are all in peace, *quoi*. In spite of the origins, we are all French.

On the first reading of this excerpt, I noted possible underlying meanings behind the words that Imane spoke and placed them in a meaning field analysis (see Appendix F) of the transcript. This was to help clarify some of the impressions I was getting from Imane's talk (Carspecken, 1996, pp. 94-102). I followed this with a more in-depth reconstructive horizon analysis (see Appendix G) to help bring out some of the potential assumptions and claims that might be hidden in the background of Imane's thinking but that influence how she makes sense of the world, her place in it and how she constructs her identity or sense of "Who am I?" in relationship to dominant discourse (Carspecken, 1996, pp. 117-120).

On one hand, Imane seems to place herself in an opposing position to the dominant discourse that says that a woman who wears a veil in public violates the rule of *laïcité* and public religious neutrality. When she says, "If someone wants to go out dressed up, he goes out dressed up. If someone wants to go out with a veil, [s]he goes out with a veil," she seems to classify the veil, not as a religious symbol but as another piece of clothing that someone can choose to wear or not to wear. She defends her point of view by providing an alternative, personal definition of

*laïcité* and in so doing, seems to position herself as an intelligent person who can make her own decisions independently of the dominant discourse that she has been taught to accept. She then qualifies her opinion with the add-on, “although with respect, on the other hand. I agree that it should be with respect, that it should be, uh, at home. Eh?” With this qualification, she seems to be positioning herself as a reasonable person who is willing to find common ground with the dominant understanding of *laïcité*. She develops this idea by specifying practices that she, as a religious Muslim woman, would refrain from doing in public out of respect for others. She then links this to what seems to be a request for equality and the right to practice her religion in peace. In this she seems to be indicating that she, as a religious Muslim woman, is not equal and that she does not feel free to practice her religion. She seems to be implying that contrary to the dominant ideology about *laïcité* which says that religious neutrality in public makes everyone equal and produces peace and public unity, *laïcité* actually serves to marginalize and oppress her.

Imane also seems to link equality with peace. By doing this she also seems to be speaking to public discourse that presents Muslims as violent and terrorists. When she spoke about her religious practices, Imane used the word “*je*”, or ‘I’, seeming to separate herself from the ‘they.’ In this, she aligns herself with Muslims. However, when she speaks about peace and equality, she uses the word “*on*”, which, in the Paris regional dialect, translates to ‘we.’ In doing this, she seems to be creating solidarity with the entire French population which she reinforces with her final statement “we are all French.” It seems as if she is trying to communicate the idea that even though she is Muslim and has different origins, she is also French and wants the same rights, equality, and peace as everyone else. However, she also seems to be indicating that she does not have the same equality and is marginalized by the same cultural discourse that is supposed to guarantee her rights and equality.

**Interpretation of Analysis Example.** In this segment Imane seems to be attempting to establish her sense of identity (Who am I?) as a French-Algerian Muslim woman and to balance this with what she perceives as French cultural expectations. She does this by presenting herself as a reasonable person who is willing to negotiate the meanings of both the Muslim veil and *laïcité*. The veil, which is commonly interpreted as a religious symbol that has no place in secular society, she presents as a neutral piece of clothing that one may or may not choose to wear. She presents *laïcité*, commonly interpreted as public religious neutrality, as the freedom to practice one's religion in peace. Imane develops her identity as a reasonable Muslim woman by detailing religious practices that she does not consider acceptable in the public sphere. She resists the common French cultural expectation of public uniformity and secular identity by claiming a French identity and solidarity despite her non-French origins and public display of her religious beliefs. In doing this, she presents the possibility of being French and Algerian and Muslim and a woman.

### **Writing up findings**

As I read and re-read the stories and my initial interpretations, I re-wrote each story in English borrowing from the autobiography genre to retain Imane's voice and tell them as first-person narrative accounts (Kim, 2016, pp. 123-125). During this process, I noticed that the stories that Imane told could be grouped under the following general themes: stories about wearing my veil, stories about what I think of my experiences, stories about conversations with my teachers about *laïcité*, and stories about what I think about current events. I placed the stories under their corresponding general themes to help organize them. To further emphasize Imane's voice, I titled each story using a quote from Imane in the original French that seemed to reflect an important idea that she was attempting to communicate. I read through the stories in

English with her to verify the accuracy of the story details and that I had retained, to the best of my ability, her voice in the English version.

Table 3.2 Story Themes

General Themes	Stories about wearing my veil	Stories about what I think of my experiences	Stories about conversations with my teachers about laïcité	Stories about what I think about current events
<b>Stories</b>	<p>-Nous, on vit partout le racisme. (We experience racism everywhere).</p> <p>-J'ai pas le choix. Je peux pas dire « non. » (I didn't have a choice. I couldn't really say 'no').</p>	<p>-Je peux pas être hypocrite avec le Dieu... C'est pas un jeu. (I can't be a hypocrite with God... It's not a game).</p> <p>-C'est catastrophique parce qu'en fait, ils sont pas claires. (It's catastrophic because in fact, they aren't very clear).</p>	<p>- Pourquoi elle a le droit de porter sa croix et moi, ... je n'ai pas le droit de porter mon voile. (Why she has the right to wear her cross and I, ... I don't have the right to wear my veil).</p> <p>-La société française, elle oblige la femme à se dévoiler. (French society obligates women to take off their veil).</p>	<p>- Je vois pas du tout la lumière au bout du tunnel. (I can't see the light at the end of the tunnel).</p> <p>-Comme si ils m'interdisent de m'habiller. (It's like they're telling me I can't get dressed).</p> <p>-J'ai envie d'être moi-même dans un pays où je pourrais dire comme je veux pas de jugement, pas avoir peur. (I would like to be myself in a country where I could say what I want, no judgement, no being afraid).</p>

After I had organized the stories according to their general theme, I summarized the interpretations of all the segments in each story into a final interpretation for each theme.

Imane's stories and the final interpretations will be presented in the next chapter.

## **Strategies for validating findings**

One strategy I used to validate my findings is to make my biases transparent by using memo and reflexive writing throughout the data analysis and interpretation process (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 261). I came to this project with already-formed biases from the number of years I had lived in this community and my own personal experiences with both my North African friends and with French people and culture. While in many ways this is an asset because it helped me to better understand the culture and context, it also meant that I needed to be open about how these biases could influence my analysis and interpretation of the findings.

Another validation strategy I used came from my firsthand knowledge of Imane from my personal interactions with her in the English study groups and Zoom tutoring sessions. Imane's stories were extracted from data collected during three separate years and two different periods of her life, high school, and college. Since her stories were sometimes told spontaneously in French, sometimes in response to questions that I asked in English, and sometimes in personal interviews where I asked for clarification on stories she told in class, my personal knowledge of Imane helped me to construct coherent accounts of her stories and valid interpretations. It also helped me to resolve potential inconsistencies of details or data that seemed to contradict itself but was simply a reflection of the changes in Imane's thinking as she constructed her identity over time and from her experiences.

I validated my findings by seeking Imane's feedback through the analysis process. As I worked with her in the private tutoring sessions, in addition to collecting new data, I corroborated her stories by reintroducing some of the same subjects and questions that I had previously asked her in the first two years of data collection. Imane continued her Zoom tutoring sessions with me throughout the analysis and interpretation process as she prepared for an exam

that she took in May 2022 to certify her community college degree. I included her in the translation of her stories to English and in the subsequent analysis and write-up as a member check to my work (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 259-263, 269-271)

Table 3.3 Data Triangulation

Research Questions	Data Source #1	Data Source #2	Data Source #3	Data Source #4
1. What are the stories and experiences that are personally significant to Imane and how does she make sense of them?	-Personal Interviews	-Audio recorded group sessions -Student work	-Corroborating Questions -Member checking stories	-Field notes and journal -Memos
2. What do Imane's stories reveal about French cultural perspectives and current discourse on immigrants and how they impact her life as an Algerian immigrant to France?	-Audio recorded group sessions	-Corroborating Questions - Member checking stories	-Field notes and journal -Memos	-Member checking stories, data analysis and interpretations
3. How does Imane use transnational identity and cultural understanding to navigate the multiple languages and cultures she encounters in her everyday life as an immigrant to France?	-Personal Interviews	-Audio recorded group sessions -Student work	-Field notes and journal -Memos	-Member checking stories, data analysis and interpretations

In addition to being a validation strategy, member-checking was also useful in avoiding what is known as narrative smoothing in the analysis and the writing up of the findings. Narrative smoothing is when the researcher, to present a good story, subjectively alters

the data to reflect what s/he wants to hear rather than present a faithful account of what the participant said (Kim, 2016, pp. 191-193).

### **Potential ethical issues**

The first ethical consideration is that of full disclosure of the purpose of this study and Imane's role in it. Imane's small stories were embedded in data that was collected from an exempt research protocol that I conducted with my own students which does not require signed consent. Additionally, France does not require signed consent for social science research, including educational studies. However, I considered doing a study without the participants' knowledge to be a potential ethical issue. Consequently, before beginning my project in 2018, I disclosed the purpose of the study with Imane, went over an informed consent statement with her both in English and in French and obtained both her and her mother's signature since she was a minor at that time. She was assigned the pseudonym *Imane*, and all the data was de-identified as soon as the audio recordings were transcribed, and the audio files were destroyed. It was made clear to her that her participation in the English study group was not contingent on her participation in the research project. In the subsequent years, her verbal consent to continue the project was obtained before I began collecting data. During her Zoom tutoring sessions, since Zoom does both an audio and video recording, I honored her request to destroy the video portion and only keep the audio file for transcription (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 53-58).

Another potential ethical issue relates to the relationship that I developed with the Imane over the course of the five years of this study and the personal nature of the stories that were shared. Even though this relationship is important so that she feels 'safe' in sharing personal details of her life with me as the researcher, it can pose a potential ethical problem if the boundaries of what information is to be included in the data are not established and

respected. This became more of an issue in my relationship with Imane as time progressed and she, at times, initiated personal phone calls and text messages outside the boundaries of our study sessions. I made an effort to simply not include the information that she shared outside of our study sessions in any of the data collection, including my field notes and observations. If she talked about something that could be of interest to the study, I invited her to develop the story in a study session or an interview that she knew I was recording but if she refused my invitation, I did not pursue the story. I kept a record of the text messages we exchanged via WhatsApp for the student work and articles she sent me and to refer to as a timeline of our study sessions and the occasional absence, but I did not use the personal messages as data (Kim, 2016, pp. 103-104).

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter I have presented my rationale for using small story analysis for this study with Imane, an Algerian Muslim immigrant to France. I have also summarized five step data analysis process proposed by Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2006) and how I incorporated reconstructive analysis to understand how Imane which stories and experiences seem to be personally significant to Imane and how she makes sense of them, how Imane positions herself in relation to dominant cultural perspectives and current discourse on immigrants, and how she uses her transnational identity and cultural understanding to navigate the multiple cultures discourses that she encounters in her everyday life as an immigrant to France. I also provided examples of each level of analysis using an excerpt from one of Imane's stories. In the next chapter, I will present Imane's stories in English and my findings.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

### **Introduction**

In a country “like France, where there is an established and accepted line between public and private spheres of life” (Keaton, 2006, p. 166), the complexity of Imane’s life and school experiences as an immigrant student is neither known nor understood outside of her community. I have chosen to use narrative inquiry to examine and present Imane’s stories to reveal her experiences and to promote an understanding of them to those outside of the French cultural context. In choosing to present her stories, I am assuming that they “reflect not only culture, ideology and socialization, they also provide insights into the political and historical climates impacting on the storyteller’s lives—like stones dropped into water, the ripples reach out in ever increasing circles” (Grbich, 2013, p. 221). While Imane’s experiences and stories are unique to her, they are “powerful with a potential to be subversive” (Gnanadass, Murray-Johnson, & Vetter, 2021, p. 41) because they create a counternarrative that disrupts the public immigrant narrative in France and “illuminate the issues of class, race, gender, and nationality” (p. 41).

### **Levels One and Two Findings**

Levels One and Two analysis were primarily concerned with analyzing the story itself, the characters, and the context in which it was told. Level One analysis examined the story design and themes. It asked the question: “Who are the characters and how are they relationally positioned? (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008, p. 385; Alexander, 2016, p. 8). Level Two analysis explored how the speaker narrated the story, managed the flow of the narration and the relationship between the participants in the conversation (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008, pp. 386, 388-389).

Imane's stories were told in the context of what Campano (2007) calls the "second classroom," small group settings and one-on-one interactions with me, as her teacher that occurred "beyond the immediate classroom walls, into homes and community spaces" (pp. 39-40). The study group and private tutoring contexts seemed to be an ideal place to nurture relationships, build community and provide a space for the second classroom to flourish which in turn facilitated an environment where she felt free to introduce the themes that interested her and to spontaneously tell her stories.

Imane's comfort level with sharing her stories seemed to increase over time. The first year that Imane came to the English study group sessions, the conversations mostly took the form of an interview with me asking questions and Imane and the other study group students, answering, often as briefly as possible. As time went on, while the conversations still resembled an interview, Imane seemed to become more comfortable with adding in her opinions, thoughts, and interpretations of the event she was telling me about, especially in situations where the other students were not present. Over the course of the study, I consistently attempted to relinquish my lead role as teacher and hand it over to Imane, encouraging her to speak freely and following her lead when she changed the topic of the conversation and introduced her own ideas. Eventually, Imane began to establish herself as my equal by taking the initiative to introduce themes related to wearing a veil and *laïcité*, at times disrupting the conversation by ignoring my questions or abruptly changing the subject of the conversation. She developed her themes by using herself as an example and exploring what it means to be a French Muslim woman. Another way that Imane established herself as an equal partner in the conversation was by adopting the informal form of you, "tu", instead of the formal "vous" which is an important cultural distinction in French.

### **Level Three Findings**

My Level Three analysis examined the content of Imane's stories and how she positioned herself in relation to dominant social and cultural discourses by seeking to answer the question, "Who am I in all this?" (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008, p. 391). In this level, I also incorporated reconstructive analysis to explore the power relations that construct the discourses impacting Imane's everyday life (Carspecken, 1996, p. 42).

To present my Level Three findings, I have chosen to retell Imane's stories by borrowing elements from the autobiography genre and writing them as first-person narrative accounts that are compilations of the story segments that Imane told over multiple sessions (Kim, 2016, pp. 123-125). In the original form Imane's stories are interspersed with clarifying questions, comments, and discussion between the two of us or with the other study group members. I have translated them from the original French and pieced them together from the various segments while eliminating the comments from the other conversation participants to achieve a narrative flow. In the autobiography genre "the story often discloses hidden details of the private life of a vulnerable self, highlighting emotional experience, to challenge the culturally dominant discourse" (p. 125). To illuminate these hidden details in Imane's life, I have taken a broad definition of what counts as Imane's stories to include her opinions, reflections, and comments on her experiences as well as the conversations that she often initiated about current events involving wearing a veil in France. I believe strongly in Imane's "right to exercise ownership of voice" (Gnanadass et al., 2021, p. 41). Thus, I have tried to retain her unique voice and way of speaking in my English translations. The stories are organized according to general themes and are titled using quotes from Imane in the original French. The English translation of the title is highlighted within the text of the story itself to place it in its context.

## Stories about wearing my veil

« *Nous, on vit partout le racisme* »

In France **we experience racism everywhere**. It can sometimes be displayed through aggressive behavior but is very often more subtle such as in the way people look at us. One time when I experienced racism was when I went to look for an internship. Along with my professional clothes, I also wore my veil. My teacher and a friend had recommended a certain shop to me. They told me that this shop accepts interns and would certainly hire me. I was determined to be accepted as an intern so I went with all my papers convinced that they would hire me. But the moment I entered the shop, the only response I received was ‘no.’ Actually that wasn’t the entire response. The entire response was ‘No, we don’t accept interns.’ They didn’t say that I’m not who they’re looking for, they said they don’t accept interns. I knew very well they took interns. Because I had some friends who had already done their internships in that same shop. But the only response they could give me was that they don’t accept interns. I know very well that the reason they said this was because they saw me with my veil.

Mostly the racism I’ve experienced has been through the way people see me. I finally found a shop to do my internship in. The shop owner was Jewish and had nothing in common with me. She could have decided to tell me no too. It would have been her right to do that. Instead, she accepted me, and she was really nice to me. She even let me wear my veil in her shop. When we finished our internships and returned to class the teachers asked us questions about where we had our internship and how it went. There was another person in my class, and do you know where she did her internship? In the first shop where they told me they don’t accept interns.

*« J'ai pas le choix. Je peux pas dire 'non.' »*

I started wearing my veil in middle school and there were actually several other girls in my class who also wore veils, at least three or four. But in my vocational high school, I was the only girl wearing a veil. That was because I was in vocational school. When girls are in middle school and they think about going to vocational school, they're going to think, "Ah! Vocational school is a good choice because there will be internships." But when a veiled girl thinks about vocational school, she's going to think, "Oh! No, I can't go to vocational school because there will be internships and class field trips and I will have to take off my veil. It's vocational school and we're going to meet professionals and I'll have to take it off." A veiled girl will have to think more about her veil than her future. But when I thought about going to vocational high school, I didn't think about all of that. I just thought, "It'll be fine. I'll see how it goes."

So, I wore my veil through my junior year and mostly, no one said anything about it. But at the beginning of my senior year there was a field trip that I wanted to go on. It was a class trip to a college and career fair where there were jobs to apply for like at McDonald's, community and technical colleges, and workshops on how to do things like write your CV. Well, since it was a class trip, they asked me to go without my veil from the school until the end of the trip. So, **I didn't have a choice. I couldn't really say 'no'**. At the entry to the college and career fair, I asked them again anyway if I could put it back on, but they told me to leave it off. They told me that wearing a veil isn't very professional. So, I took it off and left it off and I just really didn't feel like myself, but I didn't see that I had a choice or the ability to refuse. I just don't see why a veil bothers people. Even if it's related to my religion, I just don't understand why a little piece of veil bothers them. But I was stuck, and I told myself, "This is my last year and I have to pass my exams. I don't want to have any problems. I have a tendency to worry about things and

stress over them and I can't get caught up with this at the same time. There's going to be other field trips and other activities that interest me. If I'm veiled, I can't participate in anything. I'm going to have to put my future and my success ahead of my religion." Maybe what I told myself isn't good, but I wasn't strong enough or courageous enough to refuse to take it off.

On the other hand, I need to think about my future. I've always said that my goal is to finish my studies, find a good job and make my parents happy. I don't have rich parents who can leave me a business or land in Algeria or anything like that. I need to make my own way, so since I have to finish my studies, find a job and make my parents happy, I needed to go to vocational school and not let wearing my veil determine my choices. I'm obligated to put my religion... not aside because I'm still the same person and I still do my prayers... but I can't let my religion put up barriers for me.

In the large universities, girls can get away with wearing their veil because no one really cares what they do. I knew that I'd probably go to technical college where the classes are small, and the professors know everyone and see what we do. I didn't want them to judge me because I'm veiled. So, when I took off my veil, I thought that perhaps when I get to college and I see what happens and how people are or maybe if I find an internship quickly, I might eventually put my veil back on. I told myself that if not, later on when I have a stable life and a good job, I could someday put it back on. Perhaps if I work in a small business and I get to know my colleagues and they respect me, they wouldn't judge me if I started wearing my veil again. It wouldn't be the same thing as when I was in vocational school. In the future, my colleagues would be adults and more mature so they wouldn't judge me for wearing a veil. So, I waited to see how it went and if I'd have the opportunity in the future to ask for the right to put it back on. Now I attend a private college and they don't seem to care if I wear a veil, so I put it back on. I

did have one professor who was very open about being an atheist, tell me that since I'm an intelligent woman, it's too bad I wear a veil, but in general, at my college no one seems to care. I'm doing my internship in a store, and they don't care if I wear my veil either. When I think back on my last year in high school, I can see that I was young. I regret certain things. Now I don't agree that I had to choose my future over my religion and would do it differently if I could.

### **Stories about what I think of my experiences**

*« Je peux pas être hypocrite avec le Dieu... C'est pas un jeu. »*

I'm not sure what my teachers thought when I took off my veil. They really didn't say anything but that might be because we don't have the right to talk about religion in school. Maybe they just thought that it's normal, she can wear it when she wants, or she can take it off when she wants.

As far as other people go, I was a little bit uncomfortable because people can misunderstand. Quite often when a woman takes off her veil it means that she is no longer practicing her religion and I didn't want them to think that. On the other hand, I'm not someone who thinks that I must explain myself to others. There are some people that I want to understand but with most people, it's none of their business. For those people, if they saw me outside and commented on it, I would respond, "Yes, I did, and my reasons are my own business." In the end, I still pray, I'm still the same person, I haven't changed. Taking off my veil doesn't give me the right to do what I want like going out or hanging out with guys.

But even though I don't care what other people think about me having a piece of material around my face, I do care about what my family thinks, especially the men in my family. My father. I respect my father and I'm not just going to do whatever I want. But my father didn't say anything at all. He's not a person who talks about his feelings much. The only person he really

talks to is my mother. If he has something against you, he'll tell my mother and she'll come tell you. He's just not someone who shows how he feels. So, I have no idea what he thinks about it. We've never spoken about it. My mother most likely explained it to him. She most likely told him that I needed to finish my last year and take my exams with no problems, so I took it off. But since I've never talked to him about it, I have no idea what he thinks. But when I go somewhere with him, I wear a turban to cover my head out of respect for him. I can't just put my veil back on when I'm with him just to please him. **I can't be a hypocrite with God. It's not a game.** You can't just put it on or take it off when you feel like it. But for my father, to show him respect, I at least wear a turban. But my father, he knows very well what I'm worth. He knows that I'm not just going to start going out and doing whatever I want. He trusts me.

Even though I haven't explained myself to my teachers or other people, I do have some friends who understand. I told the whole story to some of my friends that I see every day. I think that's normal because we see each other all the time and they would wonder what happened. I'm actually surprised though because I took it off in September. Now it's March and since September no one has really commented on the fact that I no longer wear my veil. I've seen other women who took off their veil, and honestly, other people harassed them about it and insulted them. I guess it's because I've always been a good girl, the veiled girl who wouldn't do this or that. Taking off my veil could have shocked them because they could have said, "Oh, we never thought she would be like that!" They could have thought about other girls who took off their veils because they wanted to go out and party and everything but with me, because of who I am and the fact that I'm still a good girl, no one has insulted me because I took off my veil. Even the people at school that I don't like, because it's normal to have some people that you don't like,

even those people haven't said much of anything to me. Some of them might ask me why but no, they've never harassed me about it.

*« C'est catastrophique parce qu'en fait, ils sont pas claires »*

If I were the minister of education, I would change everything. I would change everything because it's not just that we're in France that everything is fine. Just because we have schools and we learn things, it doesn't mean that all the schools are good schools. I'm not complaining about my school, I think it's a good school even though it's a vocational high school. Some people think that the vocational schools aren't that good but not my school. In my school we have to put together portfolios and have oral exams and everything. But what I don't like is that there are courses that are useless. That could just be my opinion because there are some students that don't understand some of the courses, for example the language courses. But for me, I would rather you just give me the documents, about segregation for example, and the next day you can give me a text and I'll present it. We don't need an entire trimester to talk about segregation. For me, I understood segregation from the first day. They could have taught about it one day and given me the documents and the next day I could have written a text and presented it.

And when it comes to religion **it's catastrophic because in fact, they aren't very clear.** They aren't clear on when we should talk about it and when we shouldn't. Either they should accept religion and talk about it or take it out of every subject because now they say we shouldn't talk about it but then it's part of every subject. For example, when we talked about segregation, we had to talk about slavery, we had to talk about religion, we had to talk about the difference between a secular person, a Muslim, and a Christian. But that's talking about religion! I don't see why they talk about *laïcité* and the fact that we can't talk about religion and then in all of the

texts, in all of the themes we find religion. In French class we had to talk about an Indian girl who wanted to play soccer, but her parents didn't want her to, they wanted her to get married. I don't think it's appropriate to talk about how someone is raised. Perhaps the girl did want to play soccer, that's normal. But that doesn't mean her parents didn't let her. That doesn't mean that in Pakistan they don't live well. In fact, they talk about religion, and they criticize and talk badly about Arab and Muslim countries, and they then talk about *laïcité* as if we shouldn't talk about religion. Everyone has their own religion, and they don't want us to talk about our religion or to even show it and they're the first to talk about religion. Someone can be interested in religion and still let people do what they want. I'm that way. I think that everyone has their religion, and they can practice it like they want. But they say we shouldn't talk about religion and then they identify me as Imane, the Arabic girl not Imane who lives in La Garenne Colombes. It's always Imane, the Arabic girl. And when there's a terrorist attack, even when it's by someone who has French citizenship, even on the news, they don't say that the person is a French citizen, they say it's Mohammed who has Moroccan, Algerian or Tunisian origins. But he's French, he's a French citizen.

I don't think they're talking about legal citizenship. They talk about *laïcité*, freedom, and how we're all welcome in France. They say that we're all French citizens, we're the youth and the future of France. Then when it's something like terrorism, they are ashamed to say the person is French. It's just because the person is a terrorist that they say he's Moroccan, Tunisian, or Algerian. You could say that but he's first a French citizen. And after all, a terrorist isn't necessarily a Muslim terrorist. A terrorist is someone who terrorizes other people, that's what a terrorist is. What happened recently at the mosque, it was a terrorist. It was someone who went to kill people. Logically, that's what it is for me. Yes, there are differences but in the end it's

still a terrorist, it's someone who is mentally sick. Even if no one knew he was sick, it's someone who is handicapped or maybe he is a racist. But he's still a terrorist. When they say that it was a terrorist, they mean that it was a Muslim terrorist when that's not what the word terrorist means. So, when we do something good, they call us French but when we do something bad, we're Arabs. That's what I don't understand. So, they're not clear in their thoughts, the people who say in their discourse that we're free and that we're all French. Macron always says that we're all French, we're all united. Then as soon as something happens that isn't good, it's the Blacks and the Arabs who make a mess of things.

So, I know that even though I'm French because I wasn't born in France, I'm not really French. I have French citizenship because my mother was French and born in France. I can't really say that I'm French, only French on paper, because I wasn't born here. What I don't understand is why someone who was born, lived and grew up in France is considered to be a different person.

### **Stories about conversations with my teachers about *laïcité***

**« *Pourquoi elle a le droit de porter sa croix et moi, je n'ai pas le droit de porter mon voile.* »**

I remember a conversation that I had with a teacher about wearing my veil in school when I was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Rosa Parks Middle School. In our class we were talking about *laïcité*. There was a girl in class with me, a Black Christian girl and she was wearing a little cross necklace, but I don't remember if I had already started wearing my veil that year or not. So, we were talking about that, about *laïcité*, and I spoke up. I said, "We're in a public place, as you say, we're in a public school. I don't see **why she has the right to wear her cross and I, as a Muslim, I don't have the right to wear my veil.**" She told me that it's because we can't really

see the cross very well, not like a veil. We can only see the cross if we get close to her. She can also hide her cross, but I wouldn't be able to hide my veil.

**« *La société française, elle oblige la femme à se dévoiler* »**

I was talking to my French teacher about *laïcité* this morning. We were talking about *laïcité* in Europe, which countries allow women to wear a veil. There was England where woman can veil. There was America where women wear veils to work. France is the only country that doesn't let women wear veils. And I asked my teacher what the problem is. She said that it's because France is a secular country. So, I told her, "But what is *laïcité*? For me it's the freedom to have your own religion, to have your own culture and traditions. No one can tell me what I should do to be a good person." And after she told me that maybe in private businesses you can wear it. It will depend on the boss. But that in any case, we can't wear veils in schools. But in the schools, they are the first ones to talk about religion and the first ones to talk about *laïcité* in their religion classes. Then they don't allow men and women to wear symbols of their religion. I just don't understand how they interpret this word in France. So, for me, *laïcité* means to have freedom of religion and to practice my own religion the way I want. I would certainly not talk about it in public or try to convert people, but I don't understand why it bothers people so much to see a girl wearing a veil or a Jewish boy wearing a kippah. And the fact that the French or Europeans see the veil as an obligation when they obligate us as well. They say that the Arabs, the Muslims obligate their girls or their wives to wear a veil when in fact, **French society obligates women to take off their veil**. For me *laïcité* means to have a choice. Personally, I encourage all the women who wear a veil in France to have the courage to keep it on all the time. Even though I didn't have enough courage and took mine off because I couldn't accept only wearing it sometimes and taking it off at certain times like when I was in

school or when I was doing sports. My opinion is that it doesn't mean anything to wear the veil when I'm away from home if I take it off in places like school or the gym where I don't have enough courage to keep it on. But it's not just about religion, I think that there are no individual rights in this country and that even if Islam didn't exist, there would still be this kind of problem.

I don't think that I'm the only person who thinks this way. I think that there is a big percentage of people who also share my opinion. In any case, today in class with the teacher, she was all alone. She kept saying how France is *laïque* (secular) and that it's a good way to have a good society, that the politicians do their work well and stuff like that. But no one agreed with her, not even the non-Muslims. They also don't understand why Muslims bother the French and so they put barriers in place against them. So, while the other students agree with me, they don't say anything, they don't have the courage to speak up about it like I do. After all, how will speaking up change anything. It's been this way for hundreds of years and I'm not just talking about Islam, I'm talking about all the religions. More recently, people have been fighting for the right to express their religion for twenty years or so. You see it on YouTube, veiled women or a Jewish man talking against a politician. It's been years and there is still no change. I think that all the other countries are making progress, except Italy where no one has the right to wear a veil or a kippah. But I think that France doesn't want to change or make progress because it's been years and years that we've been asking for this right and there hasn't been any change.

### **Stories about what I think about current events**

**« *Je vois pas la lumière au bout du tunnel.* »**

I can't see at all, like we say in French, **I can't see the light at the end of the tunnel.** It isn't there at all. Because right now, I'm watching a lot of debates on television. They talk, talk, talk and people are dying. 3000 people, 20,000 people are dying outside and they're only talking

about the veil, about the girls, about, about.... For me that's not what's killing people. That's not what's taking people's lives. It's not the veil that's killing people. It's the Corona virus that's killing people, not the veil. If anything will ever change in France, they need to let people do what they want. If someone wants to go out dressed up, they can go out all dressed up. If someone wants to go out wearing a veil, they go out wearing a veil. If someone wants to talk to me about *laïcité*, well, for me *laïcité* is having the freedom to practice your religion. On the other hand, they should have the freedom with respect, I agree with that. People should be respectful. I'm not saying that I'll pray outside in front of people or yell out "*Allahu akbar*" in front of everyone, but other than that everyone should be able to live in peace, everyone should be equal and to accept that we are all living in peace and that despite our origins, we're all French.

So, I don't know if you know about the girl who is in the National Student Union. She's been on the news, in the newspaper Charlie Hebdo and everything. She's in charge of the Union or something because every time there is a debate that involves the students, she has to be there to represent them. But whenever she's there, their only concern is that she comes wearing a veil. It's crazy! Whenever I see that I think that there's something wrong with these people. She's there in the meeting because they're talking about the situation with the students. There are students who are dying of hunger, who don't even have one euro to buy groceries and they don't have scholarships. Everything is closed so they've lost their part-time jobs. So, then they can't pay their rent and they lose their housing. The students don't have enough to eat, and their only worry is that the student representative is wearing a veil. They said that either she needs to take off her veil or she should leave the room. But the person in charge of the reunion said that she could stay and if people didn't like it, they could leave. So, for the past three weeks, that's all

they've been talking about on the news. There was even a debate on television about it and people were saying that she really should have taken off her veil. But that's not the problem! That's not why they were at the meeting. They were there to talk about the students, the ones who are hungry because of the Corona virus. The ones who lost their summer jobs. Even where I work at the store there are students who work a few hours a week and they all lost their jobs. They have short-term contracts, and the store doesn't have enough money to pay them, so they all left. The only ones left are the interns like me and the ones who have long-term contracts. It's the same at McDonald's. They've let all their short-term workers go. The students don't have enough money to live and there, their only concern is that there's a girl in the room who's wearing a veil.

*« Comme si ils m'interdisent de m'habiller. »*

France has a real problem. The government officials have something really wrong with them. We still have important problems related to Covid like with the vaccines and the hospitals not having enough beds, but do you know what they're talking about? The veil and Islam. Yesterday, I heard that they passed a law to forbid anyone from flying any flag other than the French flag. During soccer matches it's not just the Algerians who fly their flag, the Portuguese do it too. The politicians really have something wrong with them. They also outlawed minors from wearing a veil and veiled moms who want to accompany their kids on class field trips. They're not allowed to wear a veil when they go with the kids on class trips. But to forbid minors from wearing a veil? How many minors actually wear a veil? People are still dying from Covid, and they pass a law like this. The next thing you know they will attack the adults. It's ridiculous. Macron forgets, or doesn't care, that next year we'll have an election, and we'll vote

either for or against him. It's too bad for the minors, poor things. I'm glad that I'm older than 18 but it's still ridiculous. **It's like they're telling me I can't get dressed.**

*« J'ai envie d'être moi-même dans un pays où je pourrais dire comme je veux, pas de jugement, pas avoir peur. »*

I can't complain about the education I've received in France. I think that France does a good job with that especially since it's free. I don't have to pay for my studies like students do in other countries such as America. I like my program and that I alternate between my studies and my internship so that not only is my education free, I also get a small salary. When I graduate, I'll receive a diploma that will be recognized around the world. So, there are positive aspects to living here and I'm not complaining. Unfortunately, there are also a lot of aspects that make me feel like I can't be myself here. **I would like to be myself in a country where I could say what I want, no judgement, no being afraid.** To be honest, I know of several girls who have been physically assaulted because they're wearing a veil in public and they're not the only ones. Many girls wearing a veil these days are publicly harassed. My friend told me recently that one time when she was on the Champs Elysée, a woman shoved her. I'm lucky because I haven't experienced physical violence, but people have verbally harassed me. They say mean things and they judge me. They ask me stupid questions like, « Oh, are you wearing it because your dad makes you or because you want to?» I don't like that very much. So, even though I'm receiving a good education and I'm in a good school and get good grades, I think that I would prefer to work for myself. I don't want to work for someone who might harass me or judge me or tell me what I can wear. However, I might not be able to stay in France if I want to have my own business. The taxes here for entrepreneurs and small businesses are awful. I think they're something like 60% when in other countries they're more like 1%-2%.

## Summary

Through Imane’s stories and in the context that she told them, I have attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the stories and experiences that are personally significant to Imane and how does she make sense of them?
2. What do Imane’s stories reveal about French cultural perspectives and current discourse on immigrants and how they impact her life as an Algerian immigrant to France?
3. How does Imane use her transnational identity and cultural understanding to navigate the multiple languages and cultures she encounters in her everyday life as an immigrant to France?

Table 4.1 Story Themes and Research Questions

<b>General Themes</b>	<b>Stories about wearing my veil</b>	<b>Stories about what I think of my experiences</b>	<b>Stories about conversations with my teachers about laïcité</b>	<b>Stories about what I think about current events</b>
<b>Stories</b>	<p>-Nous, on vit partout le racisme. (We experience racism everywhere).</p> <p>-J’ai pas le choix. Je peux pas dire « non. » (I didn’t have a choice. I couldn’t really say ‘no’).</p>	<p>-Je peux pas être hypocrite avec le Dieu... C’est pas un jeu. (I can’t be a hypocrite with God... It’s not a game).</p> <p>-C’est catastrophique parce qu’en fait, ils sont pas claires. (It’s catastrophic because in fact, they</p>	<p>- Pourquoi elle a le droit de porter sa croix et moi, ... je n’ai pas le droit de porter mon voile. (Why she has the right to wear her cross and I, ... I don’t have the right to wear my veil).</p> <p>-La société française, elle oblige la femme à se dévoiler. (French society obligates women</p>	<p>- Je vois pas du tout la lumière au bout du tunnel. (I can’t see the light at the end of the tunnel).</p> <p>-Comme si ils m’interdisent de m’habiller. (It’s like they’re telling me I can’t get dressed).</p> <p>-J’ai envie d’être moi-même dans un pays où je pourrais dire comme je veux</p>

		aren't very clear).	to take off their veil).	pas de jugement, pas avoir peur. (I would like to be myself in a country where I could say what I want, no judgement, no being afraid).
<b>Research Questions</b>	Research Question 1: What are the stories and experiences that are personally significant to Imane...			
		Research Question 1: ...and how does she make sense of them?		
			Research Question 2: What do Imane's stories reveal about French cultural perspectives and current discourse on immigrants and how they impact her life as an Algerian immigrant to France?	
	Research Question 3: How does Imane use her transnational identity and cultural understanding to navigate the multiple languages and cultures she encounters in her everyday life as an immigrant to France?			

Imane seems to find the most personal significance in the stories about her personal experiences and current events that are related to wearing a veil and the subject of *laïcité* in France. She seems to try to make sense of them by verbally analyzing the experience itself and what it means to her personally as a Muslim woman in France. Her stories seem to reveal that current French discourse about immigration centers around Muslim immigrants and portrays them as not adhering to *laïcité* while often linking them with terrorism. For Imane, wearing her veil seems to be an outward expression of this and her choices to both wear her veil and to remove it have impacted her educational experiences and mandatory internships. French public discourse about women who wear veils also has the potential to influence her future decisions

about her career and where she will live. Imane seems to use her transnational identity and cultural understanding in her analysis and interpretation of both her personal experiences and the current events that she reads and hears about on the internet. Her transnationality helps her to re-define French cultural values such as *laïcité* and her understanding of what it means to be French and to apply them to her own sense of identity. It also seems to give her the ability to take a critical stance and talk back against French cultural values and discourse centered around current events as well as the power dynamics revealed through events themselves. Her transnational identity and her understanding of cultural values and ways of knowing outside of the French context, while perhaps marginalized in school, gave her a point of reference for examining what she was being taught and empowered her to form her own thoughts and opinions (Moje & Lewis, 2007, p. 23). In the final chapter I will further discuss my research questions, reflect on how my findings have impacted my life and teaching as well as talk about possible next steps.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

### Introduction

Imane, as a young Muslim woman in France, has faced many challenging situations centered around her choices for wearing her veil and the social expectation to publicly comply with the principle of *laïcité* as a sign of her integration into French society. At school, she was “placed in an often unfathomable position of sifting through course content, adhering to tasks, or being exposed to information that conflicts with or invites confusion about what ... is expected of [her]... in secular schools and societies” (Keaton, 2006, p. 146), often without help. It was in the “second classroom” context of our private conversations, study group and personal tutoring sessions that she was able to tell her stories and make sense of her experiences (Campano, 2007, pp. 39-40). In this chapter, I will discuss my research questions and how Imane’s stories and my relationship with her have transformed my thinking and impacted my teaching practice.

#### **He knows very well what I’m worth.**

My first research question is: What are the stories and experiences that are personally significant to Imane and how does she make sense of them? The experiences that Imane seemed to consistently return to in her stories were those related to wearing a veil in France. She told stories from her personal experiences both at school and school-related activities such as field trips and internship job interviews. She also demonstrated a personal interest in the events related to *laïcité* and wearing a veil that were making the national news. As she told stories about these events, she would often switch mid-story from using the pronouns “she” and “they” to using the pronouns “I” and “we” as if she was personally present in the story. These stories and the stories she told about conversations with her teachers revealed a “Us” versus “Them” mentality centered around the cultural value of *laïcité*, and Muslim women who fail to comply

with this principle by wearing a veil in public. To be perceived as a “good” French citizen, she felt required to adhere to the cultural definition of *laïcité* as public neutrality, which then allowed her to integrate into the majority culture of “us.” Wearing a veil as an external symbol of her religion violated this cultural value and excluded her from cultural belonging, placing her into the minority group of “them” despite her legal French citizenship from birth (Delanty, 2006, p. 30). This focus on both her own experiences wearing a veil and other Muslim students’ experiences suggests that she was struggling with the dilemma of belonging, what determines one’s value or worth and what that meant for her as a Muslim woman in France (Jimenez et al., 2009, p. 24). Since wearing a veil was something that she could choose, this meant that her dilemma became focused on whether her worth lay in her compliance with majority cultural expectations of what it means to be a “good” French citizen or whether it lay in resisting the dominant culture to be what she perceived was a “good” Muslim and wearing her veil. This seemed to cause her a lot of personal anguish as she weighed the pros and cons of wearing a veil and seemed to be summarized in her description of her relationship with her father, whose opinion was very important to her but with whom she did not discuss her dilemma. In this relationship, Imane attempted to comply with the principle of *laïcité* by removing her veil in public while simultaneously showing respect to her father by covering her hair with a turban when she was out in public with him. After discussing at length how her father might perceive her now that she was no longer wearing a veil, the religious practices she continued to observe, and her public reputation as a “good” girl, her conclusion was that her father knew her worth and that he trusted her whether she was wearing a veil or not. This suggests Imane’s social act of wearing or not wearing a veil, tempered by the compromise of wearing a turban when she was in public with her father, became the outward manifestation of her struggle to balance her French

secular identity at school with her Muslim identity at home and in her community (Keaton, 2006, p. 146). The act of putting her veil back on when she was given permission suggests that her personal sense of belonging seemed to resist the idea that her worth depended on being a “good” French citizen with a secular identity and values. Instead, her sense of belonging seemed to be linked to what it meant to be a “good” person who could be both Muslim and French and respectful and tolerant of other people’s differences (Carspecken & Cordeiro, 1995, pp. 91-92).

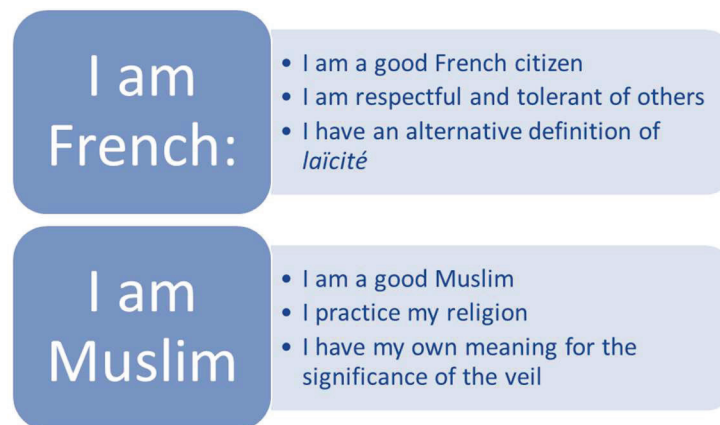


Figure 5.1: Being both French and Muslim

My findings suggest that Imane used talk to make sense of her experiences when she would use a short story as a catalyst to verbally explore her ideas, often giving detailed descriptions to support them. Embedded within this finding, another, more subtle story was revealed, one that was woven throughout the telling of Imane’s small stories. This story was our story, the story of my relationship with Imane and the role it played in shaping the telling of her stories (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 214). It was in the context of our relationship, first as student-teacher, later as equals, that Imane would recount what had happened to her or what she had been listening to or reading about in the media. In an environment where she seemed to feel safe and accepted, she would begin to verbally analyze her experiences by attempting to understand them from the French perspective, talking through what her point of view was and trying to

reconcile the two. My deliberate effort to step back from my role as teacher and facilitate her talk was in contrast to her teachers at school who would respond to her questions with scripted answers such as “This is France. We’re secular.” This would effectively shut down her talk and questions in the classroom (Sanchez & Kasun, 2012, p. 84; Garcia, 2009, p. 152). When she brought those same questions to the English study sessions, I would encourage her talk, make supporting comments, and ask clarifying questions. As time went on, she would increasingly take opportunities to introduce the themes and stories that interested her. However, this most often happened when we were alone, in the times before class and during private conversations when the other students were absent (Campano, 2007, pp. 39-40). The third year, after we moved to private Zoom sessions, she took the liberty to place herself on equal status with me in both the language she used (informal use of *tu/you*) and in the way she would often ignore the question or theme I was introducing and take up her own theme. Here again, rather than shut her down and insist on my role as teacher, I encouraged this behavior and let go of any power I might have by letting her choose when she talked, what she talked about and even what she wanted to study in English. This suggests that the relationship I deliberately established with her became a vital element in creating a safe place for Imane to make sense of her experiences by talking through her stories and establishing her sense of “Who am I?” as a female Algerian Muslim in France.

### **France is a secular country.**

My second research question is: What do Imane’s stories reveal about French cultural perspectives and current discourse on immigrants and how they impact her life as an Algerian immigrant to France? Much of Imane’s stories and talk about French discourse was specifically centered around public discourse about Muslims which she supported by stories of her personal experiences and what she was seeing and hearing in the media about women wearing veils in

public. Going by what she heard from the media, she seemed to feel that France misunderstood her culture and her religion. From her perspective, there seemed to be a certain amount of hypocrisy in a system that claims, “the Arabs, the Muslims obligate their girls or their wives to wear a veil” when from Imane’s perspective, “French society obligates women to take off their veil.” For Imane, the government and the media’s apparent obsession with Islam and women wearing veils and their misunderstanding of the culture resulted in a negative portrayal of them as the source of the country’s problems (Bilge, 2010, pp. 15-16; Amiraux, 2013, p. 794). This negative perception seemed to have direct consequences on Imane’s life by influencing how others perceived her both in public and in her school context. In the public context, although she had been verbally harassed, she expressed gratitude that she had not experienced physical harassment, like her friend who was physically shoved in public while walking along the Champs Elysée, a well-known boulevard in Paris.

In the school context, she referred to conversations with her teachers about *laïcité* and specifically wearing a veil. In middle school her teacher told her that while it was acceptable for her friend to wear a small cross necklace because it could be hidden, it was not acceptable for her to wear a veil because she could not hide it. Later, in her vocational high school, she was told that wearing a veil was not professional. She seemed to be genuinely confused by the discourse on *laïcité* because on the one hand, she was told that she could not talk about religion or wear her veil but on the other hand, the subject of religion came up in various classes at school. When she asked her teacher about this, the teacher said that

“it’s because France is a secular country... And after she told me that maybe in private businesses you can wear it. It will depend on the boss. But that in any case, we can’t wear veils in schools. But in the schools, they are the first ones to talk about religion and the first ones to talk about *laïcité* in their religion classes. Then they don’t allow men and women to wear symbols of their religion.”  
(English translation mine)

Her conversations with her teachers and the reactions of those around her illustrate the different power relationships and how they impact Imane's everyday life. The government, by passing laws that regulate when and where Muslim women can wear a veil, exercises the power to impose French societal and cultural values on its population (Bertossi, 2012b, p. 251). Imane's teachers brought these broader societal power relationships down to a local level that impacted her life by enforcing these values and refusing to let her participate in a school event wearing her veil (Fuller, 2018, p. 8). These power relations between France, school via her teachers, and Imane as an immigrant student resulted in "discourses and practices that exacerbate misunderstandings and inequities between people and groups of people and serves as a barrier to educational initiatives that promote open and equitable engagement" (Hawkins, 2014, p. 91).

Imane's experiences with wearing her veil, her conversations with her teachers about the veil and *laïcité*, and the public discourse about Muslims from the government and in the media also have the potential to influence Imane's future decisions for continuing her education, her career path, and even where she will live. In high school, Imane seemed to have hope that she could one day put her veil back on. She seemed to think that after she finishes her studies and gets a job, if she has the right co-workers and establishes a good relationship with them, they might allow her to wear her veil at work. This did, in fact, happen sooner than she had hoped. The final year of the study she was attending a private college and had her internship in a company where she was allowed to wear her veil. However, even then, she expressed the feeling that in France she did not feel as if she could be herself. Imane seemed to have very little hope that France could change because she did not seem think that France wanted to change. So even given the opportunity to resume wearing her veil, she expressed the desire to "be myself in a country where I can say what I want, no judgement, no being afraid" even if it means eventually

leaving France and living somewhere else. That Imane’s ability to wear her veil in public is not determined by her own personal values and beliefs but by the tolerance displayed by those around her demonstrates the power of *laïcité* in French society and its goal of “cultural domination instead of neutrality and equality” (Bertossi, 2012b, p. 251). It suggests that Imane continued to feel unsafe and insecure about her right to religious freedom because she knew that at any moment, this right could be taken from her.

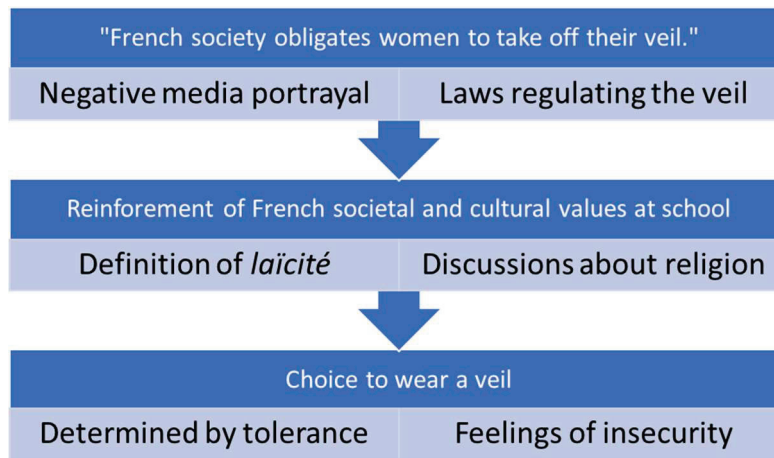


Figure 5.2: Hierarchy of Power

### We are all French

My third research question is: How does Imane use her transnational identity and cultural understanding to navigate the multiple languages and cultures she encounters in her everyday life as an immigrant to France? Imane’s transnational identity gives her a cultural flexibility and a sense of global citizenship. They produced a dichotomy in her sense of belonging which on the one hand permitted her to say, “we are all French” but also compelled her to admit that she was “not really French.” Her transnational cultural understanding gave her a comprehension of French and non-French cultural values and other ways of knowing which she used to take a critical stance and create a counternarrative to the typical immigrant narrative found in French cultural values and anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim discourse.

### **A piece of material around my face.**

Since Imane's life spans Algeria and France, she has acquired the knowledge and skills to thrive in both countries and cultures. This has given her a cultural flexibility and ability to adapt to her social environment (Sanchez, 2007, pp. 490-492; 503). She demonstrated this in her willingness to negotiate the meanings of both the Muslim veil and *laïcité*. While in French culture the veil is interpreted as a religious symbol that should not be displayed in public, in her community it serves to identify the "good" girls who neither go out with boys nor party. Imane renegotiated the meaning of the veil as a piece of material that she could choose to wear around her face or leave off but that did not inherently change who she was or how she behaved. She renegotiated the meaning of *laïcité*, which French society interprets as public religious neutrality, as the freedom to practice her religion in peace. In redefining these two key aspects of her life, Imane was able to adapt to the demands of both French society and her Muslim community by taking off her veil when it was required, putting it back on the following year when she received permission to do so and showing that she could present herself as both a responsible French citizen and a practicing Muslim woman (Carspecken & Cordeiro, 1995, pp. 91-92).

### **Not really French.**

Imane used her transnational identity and cultural understanding to explore the idea of citizenship, belonging and what that means for her as a citizen of two countries and a member of multiple social groups. She demonstrated this in her story of an article she had studied in French class about an Indian girl who wanted to play soccer against her parents' wishes. Implying that her French teacher portrayed the girl's parents as inferior because they did not practice *laïcité* and by unfairly criticizing their country's culture, beliefs, and practices, she displayed a global vision and loyalty to humanity by defending other countries' universal right to have their own

culture, beliefs, and ways of knowing, especially Arabs and Muslims. She supported her arguments with her own personal experience of being marginalized and her understanding of public discourse on *laïcité* and citizenship. This suggests that she was interpreting the article through the lens of her understanding of global citizenship (Sanchez, 2007, pp. 490-492; Lam, 2006, p. 230). It also suggests that her transnational identity and cultural flexibility have given her the ability to live in her local context and acquire local literacy practices while retaining a global perspective (Bean & Dunkerly-Bean, 2015, p. 49).

Imane also used her transnational identity and cultural understanding to delve into the concept of what it means to be a French citizen, who determines the criteria, and the apparent hypocrisy of the French government and society on citizenship. Recognizing that France possesses the power to decide the official policies regarding immigration, citizenship, and the discourse about who is considered French or not regardless of their actual legal status (Lam & Warriner, 2012, p. 195), Imane seemed to feel that the discourse was very situational. She said:

“They talk about *laïcité*, freedom, and how we’re all welcome in France. They say that we’re all French citizens, we’re the youth and the future of France. Then when it’s something like terrorism, they are ashamed to say the person is French. It’s just because the person is a terrorist that they say he’s Moroccan, Tunisian, or Algerian. You could say that but he’s first a French citizen.... Macron always says that we’re all French, we’re all united. Then as soon as something happens that isn’t good, it’s the Blacks and the Arabs who make a mess of things” (English translation mine).

Imane personalized her general theories about how legal citizenship does not equal being considered French by explaining that although she is legally a French citizen by birth, since she was born in Algeria, she was “not really French.”

While Imane’s words suggest that she might feel excluded from French society, her discussion about why she made the decision to remove her veil and who she talked to about it revealed her cultural flexibility and her ability to adapt to multiple social, cultural, and linguistic

contexts. In the secular school context, her sense of belonging was dependent on her adherence to French cultural values while in her home context it seemed to be contingent on her father's acceptance of her and his trust in her ability to behave appropriately according to him. In her community her membership seemed to be based on her reputation as a 'good' girl. In each of these contexts, she had a role that she was expected to assume giving her multiple, contextualized identities. She used her transnationality to make sense of who she was, to present her identities to her teachers, family, and community members, and to position herself in relation to them (Sanchez & Kasun, 2012, pp. 85-86). As a twenty-one-year-old, when she thought about some of the decisions she had made as a seventeen- and eighteen-year-old, she said that she realized that she was young and regretted some of her reasonings. This suggests that her identities have not remained static but have changed and developed over time as she has participated in other contexts and made sense of her new experiences (Moje & Luke, 2009, pp. 417-419).

### **France has a real problem.**

Imane's transnational cultural understanding seemed to give her the ability to examine national events and discourse about Muslims and to take a critical stance in her interpretation of them. On multiple occasions Imane introduced stories about national events that were taking place. One such occasion was her discussion of the discourse surrounding Maryam Pougetoux wearing a veil to the French National Assembly in September 2020. This was during the Covid 19 pandemic and students were in crisis due to lack of job opportunities. Taking a critical stance against the French media for their seeming obsession with Pougetoux's veil while ignoring the students' financial crises, Imane says:

“So, for the past three weeks, that's all they've been talking about on the news. There was even a debate on television about it and people were saying that she

really should have taken off her veil. But that's not the problem! That's not why they were at the meeting. They were there to talk about the students, the ones who are hungry because of the Corona virus. The ones who lost their summer jobs" (English translation mine).

The following year when France was struggling to roll out its Covid vaccination program, Imane seemed to be very disturbed by a law that was passed forbidding people from displaying any flag other than the French flag. This same law outlawed minors from wearing a veil as well as prohibited veiled mothers from accompanying their child on class trips. She took a critical stance against the government saying,

"France has a real problem. The government officials have something really wrong with them. We still have important problems related to Covid like with the vaccines and the hospitals not having enough beds, but do you know what they're talking about? The veil and Islam" (English translation mine).

She seemed to personally identify with minors and veiled mothers when she said, "It's like they are telling me I can't get dressed." This suggests that her transnational identity and cultural understanding have given her an awareness of the power relations in France that shape her everyday life and the ability to critique them (Sanchez, 2004 as cited in Sanchez, 2007, p. 493).



*Figure 5.3: Creating a counternarrative*

## **My Reflections**

Over the course of this study and the years of working with Imane, her stories about her life as a young Algerian, Muslim immigrant woman in France have transformed my perception of her. During my analysis and review of my findings, many of my reflections have been on the power of story and the power of relationship.

### **The power of story.**

As I analyzed Imane's stories and reflected on my findings, I noticed the power of story in Imane's life. It was through stories that Imane communicated who she was both to me and to herself. While she participated in the English learning activities that I proposed and answered my questions about her life as an immigrant in France, it was the stories that she told spontaneously in conversations with me about her everyday life that she seemed to be using to communicate who she was (Vasquez, 2011, pp. 537-538). Through her stories I not only learned about her culture, values, beliefs, family socialization, and how the political climate in France affects her life (Grbich, 2013 p. 221), but how I also learned to know who she is as a person. Talking through her stories with me seemed to be how she attempted to make sense of her experiences and the cultural expectations that were placed on her by her various social groups (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 213).

As a transnational American I have had my own experiences with trying to make sense of French cultural values. Because of this as well as the length of time I had been working and living in a community with a majority North African and Muslim population and the friendships I had previously formed with immigrant women, I was predisposed to accept her veil and her beliefs without expecting her to conform to French societal values. Despite this, when I first met Imane wearing her veil, I still made certain assumptions that she would be more conservative in

her thoughts and less tolerant of other people's values and beliefs. These assumptions were based on my own notions of what a veil symbolizes formed from my prior experiences with young women who chose to wear their veil. In fact, I came to see that Imane considered her veil to be purely her own personal choice and was very curious about other cultures, belief systems and values. Imane's stories, both those that I elicited as her teacher and those that she spontaneously told me were the transformative tool that shattered my assumptions and completely changed my perception of her (Gnanadass, 2021, pp. 41-42).

### **The power of relationship.**

The power that Imane's stories have had in transforming my perception of her is grounded in the context of the relationship between us which influenced the stories she chose to tell and when she chose to tell them (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 214). Many of Imane's stories referenced her struggles during her school years and seemed to be less about learning the required educational content and more about her identity formation as a young Muslim immigrant woman in France. In my findings, I found a link between Imane's educational experiences and how her teachers responded to her questions about *laïcité* and wearing her veil. She seemed to have more negative experiences and to be more distrustful in general of the teachers who shut down her questions with scripted answers regarding *laïcité*, perceiving them as displaying a certain level of hypocrisy between what they said and what they did. Her distrust seemed to carry over into their teaching of content matter and caused her to question the validity of what they were teaching.

The deficit perspective that Imane's teachers displayed seemed to stem from a cultural misunderstanding of her Muslim religious identity and her desire to wear her veil (Bertossi, 2012a, pp. 436-437) as well as her difficulty in accepting the French interpretation of *laïcité*.

This could have led some of her teachers to believe that she was resisting assimilating into French culture (Croucher, 2015, pp. 307-308) and that it was their duty to help her with her integration by reinforcing *laïcité* (Lizotte, 2020, pp. 2-3). However, rather than facilitating Imane's integration into French society, this insistence on *laïcité* ultimately resulted in an atmosphere of distrust between Imane and her teachers that negatively impacted her relationship with them and ultimately her grades in class.

On the other hand, during my English sessions with Imane, as I intentionally built a relationship with her and engaged in conversation with her about her questions and concerns and encouraged her to explore her ideas, she displayed a great deal of trust in me, both in my opinions and in my teaching of English. This created a positive environment during our study group sessions that facilitated her learning which was evidenced by the work she produced and her test scores on the English portion of her national exams. This reflection has impacted my teaching with other students by inspiring me to create opportunities for building a relationship and trust with them as well. As I have done this, I have seen other students produce work in our English study groups that is far more advanced than what they produce at school, demonstrating that, like Imane, their grades in class are not necessarily a reflection of their understanding of the content, but of their poor relationship with their teachers.

On the surface, this corresponds to a study done by Qribi, Courtinat and Prêteur (2010) which found that contrary to the widely accepted belief in France that immigrant students' success in school is dependent on their integration into French society and adherence to *laïcité*, North African immigrant participants' success was correlated to positive school experiences which then led to successful integration in French society (pp. 693-701; Bertossi, 2012a, pp. 438-439). However, in their discussion Qribi et al (2010) indirectly reference *laïcité* by finding that

the students who reported having positive experiences in school and being successful in their studies were female students from non-practicing, “modern” families and that students who reported having negative experiences were both male and female students from “traditional” and religiously conservative families (pp. 693-701). While they encouraged teachers to take note of the positive effects of a good school experience on students’ apparent success in school, Imane’s stories have caused me to wonder if the teachers’ perceptions of some students as being more open-minded and willing to integrate than others led to them creating a more positive environment for them in the classroom. Imane’s stories have also led me to wonder if it is even possible for teachers to create a more positive environment if they are unaware of their own perceptions and the cultural values and power relations that influence them.

### **Where do we go from here?**

Imane’s stories and her struggle to negotiate her identity as a young Muslim immigrant woman in the French school system reveal a need to better illuminate the complexity of immigrant students lives and experiences in multiple cultural contexts. While many studies have been done in the American context on the impact on students’ learning when teachers hold a deficit perspective of their immigrant students’ languages and transnational literacies and the imposition of policies that reinforce dominant social practices (Street & Leung, 2015, p. 305), considerably less research has been done in the French context with the nuances that are specific to French cultural values. This research could explore the connections between immigrant students’ school experiences, their achievement levels and teachers’ perceptions of students and the influence that dominant French cultural values such as *laïcité* and teachers’ interpretation of their mandate to assimilate immigrant students into French ideology have on this perception (Helot, 2003, pp. 255-256). However, Imane’s stories of her life as a Muslim immigrant student

also reveal a deeper need for additional studies on a global scale in multiple cultural contexts to add breadth and depth to the existing body of knowledge of transnational literacies. Studies done in multiple cultural contexts would deepen our knowledge and understanding of the underlying sources of deficit perceptions of transnational students' literacies and the role that dominant cultural values play in forming these perceptions.

It is my sincere hope that Imane's immigrant stories and the story of our relationship formed in the context of the "second classroom" which shaped the telling of her stories will inspire educators to intentionally find space for the "second classroom" to flourish by creating opportunities to build relationships with their students and facilitating the telling of their stories. Just as Imane's stories had a powerful effect on changing my perception of her when I was already inclined to have a positive point of view, each immigrant student's unique story has the power to disrupt the conventional immigrant narrative. While Imane's stories helped her to make sense of the world around her, they also produced a counternarrative to the anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim discourse that is prevalent in French society. Empowering each of our immigrant students to tell their stories in the space where they feel safe, respected, and accepted has the potential to create a counternarrative with the capacity to transform society (Gnanadass, 2021, p. 41).

### **Conclusion Summary**

Imane's stories became a powerful tool that allowed her to explore her own thoughts about wearing a veil in France. These stories seemed to have personal significance to her and were closely linked to her struggles to make sense of the French interpretation of *laïcité* and the freedom to practice her religion while maintaining a balance with French expectations of public religious neutrality. The social act of wearing a veil appeared to be an external sign of her

internal struggle over her sense of identity and belonging. It impacted her relationships with her family, teachers, and community members while she attempted to manage their expectations of her in multiple cultural contexts.

The relationship I built with Imane was another powerful tool that provided a safe context for her to examine and critique the French cultural values that she was learning in school and hearing about in the national media. In the context of our conversations, her transnational identity and cultural understanding allowed her to draw on her experiences in multiple cultures and different ways of knowing to negotiate the meanings of both the Muslim veil and *laïcité*, to challenge the dominant cultural values that she was encountering and to create a counternarrative to the anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim public discourse in France.

While Imane's unique experiences in France revealed a need for more research to be done globally in a variety of country and cultural contexts, her stories can also inspire educators to make a space for their own immigrant students to share their stories. By doing this, we can deepen and broaden our understanding of the challenges that immigrant students face and how they use their transnational identities to survive and thrive in multiple cultural and linguistic contexts.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Indiana University IRB Clearance

Protocol number: 1905291611A001

Principle Investigator: Hines, Mary Beth

Title: Exploring Issues of Laïcité and the French National Educational System's Mission to Transmit a Common Culture with North, West and Central African Diaspora Students to France  
Status: Amendment Incorporated into Protocol

Type: Exempt

Initial Exemption Granted: 5/31/2019

Amendment-001 Exemption Granted: 12/04/2020

- ID #625: Describe the purpose of this study in lay terms.

Within the context of an English as a Second Language Study group and individual tutoring sessions, the purpose of this study is to explore how students of North, West and Central African descent navigate the French school system that has a mission to transmit a common French culture, including *laïcité* or French secularism.

- ID #25377: List and describe all research interactions and/or interventions, including the frequency and duration of procedures, and length of participation for individual subjects.

Students will participate in weekly English study groups of 1-1.5 hours that form in October or November of each school year and that last until May or June of that same school year. Alternatively, due to the national lockdowns and restrictions associated with the Covid 2019 pandemic, students will participate in private English tutoring sessions via Zoom on an as-needed basis. The data will be collected from normal classroom activities that could include group discussions, writing activities, role play activities, artwork, etc as well as audio-recorded Zoom tutoring sessions and the normal English language learning activities associated with these sessions.

- ID #25378: List criteria used to determine that a subject, record, or specimen is eligible to be included in this study.

Student's parents or grandparents immigrated to France from North, Central or West Africa and the student participates in the English Study group.

- ID #25380: Select the categories that apply to this study:

Research Studying Educational Practices

- ID #25381: Explain how the research is not likely to adversely affect students' opportunity to learn required educational content, or the assessment of educators who provide instruction.

The research will take place in study groups or private tutoring sessions that supplement their regular classes. The data will be collected as they do English-learning activities that are intended to help them master the curriculum required in the French national educational system.

- ID #25382: This research includes (choose all that apply):

Analysis of NON-educational or student record information created for non-research purposes

- ID #25422: Describe the source of the information.

Potential students hear about the study groups via word of mouth and contact the local association if they are interested in joining a group.

- ID #25429: Will subjects be paid for participation in the study?

No

- ID #25431: Will the research be conducted at any non-IU affiliated site?

No

- ID #701: Provide the name of the site, including city and state.

Various community-based locations and/or private homes in Bois-Colombes, Gennevilliers, and Asnieres-sur-Seine, France

- ID #25432: Is permission necessary to conduct research at the non-IU site?

No.

- ID #25388: Explain why permission is not required.

The study groups will be organized at times/days and locations that are convenient to the participants and the teacher.

- ID #25433: Is any research taking place outside the United States?

Yes

- ID #25434: List each country:

France

- ID #25435: Describe the researchers' familiarity with local customs, culture, and languages spoken.

One of the researchers has lived in France and in this particular community for 15 years and is fluent in French, speaks some Arabic and has spent many hours immersed in the local culture and customs.

- ID #25436: Describe any local ethical review requirements.

France doesn't have any ethical review requirements for social and educational research.

- ID #627: Provide the anticipated end date of the research.

06/30/2022

## Appendix B

### Indiana University IRB Clearance: Deidentified Data

Copy of an email regarding deidentified data:

From: Mills, Adam Michael <millsa@iu.edu>  
To: "Metzger, Janette Ann" <jaametzg@iu.edu>  
Cc: Hines, Mary Beth" <mhines@indiana.edu>  
Date: Wed, Jan 22, 2020, 5:07 AM

Hi, Jenette--

If all of the data is de-identified at this point, this is non-human subjects research and you do not need approval.

Thanks!

**Adam Mills**  
Research Compliance Associate – SBE  
IU Human Subjects Office  
Office of Research Administration  
Indiana University  
millsa@iu.edu  
812-856-4687

## **Appendix C**

### **Informed Consent**

#### **INDIANA UNIVERSITY STUDY INFORMATION SHEET AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR**

#### **Exploring Issues of Transnational Migration, ESL, and Social Justice with North African Immigrant Students to France**

You are invited to participate in a research study of using critical literacy practices in an EFL context among North African immigrant children to France. You were selected as a possible subject because your parents immigrated to France from North Africa. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

The study is being conducted by Mary Beth Hines, associate professor of Literacy, Culture, and Language Education at Indiana University, Bloomington; Janette Metzger doctoral student in the School of Education at Indiana University, Bloomington It is not currently being funded

#### **STUDY PURPOSE**

The purpose of this study is to explore the question: What do participants' immigrant stories reveal about their educational experiences in the French national education program?

#### **NUMBER OF PEOPLE TAKING PART IN THE STUDY**

If you agree to participate, you will be one of 6 subjects in 3 different study groups who will be participating in this research.

#### **PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY**

If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following things:

- Agree to allow the researcher to use previously collected data from a class project done for non-research purposes which involved the following:
  - A beginning and ending interview with the researcher to explore your views of social justice.
  - Participation in a weekly study session over a period of 5 weeks to prepare for the English portion of the Baccalaureate exam or to study Professional English. You will examine various texts using critical literacy practices. The researcher will audiotape at least one session and take notes on her observations during the sessions.

#### **RISKS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY**

The risks of participating in this study may include feeling uncomfortable being observed or audio recorded during the session, or possibly answering the questions during the interview and during the discussion portions of the sessions. here is also a risk of loss of confidentiality, in that others may discover that you participated in this study. We will take measures to protect your confidentiality.

We will do everything we can to minimize the risks. We will schedule the weekly sessions according to your availability and in public locations that offer a measure of privacy.

While completing the interview or when asked a question, you can tell the researcher if you feel uncomfortable or do not want to answer a particular question.

### **BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY**

The benefits to participation that are reasonable to expect are free tutoring in English for your exam and/or learning new tools to improve your English skills.

### **ALTERNATIVES TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY**

An alternative to participating in the study is to choose not to participate. In this case, you will not participate in the procedures described. If you choose not to participate, you will still participate in the course as usual.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published and databases in which results may be stored. Any audio or video recordings will be accessible only to the investigators and/or translators for data analysis purposes only and will be destroyed after completion of the study.

Organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator and his/her research associates, the Indiana University Institutional Review Board or its designees, and (as allowed by law) state or federal agencies, specifically the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [for FDA-regulated research and research involving positron-emission scanning], the National Cancer Institute (NCI) [for research funded or supported by NCI], the National Institutes of Health (NIH) [for research funded or supported by NIH], etc., who may need to access your medical and/or research records.

### **PAYMENT**

You will not receive payment for taking part in this study.

### **CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS**

For questions about the study or a research-related injury, contact one or more of the researchers, Mary Beth Hines at [Mhines@indiana.edu](mailto:Mhines@indiana.edu) or Janette Metzger at [Janette.metzger@gmail.com](mailto:Janette.metzger@gmail.com) or at 06.22.87.25.38. If you cannot reach the researcher at any time, please call the IU Human Subjects Office at or 812-856-4242 or 800-696-2949.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, to discuss problems, complaints, or concerns about a research study, or to obtain information or offer input, contact the IU Human Subjects Office at 317-278-3458 812-856-4242 or 800-696-2949.

### **VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THIS STUDY**

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

### **ASSENT/CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE**

If the student is at least 18 years of age then parental consent is not required for participation in this study. If this is the case, please check the box below and only provide the student signature; do not provide a parental signature. **If the student is under the age of 18 then parental/guardian consent is required to participate in this study.**

- I certify that I, as the student, am at least 18 years of age and do not need to provide parental consent for my participation in this study.

### **SUBJECT'S ASSENT/CONSENT**

- In consideration of all of the above, **I AGREE** to take part in this study.
- In consideration of all of the above, **I DO NOT AGREE** to take part in this study.

I (or my parents if under age 18) will be given a copy of this informed consent document to keep.

**Printed Name of Student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Student:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **PARENT/GUARDIAN'S CONSENT**

- In consideration of all of the above, **I CONSENT** to my child's participation in this study.
- In consideration of all of the above, **I DO NOT CONSENT** to my child's participation in this study.

I will be given a copy of this informed consent document to keep for my records. I agree to participate in this research study.

**Printed Name of Parent:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Parent:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Person Obtaining Consent:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix D

### Original Transcript

Imane Zoom English Session

2/15/21

As a continuation of the lesson and discussion, Jan pulls up a picture of Congresswoman Ilhan Omar in front of several microphones wearing a turban on her head.

1. Imane: *Moi, je dirais que ça dépend de quel pays.*
2. Jan: *ça, c'est en Amérique.*
3. Imane: *Je pense que en Amérique ça peut passer, ça, euh?*
4. Jan: *Ok?*
5. Imane: *Parce qu'en fait, le, le la critique américaine et la critique française, c'est pas la même chose.*
6. Jan: *Ok. Explique-moi.*
7. Imane: *Tu sais que cette fille, si elle aurait passé à la télé française et qu'elle était en France, ils auraient plus parler de son, de ce qu'elle, de ce que, comment elle porte, comment, comment elle est habillée que de ce qu'elle disait.*
8. Jan: *Ok. Pourquoi?*
9. Imane: *Tu vois, par exemple, je sais pas si qu'elle disait les trucs très intéressant sur la politique, sur, euh, sur pleine de choses. Et, bah les français, ils vont plus, bah dire, "Ah! bah, C'est une femme, euh, qui portait un turban, et nah, nah, nah, un turban, un turban. Au lieu de parler de, sa, de son, de sa connaissance intellectuelle.*
10. Jan: *Ok.*
11. Imane: *Donc, tu as, donc, en fait, je pense que en Amérique ça pourrait pas passer comme ça.*

12. Jan: *Ok. Je vais te montrer une autre photo de la même dame. Et puis je vais te dire qui elle est. Tu me dis, quand tu le vois, tu me dis toute de suite, euh, qu'est-ce qui arrive dans, dans (slight pause) dans ta tête ou dans ton cœur.*  
(silence, Jan pulls up photo of Representative Ilhan Omar, wearing a veil in front of the American flag)
13. Imane: *C'est beau.*
14. Jan: *Pourquoi?*
15. Imane: *Bah, c'est beau. C'est euh, (sound of deep inhalation) Oh! la! la! C'est tellement beau de voir ça! C'est comme moi aussi, je vois tout le temps les choses comme ça! J'ai euh, (???? 20) des filles, toute en l'armée et tous. (slight pause) Même ce, ce, celles qui passent de l'armée et tous en Amérique. Elles peuvent passer partout, elles peuvent porter le voile, euh. Elle est policière. Euuuuuuuh, c'est le, celles qui travaillent, elles peuvent porter le voile, alors qu'en France. Un pays comme la France qui est laïc, on peut pas. C'est tellement beau! Jehors, moi!? Je vois pas, je vois pas en France une fille comme ça avec un drapeau français derrière.*
16. Jan: *Ok.*
17. Imane: *Pour moi c'est teeeeellement loooooiin!? Quand on pourrait avoir ce jehors de photo.*
18. Jan: *Ok*
19. Imane: *Et c'est beau de voir ça.*
20. Jan: *Elle est dans le*
21. Imane (talks over Jan): *Le voile il porte les, les, les couleurs de, de du drapeau.*
22. Jan: *Elle est dans le Congrès Américain. Elle a été élue par, par son état pour les représenter dans le Congrès à Washington D.C. Elle, elle s'appelle Ilhan Omar.*
23. Imane: *D'accord.*
24. Jan: *Ok? Donc elle, c'est, tu viens de me dire que tu vois pas une femme en France avec un drapeau français derrière comme ça voilée. Est-ce que tu peux voir, euh, quelqu'un dans le parlement, dans le gouvernement, euh, euh, une femme, um, (slight pause) qui part au travail comme ça?*

25. Imane: *Non. Après les entreprises privées qui acceptent ce jehors de, de tenu. Mais, euh, (makes noise with mouth and exhales) c'est très, très, euh, je vois vraiment, euh, je vois pas du tout le, comme on dit en français, je vois pas du tout la lumière au bout du tunnel.*
26. Jan: *Mmmm*
27. Imane: *Tu connais cette expression?*
28. Jan: *Oui, oui.*
29. Imane: *Et bah, la lumière au bout du tunnel, elle n'est pas la du tout.*
30. Jan: *On dit ça en anglais aussi. The light at the end of the tunnel.*
31. Imane: *Oui, c'est ça. C'est elle n'est pas là, la lumière au bout du tunnel. Parce que là, en ce moment, je regarde beaucoup la télé, je regarde beaucoup les, les débats et tout. (makes a noise with her mouth and exhales) parlent, parlent, parlent et ils parlent pas, les gens qui meurent, les 3000 personnes, des 20 000 personnes qui meurent dehors. Ils parlent juste du voile, des filles, des, des, des (fades off) Pour moi c'est pas ça qui tue les gens, euh? C'est pas, c'est pas ça qui prennent la vie. C'est pas le voile qui, qui, qui est en train de tuer des gens. C'est le Corona virus qui est en train de tuer des gens et pas le voile.*
32. Jan: *Mmm, mmmm*
33. Imane: *Et je vois pas, euh, (fades off, then speaks louder and clearer) Tu sais, les débats comme ça, il faut vraiment les éviter. Mais comme ça, de voir ça, c'est très, très beau.*
34. Jan: *Qu'est-ce que tu penses doit changer en France? Pourquoi'ils acceptent (slight pause) une dame comme ça dans le gouvernement. Avec, dans une photo avec le drapeau français derrière?*
35. Imane: *Bah, qu'ils acceptent que tout le monde fasse ce qu'il veut, en fait.*
36. Jan: *Ok*
37. Imane: *Si quelqu'un veut sortir en tenu, il sort en tenu. Si quelqu'un veut sortir en voile, il sort en voile. Si quelqu'un veut te rappelle la laïcité, bah, pour moi la laïcité c'est d'avoir*

*la liberté de pratiquer sa religion et d'avoir de la liberté, alors qu'avec respect, par contre. Je suis d'accord que ça soit du respect, que ça soit, euh, chez soi, euh? Je ne, je ne dis pas que je vais prier dehors devant les gens, euh, crier 'Allahu akbar' devant tout le monde mais au delà, c'est juste que chaque'un soit en paix, qu'on soit tous, qu'on soit tous égale, quoi? égaux, pardon. Qu'on soit tous égaux comme tout le monde et que, euh, d'accepte le fait que, qu'on est tous en pais, quoi. Malgré les origines, qu'on est tous français.*

38. Jan: *Mmmkay. (pause) Ummm, et ça, tu as dit que, tu as dit qu'on, qu'on est tous français et en fait, je pense que cette dame-là, elle a été né en Soudan*

39. Imane: *Okay*

40. Jan: *Mais elle a été élevée en Amérique donc*

41. Imane: *D'accord*

42. Jan: *Elle se considère comme Américaine et, et, Kamela Harris, la vice-présidente (slight pause) quand on lui demande, elle dit, elle dit pas que je suis, I'm African-American ou I'm Indian-American ou Asian-American, elle dit pas tout ça. Elle a dit, "I'm American."*

43. Imane: *Mmm*

44. Jan: *Like, tout le reste, c'est moins important pour elle. Elle dit simplement, "I'm American."*

45. Imane: *Bah, Je sais pas si tu connais, euh, j'sais plus comment elle s'appelle, celle qui, qui, qui est dans le syndicat des étudiants. Elle est voilée aussi. (slight pause) Elle était, elle était sur le journal le Charlie et tout. (slight pause) Attend, (searches phone) elle est, elle est vic, euhm, syndicat des étudiants, elle est quoi? Elle est chef ou quelque chose comme ça. (pause)*

46. Jan: *Comme quoi?*

47. Imane: *En fait, c'est, je sais pas si t'as vu le, euhm, leee, leee, le débat. C'est elle.*  
(pause)

48. Jan: *Ah oui, c'est le débat sur la loi qu'ils veulent passer.*

49. Imane: *Vooooila! En fait, c'est elle, elle fait, elle est, elle est...*

50. Jan: *Mmmhmm*

51. Imane: *En fait, elle travaille dans le syndicat des étudiants. Elle est chef du syndicat des étudiants. Et c'est une voilée. Du coup. Et en fait, à chaque fois qu'il y a un débat entre les syndicats par rapport, par rapport aux étudiants, elle, elle doit être présente. Et bah, leur seul souci, c'est qu'ils veulent pas faire le débat pendant que cette femme voilée, elle est dans la salle. (pause) C'est fou, quand même. C'est, c'est, c'est euh, franchement quand je vois ça, je me suis dit, bah, c'est les malades, les gens. Juste parce qu'elle est là dans une réunion entre syndicats des étudiants pour parler de les étudiants, parce que, alors, aujourd'hui les étudiants, ils, ils meurent de faim, ils font pas un euro chez leurs courses, ils ont pas de bourse, la, les locaux sont fermés partout, ils perdent leurs travaux, euh, euh, leurs, leurs jobs d'étudiants, ils perdent leur, leurs loyers, ils perdent leurs maisons, ils ont pas à quoi manger, quoi nourrir et alors, leur seule souci, c'est la fille qui est dans la salle qui est voilée. (slight pause) Ils ont dit, on fait pas de débat tant qu'elle est là dans la salle. Soit elle retire son voile, soit elle part. (slight pause)*

52. Jan: *Mais qu'est-ce qu'elle fait*

53. Imane: *Et du coup, ça fait 3 semaines qu'ils en parlaient de plus sur ça.*

54. Jan: *Et qu'est-ce qu'elle fait? Elle quitte la salle? ou elle reste?*

55. Imane: *Non, pas du tout, ils ont dit "c'est vous, vous allez quitter." En fait la, la, la, la chef de la réunion, elle leur a dit, "Si ça vous plaît pas, vous pouvez partir." Et elle, elle reste. (pause) Mais c'était un débat, euh, à la télé et tout. Ils ont dit, "Mais non! euh, elle devrait vraiment retirer son voile, euh, je sais pas quoi! Mais... C'est pas ça le problème. On n'est pas venu pour ça. On parle des étudiants. On parle des gens qui crèvent de faim à cause du Corona. Ils ont perdu leurs jobs d'été. Il y a plus deeee, en fait, même, moi-même dans, à, à Monoprix, il y a des étudiants qui travaille, euh, je sais pas, 5 heures par semaine et tout, et ils travaille, ils ont, ils les ont tous égaré (lost) euh? Je sais pas si parce qu'ils ont des CDD's et qu'ils avaient pas de, c'est tout! C'est juste parce qu'ils avaient des CDD's et que Monoprix n'avait pas d'argent pour les payer. tout le monde! Tout le monde est parti. Ils sont restés que les alternants comme moi. Et euh, et euh les CDI's.*

56. Jan: *Mmmmm*

57. Imane: *Je te dis, les McDo's, les McDo's et tout ça, les CDD's ils les ont tous retiré.*

58. Jan: *Ouais, parce qu'ils ont*

59. Imane: *... Les étudiants, ils ont pas d'argent! Et là! Ils ont, leur seul souci est la fille qui est voilée. Ils veulent pas, ils veulent pas qu'elle reste, euh, dans la salle!"*

## Appendix E

### Segmented Transcription in English

**Segment 1.** As a continuation of the lesson and discussion, Jan pulls up a picture of Congresswoman Ilhan Omar in front of several microphones wearing a turban on her head.

1. Imane: Me, I would say that it depends on which country.
2. Jan: That one, it's in America.
3. Imane: I think that in America, that could be done.
4. Jan: *Ok?*
5. Imane: Because, in fact, the, the American critique and the French critique, they aren't the same thing.
6. Jan: Ok. Explain that to me.
7. Imane: You know that this girl, if she had been on French television and she was in France, they would have talked more about her, about what she, about what, how she was wearing, how, how she was dressed than what she was saying.
8. Jan: *Ok. Why?*
9. Imane: You see, for example, I don't know if she was saying things that were very interesting about politics, about, uh, about a lot of things. And, *bah*, the French, they will more likely, *bah*, say, "*Ah! Bah*, It's a woman, uh, who is wearing a turban, and *nah, nah, nah*, a turban, a turban. Instead of talking about her, about her, about her intellectual knowledge.
10. Jan: Ok.
11. Imane: So, you have, so, in fact, I think that in America, that couldn't be done like that.
12. Jan: Ok. I will show you another picture of the same lady. And then I will tell you who she is. You tell me, when you see it, you tell me right away, uh, what appears in, in (slight pause) in your head or in your heart.

**Segment 2.** The conversation seems to shift slightly as Jan intentionally moves to the next photograph of Representative Ilhan Omar, wearing a veil in front of the American flag.

13. Imane: It's beautiful.

14. Jan: Why ?

15. Imane: *Bah*, It's beautiful. It's, uh, (sound of deep inhalation) *Oh! la! la!* It's so beautiful to see that! It's like me too, all the time I see things like that! I have, uh, (???? 20) some girls, all in the army and everything. (slight pause) Even th, th, these girls who are in the army and everything in America. They can go everywhere, they can wear their veil. She is a police officer. Uuuuuuh, it's the, the girls who work, they can wear the veil, while in France. A country like France that is secular, we can't. It's so beautiful! *Jehors*, me!?! I don't see it, I don't see it in France a girl like that with a French flag behind her

16. Jan: *Ok*.

17. Imane: For me it's sooooooooo faaaaaaar awaaaay!?! When we will be able to have this type of picture.

18. Jan: *Ok*

19. Imane: And it's beautiful to see that.

20. Jan: She is in the

21. Imane (talks over Jan): The veil has the, the, the colors of the, the flag.

22. Jan: She is in the American Congress. She was elected by, by her state to represent them in Congress in Washington D.C. She, her name is Ilhan Omar.

23. Imane: All right.

24. Jan: *Ok?* So she, it's, you just told me that you can't see a woman who is veiled in France with a French flag behind you. Could you see, uh, someone in parliament, in the government, uh, uh, a woman, um (slight pause) who goes to work like that?

25. Imane: No. Maybe private businesses that accept this type of, of clothing. But, uh, (*makes noise with mouth and exhales*) It's very, very, uh, I truly see, uh, I don't see the, like we say in French, I don't at all see the light at the end of the tunnel.

26. Jan: *Mmmm*

27. Imane: Do you know this expression?

28. Jan: Yes, yes.

29. Imane: And, *bah*, the light at the end of the tunnel, it's not there at all.
30. Jan: We also say that in English: *The light at the end of the tunnel*.
31. Imane: Yes, that's it. It's that it isn't there, the light at the end of the tunnel. Because, now, in this moment, I watch a lot of TV, I watch a lot of the, the debates and all. (makes a noise with her mouth and exhales) talk, talk, talk and they don't talk about, people are dying, the 3000 people. Some 20,000 people who are dying outside. They just talk about the veil, the girls, the girls (fades off) For me, that's not what's killing people, eh? It's not, it's not this that is taking lives. It's not the veil that, that, that is killing people. It's the Corona virus that is killing people and not the veil.
32. Jan: *Mmm, mmmm*
33. Imane: And I don't see, uh, (fades off, then speaks louder and clearer) You know, the debates like that, we should really avoid them. But like that, to see that, it's very, very beautiful.

**Segment 3.** The conversation seems to shift again as Imane returns to the photograph and repeats her original comment. Jan seems to take this a sign that Imane has finished and asks another question.

34. Jan: What do you think must change in France? For them to accept (*slight pause*) woman like that in the government? With, in a photograph with the French flag behind her?
35. Imane: *Bah*, they have to accept that everybody does what they want, in fact
36. Jan: *Ok*
37. Imane: If someone wants to go out dressed up, he goes out dressed up. If someone wants to go out with a veil, [s]he goes out with a veil. If someone wants to remind you about *la laïcité*, *bah*, for me, *la laïcité* it's to have the freedom to practice your religion and to have the freedom, although with respect, on the other hand. I agree that it should be with respect, that it should be, uh, at home, uh? I'm not saying that I will pray in front of people, uh, cry out '*Allahu akbar*' in front of everyone but beyond that, it's just that each one could be in peace, that we are, we are all equal, *quoi?* Equal [plural form], *pardon*. That we are all equal [plural form] like everyone and that, uh, to accept the fact that, that we are all in peace, *quoi*. In spite of the origins, we are all French.
38. Jan: *Mmmkay*. (pause) *Ummm*, and that, you said that, you said that we, that we're all French and in fact, I think that this lady here, she was born in Sudan.

39. Imane: *Okay*
40. Jan: But she was raised in America so
41. Imane: All right
42. Jan: She considers herself to be American and, and, Kamela Harris, the Vice-president (slight pause) when she is asked, she says, she doesn't say that I am, *I'm African-American* or *I'm Indian-American* or *Asian-American*, she doesn't say all that. She says, "*I'm American.*"
43. Imane: *Mmm*
44. Jan: *Like*, all the rest, it's less important for her. She simply says, "*I'm American.*"
45. Imane: *Bah*, I don't know if you know, uh, I don't know any more what her name is, the one that, that, is in the student union. She wears a veil also, (slight pause) She was, she was in the newspaper, the *Charlie* [Hebdo] and everything. (slight pause) Hold on, (searches phone) She is, she is, she is vice, um, student union, she is what? She's in charge or something like that. (pause)
46. Jan: Like what?
47. Imane: In fact, it's, I don't know if you saw the, um, theeee, theeeee, the debate. It's her.  
(pause)
48. Jan: Oh yes, it's the debate on the law they want to pass?
49. Imane: Thaaaaat's it! In fact, it's her, she did, she is, she is...
50. Jan: *Mmmhmm*
51. Imane: In fact, she works in the student union. She is in charge of the student union. And she wears a veil. So. And in fact, each time there is a debate between the unions about, about the students, she, she has to be present. And *bah*, their only worry, it's that they don't want to have the debate while this woman in a veil, she is in the room. (pause) It's crazy, anyway. It's, it's *eah*, frankly when I see that, I told myself, *bah*, they're sick, these people. Just because she is there in a meeting between student unions to talk about the students, because, well, today the students, they, they're dying of hunger, they don't [give] them one euro for their grocery shopping, they don't have scholarships, there, the places are closed everywhere, they're losing their work, uh, uh, their, their student jobs, they're losing their, their rents, they're losing their houses, they don't have anything to eat, to feed themselves, and well, their only worry, it's the girl that's in the room who's

wearing a veil. (slight pause) They said, we won't have the debate while she is here in the room. Either she removes her veil or she leaves. (slight pause)

52. Jan: But what does she do

53. Imane (talks over Jan): And so, it's been 3 weeks that they talk only of that.

54. Jan: And what does she do? Does she leave the room? Or does she stay?

55. Imane: No, not at all, they said, "it's you, you will leave." In fact, the, the, the person in charge of the meeting, she told them, "If you don't like it, you can leave." And she, she stays. (pause) But it was a debate, uh, on TV and all. They said, "But no! uh, She really should have removed her veil, uh, I don't know what! But.... It's not that, the problem. No one came for that. Everyone was talking about the students. Everyone was talking about people who are dying of hunger because of Corona. They lost their summer jobs ! There aren't any moore, in fact, even, me in, at, at Monoprix, there are students who work, uh, I don't know, 5 hours per week and everything, and they work, they were, they were all lost, uh? I don't know if it's because they have short-term contracts and they don't have, that's all! It's just because they had short-term contracts and that Monoprix didn't have money to pay them. Everyone! Everyone left. Only the interns like me stayed. And uh, and uh those with permanent contracts.

56. Jan: *Mmmmm*

57. Imane: I tell you, the McDonalds, the McDonalds and everything, the short-term workers, they let them all go.

58. Jan: Yeah, because they had

59. Imane: ... The students, they don't have money! And there! They have, their only worry is the girl who wears a veil. They don't want, they don't want her to stay, uh, in the room!

## Appendix F

### Meaning Field Analysis

*Bah*, they have to accept that everybody does what they want, in fact.

[MF: They don't accept us now AND Different people want different things OR Don't you like me the way I am? AND I really want be accepted OR Why can't you accept that I'm not like you? OR I know what they need to do BUT no one asks me or listens to me OR You have the power to decide who is accepted but I don't]

... If someone wants to go out dressed up, he goes out dressed up. If someone wants to go out with a veil, (s)he goes out with a veil. If someone wants to remind you about *la laïcité*, *bah*,

[MF: If I wear a veil, they talk to me about *laïcité* OR No one mentions *laïcité* unless I wear a veil. OR Why are other types of clothing acceptable but my veil is not? OR I'm able to choose for myself to wear the veil AND You use *laïcité* to dictate what makes you uncomfortable OR You have the power to dictate to me what *laïcité* means.]

for me, *la laïcité* it's to have the freedom to practice your religion and to have the freedom,

[MF: I also understand *laïcité*. OR *Laïcité* means something different to me than it does to you. OR My definition of *laïcité* is liberating AND What makes my definition/understanding of *laïcité* wrong? AND Why do you have the power to decide what *laïcité* means and I don't?]

although with respect, on the other hand. I agree that it should be with respect, that it should be, uh, at home, uh?

[MF: We have something in common AND We can agree about some things OR You think I don't respect you OR You don't respect me AND you don't listen to me.]

I'm not saying that I will pray in front of people, uh, cry out '*Allahu akbar*' in front of everyone but beyond that,

[MF: I understand respectful limits AND I know where the proper time and place for my religious practices is OR You think I will force my beliefs on you OR You think I'll be in your face with religion AND I know my religious practices will make you uncomfortable OR You have the power to decide where I practice my religion AND I don't BUT I respect that.]

it's just that each one could be in peace, that we are, we are all equal [singular form], *quoi?*

Equal [plural form], *pardon*. That we are all equal [plural form] like everyone and that, *eah*, to accept the fact that, that we are all in peace, *quoi*.

[MF: I believe that we are the same AND I want everyone to be the same AND I want everyone to live in peace BUT You don't think I'm equal AND You don't think I want to

live in peace with you OR You have the power to say who is your equal BUT I don't  
AND I wish you saw me as your equal]

In spite of the origins, we are all French.

[MF: I have a different origin BUT I'm still French OR You don't think I'm really  
French OR Why don't you accept me as French? OR You have the power to decide who  
is French and who isn't BUT I don't AND My opinion doesn't count.]

## Appendix G

### Reconstructive Horizon Analysis

*Bah*, they have to accept that everybody does what they want, in fact. ... If someone wants to go out dressed up, he goes out dressed up. If someone wants to go out with a veil, (s)he goes out with a veil.

	Objective	Subjective	Normative-Evaluative	Identity
Foreground	-People wear different clothes when they go out -A veil is clothing	-I want them to accept all types of clothing	-People should accept other's choices	-I can do what I want
Mid-ground	-People want to choose the clothes they wear -Some people want to wear a veil	-I want them to accept my veil as my choice	-They should accept my choice	-I can choose to wear a veil
Background	-I choose to wear a veil	-I want them to accept me	-They should accept me	-I don't have to conform to their expectations

If someone wants to remind you about *la laïcité*, *bah*, for me, *la laïcité* it's to have the freedom to practice your religion and to have the freedom, although with respect, on the other hand. I agree that it should be with respect, that it should be, uh, at home, uh? I'm not saying that I will pray in front of people, uh, cry out '*Allahu akbar*' in front of everyone but beyond that,

	Objective	Subjective	Normative-Evaluative	Identity
Foreground	-People talk to me about <i>laïcité</i> -I know what <i>laïcité</i> is	-I think I know what <i>laïcité</i> is	-People should have the freedom to practice their religion -People should respect other's freedom	-I am an intelligent person who knows what <i>laïcité</i> is. -I am a religious person who is respectful of others and reasonable about my religious practices

Mid-ground	-People use <i>laïcité</i> to support their argument -My definition of <i>laïcité</i> is different than theirs	-I want the freedom to practice my religion -I think my understanding of <i>laïcité</i> is valid	-I should respect other's freedom of religion -People should respect my freedom of religion -They should understand <i>laïcité</i> like I do	-I am disrespected
Background	-People use <i>laïcité</i> to make others conform to their point of view.	-I want you to give me the power to practice my religion	-You shouldn't use your power to make me conform to your point of view -You should give me the power to choose how I wish to practice my religion	-I am oppressed by their interpretation of <i>laïcité</i>

it's just that each one could be in peace, that we are, we are all equal [singular form], *quoi?* Equal [plural form], *pardon*. That we are all equal [plural form] like everyone and that, *euh*, to accept the fact that, that we are all in peace, *quoi*. In spite of the origins, we are all French.

	Objective	Subjective	Normative-Evaluative	Identity
Foreground	-Everyone is the same -Everyone can be in peace -Everyone is French	-I want everyone to be equal -I want everyone to be in peace	-Everyone should be equal -Everyone should live in peace -Everyone should be accepted as French	-I am equal with you -I am French like you
Mid-ground	-I am the same as you -I can be in peace -I have different origins but I am also French	-I want to be equal -I want to be in peace -I want to be accepted as French	-You should treat me as equal -You should let me be in peace -You should accept me as French	-I am also Algerian -I am a peaceful Muslim

Background	-You don't accept me as equal -You don't accept me as French -You have the power to decide who is French	-I want to be accepted for who I am	-You should not discriminate against me -You should not marginalize me because I have different origins	-I am not a religious fanatic -I am not a terrorist
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## Curriculum Vita

**JANETTE METZGER**

### EDUCATION

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- Ed.D** Literacy, Culture and Language Education December 2022  
Indiana University, Bloomington, IN  
Committee: Dr. Mary Beth Hines (chair), Dr. Mitzi Lewison, Dr. Barbara Dennis
- MBA** Business Administration December 2000  
Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, IN
- BA** Liberal Studies May 1993  
Bethel College, Mishawaka, IN

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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- Key Concepts, International**, Ft Wayne, Indiana April 2002 to present  
Regional Strategy Coordinator-Europe
- Coach emerging leaders
  - Network with leaders in European region
  - Explore new opportunities in region
  - Follow up with inquirers in Europe
- President, Clé pour un Avenir d'Espérance
- Live and work in a multicultural community northwest of Paris, France.
  - Administer a local community association, Clé pour un Avenir d'Espérance (C.A.E.) which offers educational enrichment activities, workshops, and intercultural exchange opportunities.
  - Seek to identify challenges that immigrants have in integrating into French culture and society and help them to find potential solutions to overcoming them.
  - Provide training workshops for other women engaged in not-for-profit work with such as:
    - Translanguaging Techniques in Coaching Immigrant Students
    - Teaching Transnational Students
    - Oral Techniques for Teaching Literacy to Immigrant Women
    - Oral Teaching Methods vs Literate Teaching Methods
  - Provide tutoring in the form of English study groups to multilingual students as well as classes in Professional English for young adult professionals.
  - Train and mentor team members and volunteers
  - Build community ties by working in partnership with other local community associations.
  - Build and maintain financial support base.
- Past responsibilities:

- Taught French and literacy to illiterate, immigrant women primarily from North African countries.
- Directed the literacy program consisting of over 40 students and volunteer staff.
- Developed literacy curriculum in French using oral learning techniques.

**Taco Bell Corporation**, Ft Wayne, Indiana  
Restaurant General Manager

November 1995 to August 2002

- Set and administered goals for store to meet and exceed company expectations.
- Interviewed, hired, and supervised the performance of all subordinate staff.
- Worked within controllable expense budget to purchase supplies and maintenance expenses.

## **VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE**

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**General Oversight Council, Missionary Church**, Ft Wayne, Indiana  
Lay Member

July 2021-present

- Participate in bi-annual meetings that include the following:
  - Provide general financial oversight of the Missionary Church
  - Approve denominational budget
  - Make decisions in the place of the General Conference when it is not in session
  - Read and approve Directors' reports
  - Ratify Ministry Leadership Council decisions
- Member of the Finance Sub-committee
  - Participate in monthly Zoom meetings that review and discuss monthly finance reports
  - Discuss and bring finance-related action steps to the entire GOC

## **PRESENTATIONS AND INVITED LECTURES**

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**Paper Presentation**, "Becoming French: A Small Story Narrative Analysis of One Algerian, Muslim, Immigrant Student's Experiences in France," 71st Annual Literacy Research Association Conference, December 1-4, 2021

**Paper Presentation**, "Exploring Issues of Transnational Migration, ESL, and Social Justice with North African Immigrant Students to France," 17th International Humanities Conference, July 3-5, 2019.

## **PROFESSIONAL TRAINING**

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**Cambridge Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA)**  
ILC France-IH, Paris, France, August 2014  
Pass B

### **English Education courses**

Tri-State University, Angola, IN, January 1996-April 1999

## **LANGUAGES**

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**English:** Native Language

**French:** Fluent in reading, writing and speaking, have lived in France since July 2005

**Darija/Moroccan Arabic Dialect:** Studied basic, spoken Moroccan Arabic.