The Experience of Non-Francophone Parents with Children in Minority-Language French Schools in Prince Edward Island: A Mixed Methods Study

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of Education
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Educational Studies
University of Prince Edward Island

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Charlottetown, PE
January 12, 2018

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Abstract

Research indicates that classrooms across Canada and our globe are becoming increasingly multilingual and multicultural. Parent involvement (PI) in schools has frequently been shown to be an important indicator for student literacy and achievement; however, many parents of children in these diverse classrooms are not proficient in the school language and, therefore, their involvement is limited and challenging. This dissertation explores the beliefs, experiences, and involvement of non-francophone (NF) parents with children in French minority-language schools in Prince Edward Island (PEI). Data for this research was collected from an online survey (n=86) and focus group or individual interviews with 38 NF parents whose children attend French schools. Two theoretical models from minority-language education and parent involvement literature were used to frame the study and to analyze the data. The results confirm that the clientele in French schools in PEI is diverse, requiring an expanded definition of the family and parent type. There are many types of NF parents, and many of these parents need assistance to optimize their educational involvement with a child in a French school. The analyses revealed that NF parents had a decreased sense of autonomy, competence, and belonging and that only two of eight potential ways to facilitate PI were functioning for most NF parents with children in French schools. I make recommendations for modifications to the two theoretical models used. I also propose a new theoretical model aimed at reducing barriers to parent involvement by offering differentiated support to parents, considering their proficiency in the language of the school and, specifically, to enhance parent involvement in French minority-language education. Finally, I suggest policies and practices based on the research data to enhance the educational involvement of NF parents, and potentially all parents, at home, at school, and in the community, through improved communication strategies and relationship building.
Preface

This Dissertation is an original, unpublished, independent work of the author, Mary M. MacPhee. The fieldwork reported was covered by UPEI Ethics Certificate number 6005869.
Acknowledgements

This thesis is possible because of the contribution and support from many people. To begin I would like to acknowledge and thank my co-supervisors and committee members, Dr. Miles Turnbull, Dr. Marianne Cormier, and Dr. Jane Preston. I am indebted to them for their patience, encouragement, feedback, suggestions, and rigor over the past six years.

I am sincerely thankful for Mile’s support and guidance as a colleague and a friend, not just through the last six years but over the last 30 years, working with a shared passion for excellence in French language education. Miles has been a mentor in many ways over the years and his personable and caring approach, along with letters of reference, have helped me enormously.

This work was enhanced by the input from Marianne, as an expert in and champion for minority-language education. Her encouragement about my topic of interest, my presentations at national and regional conferences, and rigor in correct understanding of the theory in minority-language education helped me deepen the exploration of parent involvement in this context.

The quality of this written work has definitely been supported by Dr. Jane Preston, who helped me develop my writing. Thank you, Jane for challenging my ideas and improving the organisation, flow, and clarity in my work. I will always remember and appreciate Jane’s attention to recognizing strengths, improving weaknesses, and supporting graduate students.

I need to thank the participants, the parents who participated in this research and the administrators and community groups who promoted the research. I want to acknowledge the work of John Fox, a student at Holland College who helped design the visuals for the Differentiated PI Model. I am also colossally thankful for the support from the other PhD students in my cohort, Gabriela Arias de Sanchez, Valerie Campbell, Alaina Roach O’Keefe, and Naullaq Arnaquq. The goddesses came together and supported each other through trials and celebrations with optimism, respect, and encouragement and we have become lifelong friends. I thank all of the PhD optimists who collaborated over the last 6 years at UPEI.

I gratefully acknowledge the help of the Faculty of Education at UPEI. In particular, I would like to thank Dr. Martha Gabriel, Dr. Lyndsay Moffatt, Dr. Tess Miller, Dr. Ron MacDonald and Zain Esseghaier for their support. I also thank Dr. Nia Phillips, Dr. Henrik Stryhn, and Dr. Robin Sutherland from UPEI for their writing and statistical support.

I am thankful for the financial support from the Social Science Research Council (SSRCH), the UPEI Faculty of Education, the Joint Education Research Grant (JERG), which funded the initial pilot project, and the BMO financial group.

I also need to thank my husband, Greg for his patience and quantitative research input and my children, Amanda and Andrew, for their patience and support during the PhD. I hope one day they understand and appreciate the time and effort required to complete this program.
Dedicated to Andrew and Amanda
and all who are
maintaining or reclaiming the French language
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Definition of Terms

Herein, I provide the definitions of terms that appear frequently throughout this document. The definitions are to facilitate reader comprehension of potentially unfamiliar terms, many of which are specific to French minority-language education and community revitalization efforts.

**Additive Bilingualism** is a form of bilingualism that occurs when the educational conditions favor the acquisition of a second language without loss or threat to the maternal language or culture of the learner (Lambert, 1973, 1981; Landry & Allard, 1997). An example of additive bilingualism is a French immersion program where Anglo-dominant students learn French as a second language without negatively impacting their English.

**Ethnolinguistic vitality** refers to the strength and vitality of a minority group’s language and culture. In the case of this research, it pertains to the French language and culture in a community as measured by social status, demography (e.g., population, especially population density), and institutional support (e.g., education, media) (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977). Ethnolinguistic vitality can also be seen as the group’s linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1992) as well as its demographic, political, economic, and cultural capital (Landry, 1994).

**Exogamous couple**, also called a mixed couple, is a term that denotes two partners who have two different maternal languages and/or cultures. In the context of this document, it is usually one Francophone with one non-Francophone parent, the latter of whom is typically Anglo-dominant.

**Endogamous couple** is a term that means both parents share the same language and culture. In the case of this research, it can refer to two Francophone parents or two Anglophone parents.
Francité familio-scolaire has been described as family effort for bolstering and showing value and support for French language and culture at home, in the community, and at school (Landry & Allard, 1997).

Francophone is defined for the purposes of this dissertation, which is situated in the French minority school context, based on right-holder parent eligibility. A Francophone is determined by the first two criteria in Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms\(^1\) (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982). A Francophone is someone (a) whose first language learned and still understood is French and/or (b) who has received his/her primary school instruction in French.

French minority-language schools or Francophone schools exist outside of Québec to encourage education in French as a first language in contexts where French is a minority-language and the numbers are sufficient. These schools are also known as French minority-language schools. The entire programming is in French, including the curriculum, extracurricular activities, and school administration.

Francisation is a program offered by a French minority-language school to provide extra support to students who begin school as non-French speakers to develop a linguistic level similar to their peers in school. Examples of francisation activities include French vocabulary development in or out of the classroom, French camps, French courses, family evenings, and

\(^1\) **MINORITY-LANGUAGE EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS**

23. (1) Citizens of Canada (a) whose first language learned and still understood is that of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province in which they reside, or (b) who have received their primary school instruction in Canada in English or French and reside in a province where the language in which they received that instruction is the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province, have the right to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in that language in that province. (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982)
parent workshops or parent-partners to offer guidance (Council of Ministers of Education [CMEC], 2002). I have maintained the French spelling of francisation and, thus, the first use of francisation is italicized in the document, but not thereafter.

**Maternal language**, also called the mother tongue or first language, is the original language learned as a child.

**Non-Francophone** is defined for the purposes of this dissertation, by right-holder parent eligibility in minority French schools. A non-Francophone, thus, is someone who (a) does not have French as the first language learned and still understood and (b) who has not received their primary school instruction in Canada in a French school. A non-Francophone does include someone who has become proficient in French through French immersion schooling or other means, yet was not raised speaking French at home.

**Parent involvement** is the educationally focused parent actions or interactions at home, at school, or in the community for the child’s academic or French linguistic and cultural benefit.

**Right-holder**, in a minority school context, refers to a parent who holds rights, as determined by Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982), and therefore is eligible to have his or her child attend minority-language schools. To be a right-holder, one must first of all be a citizen of Canada and a parent. In provinces where French is the minority-language, one must also embody one of the following: (a) French was the first language learned and is still understood; or (b) primary school instruction was received in Canada in French; or (c) has a child who has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in French in Canada (Canadian Charter, 1982, s 23).
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, cultural and linguistic assimilation and language loss or language death are current realities. In Canada, French minority-language schools are seen as vital components to prevent such language loss and these schools foster the maintenance and survival of the French language and culture in minority-language contexts across the nation. For a variety of reasons, a growing number of children and the parents of children attending French schools in minority contexts in Canada are non-Francophone (NF). Thus, the children may not have French proficiency when they begin school or not have French language support at home. With the ever-increasing number of NF parents of children attending French schools, there is a need to investigate the involvement of NF parents in their children’s education in French. This investigation is important, because, for several decades, research has shown that parental involvement (PI) is an important indicator of academic and social success of children.

In this research, I examine the interrelationship between the involvement of NF parents, the French schools, and the French community (CMEC, 2003; Epstein, 2011) on Prince Edward Island (PEI). This research explores NF parent experiences and shares their stories about navigating French education for their children. Likewise, it is necessary to bring attention to the educational involvement of parents who do not speak the language of the school, because of the increasingly common experience of children receiving their education in a language other than the home language (Iannacci, 2006). This study can inform education in French minority-language contexts as well as in multilingual classrooms in Canada and around the globe.

To advance in this research of PI in minority French education, it was important to know about the NF parents whose children are enrolled in the minority-language schools. The purpose of this research was to identify the demographic characteristics and to understand the beliefs,
experiences, and involvement of NF parents who have chosen a Francophone school for their children. The research questions were:

1. What are the demographic characteristics and the beliefs of NF parents who have chosen a French minority-language school for their children?
2. What are the experiences of NF parents who have children in a French minority-language school?
3. How are NF parents involved in the education of their children at home, at school, and in the community?

This first chapter of my dissertation is designed to give an overview of the context for the research I conducted. To help the reader understand the stimulus for the research, I begin with my personal experience and describe the genesis of this study. Second, I depict the features associated with minority French schools and right-holder eligibility. Next, I explore changing demographics, PI, and minority French school diversity and challenges. I also introduce the theoretical framework guiding the study. Finally, I offer a summary of the study and explain its significance.

**Stimulus for the Research**

The author sharing his/her background, bias, and relationship to the context and the data are important aspects of reflexivity and transparency in qualitative research (Kamberelis & Dimitrialis, 2011; Patton, 2015). This research followed a mixed methods design using both qualitative and quantitative data. Therefore, for transparency and reflexivity purposes, I begin by sharing my story and why this research is important to me. Greene (2007) described mixing methods as a process of mixing mental models or “claims, understandings, predispositions, values and beliefs with which a social inquirer approaches his or her work” (p. 53). My
relationship to this research emerged from a mix of personal, professional, and academic realms; in turn, I explain some of my mental models.

**My Story**

I am a NF parent, and my two children are enrolled in a French minority-language school on PEI. My mother was born in a Francophone family, but she and her siblings lost their French language in the mid-1900s. My narrative actually begins with my mother’s story. My mother’s family of 15 children, originated from the western part of PEI. Despite growing up speaking French at home and being surrounded by other Francophone families, my mother and her siblings were not schooled in French. At that time, the school boards privileged English in the schools, and French books and instruction were discouraged (Arsenault, 1989; Power, 2011). English held great public appeal, since it was the majority language, and speaking English increased one’s social and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1992). My mother’s family was assimilated (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), and, having lost the French language, my mother became what Denis (2011) called an *ayant droit perdu* or lost right-holder (p. 11).

I have come to understand assimilation through the lens of current theories on language loss and language maintenance. According to Landry, Allard, and Deveau (2007b), language maintenance and the ethnolinguistic vitality or strength of a language and culture, require close social proximity of speakers, support from citizens and government (ideological legitimacy), and institutional completeness, which together develop cultural autonomy. If one or more of these three components is weak, then there is less chance of maintaining a minority-language and culture. My mother’s family’s use of French language within their home and among extended family and friends served as social proximity, or the ability to use the language when gathered with others in social settings. However, governmental and societal actions at that time were
assimilationist and provided no ideological legitimacy for the French language and culture, thereby degrading its worth. The use of English in the community was encouraged, if not forced, by the social and economic value accorded to English by the government and by the social context (Cormier, 2005; Landry, 2010), resulting in the slow erosion of French. Additionally, French was discouraged in schools, thus reducing the degree of institutional completeness for the French minority. These social conditions resulted in fewer and fewer opportunities for people to use French, which, accompanied by a low value for French, favored the use of the majority English language. Viewed through the lens of Landry, Allard and Deveau’s Cultural Autonomy Model (2007b), the conditions were insufficient for my mother, her family, and their French Acadian community of that era to develop cultural autonomy and maintain their language. In the end, my aunts, uncles, and mother were unable to speak French. I have French Acadian heritage and have fond memories of delicious chicken fricot/soup and Acadian cooking. However, I have never felt a part of the French Acadian community, because I did not learn French from my family.

I had a desire to become a French teacher, which, no doubt, resulted from my knowledge of my mother’s family history, her Acadian background, and my interest and skill in French as a student at school. I majored in French when I undertook my Bachelor of Education at university and developed sufficient French language competency to teach French immersion classes. In learning French, I became a member of what Denis (2011) referred to as the *génération retrouvée*, or recovered generation (p. 12).

When I had children and was a stay-at-home parent, I wanted my children to learn French, as well as English. I made ethnolinguistic choices for my children, which I later found out mirror the components of Landry and Allard’s (1997) minority-language theory. Landry and
Allard created their counterbalance model to show how to support learning a minority-language. Their model includes supporting the minority-language in the family, school, and community milieus to promote additive bilingualism with acquisition of the minority-language and culture.

In a community with weak ethnolinguistic vitality, the family and school must work diligently to promote the development of the minority-language and culture. My hometown, Charlottetown has weak ethnolinguistic vitality for the French language and culture. For example, Francophones are dispersed geographically among the Anglophone majority and some of the students who attend my children’s school travel as far as 45 Kilometers to attend the school. Relevant to government support, as of December of 2014, the PEI government committed to providing more services in French to respond to the needs of Francophone Islanders (CBC News, 2013). However, two years later, there was no significant change in the designated services and, frustrated by how little had been achieved, the person hired to facilitate the increase in services left the position (CBC News, 2016). The weak ethnolinguistic vitality of this region is one reason why it is so important to understand the involvement and the role of NF parents at French schools in PEI. The NF parents need to be recognized as valuable partners in maintaining and revitalizing French language and culture.

As a parent, I made extra efforts in our home/family milieu to support my children in learning French; I wanted the process of learning French to be easier and more natural for them than it had been for me as an adult. Even though French was my second language, I spoke and sang in French with my children from the time of their birth. At home and in the car, I played French music CDs and the French radio. I attended French baby, toddler, and preschool playgroups and French library activities to expose my children and myself to the French community. They were exposed to English in all activities involving their father, our extended
family, and friends. My husband and I, with strong encouragement from me, chose a French minority-language school to optimize our children’s chances for the best quality bilingualism (Landry, 2010) and in an effort to recover a lost heritage. As I reflect on these examples, I had been working with the components of minority-language theory without knowing it. We chose a French school, because we wanted our children to develop optimal levels of bilingualism (Dalley & Saint-Onge, 2008) and to reclaim the French language and culture. We were granted access to the French school, because I was a right-holder through a grandparent clause applied to article 23 of the Charter at our local French school board (Landry 2010; Vincent, 2010). The grandparent clause permits admission of children with a Francophone grandparent to French minority-language schools. The French school provides our children access to an institution with sociocultural and extracurricular activities in French, such as sports, theatre, music, and dance. These diverse activities offered in French promote institutional completeness and social proximity with others who speak and socialize in French.

As indicated previously, institutional completeness and social proximity are two of the desired components in the Cultural Autonomy Model (Landry et al., 2007b). These minority-language scholars recommended enculturation in French in early childhood and referred to the minority school as the cornerstone for developing cultural autonomy (Landry et al., 2007a), because the school serves a dual purpose by providing institutional completeness and social proximity with others who speak French. Fortunately for my children’s generation, unlike my mother’s, there is ideological legitimacy in the form of federal support in legislation and federal and provincial government funding for French minority-language schools, which completes Landry et al.’s third essential component toward cultural autonomy.
In their French education, our children are developing an identity and sense of belonging associated with the French Acadian and Francophone community. For example, one child has participated several times in the Acadian Games/Jeux d’Acadie in the Atlantic Provinces and the other child composes songs in French as well as in English. Their attendance at the French school and participation in activities in French with a school-made minority-language social group helps them develop an identity as a member of the Francophonie and reclaim family heritage (Cormier, 2005).

Two other minority-language theories support minority-language learning and contributing to the French community, and they are also relevant to my family experiences reclaiming French. Cormier (2005) proposed the ricochet theory, which aptly described the aspirations I have for our family. According to this theory, if a child develops an identity as a member of the Francophone community, he or she is likely to continue to contribute to the development of the Francophone community as an adult. Another minority education model, the self-determination of ethnolinguistic development (SED) (Landry et al. 2007b), demonstrated that individuals who develop a sense of motivation for learning and using a minority-language are more likely to continue to use that language in society. If the ricochet (Cormier, 2005) and SED (Landry et al., 2007b) theories are correct, then my children’s identity, formed in part at the French school, helps them embrace a feeling of belonging to the Francophone and Acadian communities, and that sense of belonging will develop an internal desire to want to and choose to use the French language now and in the future. Ideally, my children will contribute to maintaining and revitalizing the French language in our home community, and, hopefully, embody the French culture and heritage. If my children do stay attached to the French community in the future, my effort as a member of the génération retrouvée, or recovered
generation (Denis 2011) will have been productive for my children as well as the broader French community.

Notwithstanding the educational opportunities offered to our children, my husband and I did not feel like members of the Francophone community. We have felt awkward as NF parents with our children at the French school, despite my French Acadian heritage and French language proficiency. In fact, my husband would likely remove the children from the French school if for some unfortunate reason I were not able to be here to help the children. He believes that he is unable to be effectively involved with the children’s education and has felt uncomfortable at the school. In our early years at the school, I realized that despite being able to function in French, I also felt uncomfortable, linguistically insecure, and unsure if we were truly welcomed or belonged. I was much less involved at the school than I had anticipated. I was concerned about the presence of Anglo-dominant students, including my own children, potentially anglicizing a safe French space (O’Keefe, 2001; Thériault, 1999). After all, I was keenly aware of the need to protect French and of just how quickly assimilation to English or a majority language can take place. I began to question how the experience was for other NF parents who had chosen a French school.

I discovered that other NF parents with children in French minority-language schools also reported feeling marginalized (Dalley & Saint-Onge, 2008). As I observed NF parents at our children’s school, I wondered how they felt or were involved, especially if they had no Acadian or Francophone heritage, no French proficiency, or were allophones. The experience and observations as NF parents with children at a French school is what led to my current research interest pertaining to the experiences, involvement, and beliefs of NF parents who have chosen a
Francophone school for their children. In the next sections, I describe the French minority school context and the analytic framework for this research.

**Minority French Schools and Right-Holders**

French and English minority-language schools have existed in Canada for several decades. The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Section 23 (1982) defined the criteria for attending minority English schools in Quebec and minority French schools outside of Quebec. A constitutional right-holder refers to parents who have the right to send their children to school in their minority-language based on the *Charter*. In some areas, such as Nova Scotia, PEI, Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, and British Colombia, French school boards also use a grandparent clause to admit students who have Francophone grandparents or ancestors to French schools, because, as recognized in 1982, many parents had lost their French language due to lack of French schools, lack of community support, and assimilation (Conseil des écoles Fransaskoises, 2013; Conseil Scolaire Francophone de la Colombie Brittanique, 2013; Conseil Scolaire Francophone de Terre-Neuve et Labrador, 2013; Vincent, 2010). The majority of parents with children in the French schools are right-holders, even though they may not speak French with their children.

A typical NF parent who has a child in a French school is often an Anglophone partner in an exogamous couple, who may not speak, read, write, or understand much, if any, French. The NF parent becomes a constitutional right-holder along with the Francophone parent when the child is enrolled in the French school. Other possible NF parents include assimilated individuals of Francophone heritage, immigrant or allophone populations, or highly motivated (for learning French) families where one parent or neither parent has French language proficiency (R. Cormier, personal communication, November 15, 2011; Taylor, 2002). Though it varies between
school boards across the country, usually these non-right holder NF parents need to apply to an admissions committee to be admitted to a French school (Commission scolaire de langue française [CSLF], 2014; Taylor, 2002).

**Changing Demographics**

Many of the families who sent children to the minority French schools in the era of the Charter in the early 1980s were *endogamous* couples with two French parents. However, for many reasons, such as a decline of rural French communities, lower birth rates, and urbanization (Landry, Deveau, & Allard, 2006), statistics show that the number of Francophones in Canada is decreasing. Concurrently, there has been an increase in the number of exogamous couples, with one Francophone parent and one NF parent (Landry, 2010; Vézina & Houle, 2014). Across regions of Canada, as few as 7.5% (in New Brunswick) and as many as 33.5% of students (in Nova Scotia) in French minority-language schools came from Anglo-dominant backgrounds (Allen & Cartwright, 2004). However, in some areas in Canada, the Anglo-dominant presence is much higher. Rocque (2006a) showed that 82% of children of right-holders in Western Canada came from exogamous couples. A recent small-scale study in a rural, historically Acadian community on PEI showed that 75% of parents of children attending the French minority-language school in the community were NF (endogamous Anglophones) with minimal self-reported French proficiency (MacPhee, Turnbull, Gauthier, Cormier, & Miller, 2013). Other statistics specific to PEI, showing an increase in exogamous couples, were reported by Chavez, Lepage and Bouchard-Coulombe (2012):

From 1971 to 2006, the proportion of children from a French-English exogamous family among all families with at least one French-mother-tongue parent increased in Prince Edward Island, going from 43% to 74%. Conversely, the share of children living in an
endogamous family with both parents having French as their mother tongue declined substantially, from 57% in 1971 to 25% in 2006. (p. 16)

Landry (2010) highlighted the decrease in the number of students admissible to attend French schools in Canada and the increase in the number of children who come from exogamous couples rather than two Francophone parents. In 1986, 53% of the children of right-holders eligible for French schools came from exogamous couples (Martel, 2001), and in 2006, 66% came from exogamous couples (Landry, 2010). Specific to PEI, in 2001, there were 1755 children of right-holders eligible to attend French schools, where in 2006, there were only 1310 students eligible to attend French schools (Landry, 2010).

Other researchers have commented on the increase in heterogeneity in French schools and the greater demand on teachers to support linguistically diverse students in their classes (Heller, 2002; Gérin-Lajoie, 2006, 2008). In addition to teaching curriculum, teachers of early grades have found they need to teach French to students with low or no French proficiency (Cormier, 2005, 2015). Traditionally, parents, family, and community transferred French to the children. Thus, over the last decade, there has been a need to define and offer francisation, which is support or programming to meet the language and cultural needs of students who arrive in schools with little or no French language proficiency (CMEC, 2002, 2003; Cormier, 2005; Cormier, Bourque, & Jolicoeur, 2014). Some research efforts have investigated francisation methods and NF student needs for francisation from onset of school through to completion and explored the school needs for appropriate resources (Cavanagh, Cammarata, & Blain, 2016; Cormier & Lowe, 2010; Cormier et al., 2013b). In a similar vein, I see a need for research related to the experience and involvement of the NF parents and their children, many of whom likely require support as they navigate the French minority-language school system.
**Introduction to Parent Involvement**

Extensive research from around the world has shown that PI in children’s education is a strong indicator of student academic and social achievement (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Eccles, & Harold, 1996; Epstein, 2011; Jeynes, 2003, 2007, 2010; McNeal, 2014). Parental involvement, as measured in various research endeavors, includes, but is not limited to, parents assisting with homework, helping with reading and vocabulary, attending or participating in school activities, maintaining contact and communication with the school, and valuing the importance of education (CMEC, 2003; Epstein, 2011; Moles & Fege, 2011). In French minority-language schools, PI is important for the aforementioned reasons and is crucial to help children to make academic and linguistic progress in French, because the parents need to value and promote the minority French language, especially in English majority communities where English is dominant (CMEC, 2003; Landry, 2010). A fuller explanation of PI is provided in Chapter 2.

**Minority French Parental Involvement**

While much research has been done on PI, most has been carried out in a majority Anglophone context (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Epstein, 2011; Jeynes, 2003, 2007, 2010). Generally, the body of literature on PI in the French minority context is small, and there is a lack of literature regarding NF parents. However, there are theories in the research literature about ethnolinguistic revitalization and maintenance for minority-languages and culture, which offer suggestions for how native and non-native speaking parents can assist children. Yet, surprisingly, little has been done to research the theories or to study and understand PI in the French minority context in Canada (CMEC, 2003; Fishman, 1991; Landry, Deveau, & Allard, 2006). Some research has been done investigating the experience of the
exogamous couple (Cormier, 2015; Cormier & Lowe, 2010; Rocque, 2006a), and some suggestions have been made for NF parents in exogamous couples to be involved (Taylor, 2003, 2007). My study, which investigated the demographics, beliefs, involvement, and experience of NF parents with children in the French system, is particularly timely and important considering the rapidly growing number of students with NF parents who are enrolled in Francophone schools in PEI and across Canada (Ontario Ministry of Education [OMOE], 2009).

**Minority French School Challenges**

Several areas of concern from the French minority school research literature point to the need for an improved understanding of French minority-language education, including the role of parents and NF parents, in particular. These concerns include student underachievement in French schools and the struggle for French schools to maintain sufficient numbers to stay viable. Across Canada, students in French minority-language schools underachieve on standardized tests such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and other common assessments when compared to the Canadian average (Allen & Cartwright, 2004; Knighton, Brochu, & Gluszynski, 2010; Wagner, Corbeil, Doray, & Fortin, 2002). Literacy skills are typically lower for French minority-language students compared to English majority or French majority language students. For example, the analysis of PISA results from 2009 revealed:

Students in the English-language school systems outperformed students in the French-language school systems, and in five provinces, (British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia) students in the English-language school systems outperformed students in the French-language school systems by 38 points or more on the combined reading scale … A similar pattern was observed with respect to performance in the three reading aspects sub-scales. Across all three aspect sub-scales
students enrolled in the English-language school system performed significantly better than those in the French-language school system for Canada overall and in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. (Knighton et al., 2010, pp. 21–23)

Parent support for literacy and socio-cultural development of children in the minority-language context is vital; however, many parents, especially many NF parents, do not have the French language proficiency and/or are uncertain about how to offer support (CMEC, 2003; OMOE, 2009). It would be helpful to know how NF parents are involved with their children’s education, including activities that support literacy and language development. This research provides insight about how NF parents are currently involved and barriers to involvement.

Another concern in the minority French school context is that approximately half of eligible children of right-holder parents attend English schools instead of French schools (Martel, 2001; Landry, 2010). Moreover, many parents transfer their children from French schools to French immersion or English programs during the transition years of Grade 7 or Grade 10 (Cotnam, 2011; Dalley & Saint-Onge, 2008). If Francophone numbers are declining and only half of eligible children are enrolled in French immersion or English programs, the future of French minority schools is bleak. French minority-language schools want to attract and retain students, both to keep their student numbers high and to maintain an institution that protects and values an educational and social space for the maintenance and enrichment of the French language and culture (Landry, Allard, & Deveau, 2010; O’Keefe, 2001). Furthermore, if children do not attend the French schools, assimilation likely continues, with negative consequences for the French language. Therefore, it would make sense to understand the motivations of NF parents to choose, reject, or abandon the French school and to determine how to meet the needs
of parents and students with regard to student success and enrollment in French schools. Past research has referred to the NF parent in exogamous couples (Cormier & Lowe, 2010; Rocque, 2006a), but no known research has focused on the different types of NF parents and their needs and perspectives in Francophone schools. Additionally, no other known researcher has focused exclusively on the NF parents who have children enrolled in French schools in PEI (MacPhee et al., 2013).

In general, the literature on PI accentuates the importance of parents feeling welcomed by the school (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Jeynes, 2011c; Pushor, 2013). The literature also highlights the need for parents to feel comfortable and competent in playing a supportive role for their children (Hoover-Dempsey, 2011; Hornby, 2011). The challenges for NF parents are multiplied when they do not understand the language of instruction. When NF parents attempt to assist their children with homework and get involved in school activities, which are typically in French, they may find it difficult or impossible to comprehend the teacher or book instructions. It is likely that many of these parents experience frustration or alienation and may abandon the French system (Cormier, 2015; Dalley & Saint-Onge, 2008; Hoover-Dempsey, 2011). If appropriate resources are lacking for NF parents or if communication and support from the school are not helpful for NF parents, then students could experience a less-than-optimal education. These young people may be academically disadvantaged as well as linguistically disadvantaged students.

Another challenge is that school enrollment declines if families decide to leave the French school. A low sense of parent self-efficacy (Hoover-Dempsey, 2011) is equally possible in exogamous couples where one NF parent is feeling left out of the child’s education despite the Francophone parent presence. A lack of help at home due to low French proficiency could be
problematic for students and withdrawals from the school and declining numbers would be problematic for the French system. In such an event, the additional role of the French schools to encourage community development and repair historical wrongs, as well as provide French education, would not be accomplished (Rocque, 2008). A decrease in enrolment would negatively impact the French linguistic and cultural survival that Canada has been striving to promote with Section 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The findings from this dissertation are needed and relevant to the future of Canadian French minority-language schools and the Canadian bilingual identity.

**Increased Diversity Challenges**

Due to the increasing demand for French schools by diverse populations across Canada, several French school boards have broadened admission policies, which allow for the admission of NF students in order to accommodate the interest and maintain numbers in French schools, thereby promoting survival of the schools. The increasing linguistic and cultural diversity of parents who send their children to French schools often means children with no or little French require extra support. The diversity of parents also heightens the likelihood that NF parents face greater challenges to be involved in school-related academic, non-academic, and para-academic activities. The amount of PI appears limited for a NF parent when PI is linked to assisting with homework, helping with reading and supporting vocabulary growth, maintaining contact with schools, understanding communication coming home from the school, and, in general, aiding fluency in the school language (Kavanaugh & Hickey, 2013).

This study examining the experience of NF parents in French schools on PEI helps understand current PI for NF parents, informs about the barriers to PI, and provides suggested actions that could lead to more positive engagement for NF parents. Improved PI could enhance
academic and linguistic achievement for children and promote the French language and culture within diverse populations in French minority-language schools across Canada. The information from this study can also be applied more broadly to other contexts where the parents do not speak the dominant language of the school.

**Theoretical Framework Guiding the Research**


From the theory in minority-language education, I found models that explain or promote minority-language learning and additive bilingualism. I used the theoretical models of the self-determination and ethnolinguistic development model (SED) proposed by Landry, Allard, and Deveau (2007b, 2009) and Landry and Allard’s (1990) counterbalance model, which have been proposed specifically for minority-language contexts. The SED model helped interpret the data from parents as the data pertain to their feeling of autonomy, belonging, and competence being involved in French education. The counterbalance model also assisted understanding cultural and linguistic maintenance and revitalization and the importance of school, family, and community partnerships. I also used the model for parent involvement by Hornby (2011) as a gauge to
analyze the data from NF parents to assess their involvement at home and at school. See Chapter 2 for a more detailed literature review and discussion of my theoretical framework.

**Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this research was to understand the demographic characteristics of NF parents as well as to examine the beliefs, experiences, and involvement of NF parents who have chosen a Francophone school for their children. This study fills a gap in the scholarly and professional literature about different types of NF parents, their motivations for enrolling children in Francophone schools, the role they play in the child’s education, and the barriers they face relative to PI. The findings are meant to offer new information to school professionals, educators, administration, and parent groups. This research is the first known study in Canada to document the experience of NF parents beyond exogamous couples. This study is timely as French schools are serving increasingly diverse populations across Canada (Vincent, 2010; CSLF, 2012; OMOE, 2009), especially in large urban centers such as Toronto and Calgary. Therefore, many regions, school boards, and schools can benefit from broader knowledge about NF parents and the role these parents play. It is also the first known study to combine theory from PI research and French minority-language education.

The study complements theoretical models about minority-language revitalization and has the potential to contribute to the enhancement of school board policy and programming. The application of the knowledge gained from this research has great potential to enhance collaboration between French minority schools and NF parents, resulting in enriched learning situations for students, parents, and educators. Parent associations in the minority context will be better informed to help parents, especially NF parents, in their schools on PEI and across
Canada. Moreover, this research informs French language and cultural survival efforts to address linguistic, cultural, and social challenges in French minority contexts across Canada.

French minority-language schools are seen by both the Supreme Court of Canada (Arsenault-Cameron, 2000) and researchers (Fishman, 1991; Landry & Rousselle, 2003; Landry, 2010; Martel, 2001) as critical for helping minority French communities to thrive and maintain their cultural-linguistic identity and vitality. As stated by Victor Goldbloom (1998), former Commissioner of Official languages:

Few can doubt the importance of minority-language schools to the vitality of their communities. Such institutions provide an essential physical and social space within which members can meet and foster their cultural and linguistic heritage. Indeed, without minority-language schools the very conditions necessary for the preservation of Canada’s linguistic duality would be markedly diminished. (p. 6)

Summary

Parents, as well as educators, play a key role in the success of students and the schools. The Canadian Charter of Rights established the criteria, and school boards determine which parents are eligible to choose minority-language schools (Rocque, 2008). Yet, despite Charter definitions for eligibility to French minority-language schools, language boundaries are not so clear. Some right-holder parents do not speak French, and an increasing number of the students populating French schools speak little or no French when they arrive at school (Cormier, 2005; Cormier & Lowe, 2010; OMOE, 2009). It has been shown for decades that PI is an important indicator of student achievement. Thus, for optimal student success in a French academic environment, research is crucial to identify and understand not only NF student needs, but also the motivation, experience, involvement, and needs of NF parents.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this research, I examine the reality of NF parents who have children in French minority-language schools by exploring their experiences and educational involvement at home, at school, and in community. This chapter presents a review of the literature pertaining to parent involvement (PI) in general, and to Canadian French minority-language schools, in particular. First, I share different definitions from the literature as well as my definition for PI for this dissertation research. Second, I depict what past research has revealed about parent beliefs and motivations relative to PI. Then I present the benefits and barriers to PI, including a focus on minority contexts. I explore what has been written about parental school choice, minority French school eligibility and choice, and the effects of exogamous couples’ school choice of a French school. I highlight the research and gaps in knowledge concerning the NF parent in French schools. Following the review of the literature, I provide an overview of the theoretical framework that informed this study.

Parental Involvement

For the past 40 years, worldwide, there has been a vast quantity of research conducted about parents’ educational involvement with their children. In this section, I provide definitions for PI that were used in the past and my definition for PI for this study. I also share key findings from PI research including important predictors for PI, parent beliefs and motivations about PI, benefits of PI, and barriers preventing PI. Since the context for this study is in minority French schools, and, because NF parents are actually a subgroup of parents within the minority French school, I have also drawn on the literature specific to the barriers to PI in minority contexts, where language is often a barrier.
Definition

Extensive research conducted in many parts of the world, reporting both individual studies and meta-analyses, has shown that PI in children’s education is often a strong indicator of academic and social achievement (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Epstein, 2001; Jeynes, 2010; McNeal, 2014; Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall, & Gordon, 2009; Wilder, 2014). The terms that have been used in the research to describe and measure PI in education have not been consistent over time, and this discrepancy has resulted in corresponding inconsistencies in research results (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Fan & Chen, 2001). A thorough discussion of how PI has been defined in the research is required.

For the past forty years, parent involvement has been a term favored within much of the research; however, not all scholars use this term. Since 1987, Epstein (2011) has recommended that educators use the term family partnerships. In contrast to this suggestion, a recent trend has researchers (Moles & Fege, 2011; Pushor, 2010) using the term family engagement rather than involvement. Pushor (2010) favors engagement to indicate that parents play more than supportive roles by actually contributing to the curriculum taught in the classroom and both families and schools benefit from the collaboration. These scholars believe that the term family engagement more accurately reflects the role that parents and the extended family, such as grandparents, may play in education. They believe the term engagement imbues a sense of a deeper level of commitment to education compared with the term involvement.

Although I understand the rationale for the other terms that have been suggested, such as partnerships and engagement, I have chosen to use the term parent involvement (PI) to be consistent with the historical use and the bulk of research on the topic. Also, this term is consistent with the terminology used in Hornby’s (2011) theoretical model that I use for data
analysis. I am following Fan and Chen’s (2001) research advice, which is twofold: they suggested paying close attention to the operational definition of PI for the research, and they suggested including a variety of different dimensions of PI, measuring definitions and dimensions separately. I have followed their advice closely in both cases.

I also considered the distinction made by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) between assessing *spontaneous* PI that is naturally occurring and PI that transpires as a result of a program devised to improve PI. My research targeted spontaneous PI that occurred naturally, and as a result of the parents’ intentions, outside of a program. Although some French school programs make suggestions to promote francisation at home (Cormier & Lowe, 2010), NF parent participation in francisation programming would not have precluded their involvement as participants in this study. Additionally, francisation efforts on PEI were in the early stages at the beginning of this research and were not being presented as a comprehensive program at all schools (MacPhee et al., 2013). In terms of PI, I have also been influenced by the distinction made by Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) between parent overall involvement with the child and involvement specific to the child's scholarly education. My research focused primarily on scholarly educational involvement, including PI as it related to cultural identity, given the French minority context, purpose, and theoretical models that are the foundation of my study.

Many types of PI have been depicted over the years. Epstein (2011), a renowned scholar on the topic, identified six, which include: basic obligations of families (e.g., health and safety and healthy child development), basic obligations of schools (e.g., communication with families), involvement at school (e.g., volunteering), involvement in learning activities at home (e.g., homework, monitoring, and decision making), involvement in decision making, governance, and advocacy (e.g., parent teacher associations and committees), and collaborating
and exchanges with community organizations. Hill and Tyson (2009) defined PI as “parents’ interactions with schools and with their children to promote academic success” (p. 1491). The PI definition from the No Child Left Behind initiative in the United States is “the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities” (p. 3). Moles and Fege (2011) stated:

Parent involvement can refer to a wide array of activities in the home and in collaboration with the school. These may include helping with children’s home learning activities, communicating between schools and families, attending parent meetings and educational workshops, helping to write school policies, organizing to demand better schools, and participating in decisions about the education of one’s child including choice of schools.

(p. 5)

Earlier definitions included “parental aspirations for their children’s academic achievement” (Bloom, as cited by Fan & Chen, 2001, p. 3) and “the allocation of resources to the child's school endeavors” (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994, p. 237). The definitions span from basic care and aspirations for the child, to involvement at the school and advocacy for improved education.

The French minority-language theorists and researchers have valued and explicitly recommended means by which parents can be supportive and involved; however, I found no definition for PI in that literature. Resources have been created for parents that include recommendations such as helping with literacy and vocabulary development, valuing French, using French media, and getting involved in French cultural activities in the community (CMEC, 2003; Commission Nationale des Parents Francophones [CNPF] 1996; Cormier & Lowe, 2010; Taylor, 2002). In addition, the literature about the French minority context referred consistently to the importance of collaboration between the family, school, and community to achieve
successful transfer, maintenance, and revitalization of the French language and culture (Landry & Allard, 1997; Landry, 2010; Rocque, 2008; Vincent, 2010). This point aligns with Epstein’s (2011) three inter-linked Venn diagram spheres of family, school, and community for effective partnerships. Landry and Allard (1990) emphasized that with a minority-language, it is necessary and beneficial to have support from the family, school, and community to maximize the likelihood of learning and maintaining the minority-language as well as for attaining additive bilingualism and academic achievement.

Bearing in mind the array of definitions that are attached to PI, along with the French minority school and minority-language context, I define PI for this research as: spontaneous, educationally focused parent actions or interactions at home, at school, or in the community for academic or French linguistic and cultural benefit. Herein, spontaneous means naturally occurring without a parent program. The term parent can be broadly applied to the caregivers involved in the child’s upbringing and education, as, for example, a biological mother/father, adopted mother/father, grandparents, and foster parents.

This research targeted, but was not limited to three domains. Firstly, I looked for examples of effort made at home to provide materials and space for homework, aid with homework such as reading out loud or listening to the child read, ask or review vocabulary words, discuss the value of education and French, and discuss educational aspirations and choices. Secondly, I looked for involvement at school, such as, communicating with school via calls or notes, visiting the school for meet-the-teacher-night or parent-teacher interviews, volunteering at school, and participating in committees. Thirdly, I considered involvement in the community, for example, making library visits, attending musical or theatrical presentations in French, and sport and leisure activities, as well as going to community events put on outside of
school hours by the school or French community organisations. Having defined PI for this
dissertation, I move on to discuss the key findings from the research literature.

**Previous Research**

Some research, and, in particular, several meta-analyses (i.e., Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003, 2005; Wilder, 2014) pertaining to research about PI, revealed that PI is an important indicator of student success, across all races, socio-economic status, parent education level, minority groupings, and school grades (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2011b; Weiss et al., 2009; Wilder, 2014). Those findings demonstrated that not all types of PI are equally beneficial, yet, no single type of PI has been found to be sufficient on its own (Fan & Chen, 2001; Weiss et al., 2009). Parental assistance with homework has been shown to be the least important PI factor associated with achievement (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Hyndman, 2014; Jeynes, 2011b; Wilder, 2014). The most important PI indicators of academic achievement and social adjustment included high expectations, loving and effective communication, a supportive, non-authoritarian but structured parental style, reading aloud at home (Jeynes, 2011a), academic socialization, educationally enriching activities (Hill & Tyson, 2009), and bidirectional communication with school and parents (Jeynes, 2003, 2011b; Weiss et al., 2009). Jeynes (2011b) noted that family structure and parent availability, followed by parent discussions and communication were key predictors of student achievement. This finding is consistent with the recommendation by Hornby (2011) that all parents need open channels of communication with the school and most parents can contribute by collaborating with teachers to assist children at home or at school. Wilder (2014) identified high parent expectations for academic achievement as having the strongest relationship with student achievement. These findings demonstrate that diverse types of PI have been found important to help children achieve academically.
Despite the aforementioned findings, some PI research identified little or no benefit to student achievement (El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010), or showed that increasing PI for children with lower socioeconomic status parents had a positive impact but not for children whose parents had high socioeconomic status (Domina, 2005). Other research showed that the influence of PI varies depending on the parent social status (Lareau 1989; Lee & Bowen, 2006), gender (Fleischmann & de Haas, 2016; Keith et al., 1998), and immigrant status (Fleischmann & de Haas, 2016; Kao, 2004). As mentioned previously, varying research findings could be the result of inconsistent definitions and measures of PI. Therefore, I rely on my set definition and measures of PI for this research.

Predictors and Benefits

The research literature on PI has identified some factors that are positive predictors of parental educational involvement. One of these predictors is parents feeling that they are competent and that they can make a positive contribution to their children’s education and school environment (Bandura, 1997; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Green et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey, 2011). Other predictors include a welcoming atmosphere and culture of a school (Green et al., 2007), as indicated through such things as explicit invitations by the child, school, and teachers for PI (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Weiss, et al., 2009). A PI predictor for minority or immigrant groups is knowledge of the language of the school (Edwards, 2011; Paik, 2011; Turney & Kao 2009; Weiss et al., 2009). The quality of the connections, trust, and relationships between families with teachers and the school are also important indicators of PI (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Hand, 2009; Weiss, et al., 2009). Parent beliefs, which are influenced by personal history, culture, and society (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Green et al., 2007; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Weiss, et al., 2009), also determine if, and to what degree, parents become involved in their children’s
education. As reported by Cormier and Lowe (2010), some parents value a French education for their children so much that they are willing to feel alienated and suffer decreased involvement if it means the child has a quality education and develops linguistic skills in French.

The general benefits of PI, parent beliefs, and parent motivations that favor PI are important for school professionals and parents to understand because of the positive impact of PI revealed in much of the research literature. Hoover-Dempsey (2011) summarized empirical studies, which showed myriad advantages resulting from PI. Compared to no or low PI, findings revealed that when parents are involved, student academic performance is superior as measured by class marks, achievement tests, teacher ratings, graduating on-time, student value for learning, student active engagement in learning, and student self-regulation and competency for learning (Hoover-Dempsey, 2011). However, there are barriers that reduce or prevent PI which have also been reported in the literature.

**Barriers to Parent Involvement**

Numerous barriers to PI have been identified by researchers over the years. The barriers identified two decades ago (Eccles & Harold, 1996) share much in common with barriers identified more recently (Jeynes, 2011b). However, the recognition of the importance of PI barriers has increased in recent years, in part due to diversity and the increasing multicultural and multilingual presence in classrooms around the globe (Edwards, 2011; Hornby, 2011; Paik, 2011). As a result, significant barriers to PI have been identified in minority contexts and where parents do not speak the language of the school (Hornby, 2011; Liu, 2016). In PEI, over the last decade, there have been substantial demographic changes and the arrival of diverse immigrants with many different languages (CBC News, 2016).
Hoover-Dempsey (2011) and Hornby and Lafaele (2011) described the factors that prevent parents from being involved. For example, parents tend not to be educationally engaged in situations where a parent does not believe in the importance or value of PI or when the parent does not believe in his or her personal ability to help. For instance, parent beliefs decreased PI in the case of Irish immersion students where the parents, not knowing Irish, believed they could not effectively help their children (Kavanaugh & Hickey, 2013). Additionally, parents are less involved when they believe that it is the school’s responsibility, rather than the parent’s responsibility, to educate students (Hoover-Dempsey, 2011; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

In other research, Eccles and Harold (1996) identified barriers to PI when they found that parents’ time, energy, economic resources, familiarity with curriculum, confidence in ability to help (efficacy beliefs), attitudes about a parent’s role at different ages (child’s), and prior negative experiences with school accounted for decreased or lack of involvement in the child’s educational process. Jeynes (2011b) confirmed those PI barriers in his findings and added parent language, socioeconomic status, and conflict with educators as contributors to decreased involvement. Hornby and Lafaele’s (2011) work contained an extensive list of obstacles to PI, including a lack of invitations from school and a non-welcoming atmosphere at school. They also explained that many teachers believed that parents were somehow deficient or less able to help. These types of teacher attitudes deterred PI. Other obstacles to involvement were low parent education and complicated family circumstances, such as solo parenting, parent work schedules, and other parenting responsibilities (Hornby, 2011). Hornby identified the additional barriers of having older children or children with special needs, and parents with poor mental or physical health. In situations where parents were not proficient in the school language, had low cultural capital, had low or no trust between home and school, or felt that there were differing
agendas at home and at school, there was a negative impact on PI (Hornby, 2011). Hornby summarized the above mentioned PI barriers into four categories: parent and family, child, parent-teacher and societal factors.

Recent research out of Québec (Dumoulin, Thériault, & Duval, 2014) identified five improvements needed for home and school collaboration:

1) developing communication practices to stimulate discussion between teachers and parents; 2) convening meetings that take into account parents’ work schedule and provide children activities during the latter; 3) providing more information to parents about the progresses, difficulties and learning of their children; 4) informing parents from disadvantaged areas about the value of their role in their children's education, and; 5) organizing group meetings for parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds. (p. 117) These findings show a need for more collaboration and dialogue between schools and parents.

Although barriers to PI for parents have been well researched and suggestions have been made to enhance involvement, PI barriers specific to NF parents were investigated in the survey and interviews for this research. The data analysis to respond to research Question 3, yielded information about the PI barriers that NF parents faced and the recommendations NF parents felt would address the barriers. Next, I discuss the significant PI obstacles revealed in the literature that exist in minority contexts, especially where a language barrier is experienced by parents.

**Involvement Barriers in Minority Contexts**

In research conducted in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand, minority parents are identified as typically born outside the host country. According to the literature, minority parents experience more barriers to PI than native-born parents (Hornby 2011; Turney & Kao, 2009). Minority parents have a greater need to feel welcomed, and they
experience greater language disparity, which makes communication with the school difficult (Edwards, 2011; Hornby, 2011; Turney & Kao, 2009). These parents may also have greater work, income, transportation, and safety concerns. Research into PI has shown that parents in diverse life situations are not all equally equipped to be involved in the same types of PI (Hornby, 2011; Turney & Kao, 2009). Paik (2011) and Liu (2016) spoke to the needs of minority parents and recommended that teachers and schools invite diverse parents to get engaged with the school community. They also suggest school personnel partner with parents, making use of a parent liaison and translation to overcome language and cultural barriers in assorted ways, including for meetings, newsletters, and events. Schools can assist parents by paying particular attention to effective communication strategies, initiating parent liaisons, if possible, and informing parents about the importance of providing books and developing literacy at home.

Paik (2011) argued that diversity will continue to be the norm everywhere, so it is necessary to collaborate at all levels to assist minority schooling. Edwards (2011) agreed with Paik, recommending that school professionals need to reflect on how they can differentiate for diverse parents to enable PI. Such a process would be similar to how educators differentiate teaching for diverse student needs. In a minority Irish language context, Kavanaugh and Hickey (2013) found that low language proficiency among parent or family members, time issues, the child’s resistance to PI, lack of school initiative or resources, and parent dissatisfaction with initiatives or resources, contributed to low PI. Within this list, the parents’ lack of language proficiency was the most frequent barrier. Those parents required help from the school to know how to assist with education in a minority language and to trust that they were able to contribute as educational partners.
Reconfirming past research (Landry & Allard, 1997), Landry, Allard, and Deveau (2006) showed that if an exogamous couple made efforts to promote French and had a strong value for francité (French use) at home, then the students from exogamous couples did as well academically and linguistically, as the children from endogamous couples. Cummins (2012) also stated, in the case of immigrant parents in French schools, being Anglo-dominant is not a disadvantage if parents supported literacy development in their maternal language. He cited studies that have shown that cross language transfer of skills, such as reading comprehension, occurs for bilinguals. Therefore, parents can help with the development of a second or minority language even if they do not speak it by providing books and learning resources and supporting literacy development in their own language, while modelling positive attitudes towards the language being learned (Cummins, 2000; Kavanaugh & Hickey, 2013).

The review of the literature helped create my definition of PI. In the literature, I identified factors that serve as barriers or motivations for PI, advantages of PI, as well as PI factors to consider in the circumstances of minority and diverse parents. Across many situations, PI has the potential to bolster student achievement. It is reasonable then to conclude that PI is important in French minority-language education in Canada. Based on the above findings, I propose that the Anglo-dominant or immigrant/allophone parent who has a child in a French minority-language school can feel like or be seen as a minority or diverse parent within the context of the French school. Hence, based on the PI literature, it is important to recognize that NF parents at a French school likely have an even greater need than typical parents to feel welcomed, receive effective communication with school personnel, be invited to participate, feel informed, and feel competent to be involved with their children’s education. With this perspective on the NF parent and the knowledge about PI, I shift the focus to the French minority context to examine what is
known about how NF parents feel and how they are involved. I explain why parents chose certain schools, and, specifically, why parents chose French schools, especially when their children were not proficient in the language.

**Parental School Choice**

According to the literature, parental school choice has gone from simply sending one’s child to the school located closest to home to a parent being an informed consumer who deliberates and chooses a school based on family values and the effective school marketing and reputations (Bagley, Woods & Glatter, 2010; Cotnam, 2011; Davies & Aurini, 2011). I refer to school choice that has been studied in the United Kingdom, the United States, Saudi Arabia, England, and Canada. Bagley, Woods and Glatter’s (2010) research in the United Kingdom revealed that the reasons parents rejected a school were related first to the distance to the school, followed by poor appearance of the pupils at the school, and a displeasing school environment and infrastructure. Other explanations were poor staff approachability, poor administration, ethnic composition and social selection, school reputation, and student bullying issues. Parents also reported having avoided schools where school personnel were perceived to lack human connection and warmth. The authors found that parents considered the various marketed options and made their school choice decisions based on personal and social values, in addition to academic value. Research in the United States confirmed these points. American parents also decided on a school based on its location and distance from home, the academic quality of the school, and the demographics and the security of the students (Gross, deArmond & Denice, 2015).

Other research in England showed that the location of the school, the ability to meet the needs of the child, the discipline and behavior expectations, and academic success of the students
were the most important motivating factors for parents (Wespieser, Durbin, & Sims, 2015). This study revealed that parents with higher socioeconomic status chose a school based on discipline, academic achievement, and effective leadership. Parents with more social capital researched schools before making their choice. They visited schools during open sessions or spoke with other parents. Parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds chose schools based on teacher qualifications, school reputation, and school location. They tended to allow the child to choose the school or choose a school where a sibling attended.

Looking to other research, in Saudi Arabia, parents chose a school based on class size, quality of instruction, and relationships between the students and teachers (Alsauidi, 2016). The ambiance and the condition of the buildings were also important. Parents were looking for the availability of sporting and physical activities offered in a gym or outside, library services, theatre spaces, computer labs, and science labs. Technology supporting effective communication with parents was also considered significant (Alsauidi, 2015). Next, I discuss school choice in Canada.

In the Canadian context, Yoon and Gulson (2010) did a small study of two elementary schools in Vancouver, which showed that White middle-class parents, when presented with different options, tended to choose a school with specific characteristics. For example, they selected schools based on whether the school had a reputation for a strong competence in either English or French as an official language of Canada and students achieving high literacy, as ranked by the Fraser Institute (Yoon & Gulson, 2010). The researchers found that academic and language aspects in a given school were important to parents as forms of social, cultural, and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1989, 1992), which would provide their children access to better jobs and higher social prestige. The parents avoided schools with higher ESL learner populations
and favored schools with an option for French immersion and bilingualism. Immigrant or multilingual non-Anglophone parents in Yoon and Gulson’s study tended to choose English schooling if their child did not speak English at home, to favor the mastery of one official language. Davies and Aurini (2011) found that, in Canada, approximately two-thirds (or 68%) of parents chose a standard public school; almost one-quarter (or 23%) chose a religious public school. The remainder of parents (about 9%) chose private or home schooling. These researchers found that parent education and income did not account for choice of school. They theorized that wealthier and more highly educated parents may already have chosen to live in better neighborhoods, which eliminated the need to choose better schools. Across Canada, parent values did seem to determine if they chose a public religious school or a near-by school. Specific to PEI, about 4% of the student population was enrolled in Francophone schools in 2010, while 95% was enrolled in English schools. The remaining children were registered in private religious education or were being home-schooled (Clemens, Palacios, Loyer, & Fathers, 2014). The research in Canada demonstrates that parents value official languages and literacy and that there is some diversity in school choice in Canada but not a great variety.

When considering the immigrant and allophone parent school choice in Canada, Landry (2010) reported from the census of 2006 that immigrants accounted for 20% of the Canadian population. Within this group, 46% had begun to use one of the official languages at home instead of their maternal language. However, English had a stronger attraction for 43% who chose English schools and to speak English at home, and only 3% who chose French. Despite these small numbers, linguistically and culturally diverse populations across the country are growing, and some are choosing the French minority-language schools (Vincent, 2010).
It is clear that many parents act as informed consumers when it comes to choosing the school for their children. It is also apparent that parents make school choice based on a school location, academic standing, and quality of the infrastructure at the institutions. In Canada, parents also chose a school that supports the development of an official language, especially English, which contributes to developing social, linguistic, and economic capital for their children in the long term.

**Minority French School Eligibility and Choice**

Since 1982, minority French parents in Canada have had the right—though hard fought in the courts to access it—(Power, 2011; Rocque, 2006a) to send their children to French minority schools where numbers warrant. For example, right-holders on PEI have access to six French minority-language schools, whether or not the children speak French when they arrive at school. Schools on PEI, and many school boards in the rest of Canada, use a grandparent clause to grant school access to families with “ancêtres Francophones” (Denis, 2011, p. 24) or Francophone ancestors, who have lost the French language but have a French or Acadian heritage (Vincent, 2010). Non-right-holders, such as immigrant, allophone, and Anglo-dominant families can apply to the admission committee of a minority French school to be granted access.

The French school board may admit children other than Section 23 children (children of right-holders) to classes in which French first language instruction is provided, having regard for the integrity of the system and the intent to provide a French first language program (CSLF, 2014, p. 4).

As referred to in Chapter 1, certain parents have been defined as right-holders or *ayants droit* and are eligible to choose French (or English in Quebec) minority-language schools for their children (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982). In the last two decades,
research has been conducted on school choice by endogamous and exogamous couples in the French minority school context (Dalley & Saint-Onge, 2008; Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, [OCOL] 1999). That research was undertaken because, despite Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which allowed access to education in the minority-language in Canada, only half of eligible children were attending French schools (Landry, 2010; Martel, 2001). When it was observed that many eligible parents were not choosing the French minority school option, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages [OCOL] (1999) initiated a study on motivations for school choices by eligible parents outside of Quebec.

The 1999 findings about school choice revealed that some parents chose an English school, because they were in an exogamous couple with one NF parent or used little French at home. Some parents chose immersion in an English school as an option to achieve bilingualism, and others were worried about the difficulty to learn French. Many parents wanted their children to stay in a school in the same neighborhood or found the distance and travel to a French school was too lengthy. Parents found that the English school offered more sport options and extracurricular activities. Some parents found the French schools were too rigid and inhospitable toward the Anglo-dominant parent.

There were also a variety of reasons why parents did choose a French school. These reasons included a parent possessing a Francophone identity, a desire to preserve French, a value for the French language, and a desire to enable communication with extended French family members. Furthermore, parents who chose French schools for their children valued bilingualism and believed that learning French was difficult and, thus, required work in a French school. Many of these parents believed English will be learned regardless of the language of education,
and most had a connection with a French living environment. Parents also chose a French school if it had a good reputation, and they were willing as an exogamous couple with one NF parent to make efforts to adapt to the child’s education in a French school. I relied upon these findings about school choice as a base for several survey and interview questions about NF parent beliefs and motivations for their choice of the French school.

More recently, Dalley and Saint-Onge (2008) reported on research conducted in the French minority context in the Yukon, which revealed that exogamous couples’ choice of an English school was due to the importance of English in the workforce and the ease of finding an English school anywhere in the country. Choice of a French school by an exogamous couple was related to sharing a common culture and desire for transmission of the French language, higher social class/socioeconomic status, professional status, and a sense of belonging to the Francophone community. Some parents chose French immersion offered within an Anglophone school system to provide their children with a bilingual education. The authors also reported that the parents who did not share the ideas and culture of the Francophone school rejected the French school and chose French immersion or English programs.

Cotnam (2011) conducted research about a students’ choice to move from a French school to an English school. Among other factors, this choice was influenced by parent opinions and values. Cotnam highlighted that the choice of school was strongly affected by socioeconomic status and resources available to parents. She cited that the education of parents was a determinant of school choice. About 76% who choose French schools finished their secondary education, compared to about 42% having finished secondary education and who opted for an English choice (Deveau, Landry, & Allard, 2006). Higher parent social capital was linked to parent income and was associated with access to an informed social group, which
influenced parent school choice. Her review of minority French research, which pointed to parental interest in children developing competency in English and a strong desire for bilingualism, were similar to the findings of Yoon and Gulson (2010) in Vancouver. The choice of a French high school depended on a parent’s cultural attachment and sense of belonging to the Francophone community, with the desire to transfer the French language, culture, and identity (Arsenault, 2008; Dalley & Saint-Onge, 2008; Landry, Allard, Deveau, & Bourgeois, 2005; Deveau et al., 2006). Interestingly, immigrants, allophones, Anglophone, and exogamous couples reported valuing official languages and many reported valuing bilingualism (Dallaire, 2003; Landry et al., 2006).

Despite having greater access to French schools due to Section 23 and the Charter, the literature revealed that right-holder parents and exogamous couples make different educational choices for their children. The school choice of exogamous couples varies for diverse reasons, including parent language beliefs and values about the importance of English and French in the home and for the future. Social capital, education, and the socioeconomic status of parents have been shown to be important indicators of school choice along with a strong parent value for bilingualism.

**Effects of Exogamous Couples’ School Choice**

For the past two decades, increasing numbers of children from exogamous couples are attending French minority-language schools (Landry & Allard, 1997; Taylor, 2003; Vincent, 2010). At first, the presence of Anglo-dominant parents and students was seen as a threat to the integrity and maintenance of French language and culture in the French schools (OCOL, 1999). It was also seen as a challenge for teaching students with little French in the French minority school classroom (Gérin-Lajoie, 2001). The Anglo-dominant students, even from families with
one Francophone right-holder parent, often would arrive at school with little or no French. The extra support required to respond to a lack of French language proficiency when beginning a French first language education has become known as *francisation* (CMEC, 2002), where the school, teachers, and/or parents provide help for French language and cultural development. More recently, exogamous couples and Anglo-dominant students are seen as the new social reality. Deliberations have centered on how to promote and market the French school, to attract the exogamous couples to choose the French schools (Landry, 2003), and maximize the potential of Francophone and Anglo-dominant parents (Landry, 2003, 2010; Taylor, 2003, 2007; Vincent, 2010).

As a result of an increase in the number of children coming from exogamous couples, there have been more Anglo-dominant or NF parents associated with the French school. There are suggested resources aimed at the exogamous couples and Anglo-dominant parent. Although these parent resources utilize minority-language theories, the resources and suggestions do not appear to be based on research conducted with parents. In 2002, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (2002) met and discussed the need for increased francisation programming in minority Francophone schools across Canada. In 2003, CMEC released a program to help inform and train French minority-language teachers and teacher-educators about francisation needs, resources, and pedagogical practices (CMEC, 2003). The importance of parents was acknowledged in this endeavor, including many suggestions for possible helpful actions and efforts by the NF parent. Some of the resources created for parents include Manitoba’s *Le français: sois de la partie!* (Education Manitoba, 2002), which provided parents with tips to help their child in French. That text was written in French but was expected to be explained by the French proficient parent. Glen Taylor (2002), supported by Richard Vaillancourt and the
Fédération des parents Francophones de l’Alberta, published *I’m With You*, an English guide for exogamous families, after producing an earlier book in French, *Tu peux compter sur moi: Guide à l’intention du parent pour l’accompagnement de l’enfant dans son éducation en français langue première* (1998). Glen Taylor then published *Fusion: I’m with you 2: Raising a bilingual child in a two language household* (2007). Other provinces, such as Saskatchewan, used a brochure based on information by Taylor (2002) to support NF parents. The Commission National des Parents Francophones (CNPF) authored a newsletter entitled, *Bonjour!* from 1996 to 2012 (CNPF, 1996), and then *Voir Grand* (CNPF, 2007), a bilingual book was developed as a guide for Franco and/or Anglo-dominant parents to provide suggestions how to help a child develop a sense of Francophone identity. No methodology of research with parents was explained or cited as a foundation from which the resources were created, nor have I been able to locate research conducted on the parent use of the suggestions and guides.

Dalley (2006) examined the language used to describe the identity of children from exogamous couples by referring to the work of two experts in exogamy, namely Landry (2003) and Taylor (2002). She found that they both wrote about theoretical and practical recommendations using the terminology of the NF parent in exogamous couples and possessing an Anglophone or Francophone identity, neither of which acknowledged for the child a mix of language and culture from home. In consideration of the language used to describe school participants, Dalley (2006) explained that when school professionals recognize and welcome the mixed cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students and the parents in French schools and use appropriately inclusive language, it promotes a sense of belonging. Also, the students and parents are able to identify with a school where they fit in, rather than where they feel marginalized.

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2 Dalley’s exact words were: “Une plus grande reconnaissance des identités multiples et hybrides des héritiers des mariages mixtes est un élément essentiel de cet accueil, sans quoi l’enfant se trouvera marginalisé par un discours bien intentionné” (p. 92).
According to Dalley (2006), the language used to refer to children and parents in French schools was not satisfactory. Gauthier and MacPhee (2014) also called for more inclusive language to describe NF students and parents. However, the exogamous language currently used is not adequate, because the types of NF parents in French schools are more diverse than just one NF parent in an exogamous couple (MacPhee, Turnbull, Cormier & Miller, 2017; MacPhee et al., 2013). Parent involvement suggestions do not include strategies and language, which acknowledges family contexts without a Francophone parent. Furthermore, in the small body of suggestions that exists to help NF parents, the responsibility for action has been largely put on the Francophone parent, and, to a lesser extent, the NF parent, to take charge, rather than the school. Rocque (2006a) and Rocque & Taylor (2011) were exceptions to this trend. They called for schools to reach out to help parents and offer parents resources about the importance of the parent role at home and at school and how to assist the students and the French school meet the dual mandate for pedagogy and Francophone identity development in French. The role of valuing and encouraging PI is not meant to be one-sided (Hornby, 2011); enhancing PI needs to be a school priority. In a minority school context where the NF parent may often feel alienated, linguistically insecure, and hesitant to approach school personnel for discussions, it is important that the parent be supported and not be expected to be the sole initiator for PI. An important role of the school is to educate and support parents, especially in French minority-language schools where parents are the decision-makers and responsible for school governance (Rocque, 2006b, 2010–11; Taylor, 2007).

There has been an increase in the number of exogamous couples with children in French schools, and, as a result, there has been the need to offer francisation and to develop resources for NF parents. Although the literature in the French minority context discussed the importance
of parents and family (CMEC, 2003; Fishman, 1991; Landry, 1997, 2010) and suggested roles they can play, scant research has been done about different types of NF parents who have children in the French schools. Notwithstanding some research in Alberta and New Brunswick, there is a need to know how NF parents are involved. It is also necessary to inquire into minority contexts with extremely low ethnolinguistic vitality, such as PEI. In the PEI context, there is little community support for the French schools to access, and school challenges are pronounced. Do NF parents feel welcomed, supported, and informed to help their children academically? There is also a need to have a research base to determine if the recommendations in the literature are valid and supported by empirical evidence, are possible for NF parents, or are merely good intentions.

Next, I explore the research I have found relevant to NF parents in Francophone schools. I expanded the search beyond exogamous couples and found that NF parents discussed in the research literature included immigrant and allophone parents, along with Anglo-dominant parents. The literature points to a need for a more comprehensive inclusion of the different types of NF parents in French schools.

**Focus on Non-Francophone Parents**

The literature includes several articles that mentioned NF parents, as well as immigrant and allophone parents in the French minority context. Taylor (2003), an Anglophone parent in an exogamous couple, whose children attended a Francophone school, compiled a report on the needs of exogamous couples, and the NF parent, in particular. In his report, he stated that the NF parent required the same information as the Francophone parent, albeit not in French. He affirmed that the NF parent benefits from suggestions about how to help their children and from school efforts to make NF parents feel welcomed. Taylor recommended that a national program
focusing on parents would be useful. This program could be adapted to meet the needs of varying contexts. In the report, Taylor proposed that the Francophone communities across Canada could work together to effectively inform NF parents about linguistic development, additive bilingualism, and academic support for their children. Taylor (2007) also released a book (as mentioned earlier), focusing on the NF parent in exogamous couples. Taylor co-published an article (Rocque & Taylor, 2011) with similar recommendations to assist the participation of exogamous couples in minority-language schools.

A few Canadian studies in New Brunswick and Alberta have examined the lived experience of exogamous couples, most of which are comprised of a Francophone and an Anglo-dominant partner, who have children in French schools (Cormier & Lowe, 2010; Rocque, 2006a, 2008). As part of a larger study that measured the effectiveness of a variety of models of francisation, Cormier and Lowe (2010) conducted a study in New Brunswick that measured the hospitality and support provided by several schools to exogamous couples. They interviewed French and English-speaking parents from exogamous couples and found that there was a range of positive and challenging experiences. Some Anglo-dominant parents felt at ease, generally understood the French communications that came regularly from school, and felt satisfied with school relations. Several Anglophone mothers frequently communicated with teachers and helped with homework, though, often, the Francophone parent was more involved. Other parents felt slightly uncomfortable at the start of the year, but felt more at ease with repeated opportunities for contact. Some parents felt left out during parent-teacher interviews, and one parent requested English notes and more information about francisation. Parents in one school were grateful of the effort by school administration and staff and reported being able to participate in activities. Yet, other parents did not feel comfortable and felt the school staff did
not make efforts to welcome them; instead, they got a feeling that Anglo-dominant parents should not be a part of the school. The parents revealed that choosing a French school was stressful, yet they were satisfied with their choice. The parents were willing to endure inconveniences to benefit their children with dual linguistic and cultural heritage.

Rocque (2006b, 2008) surveyed exogamous couples and school administration in Conseil Scolaire Centre-Est of Alberta to examine how administration was integrating NF parents and supporting the school’s socio-cultural mandate. This work was heavily focused on the legal issues and school governance aspects, as well as the potential for involvement of the NF parent in minority-language schools, where the governance of schools has been assigned to parents (Mahé, 1990). Rocque (2006a) extended the definition of school governance by parents in this minority context to include actions such as choosing the French school, helping at home, seeking involvement at the school, and participating in the classroom or on decision-making councils. He examined what participants understood about the double mandate of the school to offer pedagogy and social identity via community development and through the linguistic choices made in participant homes. He also documented the views of school administration and board members about the effect of exogamy on school governance. He hoped to provide options for administration when considering the exogamous clientele and options to better support exogamous couples within the domain of school governance. That study resulted in suggestions for a French school to counterbalance the effect of the English majority. It also promoted additive bilingualism with improved communication strategies and more material resources for parents. As stated, the research focus was on exogamous couples with one Francophone parent.

Rocque examined the parent choice of a minority French school. Parents involved in Rocque’s (2006a) study reported having chosen the school based on the quality of teaching and
individualized attention, a rich bilingual linguistic experience, a high value for French, and a positive and welcoming atmosphere at the school. English was the dominant language at home for most families. Parents recognized that, in addition to the regular school support, they needed to provide extra French support to the children. They said that it was difficult to be involved in the Francophone community. Rocque (2008) reported that some parents experienced challenges with the French communication of the school. While Francophone parents felt satisfied with their involvement, NF parents felt frustrated and excluded due to communication difficulties and had suggested the need for bilingual communication. Although NF parents wanted to support the school, they did not always feel welcome. On a positive note, they reported that schools were reaching out to parents in some ways, most commonly by providing welcome kits and information and training for parents, all of which assisted with the engagement of parents in the classroom. Overall, NF parents had negative experiences. They expressed that their needs that were not being met.

The above findings can be compared with the findings from a small scale PEI pilot project (MacPhee, Turnbull, Cormier & Miller, 2017; MacPhee, et al., 2013), which focused on NF parents in one small, rural, French minority-language school. In the latter study, 14 of the 15 survey participants were in a uniquely Anglo-dominant couple or a NF single parent. This high number of English endogamous couples indicated a need to consider NF parents beyond the exogamous couple. The NF parents reported having to make extra effort to help the children being educated in French. Parents required teaching staff to use English to enable effective communication, because notes and emails typically came from school in French. The participants also indicated it was challenging to help their children with French schoolwork. Despite indicating that they were committed to being involved, their lack of French proficiency was an
obstacle for parents to be as educationally involved as they would have liked. However, the parents expressed that they felt warmly welcomed at the school. Parents felt involved in the child’s education, except in areas that required French, such as reading and vocabulary development at home, and attendance at activities in the French community.

The above studies demonstrated a concern across Canada about PI for NF parents in French schools. With the exception of the PEI study, the research has not expanded beyond the exogamous couple. Over a decade has passed since Taylor’s report, and exogamous couples and Anglo-dominant parent presence in French schools continues to increase. In addition, there are NF immigrant/allophone parents who have been choosing the French school option and going through admission committees (Farmer, 2008; Farmer & Labrie, 2008). Some research has identified challenges specific to immigrant parents in the French minority school system. Based on a study about immigrant parents, Farmer and Labrie (2008) reported that being under-represented in the French system was a challenge for immigrant parents.

Farmer and Labrie’s (2008) research showed that many immigrants were more interested in developing skills in both English and French, rather than solely in French. Farmer (2008) indicated that extra effort is required of children to communicate and mediate between home and school. Farmer also reported that there was a feeling of awkwardness for immigrants in the French school choice, because immigrant Francophone families do not have rights as Canadian right-holders do according to Section 23 of the Charter. As a result, these parents must apply to a committee to be accepted into a Francophone school. The application process immediately accentuates the differences between domestic and immigrant families and schools and creates social distance for immigrant families. In turn, immigrants feel a decreased sense of belonging to the French system. The authors recommended better management of diversity in French
minority-language schools by focusing on welcoming events and other programs to integrate newcomers into the community. The authors stipulated that these events and programs need to emphasize the similarities between parents, rather than differences, such as race, for example.

Research conducted with Black immigrant parents whose children attended French schools in Ontario (Keita, 2010) showed that these parents felt like a double minority as both immigrants and Black in a minority French school, despite being Francophone. These parents felt they were underrepresented on school councils, on committees, and during school decision-making sessions. There was a recommendation for improved equity for the presence, values, and participation of all parents in French schools in Ontario (Keita, 2010). Also relevant from this Ontario research is the following statement:

Children of Black Francophones have made possible the continued existence of a number of schools, especially in large cities. Without children from racial minority families, the French-language school system would have suffered for lack of students due to the assimilation of White Francophones into the Anglophone majority. (Keita, 2010, p. 11)

The children of Francophone immigrants contributed to the numbers of students in French minority-language schools.

In Atlantic Canada, the context is somewhat similar given that Anglo-dominant or NF parents and students are being recruited and are currently maintaining enrollment and the existence of some French schools. In this context, NF parents want to participate and be involved in their children’s school and their children’s education. To boost numbers, French schools in the Atlantic region, as in the rest of Canada, welcome immigrant students, although according to Kamano (2014), the research is still too scarce to give a good picture of how immigrants and newcomer students have been integrating into French minority schools. Researching the
integration of newcomers into minority French schools in New Brunswick, Kamano commented that the immigrant parent often experiences issues with lack of clarity and understanding about the role of the parent and the role of the school. This lack of clarity can be due to vastly differing socio-cultural experiences from the country of origin. Kamano also referred to Farmer’s research (2008) that revealed tensions for immigrant parents in French schools. Overall, Kamano’s research in NB identified a lack of information accessible to immigrant parents in French schools.

Liu (2016) recognized a lack of involvement of economic immigrant parents in their children’s education in Atlantic Canada. Liu’s research was based in the English school system on PEI, and it identified PI difficulties for minority parents due to language barriers, communication difficulties with school, social exclusion, and few opportunities for school involvement and leadership. These immigrant parents strongly recommended that schools offer parents orientations, guidelines, and opportunities for social participation and cultural integration.

Gérin-Lajoie (2001) reported the increasing immigrant and ethnic diversity of students in the French schools in large centers, such as Toronto and Ottawa, as one of the teaching challenges in the minority French context. In 2008, the Canadian Teachers Federation/Fédération Canadienne des Enseignants (CTF/FCE) (2008) set several priorities for the Francophone schools, two of which were to welcome diversity and prepare teachers for this diversity. The FCE 2010 symposium summarized that some progress adapting to linguistic and cultural diversity was happening in each province. The report highlighted the importance of welcoming diverse students and families and focusing on the need for French cultural dimensions to be included in school, because the school is often the sole contact with the French community. It
was noted that the school also needs to remain open to redefining the emerging Francophone community. Teacher education and access to appropriate resources were considered important supports for minority French school professionals. As well, learning about the demographics and cultures of students and learning how to communicate with diverse parents were seen as essential objectives for French school professionals.

As a result of the continuing growth in diversity of the student population, in 2009, the Ontario Office of Francophone Affairs revamped its definition of Francophone. Ontario’s inclusive definition now includes individuals whose mother tongue is neither French nor English, but who have a particular knowledge of French as an official language and use French at home. To welcome and support newcomers to the school, Ontario French Schools have also created an open and inclusive policy statement and admission process for diverse students and families (Prasad, 2012). There is an awareness and movement toward acceptance of diversity in the French schools, but little research has been conducted to date.

The literature in this section has verified the growth in the linguistic and cultural diversity of students and parents in French schools across Canada. This diversity has caused teaching and parent involvement challenges for the French school administration, teachers, and the NF parents. In general, the authors in the literature stressed the importance of welcoming and informing parents by providing effective communication to counter the language barrier, as well as offering strategies to parents to be involved at home, at school, and in the community.

**Gaps in the Research about Non-Francophone Parents**

My research questions are, in part, directed by my own observations, the research literature, and the questions asked by other researchers in this domain. Dalley and Saint-Onge (2008) asserted a need for more research on mixed (exogamous) couples’ choice of school,
especially since the numbers are increasing, and mixed couples are assumed to comprise the right-holder population who do not choose Francophone schools. One of their suggestions for future research questions was: “What is the lived family reality for the inclusion of Anglo-dominant right-holders and their children, and is it done in an inclusive way?” (p. 140).

Arsenault (2008), a school principal in a French minority-language school in Alberta, questioned if there were sufficient strategies in place to enable the involvement of Anglophone right-holder parents in the schools while being true to the purpose of Francophone schools. Moreover, could the parents get enough information when making their choice? She also wondered if there was linguistic and social network insecurity for Anglophone parents. Others (Rocque, 2006a; Rocque & Taylor, 2011) recommended more research about how to help NF parents, how to make NF parents feel welcomed in schools, how to be reassured about their school choices, and how to better equip parents to offer support at home for French language education.

There was limited information about NF parents in existing research, and the present research is necessary due to the increasing number of exogamous couples and NF parents who chose French schools. Epstein (2011) stated:

The main differences among parents are their knowledge of how to help their children at home, their belief that teachers want them to assist their children at home, and the degree of information and guidance from their children’s teachers in how to help their children at home. (p. 39)

All parents, and especially the NF parents, can benefit from the knowledge of how to be involved with their children’s education in a French minority-language school. The demographics in the French schools have changed. Compared with the vast quantity of research about PI globally, little research has been done to explore PI in the French minority-language school context,
despite theories and plentiful suggestions supporting family, school, and community collaboration. My research assists in recognizing different types of NF parents, how NF parents are being welcomed, informed, and supported by school professionals on PEI, and how they are able to be educationally involved at home, at school, and in the community.

**Theoretical Framework**

In this section, I discuss the theoretical models from Hornby (2011), Landry and Allard (1990), and Landry, Allard, and Deveau (2007b). I also refer to work from Landry, Allard, Deveau, and Bourgeois (2005) and Rocque (2006a) because of modifications that have been made or suggested with their models.

One of the models I have chosen to work with for this study is Hornby’s model for parent involvement (2011). I describe Hornby’s PI model below to demonstrate how it helped for analysis of the PI of NF parent data using eight types of PI in the three contexts of home, school, and community. I make mention of these three contextual benchmarks because of their importance for additive bilingualism in the counterbalance model (Landry & Allard, 1990), which has been a vital model in minority-language research and practice for two decades. The counterbalance model also situates the discussion of PI in the maintenance and revitalization of French in minority contexts. I have also considered Rocque’s (2006a) adapted counterbalance model, which takes into account the increased number of students who live in predominantly English homes. In addition, I refer to one section of the SED model by Landry, Allard, and Deveau (2007b), adapted from Landry, Allard, Deveau, and Bourgeois (2005). This section of the SED model is applied to gauge the NF parents’ sense of autonomy, belonging, and competence being involved in their children’s education in French.
Parental Involvement Model

Several valuable PI models have been used and cited in PI research, such as Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (Green et al., 2007) revised theoretical model of the PI process (specific to parents’ motivations for involvement), Epstein’s six types of PI (2011), and Eccles and Harold’s (1996) model of the influences on and consequences of PI in schools. However, I chose to use Hornby’s model (2011), because, not only does it include the essential aspects of the other models, but it expands beyond them. As well, Hornby’s model aligns with my research purpose, incorporating, for example, five of Epstein’s (2011) six types of PI, all of which were consistent with my definition of PI. Epstein’s sixth type, which is absent in Hornby’s model, is the basic obligation of families to provide care for children. This sixth type of involvement falls outside of my definition of PI for this research focused specifically on educational involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model focused on parent motivations for PI, and Eccles and Harold’s model looked at consequences, rather than simply PI. Hornby’s model allowed me to identify the ways NF parents are involved and to categorize the varieties of PI into eight different types.

Hornby’s model (2011) in Figure 1 below, considered PI from two perspectives: possible contributions parents can make at school and at home and parent needs, which schools can address. Each of these two areas (i.e., contributions and needs) includes a four-level hierarchical list expressing the features of all, most, many and some parents. For example, according to Hornby’s continuum, all parents need effective channels of communication between home and school. Most parents need meetings with school staff, and many parents can benefit from parent workshops and sessions to address parent needs. Finally, some parents need extra support such as counselling, or talking with parents who have interests or issues in common. Hornby’s (2011) list of contributions that parents can make is also a continuum that ranges from what all parents
can do to what some parents can do. All parents can share information about their children with school professionals. Most parents can collaborate with teachers by helping with school work at home. Many parents can be a resource to help in the school (e.g., helping in the classroom, fundraising, or offering parent support), and some parents will get involved with school meetings such as parent committees and policy discussions. Hornby’s model (2011) is designed to promote or enhance PI bi-directionally between home and school, keeping in mind that school professionals must be flexible with their expectations of parent involvement, due to the vast differences in the lives and abilities of all parents.

Teachers and school staff can derive benefit from Hornby’ PI model that highlights parent needs and welcomes parent contributions in diverse ways. In particular, this model does not simply focus on the school’s academic objectives, needs, and agenda, but also considers parents’ needs. I relied on the eight actions of this PI model to elaborate the survey and interview items, to answer my research Question 3 about different forms of PI, and to make recommendations for policy and practices.
**Minority-language Education and Maintenance/Revitalization**

Landry and Allard (1990) proposed a counterbalance model (see Appendix F) for language maintenance or revitalization in minority-language situations, which aligns with Epstein’s (2011) model, because it takes into account family, school, and community milieus. The counterbalance model also brings into consideration whether there is high or low ethnolinguistic vitality in the geographical area under study. Over time, Landry, Allard, and Deveau (2007b, 2009) made further theoretical advances and created a larger SED model, visible in Figure 2 below.

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The SED model explored many factors that affect one’s motivation to learn and use a minority-language. The SED is complex, but I will refer to one small section of the SED for my research. The section of the model that I use is the feelings of autonomy, competence, and belonging (ACB) (Landry et al., 2007b), which affect an individual’s motivation and choice to learn or use a minority language. I have chosen to look at these three feelings as important components for NF parent motivation for a child to learn French and to choose and remain in a French minority-language school.

Figure 2. Self-Determination and Ethnolinguistic Development Model (SED) (Landry et al., 2007b) adapted from Landry, Allard, Deveau and Bourgeois (2005). The ACB feelings from the model were borrowed from self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which explored the motivation of individuals to commit to do something. The

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authors, Landry, Allard, Deveau, and Bourgeois (2005) modified Ryan and Deci’s (2000) term, ACR (autonomy, competence and relatedness) to become ACB for autonomy, competence, and belonging (Landry et al., 2007b), which influence one’s motivation to learn and use a language. The ACB concept has influenced my research Question 1, about parent beliefs, including motivations, in the choice of a French school for their children. I was also interested in the ACB aspects, because, as Pushor (2013) and Jeynes (2011c) related, parents were more likely to be involved if they felt welcomed at the school as part of the community and received support. Hoover-Dempsey (2011) explained that when parents had a feeling of self-efficacy or believed they could make a positive difference through their involvement, this autonomy or competence enhanced parental engagement. The original SED model intended to investigate the motivation of minority-language speakers to learn and use a language. However, I used the ACB section of the model to explore parents’ experiences and involvement while their children were learning and using a minority-language. These theories informed my research questions 1 and 2, inquiring about parents’ beliefs/motivations and experiences. I aimed to find out why parents chose the French school and about the experiences of NF parents. During my analysis of the data, I noted if parents felt welcomed, supported, equipped to be involved, and/or committed to remaining in the school. This line of inquiry was important, because, if parents do not feel autonomy, competence, and a sense of belonging while children are at the French school, they might choose to withdraw their children from the school.

*Francité familio-scolaire*, a concept proposed and studied by Landry and Allard (1997), describes the efforts made at home or school, to value and promote the French minority-language. The need to help NF parents promote francité may be greater than for parents who are Francophone and use the French language, access French media, and expose children regularly
to French culture in the home and in the community. With the third research question, I hoped to be able to describe the involvement of NF parents and to identify to what degree they were able to promote francité familio-scolaire. The importance of the three domains of home, school, and the community for French maintenance and revitalization led me to ask about the parents’ experiences and involvement in all three domains in questions two and three.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the literature relevant to my research, revealed where gaps in knowledge exist, and offered an overview of the theoretical frameworks that informed this study. I provided the definition I used for PI. I explored the predictors and benefits of PI and the barriers, especially for PI in minority contexts. I argued that an NF parent in a French school could be seen as a minority parent with language barriers, and, as such, they require extra support to promote PI. To date, the research in minority French school contexts has informed readers about French school eligibility and exogamous couples’ school choice. The gaps in knowledge concerning the NF parent and several important components from minority-language education and from the PI models referred to in this chapter have guided the development of my research questions, survey, and interview questions, as well as the choice of methodology and methods for this research. The methodology and methods are outlined next, in Chapter 3.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The purpose of this research was to describe the demographic characteristics of diverse NF parents, as well as to understand the beliefs, experiences, and involvement of NF parents who have chosen a French minority-language school for their children. I explored the reality of NF parents at home, at school, and in the community by using a mixed methods research design.

This chapter is divided into five sections. First, I explain my epistemological approach to the research, including my personal reflexivity and then my choice of research design. In later sections, I describe participant recruitment, sampling procedure, sample size, sample development, and use of the survey instruments. I explain my mixed methods data collection procedure using an online survey, focus group discussions, and individual interviews, and I discuss data analysis. I conclude by addressing how I promoted trustworthiness of the research.

Epistemology

To address my research purpose, I chose a mixed methods research design (Creswell, 2008; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Green, 2007; Mason, 2006a), which aligned with my research paradigm and a pragmatic approach. I borrow the definition of paradigm from Morgan (2007) who argued for “paradigms as systems of beliefs and practices that influence how researchers select both the questions they study and methods that they use to study them” (p. 49). My methodological approach was informed by dialogic pragmatism, a social constructionist worldview, and my personal reflexivity about my role as researcher. Dialogic pragmatism is defined by Mason (2006a) as a multi-nodal approach to social research that examines and describes social experiences in diverse ways and viewed from varying perspectives. Social constructionism is belief that human knowledge and assumptions about reality are constructed by groups of people in social contexts. Personal reflexivity is a process of self-reflection and
scrutiny by a researcher to have a consciousness awareness of one’s own perspective and interpretations throughout the research process.

My research questions emerged from my family, education, employment history, and experiences as described at the beginning of Chapter 1. As stated by Morgan (2007), “It is we ourselves who make the choices about what is important and what is appropriate, and those choices inevitably involve aspects of our personal history, social background, and cultural assumptions” (p. 69). In this way, I acknowledge that aspects of this research were subjective, even when I was trying to make objective observations, because, in making the choice to be involved, I was already subjective. As a part of mixed methods, this process is explained as the concept of *intersubjectivity* (Biesta, 2010; Morgan 2007), which is an ongoing back and forth of the researcher, between recognizing one’s subjectivity, and trying to maintain objectivity. For example, one participant replied to a question in the online survey that NF parents do not have a role to play in the French school. I noted my visceral, subjective reaction while reading this opinion, and then reminded myself to be objective because the participants have their own opinions and this participant may even have written something quickly or inadvertently.

As I began my study, my research was influenced by my multi-faceted worldview, which was congruous with a mixed methods approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Greene, 2007; Mason, 2006a). As a junior researcher, an Anglophone parent of two children in a French minority-language school, a French immersion teacher, and as the daughter of an assimilated Francophone, I began this research working from multiple paradigms (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) or mental models, which Jennifer Green (2007) described as a process of mixing mental models or “claims, understandings, predispositions, values, and beliefs with which a social inquirer approaches his or her work” (p. 53). From the beginning, the researcher and teacher in
me wanted to identify the number of people affected in the context of my research. As both a daughter and a parent, I wanted to highlight and describe the lived experience of NF parents in this context.

I became intrigued by *dialogic pragmatism* as described by Mason (2006a); her work has influenced my approach to the collection and analysis of the data. I have only seen dialogic pragmatism discussed by Mason (2006a), who argued that social experiences intersect on different dimensions and on different axes (a term I refer to as angles) and these experiences can be examined and described from varying perspectives. Mason explained: “By ‘dialogic’ I mean that the ways in which these axes [i.e., angles] and dimensions are conceptualized and seen to relate or intersect can be explained in more than one way, depending upon the questions that are being asked and the theoretical orientations underlying those questions” (p.20). The different axes referred to by Mason (2006a) made me contemplate the multiple theories I was using for analysis and the dimensions made me think of the multiple facets I anticipated discovering about the NF parent reality. The dimensions relevant to this research include the various motivations for the choice of school, the changing demographics of the current clientele, and the three spheres of home, school, and community. The contexts of home, school, and community are different spaces, which can vary immensely and can have an important impact on parent experiences. Hence, in my pragmatic application of a mixed methods design, I am conscious of viewing and interpreting various dimensions of the NF parents’ reality and I analysed the data using both PI and French minority-language education theories.

In addition to using dialogic pragmatism, I was pragmatic with the choice of a mixed methods design to be “employing ‘what works’, using diverse approaches, and valuing both objective and subjective knowledge” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 26) to understand the
problem that motivated the research. I appreciate why the various audiences who read or hear about my work want to consider the numbers and statistics that describe the NF parents in minority French school contexts. I also value the stories and the personal details that participants shared about their lives that explain or provide the context for the statistics (Crotty, 1998). I consider myself pragmatic, having chosen mixed methods in order to benefit from the strengths of each method while minimizing the weaknesses when used in isolation. I recognize the perceived strengths of quantitative methods, which, according to Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie (2003), are the standardized procedures, easy replication of procedures, and description of analytical techniques (p. 361). Mason (2006a) expounded on the value of quantitative research to “predict wide patterns and changes in social phenomena … trends, commonalities and averages” (p. 16). However, I agree with these same authors who recognized that qualitative research presents high quality interpretations of results and explores the meaning of the results, by providing substantial consideration of the sociocultural context (Mason, 2006a; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). Overall, in my view, a mixed methods study provides more comprehensive data and yields better interpretation of the information (Green, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). Moreover, relative to my pragmatism, I believed the study had the potential to uncover solutions to address challenges that were identified by NF parents (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

The quantitative findings draw on descriptive statistics to describe demographics and beliefs, involvement, and experiences of NF participants. The quantitative analysis also facilitated the use of inferential statistics and the examination of the relationships between variables in the survey (Vogt, 2007). In addition, the use of a quantitative method is thought by some researchers to reduce bias, to provide more generalizable data, and to provide a different
type of information to audiences who need quantitative data for decision making (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Vogt, 2007). Mason (2006b) listed many reasons why a qualitative approach enhances the research when examining a multi-dimensional social reality, because the multiple methods help to understand the lived realities and social experiences of people in diverse contexts, and permit people to see more than two options of reality and acknowledge a continuum of experiences.

I approached my research with a social construction worldview, a belief that human knowledge acquired by groups of people is constructed in social contexts (Burger & Luckmann, 1991; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Where constructivism considers an individual’s experience learning and gaining knowledge, constructionism considers the collective and how a large group of people gains knowledge and is affected by the surrounding culture. Social constructionism examines how a group learns and is affected by interactions and social practices in society. Crotty (1998) defined constructionism for social researchers:

…constructionism? It is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context. (p. 42)

Moving from Crotty’s definition, based on a social construction worldview, I believe that when the NF parents choose schools for their children, they are affected by their social context, the surrounding culture, and the social constructions about education that influence their knowledge and actions. As the literature review in Chapter 2 described, NF parents are consumers of education. The French school personnel are also in a position of responding or ‘reconstructing’ due to the current social context and demographic changes within the minority French schools
and regional contexts. Patton pointed out that construction perspectives can emphasize “capturing and honouring multiple perspectives” (2002, p. 102) and “a constructionist would seek to capture diverse understandings and multiple realities about people’s definitions and experiences of the situation” (2015, p. 122). Gergen (2009) wrote that “constructionism invites us to appreciate multiple perspectives (p.58). Personally, I believe that individuals in similar social circumstances can have varied perspectives due to different interpretations of the situation, which can be attributable to different cultural and personal backgrounds. Individuals may also share similar perspectives owing to a shared culture and the influence of that cultural knowledge (Crotty, 1998; Fosnot & Perry, 1996; Patton, 2015). Hence, I conducted my research moving from the “individual perspective to broad patterns” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 22). I conducted research with participants hoping to identify if there were trends or common experiences for NF parents whose children attend Francophone schools. I also endeavored to recognize divergent experiences and acknowledge a multiplicity of social constructions by the NF parents as a result of having chosen the French school (Greene, 2007; Patton, 2002).

I am also aware of my influence on and contribution to constructing the research. As Kincheloe (2000) wrote:

The angle from which an entity is seen, the values of the researcher that shape the questions he or she asks about it, and what the researcher considers important are all factors in the construction of knowledge about the phenomenon in question. (p. 342)

My intent for the research was to explore the beliefs, experience, and involvement of NF parents and to investigate the demographic characteristics and perspectives of different types of NF parents involved in French schools. In doing research with NF parents, as an NF parent myself, I had to be conscious to detach the participants’ experiences from my own (see explanation in
Personal Reflexivity, p. 64). It was crucial that I honor the multiple realities of the parents while analysing the data because, as Gergen (2009) stated, “the data never speak for themselves. Rather, the investigator is always making interpretations, which is to say, constructing what the data mean” (p. 64). This epistemology fits with valuing the qualitative explanations along with the quantitative results, because, as Mason (2006a) stated, “Explanations themselves are constructions, and that more than one version is possible” (p. 20). The qualitative research methods permit me to offer a rich description of the context and the multi-dimensional social experiences of the participants rather than seeing the NF parent reality as a single experience or a single numerical representation. The quantitative data reveals trends and relationships between variables, while the qualitative descriptions or constructions help the researcher to understand the quantitative data. Thus, a constructionist epistemology is appropriate for this research since a continuum of experiences for NF parents was anticipated.

**Personal Reflexivity**

Although I aspired to be unbiased, some bias is innately imbued within all research (Patton, 2015). Therefore, I attempted to limit bias as much as possible through credible, dependable, transferable, and confirmable research, triangulation of research methods, and personal reflexivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I have practiced reflexivity by writing about my personal background in this document as well as writing in my journal throughout the research process (Janesick, 1998; Ortlipp, 2008; Patton, 2002; Walker, Read, & Priest, 2013) (see p. 65). I conducted member-checking of the transcriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) prior to analysis. I strived to share the voices of the NF parents regardless of the similarity or difference from my experience and personal feelings (Patton, 2002). I endeavored as a researcher to demonstrate
respect for and protection of the NF participants during interviews and transcribing and analysing their words. For example, I would change the name or gender of an individual in the transcription to ‘my child’ or ‘my spouse’ in an effort to preserve anonymity. I tried to maintain a neutral stance of caring combined with active listening during the focus group discussions (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Patton, 2002). I endeavored not to discuss my own experience or opinions, but when parents asked a question about resources or strategies to the group or to me as moderator, I answered them with the information I had.

According to Russell and Kelly (2002), “Keeping self-reflective journals is a strategy that can facilitate reflexivity” (p. 2). The research journal is considered a tool to show transparency and self-reflection, as well as to permit refinement of understanding through reflection during the research process. Researchers use their journal to examine personal issues, assumptions, power, and goals and to “clarify personal values systems and acknowledge areas in which you know you are subjective” (Ahern, 1999, p. 2). In the journal I kept as a reflexive tool (Janesick, 1998; Ortlipp, 2008), I wrote about my observations, feelings, and experiences, including the set-backs and frustrations I experienced, during the research. This journal was a reference source, in order not to forget or misrepresent personal or research details, such as how I decided the cut-off for which survey participants had not completed enough of the online survey and the demographics these individuals represented. As well, I wrote about my preparations for the research, such as attending a local workshop with Casey and Krueger (2013), and attending PhD seminars offered on campus. I detailed how the school administrators in different schools shared the invitation with NF parents to participate in research about NF parents, I recorded the number of NF parents in each school according to administrators’ estimates, and I wrote my impressions after each focus group discussion. Furthermore, I used the journal during and after discussion sessions with
my committee members to log questions and answers received, such as with my analysis and statistical concerns. For example, one of my documented statistical questions was if the scree plot would be placed in the document in Chapter 3 or in the Appendices. I kept a summary of my data and decisions about the data from the qualitative and quantitative collection, including the codes I developed from transcriptions, the count of comments and types of opinions shared, the counts from the qualitative section of the survey, the criteria for choosing which participants to keep from the survey data. I used the journal to record questions, plan my work, and reroute me when I was puzzled during analysis.

I also used the reflexive journal as a place to write about my decisions and concerns. I wrote to clarify my thinking while writing about a given topic or observation. At the end of the second year, after research ethics approval and during data collection and analysis, I was able to revisit my initial intentions and questions during the proposal writing stage and as far back as the commencement of my pilot project four years prior. The journal served as a roadmap, where I could record where I was and what I had done or had observed at specific moments in time. It allowed me to consider unknown and uncharted territories and explore diverse possibilities to find my way forward. Although the journal was not a source of data, it played a major role in keeping me on track with my research.

As a pragmatic researcher, I came to the research with some advocacy in my mind (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), hoping that the information from the NF participants would promote change and garner support for parents if the data revealed that there was a need for improved assistance for NF parents. I aimed to extract as much qualitative and quantitative data as possible about the NF parent reality, and I hoped to develop
recommendations to enhance involvement of parents and enrich academic, cultural, and linguistic development for students, as a result.

**Research Design**

To understand the complex and multi-dimensional social experience of NF parents, I combined quantitative and qualitative data collection methods (Mason, 2006a; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2011). I conducted qualitative data collection by way of nine focus groups (Kreuger & Casey, 2000; Patton, 2015; Fontana & Frey, 2000; Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009) to provide an in-depth understanding of the experience and stories of 34 NF parents. Patton (2002) suggested constructionist guiding questions such as: “What are their reported perceptions, ‘truths’ explanations, beliefs, and worldview? What are the consequences of their constructions for their behaviors and for those with whom they interact” (p. 132)? I asked questions to examine how parents’ beliefs motivated the choice of the French school, and I explored their lived experience and educational involvement as a consequence of this choice. I conducted four individual interviews in addition to the focus groups. I also collected quantitative data using an online survey in order to access a larger number of participants than is possible through interviewing (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, Greene, 2007). The volume of quantitative data was sufficient to relevant statistical analysis (Creswell, 2009; Mason, 2006a; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003).

**Instruments**

Focus group interviews, individual interviews, and an online survey were the main sources of data collection for this study. I will refer to the focus group interviews and individual interviews together as *the interviews*, unless there is a need to indicate any findings unique to one or the other. The survey and the focus group interview questions were tested in a pilot project in
the fall of 2012 in one French school in rural PEI (MacPhee et al., 2013). I made refinements to the survey and interview questions as a result of this pilot study. I reduced the number of negatively worded questions and rearranged survey sections. Initially, I created the content for the focus group and individual interview questions, as well as the items on the survey, from the research literature. During the literature review regarding PI, I kept track of indicators of PI at school and at home to create a literature review matrix to track research findings. Literature relating to culture and French minority-language education (Archer, Francis, & Mau, 2010; CMEC, 2002; Cormier & Lowe, 2010; Lowe & Richard, 2009; Rocque, 2006a) provided supplemental and second-language-specific indicators to the matrix. When the indicators of PI became redundant, I began to formulate the survey and interview questions. A similar small-scale study about francisation that had been conducted in School District 5 in New Brunswick (Etoile du Nord, 2011) and suggestions from the CMEC website (2003) also guided me with the survey, focus group items, focus group question probes, and individual interview development.

The initial intent and sole construct was to explore the experience of NF parents. However, it became apparent from the literature that involvement (Epstein, 2011; Hoover-Dempsey, 2011; Hornby, 2011; Jeynes, 2011b) could and should be measured separately from parental experience and feelings, because experiences and feelings can be predictors of involvement (Hornby, 2011; Kavanaugh & Hickey, 2013; Pushor, 2010; Vincent, 2010). In my theoretical framework, Hornby’s model (2011) considers types of PI, and the choice to use a minority language in the SED model of Landry et al. (2007b) depends on feelings of autonomy, competence, and belonging, based on experiences. Parental beliefs were also identified in the literature as important for predicting active involvement or acting as potential barriers (Hoover-Dempsey, 2012; Hornby, 2011) to involvement. The construct for this research, therefore, was.
multi-dimensional, including three distinct sub-components: parent experience, parent beliefs/motivations, and parent involvement.

Two extremes could exist on the continuum of NF parent experience, beliefs, and involvement. On the negative end, parents might have a terrible experience with the school, negative PI beliefs, and no involvement due to frustration, feeling unwelcome in the school, and feeling incompetent and unable to help their children with school work. Parents could feel totally uninvolved and ready to abandon the French school in favor of another option. At the positive end of the continuum, one would find highly motivated NF parents who are involved and optimistic about their effort for helping their children with homework. These NF parents would participate in the school, either in the classroom as a volunteer or at a variety of school functions, take the children to a variety of social and cultural activities in French in the community, listen to French music, and read or listen to French stories. The parents would likely learn French along with their children as a result of the efforts to help the children succeed in school. In between the two extremes, there would be a variety of possibilities on the continuum of experience, beliefs, and involvement for parents.

**Survey.** The survey was designed to be a concise and succinct tool to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2009). The survey explored the dependent variables of parental beliefs, school choice motivations, and educational involvement, such as parent contributions, parents’ involvement needs being met, and barriers to involvement (Hornby, 2011). The survey also queried the NF parents’ experiences at home, at school, and in the community, to consider their feelings of autonomy, competence, and belonging (Landry et al., 2007b). Independent variables on the survey included parents’ self-reported French language competency, heritage, confidence to speak in French, use of a French preschool, involvement in francisation, and use of English at
the school. I compared items on my survey with other PI and school climate assessments for parents (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, & Simon 1997; Vienneau, 2011; Washoe County, 2012). The comparison confirmed commonalities with my construct indicators. The survey (Appendix A) consisted of the following 10 sections:

1. Demographics: type of NF, citizenship, languages, heritage, preschool (18 items);
2. Francisation at school (2 items);
3. Motivation for choice of French school (3 items out of 16 to rank top 1–3);
4. Level of agreement with statements (26 items);
5. Frequency of involvement yearly (14 items);
6. Frequency of involvement weekly (12 items);
7. Use of English at school (2 items);
8. Open answer questions (3 items);
9. Demographics: marital status, education, income, age (5 items); and
10. Contact information to participate in a focus group.

The demographics questions were required to answer my first research question about parent characteristics and beliefs. The demographics were also important to provide estimated statistics to know how closely the characteristics of the sample describe the larger NF population (Creswell, 2009; Fowler, 2009). My three research questions about parent characteristics, beliefs and involvement and experiences at home, at school, and in the community, were examined using questions with 5-point Likert scales (Vogt, 2007). Sections 4, 5 and 6 consisted of a series of Likert scale questions that were designed with both extremes of the NF parent experience, belief, and involvement continuum in mind. Parents were asked to gauge their agreement with statements describing their beliefs, experiences, and involvement and to report the frequency of
their involvement in various activities at home, at school, and in the community from low to high.

I consciously avoided writing survey questions in the negative (Sauro & Lewis, 2011) and chose instead to include words that would acknowledge a negative feeling or belief of a participant. For example, along with positively worded statements, participants were asked to rate the degree to which they felt *awkward* at the school, had considered *moving* their child or children to an English school, felt *uncomfortable* at social, cultural, or sporting events, *felt left out* of the child’s education. One negatively worded question—I do NOT attend meet the teacher night, because I do not understand what is said in French—was included as a check for participant attention to the items, a strategy recommended by design experts (Sauro & Lewis, 2011). This strategy also acknowledged the negative as well as the positive end of the spectrum of the three aspects of the construct.

The intention for data collection was to have parents initially complete the survey before interviews, isolating their opinions prior to the group discussion and potential influence of the group, as well as serving as a warm-up for parents to get their thoughts flowing before the focus group discussion. Surveys were also available to be mailed or completed over the phone if some parents preferred (Fowler, 2009).

I used my survey, which had three open-ended questions embedded within, as one method that, when combined with focus group interviews and individual interviews, provides a triangulation of methods for data collection (Patton, 2002; Vogt, 2007). The survey permitted me to collect the information from a larger number of participants than would focus groups and interviews. A larger, more representative sample would facilitate extrapolation of the information to NF parents in similar contexts (Creswell, 2009; Morgan, 2007; Patton, 2002).
The validity and reliability of the survey were established during a pilot study (MacPhee et al., 2013). The use of exploratory factor analysis in the pilot project helped to identify items from the frequency and agreement questions, which were placed into three scales of PI at school, PI at home, and parental language beliefs. Reliability of the sub-constructs in the pilot questions was established with Cronbach alphas equal to 0.72, 0.73, and 0.78 respectively. The survey questions were adjusted after the pilot to improve organization of the sections, clarify instructions, reduce the number of negatively worded questions, and add a rank ordered question about parent school choice motivations and a question to self-identify from five types of NF parent. The Cronbach alphas for the refined survey used in my study were equal to 0.88, 0.87, and 0.80, which is considered an acceptable level of reliability or internal consistency (Creswell, 2009; Vogt, 2007). Content validity for the survey was established based upon expert review of the survey by local professors and content resemblance to constructs in the research literature. Validity of the instrument was further confirmed by the school administration response to the pilot results affirming the survey results were concurrent with the observations of parent involvement and experiences at the school.

**Interviews.** The questions for the focus group interview were chosen to explore the feelings of NF parents about their choice of a French school and the resulting parent experiences (Patton, 2002). I also asked *why* and *how* questions such as why and how parents chose a French school and how NF parents were involved (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Patton, 2002) when navigating a French school system as non-Francophones (Appendix B). As interviewer, I was also an instrument in this research, firstly, having chosen the questions and, secondly, playing a role where I could potentially affect participant participation (Kincheloe, 2000; Kreuger & Casey, 2000). To reduce my influence on the parents’ responses, I intentionally played the role
of learner, not intending to engage in conversation with the participants or by sharing my own opinions or experiences. I limited my sharing to expressing factual information if sought (Hosking & Pluut, 2010). I saw the other NF parents as experts in their own lived experience (Hosking & Pluut, 2010).

**Site and Participant Selection**

Following ethics approval from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Prince Edward Island on August 21, 2014 (Appendix C1), I sent letters to the French school board, the Commission scolaire de langue française (CSLF) to obtain permission to conduct research in their schools. I received approval from the CSLF on September 25, 2014. I was successful in engaging administration and NF parents from five French schools in PEI to participate in the research. These five schools included small, rural, strongly Anglo-dominant districts in historically Acadian regions, and larger, predominantly Francophone schools, in both rural and urban locations.

I describe the schools for the reader to make comparisons with other French minority school contexts. School one was a rural K–12 school with an average population of 100 students. There was a high number of NF parents at School one. Memos from the school were sent out in a bilingual format, and the parent committee functioned in English. There was no English or translation function on the school’s website; however, the website did include articles of interest to parents written in English.

School two was a large, urban K–12 institution housing approximately 300 students. At this school, approximately one-third of the parents were NF. School memos were sent home in French, and the parent committee functioned in French. There was no English or translation function on the website.
School three was a rural school serving Grades K–12 and less than 100 students. Nearly three-quarters of the parents were NF and school memos were sent home in French and, on occasion, they were sent bilingually. The parent committee functioned in English and in French. The website was entirely in French except for a promotion for French Kindergarten, which was written in both English and French.

School four was an urban school with approximately 150 students and had been expanding from a Grade K–9 school to include high school grades. Approximately half of the parents were NF. The school memos were sent in French, and the parent committee functioned in French. There was no English or translation function on the website.

School five was a large rural school and, at the time of the data collection, about one-quarter of the parents were NF. There were more than 200 students. School memos were sent in French, and the parent committee met in French. There was no English or translation function on the website.

**Participant recruitment.** I used purposive sampling, recruiting participants from a specific sub-group of parents (Patton, 2002), to collect data from NF parents who had chosen a French minority-language school for their children. I sought parents from each of the French schools to participate in online surveys and in focus groups (and individual interviews) to be held near to the school (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Upon approval from the French school board, I contacted the administration in each school to make arrangements to send information along with an invitation for NF parents to participate in my research. I used various means of contacting and informing NF parents about the opportunity to participate in the online survey and the focus group interviews. The information packet also informed parents that a gift donation of $10 would be made to the school
library for each focus group of four to eight parents. The schools sent the information about the research home to parents several times over two months in the weekly school newsletters, and schools also shared information in emails they sent to parents. I promoted the invitation to NF parents via social media advertising (e.g., Facebook pages and Twitter accounts), through Francophone parent groups and French newspapers. I also made the recruiting information available through UPEI communications. I had a link for participating in the online survey or focus groups shared by the above partners on their Facebook pages.

Parent participation from all of the Grades K–12 provided a wide representation across children’s ages and grades, allowing an understanding of the parents’ experience across grade levels. The importance of PI in early numeracy and literacy (CMEC, 2013; Turney & Kao, 2009) and early accompaniment (Cormier & Lowe, 2010; Landry, 2010) in the French minority context fueled my intent to have high parent participation in the elementary grades, especially from Kindergarten to Grade 2. Given that many French schools continue to Grade 12 and, because there is typically a decrease in PI at middle school due to family and school characteristics (Cotnam, 2011; Hill & Tyson, 2009), parents of children in higher grades were also invited to share their perspectives, experiences, and involvement.

**Mixed-Methods Procedure**

Mixed methods designs can vary in the purpose, timing, sequence, weight assigned to qualitative or quantitative data, or phase of the research where mixing actually happens (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). This research was fully mixed in every aspect of the methods used, because I had three open-ended qualitative questions embedded within the quantitative survey, and I conducted qualitative focus group discussions and individual interviews concurrently with the online quantitative survey. There was also mixing on the theoretical level with theory from
the international PI literature and theory being situated in minority-language education, the latter of which originated in the minority French Canadian context. The analysis of each type of data was commenced separately, and, then as I continued the analysis, I mixed back and forth between qualitative and quantitative data analysis to compare and merge content in each type of data. I did not transform either qualitative or quantitative data; however, I did count frequencies of the qualitative codes and themes.

I planned to collect the quantitative data via an online survey, which preceded the qualitative focus group interviews and this design went as planned for most participants. However, several parents had heard about and attended the focus group discussions before completing the survey. Within the online survey, there was a space for parents to leave their contact information if they were willing to participate in a focus group, which occurred one to six weeks later. I planned for an equal weighting or valuing of the qualitative and quantitative data at the outset, understanding that I would need to remain emergent in my approach depending on the number of participants and the progress with the analysis process. I had a slightly heavier dependence on the quantitative survey for parent demographics, an equal dependence on the survey and the interviews for NF parent beliefs and motivation, and gave an equal weight to qualitative and quantitative components for PI information. The mixed methods procedure I used is displayed here in the visual diagram in Figure 3. Ivankova, Creswell and Stick (2006) recommended visual diagrams to help explain mixed methods procedures. This figure explains the procedure with the qualitative and quantitative data collection that happened concurrently, the qualitative and quantitative data analysis that began separately, and the mixing that occurred between qualitative and quantitative data analysis and the interpretation of the findings.
In summary, this research had an initial phase of quantitative data collection via the online survey with embedded open-ended questions, immediately followed by the phase of qualitative data collection including focus groups and individual interviews (Creswell, 2008). The modes of data collection happened closely together with some overlap in time, so I consider the data to have been collected concurrently.

Certain challenges were present in this study, as is often the case with mixed methods research, especially the demand of time due to the amplified complexity of designing, conducting, analyzing, and interpreting both types of data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006). Moreover, I was not in control of reaching out to participants as I relied heavily on the school administrators to help me inform parents about the research and the opportunity to participate. In the end, each school approached this task slightly differently. One of the five schools had only one promotion about participation in the study due to other parent-focused activities, which explained a low participation from that school. Other
schools had sent information to parents several times, including by email, posts on school webpages, and hardcopy notes sent home.

**Participants**

Non-Francophone parents from five French schools participated in this study; the number of participants ranged from 4 to 52 parents per school. When calculating the response rate for the study, I tallied the number of potential parent participants to be 439 based on the number of NF parents at each school as approximated by the administrators. There were 4 NF parents who participated in interviews, 34 NF parents who participated in one of the 9 focus groups.

In the initial phase of data collection the web link to access the online survey was shared with NF parents. Out of 439 eligible NF parents, 123 parents participated, yielding a response rate of 28.0%. Some of the surveys were incomplete, and I dropped participants who answered less than 25.0% of the survey. This left 82 complete and 4 nearly complete surveys (missing some frequency of involvement data). I used 86 surveys for analysis, yielding a response rate of 19.6%. Those participants who were dropped represented a balanced mix of French proficiency, gender, heritage, and education and did not seem to affect the overall group composition. For the four participants who were kept despite not having completed the entire survey, I used a mean substitution for the missing data from frequency questions (Vogt, 2007).

Participants had the option in the survey to leave contact information if so desired, so I emailed all parents who had chosen to share their contact information to arrange times and locations for the focus groups interviews. Four of the schools had sufficient parent participation to run one focus group each. A fifth and large school had enough interested parents to run six different focus groups (Kreuger & Casey, 2000). In all, I held nine focus groups with 34 parents. Although I had not anticipated individual interviews, I conducted 4 individual interviews,
because two of the focus groups ended up being individual interviews as only one participant showed up at each. Another two parents who could not attend a focus group had chosen to call me, and they completed an interview by phone. The number of parents in the focus groups ranged from 2 to 7 and the average length of time of the focus groups was 80 minutes. Focus groups were held in a location close to the schools, in the community center. The demographics of participants are explored in detail in chapter 4 findings.

**Focus Groups**

Most of the focus groups consisted of mixed types of NF parents, rather than NF parents who shared a specific characteristic other than being NF. In the school where I conducted several focus groups, I ran two similar-type parent groupings (Kreuger & Casey, 2000), one focus group made up of NF parents who came from totally NF couples, and one group composed of NF parents who all had high French proficiency. Kreuger and Casey (2000) recommended having groups with a shared trait, where possible, in order to compare across different groups. The other focus groups were made up of mixed types of NF parents with exogamous couples, Anglophone and allophone couples, and single allophone and Anglophone parents.

**Data Analysis**

I used a convergence triangulation design to compare and contrast, as well as to validate the data, with equal value attributed to the qualitative and quantitative data collected. Because the two types of data were continually being compared and contrasted, I used a convergent design to mix both data sources to help make sense of the data (Creswell, 2014; J. Creswell, personal communication, March 7, 2016), to more fully flesh out the parents’ experiences, and to more effectively answer the research questions. I analyzed data separately at the beginning, and then moved back and forth between the qualitative and quantitative data to compare content,
codes, themes, and counts found in each type of data. I occasionally brought wording of the content and codes from one analysis to the other, with merging (mixing) also taking place in the interpretation and discussion of the results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Ivankova, 2015).

The focus group interviews were audio-recorded, and I later transcribed them for thematic coding and analysis (Patton, 2002). My analysis was inspired by classical content analysis and constant comparison analysis as described by Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2008) and Strauss and Corbin, (as cited by Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech and Zoran, 2009). There were three stages of constant comparison analysis, including the coding of chunks of information, categorizing the codes, and identifying themes from the coded content. Content analysis (Ivankova, 2015) is similar but also included counting the codes, which I did to highlight and rank the themes that were identified most frequently in the parent responses. I followed this procedure as a form of combined mixed methods data analysis to identify convergence and divergence (Ivankova, 2015) around the beliefs, involvement, and experience of NF parents.

My approach was similar to directed content analysis as described by Hsieh and Shannon (2005). I began with several a priori codes from existing theory and literature and added new categories and codes while reading and rereading the data. I confirmed that the codes and themes were common across the different focus groups. The information I coded in the transcriptions revealed that I had reached a point of saturation of data when themes recurred across the focus groups, and, eventually, no new information or perspectives were added by parent comments (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009). After I had transcribed the interviews, I shared the transcripts with the participants by email for approval or editing as a form of member-checking (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Kreuger & Casey, 2000). Several edits were suggested by the participants,
which helped ensure authentic representation of their perspectives prior to finishing the analysis and final documentation.

I analyzed the qualitative data from the focus groups and interviews by reading and rereading the interview transcripts and coded emergently based on the participants’ words. The *a priori* coding, based on the theoretical frameworks guiding the study, helped record answers to the research questions and included: involvement at home, at school, and in community; positive and negative experiences at home, at school, and in the community; and parent beliefs including motivations, language beliefs, and education beliefs. As I added codes, I considered if they fit within the existing categories or if I had to create new ones. After several iterative sessions of reading, coding, and subcategorizing the codes, I decided on 74 codes in total under three categories: beliefs, involvement, and experience. I used NVivo (Ver11.0) (QSR International 2011) to organize the codes and to organize and analyse the answers to the three open-ended questions embedded within the survey.

I recorded the frequency of participants’ opinions and the themes voiced to validate each participant as unique and important. According to Onwuegbuzie et al., (2009) “The inclusion of frequency data helps the researcher to disaggregate focus group data, which is consistent with the qualitative researcher’s notion of treating each focus group member as a unique and important study participant” (p. 9). I coded single individuals with attentiveness so that if one person said the same thing several times or in different ways, I would represent the individual’s comment only once rather than multiple times. Differences in number of participants at each school prevented comparisons between different schools.

For the quantitative analysis, I used SPSS version 22 to perform descriptive and inferential statistical analyses of the survey data (Vogt, 2007). I cleaned the data and observed
the skewness, kurtosis, and Q-Q plots, which were adequate; hence, I could assume normality. The few irregularities, which had values beyond ±1.96 (Vogt, 2007), were easily explained (such as skewed predominantly low French proficiency, non-familiarity with francisation).

Initially, I scrutinized the descriptive statistics. In addition, I wanted to reduce the data and look for patterns (Brown, 2009; Vogt, 2007) by using factors of parent beliefs, involvement, or experience, which could be compared with or influenced by parent’s French competency, gender, use of a French preschool, and other variables. Therefore, I used Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to test if the factors existed and to test underlying relationships (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013), along with bivariate correlations, t-tests, and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

**Principal Component Analysis.** Greene (2007) stated that analysis of data helps to reduce, organize, and describe the information collected. I chose PCA for grouping the separate items from the survey into factors as one way to reduce, organize, and describe what the survey participants reported about their involvement and experience. I did not use Factor Analysis for this purpose, because I was not testing a hypothesis and did not assume a causal structure, wherein certain variables influence other variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; Vogt, 2007).

To begin, it was necessary to choose a factor extraction method. For extraction, I tested both PCA and PAF as suggested by Williams, Brown, and Onsman (2012) and found that results were similar, yet using PCA yielded slightly higher loading. Costello and Osbourne (2005) indicated that based on their extensive review of the literature using exploratory factor analysis, it is best to base factors by a screeplot analysis and to use oblique rotation for factor loading, because there is likely to be some correlation between factors when engaged in educational research and this correlation is expected and normal. Williams, Brown, and Onsman (2012)
agreed, explaining that oblique oblimin/promax rotation results in factors that are correlated (rather than orthogonal varimax/quartimax rotation which gives factors which are uncorrelated).

Therefore, I used oblique rotation (Direct Oblimin) to maximize the loading of the items within the factors because oblique rotation would group correlated items, and the factor content is likely correlated since it is actually based on human behaviors that are related. The results from this rotation made it easier to see items loading into clear factors based on similar content. Items from the survey formed three factors: Factor 1 *Parent Involvement at Home*, Factor 2 *Parents Experienced Challenges at Home and at School*, and Factor 3 *Parent Involvement in School or Community* (Table 1) with high Cronbach alpha reliability scores. I rescaled 5 items in Factor 2 so they all scored in the same direction for Cronbach Alpha. The high Cronbach scores implied internal consistency in the survey (Vogt, 2007) for assessing the three factors. Also, strong factors with reliability testing demonstrate the quality of this survey for validating the survey and as a possible instrument for future use with PI measurement (Yong & Pierce, 2013). The three factors are displayed below in Table 1.

I began the exploratory factor analysis by using two Likert scale questions, which included a total of 52 items measuring frequency of PI and parent agreement with statements. Due to cross loading and low loading of certain items, I dropped those and continued PCA with 35 items which loaded between 0.398 and 0.776, with most loading above 0.5. I was then able to interpret three factors and compare the three factors with other variables within the survey. Exploratory factor analysis, as described here, lets one test a model, which must be acknowledged as a subjective process (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; Williams et al., 2010). These three factors (see Table 2) are assessed against the qualitative results, with rigorous comparison, and have strong correlations that are clear and easy to interpret.
Thus, I propose that despite a small sample size, the three factors stand soundly (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013, p.618). Given that my sample size was less than one hundred, I was reassured by work cited by Williams, Brown and Onsman (2010) who indicated that when communality scores of items within factors are 0.6 or higher in a small sample, or when a correlation coefficient is greater than 0.8, then a smaller sample size such as mine can be acceptable. Costello and Osborne (2005) cited 0.32 as satisfactory, if items are cross loading, yet it is advisable to have five or more strongly loading factors with 0.50 or more, which is the case. Also, it is important to consider the ratio of participants to items, or the N:p ratio, (between 3:1 and 20:2) or number of participants compared to number of variables. The recommended ratios that many researchers use as a guide were shown to be not reliable in past research and no minimum ratio was obvious (Williams et al., 2010). The N:p ratio for this survey was 86:52 or 1.65:1, which is quite low, but still worth considering with the other strong factor characteristics. Many facets supported the strength of the factors, including the Eigenvalues (see Table 2), the variance (see Table 2), and the scree plot (see Figure 4).

Table 1  Factor Loadings and Communalities Based on PCA with Oblimin Rotation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor 1 (17 items)</th>
<th>Parent Involvement at Home</th>
<th>$\alpha=0.884$</th>
<th>Loading</th>
<th>Communalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I assist child with homework</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read to-with my child in English</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I encourage my child to read in French</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I help child improve French vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I praise child for effort at school</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read to-with my child in French</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I consciously promote learning and studying French</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I encourage child to read in English</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am in contact with school calls – notes – visits</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our family goes to the English library</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We discuss reasons why learning French is important</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ask for updates on my child’s progress at school</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We use French media, TV, radio, internet</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I discuss my expectations about my child’s academic achievement 0.49 .37
We discuss the value of education with our child 0.44 .22
Our family goes to the French library 0.35 .25
I have some influence and control over my child’s learning 0.29 .10

Factor 2 (10 items)
Parents Experience Challenges at Home/School $\alpha=0.842$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Loading</th>
<th>Communality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel left out of some of my child’s education because it occurs in French</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need help to understand messages that come from the French school</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel competent to help with HW in French NOT</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with how the school communicates NOT</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel awkward when I visit the school</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do NOT attend meet the teacher night- do not understand it in French</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school has provided helpful tips-strategies to help me help homework</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel welcome at the school NOT</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting our child in French school takes more effort than FI or English</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our family attends activities in French in the community NOT</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factor 3 (8 items)
Parent Involvement in School/Community $\alpha=0.805$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Loading</th>
<th>Communality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am involved in committees with decision making for school</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I volunteer at school</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am involved in workshops for parents for child education</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attend meet the teacher night at the school</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am involved in francisation program activities</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I participate in fundraising for the school</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been invited to be involved at school by teacher-admin-child</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attend parent-teacher interviews</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2  Eigenvalues and Variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of Variance</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.761</td>
<td>25.032</td>
<td>25.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.846</td>
<td>10.988</td>
<td>36.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.551</td>
<td>7.288</td>
<td>43.308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.061</td>
<td>5.889</td>
<td>49.198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.844</td>
<td>5.267</td>
<td>54.465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.618</td>
<td>4.623</td>
<td>59.088</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three factors had a 2.6 Eigenvalue and greater; typically, Eigenvalues greater than 1 are acceptable to show strong factors, as recommended by the Kaiser criterion (Costello &
Osborne, 2005). A fourth and fifth factor in the data had Eigenvalues greater than 1 but were difficult to interpret and were dropped. Factor 1, *Parent Involvement at Home* (Eigen value = 8.76) accounted for 25% of the variance and included 17 items. Factor 2, *Parents Experienced Challenges at Home and at School*, (Eigenvalue = 3.8) accounted for 11% of the variance and included 10 items. Factor 3, *Parent Involvement in School or Community*, (Eigenvalue = 2.6) accounted for 7.3% of the variance and included 8 items.

Figure 4. Scree Plot

Also, the first three factors on the scree plot (Figure 4) were clearly above the point of inflexion or leveling off, and these three factors accounted for 43% of variance (Table 2). Costello and Osborne (2005) reported that sample size no longer follows strict rules as long as there is “strong data … high communalities without cross loadings, plus several variables loading strongly on each factor” (p. 4), which is the case with these data. According to Williams,
Brown, and Onsman (2010) the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin of 0.710 is suitable given that this is greater than 0.5 in a possible range from 0 to 1. These authors also recommended that Bartlett’s test of sphericity be significant with \( p \) less than 0.05 and mine is \( p < 0.001 \).

**Answering the Research Questions**

In order to answer research Question 1 about the demographics and beliefs of NF parents, I used descriptive statistics and analysed diverse types of NF parent characteristics (e.g., heritage, language proficiency, marital status, and education) from the survey as well as NF parent beliefs from the survey and interview data. I combined the content concerning parent beliefs from the qualitative data to supplement the quantitative data. To answer research Questions 2 and 3 about the experiences and involvement of NF parents, I analysed the qualitative and quantitative data for all examples and references to NF parents’ experiences and involvement. I categorized and analyzed PI according to Hornby’s (2011) eight forms of parental contributions and parent needs (sharing information; collaborating with teachers; acting as a resource; policy formation; channels of communication; liaison with school staff; parent education; and parent support). I also recorded barriers to PI shared by participants and the recommendations parents made to address them. I coded parents’ comments about feelings and experiences to categorize them into the ACB, or feelings of autonomy, competence, and belonging from the SED (Landry, et al., 2007b). I searched the data for emerging themes, congruency, and divergence (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Patton, 2002). In Table 3 below, I present a visual model of the chronology of the mixed methods procedure (Ivankova, 2015; Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006) that I followed.
Table 3  Visual Model for Chronology of Mixed Methods Convergent Design Procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilot project</td>
<td>• Piloted survey</td>
<td>• Refined survey and interview questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Piloted focus group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative and qualitative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instrument development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative data collection</td>
<td>• Online survey (n=86) reduced from 123 participants</td>
<td>• Numeric and text data (open-ended answers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with embedded qualitative data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Interviewing</td>
<td>• Nine focus groups (n=34)</td>
<td>• Text data (interview transcripts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Individual interviews (n=4)</td>
<td>• Codes/themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Transcribed</td>
<td>• Frequency counts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Member-checked</td>
<td>• Merging quant/qual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>• SPSS software v.22</td>
<td>• Descriptive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Normality</td>
<td>• Inferential statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Frequencies</td>
<td>• Factor loadings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Bivariate correlation</td>
<td>• Three factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ANOVA</td>
<td>• Reliability score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• PCA Factor analysis</td>
<td>• Statistical significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cronbach alpha</td>
<td>• Predictors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>• Coded data</td>
<td>• Codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Constant comparison analysis</td>
<td>• Counts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Content analysis</td>
<td>• Convergent and divergent themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated analysis</td>
<td>• Qualitative data analysed, compared and contrasted with</td>
<td>• Joint display tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quantitative data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration of quantitative and</td>
<td>• Interpretation and explanation of the qual and quant results</td>
<td>• Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qualitative results</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Future research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Validation in Mixed Methods Research**

It is important to confirm the rigor of mixed methods research, and I have done so by explaining the justification for using mixed methods, by describing my approach with dialogic pragmatism and being pragmatic, including a triangulation of methods, and sharing the details of the data collection and analysis procedure (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). I discussed the past use of the survey instrument and the validity and reliability scores, as well as detailed quantitative analysis procedures adopted in this research project. The trustworthiness of qualitative research lies in the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which are similar in quantitative research to internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

To address credibility in the qualitative research and data analysis, I pilot tested the questions to ensure they were understood (Krueger & Casey, 2000). I also practiced ethical research procedures and followed the steps of the procedure as planned, while remaining flexible enough to accommodate the lone parents for interviews rather than insisting on focus groups on four occasions. The triangulation of data is also considered a strategy to confirm credible research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Patton, 2002). I maintained a research journal, shared my worldview and biases, was careful with transcription and analysis, and attempted to represent the true voices of the participants through member-checking (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Krueger & Casey, 2000). The internal content validity of the survey was verified by choosing items that represent the range of possible answers (content validity) (Fowler, 2009). Furthermore, construct validity was confirmed in the pilot project by verifying that questions measure what they were intended to measure (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Fowler, 2009). Reliability of the constructs in the survey was assessed prior to conducting the pilot project with
pre-testing and again assessed within the pilot project, both yielding high Cronbach’s alpha scores (Vogt, 2007) related to parental beliefs, PI at home, and PI at school.

To attend to dependability over time and confirmability for the qualitative research, I relied on a triangulation of data collection methods and a variety of data analysis methods. I was vigilant in taking notes and journal writing about my decisions so that the rigor of my methods could be checked by another (Ortlipp, 2008; Patton, 2002). To confirm findings, I also had participants read/member-check (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) the transcripts and summaries of themes, and I engaged another coder, a colleague in the PhD cohort, to assess inter-coder agreement (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). We each coded three transcriptions and where there was some discrepancy, after discussing three codes used in two of the transcriptions, we came to 100% agreement (Miles & Huberman, 1994 as cited in Ivankova, 2015, p. 241.) A triangulation of forms of analysis also added to the degree of confirmability.

Given the small participant sample size, generalizability is not recommended (Vogt, 2007), but transferability to similar contexts may be possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morgan, 2007; Patton, 2002) depending on reader interpretation of the context and information. The goal of interviews was to go in-depth and to understand the participant perspectives and context (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Thus, when comparing contexts, the reader will decide if findings are transferable (Krueger & Casey, 2000). I endeavored to recruit enough participants to have a diversity of parents and perspectives, and I provide in Chapter 4 a description of the types of NF parents, their contexts, and experiences, so that this information has the potential to be extrapolated to other, similar situations (Patton, 2002).
Summary

In this chapter I highlighted the methodological approach I took to produce rigorous, ethical, high quality research. The methods were chosen to best answer the research questions and to align with my personal life experience and my approach with dialogic pragmatism, for which mixed methods was an appropriate research design. It is my hope that the description of the schools, participants, and the procedure can help the reader determine transferability of the findings to other contexts.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The findings reported here are based on responses from 86 online survey participants, coded transcriptions from 9 focus groups with 34 participants, and 4 individual interviews, with a total of 38 NF interview participants. Inter-rater reliability was established for the coding with the researcher and one other coder (PhD candidate). There was 93% agreement on the initial coding by the researcher, but, after discussion, three sentences were coded with existing titles and were added to existing nodes for 100% agreement.

The first section is divided in two parts, responding to research Question 1 about NF parent demographic characteristics and NF parents’ beliefs relevant to motivation for school choice, language, and education. The second section of the results addresses research Question 2 about the experiences of NF parents at home, at school, and in the community. In the third section, I present the findings to research Question 3, about the involvement of NF parents at home, at school, and in the community. I illustrate the findings with qualitative and quantitative results displayed together in text and table format (Ivankova, 2015). I end the chapter presenting the quantitative findings with the descriptive and inferential statistics.

Participant Demographics

These findings respond to the first research question, which queried the demographic characteristics of the NF parents. The non-Francophone parents (N=86) who participated in the survey were between the ages of 27 and 63; 52 (60.5%) were mothers, 32 (37.2%) were fathers, and 2.3% reported as other. Five of the 86 participants (5.8%) were immigrants, and 81 (94.2%) were Canadian citizens. The survey participants reported their education level and the education of the spouse/partner where applicable (N=153). The vast majority of parents (85.6%) had a postsecondary education with a college diploma (n=35), a university degree (n=36), or a
graduate or professional degree \((n=60)\). In contrast, 22 parents \((14.4\%)\) had some college \((n=8)\), some university \((n=2)\) or a high school diploma \((n=12)\). Family income as reported by 56.6% of participants was $100,000 or more, while 23.6% reported between $50,000 and $99,999, 15.8% reported between $25,000 and $49,999, and 3.9% reported a family income of less than $25,000. The breakdown of participants who completed the survey showed that 32.5% of the parents had children in rural schools, and 67.5% had children in urban schools. The demographics show some participant diversity and high socioeconomic status for the majority of the parents.

Twenty-seven of the 86 parents \((31.4\%)\) reported being Anglophone in an exogamous couple with a Francophone partner. Out of the 59 other parents, 45 \((52.3\%)\) were Anglophone in an Anglo-dominant couple, 3 \((3.5\%)\) were allophone in a couple with a non-Francophone partner, and 11 \((12.8\%)\) were Anglophone single parents. Despite the title of Anglophone, 38% of mothers self-rated as being proficient in French and able to speak, understand, and read French with 75–100% proficiency. Another 10.5% of mothers reported being able to speak and understand with 51–75% proficiency, and 16.3% of mothers reported being able to read and understand 51–75%. For fathers, 18.6% self-reported as French proficient to speak, understand and read with 75–100% proficiency. An additional 7.5% of fathers reported being able to speak, understand and read with 51–75% proficiency. Eighty percent of all participants self-evaluated as not being confident to speak in French at the school. These data reveal that approximately 80% had low French proficiency. Table 4 below shows a breakdown of the 69% of the participants who were in Anglo-dominant contexts rather than in exogamous couples.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of NF Parent</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exogamous couple (Anglophone + Francophone)</td>
<td>27/86</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-dominant (Anglophone + Anglophone)</td>
<td>45/86</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Anglophone single parent)</td>
<td>11/86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(allophone + non-Francophone)</td>
<td>3/86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Demographics Focus Groups**

I asked focus group participants to provide demographic details. Of the 38 who participated, 11 (28.9%) were male, and 27 (71.1%) were female. The number of participants who represented each age range was as follows: 4 at age 26–35; 21 at age 36–45; 10 aged 46–55, and 3 aged 56+. Two (5.3%) of the participants were high school graduates, 10 (26.3%) had a college diploma, 6 (15.8%) had a baccalaureate degree, and 19 (50%) had graduate or professional training. Two (5.3%) of the 38 parents were separated or divorced, and 36 (94.7%) were married. The self-evaluated French proficiency was varied with 7 (18.4%) participants who reported high (75–100%) proficiency, 8 (21.0%) participants reported intermediate proficiency (25–75%), and 23 (60.5%) reported low proficiency (0–25%). Once again, about 80% of the NF parents had low French proficiency and the data reveal that there was a high number of two-parent families. All focus group participants were reported in the demographics from the survey.

**Heritage**

The NF parents in this research reported some diversity with linguistic heritage, and nearly one-third had French heritage. Table 5 below provides an overview of family heritage that participants reported by choosing the language(s) of the children’s’ grandparents.
Table 5  Linguistic Heritage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grandparent</th>
<th>Grandparents’ Mother Tongue</th>
<th>Total French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal grandmother</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal grandfather</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal grandmother</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal grandfather</td>
<td>77.9%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These survey numbers revealed that up to 31.4% of the participants have a French heritage within one generation by having a French parent. This statistic is reasonably consistent with survey findings I report below, where 34.9% of parent participants cited family heritage as one of the top three motivations for choosing the French school. The numbers between 12.8% and 31.4% indicate French heritage one generation past with grandparents who spoke French.

Grades Represented

Table 6 shows participants represented 145 children in Grades K to 12 in French schools. Several parents had children who had already graduated or were in English high schools. There were 65 participants (75.6%) with children in Grades K to 7, and 21 participants (24.2%) with children in Grades 8 to 12. Every grade was represented with between 4–25 children per grade.

Table 6  Grades and Number of Students Represented by the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results above showed a greater number of children with NF parents in Grades 1–7 (students admitted more recently) compared with lower numbers in the secondary grades. The survey results showed that 67.4% of NF parents expected the children to graduate from the French school, 10.5% did not expect the children to graduate from the French school, and 19.8% were uncertain. At the other end of the age spectrum, parents reported that 55.8% of the children currently attending French schools had also attended a French preschool.

I will discuss the impact of the demographic characteristics of the NF parent participants in Chapter 5. The next section outlines the findings about parent beliefs including parent motivations for the choice of a French school, parent educational beliefs, and parent language beliefs.

**Parent Beliefs**

In this section, I present the findings from the survey and the interviews relevant to parent beliefs, including parent motivations for the choice of a French school, educational beliefs, and language beliefs. I have included comments that parents made during interviews, and I have indicated who made the comment by using the term Participant 1–Participant 86 to indicate one of the 38 parents who participated in an interview. Even though there were only 38 interview participants, each one had completed a survey somewhere within the 86, thus I maintained the number from the list of 86. I used the term Participant S1–S86 to show the comment came from the open-ended questions on the survey and represented a survey participant uniquely. I have not specified the focus group, because I analysed each participant’s comments as a unit of analysis.

**Motivations**

On the survey, the NF parents ranked their top three principal motivations for having chosen a French school. Parents also discussed their choice of a French school during the
interviews. The six motivations displayed below in Table 7 were the most frequently reported in the survey, representing between 21% and 66.2% of the parents’ top three motivations for the choice of a French school.

Table 7  Motivations for Choice of School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation for choice of School</th>
<th>Ranked order</th>
<th>Number of parents</th>
<th>Percentage of parents who ranked factor among top 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bilingualism</td>
<td>1st choice</td>
<td>31 (36%)</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd choice</td>
<td>19 (22.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd choice</td>
<td>7 (8.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future employment</td>
<td>1st choice</td>
<td>21 (24.4%)</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd choice</td>
<td>15 (17.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd choice</td>
<td>8 (9.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French heritage</td>
<td>1st choice</td>
<td>10 (11.6%)</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd choice</td>
<td>12 (14%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd choice</td>
<td>8 (9.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class size</td>
<td>1st choice</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd choice</td>
<td>13 (15.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd choice</td>
<td>15 (17.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred by other parent</td>
<td>1st choice</td>
<td>9 (10.5%)</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd choice</td>
<td>5 (5.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd choice</td>
<td>4 (4.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>1st choice</td>
<td>4 (4.7%)</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd choice</td>
<td>4 (4.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd choice</td>
<td>7 (8.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bilingualism was the most important motive for parents to choose a French minority-language school. The other five highly ranked reasons in order of importance in the survey results for NF parents were: future employment, French family heritage, small class sizes, the French school was preferred by the other parent, and the French culture present in the school and in course content.
**Integrated Findings**

Integrated tables or joint display tables are used by mixed methods researchers to display qualitative and quantitative data side-by-side. Joint display tables are recommended for use by mixed methods experts for the comparison and display of mixed methods results to help researchers and readers have a deeper understanding of the analysis and the research results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Guetterman, Fetters, & Creswell, J., 2015; Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2010; Sandelowski, 2003). Sandelowski (2003) explained that mixed methods researchers can more effectively use written reports when combined with tables to compare and contrast data without one method being dominant and using both formats appeals to a variety of audiences. Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) have discussed the growing use and usefulness of joint display in mixed methods research. These tables are data dense; I provide a visual summary of data, therein bolstering their use. I have chosen to use joint displays for the findings in parent beliefs, parent experience, and parent involvement.

The data for the top six ranked motivations from the survey are displayed below in integrated data Table 8, alongside the interview data and quotes that pertained to the motivations. I chose quotes to represent diverse parent opinions which fall under each motive. The table is followed by a presentation of the overarching themes from the parent comments about the choice of the French school, which are compared and contrasted with the numbers from the survey.
Table 8  Linking Survey Results and Quotes for Parent Beliefs: Motivations for School Choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Quotes from Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivations in ranked order</td>
<td>Frequency of incidence during interviewing</td>
<td>Quotes from coded transcriptions relevant to the ranked motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingualism</td>
<td>29 individuals (76.0%) made statements re: bilingualism</td>
<td>“I think it is a fundamental value, a Canadian value, if you have an opportunity why wouldn’t you benefit from it?” (Participant 16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st choice</td>
<td>36.0% (n=31)</td>
<td>“For me it never hurts to have a second language- more job opportunities and more opportunities in life ... I think it makes life so much easier especially when you live in a country that has some bilingual provinces. For them it is never going to hurt them to have it. English is never going to be an issue to learn.” (Participant 34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 3 choices by 66.2%</td>
<td>36 references to bilingualism (23.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Employment</td>
<td>10 individuals (26.0%) made statements re: employment</td>
<td>“In terms of employment opportunities and travel opportunities, and things along those lines.” (Participant 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st choice</td>
<td>24.4% (n=21)</td>
<td>“But I think it gives them a much greater chance of employment any place across Canada. Especially in government positions or anything like that, if you can say you are bilingual on your resume it says a lot more in your favor.” (Participant 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 3 choices by 51.1%</td>
<td>10 references to employment (6.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage</td>
<td>20 individuals (53.0%) made statements re: heritage</td>
<td>“One of the other benefits is that my children can communicate with their grandparents and extended family.” (Participant 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st choice</td>
<td>11.6% (n=10)</td>
<td>“But I hear him express his frustration that ‘we are teaching you your culture’, but it is not HIS culture.” (Participant 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 3 choices by 34.9%</td>
<td>41 references to heritage (27.0%)</td>
<td>“And my dad didn’t speak French either but his parents, his mother spoke French and grandparents on both sides spoke French, and ... anyway, it filled his heart and he cried, when he learned his grandchildren were learning French.” (Participant 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Size</td>
<td>28 individuals (74.0%) made statements re: class size</td>
<td>“You may want to try to get them in a larger class size, because university isn’t just twelve people.” (Participant 33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd choice</td>
<td>15.0% (n=13)</td>
<td>“Our child he has learning difficulties- and it got noticed at a very young age. So being in a smaller classroom size possibly enabled them to pick up on that immediately.” (Participant 38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 3 choices by 33.7%</td>
<td>57 references to class size (37.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred by Other Parent</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Quotes from Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st choice</td>
<td>8 individuals (21.0%) made statements re: preference of one parent</td>
<td>“The decision to come to this school wasn’t really a big decision at all. It was important for me to have the kids in English culture, we live in an English city, it was important for my wife to have them in French culture, and this is where they are getting it.” (Participant 27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 3 choices</td>
<td>9 references to preference of one parent (6.0%)</td>
<td>“For us my husband was against …he doesn’t have any French at all and I had to do a lot of talking and convincing otherwise, that it would be very advantageous for our girls to graduate bilingual.” (Participant 12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Culture                  | 18 individuals (47.0%) made statements re: culture | “And our region is a bit short on cultural diversity so the French school offers something of that.” (Participant 18) |
| Top 3 choices            | 18 references to culture | “And there is a large amount of French Acadian people in this area but the language has been lost. Three generations in some cases, but I still think it is really worth reviving.” (Participant 12) |

### Bilingualism

Bilingualism was a main reason for choosing a French school. It was discussed in 12 of the 13 interviews, and bilingualism was a factor that showed equal and primary importance to parents in both the survey and the interviews. Many of the parents who participated in the interviews explained that they considered bilingualism important for their children as Canadian citizens, as a Canadian value, and for opportunities pertaining to future travel, study, and employment advantages. As Participant 3 explained, “Opportunities, because I am bilingual, it has really opened up many doors for me … Even just travelling or moving to other places in Canada or going to university. There are a lot of benefits.” Another parent expressed that ease of facilitating communication with others was why they wanted the child to be bilingual, because “it gives that chance to communicate with so many more people … I want my kids to be able to sit on the chair lift [anywhere in Canada] and talk to somebody in the language of their choice” (Participant 14). For this parent, the child having more than one language
would facilitate communication during travel and participation in activities with more people, than if just speaking one language. Another parent explained the cognitive and linguistic advantage:

I’ve read research that kids’ brains develop differently if they learn two languages from birth or from a very young age. And if they don’t start learning a second language before 3, it’s so much harder, just as an adult and even as a very young child. So that’s a huge benefit, and I see that my 7 year old is fluently bilingual. (Participant 6)

Developing English and French bilingualism was important to NF parents for a multitude of present-day and future advantages.

However, the parents did not value bilingualism over a quality education, and, if French were to pose a problem for their children with learning at school, then an English school would be considered. One parent stated the preference would be to keep the child in a French school to graduate unless there were problems, “because I will continually stress the importance of being bilingual ... However, if I see her grades are being affected, I would consider pulling her. Education alone is very important, French is just a bonus” (Participant 4). These beliefs about bilingualism are consistent with previous research, which identified that for Francophones bilingualism is necessary, but for Anglophones it is an advantage (Boissonneault, 2008). Several other parents expressed that the global education was more important than French, because, if the child wanted to move to an English school for programs such as music, drama, or sports in high school, for example, then it would be the student’s choice.

**Employment and Education**

Employment was the second most important motivating factor among the survey choices. Although parents said that future employment opportunities were important, employment figured as a more highly ranked school choice factor in the survey than in the interview discussions.
During interviews, future employment was mentioned by only 26% of the participants. In discussion, parents talked about employment opportunities paired with education, future travel, and study benefits as parallel advantages. Hence, my code (and this subtitle) from the transcriptions included both employment and education. For example, this parent commented about how the choice of a French school clustered the two. “I would say opportunity for employment, education, where they can live and work in Canada and all over, really” (Participant 13). There was little conversation about employment specifically despite future employment as the second ranked motivation in the survey. The results in Table 9 below show the disparity between the interview and the survey ranking of future employment.

**Heritage**

Heritage was the third most important factor parents rated in the survey for choosing a French school. During interviews, this topic came up often and, when compared with the survey results, heritage came across as a more important factor for parent school choice in the interviews than on the survey. The participant responses in the survey and interviews also gave different results about other factors that motivated the choice of a French school. I have compared bilingualism, employment, class size, preference of other parent, culture, and heritage arranged in Table 9 to compare the survey and interview results.
Table 9  Comparison of Parent Motivations from Survey and Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey (top rated factors)</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bilingualism</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Bilingualism 76% of participants discussed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 21% of motivation comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Class size 74% of participants discussed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 33.3% of motivation comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Heritage 52.6% of participants discussed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 24% of motivation comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class size</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Culture 47% of participants mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 10.5% of motivation comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred by other parent</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Employment 26% of participants mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 5.9% of motivation comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Preferred by other parent 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 5.3% of motivation comments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Heritage ranked as the third highest motivating factor in both the survey and the focus groups, even though the order of the six factors was different in the survey and the interviews. The parents who commented specifically about French heritage represented a mix between current French family heritage and past family French heritage. Frequently, participants depicted French as a familial language lost several generations ago. For example, Participant 15 described the father’s family, saying “His grandfather spoke French at home until he was 12 when the grandmother died. So, apparently this was quite common in the fifties … Acadians stopped speaking French so, my husband does not speak French.” Parents appeared to mourn the French language and cultural loss, which they wanted to reclaim,
It’s from my grandfather, and even my mom can’t remember him speaking it. So, it was lost a long time ago, so it [French] was just something that was dear to my heart, and I wanted to give that to them. (Participant 10)

Nineteen of 34 interview participants made references about lost French heritage and language. Four participants stated reclaiming the French language and culture. For other parents, it was important to maintain the language in an effort to speak and connect with the French side of the family. In one instance, a mother explained “All his relatives, except one in Canada, live in Europe. They are French-speaking, and, if they come to visit, they speak French; they do not speak English. So, for all those reasons, I think it was important” (Participant 14). One parent referred to the emphasis on the Acadian heritage in French schools in the Atlantic Provinces and observed how that content was at odds with the cultural heritage of the Francophone partner, “It’s a bit of a challenge for his dad, because he comes from Quebec and has more of a Quebecois background than an Acadian background” (Participant 5).

Several parents commented about the loss of the French language and the desire to help revitalize it, despite not having a French or Acadian heritage. For example, Participant 12 explained, “There is a large amount of French Acadian people in this area, but the language has been lost. Three generations in some cases, but I still think it is really worth reviving.” One NF parent valued French schools, along with French language maintenance and revitalization. He told the story of regional language loss:

But for the Francophones, … there were many years, starting with consolidation where many people lost their ability to speak French and lost their sense of culture … I have talked to others, and their stories about that and what I have seen in communities where they totally lost their ability because they didn’t have French schools, and had to take
them to the Supreme Court to get schools and so on. So, it is essential for the survival of the French culture that we have a place like this, which serves both as a school and a cultural centre. (Participant 24)

Many NF parents lamented the loss of French and were committed to reviving French in their families through access to the school, and several were supportive of French revival in the greater community.

**Small Class Size**

On the survey, small class size ranked as the fourth most important reason for choice of school, and, in the interviews, class and school size were frequently mentioned motivations. For parents who relayed their reasons for choosing a French school, similar to heritage, class size was a more important factor in the interview than it was in the survey. Beyond the size of the class, parents also commented that a small school was a positive and attractive feature desired for the child by the parent: “I mean the small school atmosphere, definitely small class size and almost family atmosphere. In some of the other larger schools, children can become lost” (Participant 25). Another parent saw advantages in a small school, especially the fact that small schools often contained all the grade levels:

We like how it is a small school, K through 12, and you have got older kids who can come and do reading buddies all of that. Because it is smaller and the students are K through 12, I think there is a little more problem solving going on within staff for students. (Participant 37)

Parents did note, however, that with small classroom enrollments, it can be awkward if a social issue arises, and there is no option to move to another class. As the children get into high school, parents reported that small class sizes were a disadvantage “because university isn’t just
twelve people” (Participant 33). Also, another parent worried that there may be a lack of high quality academic opportunities in high school:

For me, it is … entirely academic. And my concern about staying in the French school is exactly the opposite from starting at the French school: the class size. I assume once you get to tenth and twelfth grade, my child would not have as many learning opportunities. Physics 1 and 2, maybe they do, but I will be looking deeply into that to see what is offered and what is there. (Participant 35)

Despite liking small class sizes, several parents were concerned that learning opportunities would be limited to basic academic courses in French minority-language high schools.

**Preferred by Other Parent**

The choice of the French school due to a preference by the other parent was the fifth ranked motivation in both the survey and the interview data. There was a range of experiences for participants who said that the French school was the choice of the other parent. For several NF parents, they felt supported and welcomed by the school and involved with the child’s education, because of the other parent’s desire and involvement. Even though they did not speak French, the NF parent found that the Francophone parent helped them to be involved at school and at home. However, some NF parents were hesitant about the choice of the French school:

It was very important to him [the father] that our kids go to a, not French immersion, but a French school. I must say I was pretty hesitant about it, mostly, because I don’t speak French, and I wanted to be involved in their education. I didn’t want to feel like an outsider, because I couldn’t speak the language. But it was really important to him that his kids were educated in French, so that’s why we made the jump for the French school and so far it’s been working okay, but had a hard time deciding. There was a lot of back
and forth. (Participant 8)

For other NF parents, they reported feeling marginalized and unvalued by the teachers and staff and even neglected. For example, one participant recounted “[I was] given a note and told ‘your wife can translate that for you. Take it home to her and she can translate it’, I can be her messenger boy” (Participant 36). Also, in some situations, a call, note, or message would only be sent to the other parent, especially if the other parent was French proficient or Francophone. Both mothers (n=3) and fathers (n=4) were reported being the parent who had preferred a French school. The preference of a French school by the other parent turned out well for some NF parents, yet for other NF parents, this preference created challenging experiences.

Culture

In the survey, culture ranked as the sixth most important motivation for choosing the school, with 14.0% of participants having rated it in the top three reasons for the choice of school. When culture is added to the survey option for choice of school due to greater access to arts, music, authors, the culture combination ranked as one of the top three choices by 17.5% of parents. Culture also figured prominently in the interview discussions where 18 participants commented about the importance of the culture in the French school. For the open-ended survey question about why parents get involved in the children’s education, six participants said it was for cultural maintenance. Three parents remarked about a strong presence of arts and music and cultural representation in the classes and school, one saying, “There is so much going on like musically, and you see it in the classes too, they are always bringing in art” (Participant 22). French culture, understood as music, art, and literature from the present and past, was appreciated by the NF parents.

Several parents perceived the school’s focus on culture as enriching the lives of students
and individuals in Canada. Eight different participants highlighted that the diversity of culture was a strong and attractive point about the French school, because children exposed to another culture and language learn tolerance and alternate ways of living and seeing the world. One parent argued, “You have to embrace different cultures and diversity, and the closest one that we have here … what is at home … embrace what is at home first” (Participant 31). This participant was espousing the French culture beside Anglophone culture as enriching with different perspectives for her children and her family. There was conversation about how cultures and diversity generally enrich individual’s lives and broaden perspectives on the world.

Certain parents chose the school because of the emphasis on French culture in the French minority-language school, compared to an immersion option. For example, a participant stated, “When I went to the French immersion school, it was new, but seemed clinical, sterile to me, and when I came here there was more. There was a culture here” (Participant 35). One NF parent emphasized how important it is for children to be socialized with cultural references in a French school:

Because I learned French as an adult, I don’t have the cultural references. And we live out of town so people ask why they don’t go to immersion? It’s different to have the cultural references [at a French minority-language school] and actually living in French and having the whole experience is so different if they have that option. (Participant 16)

This parent was appreciative that the children were exposed to classic French songs, literature, history, and even fairy tales and parables, shared as French cultural references.

Several parents said they could see and feel French culture when they toured the school. Some parents chose the school because of the strong French heritage in their family and their desire for children to be able to share the French culture and language with the French side of the
family. At one extreme on the continuum of parents’ cultural beliefs, seven of the 38 (18.4%) NF parents proclaimed being actively supportive of maintaining and revitalizing French language and culture in addition to wanting a French education for their children. Some participants were of Acadian heritage, which they were reclaiming for their family. A parent talked about the loss of French saying, “It [French] wasn’t acceptable in the fifties.” (Participant 15), and another explained, “Our family, it was three generations, like my father’s family, it has been three generations since anyone spoke French” (Participant 16). One NF parent, despite not being Acadian or Francophone, stated it was still a high priority to maintain and revitalize French:

The Francophones … they totally lost their ability because they didn’t have French schools … So it is essential for the survival of the French culture that we have a place like this that serves both as a school and a cultural centre, and also for Anglophones like us, to be able to come and participate. I think it is important to everybody … We are a bilingual country. We were in grave danger a few years ago of losing French here but now it has turned around, and I think it is wonderful. (Participant 24)

Having a French school to maintain the French language and the French culture was important for many parents, regardless of linguistic heritage.

On the other end of the continuum, several NF parents reported appreciation for the culture in the French schools, but the choice of school was specifically for the education in French:

I want them to come out comfortable in English and French. Culture or no culture, I don’t care, they have two. I agree with you, language is the benefit, culture is the extra benefit. Am I here because of the culture? No. I am here because of the language. (Participant 33)
The French language for children was the primary motivation for many parents, with culture being an important benefit, yet not essential.

Two interesting French language and cultural themes emerged from the focus group discussions. One theme was about the culture of Francophones who had moved from elsewhere to the Atlantic region. Specific to NF participants in exogamous couples, there were four examples of the Francophone parent feeling awkward about the Acadian emphasis in the French schools in the Atlantic region. The focus on Acadian culture was challenging for them, because they were Québécois, Franco-Ontarian, or more generally described as French Canadian or European. A parent from an exogamous couple said, “So, trying to promote that … it’s very Acadian here, which is fine, but you’re not actually Acadian and trying to promote just the French Canadian culture … Because, not all of the kids here are actually Acadian” (Participant 8). Quotes such as this one show that there is a diversity of francophones within the schools, which can be recognized and shared, so that all members of the Francophonie feel valued.

The second French language and cultural theme was that NF parents felt conflicted as Anglophones, because of the strong emphasis promoting French language and culture in the French schools. Three parents expressed their belief that it was important to prioritize French language use at the school, which most parents supported enthusiastically. However, these participants also made recommendations for French school professionals to respect and not denigrate English culture and language in the school, since it is the language and culture of many of the students and parents. This participant explained:

It is a balance, though, and this is a discussion we have at home too. I agree especially at the school that French should be the primary language but can it not be done without diminishing English? And that is something, because I am English, and I think it’s
important as much as I respect your culture that mine should be respected, as well.

(Participant 6)

This parent wanted English to be seen and valued as an important aspect of her children’s identity, rather than pushed aside in favour of French. In her view, children should be rewarded for speaking in French rather than punished for using English.

Parents who had had children in the French schools for several years reported their appreciation for an improvement in a pro-French approach without demonstrating anti-English attitudes in French schools. A participant commented about valuing the language of the school and wished to help preserve it:

I think you have to protect it. I don’t think it is something to let people choose or not, or it will dilute … like speaking English in the French school. I appreciate some think it is not a good idea. You don’t want to have conversations diluted down to English. (Participant 18)

Participant 18 was in agreement to use French as much as possible in the French school.

The French culture in the French minority-language schools appeared to help parents meet their educational goals for the children. For example, a French school provided balance for an exogamous couple to meet English and French linguistic and cultural aspirations:

The decision to come to this school wasn’t really a big decision at all. It was important for me to have the kids in English culture. We live in an English city. It was important for my wife to have them in French culture, and this is where they are getting it. Not much of a decision on our part. (Participant 27)
Finally, based on discussions during the interviews, French music, art, and literature and an option for local cultural diversity were valued in French schools, and the French culture played an important role in the NF parent’s choice of a French school.

**French Versus French Heritage**

As discussed above, during interviews some participants made comments about French heritage as a motivation for the choice of the school. Yet, other parent comments were more general and simply referred to a parent’s desire for the child or children to learn French. Thirteen NF parents wanted a French education basically for the French language. Six participants stated having considered immersion but decided on a French school, and four emphasized that they judged the French to be better quality. For example:

> These kids have to go to an all French school, because I want them coming out of their primary education with the ability to speak without a problem and the ability to read and write in both languages, so that they can select a French university or an English university. *(Participant 33)*

In some cases, acquiring the French language was the parents’ priority over French heritage and culture.

In total, during interviews, 19 parents offered different reasons as motivations for choosing a French school. Most reasons aligned with the 13 motivations queried in the survey. To conclude, I share several of the motivations, which were not in the survey but came up commonly in the interviews. These included the parent belief that an education in French would be a positive cognitive challenge for the child *(n=10)*, that learning French would facilitate communication with others in the family or more broadly in the world *(n=7)*, that learning French at a young age would be easier than when you are older *(n=6)*, and the parents and child
had had a positive experience at the French pre-school \((n=6)\) and wished to continue at the school. Other than facilitating communication with family, these motives for choosing the French school were beyond French heritage and related to advantages for learning French.

The next section presents the findings about NF parent educational beliefs, which were identified during the analysis of the survey and focus group and individual interview data.

**Parent Beliefs about Education**

Parent education beliefs from the survey are compared and contrasted below in a joint display in Table 10, along with data and quotes about parent education beliefs shared during interviews. The table is followed by a synthesis of parent comments about their education beliefs, which are compared and contrasted with the results from the survey.

Table 10 Joint Survey and Interview Results: Education Beliefs of Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Survey Results</th>
<th>Quotes from Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent expects child will graduate from Grade 12 at French school</td>
<td>67.4% yes</td>
<td>“But in grade ten there comes a point when they have to decide what courses they want to take and how that will affect their future… If things were not going well socially or academically we would move them, but things have been fine.” (Participant 15)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.5% no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19.8% unsure</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents have considered moving child to an English school</td>
<td><strong>19.8% yes</strong></td>
<td>“I mean you are sending these kids out to the universities, which they are limited if it is French, right?” (Participant 31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.5% strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.3% agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>76.7% no</strong></td>
<td>“If we thought it would be easier for him in English we would probably change him, but I just can’t see that happening.” (Participant 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(40.7% disagree +</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36% strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants believe parents should be involved in children’s education</td>
<td><strong>81.4% yes</strong></td>
<td>“We want to be involved in our children's education and show them how important it is to have an education (and be bilingual!). We also want to instill a good work ethic in our children and teach the importance of hard work and effort.” (Participant 26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.7% strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ 76.7% agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>18.6% No</strong></td>
<td>“I am involved partly because it is enjoyable, partly because it's my job as a parent to encourage and coach education, partly to help our school”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.3% strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ 16.3% disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Question</td>
<td>Survey Results</td>
<td>Quotes from Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents believe that effort will affect achievement</td>
<td>94.4% yes</td>
<td>“Whenever I did attend, everything was discussed in French and then translated into English for me. So I just decided to stay at home and there would be twice as much time to speak in French and I would get the shortened version later.” (Participant S6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(44.2% agree + 51.2% strongly agree)</td>
<td>“Because I do not speak French I am not able to volunteer my time there” (Participant S48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents have some influence and control over child’s learning</td>
<td>92.0% agree</td>
<td>“I chose and you gave me the opportunity. I am going to take advantage of the opportunity. But I am going to make sure that I work for it. Not make others or the teachers. (Participant 31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(44.2% strongly agree + 47.7% agree)</td>
<td>“There were lots of times that I as a parent said this is really hard. And I gave my son lots of opportunity to say it is too hard… but he said no I will be bilingual and I will learn French.” (Participant 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent involvement has contributed positively to child’s education</td>
<td>84.9% yes</td>
<td>“We thought we are going to make sure our child is going to get the best of what we can do here. I think it is important from an intellectual development standpoint to learn a second language.” (Participant 34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(32.6% strongly agree + 48.8% agree)</td>
<td>“I would like to take an active part in my child's education because I want her to develop a love of learning. I want to be aware of what she is learning and how she is progressing.” (Participant 8)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.5% unsure</td>
<td>“I exchange info with teachers about my child that would help them work with my child at school and would help me at home, not only in terms of academic achievement but also with regard to social and emotional development of my child; to do my part in building foundation for future success of my child and other children in the community.” (Participant 30)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Just being an Anglophone person, sometimes you sit back and think what did we do to ourselves? ... but when you see them carrying on conversations and speaking both languages it’s like wow- it’s amazing.” (Participant 38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Question</td>
<td>Survey Results</td>
<td>Quotes from Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents motivated for choice of school by small class sizes</td>
<td>33.7% ranked small classes in top 3 reasons for choice of school;</td>
<td>“Well one of the challenges I found is just that we are all feeling … that it is not that important that you are involved.” (Participant 36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents believe supporting a child in a French school requires more effort than in French immersion or an English school</td>
<td>59.3% yes (29.1% agree 30.2% strongly agree)</td>
<td>“I like the smaller class size, where I have one that struggles, that is really important.” (Participant 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33.7% no (20.9% disagree 12.8 strongly disagree)</td>
<td>“For me the small size with a small child coming in, to the sixth grade or so, it’s great.” (Participant 35)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The NF parents discussed their education beliefs during the interviews. Parent education beliefs were also shared in response to an open-ended question on the survey, which asked why parents get educationally involved. There were 24 similar responses, which demonstrated that those respondents shared a belief that education was valued by parents and important for the children. One parent wrote, “I want my kids to see the value of education and that we are involved with them and want them to succeed” (Participant 1). Some parents emphasized the importance of French along with the importance of education:

I really want my children to succeed in their French education. I want them to know that this education is a special thing that they can have for the rest of their lives to help them in further education, where they work, where they can live, and how they will educate their children. (Participant 13)

The NF parents highly valued the opportunity to be involved with a French education for the children.
Several educational beliefs stood out, because they were frequently mentioned during interviews as topics but, were not addressed in the survey. The beliefs were related to the size of the school, the quality of English, the choice of a French or English high school, and the preparation for university level study. Every French school in this study was considered a small school with the largest enrollment of students being about 300. Various parents \((n=7)\) spoke about their belief that a smaller school was more beneficial for the child. They believed the environment of small schools decreased bullying and permitted learning difficulties to be better addressed. However, parents \((n=6)\) also mentioned different social challenges for children in schools with smaller numbers, and it could be awkward if a student had difficulty with other students. Another educational belief for many parents \((n=14)\) was that in French schools there were fewer high school course options. The perceived limitations were in the areas of trades, gym, specialists, and extracurricular activities such as drama, sports, and music.

Many parents \((n=12)\) wanted more information before making the choice of English or French high school. During the discussions, expressed parental emotions ranged from curious to agonized. They worried that there might not be enough academic challenges to interest or stimulate students in French schools. Parents also reported a concern about a lack of English being a disadvantage for preparing their children for university:

Unfortunately, or fortunately, English is the world’s language right; that is where we are at … maybe the French school, um, I don’t know if the last three years they really embrace English. Because technically, you are, I mean you are sending these kids out to the universities, which they are limited if it is French right, and you wish your education to continue, and the choices in French are there but they are limited. So, at this point I don’t really know. \((Participant \, 31)\)
This parent, like several others, voiced a concern that students need to graduate with high quality skills in English, as well as French, for future study and employment. Parents expounded on the complexity, difficulty, and uncertainty to make high school choices when considering students’ high school years and plans for university:

I don’t know, to be frank, we are facing that decision as we approach Grade 10 and could change to a high school. I am very mixed. Initially, I said they will go to Grade 12, but people said the classes get smaller and school sports … but sports is not the issue. They are involved in organized sports already. I don’t know what the issue is, and I keep asking why I would want my child to move out or to an IB program? But I have not heard all great things about that program. Well, a bigger school? Well, do I want that? Does the English program offer more courses? I have been told that the core courses you really need are offered here. The school size is smaller. I raised this with some university professors. Maybe is it better to go to classes that are more realistic to help them transfer to university. That is not true either. No study that shows those who come from bigger school class size do better in university; if you had a child who was tremendously shy and anxious, maybe. (Participant 33)

This parent needed information to address her questions about the different options, advantages, and disadvantages of an English or French high school to help make the choice for her children.

The beliefs detailed above were the parents’ educational beliefs about the student experience. In particular, there were also two educational beliefs which emerged that were directly related to the parents’ experience. First, numerous NF parents (n=7) said they felt they were not being as educationally involved as they believed they would be, and it was difficult for them. Participant 13 stated, “There were lots of times that I as a parent said this is really hard.”
Another participant explained the extra effort required without French when trying to help with school work at home and participating at the school when he said, “It takes probably twice as much time as the average guy does [to help]. Like I always felt like I was the illiterate one, but nobody has ever made me feel like I wasn’t welcome.” Nevertheless, the parents (n= 7) believed the difficulty they experienced was worth it due to the advantages the child would gain from an education in French. Despite the difficulty, NF parents were coping with the challenge, as this comment indicates. “I find it really difficult, and I knew that coming in, not that I wanted that ... I would rather have that challenge than have my child doing something that I don’t think would challenge him” (Participant 35). This parent was content with the choice of the French school, which benefited his child, even though it meant more challenges for the parent.

Another theme that emerged was, when all educational and life issues were considered, many NF parents believed that choosing the French school for the child was the best educational choice. This point is demonstrated here:

We thought we are going to make sure our child is going to get the best of what we can do here. I think it is important from an intellectual development standpoint to learn a second language and if you are going to learn a second language in Canada it may as well be French. (Participant 34)

The NF parents gave multiple examples of cognitive, linguistic, academic, cultural, and social-emotional benefits of learning French and having small classes and a small school.

**Language Beliefs**

There was overlap in parent beliefs about language and about education, but I attempted to separate language beliefs from general education beliefs. Using a joint display in Table 11, I compared and contrasted parent language beliefs from the survey with data and quotes about
language beliefs shared during interviews. The table is followed by an amalgamation of the parents’ comments about their language beliefs, which are compared and contrasted with the responses from the survey.

Table 11  Language Beliefs

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<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Survey Results</th>
<th>Quotes from Interviews</th>
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| Parent belief in their ability to speak in French at the school | 80.2% low confidence  
(55.8% not confident + 24.4% somewhat confident)  
19.8% confident  
(9.3% very confident + 10.5% confident)  
76.6% used English to communicate, 8.15% never used English at school | “I have made quite a few mistakes and it would have been better if I had not made the mistakes.” (Participant 18)  
“When I talk to Francophones and they are receptive to me I feel more comfortable with them off the bat if they are smiling. And the people who go -huh? That is when I feel more uncomfortable and make mistakes so it is really the reaction of the people in front of me. I am not a perfectionist in French.” (Participant 15) |
| Parent belief there should be staff who speak English with NF parents at the school | 73.2% yes  
(27.9% strongly agree + 45.3% agree)  
18.7% No  
(14.0% disagree + 4.7% strongly disagree)- similar to 19.0% confident | “I think that there is a need in the school that somebody can communicate in English because if I am away and something happens to my child, I need someone able to communicate with my husband.” (Participant 29)  
“Yes, and they do [speak English], and if I had a question … I could go to the office and I know they would read it for me.” (Participant 2) |
| Parent belief the school should enforce a French only policy for students | 26.8% No  
(3.5% strongly disagree + 23.3% disagree)  
60.8% Yes  
(44.2% agree + 16.3% strongly agree)  
12.8% unsure | “Because it's a Francophone environment. French first language schools are total immersion, not partial” (Participant S64)  
“Only if there is a safety issue and the child does not understanding due to the language barrier.” (Participant 8)  
“It important to keep French as the language in the school.” (Participant S69) |
During the focus groups, many parent comments reflected language beliefs. One common statement was that they believe language learning to be easier for a young child ($n=8$); thus, it is better to start learning French at a young age. NF participants also believed that learning French and being bilingual in Canada would provide greater prospects ($n=8$) with improved work, study, and life opportunities. In general, parents agreed that the language of instruction and school functioning should be strictly French for the children at the French school ($n=5$), except in cases of emergency. However, seven parents indicated it was essential that someone speak English with them at the school to facilitate communication. Four parents stated that they were worried about the English development of their children, while three NF parents, during focus groups, reassured other participants to not worry about the child learning English:

I wouldn’t worry about it. We don’t touch English at home at all. Unless I read a story to her … she is all for cuddling up and reading a story to her in English. But I don’t have to worry about teaching her English; it will come. (*Participant 12*)

*Participant 12* had a child in the intermediate grades in a French school and had seen a transfer of language skills from French to English, and thus, did not have any concerns about the younger child learning English. Eight parents indicated that, although they wanted to be involved, they felt they could not, because they did not speak French.

NF parents who completed the survey had an option to indicate if they believed that English should be used with students at the French school. The majority of survey participants (53.5%) believed that English was not necessary to use with Anglo-dominant students, because they learn French quickly, and French is the language at the school. However, 39.5% replied, yes; in these cases, they believed English should be used with students. Six parents (6.9%) chose to not answer. During interviews, five parents (13.2%) explained that teachers or administrators
should use English in situations of health and safety. For example, English should be used to help a child feel secure or to remedy a bullying situation. Also, six parents considered that using a limited amount of English with students in the early years (K–3) could be of benefit while the children are still in the early learning stages with French. Parents who said “no” to using English with students at the school were confident the children would learn French: “I think French should be used at school, as I believe they will learn with the proper environment” (Participant 86). NF parents recognized the importance of using French in the French school and only using English with students in rare circumstances.

It merits repeating the findings about NF parents’ language proficiency; specifically, that 80.0% of respondents did not feel confident speaking French at the school. The NF participants with French proficiency stated feeling some insecurity about the quality of their French. Yet, a few parents mentioned that their involvement with committees functioning in French at the French school has helped improve their French:

I have always been involved with committees as the kids got older, but it was, the first time, you know … speaking French with adults … well, it has really helped me a lot … it’s just you speak–it’s social French. When you are in the classroom it is very much academic French, so it’s a different kind of thing. (Participant 4)

This parent recognized that the two different registers of academic and familiar French were improved by the parent’s involvement at the school. One parent who was concerned about his/her French proficiency explained, “I feel comfortable coming to the school … I think I would be more involved if I knew who was in charge and felt comfortable enough to speak” (Participant 15). In this case, the parent wanted to feel welcomed, accepted, and connected to others at the school before taking the risk to speak French and to improve involvement.
Judgement: Quality of French

An unexpected finding within the data was the frequency of occasions where comments reflected a judgement about the quality of French. Some children resisted involvement by the parents, because they judged the parent’s French accent to be unacceptable. Some parents found helping with homework was a challenge, because their children said the parent’s French pronunciation was not good enough. Parents said they were aware of better quality French at the French school than in immersion programs. Even parents who self-reported they were proficient in French were judging themselves. They felt awkward, afraid to make mistakes in French or that their accent might be perceived as a low quality French, and worried that they might be found to speak French poorly at the school and community events. This parent explained:

Certainly, when they were starting out, I was nervous about my French. I mean, I knew I could get the message out and understood everything, but knew I didn’t sound as fluent ... that is my biggest challenge ... I have learned, the teachers are not that concerned with judging my French. But, it was my own insecurities about not being Francophone in dealing with the school, and I had to adjust. (Participant 14)

This parent progressed from feeling insecure about sufficient French competency at the school to feeling comfortable talking in French at the school. Additionally, participants reported that many children rejected music and movies in French, because they preferred their media in English.

Parent Experience

In this section, I present the findings from the survey and the interviews about the experiences NF parents had at home, at school, and in the community. The experiences were related to francisation, academic support, preschool, access to someone who can help at home in French, and relationships or a sense of belonging at the school. I also share the findings about
parent experiences concerning communication with the school, including messages received at home, reports from the school about the child’s progress, and tips or strategies for parents to use at home. These themes emerged from the quantitative and qualitative data. The experiences have been divided into the three domains of community, school, and home. They are presented, first, in a joint display in Table 12, followed by an account of the parent experiences. There is some overlap with parent experiences between the three domains.

Table 12  Parent Experience in the Community, at School, and at Home

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<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Survey Results</th>
<th>Quotes from interviews</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did your child attend French preschool?</td>
<td>55.8% yes French preschool</td>
<td>“It helped too as far as the daycare goes and our kids were at the daycare early on; in the daycare situation there has to be a lot more conversing with the people who are looking after your child” (Participant 20)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I started when she was about four, because I knew it would take longer to enroll her, just to go through all the steps to get her in being a non-French speaker. He submitted all the information to the French board, and they evaluated our case, and they actually suggested the daycare.” (Participant 31)</td>
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<tr>
<td>School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Was francisation offered at school?</td>
<td>33.7% yes offered</td>
<td>“In the survey-francisation- I answered no, but since then, my child in Grade one is pulled out for reading...probably back in a couple of weeks back in the regular classroom.” (Participant 37)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choice of school due to availability of</td>
<td>5.9% or 5 of 86 parents ranked access to academic support as one of top 3</td>
<td>“Mine have definitely received extra help, coming from a non, without speaking French, well when they were in kindergarten they would be taken out of the class to go and talk and play with the animals so they would learn the names.” (Participant 1)</td>
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<td>academic supports</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Survey Question</td>
<td>Survey Results</td>
<td>Quotes from interviews</td>
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<td>reasons for choice of school</td>
<td>just a matter of asking the teacher. They have the time and they have the resources to assist them, to answer whatever the question might be that they had. In my child’s case, she has some special needs and at this school, those needs are addressed. They’re not perfect but they do a pretty good job at addressing whatever the needs are.” (Participant 7)</td>
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<td>Parent feels welcome at school</td>
<td>91.7% yes agreed 9.3% did not.</td>
<td>“I thought it would be only Francophones and I would only hear French and that’s just not the way it is. Because there are so many English, we are in an English dominant place and there are so many more people that are, and have bilingual families, so I think I feel more comfortable in it than I would have if it had been strictly Francophone” (Participant 15)</td>
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<td>Parent feels awkward at school</td>
<td>24.5% yes agreed 75.6 % disagreed.</td>
<td>“So, he [spouse] says … he’s not that interested in going because he feels out of place” (Participant 29)</td>
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<td>Parents feel uncomfortable at socials (birthday party, sporting) in French</td>
<td>36.1% agreed 60.5% disagreed</td>
<td>“Sometimes there is a bit of a challenge in communications with a teacher who may be a little bit more French than English. They could tell you everything about your child in French but to tell it in English is challenging and more so for us. But we have extremely accommodating teachers they are, fantastic…we try to greet each other in…but in private the teacher will speak to us in English, it is more comfortable for us” (Participant 12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfied with communication from school on child’s progress</td>
<td>20.0% not satisfied 77.9% satisfied</td>
<td>“I must say to the school’s credit for the psychological assessment, they did translate it to English and I hadn’t even requested it. So, hopefully when it is important they will.” (Participant 30)</td>
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<td>I experience some resistance from my child when I try to be involved at school</td>
<td>84.9% no resistance 8.2% agreed resistance</td>
<td>“My child always apologizes for me to other children that I don’t speak French.” (Participant 30)</td>
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<td>“He doesn’t like us speaking French because of our accent. Some of each language. If I come to the school for parent teacher interview I insist on speaking French.” (Participant 28)</td>
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<td>Survey Question</td>
<td>Survey Results</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Home</strong></td>
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<td>I experience some resistance from my child when I try to be involved in school work at home</td>
<td>77.9% no resistance 18.6% yes resistance</td>
<td>“I would say (resistance) sometimes, because I don’t have the accent or anything, my accent obviously isn’t as good. At home it would happen.” (Participant 19)</td>
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<td>“They read their French to me. They will correct me. I will say the spelling words and they say, I don’t know what you are saying, but you do know what I am saying, LOL” (Participant 2)</td>
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<td>“Communications come home in French which we know and have accepted; we can read enough in French so we can figure it out.” (Participant 26)</td>
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<td>“Oh yes, it was difficult. There were a couple of events, things I missed because I didn’t translate papers, I didn’t have a chance and I missed showing up when she was reading and she was heartbroken.” (Participant 30)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The school has provided tips or strategies to support my child with homework</td>
<td>27.0% disagreed 64.0% agreed tips were helpful</td>
<td>“The kids would come home from school with some suggestions. When they were in the younger grades, on the computer, a French program suggested by the school.” (Participant 2)</td>
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<td>“Not for me because my French level is so high they think I don’t need help.” (Participant 32)</td>
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<td>“I don’t speak French, but I am the one who helps them with their homework. I do their spelling and stuff like that.” (Participant 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel competent to help child with homework</td>
<td>67.0% felt competent 30.2% did not feel competent</td>
<td>“I do find homework challenging. I try to engage the Francophone parent on homework. They prefer to do homework with maman, for whatever reason, but they call me on things. Especially the youngest, and I find it challenging sometimes. It adds another layer of challenge to the homework if I don’t say the word right exactly.” (Participant 16)</td>
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</table>
Survey Question | Survey Results | Quotes from interviews
--- | --- | ---
We have access to someone who can help our children with French | 17.4% disagreed–no access 63.9% agree–had access | “I find one of the biggest challenges, well, I find homework a challenge especially in Grade 1 right now.” *(Participant 8)*

“We have access to someone who can help our children with French 17.4% disagreed–no access 63.9% agree–had access” *(Participant 8)*

“And even though I have a husband who speaks, he speaks Acadian French so, most of the words… he doesn’t have a clue what they are.” *(Participant 1)*

“I guess since my French is somewhat stronger I would put myself in the 50-75 % … I don’t have any trouble reading the communications from them and I can converse pretty well. Once and a while I will throw in English.” *(Participant 6)*

Community

There is one finding that related to experience in the Francophone community, which is the NF parent experience with preschool. I describe the parents’ experience at the preschool as an experience within the community, because, although the preschool is typically within the community center building with the school, preschool is not a part of the school system. Also, it is a French environment where many NF parents would be in contact with Francophone parents and early childhood educators.

Experience with Preschool

The survey results showed that 55.8% (*n*=48) of the participants placed their child in a French preschool. Comments made by 14 different parents during the focus group interviews attest that they had put their child or children in French daycare so the child could have an early start at learning French before beginning school. For example, “We brought him here [preschool] for a year to let him get used to it here and see how it goes. And it went fairly well, which also helped bring my husband’s comfort level up a little bit” *(Participant 29)*. Two comments from parents relayed that the daycare was not a good choice for their child and either withdrew or did not enroll the child there: “We did think about putting her in the daycare, but she was so happy
where she was” (*Participant 26*). The NF parents who chose preschool said that when things went well for the child at the French daycare, they felt better about enrolling the child in the French school and felt connected to other parents, “We have been together since kids were 22 months. So, we all know each other; it’s not like we were thrown into the classroom and fend for yourself” (*Participant 17*). This parent felt well supported by a network of parents who met when the children were in preschool. These parents continued to assist each other into intermediate grades.

One of the parents had started their oldest child in Grade 1 without any French and, having seen the child struggle, placed two younger children in French preschool to begin building the language before formally beginning school. Five comments from different participants indicated that NF parents started to feel more comfortable, despite being NF parents, because of the opportunity to meet other parents and chat during socials held by the daycare. The staff in daycares also helped the NF parents to interact in French. One parent related, “At 8 in the morning, it takes extra skills to speak French! At the garderie [daycare], they were warming me up, trying to speak French with me and practice with me. Francisation—that was nice” (*Participant 9*). The parent’s experience at the daycare had helped develop the parent’s French proficiency and comfort with the Francophone educators. Additionally, NF parents had frequent occasions to interact with childcare providers in a childcare setting where relationships are developed.

I guess, because we came through the day care, where they started having social evenings where the parents and kids come in and the kids go off to the gym and the parents just talk and chat. So, it’s a chance to get to know the other parents, so as we were coming into the school, we already knew a lot of the parents. But if you came into the school in
kindergarten, they [NF parents] don’t have that. (Participant 6)

While children attended preschool, NF parents developed relationships with other parents and with educators, due to the opportunity for social interaction.

Many parents were pleased with the help of the French school board to recommend or gain access to the French daycare for the child. According to the participants, it is currently easier to apply to have a child admitted to a PEI French school if you are not Francophone than it used to be years ago. Several parents mentioned that, in the past, having the child begin in French daycare was a way to access the French school. In general, the community experience with French preschool was reported as positive by many NF parents.

School

The parent experiences at school involved francisation, academic support, relationships, communication, and children’s resistance to parent involvement at school.

Francisation

According to NF parent reports from the focus groups and survey, francisation for NF students was occurring in all five of the French schools. It appears from parent comments that extra language help has been provided for at least 12 years at the various schools; however, only recently has the term francisation come into use. Parents said that, in the past, there was no official school request for their consent for francisation; the extra support was just offered to the students:

They didn’t ask us about it, and we were kind of surprised about that, like I said. She was the one who would say, “I went with Madame whatever today.” And then it happened a few more times where she would mention about being by herself with this person. And I would be like, “What do you do with this person?” And then we asked her teacher about
it, and she was the one who told us. “Oh yeah, she goes to a helper with the language.”

And we were fine with that; we were happy that it was offered. But, I thought they should have just said to us, ‘You know she is struggling a bit with the language. We have got to help her.’ It would have been nice to know. Anyways, it was fine. (Participant 26)

This parent learned about francisation for her child as a result of participating in the research, learning the term, and thereafter, soon discovered that the child was receiving francisation.

Five parents reported a French reading recovery program as having been very beneficial for their children to develop vocabulary and French reading skills:

It was during class time, yeah, about an hour or something. And now she is not doing it, like this year. And you can see it on her report card. She definitely struggled with the language, especially at the beginning. But, as the year went on, now she is, you know, reading and stuff. She is doing what she should be, and she is getting caught up. And she isn’t getting any special help this year. Now they didn’t use that word [francisation].

(Participant 8)

This parent found that the reading recovery program helped the child with French vocabulary development but was not sure if the reading program counted as francisation.

Eleven parents (28.9%) in the interviews indicated that their children had received francisation, in or out of the class, during the school day. Four parents shared that their children received tutoring either after school or during the summer for the same purposes. No mention was made of NF parents being invited to participate in francisation efforts beyond pre-kindergarten contexts. The support offered to students as described by participants seemed more language-based than culture-based. “But I know with our kids, they have had, especially Madame [their teacher this year], they have been offered help–especially the resource teachers. It
has been primarily from an academic point of view opposed to more cultural” (Participant 38). From the parent’s perspective, the extra support helped to develop the French language.

In the survey responses, 72.0% of parents responded they were unsure if francisation at the school was helpful, while 22.0% said it was useful. Based on the interview information, I believe that many NF parents were unfamiliar with the term francisation and did not know how to answer the question, resulting in the majority of participants being unsure. However, eight of 86 participants (9.3%) reported on the survey that they participated in francisation at home. When I used crosstabs to check on those parents who participated in francisation at home, it was mostly parents with higher French proficiency. It may also be that the parents with higher French proficiency were more involved at the school and understood the term francisation.

**Academic Support**

In the survey, there was an item about school resources in the motivation ranking question, where five of 86 parents (5.8%) did choose the availability of academic supports as one of the top three motivation factors for the choice of school. During interviews, the NF parents made positive comments about their experiences with specialized resources at school for their children’s needs. Five parents commented on the quick availability of resources to help their children with learning challenges on tasks such as reading, getting organized to learn, and meeting special needs, such as a learning disability. One explained, “When school began, the teacher saw some things that were happening with the kids, and my youngest got into the reading recovery program in Grade 1” (Participant 10). Three parents stated that they believed that, because of small class size, the child’s need for extra support and resources was recognized and addressed. Another parent said, “It is also a smaller school. It seemed like there were better resources” (Participant 18). However, not all parents agreed that their child’s learning challenges
were noticed early; one participant talked about the learning needs of the child: “With a learning disability … I found that since he had issues, which has been since kindergarten, Grade 1, even though he had been having difficulties all along, he was only assessed last year. It took us six years” (Participant 1). This parent found that there were not adequate measures in place to address her child’s learning disability.

**Relationships**

I placed the relationships code in parent experience, because NF parent connections with other parents appeared across multiple nodes/codes. Responses to the survey indicated that 24.5% of parents feel awkward when visiting the school, while 75.6% disagreed, indicating they felt comfortable at the school. This question was written to acknowledge the presence of a negative feeling. The positively worded version of the question showed that 91.7% of parents reported they felt welcome at the school, where 9.3% did not. Even though most parents felt welcomed, some still felt awkward in the French school. In focus groups, seven NF parents stated they had benefited greatly from the support of a buddy or mentor they were paired with by the school or as a result of social connections. The mentor served as a contact for NF parents to get help with school questions, translations, and guidance, as well providing a feeling of acceptance. Five parent comments related directly to the positive relationships they had established with other parents and childcare providers when the child attended French daycare. For example, Participant 15 explained, “I talked to a lot of different people. Once we talked with people at the daycare and people we knew, once we knew more people, we felt more comfortable.” For this parent, making connections with other parents and educators helped to establish a feeling of belonging. Five NF parents said they felt awkward at first in the French
school but came to feel more comfortable and accepted with repeated exposure to the school, people, and routines:

Every time you come through the door, you become familiar with the people and the community and the school, the people, the faces. Just like anything else, the more you do it, the more comfortable you get with it. It helped, too, as far as the daycare goes and our kids were at the daycare early on. In the daycare situation, there has to be a lot more conversing with the people who are looking after your child. (Participant 20)

Repeated exposure and frequent contact with others at the French daycare and school helped parents feel more comfortable.

Another five parents (5.8%) stated outright that they did not feel a sense of belonging to the school and never had. One of these NF parents said she wanted to get involved but felt disconnected and unsure. “But I don’t know personally what to go to. Like, I am Anglophone, and I don’t have a connection with French parents” (Participant 18). One other parent explained that, for the first child, he/she had spent a lot of time at the daycare and met a lot of parents, which resulted in the feeling of social connection and belonging. However, these NF parents had not developed relationships through the daycare with the second child, and, seven years later when their child was in Grade 8, they felt little connection to the school or the people, “I think, I felt I belonged more with the first, because the youngest went to kindergarten, and we were always dropping him off and picking him up and got to know the parents” (Participant 21). In survey results, 36.1% of parents reported they felt uncomfortable in social situations, such as at sporting events or birthday parties, because people were speaking French. Two parents stated that, because the school zone was so large, it was harder to build relationships with friends and parents, because people are geographically spread. Because of the size of the catchment area and
the distance between homes, many NF parents made it a priority to get children to birthday parties and social events to promote socializing for the children as well as for the NF parent:

I’d drive her to the end of the world if it’s a birthday party, because she doesn’t socialize with them otherwise outside of school. We do all the birthday parties. We take that very seriously. And we try to host a big birthday party, because it is a chance to meet the parents and get to know them, not just because we are not Francophone but because we live so far away. We don’t socialize and playdates are difficult. And we take those opportunities to get to know people. Once people come to your house, they feel more comfortable and more accepting. (Participant 30)

Despite not speaking French, this parent used birthday parties as an opportunity to develop a connection for the child and with other parents.

The acceptance and welcoming of NF parents by administration and teachers was mentioned three times in the interviews. Remarks from several parents who had children in the senior grades implied that there was a favourable shift in attitude at the French schools, and, recently, NF parents and English were being more welcomed.

**Communication**

Communication between NF parents and the school was complicated by the language barrier. School personnel often shared information in written or spoken French, and many NF parents were not able to comprehend the messages. The survey responses indicated that 20.0% \((n=17)\) were not satisfied with communication about students’ progress, but 77.9% \((n=76)\) were satisfied with progress reports. I understand this communication about student progress to be the report cards and parent-teacher interviews that happened twice a year.
A theme that appeared in the survey and interview data was the educator’s use of English with NF parents. Twenty parents (52.6%) reported feeling appreciative that the French school administration and the teachers at their schools were willing to communicate in English during parent-teacher meetings, in emails, in person, or occasionally at meet-the-teacher night. This communication in English made them feel comfortable and well informed:

The staff, like the secretary, is always very willing to speak to me in English. The teachers have been ... I was concerned about that, because I had people tell me some of the teachers will refuse to speak English to you. Now, whether I will run into that in secondary I don’t know, but in elementary, everybody was quite open.” (Participant 5)

The use of English by staff and teachers helped parents be better informed and feel welcomed.

As indicated in the results above, most NF parents believed that English was not necessary to use with students, except in case of emergency. However, the majority of parents needed to use English at the school. Ten parents (26.3%) said they absolutely needed someone to communicate with them in English in order to function in the school. Five different parents (13.2%) stated they felt conflicted, because they needed the information in English, yet felt bad to ask for it in English knowing the school policy is to communicate in French. One parent, discussing the memos coming home in French as one of the biggest challenges of having a child at the French school, stated:

I would say the memos coming home and another thing is the parent-teacher interview, where I know they need to talk their French, but will talk English to me. But I feel bad, because I know they are supposed to do it in French. It’s as if I am taking away from their language. (Participant 17)
Here was a clash between the parent’s needs and the school communication policy. Another parent expressing discomfort about using English shared:

I have an issue ... I don’t have a right to be here, so my coming and saying I expect you to adjust to me is definitely not the way I see it. If they have a candidate who speaks both French and English, it would be a bonus to them. But am I sitting here and do I expect them to speak English to me in a critical situation? Absolutely not. It is my choice, and I took that route, and I plan to continue that route and get through it one way or the other. (Participant 35)

This parent internalized that the commitment to the French school included the commitment to the French language policy, even though that presented challenges for the parent.

Finally, 10 parents (11.6%) expressed that they did not attend meet-the-teacher-night, parent-teacher meetings, parent committee, or other sessions at the school. Parents missed those meetings because they occurred only in French. Some parents in the past had gone to such meetings but failed to get any information from them. As a result, they found it was a waste of time. For example, a parent explained, “I stopped going to parent meetings and stuff like that, just because I couldn’t understand. I felt very out of place, not that I felt not welcomed, I always felt welcomed, but just very… I couldn’t understand it” (Participant 38). Other parents said:

I don’t bother going to meet-the-teacher, because it is all in French. I did for the first couple of years with my older, but it was a waste of time. So, it does kind of exclude you from participating in school fundraisers, things that go on in the school that you might participate in. (Participant 21)

and
“I guess I don’t mind going and I like to see. But I don’t understand what’s going on half the time. And so it’s a little ... and everyone around you is talking French.

Usually, I’ll just speak English and usually people will speak English back. It’s not really an issue … Even the things here like the information nights. It’s all in French. It’s kind of like, is there a point of getting a babysitter to go to this information night where I’m going to sit here and only probably get 25% of what is being said? You’re [the spouse] going to be whispering to me the whole time. So, really, usually he just goes, and I stay home and put the kids to bed. (Participant 8)

These findings show that the group parent meetings held in French were, generally, not effective or hospitable for NF parents. Despite the language barrier, some parents felt well supported in their school, “I know I can come in here and I can talk to anybody about anything that is going on” (Participant 1). The willingness of staff or educators to speak in English made parents feel welcomed and informed.

Several parents pointed out that NF parents who chose a French school were keen to help their children and should be better welcomed and informed. The parents said it would make more sense to inform NF parents and engage them properly in English sessions, equipping them to support the children in French, rather than leave them uninformed and struggling. One parent comment was, “To me, if I can’t speak the language, but I think it is important for my child to be here, you should be giving me kudos for that. Don’t give me a hard time” (Participant 5). The parents were willing to help the students and the school and wanted to know how.

A recent effort to provide better communication with NF parents was noted by participants, one of whom expressed:
I know it is changing somewhat, in the fall when they did the talk in the auditorium; it was the first time I ever heard them speak English. For those reasons, medical needs, they would speak English, an exception. When I went on fieldtrips, and I did a lot, I was silent. I wanted to do something, even when they began to study English. There was an exclusion of … because of the fear of English taking over, I understand it. There is a very strict, the English police … Way more in the early years when our kids were here then. Now, and it feels different now. (Participant 23)

Improvement in the schools’ effort to welcome and communicate with NF parents was noticed. Only a few NF parents mentioned the utility of learning French as an adult to help with the communication from school. One parent referred to having taken a conversational French course for parents in the past. Many parents did say they had learned some French by helping the children with school work, or that, through the parent’s work, they learn or use a bit of French, however, learning French was not a popular consideration. Overall, it appeared that communication for NF parents at the school in private and in English with teachers worked well, but greater difficulty was experienced socially, or during meetings in French, at the school. In general, findings relayed that the French language was a barrier for many NF parents’ involvement at the school and having discussions in English with educators was more effective and attainable than learning French would be for these parents.

Child’s Resistance to Parent Involvement at School

Although this section about the child’s resistance to PI represents a small set of data, I believe it is a theme that emerged from the thematic analysis that deserves attention. I asked NF parents if they experienced any resistance from their children to parent involvement. Participants reported that in a few situations, children were resistant to parent involvement at school. A
mother explained, “To be honest, he says to his father, don’t speak to me in French, and he [father] has a very good accent. But he says don’t try mom” (Participant 5). This child was resistant to the father’s involvement, because of his English accent when speaking French and to the mother’s involvement, because she lacked French proficiency. Seven parents (18.4%) reported that children resisted their help at home or involvement at the school because of the parent’s accent when speaking French or because of not having French. In these situations the child was embarrassed:

I attended on trips when they were desperate ... Until Grade 6, then my kids said we don’t want you. You are embarrassing, because you don’t speak French ... Mom you’re so embarrassing, your accent. For me it was a real negative from Grade 6, 7, 8, 9.

(Participant 23)

In sum, many parents indicated that their capacity for involvement at school was limited. The children resisted PI at the school, because of the parent’s lack of French or a poor accent when speaking French.

Home

In this section, I present the findings about the parents’ experiences at home, which include the areas of communication, homework, resistance to parent involvement by the child, help in French at home, and the effort required by NF parents.

Communication

Many NF parents reported that they were challenged in their experience at the French school, balancing their desire for the children to learn French and their own lack of French competency trying to help at home. They knew and accepted that the memos and communication from teachers would be in French; however, it was challenging to actually decipher the
information shared with them from the school. For one question, 53.3% of survey respondents (n=46) agreed they needed help understanding messages. The written messages were sent home more frequently, usually weekly, compared to the progress reports that were issued two to three times per year. In response to another communication question, 17.4% of participants (n= 15) said they did not have access to a French speaking person who could help them, although the majority, 63.9% (n=55), had access to help.

The most frequent theme about communication arose from comments by 22 NF parents (57.8%) about school memos. They wished they could receive memos by email, so they could copy and paste them into a translator. They also wished to access memos on the school website with an option for a French-to-English translation. Nine parents (n=23.7%) said they used Google translator, and six parents (15.7%) preferred emails rather than paper handouts so that they could cut and paste the text into a translation program. One parent’s comment provided details about a need to have a translate function:

[I wish they had] just a little side button, so that they can send it [memo] home in French, that’s fine, but, so that all the information is on the website and there would just be a little translate button, kind of on the side of the memo. Because, sometimes it is hard, even on Google translate, that doesn’t translate just right. (Participant 8)

This parent wanted to be able to translate messages from French to English as accurately as possible. Also, parents hesitated to ask for communication in English, “I came in knowing that memos would not be in English, so I came in accepting that; I don’t feel I have the right to say they should change that” (Participant 2). One parent did ask the school to accommodate them in English:

I sent the admin a message asking if there was any way they could have the English
underneath the French. If they could do that for us, it would be highly beneficial, because their father wants to know what the messages says. He doesn’t want to sign a permission slip to go somewhere without actually knowing where they are going or whatever.”

*(Participant 12)*

The school did make that accommodation and started sending messages home bilingually.

Additionally, many parents struggled, because they did not know how to cut and paste text in a translation program, never having had a need to use translation. Ten parents (*n*=26.3%) commented that the language barrier via French memos was the biggest challenge. In particular, a couple of parents said they had missed important dates and activities, because they did not understand the French memos or blog:

> I have misunderstood a ton of stuff that has come home ... Or even the communiqué [newsletter], the report cards, in Grade 1, Madame [the teacher] told everyone to join a blog, but I did not figure that out until November, so I did not help my daughter study for her vocabulary for her vocabulary test, and she was failing them all. So we didn’t catch things early.” *(Participant 18)*

These examples show that, for many parents, trying to understand the written French messages that came home was a problem, and, for some children, this issue affected their academic performance.

One other observation made by several parents was the need for better communication with parents once the students arrived at the intermediate level. It seemed the frequent communication from school during the years of kindergarten to Grade 6, suddenly dropped off. For example, even though many French schools continue to Grades 9 or 12, an orientation to intermediate or high school was not offered to parents and students, as it would be when English
school students move to the intermediate or high school level. Two of the parent comments about decreased communication follow:

I have one beef. Once they hit secondaire [Grades 7–12] they could be on another planet. There has been no communication from the school. Kindergarten to Grade 6 you get communication from the teachers, and you know what is going on. Then in Grade 7 they have got six teachers. Really, you have no idea what is going on. It is like a pit opens up. (Participant 32)

and

I have one in middle school. I know, at the other junior high, we would have had an orientation, because it would have been all new building and level of schooling. But, because it is the same school, there was none of that. I went and met them [teachers]. My child said, ‘You don’t have to meet any of them’. Oh, yes, I do. LOL. I don’t know who they are, and now school is becoming serious for me. As you go on, the marks have to happen. I want to know how you are being taught sciences. She is right, there is very little communication. (Participant 33)

Parents were bothered by the lack of communication from the school during their child’s transition from elementary to intermediate or high school years. These parents wanted to be continually informed about student progress and how their children were doing in terms of marks and high school class credits.

**Homework**

In the survey, parents were asked if they received tips from school that were useful to them for assisting with their child’s homework. There were 27.0% of parents (n=23) who responded that they did not receive helpful tips to help with homework; 64.0% (n=55) reported
they did receive tips that were helpful. During the interviews, parents remarked that information sheets did come home from the school with general tips for how to help students with homework, reading, or maintaining their French over holiday breaks. However, participants explained that these sheets were not useful for many NF parents, because they were unable to read and understand the detailed suggestions in French: “Well, the only strategies that come out, that they send you for reading, are written in French, but no English [version of the tips] written, that this is what you can possibly do” (Participant 33). That parent received the paper, but could not understand the suggested strategies. One participant clarified about not getting tips. “Not for me, but neither have I gone to seek it, or ask, or anything” (Participant 35). In this case, no attempt had been made by that parent to ask for help. In sum, some of the parents reported having never received strategies to help their children, and many of the parents who had received strategies could not understand them because they were written in French, both points reflecting that the NF parents were unsupported to assist their children.

Additionally, 30.2% of parents (n=29) reported that they did not feel competent to help with homework; 67.0% (n=57) reported they felt competent to help. Teacher blogs in French and English were appreciated as a regular form of communication by the parents who looked forward to the weekly information about student homework and how parents could help:

I loved her as a teacher. She would have a blog, and it would go out Sunday evening. It would tell you what they were going to learn for the week. And certain weeks she would have the website if you wanted to look it up to help you, or a YouTube link for a French song. (Participant 11)

The blog and its timing appeared to be an effective method that several parents found useful for sharing information and suggesting ways that parents could help at home and assist specifically
with homework.

Unfortunately, one parent who did not know about or sign up for the blog from the beginning of the school year had missed out on three months of information, which would have enabled that parent to be able to help the child with reading and vocabulary at home. Having communication in English, or bilingually, or through some function to translate the communications was necessary for some. In-person conversations in English with the teacher were reported as helpful to get strategies for parents:

I talked to his teacher from last year, and, if it says *chemise* and he says *chandail*, and I know it kind of means the same. He says I am allowed to say it that way. She told me, ‘Tell him that it is right he made the connection. But the author of the book wrote *chemise*, so you should read it the way the author wrote it.’” (Participant 11)

This English discussion with the teacher gave the NF parent the strategy and confidence to help the child read in French at home.

Some parents reported that one area they were able to help with was math, “With his math, you translate the instructions, and I will help you figure out what to do, and what is it they want you to do here, and I would help him work through the math problems” (Participant 5).

Parents also found, if they could not help with some homework, an older sibling often could:

There are aspects to the homework, where my child in Grade 3 has vocabulary, where you are supposed to say the word, and he is supposed to spell it. I cannot pronounce French at all. I took Spanish, and they are nothing alike. So, luckily, my younger in Grade 1 can say the words, and he can do it. But, if it wasn’t for that, I can’t basically do any of the homework until he does math stuff. (Participant 37)

Other parents reported that even math was difficult to help with, because of the word problems.
Even though having a sibling at home, who was also receiving education in French, was helpful for clarifying messages and offering assistance, not all families had an older sibling with French proficiency and helping with homework was challenging.

**Child’s Resistance to Parent Involvement at Home**

As mentioned in the school section, several parents reported that children resisted PI at home because of the parent’s accent. “I attempt to read French to my younger daughter, but my child in school doesn’t like me to read in French to her, because it doesn’t sound right, she says. So, I usually just read to her in English” (Participant 8). Three parents’ comments also pointed to a resistance of the child to listen to French media, music, television, or movies at home in French. For example, “Yeah, we are the same; we tried a few times, switching the movies from English to French. It is insane how they prefer it [English]” (Participant 22). The children in that household resisted watching movies in French and would only watch movies in English. Parents were challenged at home on three fronts, by not being well informed about French media, by children resisting the use of French media when it was available, and having children resist their involvement because of their lack of French proficiency or a poor French accent. Although a minor theme, it appears that the children’s resistance to PI at home deserves attention in a situation where parents appear to already face challenges to be involved.

**Help in French at Home**

Results from the survey revealed that 17.4% of the parents (n=15) had no help in French for the children, while 63.9% (n=55) had access to someone to help. During interviews, some parents shared that they, a Francophone, or a French proficient parent was there at home; thus, they did not require outside help. Other NF parents explained that the Francophone or French proficient parent often travelled for work, which posed a challenge for the Anglo-dominant
parent to understand messages or homework that came home. Parents resorted to taking pictures of the text to send to the French proficient parent or tried their best to read in French over the phone to get a translation:

My wife travels a lot for work, so a note comes home from school, and I try to read it, decipher it, as best I can to try to get the gist of it. Sometimes I’ll have to wait until either she calls or I call and say, “Well, this is what the note says” in my best French and try to solve it. And homework is the other major challenge, especially when my wife goes away. My child has a problem with math, we will say, and I’m reading from her text and I would go, well, I’m not sure if this is really what they want, but this is the way I would see it. I could be totally wrong, so I’m not really helping her, because I don’t understand it. It’s a major challenge. (Participant 35)

Some parents struggled to help with homework in French. Sometimes, as mentioned above, it was an older child at home with French reading proficiency who helped decipher messages or homework in French:

I find it is good practice for the older one. And it’s good to know the younger can lean on the older one a little bit and know there is somebody there to help… helping with homework, reading along, that kind of thing. The older one is beyond me, but having an older one is like having a resource person for Grade 3, big time; it is awesome! (Participant 12)

In several instances, parents had separated or divorced, and the NF parent no longer had someone proficient in French to help the child at home:

Well, it is a challenge that all of the material comes home in French, all of the memos and stuff. I have some Core French, and I have done a little upgrading of my French, but it is
pretty basic. I can read through the materials and see there is something here about summer holidays, and I need to find out what it is about. It is a bit more of a challenge for me particularly, since I and his father don’t live together anymore, and, so, I do sometimes have to rely on other people. (Participant 5)

Eleven of the participants (12.8%) were single NF parents and had similar communication challenges.

Most parents were either managing to help their children or providing access to someone who could help. However, one of several parents recommended a mentor for a NF parent:

I appreciate the notes come home in French and that sort of stuff, but it would be interesting if they had some sort of a mentor or a partner program. If they could identify in Grade 1, here are three parents you could try to link up with, and they speak French and could try to help you, particularly if you don’t have somebody in your house who does that. (Participant 5)

Moreover, the parent partner program was reported as a successful strategy by several parents who had used it in different schools. Parents helping parents was a valuable community resource and showed that not all help for parents had to come from school resources.

**Greater Effort for NF Parents**

As mentioned in the findings about parents’ educational beliefs, on the survey, 59.3% of parents \((n=50)\) believed that it required more effort to help their child in a French school than it would in an English or French immersion program, while 33.7\% \((n=29)\) said it did not require more work. Although the effort required was greater for those parents without French proficiency, there was also more work required for the NF parent with French proficiency. For example, Participant 24 said, “Obviously, it has had an impact on our family. Anything that
comes home, I am the one that reads it, and I am the one who is more involved in interviews and meetings.” For this family, the French-proficient NF parent was responsible for helping with all school communication and homework. Earlier, in the section on educational beliefs, I referred to the parent comment about feeling it takes more effort: “It takes [me] probably twice as much time as the average guy does [to help]. Like I always felt like I was the illiterate one.” Parents expended great effort to overcome a language barrier while feeling somewhat incompetent to help and needing resources to assist with schoolwork.

As a fully mixed method design, there was qualitative data collection integrated into the quantitative survey. NF Parents had an opportunity to reply with text within the survey and say what they needed as a parent to be able to help their child at a French school. Seventeen parents (19.7%) asked for communication to be in English as well as French, to send messages electronically so that text could be cut and pasted into a translator, or to have a translation function on website pages and memos. Parents also asked for more communication and support from the school, specifically from the teachers with more frequent progress reports on how children from Anglo-dominant families were doing and what parents could do to assist at home. Seven parents (8.1%) recommended offering parents resources such as tutoring, suggesting ways to help students at home, recommending audio and video in French for children at home, and accessing French support at home and at school. In the survey, 12 parents (13.9%) stated they could be helped by opportunities to learn French, or at least important vocabulary, in order to help their children. These survey data about the NF parent desire to learn French differed from the interviews, where the parents’ desire to take French courses was essentially absent. Three parents (1.2%) also wrote about the importance of the school to have a welcoming atmosphere toward NF parents, to support them, and make them feel accepted. Similarly, three parents
(1.2%) wrote about the need to be reassured that the reality of NF parents is known by school personnel and that the benefits to the child will be worth the extra effort exerted by the NF parents. Parents made useful recommendations for how educators could improve communication and help NF parents support the children and address the involvement challenges.

Despite language barriers and communication issues, NF parents reported being happy with the choice of a French school and having a positive experience, overall, because the children received a good education. Some parents were immobilized by their lack of French proficiency, coupled with the lack of accommodation and communication strategies to support NF parents. Nonetheless, these parents were willing to endure the hardship and put in extra effort in order to offer their children the benefits of an education in French, including positive bilingual or cognitive challenges. That attitude was exhibited by Participant 24, who said, “I would say school is for kids, not for parents. Things that are worthwhile are often at a cost, inconvenience, and sacrifice, and I think that the advantages of being bilingual in this country, that the sacrifices are worthwhile.” This parent was happy with the education the child received and was willing to make sacrifices and put in a concerted effort to make it happen.

**Parent Involvement**

Parents were asked to depict their educational involvement at home, at the French school, and in the community. The range of involvement in all three domains reported by NF parents is presented in a joint display table, Table 13, with data from the survey and quotes about parent involvement from the interviews. I placed multiple quotes, aligned with survey questions, to portray the diverse NF parent range of opinions about the survey question. Table 13 is followed by a report of the parents’ involvement. A mean (M) of 4, in Table 13, denotes an opinion of a parent to strongly agree or a level of frequent involvement.
Table 13  Joint Survey and Interview Results: Parent Involvement at Home, at School, and in the Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey questions</th>
<th>Survey Results</th>
<th>Quotes from Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide supplies and a quiet space for homework</td>
<td>86.0% agree</td>
<td>“The kids are pretty independent as far as their work. They come home, and they do their homework. They both do their French reading at home in the evening.” (Participant 10)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.8% unsure</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>$M = 3.47$ of 4; $SD = 0.7$</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I am involved in francisation activities for my child</td>
<td>84.9% no francisation; 15.2% 1–4 per year;</td>
<td>“In the survival French in one of the sessions, they asked for ideas to help … the biggest thing was to use the library and get the videos and get audio stories … I get my youngest to read me the stories on the iPod, and we can hear her reading back; another is to use the iPad and videotape her reading.” (Participant 17)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M = 0.37$ of 4, $SD = 0.98$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We discuss the value of education with our child</td>
<td>16.3% discuss 1–2 times/year</td>
<td>We want to be involved in our children's education and show them how important it is to have an education (and be bilingual!)” (Participant 26)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>80.3% discuss 3–4 times/year</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M = 3.33$ of 4, $SD = 1.1$</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>We discuss reasons why learning French is important</td>
<td>23.3% 1–2times/year</td>
<td>“Because it benefits my child, improves our relationship, and exposes her to French culture (Canadian).” (Participant 562)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with our child</td>
<td>69.8% 3–4 times/year</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M = 3.04$ of 4, $SD = 1.34$</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I read to/with my child in French</td>
<td>27.9% never</td>
<td>“Because I believe in what my children are doing. Our French school is very important to my family and our community as a whole.” (Participant 54)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28.0% 1–2 times/week</td>
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<td></td>
<td>44.1% 3–4 times/week</td>
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<td>$M = 2.17$ of 4, $SD = 1.7$</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I encourage my child to read in French</td>
<td>78.0% 3–4 times/week</td>
<td>“I don’t need to read with her. She is fine.” (Participant 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.3% 1–2 times/ week</td>
<td>“As a parent, we have to make sure when she is reading books in French and also reading books in English the same as when we read. When we go to bed at night, we read 3 books in French and 2 in English to balance it out.” (Participant 25)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M = 3.17$ of 4, $SD = 1.29$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Survey questions</td>
<td>Survey Results</td>
<td>Quotes from Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>I read to/with my child in English</td>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s kind of random whether it’s English or French reading; we can do it in both.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20.9% never</td>
<td>(Participant 6)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.0% 1–2 times/week</td>
<td>“They get a lot of English at home. I have been reading to them since they were born.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>58.1% 3–4 times/week</td>
<td>(Participant 17)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>( M = 2.6 ) of 4, ( SD = 1.7 )</td>
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<tr>
<td>I encourage my child to read in English</td>
<td></td>
<td>“I don’t know when the reading in English started.” (Participant 12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I help my child improve French vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td>“We buy English books now just as much as French ... because I am concerned about English reading. In fact, we probably have more English books in the house right now.” (Participant 15)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I do activities in French with my child at home</td>
<td></td>
<td>“For my youngest, I went to the teacher. I was not quite content with her reading of the French; I ... asked are they still offering this tutoring ... we needed vocabulary.” (Participant 33)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I assist my child with homework</td>
<td></td>
<td>“I rely on my wife and her mother. She, both of them, do a lot of the homework and everything with my daughter. They just tell me what is going on.” (Participant 19)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14.0% never</td>
<td>“A friend of mine who gave me a program <em>Les petits pas</em> ... a great learning tool, comes with a cd and music and cd rom for computer, games and activities, and music and things like that ... it has a game sheet ... it can be things around the house ... play it as a game ... find this in the house ... and it is all in French ... anywhere from preschool to ... I can still play it learning French and developing vocabulary, so up to Grade 4.” (Participant 13)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>31.4% 1–2 times/week</td>
<td>“I don’t speak French, but I am the one who helps them with their homework. I do their spelling and stuff like that ... they read to me. Listening ... I will say the spelling words.” (Participant 2)</td>
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|                                      | 54.6% 3–4 times/week | “At home, because of the language barrier, of course you help your kids along, but my kids

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{I read to/with my child in English} & : \quad 20.9\% \text{ never} \\
& \quad 21.0\% \text{ 1–2 times/week} \\
& \quad 58.1\% \text{ 3–4 times/week} \\
& \quad M = 2.6 \text{ of 4, } SD = 1.7 \\
\text{I encourage my child to read in English} & : \quad 12.8\% \text{ never} \\
& \quad 35.0\% \text{ 1–2 times/week} \\
& \quad 51.2\% \text{ 3–4 times/week} \\
& \quad M = 2.49 \text{ of 4, } SD = 1.5 \\
\text{I help my child improve French vocabulary} & : \quad 34.9\% \text{ no help} \\
& \quad 21.0\% \text{ 1–2 times/week} \\
& \quad 44.1\% \text{ 3–4 times/week} \\
& \quad M = 2.06 \text{ of 4, } SD = 1.8 \\
\text{I do activities in French with my child at home} & : \quad 55.8\% \text{ never} \\
& \quad 27.9\% \text{ 1–2 times/week} \\
& \quad 16.3\% \text{ 3–4 times/week} \\
& \quad M = 1 \text{ of 4, } SD = 1.4 \\
\text{I assist my child with homework} & : \quad 14.0\% \text{ never} \\
& \quad 31.4\% \text{ 1–2 times/week} \\
& \quad 54.6\% \text{ 3–4 times/week} \\
& \quad M = 2.59 \text{ of 4, } SD = 1.6
\end{align*}
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<td>have learned from very early on to do their homework themselves.” (Participant 10)</td>
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<td>“It is interesting, I find, particularly when he is reading, I cannot correct him on how he reads. Just recently my wife sat down with him to read also, and she said, ‘no no’ … and made a lot of corrections. Normally what I do is he reads and I listen.” (Participant 35)</td>
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<tr>
<td>We use French radio, TV, or computer for French language activities</td>
<td>39.5% never&lt;br&gt;36.1% 1–2 times/week&lt;br&gt;24.4% 3–4 times/week&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;M = 1.39 of 4, SD = 1.5</td>
<td>“It’s hard for us, because we don’t speak the French language. We don’t watch French tv” (Participant 38)</td>
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<td>“We have used French computer sites for school for different things, school work, just fun games, and stuff. We have used that a lot.” (Participant 38)</td>
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<td>I work at promoting positive attitudes and motivation to learn/study French</td>
<td>17.4% never&lt;br&gt;43.1% 1–2 times/week&lt;br&gt;39.5% 3–4 times/week&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;M = 2.1 of 4, SD = 1.5</td>
<td>“My partner … her family values French education very much. So, it’s not just her, but her mother was bent on French education as well.” (Participant 6)</td>
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<td>“I think it is a good challenge, being in a mostly English environment and having that added benefit of having French.” (Participant 13)</td>
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<td>I discuss my expectations about child’s academic achievement</td>
<td>15.1% never&lt;br&gt;46.6% 1–2 times/ week&lt;br&gt;38.4% 3–4 times/ week&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;M = 2.06 of 4, SD = 1.4</td>
<td>“I think that it is important for children to understand that there are actual expectations for success. Failure by a student is fine if you give it a good effort, but, without effort, you cannot expect to be rewarded with success.” (Participant 29)</td>
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<td>“I really want my children to succeed in their French education. I want them to know that this education is a special thing that they can have for the rest of their lives to help them in further education, where they work and where they can live, and how they will educate their children.” (Participant 13)</td>
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<td>School</td>
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<td>I have been invited to be involved at school by the teacher, administration or my child</td>
<td>63.9% invited&lt;br&gt;29.0% not invited&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;M = 2.9 of 4, SD = 0.92</td>
<td>“I have gone on trips … the school is inviting in that regard ... teacher has had a few in-class events to which the parents were invited.” (Participant 2)</td>
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<td>“Just sending home invites to the activities on the communiqué, I wished I could get</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would like to get involved in activities that take place at school</td>
<td>9.2% no, 80.0% yes, 12.8% unsure</td>
<td>“I would like to be on the parent committee, but it has kind of been discouraged.” (&lt;sup&gt;Participant 1&lt;/sup&gt;)</td>
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<td>M = 3.2 of 4, SD = 0.66</td>
<td>“I feel really hesitant to volunteer for field trips and stuff, and then I feel kind of like I’m missing out. And even stuff to help in school. I always envisioned myself, like really helping.” (&lt;sup&gt;Participant 8&lt;/sup&gt;)</td>
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<td>I do not attend meet the teacher night because I do NOT understand what is said in French</td>
<td>74.4% disagree &amp; attend, 18.6% agree &amp; not attend, M = 1.81 of 4, SD = 0.93</td>
<td>“I don’t bother going to meet the teacher, because it is all in French. (&lt;sup&gt;Participant 21&lt;/sup&gt;) “Meet the teacher night is usually all done in French. I always go so I can see the person, and I have some French and get the gist of what is being talked about. I understand why they do that, and I am okay with them doing that, but it is a challenge.” (&lt;sup&gt;Participant 23&lt;/sup&gt;)</td>
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<td>I am satisfied with how the school communicates with me to keep me up-to-date on my child’s progress</td>
<td>19.8% disagreed, 78.0% agreed, M = 3.1 of 4, SD = 0.86</td>
<td>“Some of the teachers, I wouldn’t go to interviews, because they would make you feel stupid for not speaking French.” (&lt;sup&gt;Participant 23&lt;/sup&gt;) “But parent teacher interviews I go to, because they can speak English to me.” (&lt;sup&gt;Participant 37&lt;/sup&gt;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I ask for updates on my child’s progress between report cards</td>
<td>30.2% did not, 43.1% ask 1–2 updates, 26.7% ask 3–4 updates, M = 1.6 of 4, SD = 1.5</td>
<td>“We want to keep track of child’s progress on a daily basis, so we, about 2 years ago, we developed this booklet that the teacher put a comment and we give her comments on the same page.” (&lt;sup&gt;Participant 7&lt;/sup&gt;) “I’ve had teachers say to me, ‘Feel free if you have to write a note in English, don’t feel like you need to write them in French’.” (&lt;sup&gt;Participant 8&lt;/sup&gt;)</td>
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| I attend meet the teacher night                                                  | 23.0% no meet the teacher, M = 1.07 of 4, SD = 0.92 | “I think that it varies according to whoever the administrator is. Those meet the teacher conferences, sometimes it is all in French or it’s a big room; there are so many people, and there is someone up front, and you can barely hear them to start with, so even I would have trouble understanding them. Whereas, there have been times where someone else has
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| I attend parent teacher interviews | 10.5% no          21.0% 1 per year  68% more than 1  
  $M = 2$ of 4, $SD = 1.09$ | “You know you go to parent teacher interviews, and they are clearly much more comfortable speaking in French than in English. So, it’s just kind of hard because you’re always translating.”  
  (*Participant 8*)  |
|                       | 67.5% do not volunteer  32.0% volunteer 1–4/year  
  $M = 0.79$ of 4, $SD = 1.3$ | “I volunteer for whatever the kids are doing here in school, you know, for fieldtrips, for apple orchards, for whatever. Right from the beginning and they are very accommodating.”  
  (*Participant 7*)  |
| I volunteer at school | 39.5% no fundraising  26.8% 1/year  33.7% 2–4/year  
  $M = 1.27$ of 4, $SD = 1.04$ | “I would come support book sales, and for the yard sale, or fundraising for the park,”  
  (*Participant 23*)  |
| I participate in fundraising for the school | 10.5% no contact; 31.5% 1–2x times/year  58.0% 3–4 times/year  
  $M = 2.8$ of 4, $SD = 1.5$ | “Also, there is no one who would have a problem to call my cell number if they thought there was a problem and wanted to contact me.”  
  (*Participant 29*)  |
| I am in contact with the school via notes, calls, or visits | 81.4% no          | “I always thought when my kids came to |

"gotten up and translated the important bits.”  
(*Participant 6*)  |
|                        |  | “In general, for the parent night at the first of the year, the Anglophones do not go.”  
  (*Participant 28*)  |
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<tr>
<td>committees where decisions about the school take place</td>
<td>18.6% involved $M = 0.44$ of 4, $SD = 1.06$</td>
<td>school that I would be involved in home and school … and now I am here, and GROAN … but, now I don’t feel like I can do it.” (Participant 26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am involved in support workshops to help me as a parent help my child in his or her education</td>
<td>81.4% no 18.6% involved $M = 0.45$ of 5, $SD = 1.06$</td>
<td>“I have always been involved with committees as the kids got older.” (Participant 3)</td>
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<td>“I would like to be on the parent committee, but it has kind of been discouraged. Well, I wouldn’t say discouraged, but, I have asked about it a few times and, because the meetings are all in French and I don’t speak French. I kind of find, I have to admit, I find that a frustrating fact — a very frustrating fact — because I am very involved with my kids and their schooling and their outside environment, and I would like to be involved in the parent committee.” (Participant 1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community</td>
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<td>“Two weeks ago the Grade 1 teacher came in to talk with us [parents] and play different games. And she introduced it the same as in her class, using a lot of hand motions and get the words around, and it was really interesting how you could communicate just by using your hands and pointing and getting words down. She said YouTube was great too for songs … singing and repetitiveness. And we went to another session on the same night … but it has a lot to do with language, reading, and last week was music and different ideas. Survival French, she gave us a book with games in it so my youngest and I can play matching games or finding words.” (Participant 17)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Our family attends activities in French in the community</td>
<td>29.1% no 38.3% 1–2 times/year 32.5% 3–4 times/year $M = 1.76$ of 4, $SD = 1.6$</td>
<td>“I know my child would like us to go. I hear ‘You never came to anything’ but, first, I work, and secondly, I don’t speak French.” (Participant 30)</td>
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<td>“With community, I have a hard time reading and understanding what they are, and about the right age groups, that sort of thing. I made it to very few of those things, and I would love to go to more, but I have a hard time knowing which ones I can go to.” (Participant 18)</td>
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### Survey questions

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<tr>
<td>Our family goes to the French library</td>
<td>40.7% no 23.3% 1–2 times/ year 36% 3–4 times/year $M = 1.77$ of 4, $SD = 1.8$</td>
<td>“And community, we don’t do a lot of things due to distance. We will go to our local library, to the French section” (Participant 16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our family goes to the English library</td>
<td>32.6% no 28.0% 1–2 times/ year 39.6% 3–4 times/year $M = 1.96$ of 4, $SD = 1.7$</td>
<td>“There are the resources in the community; a good example is the library. We have been coming every Saturday since kindergarten, maternelle. The librarians are so great, that is a great resource.” (Participant 31)</td>
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### Home Involvement

According to the interviews, 60.5% of NF parents put a lot of time into helping children at home with homework and spelling words ($n=23$), listening to them read ($n=15$), and calling on the other parent or people in a buddy system to ask what the messages sent home in French meant in English. In the survey, parent involvement included 74 parents providing supplies and a quiet space for homework (86%), 83 parents discussing the value of education (96.6%), and 80 parents who discussed the importance of learning French (93.1%). Additionally, 71 parents (82.6%) reported that they promote positive attitudes to learn and study French, and 73 parents (85.0%) discuss expectations about academic achievement. There were 72.1% of participants ($n=62$) who read to or with the children in French and 94.3% ($n=81$) who read to or with the children in English. Only 14.0% ($n=12$) reported not helping with homework. For many parents, their involvement assisting with homework was a challenge, even in math, because the written word problems were difficult to translate. Eight parents (21.0%) stated in the interviews that they had concerns about their own or the child’s pronunciation. Six parents (15.8%) said they just could not help with homework at all. Ten parents (26.3%) mentioned the importance of English and wanting to help with English at home, and, as mentioned previously, there were some
parents concerned that the child’s English would not be good enough coming out of the French school.

Five parents (13.2%) obtained tutoring for the child, because they could not help and/or the child needed extra help in French. There was overlap with the involvement findings and the NF parent experience, where the language barrier was the biggest impediment to involvement and contributed to not being able to understand what was written in French. Several parents mentioned feeling excluded, because they could not understand. As one said, “So that is excluding, by sending those communiqués out in just French” (Participant 21). Some parents typed French messages into a translator program to understand the note sent home, a process which was time consuming. Other NF parents figured out how to paste the text from school emails sent home from school into a translator in order to read the message in English. Nine parents (23.7%) from interviews used Google translator for deciphering notes from school. Many parents were involved at home, but this comment demonstrates the degree to which many parents desired to know more and be more involved, “It is a French school. But if you engage the English portion of the English parents … if you engage them and let them know more about the French culture, then that is better for everybody” (Participant 20). This parent thought that more could be done to get NF parents informed and feeling involved at the school, which would, in turn, benefit students, parents, and educators.

Several parents explained in the interviews that they tried to encourage French use outside of school. Parents attempted to use French media in the house with TV, games, and/or computer programs. Seven parents (18.4%) encouraged their child to talk in French at home. Many parents said it was difficult to use French media, and it got more difficult as the children aged. One parent explained the difficulty:
It’s hard for us, because we don’t speak the French language. We don’t watch French TV, so as we are preaching it to them, it’s basically we should be doing it ourselves. And we kind of fell short of that. We didn’t really encourage it as much as we probably should have. (Participant 38)

The difficulty with using French media overlaps with the findings that some NF parents’ did experience resistance to French media at home. In the survey, 39.5% (n=34) reported never using French media at home. Six other parents (15.8%) tried to encourage access to French activities outside of school in different ways, such as visits to Québec. The parent comments and survey responses expressed that PI, although valued and frequent, was a struggle for many, while more manageable for those parents with some French proficiency and access to help. Only one parent in interviews reported that they had participated in a workshop that helped them to learn how to support the children in the education in French, while 18.6% of survey parents (n=15) reported having been supported in workshops to help the children.

School Involvement

Both mothers and fathers who participated in the research said they either wanted or tried to be involved at the school; 80.0% of survey respondents (n=69) wanted to be involved in activities that took place at the school. Parents contacted teachers by email and sometimes by phone. They tried to read the newsletters and attend meet-the-teacher night and parent-teacher interviews, and some parents checked the school’s website occasionally. Survey results showed that 66 parents (76.8%) attended meet-the-teacher night, but 16 parents (18.6%) did not, because it occurred in French. Another 77 parents 89.0% attended parent-teacher interviews at least once per year. However, the biggest challenge to school involvement was that most communication was done in French, and many NF parents needed help to understand what was going on and/or
what was written in French, despite the time and effort they already put in on their own at home. For example, this parent needed a little communication help:

> We came here expecting all French, and it is, okay, so it is fine. So, I don’t like to ask for other things. I don’t want to ask, can you send that in English to me … So, I can see asking for it electronically so we can get it into something to translate. But, I have a hard time asking for it in English. (Participant 25)

Most parents reported that emails from teachers or parent-teacher interviews were in English, but a few parents attended the parent-teacher events or other sessions with the Francophone spouse and then relied on translating during or after the session.

> There were 58 parents (67.5%) on the survey who did not volunteer at school, yet 52 parents (60.5%) reported having helped with fundraising. Five different parents stated they wanted to be involved with school fieldtrips but felt left out:

> I feel really hesitant to volunteer for fieldtrips and stuff, and then I feel kind of, like I’m missing out. And even stuff to help in school. I always envisioned myself, like really helping. I’m kind of a stay-at-home mom. I work a little. So I would be available to volunteer in school and doing things, and I feel kind of limited that way, because I feel not wanted. (Participant 8)

This parent did not know how, or to what degree, involvement at the school was possible and really wanted to be heavily involved. Participants reported that having teachers, administrative assistants, and administration who were approachable in English, positively influenced NF parents to get involved in parent or breakfast committees, get help from teachers, and have information translated from French to English. Parents acknowledged that offers had been made from administration and teachers for NF parents to stay after meetings to have the information
relayed in English. However, one parent commented about a problem when educators make such an offer, “If you want to stay after, we can go over whatever you don’t [understand]… The only thing I find with that is, I have already spent an hour here, and I don’t really want to stay another extra hour” (Participant 1). The idea of spending double the time at school sessions for parents, in order to have a translation, was not appealing. Timewise it was too demanding.

Four parents wanted to be involved on parent committee or home-and-school groups, but they felt they could not, because they did not have French. A parent commiserated, “It was one of the considerations … that I would not be able to volunteer at the school. They don’t really create much opportunity for English-speaking volunteers. I can’t get on a committee or something like that” (Participant 5). Sixteen (18.6%) NF parents reported on the survey that they were involved in committees at school. Two of the schools were described by the parents as having the parent committee meetings in English, which allowed all the parents who wanted to participate to be involved with decision making. Those NF parents reported feeling high degrees of involvement and also reported that the students had high engagement with use of French in the schools and during playground time, despite common use of English by school personnel with parents.

Three large schools, two of which were urban and one of which was a rural school, conducted the parent committee meetings in French, and the parents in the focus groups felt that they could not be involved in the children’s education in the way they had foreseen. Parents with children at one of the larger schools reported a high degree of use of English by students in this school, but few activities were offered in English to parents. Many parents commented on having a desire to be involved in parent meetings, such as open house or parent committee, if it were to take place in English or bilingually. Parents were, nonetheless, conscious of the need for the
space within the French school to remain dominantly French. They did not want to encourage English openly in the schools but felt that using English in parent groups would encourage their participation. Two comments that demonstrated this need for English while preserving French were: “I only wish there was a way I could be involved in the school without feeling that I was devaluing the language because of my English” (Participant 4), and “Even if they put everybody who was a NF parent with someone in the middle and translate somehow at the same time, that would be kind of nice, or have your own meeting in English would be even better” (Participant 1). It appears that there would be much greater involvement of NF parents if, somehow, parent committee or information sessions could be translated or facilitated for them in English.

Community Involvement

NF parents were asked about their involvement in activities in the French community outside of school hours. Five different parents (13.2%) simply said they did not participate in French community activities, either due to not having French, not having time, or not having an interest. They were busy in other child-related activities, such as sports. In the survey, 25 parents (29.1%) said they did not attend French community activities, but 60 parents (70.5%) did. In the interviews, five parents (13.2%) indicated that they could not see a purpose in attending a community activity if they could not understand what was being said in French. Seven parents (18.4%) said they attend some French community activities, such as a pancake breakfast, Fête de la St. Jean Baptiste, or going to the French library. The library was mentioned by six parents (15.8%) as the main way they encourage community involvement with their children in French. There were 51 parents (59.3%) from the survey who reported going to the French library. Fourteen parents (38.8%) mentioned attending community activities with their children, such as Cap Enfant child-centered activities, dance or musical theatre productions, such as M. Roland
Community involvement by NF parents was more prevalent where the French schools were located in smaller communities and when children were younger. One parent said that it comes down to feeling comfortable to participate in French community events. “We haven’t done those as much. I think it comes down to comfortability, who we know that is going and that we have a social group there. That makes a big difference” (Participant 15). When children were younger and when NF parents felt socially connected to other parents, there was a greater chance they would participate in French community events with the children.

Two NF parents had been heavily involved with the setup of the French schools when they started in their communities. The parents stated it was really challenging getting the permission for the schools, preparing the buildings, the buses, and getting teachers and courses set up and running. The difficulty the parents faced in the community was increased by the pressure from English-speaking family and friends who commented that the NF parents had made a poor choice to send the children to the French school.

Why are Parents Involved?

Embedded within the survey was an open-ended question for parents to explain why they considered their involvement at home, school, or in the community important. The major motivation parents explained for being involved was a belief that their involvement would aid the child towards optimal development and enhanced life opportunities. There were 24 parents (27.9%) who said they were involved to show the value they placed on education and to model and highlight the importance of lifelong learning. Eighteen parents (20.9%) said it was the role of a parent to be involved and to encourage, coach, or support their children. Twelve parents said it was important for their family and their involvement in the French community. Less common

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Roland Gauvin does school, library, and community tours in Atlantic Canada with his French toad friend, Monsieur Crapaud, offering French concerts with French music and books composed for students.
reasons to be involved were to have influence and information \((n=7 \text{ or } 8.1\%)\), to help maintain French language or culture \((n=6 \text{ or } 6.9\%)\), to help the French school \((n=5 \text{ or } 5.8\%)\), to assist with homework \((n=4 \text{ or } 4.7\%)\), and to model for children the importance of a strong work ethic and that you must put in effort in order to succeed \((n=3 \text{ or } 3.5\%)\).

The NF parents were generally highly involved at home with their child’s education, despite substantial challenges with the language barrier, which made it difficult to understand homework and written communication from the school. Most parents experienced the language barrier as a significant obstacle to being involved at the French school and in the French community, unless they had social connections, which eased their participation. These findings came from qualitative and quantitative data. The next section is a presentation of the quantitative findings from Principal Component Analysis (PCA).

**Principal Component Analysis**

As explained in Chapter 3, I used PCA to help organize and describe the involvement and experience data and to test if there were factors that existed with underlying relationships. Along with PCA, I used bivariate correlations, t-tests, and analysis of variance (ANOVA). When I used PCA with sections of the survey data, the items grouped successfully into three factors: Factor 1: *Parent Involvement at Home*, Factor 2: *Parents Experienced Challenges at Home and at School*, and Factor 3: *Parent Involvement in School or Community*.

**Factor 1**

I conducted a Pearson correlation to assess the relationship between Factor 1, *Parent Involvement at Home* and 9 different variables in the survey, and found that there was a small to medium correlation with six of the variables. There was a positive correlation with statistical significance with *Parent Involvement at Home* and *Parents Felt Competent to Help with*
Homework \( r=0.426, n=77, p<.001 \), Parent Confidence to Speak French at the School, \( r=0.318, n=79, p=0.004 \), Parent Involvement Contributed Positively, \( r=0.318, n=75, p=0.004 \), Parent Involvement in French Activities at Home, \( r=0.403, n=81, p<0.001 \), and Gender, \( r=0.358, n=79, p<0.001 \). These findings appear logical given that many of the parents reported that they felt they could be more involved at home if they could help with homework, if they could speak French, if they felt strongly about the value of parent scholarly involvement, and when they could do French activities at home. Additionally, in terms of gender, mothers were more involved as participants and in reporting involvement at home and at school. There was a negative relationship at the 0.05 level between Factor 1, Parent Involvement at Home and Parents Need Help to Understand Messages, \( r=-.247, n=78, p=0.029 \). This finding indicated that challenges with understanding messages negatively impacted the NF parents’ involvement at home.

**Factor 2**

For Factor 2, Parents Experienced Challenges at Home and at School, I ran an independent sample t-test and correlations. The t-test was conducted to compare the Use of English by NF parents at school and Factor 2. There was a significant difference in the scores for the Group 1, Parents who Used English at School (\( M=2.59, SD=0.60 \)) and the Group 2, Parents who Used French at School (\( M=3.21, SD=0.51 \)) conditions \( t(61)=-3.81, p<0.001 \). These results suggest that needing to use English (or lacking French proficiency) contributes to experiencing more challenges as an NF parent being involved at home or at school. The effect size (or size of the difference) according to Cohen’s \( d \) was -3.176, so a small to medium effect, based on \( t \) score and sample sizes.
I conducted a Pearson correlation to assess the relationship between Factor 2, Parents Experienced Challenges at Home and at School and 4 different variables in the survey. There was no statistically significant relationship with parents having access to someone who can help in French. There was a negative correlation with statistical significance at the 0.01 level with Parents Need Help to Understand Messages, $r = -0.767$, $n=65$, $p<.001$, I Feel Left Out, $r = -0.769$, $n=65$, $p<.001$, and I Have Considered an English school, $r = -0.628$, $n=63$, $p<.001$. These findings align with the interview reports from many parents who shared that difficulty understanding the messages that came home from school and not feeling involved or able to build relationships and a sense of belonging, were among the biggest challenges NF parents faced. Experiencing challenges to be involved could contribute to NF parents considering an English school for their children.

I conducted a Pearson correlation to assess the relationship between Factor 2, Parents Experienced Challenges at Home and at School and Parent Confidence to Speak French at the School. There was a negative correlation with statistical significance at the 0.01 level with Parent Confidence to Speak French at the School, $r = -0.543$, $n=65$, $p<.001$. Lower parent confidence to speak in French seems to correlate significantly with a higher degree of challenges to being involved at home and school. Because this correlation was significant, I decided to compare Parents Felt Competent to Help with Homework and the self-assessed French Proficiency. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between French Proficiency and Parents Felt Competent to Help with Homework. There was not a statistically significant difference for parents who reported zero French Proficiency, $r = 0.196$, $n=84$, $p=.075$. There was a positive significant relationship between low French Proficiency 1, $r = 0.228$, $n=84$, $p<.037$, with moderate French Proficiency 3, $r = 0.321$, $n=84$, $p=.003$, and high
French Proficiency 4, $r=0.274$, $n=84$, $p=0.012$. It suggests that NF parents with lower French proficiency felt less competent to help with homework.

I conducted an ANOVA with Factor 2 and 6 variables. There was a statistically significant relationship between Factor 2, Parents Experienced Challenges at Home and at School and Parent Confidence to Speak French at the School as well as with Parents who Used English at School. There was a significant effect of Parent Confidence to Speak French with Factor 2, Parents Experienced Challenges at Home and at School $F(2,62) = 10.24$, $p<0.001$. Lower parent confidence to speak French related to a feeling of experiencing greater challenges being involved at home and at school. There was significant effect of Parents who Used English at School, and Factor 2, Parents Experienced Challenges at Home and at School $F(2,60) = 4.74$, $p=0.012$. Parents who needed to use English experienced greater challenges. Parents who could communicate in French had more positive experiences.

**Factor 3**

I calculated a Pearson correlation for Factor 3, Parent Involvement in School or Community with 7 variables. Two of the variables did not show a significant relationship. There was a negative correlation with statistical significance at the 0.01 level with I Feel Left Out, $r=-0.323$, $n=75$, $p=0.005$, and Parents Need Help to Understand Messages, $r=-0.317$, $n=75$, $p=0.006$. These results indicate a relationship between the difficulty for parents to get involved at the school and their need for help to understand messages. There was a positive correlation with statistical significance at the 0.001 level with our Family Attends Activities in French in the Community, $r=0.344$, $n=77$, $p=0.002$, and I Ask for up Updates on Children’s Progress Between Report Cards, $r=0.454$, $n=77$, $p<0.001$. These results indicate a relationship for those who can attend French activities in the community and being involved at the school. Also, there is a
relationship between the parent’s involvement at the school and need for more information between report cards. NF parent involvement at the school is an area where parents felt left out.

Additionally, I conducted a one way ANOVA comparing Factor 3 with several variables and found there was a significant effect when comparing Parents who had and who did not have Parent Confidence to Speak French at the School. There was a significant effect of confidence to speak French with Factor 3, Parent Involvement in School or Community, $F(2, 22) = 4.175, p = 0.019$. The greater confidence to speak in French at the school contributed to a greater degree of involvement at the school. In contrast, low confidence translated to little involvement at the school and community.

This concludes the presentation of the findings. In the next chapter, I offer a discussion of the impact of the findings for the French minority-language schools and make recommendations for policy and practice based on the findings.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This final chapter is dedicated to the analysis and interpretation of the findings from this study. I highlight the uniqueness and contributions of the research, and I expand on previous research and theoretical frameworks. This study investigated the demographic characteristics of non-Francophone (NF) parents and explored the beliefs, experiences, and involvement of NF parents who have chosen a French minority-language school for their children on PEI. The three guiding questions were:

1. What are the demographic characteristics and the beliefs of NF parents who have chosen a French minority-language school for their children?
2. What are the experiences of NF parents who have children in a French minority-language school?
3. How are NF parents involved in the education of their children at home, at school, and in the community?

I begin this chapter by discussing the findings about the demographic profile of NF parents and the impact of their presence in French minority-language schools. Second, I analyze the remaining part of research Question 1 about NF parent beliefs, which influenced their choice of a French minority-language school. Third, I explore the answers to research Question 2 (the NF parents’ experiences) and research Question 3 (the involvement of NF parents). I discuss how these discoveries are relevant to the two theoretical models with which I worked. To do so, I examine the experience and parent involvement (PI) of NF parents through the lenses of Hornby’s model for PI (2011) and the feelings of autonomy, competence, and belonging (ACB) in Landry et al.’s SED model (2007b). In a fourth section of this chapter, I offer a new PI model, which considers the diversity of parents’ linguistic competencies. Fifth, I make recommendations.
for policy and practice. These recommendations may not only resonate with officials at the Department of Education and the French school board, but also with teachers, parent groups, and NF parents. Finally, I discuss limitations of the study and suggestions for future research. I conclude with reflections on the personal significance of this research in my life as a NF parent, teacher educator, and researcher. However, before I discuss the findings, I position myself vis à vis the political delicateness of this topic in French minority-language schools.

**Delicate Topic**

The integration of NF parents and students into French minority-language schools is indeed a delicate and complex topic. Essentially, integrating NF parents and students means inviting the majority English language, not to mention other languages, into a space that was created to protect and maintain French and assist the Francophone community to grow. The paradox in this situation is that when NF parents, even assimilated right-holders, have their children admitted to French schools, the environment is no longer uniquely French. Francophone parents, teachers, and administrators may worry and fear that the environment will be anglicized (Cormier, 2015), French will be overwhelmed by English, and the French-language schools will be diluted or eventually lost all together, once again.

As someone whose family experienced the loss of the French language, culture, and access to education in French, I understand both theoretically (Landry, 2010; OCOL, 1999; Taylor, 2003) and practically the significance of a space and case to use, promote, and preserve French. However, this language loss underscores how important it is to have access to quality French education as a way of addressing past wrongs and to help reclaim the lost language and culture. As the research and marketing of the French school attest, the best place to develop French language and identity in a minority context is in a French language school (Landry,
Allard, & Deveau, 2010; CLSF, 2014), and the Charter guarantees this educational right for right-holders. Therefore, it is important to me that the data and recommendations that emerge from my study help accommodate NF parents and students without losing sight of the crucial goal of preserving the minority-language school as a predominantly French space for generations to come.

On one hand, the presence of NF parents and students may be seen as a threat to the integrity and maintenance of the French language and culture in the French schools. That belief suggests that in order to save French, it is necessary to maintain a totally French environment in French schools and to the extreme, keep other languages out. On the other hand, it is known that assimilative forces caused many people to lose their French language and culture, so there is recognition of a need to be inclusive and allow children/families to reclaim and relearn their language and culture and share it forward with future generations. The challenge lies in creating a context that allows both to happen: maintaining and reclaiming the French language and culture with access to education in French.

Demographics Matter

The results from this research show that there are multiple types of NF parents in the French minority-language schools on PEI. The PEI French School board policy has no doubt played a role in the increase in NF parents and students (see Appendix G for PEI Education Act, 2016). The CSLF policy permits applications for the admission of children whose grandparents

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6 Le règlement de la Loi scolaire de l’Île-du-Prince-Édouard dit que la Commission scolaire de langue française peut admettre des enfants autres que ceux visés par l’article 23 eu égard à l’intégrité du système et au but visé de fournir un programme en langue française. Les parents se trouvant dans cette catégorie et qui voudraient inscrire leurs enfants à l’école française sont priés d’en faire la demande par écrit à la Commission scolaire après avoir rencontré la direction scolaire de l’école française de leur région. (https://cslfipe.wordpress.com/parents/criteres-dinscription/) [According to the Prince Edward Island Education Act, the Commission scolaire de langue française can admit children other than those included in Section 23 considering the integrity of the system and the desire to access French education. Parents in this category who want to apply to send children to the French school are asked to apply to the Commission scolaire after consulting with the French school in their zone-loose translation]
are grandparent clause right-holders and applications for children of non-right-holders. The majority of the NF parents in this research were Anglo-dominant couples or single parents who were grandparent clause right-holders or had Francophone ancestors several generations in the past and were, therefore, reclaiming the French language and culture. Many of these NF parents with French heritage would be members of the group that Denis (2011) identified as lost right-holders who have Francophone ancestors but no longer have French proficiency due to assimilation. Other participants included Anglo-dominant parents with ambitions to secure the best education possible for their children, including high quality French, to optimize present-day and future opportunities for their children. Just under one-third of the participants were in an exogamous couple with a Francophone right-holder who wanted French education for their children. Many of the NF parents had low French proficiency, which means that in these French schools, there was a high number of students with NF parents who struggle with understanding and communicating in French.

The demographics from this research also showed that the majority of NF parents had high socioeconomic status and wanted to be educationally involved parents. The admission policy of the French school board attracts NF parents with educational resources and a strong desire to help the children, while also increasing student enrollment. However, the French school board policy to communicate only in French prevents optimal PI due to the French language barrier for many of the NF parents. The schools work to maintain a French-language-use policy, including messages to parents in French; therefore, the NF parents struggle to comprehend the communications from school and to be educationally involved. French school boards and teachers face the challenge to support and accommodate this growing NF demographic of
students and parents from kindergarten onward to maintain quality French education and a French environment (Cavanagh, 2016; Landry, 2010; OCOL, 1999; Taylor, 2003).

The demographics in this study highlight the needs of the diverse partners, such as assimilated or Francophone right-holders and non-right-holders in French minority-language education. Francophones in a minority context, whose population is slowly declining, strive to maintain access to quality French education so that the French language and culture endure. French education is also sought by NF parents who are right-holders and other NF parents who desire a French language education for their children. French schools benefit from students with NF parents, because they augment the enrollment. As well, French schools need to maintain a predominantly French environment, which is more challenging as the linguistic diversity of the student population increases. However, for this admission practice to succeed in the longterm, the findings of this study indicate that the parents, regardless of the type of NF parent, need to have their communication requirements met. They also need to feel welcomed and to possess a sense of belonging within the school and its community. With these needs addressed, there will most probably be an improvement in their understanding of the school mandate and their involvement with their child’s education at home, at school, and in the community. Moreover, the involvement of these parents should improve success and retention of the students, leading ultimately to greater success for the entire French school system on PEI. These students might then become the bilingual parents of a future generation of students in minority French schools, which, ultimately, will perpetuate the vitality of these crucial institutions.

I now move from the demographics to discuss the NF parent beliefs as well as their involvement and experience in their child’s education at home, in school, and in the community.
Parent Beliefs

The findings showed that the NF parent motivation to choose a French school was influenced by parents’ language and educational beliefs. Consistent with Mason’s (2006a) dialogic pragmatism referring to how social experiences intersect on different dimensions, I observed in the data that multiple social dimensions intersected to affect the parent school choice. The primary motivation that affected the NF parent beliefs and influenced their school choice was the desire for the children to develop bilingualism. There were also six themes that emerged as the other dimensions in the parents’ choice of a French minority-language school.

Bilingualism was the main motivation expressed by NF parents for the choice of a French minority-language school in the survey and interviews. The importance of bilingualism felt by parents is consistent with previous research (Dalley & Saint-Onge, 2008; Landry, 2010; MacPhee et al., 2013: OCOL, 1999), which found that parents believed having two languages would enhance employment opportunities and provide greater options for study and travel. Bilingualism was important to the NF parents for several reasons, and I explore these dimensions categorized thematically as family heritage and school accessibility, linguistic and cultural gains, and academic and cognitive advantages.

French heritage and school accessibility. The NF parents in this study valued bilingualism, and, for many, it was especially important because of French family heritage: 27 of the 86 survey participants (31.0%) had an existing Francophone heritage on at least one side of the family. In these cases, there was a desire to develop the children’s French language skills, cultural knowledge, and French identity in order to maintain communication in French with family members. Another 18 (20.3%) of the NF participants were eligible as right-holders to access the schools due to the grandparent clause, and many others explained that they were
reclaiming the French language and culture. Almost half of the NF parents were not right-holders according to Charter or grandfather clause criteria, yet, many of these participants passionately discussed recovering the French language that had been lost two and three generations prior.

The experience of a NF parent who is reclaiming the French language and culture has not been well researched. During the review of the literature, I found only one article that explored the NF parent reclaiming the French heritage by choosing a French minority-language school (Cormier, Turnbull, Lirette-Pitre, Blain, Cormier, & MacPhee, 2013). More research about assimilated Francophones searching out French schools could yield interesting results. The strong appeal of the French language and culture in addition to NF parent high SES and willingness to work hard and be involved as reported in these data, indicate the NF parents are likely to be powerful partners to engage in the effort to promote French language and culture. Therefore, this dissertation makes an important contribution to the scholarship relating to NF parents reclaiming their lost language and culture via French minority-language education.

Accessibility as a right-holder was a dimension of parent motivation and a critical factor that made the choice of a French school possible for the NF parents to attain bilingualism and heritage goals for their children. The data indicate that about half of the NF participants (n=44 or 51.0%) were eligible to have their children admitted to the schools based on the language of a grandparent. Such access to French minority-language schools for those individuals who have lost the language continues to be possible across Canada in school boards that use a grandparent clause (Conseil des écoles Fransaskoises, 2013; Conseil Scolaire Francophone de la Colombie Brittanique, 2013; Conseil Scolaire Francophone de Terre-Neuve et Labrador, 2013; Vincent, 2010). Because access to PEI French minority-language schools is flexible and permits applications from parents without French heritage, non-right-holder NF parents also chose these
schools for access to high quality French education for their children. As consumers of education, these NF parents were taking advantage of their ability to apply to have their children attend French schools, which is also a result of a purposeful marketing campaign by the PEI French school system (CRLF, 2004). Moreover, this active marketing and flexible access require French school boards and schools to provide the resources, strategies, and training to accommodate this increasing NF clientele. Resources and strategies can help NF parents and students succeed with French education, as well as respond to the concerns identified in past research (OCOL, 1999; O’Keefe, 2001) aimed at preventing a decline in the quality of French in the Francophone schools. For NF parents, having access to the French school for children to learn French or to develop bilingualism was a strong motivator, regardless of heritage.

**Linguistic and cultural gains.** The NF parents held language beliefs that favored the choice of a French school in the pursuit of bilingualism and language and cultural goals. Many NF parents believed that the quality of French at the French minority-language schools would help their children develop better French skills, compared to other French education program options. Some parents also believed that learning French at an early age was a better choice for stronger French and bilingual language skills, compared to, for example, a late French immersion program or learning French as an adult. These findings add a parent perspective to the existing literature, which has also discussed the value of introducing French in the early years (Gilbert et al., 2004; Landry, 2010). Research in second language learning has demonstrated that learning an additional language at a young age can contribute to valuing different cultures and languages, enhancing cognitive and metalinguistic development, and learning other languages (Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2006). Bilingualism has been reported as a reason for choosing French schools in past research (Cotman, 2011; OCOL, 1999), and choosing minority French schools for
better quality of French was previously reported in research (Rocque, 2006) with non-Francophone parents.

Numerous parents were motivated to choose a French minority-language school because of the French cultural dimension they believed was present in these institutions. The French culture in the school and in the course content appealed to the parents with French heritage or Francophone partners for preserving or reclaiming their culture and to other NF parents who wanted to expose their children to cultural and linguistic diversity. Many NF parents were motivated to choose the French school due to the presence of French music, art, and literature in these schools. The linguistic and cultural benefits of French education attracted parents to choose the French minority-language school. Previous research has demonstrated that, for Francophones and exogamous couples, valuing the French culture is one of the most important factors in choosing a French school (Dalley & Saint-Onge, 2008; Deveau et al, 2006). Research by Rocque (2006a) also previously reported valuing French culture as a determinant in NF parent choice of a French school.

**Academic and cognitive advantages.** Along with bilingualism, NF parents wanted to make the educational choice to most greatly optimize present and future opportunities for their children. Many NF parents believed that the small size of the French schools and classes would nurture and support the academic progress for the children. This preference for small size is consistent with previous findings (Rocque, 2006) but not all French schools are small. A common parent belief was that due to a low teacher-student ratio, students received greater individual attention from educators. Further, parents believed this attention allowed teachers to more easily identify children experiencing learning difficulties and promptly offer support. Several NF parents also commented that the smaller school offered a better social and emotional
climate for children. Other parents believed that there were cognitive advantages for children who developed as bilinguals, and the French minority-language school was the best choice to enhance cognitive and bilingual development from an early age. This finding that parents sought cognitive advantages at the French school appears unique to this study. It seems that the NF parents agreed with Gilbert, Letouzé, Thériault, and Landry (2004) who argued that the French schools ought to be recognized for having the “added value of French-language education … the higher level of its students’ bilingualism, the lower student-teacher ratio” (p. 41).

In contrast, some parents said that their children’s class size was average and not as small as expected. Other parents expressed concerns about the disadvantages of small classes and small schools, resulting in reduced course and extracurricular options compared to what larger English and French immersion schools and staff can provide. One parent lamented, “Our numbers get small partly due to stuff we can’t offer due to size … for the most part it is courses” (Participant 10). Parents wanted high quality course options in French schools, especially at higher grades, and they wanted information about the available courses. Several NF parents were specifically concerned about inferior quality English classes in French schools. This concern for English is a new finding, although previous research identified that Francophones and exogamous couples have made the choice of English schools out of a desire for high quality English (Cotnam, 2011; OCOL, 1999). There was a parental expectation to have the personnel and programs to offer athletic and artistic activities after school, which echoes previous findings (OCOL, 1999). The NF parents who had children approaching high school age indicated that there is a need to get more school and course information to NF parents. Specifically, the parents wanted information to help make the choice of a French or English school for intermediate or senior grades. This finding is unique and important. Previous research has identified that students tend to transition
to English schools for intermediate or high school grades (Cotnam, 2011; Dalley & Saint-Onge, 2008). This study indicated a need to inform parents about French education and help them to make school choices. Research in this minority French school context (MacPhee et al., 2013; Cavanagh et al., 2016) revealed that school or community resources are needed to maintain or enhance academic and cognitive advantages at all grade levels to prevent NF parents and their children opting for English schools in the upper grades. This study reinforces such research.

Overall, a desire for bilingualism and the belief that education in the French minority-language was the best educational choice for children were the two main angles of motivation for parents’ school choice. The two motivations were influenced by an intersection of different dimensions of parent beliefs that a French school would provide the best linguistic, cultural, and academic opportunities for the children. Parents had considered the educational components that would best assist short and longterm success for the children. Parents chose a school that would allow their children to feel emotionally and socially secure, to stay connected to family, and to optimize academic learning. Parents were also trying to make high school choices for their children to best prepare them for university, travel, and future employment.

**Parent Experiences and Involvement**

In the following section, I draw on the theory and models from my theoretical framework along with the data that answered research Question 2 and Question 3 to discuss the experiences and involvement of NF parents who have children in French minority-language schools in PEI. Mason (2006a) suggested to look at social experiences from different axes/angles and dimensions, because they are rarely unidimensional. Therefore, I explore the NF parents’ experiences from the perspective of the ACB in the SED model (Landry et al., 2007b), and I then examine the NF parents’ involvement using Hornby’s PI model (2011).
**Autonomy, Competence, and Belonging (ACB)**

Landry, Allard, and Deveau (2007b, 2009) built upon earlier theories in minority-language education and created the self-determination and ethnolinguistic development model (SED). The SED model incorporated factors that influence ethnolinguistic development, including an individual’s motivation to learn and use a minority-language. From the complex SED model, I focused on one particular section that refers to an individual’s feelings of autonomy, competence, and belonging (ACB) (Landry et al., 2007b). The ACB components come from self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which targets the concept of motivation and why people commit to do something. I have chosen to look at these three ACB feelings from a slightly different angle. I looked at the NF parent feelings of autonomy, competence, and belonging as they relate to the parent motivations to choose a French minority-language school for their child’s education and learning of French and PI at a French school. I investigated the NF parent experiences and involvement through the lens of the ACB in the SED model (Landry et al., 2007b).

**Autonomy.** The autonomy component of the ACB addresses in this case the NF parent feeling able to choose appropriate activities and initiate helpful involvement in harmony with the institution and its values, norms, and practices (Landry et al., 2007b; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In contrast, a lack of autonomy would result in parents feeling conflicted or alienated by these school experiences.

Based on the data, most NF parents struggled with autonomy. Parents in my study were conflicted about the need to use English and the need to ask for documents or conversations in English. Survey data showed that 69 (80.2%) of the participants reported low confidence with French and 63 participants (73.2%) needed school personnel who could speak English with
them. Most parents reported that they were able to function at home, but their involvement required more effort and time than it would if children were in English or French immersion programs. Even in their own home, most parents did not feel full autonomy or ease of involvement. Therefore, it is not surprising that the majority of parents did not feel the autonomy needed to be involved at the French school or in the French community. The sense of autonomy was stronger for parents with French proficiency and weaker for parents with low or no French proficiency. Parents in the low and middle level of proficiency felt challenged, because they regularly faced PI barriers at home, at school, and in the community. The NF parents were challenged to understand or translate weekly paper-copy newsletters sent home, French homework assignments, and even math problems, which are based on a written word-problem approach. Further, school and community activities took place in French, resulting in many NF parents feeling too uncomfortable to attend.

The analysis identified a finding of limited parent autonomy, which points to a need for French schools to reach out to more than half of the NF parents to improve communication and provide educational tips and strategies to enhance the involvement of NF parents at home, at school, and in the community. Autonomy is considered an important aspect of motivation and involvement (Hoover-Dempsey, 2011; Hornby, 2011; Landry et al., 2007b; Ryan & Deci, 2000) and French school boards and personnel can do much more by responding to parent needs. School professionals could help parents choose appropriate resources and activities, which would boost parent autonomy and PI at home, in particular, as well as in the community and at school.

**Competence.** Competence refers to the degree to which an individual feels able to function effectively. In this context, competence means the degree to which NF parents felt competent to be involved in their child’s French education and confident to deal with the
challenges. In this study, competence is also linked to the parent's perception of their ability to understand and to be involved at home, at school, and in the community (Landry et al., 2007b; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The participants valued PI, wanted to be involved, and believed that their involvement made a positive contribution. For example, from the survey, 79 parents (92.0%) felt they had some influence and control over child’s learning and 73 (84.9%) reported that PI has contributed positively to their child’s education. Encouragingly, 58 parents (67.0%) felt competent to help with homework, 61 parents (71.0%) helped with reading in French, and 68 parents (79.0%) helped with reading in English. However, at least half of the NF parents did not feel competent helping with spelling and reading in French. Many parents felt that they lacked the quality of French language skills required to be effectively involved. They worried about their own French comprehension, poor pronunciation, and lack of a social connection with other parents. In essence, those parents were concerned about their perceived minimal involvement at home, and they felt they could not be effectively involved in the school and community contexts. Whereas seven (18.4%) of the participants had French proficiency and felt competently involved, most NF parents required assistance understanding school communication received in French. Most parents wanted to feel more confident and knowledgeable about specific ways to be involved at home, at school, and in the community (francité familio-scolaire) in order to help their children succeed.

The analysis revealed that NF parents had a feeling of reduced competence for being involved at home, at school, and in the community. Where competence has been shown to be important for motivation and PI (Hoover-Dempsey, 2011; Hornby, 2011; Landry et al., 2007b; Ryan & Deci, 2000), NF parents needed reassurance that they can help their children in the home
language and they needed strategies and resources to help in French as well. Cummins (2000, 2012) and Chernoff (2005) discussed how parents who help develop the literacy of the home language contribute to literacy in a second language because language and literacy skills can transfer between languages and home language and culture must be valued and supported. Anglo-dominant or NF parents could be advised to help enrich literacy and numeracy at home in the home language as well as to help the school language. It would be useful for many parents if school personnel recommend applications or websites where parents can get assistance for students with French pronunciation and writing help. Educators could contribute to improving parent competency by sharing information and resources that help parents help their children.

**Belonging.** The element of belonging or relatedness refers to an individual feeling connected, respected, and cared for (Landry et al., 2007b; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In my analysis, I explored the degree to which NF parents felt they were connected, able to interact, and valued and accepted in French minority-language schools.

In my group of NF participants, some parents felt unwelcomed and marginalized, some felt well-situated in the school, and many felt that they wanted to be acknowledged, involved, and heard. While 55 parents (63.9%) were invited to be involved at school by the teacher, administration, or child, there were 25 parents (29.0%) who reported not having been invited. The survey revealed that 70 participants (81.4%) from this NF parent group were not involved in committees where decisions about the school take place. The 16 NF parents (18.6%) who did report committee and decision-making involvement matches the number of parents (n=16) who reported high French proficiency (18.4%). Despite the reality that NF parents comprised a large section of the parent body in French minority-language schools on PEI, it appears that the voice
of parents without French was not actively sought or shared. Furthermore, because of the language policy, most of these parents do not feel comfortable bringing their needs forward.

These data also revealed that NF parents wanted to feel welcomed and wanted to develop relationships with other parents. Having social connections with other parents would enable them to share or discuss school-related information and to participate in school or community activities with an improved sense of belonging. The survey results showed that 21 parents (24.5%) felt awkward at school, and 31 parents (36.1%) felt uncomfortable at social events, such as birthday parties or sporting events, both of which occurred in French. Many parents explained in the interviews that they could not attend school events when they did not understand the invitations from school. They felt socially uncomfortable when attending events where they do not know anyone else. Additionally, they felt somewhat awkward to attend activities when everyone would be speaking in French. While some NF parents expressed a sense of belonging to the French minority-language school, most of those parents were French proficient.

The analysis illuminated a decreased sense of belonging for the majority of NF parents. Although school personnel can make special efforts or arrangements to invite NF parents to attend parent events, it appears that giving NF parents a place and time to meet and discuss together without educator involvement would also contribute to a sense of belonging for parents. A monthly NF parent meeting would permit parents to get to know some of the other NF parents in the school. Such a meeting would create an opportunity for NF parents to discuss with others who face similar challenges and share options and strategies that help NF parents while contributing to building a sense of community. The literature from PI and French minority education (Cotnam, 2011; Cormier & Lowe, 2010; Jeynes, 2011b; Pushor, 2013; Ryan & Deci,
concur that developing a sense of belonging to the community and feeling welcomed is an important factor in PI and choice of a French school.

**Theoretical Implications of the SED Model**

According to the macrosocial and microsocial factors that affect ethnolinguistic development (Landry et al., 2007b), social proximity and institutional completeness, as well as ideological legitimacy (societal support for the minority language) are required. The French minority-language schools help provide social proximity and institutional completeness. In terms of ideological legitimacy, when NF parents choose the French school, they demonstrate societal support for the minority language (Cormier, 2015); however, these parents likely need to know more about the mandate of the French school and how NF parents can help. When French schools welcome, accompany, and equip NF parents with information, resources, and strategies, the NF parent can make choices to enhance the Frenchness or francité familio-scolaire in the home. As mentioned in Chapter 1, past research has shown that family choices and actions at home to develop the French language have had a positive outcome on bilingual development and bilingual identity (Landry & Allard, 1997, Landry, Deveau, & Allard, 2006). I propose that attending to the ACB needs of the NF parent can enhance the likelihood that these parents will make choices to support French at home, better support their children in French education, encourage the children to use French at the school, and be more knowledgeable about their role in ideological legitimacy.

In 2006, Rocque (2006a) recommended slight modifications to Landry et al.’s (1990) counterbalance model (Appendix F). He suggested acknowledging the changing French minority-language school clientele, which included more exogamous couples, and more parents for whom French was not a first language, compared to when Landry et al. (1990) conceived
their model in 1987. I agree with Rocque that the demographics of the French minority-language schools in this research also justify an updating of the counterbalance model. I also argue for updating the SED model by broadening it to account for motivated language learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. I suggest expanding beyond the theory in the SED model about the ACB of language learners and users, to include and consider the ACB of parents choosing French minority-language schools for their children. If French schools attend to the ACB needs of NF parents, these parents hopefully would develop a conscientization (Friere, as cited by Landry et al., 2007b) about the importance of school, community, and families supporting French as a minority language (ideological legitimacy). It may be possible to measure the NF parent ACB and the effect on NF student language motivation and choice to use the French language, or the effect on French ethnolinguistic development. Expanding the theory will enlarge the population considered as French learners, boost the potential of French schools to optimize PI, and ultimately enhance the success and longevity of French minority-language schools. If French school boards and schools attend to improving PI, student and school success are likely to improve, and with that development, the retention of students and the survival of the school would be enhanced.

I also believe there is a need to add a component to the counterbalance model, which recommends that the family, community, and school all contribute to developing additive bilingualism. Presently, there is no liaison agent present in the model and there is a need for a link and cooperation between the school, the family, and the community to meet language objectives. The lower the ethnolinguistic vitality in a minority community, the greater the need for partnership, communication, and action coordinated with the three domains. The new component I am suggesting would be a liaison agent (an individual or group) that would be
responsible for communication and collaboration among the three domains: home, school, and community. This liaison agent would work to help access and share resources to meet the pedagogical, academic, family, and community needs.

The ACB of the SED model was effective to analyze the data about the feelings of autonomy, competence, and belonging of the NF parents. The results show that the majority of NF parents were challenged with a decreased sense of autonomy, competency, and belonging in their experience of having a child in a French minority-language school. The parents who reported feeling the greatest ACB were parents who had French proficiency and did not struggle with a language barrier, or those parents whose children had attended a French preschool and developed social connections. The preschool parents explained that because of daily drop-offs and pick-ups, NF parents had the opportunity to meet many other Francophone and NF parents and develop a sense of belonging, network, and support. This social camaraderie continued to benefit these parents into the school years. Research has shown that PI is positively influenced when the parents feel welcomed at school and feel able to be effective contributors (Hoover-Dempsey, 2011). In the French minority-language context, researchers have theorized that the ACB has an impact on the motivation of speakers of a minority language to choose to use that language (Landry et al., 2007b, 2009). I have transposed the ACB from motivation theory and, based on the data, I argue that it is important for French school personnel to attend to the ACB feelings of the NF parent in order to encourage parent motivation to persevere with children in a French minority-language school. Next, I discuss the involvement of NF parents through the lens of Hornby’s model for PI (2011).

Hornby’s Model for Parent Involvement
Hornby (2011) proposed a model to address PI barriers and enhance PI. According to Hornby’s model, there are eight significant ways to facilitate the educational involvement of parents. Four of the eight suggestions to favor involvement are actions that a school can take to respond to parent needs. The other four outline actions that parents can take to contribute to student learning. In Table 14, I compare the involvement of NF parents from the survey and interview data with the eight recommendations that Hornby proposed to enhance PI. I then discuss my analysis of the data using Hornby’s model for PI (2011), explaining the degree to which each of the eight actions was present for the NF parents who participated in this research.

Table 14  Comparison of Involvement by NF parents with Hornby’s Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Needs</th>
<th>Parent Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. All parents need open channels of communication, such as newsletters, calls, emails, or agendas</td>
<td>Partial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Most parents need to have meetings and discussions with school teachers or administration as liaison</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Many parents need parent education or workshops on topics of interest to parents</td>
<td>Little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Some parents need support such as counselling or parent support groups to discuss shared concerns or interests with other parents</td>
<td>Little</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Contributions</th>
<th>Parent Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. All parents contribute by sharing details about children, strengths or struggles, preferences, and medical information</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Most parents contribute by helping at home with school work or with behavior programs</td>
<td>Frequent with difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Many parents contribute as a helpful resource at school, helping in the classroom, fund-raising, or aiding other parents</td>
<td>Little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Some parents contribute at school meetings, in parent committees, and during policy discussions or parent support groups</td>
<td>Little</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the decade prior to the release of his book, Hornby (2011) observed that there was a gap between the PI research literature recommendations, which were to increase PI and the actual amount of PI in schools across the globe. Applying Hornby’s PI model (2011) to my study, there was also a gap between the French minority-language school facilitation of the involvement of NF parents and ways that NF parents felt enabled to be involved in their children’s education. The data viewed through the lens of Hornby’s eight PI recommendations revealed that the involvement of NF parents was not being optimized. I explain this point by relating each component of Hornby’s model (2011) to the findings.

**Parent Needs**

Hornby’s PI model is divided into two main sections of parent needs and parent contributions. I will first discuss the parent needs of communication, liaison with the school, educational workshops, and parent support for specific concerns.

**Communication**

Effective communication between home and school is the first aspect of effective PI (Hornby, 2011). The French schools provided several channels of communication in French, which included using handbooks, newsletters, telephone calls, emails, blogs, and homework diaries. However, these school communication channels were useful and efficient for only half of the NF parents. The other half could not access content due to the language barrier because the communication was sent in French. Many NF parents could not decipher the message written in French and would have to call someone for help or physically go into the school and ask for a translation. Additionally, these parents felt they were being a burden when asking for help. When parents tried to decipher the French written communication they received, they faced another challenge. They were unable to cut and paste the message into a translation program, because
each message was in hardcopy form. Parents would need to sit at the computer and try to type French text into a translation program, requiring a lengthy amount of time and the frustration of figuring out French spelling and accents. If parents did not have time to ask for help or get translations, the message from the school could be misunderstood or set aside all together. A few parents acknowledged written or emailed bilingual communication. Parents did appreciate blogs and emails which could be more easily translated using online translation programs.

School communication is of vital importance, and yet, the communication from the French schools was ineffective for many NF parents. According to the Education Act (2016) it is the duty of the school to effectively communicate with parents. Perhaps the school personnel were not aware of their duty or did not realize the extent to which the communication was a problem for NF parents. The data highlight the communication needs of all parents, especially those who do not speak the language of the school and who require diverse strategies to be used to ensure effective communication. This issue of communication from school to home is likely a linguistic challenge and concern for English as well as French school boards given the increasing number of parents who do not speak the language of the school.

School Liaison

Hornby’s second need is for a parent-to-educator contact or liaison with the educator throughout the year. According to the data, this need was commendably met for the majority of NF parents. It was effective because written and verbal communication continued in French for those parents who understood the language, but the school liaison/teacher was able to communicate in person and in English when necessary. Parents appreciated the effort made by teachers and administrators to speak privately with them in English at the school or on the phone and to use English during parent-teacher interviews. The NF parents also benefitted from
educators presenting abbreviated summaries of the main points in English at meet-the-teacher and open-house sessions at the school.

Hornby emphasized the importance of a healthy parent-to-educator liaison, and the data show this need was met relatively well. However, Hornby’s model does not explain how to ensure a successful relationship with a liaison. In this study, it appears that certain NF parents were able to develop a level of trust with classroom teachers who encouraged them to write notes, make phone calls, and send emails in English. It also helped when the parent was able to participate in parent-teacher interviews in English. Parents are not all able to be involved in the same way at home and at school. Therefore, a teacher encouraging the parents to communicate with the school in different ways acknowledges that the parents are important partners in the child’s education and makes the parent feel welcomed. Additionally, repeated contact (Hands, 2009) helps to build trust between the parents and the teachers. Hence, it is important for educators to continue to invite parents throughout the school year and help reinforce a welcoming school climate. Another important point is for parents to know who to contact at the school as a liaison (Liu, 2016; Paik, 2011), especially if a teacher in the French school is not comfortable with the language of the parent or is unable to communicate in English. Paik (2011) and Liu (2016) suggested that school personnel partner with parents and appoint a parent liaison per school to help overcome language barriers. Welcoming and connecting with parents at the school with a greeting or smile would be expected of all personnel, not just the liaison. The liaison, administrators, and teachers could stay in touch with NF parents and invite them to share their needs throughout the school year.
Educational Workshops

Hornby’s PI model suggested that many parents would need and benefit from being involved in parent focused workshops or education. The majority of the NF parents were not able to participate in workshops focused on parent education at the school, either because there were no workshops or they were offered in French. Parent educational workshops are important for the NF parent and for all parents involved in a minority-language school. It is necessary for the school board and schools to share with NF parents the recommendations that have been made for actions that a parent can take to help a child value and develop French as a minority language (Landry, 2010; Taylor, 2007; Voir Grand, 2007). Many of the NF parents will only know how to help specific to French education if they receive resources and strategies from the school or school board. Ideally, information or workshop sessions would be offered to parents when the child is accepted to the school and throughout different ages or grade levels. All parents, and especially NF parents, could benefit from sessions where they learn about the literacy and numeracy goals at each grade level and how to help the children at home (MacPhee et al., 2013). Parents could benefit from learning about additive bilingualism, the mandate of the French school, and activities and resources that promote use of French outside of the classroom (Landry, 2010). The NF parents, in particular, may not know about the French radio or television programs to access, and likely all parents could use recommendations of internet sites and program applications in French that are enjoyable and helpful for students or parents. In the past, some workshops for NF parents to learn basic French have been offered in schools and community centers and more French courses could be extremely useful. Finally, NF parents could be involved offering workshops to school personnel or parents. Educators would have the opportunity to hear about the successes and challenges experienced by NF parents. Educators
and other parents would have a chance to ask questions and share information. Such workshops would address the needs of the parents as well as the needs of the school.

Opportunely, since the data collection for this study ended, access to PI workshops in English may be increasing because personnel in PEI French schools have begun delivery of a program (D. Ouellette, personal communication, November 1, 2017) inspired by and similar to the *Voir Grand* (CNPF, 2007). Parents have been invited to attend bilingual sessions and NF and Francophone parents consider strategies and discuss the importance of helping their child hear and use French outside of school hours.

In order to ensure that NF parents are well-informed, it is vital to function in English or bilingually, ensuring that a school liaison or a translator be present for these parent sessions. To encourage parents to attend workshops, it is important that the timing of the sessions align with the availability of parents. For example, parent workshop sessions could be offered in the evenings and childcare or a meal could be provided (MacPhee et al., 2013). The same session could be offered each year and new parents encouraged to attend. Additionally, sessions could be videotaped and uploaded to school websites to ensure accessibility of this information to all parents. The data show that NF parents, in many ways, are in greater need of these workshops, nonetheless, Francophone parents may also benefit from the content and strategies shared online.

**Parent Support**

Hornby believed that some parents would profit from counselling or meeting with other parents with similar interests or needs. Most of the NF parents reported having no meetings to address a specific need beyond educator and parent meetings for students with learning difficulties. Parent support was not evident beyond parent committees that met in English in two of the schools. Interestingly, a comment I heard frequently at the end of focus group discussions
was that NF parents found the discussion of their needs and the strategies they used as NF parents was helpful for them. Many parents also wished for a parent-partner or buddy to be recommended by the school so they could have someone to ask for help or get information.

Participant comments about benefiting from discussions with other NF parents and wishing for someone with whom to partner aligns with studies that show that parent-to-parent relationships are a form of social capital and support student achievement in school (Coleman, 1988; Preston, 2011, 2012). The NF parents wanted support from and to develop relationships with both Francophone and NF parents. Developing networks of NF parents and creating heterogeneous groups of Francophone and NF parents could help meet communication and belonging needs for parents as well as improve academic assistance at home. Parent support networks could also help reduce some of the burden for French school personnel to translate materials or offer parent sessions where resources are limited. Thus, schools could help meet parent needs by inviting parents to a NF parent night where they could exchange ideas with each other and as well as with a member of the school or school board. The NF parents could help each other, because they understand the specific challenges of not being proficient in French and school personnel could offer resources or strategies with which the NF parents may not be familiar. Where research has revealed that stronger social connections between parents can positively affect student achievement, there is a need identified by this research for French schools to tap into the potential of parent-to-parent social connections and support.

**Parent Contributions**

The second section of Hornby’s model addresses parent contributions. The parent contributions that will be discussed here are sharing information about the child, helping at home, helping at school, and participating at school meetings and policy decisions.
Sharing Information about Child

The Hornby PI model (2011) indicated that all parents can contribute to student learning in four important ways. First, parents contribute by sharing information, such as the children’s strengths, preferences, and medical information. Sharing information was the contribution that was the easiest for NF parents, because the majority of them communicated in English with the educators. The NF parents felt it was acceptable to direct information to teachers or administration in person, by email, or by writing notes to the teacher in English. Parents felt effective in this type of contribution communicating with the school.

Hornby’s model is based on a partnership model, acknowledging the expertise of both the teacher and the parent. The parent is an expert about the child and can easily share the child’s interests and challenges while the teacher is expected to have educational expertise. Given the increasing diversity in French school classrooms, it might be advantageous for the teachers, especially in the primary grades, to offer a meet-the-family-night (Pushor, 2010). At this session, parents could share with others present some information about the child, their family, the languages spoken at home, their heritage, their motivation for enrolling at a French school, and how they would like to be involved at home and at school. Educators would have a better understanding of the students, their backgrounds, and for planning activities for the year. An occasion such as this would establish a trusting, welcoming parent-teacher relationship, because the teacher would recognize the realities of the student and parent and the parent would feel a connection with the teacher. Teachers would know which parents could act as a resource in the classroom and which parents would require additional resources to help at home. Parents would also have an opportunity to meet other parents and establish relationships built on a communicative shared experience rather than recognizing a face when briefly passing in the
classroom or school hallway. Hornby recommended parents share information, and I believe most schools, and especially French schools could go even farther to benefit themselves and families by organizing events that nurture knowing and supporting the students and parents.

**Helping at Home**

A second way parents contribute is to support children’s learning at home by scaffolding school learning. Most NF parents were collaborating in a variety of ways at home. However, many felt challenged or left out, were not as involved as they believed they could be, and needed more information about how to help linguistically and academically. Parents listened to young children read in French, but many felt they were not able to help the children with French pronunciation. Parents also read out lists of vocabulary words to help prepare children for spelling tests and worried they were mispronouncing the words or felt resistance from the children because they were indeed mispronouncing the words. Educators could suggest to parents to access French pronunciation of words on the internet and/or to use recorded stories and audio books to help children in French at home. While this may seem obvious to trained educators, this knowledge is not second nature to most parents. Moreover, Cummins (2000) discussed how parents contribute to second language acquisition when they strengthen the first language by providing rich linguistic experiences. Thus, NF parents could benefit by knowing how to enrich literacy at home in English or in the home language, as well as in French, therein alleviating some of the parent worry about not being able to help in French.

**Helping at School**

A third form of parental contribution is for parents to act as a resource at the school. Few NF parents acted as a school resource, because they felt they could not function in French at the school. Many desired greater involvement and wanted to help in the classroom, go on school
trips, and support other parents. If teachers or administrators found ways that NF parents were able to help in the classroom or at the school, this resource activity at the school would build social connections for parents with educators and familiarize parents with the curriculum. Parents could also help at the school by offering to assist other NF parents. Research focused on school and community involvement (Hands, 2009) highlighted the importance of building trust between partners and specified that repeated interactions build trust. Fenlon (2005) recommended that parents be invited into schools at the beginning of the child’s educational journey to start building the parent-school relationship and empowering parents when children enter kindergarten. The participants from this study who had children in French preschool confirmed having had a more positive experience once children arrived in the school system. Several NF parents acknowledged noticing a favorable shift in attitude at the French schools and, recently, NF parents noted that English was more often used in communication with them and that they felt more welcomed in the school and on field trips than they had in the past.

Hornby’s model encourages parents to help at school, which is an assumption that parents can function in the language of the school. Given that this study showed that the majority of NF parents did not feel able to help at the school, Hornby’s model could be improved by addressing the language of parents and suggesting strategies to be involved at the school.

**School Meetings and Policy Development**

The fourth way parents can contribute is to participate in committees, policy development, or decision making at the school. During interviews, no parent mentioned contributing to policy formation or decision making, though some had attended parent committee meetings. Although a few parents mentioned that their involvement at the French school and with committees helped improve their French, most of the parent committees were conducted in
French, which posed a barrier that prevented NF parents from participating. Participants in focus groups stated they would appreciate being involved in parent committees where NF parents were actively involved in helping make decisions that concern their children at the school.

Inviting and encouraging NF parent involvement on committees and for policy development could contribute to improved understanding of NF parent needs and how to help reduce barriers to PI at the school and at home. Parent input at school or board meetings could contribute to improved strategies for communication and identifying resources that would be helpful for NF parents. The involvement of NF parents on committees and in policy development could also help the NF parent understand the challenges of the French school in a minority-language context. Open communication between Francophone and NF parents in meetings could help NF parents understand, for example, the fear held by some Francophones that Anglo-dominant students in French classes, hallways, and playgrounds may have an anglicizing effect or that they may use the limited resources available to Francophone students who are right-holders. As a result of improved understanding, NF parents may encourage their children more to strictly use French at school and to promote more French activities for the child at home from an early age. Parent involvement is especially important to consider since the parents are expected to be heavily involved and have the right to governance in French minority-language schools (Rocque, 2006).

**Theoretical Implications of Hornby’s Model for Parent Involvement**

Hornby’s model (2011) was effective for categorizing and analyzing the various types of involvement of NF parents, but in applying this model to the results of my study, only two of Hornby’s eight ways to facilitate PI were functional for most NF parents with children in French schools. Given the large body of research that demonstrates that PI has a positive impact on
student and school success, there is room for significant improvement with the involvement of NF parents whose children are enrolled in French minority-language schools. One aspect of Hornby’s model (2011) I wish to highlight is that it is based on a partnership model where “professionals are viewed as experts on education and parents are viewed as experts on their children” (p. 29). In a partnership, both partners are expected to work together to build trust, respect, confidence, communication, long-term commitment, equality, and advocacy for the optimal education for the children (Hornby, 2011). In the French minority-language school there is a need for parents and teachers to work together as partners with home, school, and the community (Landry, 2010) to achieve the mandate of quality French education and development of the Francophone community. The partnership model permits different perspectives to be considered. For example, according to Hornby (2011), parent education “can be organized from the perspective of the consumer model with parents stipulating what guidance or input they need. Alternatively, … organized from the perspective of the expert model with teachers specifying what parents need to learn” (p. 31). This type of collaboration working in both directions would be appropriate for use in French minority-language education to permit parents and educators to work together to meet communication and educational needs and assist students.

Hornby’s model (2011) was an effective tool for the analysis of the PI data. However, I suggest that the model be expanded to include a ninth component, an overarching explicit objective for schools or school boards to establish a PI policy, which should be developed with parent input and monitored regularly to confirm school usage of the 8 strategies designed to enhance PI. I argue that this model ought to be expanded with a PI policy that aims to, among other things, augment communication strategies to facilitate involvement of parents who are not proficient in the school’s main language of instruction. Although Hornby (2011) addressed the
importance of paying attention to the needs of diverse parents and suggested the need for a policy that encourages PI, neither of these components was included in his model for PI. I also recommend that in Hornby’s model for PI, the category of channels of communication needs to be amended slightly to ensure effective communication for parents, including those who are not proficient in the language of the school.

The NF parents in this study wanted to be involved in the education of their children. Although they were experts about their children, they did not feel competent to be involved at home, at the school, or in the community. Hornby’s model (2011) is about parents making contributions as well as educators meeting parent needs. If a school were to put strategies into practice to meet the four needs of parents, the NF parents would be empowered for greater involvement. Educators have to make an effort to inform parents how to help in different ways. There is a layer of responsibility for teachers and schools to reach out to parents to identify what interest they have in being involved and what needs they have to enhance their involvement. Parents will contribute to the best of their ability; however, when presented with strategies, resources, and information from the school, the parent ability to contribute will be greatly enhanced. Hornby (2011) discussed barriers to PI in Chapter 2 of his book prior to introducing his PI model in Chapter 3. It is important for educators to be aware of the parent and family, child, parent-teacher, and societal factors or barriers that need consideration when reaching out to meet parent needs.

There are times when the parent will have educational expertise or input to offer and the educator will have social or psychological observations about the child to share with the parent. Therefore, I find Hornby’s explanation overly simplified to say that the teachers are the school experts and the parents are the child experts in a school-parent partnership. Many parents can
relay academic details to teachers. Parents may actually have more academic knowledge than some teachers in certain areas. In minority French schools, many of the teachers have chosen the French school for their own children, thus the parents are also teachers. Using myself as another example, I have years of experience teaching French as a second language, have developed expertise around minority-language education theory and pedagogy, and work in French teacher preparation. I would be able to make suggestions or have expertise to offer, as well as be a caregiver. In turn, Hornby’s explanation that an ideal school-parent partnership is one where the teacher is the professional and the parent is the caregiver and envoy of information may need revisions. It would be helpful for educators to consider drawing on students and their families as resources to make curriculum connections and, in doing so, enhance family involvement.

Using theoretical models from the research literature to analyze the data permitted me to consider the research findings from different angles and through different lenses, and I was able to assess the Model for PI (Hornby, 2011) and the ACB components of the SED model (Landry, et al., 2007b). Both models worked well as perspectives from which to view the data. Hornby’s model permitted a distinct separation of the data into different types of PI and served to highlight two activities that promoted PI and six actions that needed improvement. The ACB components of the SED model (Landry et al., 2007b) were useful for organizing and understanding the NF parents’ experiences and involvement and decreased sense of ACB. However, I found that both models need to be updated to reflect the increasing diversity in schools.

**Differentiated Parent Support Model**

As an alternative to modifying existing models, I propose a new theoretical model that builds on the theories in French minority-language education, the research about PI and the barriers parents face that reduce PI, as well as the findings from these NF parent data. This
model attempts to account for the increasing diversity of parents. The differentiated parent support model creates a framework to encourage schools to offer differentiated support to parents to reduce barriers to PI and to welcome and support all parents, including those parents who are not proficient in the school language. This model takes into consideration numerous factors that affect PI, including different types of parents, diverse types of involvement, differentiated support for parents to enhance French linguistic and identity development for students, teacher and administrative responsibilities, and the importance of a PI policy.

Following the presentation of the model in Figure 5, I discuss how the combination of these components can promote French ethnolinguistic vitality. The term ACB used in this model, inspired by Landry, et al. (2007b) who referred to the ACB needs for language use, refers to the autonomy, competence, and sense of belonging of parents who have children in the French minority-language school. I propose that the ACB of parents can be enhanced by school efforts to offer differentiated parent support, which can have a positive impact on PI and parent motivation to choose or continue with French language school.
I developed this differentiated parent support model after contemplating the theory of the counterbalance (Landry & Allard, 1990) and SED models (Landry et al., 2007b) and the demographics in French minority-language education as well as Hornby’s model for parent involvement.

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7 Visuals of the Model designed by John Fox
involvement (2011). As mentioned earlier, there are many factors that reduce or impede PI. On the left side of the model, I have included Hornby’s (2011) four broad categories of barriers/elements that could impact PI: parent and family factors, child factors, parent-teacher factors, and societal factors discussed in Chapter 2. I chose to display the factors as determinants that affect PI as a reminder to educators to remain flexible with expectations held for parents and PI, because parents have differing capacities. From my data, the low French proficiency of NF parents, which creates a language and communication barrier, limited autonomy, and limited feelings of competency, would fit in the category of parent and family factors. The decreased sense of belonging for NF parents at a French school would fall into parent-teacher and societal factors.

In my model, the long arrow along the base and curving upward on the right side represents the school with the solid, thick base line indicating the implementation of a PI policy as a foundation at the French school board and schools, which aims to encourage PI by attending to parent needs and encouraging parental contributions. The policy encompasses Hornby’s (2011) eight actions to enhance PI, including the use of diverse strategies for effective school communication with parents, options for liaison between educators and parents, occasional parent workshops or support groups, and parents contributing information, collaborating at home, acting as a resource at school and participating in committees and decision-making at school. Schools would implement practices based on this policy to enable PI, using strategies to accommodate parents who are not proficient in the school language.

In my differentiated parent support model, I have borrowed the image of a balance beam from the counterbalance model (Landry & Allard, 1990). That model had, along with school and community, a family component, which did not take into account different types of parents.
outside of the exogamous family. Thus, I attempt with my model to include families with all
types of parents who may have a child in a French minority-language school. I have placed types
of parents according to French proficiency along the teeter-totter beam. The people figures
represent a possible parent or couple on a continuum from Francophone proficiency to no French
proficiency.

I included five types of parents in this new model: an endogamous family with two
Francophone parents or a single Francophone parent; a couple with one Francophone and one NF
parent where both have French proficiency or a single NF parent with French proficiency; an
exogamous couple with one Francophone and one non-French proficient NF parent; two NF
parents, one of whom has French proficiency; and one or two parents, neither of whom have
French proficiency. The parent figures are aligned starting from least French proficiency at the
top of the beam, to greatest French proficiency on the bottom. The bottom figures have a greater
degree of French proficiency and Francophone identity, cultural knowledge, and a familiarity
with French schools and the Francophone community, which is likely to be greater in an
endogamous household. I have made two assumptions. First, French competency is an asset, and
not a barrier, to PI. Second, Francophones and parents with French proficiency can and do use
some French at home and at school.

There are arrows that point from the school on the right side toward the parents in the
middle and to the left to indicate educators help meet parent needs with appropriate resources,
communication strategies, education, and support offered for parents. I assume that average
school assistance and communication would be given to or be required by French proficient
families who are situated lower down on the balance beam and likely feel greater autonomy,
competence, and belonging. This school support is indicated by a short, narrow arrow pointing
from school to family. More (medium) support, in the form of resources and communication strategies, may be required for families higher up the beam, again with the assumption that less proficiency in French would be a barrier to involvement and feeling autonomy, competence, and belonging. This support is indicated by a medium-sized arrow pointing from school to families. Extra (high) school support, in the form of resources, communication strategies, and parent education or counselling is required for families at the top, where French competency is limited or non-existent. Some of the support for parents could be provided by other parents. The extra support indicated by the longest and widest arrow from school to family would strengthen NF parents’ sense of autonomy, competence, and belonging.

The letters ACB that appear with school support on the right side of the model are borrowed from the self-determination and ethnolinguistic development (SED) model. Landry, et al. (2007b) spoke about the role of these basic feelings in developing an identity with a minority group and increasing the motivation to use a language. The ACB refer to a sense of autonomy, competence, and belonging that a school can help create for the parents as well as the students. Attending to these ACB feelings can help motivated parents to develop their identity as a member of the minority group and maintain their commitment to retaining their children in the French school system. If parents do not feel welcome and are unable to help their children, they may remove their children from the school (Dalley & St-Onge, 2008).

Descending on the left side of the model is a downward arrow that indicates the degree of support and types of PI required by parents to adequately assist their child in French minority-language education. The longer distance downward required by the non-French proficient parent indicates that a greater amount of effort is required from NF parents to be involved helping with homework, exposing children to French outside of school hours, and to participating at school
and community events. The French proficient figures on the bottom of the beam likely require less deliberate effort as French proficient parents to help children with school work and to be involved at school or in the French community.

I summarize this differentiated parent support model with a premise that parents who have less proficiency in the language of the school need more support from educators to meet their needs and to optimize their involvement. In the next section, I make recommendations for policies and practices to implement in French minority-language schools to improve PI.

**Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

Many of the recommended initiatives to help NF parents in French minority-language education, such as those suggested by Taylor (2003, 2007), have not emerged out of empirical research. Therefore, I aim to offer empirically based suggestions. The recommendations I make here come from this dissertation study and target enhanced involvement of parents in their child’s education. Parent involvement, by extension, will enrich the academic, cultural, and linguistic development for students in French schools. While contexts are different and the number of participants in this study does not warrant generalization of the findings, I believe that many recommendations will resonate in a variety of minority French contexts across Canada. French schools in Alberta (Rocque, 2006), New Brunswick (Cormier, 2015) and other Canadian provinces (Vincent, 2010) are hosting an increasing population of NF students and parents. Minority-language French school and school board personnel need research findings and strategies to develop policies and practices to effectively deal with the changing demographics in French schools.

While there are policies and practices in place to maintain the minority-language school as a predominantly French space, given the data and the diverse clientele, these policies and
practices should also welcome and integrate the NF parents and students they serve, along with Francophone parents and students. The following recommendations for policies and practices are based on my findings and are intended to support school governance, administrators, and educators to address PI barriers, therein enhancing involvement of NF parents. I draw on Hornby’s (2011) eight ways to improve PI as a way to frame and organize the policy and practice suggestions and maximize the benefit from parent contributions and meeting parent needs.

**Improving the Involvement of NF Parents**

The French minority-language school exists to maintain, and, in some cases, revitalize the French language and culture in minority contexts. It is encouraging to report that some positive work to encourage PI in French schools started on PEI while I was carrying out the dissertation research and the complex analysis. For example, PEI has begun to use a francisation program in the six French minority-language schools and a 0.5 francisation teaching position has been allocated in each school. The NF parents in the early grades are asked to share information about their family from the beginning to help teachers understand the needs of students in their classrooms. Additionally, all of the French schools have begun or completed a series of bilingual presentations similar to *Voir Grand* (CNPF, 2007) where they invite parents and explain the double mandate of the school and explore how all parents can assist and encourage use of the French language. There is still room for improvement, and I have referred to the data from this study to make recommendations to further enhance PI in minority-language schools.

Parents are key participants in children’s education and are valuable partners who contribute to the school’s mission. The following suggestions directly respond to the needs of the growing NF population of parents in French schools; however, many of the practices would
likely benefit all parents in French minority-language schools. The recommendations emerged from aspects of the data (i.e., voices of the participants) combined with the ideas threaded throughout the associated research literature.

**Recommendation 1**

The data suggested that NF parents wanted to be more welcomed, valued, and involved in the French minority-language schools than they currently were. Hornby (2011) suggested that schools need to create and enforce a policy about PI in order to enhance PI. As per my earlier suggestion to modify Hornby’s PI model (2011) by including an explicit PI policy, I recommend that:

1. The French minority-language school board and schools optimize PI and establish a PI policy. The way each school would address such a policy would probably differ. Nonetheless, the PI policy would be aimed at valuing and facilitating parent involvement at home, at school, and in the community. The policy should be developed with parent input and include monitoring of the policy implementation in schools. In particular, one of the first steps to establishing this policy would be to collect starting point data about what is presently working and not working in each school with regard to PI. To collect data, a school review could be done on each school in the province. To do so:

   - An outside agency could initiate school surveys with parents to collect data in each school while simultaneously conducting focus group and individual interviews with parents, students, educators, and community members. The school review could also involve analysis of school documents related to PI. A policy would be established based on the data and the principal or an appointed PI liaison from each school would monitor if schools follow the policy and report to the school board on an annual basis.
Recommendation 2

The data showed that communication in French was a barrier for many NF parents. The literature and PI documents state that all parents need open channels of communication with the school and staff (Epstein, 2011; Hornby, 2011). In French schools on PEI, there are many NF parents, and the majority of these parents are not proficient with the French language. Therefore, to maintain effective communication with parents, it is recommended that:

2. The French school board modify the last line of its existing language policy that insists that school and board communication be exclusively in French (Politique linguistique et culturelle, 2009). The policy should encourage educators to recognize the importance of meeting the communication and information needs of the growing NF clientele, which is no longer an exceptional circumstance. Although this modification is delicate and complex, the parents in this study pleaded for differentiated practices to support their communication needs. In particular, the NF parents articulated clearly that they feel a need for communication in English or in a format they can translate. In doing so, they would be better informed and better able to assist their children. The parents offered the following practical strategies for communication:

- Deliver newsletters, school notices, or permission forms in electronic versions or online, available in both official languages, and/or an easy-to-translate format. French material and website pages should be available online in a format that can be translated or with a translation function;
- Suggest people for NF parents to contact for assistance by phone or in person;
- Pair parents for support to seek information or get help assisting with homework;
• Provide an English written or oral summary of important points being shared during French meetings with parents.

**Recommendation 3**

In the literature, Hornby (2011) said that most parents require meetings or discussions with personnel at the school throughout the school year. The data revealed that many NF parents on PEI were not able to participate in a discussion in French and nearly one-quarter of the participants did not attend school meetings, because they could not understand what was said. In order to facilitate NF parent participation in meetings or discussions, the participants recommended that:

3. The French school board and schools encourage dialogue between NF parents and educators with practices that include, but are not limited to:
   - Establish and implement strategies at each school with educators and parents for improved NF parent communication and involvement, including for NF parents whose children have learning difficulties or require frequent updates;
   - Ensure a liaison agent and some bilingual personnel to talk with parents or to offer translations;
   - Hold parent-teacher interviews bilingually or in English for NF parents;
   - Provide a blank English version of the report card available on school websites so that parents can ensure that they understand the child’s report.

**Recommendation 4**

Hornby (2011) stated that many parents need education or workshops on topics of interest and that some parents need counselling or parent support groups. NF parents in this research indicated that they have specific needs, including learning how to help their children in
French at home, how to be more involved at school and in community, and how to gain more knowledge about the options available for French high school education. Parents also need to understand their role and be aware of diverse strategies to encourage the use of French outside of school through different ages and grade levels. At a school and provincial level, there is a need for resources to be made available to NF parents who are considering, or have already made, the choice of a French school. Therefore, based on the literature and the data, I recommended that:

4. The French school board identify and distribute a range of NF parent resources and that the school board or schools offer workshops for NF parents. Participants made the following suggestions to enhance parent education and involvement:

- Provide NF parents with guidance about what to expect as their children are involved in French minority-language education and how to help at different grade levels;

- Suggest programs such as *Petits Pas* or *Voir Grand* for parents to use at home;

- Offer parent workshops or parent information sessions in English, or bilingually, for NF groups throughout the year;

- Hold an English open-house session at the beginning of the year while the French session takes place: explaining the mandate of the French minority-language schools and the role of NF parents to support French education; suggesting strategies and resources to access (radio, music, games, media) for encouraging children to use French outside of the classroom;

- Conduct parent orientations prior to kindergarten, Grade 7, and Grade 10. Parents want to know how to get students off to a good start as well as how to choose a French or English intermediate or high school. Sessions for NF parents (and all parents) to discuss what is available in intermediate and senior levels will help parents
gain knowledge as well as a sense of belonging and provide an opportunity to meet
and make connections with other parents and teachers;

- Organize sessions for NF parents to meet and share strategies with other parents;
- Offer voluntary French classes for parents.

**Recommendation 5**

In his discussion of parental contributions, Hornby (2011) emphasized that all parents can contribute to school and student progress by sharing details about their children with school personnel. Parents in this research reported being hesitant to contact schools when they needed help because they had to do so in English or would need to ask for information in English. Given the literature, the experiences of NF parents, and the linguistic diversity of the parents of students in French schools on PEI, I recommended that:

5. French schools explicitly inform NF parents about the expectations for language use and suggest strategies to facilitate communication with administrators and teachers, to encourage NF parent communication with school personnel. The way each school would address this would probably differ based on school population and staff perspectives. Some schools may wish to have greetings and brief conversations with NF parents in French in the hallways and ask parents to restrict the use of English to offices or classrooms. Other schools may prefer to greet and hold discussions with parents in English at any location within the school. The NF parents recommended that:

- Communication from the school either be sent in a bilingual format or be sent electronically in a format that is easy for parents to cut and paste into a translation program.
**Recommendation 6**

Most parents contribute to student learning and school success by helping at home with school work or with behavior programs (Hornby, 2011). The NF parents in this research were involved at home, yet had a decreased sense of competency and autonomy. They clearly wanted to be more involved. Use of French outside of school is also important for continued French language development of students in minority French contexts. Therefore, to optimize the home involvement of NF parents, I draw on parent suggestions and the literature to recommend that:

6. The French school board and French schools provide a written set of guidelines for parents along with workshop sessions to help NF parents assist their children at home. The NF parents offered the following practices to enhance their involvement at home:

- Reassure parents that children will learn the French language regardless of parent language competency;

- Suggest resources such as computer programs or online sites for translation, pronunciation, and French help at home; ensuring translation functions on school websites to translate to different home languages;

- Share suggestions about French radio, television, website, game and music sites and extracurricular activities and community events in French; updating a blog or page on school websites with age and grade appropriate suggestions, in a bilingual or translation format;

- Ensure promotions about community events happening in French are accessible to NF parents in a bilingual format or in a format that can be translated to English.
**Recommendation 7**

According to Hornby’s model (2011), many parents contribute as a helpful resource at schools where they help in the classroom, fundraise, or assist other parents. Many of the participants in this research wanted to be more involved at the school, but they had a decreased sense of involvement and belonging, because they felt that their French was sub-standard. Effort is required in the French minority-language schools to reduce PI barriers and encourage school involvement and a sense of connection for NF parents, while maintaining French. Therefore, based on the literature and the data, I recommend that:

7. The French schools establish practices of holding school and community activities that incite parent attendance/involvement, foster a sense of belonging and welcome, and offer a period of time for social connection with other parents throughout the school year, especially for parents with children in early grades. Parents made the following suggestions for boosting their involvement at school:

- Host an Anglophone parent night where the NF parents can discuss involvement strategies and concerns;
- Use a parent-pairing program between NF parents and parents with French proficiency, which provides social contacts and information resources for NF parents to ask questions and discuss involvement strategies;
- Encourage parents who can to use French and reassuring those who need to use English that educators can arrange times to meet or find ways to communicate with parents in English;
- Invite NF parents to be involved in English classes and projects;
• Acknowledge and applaud the presence of NF parents at events or offering an occasional English song or brief introduction during concerts, Christmas or musical presentations;

• Consider longer parent-teacher interviews for NF parents who may have more questions, need more guidance, and take the time to inquire if the parent can be involved some way;

• Continue opportunities for parent involvement and communication in intermediate and senior grades;

• Survey parents for their interest in being involved to see what contributions they feel able to make and when that involvement is possible;

• Invite NF parents to be involved in class or school activities and offer any French vocabulary required for the NF parent.

Recommendation 8

The eighth of Hornby’s PI actions proposes that some parents can contribute at school meetings, in parent committees, and during policy discussions or parent support groups. Many of the NF parents in this research wanted to be more involved in parent committees and to have their voices and needs as NF parents acknowledged. However, the parent involvement was limited by the language barrier they faced. Parents also hesitated to reach out and ask for help, because they wanted to respect the policies and practices in a French school. Therefore, based on the literature and the voices of the NF parents, I recommend that:

8. The French school board encourage occasional board level and school level meetings and parent committee meetings solely in English or bilingually with the explicit purpose of inviting NF parents to dialogue and offer input. These sessions could be separate from the
French meetings that already take place and would involve NF parents in discussions about policy or parent needs and support. A sub-recommendation is that the school board clarifies NF parent roles and responsibilities: how to support the global development of the child and help the child develop the French language and culture (FON–102, FON–103, CSLF, 2009). Some practices, inspired by the parents’ recommendations, could include, but are not limited to:

- Encourage discussion with NF parents about their role in minority school governance, different approaches to address NF parent needs for assisting children in a French education and promoting French language and cultural development in varied contexts, the strategies and resources that could be useful for parents, and the procedures to preserve minority-language schools as a predominantly French space;

- Organize some parent committees or sub-committees to function bilingually or in English at the school level to include the NF parents.

In order for the NF parents to be key players in strengthening the students, school, and community in a minority-language context, the parents need to be supported. As expressed by Bernard (1997), as ethnolinguistic vitality weakens, the demands on French schools increases, and the role of the French school is considerably more important for the preservation of the

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8 la famille et la communauté : des partenaires de premier plan • l’école de langue française doit pouvoir compter sur les milieux familial et communautaire dans son rôle de développement global et intégral de l’enfant, and À l’endroit du parent : • agir comme partenaire essentiel dans le développement intellectuel et culturel des jeunes, • maintenir une attitude positive à l’égard des apprentissages langagiers de son enfant, • entretenir une communication efficace avec le personnel de l’école, et • demeurer conscient du rôle qu’il doit jouer pour aider son enfant à s’épanouir dans la langue française et la culture acadienne et francophone. [The family and community are important partners; the French school must be able to count on the family and community to share a role in a global and holistic development of the child; the parent must act as an essential partner in the intellectual and cultural development and help maintain a positive attitude toward language learning for the child; parents must stay conscious of their role to play in helping the child develop the French language and Acadian and francophone culture; loose translation]
community. However, where ethnolinguistic vitality is low, the school has fewer resources to respond to the enormous expectations of that community; it is quite a paradox. As mentioned earlier, the recommendations offered here respond to the needs of NF parents, but many of them could assist all parents. Most of these initiatives would benefit parents at home and outside of school hours, and have less of an anglicizing effect on the school environment for regular day-to-day functioning.

**Taboo Topics or Time for Action?**

Based on the research, I have shared recommendations for policy and practices to reach out to NF parents, optimize PI, and keep French schools predominantly French spaces. However, others (Rocque, 2006; Taylor, 2003) have made similar recommendations and the implementation of the practices has been slow. Or, if recommendations have been taken up in certain regions, such as the area where parent research was conducted in Alberta (Rocque, 2006; Taylor, 2003), the effects have not expanded across the country. Many of the topics recommended here for consideration and planning have been written about since the 1999 study of the *Motivations for School Choices by Eligible Parents Outside Quebec* by the Office of Commissioner of Official Languages, and, more recently, by CTF (Vincent, 2010), Glen Taylor, (2000, 2002, 2007, 2015) and Jules Rocque (2006, 2015). Has the call to action to provide resources and support to NF parents been so slow because it is taboo to discuss the presence and needs of NF parents? Has there been a lack of interest on behalf of the school board, administration, and teachers? Or, is there a lack of resources to support French minority-language schools? Because numbers of NF parents and students are now so high on PEI, and growing here and elsewhere, it is critical to openly discuss how French schools welcome and accommodate NF parents and students and maintain French. This discussion needs to include
ideas about how to facilitate communication with NF parents, how to encourage PI, and to do so without anglicizing the French school environment (O'Keefe, 2001; Thériault, 1999).

**Recommendation for National Collaboration**

For individual schools and provinces, what appears to have been a slow, piecemeal approach to support NF parents and French schools would be stronger and more effective with all Canadian French minority-language education partners working together. Collaboration among French school boards (Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires Francophones, FNCSF) and French community and parent groups (la Fédération des communautés Francophones et acadienne du Canada (FCFA); la Commission nationale des parents Francophones, CNPF) would facilitate researching, developing, and sharing strategies and resources, such as parent guides and parent workshops or sessions. Resources are needed to develop regional and national support for French school boards, administrators, teachers, and NF parents across Canada. As reported in the St. John’s French newspaper (*Le Gaboteur*, 2016):

It is time Anglophone parents may be seen as contributing to the vitality of French in Canada, because even though many exogamous families do not transmit French to children, the number of families who do has doubled in Newfoundland and Labrador alone. (p. 8)

Partnering across provinces and school boards could facilitate this process of sharing resources, similar to the success reported by Taylor (2003) when guides for exogamous couples were distributed by the CNPF in some regions. This quote from CMEC (2004) proposed enhancing education in minority schools and calls for all partners to collaborate:

The paradigm shift required to meet minority education needs will be possible only if all partners involved contribute to the shift. Educators, parents, and other members of the
community all have a specific role to play in developing, maintaining, and enriching French language schools in Canada. The Francophone minority owes it to itself to work collectively and concertedly to be better equipped to break out of isolation, meet educational challenges, and promote quality and excellence in its institutions. (p. 45)

I argue that there can be a win–win–win situation if the school personnel and NF clientele learn how to increase PI, enhance learning in French, and avoid an anglicization of the French school. For example:

- the NF parent and child with past French heritage reclaim the French language and culture and all the advantages that come with bilingualism;
- the NF child, and to some extent, the NF parent without a French heritage gain a second language as well as a broader cultural perspective and identity with the numerous benefits of bilingualism; and
- the French families maintain their language and culture while the school succeeds in having more students learning French and contributing to the French community.

It is important for the PEI French school board and other French school boards to have and analyze these data about the demographics, beliefs, involvement, and experiences of NF parents. More broadly, the data are important to help educators and administrators consider how to help parents and students in the short and long term, as well as to prepare future school marketing. It is crucial that the resources be in place to equip the PEI CSLF and French school boards across Canada in the effort to meet the needs of the diverse population in the French minority-language schools and also maintain a French space in the schools. Collaboration among the various partners and appropriate funding are both necessary in order for the strategies and the material and human resources to be in place and be effective.
Rec
ommendation for Teacher Education and Resources for Parent Involvement

According to Hornby (2011), governments have PI policies rather than PI legislation and those policies often lack implementation strategies, sharing of information, and training; thus, they fail to reduce the barriers to PI. Item 57 in the PEI Education Act (2016) stated that parents have responsibilities:

(a) to act as the primary guide and decision-maker with respect to the student’s education;
(b) to take an active role in the student’s educational success, including assisting the student in complying with section 49;
(c) to ensure that the student attends school regularly;
(d) to ensure that the parent’s conduct contributes to a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment;
(e) to co-operate and collaborate with school staff to support the delivery of specialized supports and services to the student;
(f) to encourage, foster and advance collaborative, positive and respectful relationships with teachers, principals, other school staff and professionals providing supports and services in the school; and
(g) to engage in the student’s school community. (p. 29)

Given the direction but lack of details in this statement about how parents meet their responsibilities, there is a need to develop a PI policy and to implement practices and resources in the French minority-language school, which would help overcome the language barrier for many NF parents. This policy initiative could also enhance PI for francophone parents in these schools. Currently there is no obligatory training on PEI for teachers to work with parents.
Educator skills for collaboration and communication with parents generally, and with parents who do not speak the language of the school specifically, should be a part of every teacher education program as well as ongoing in-service professional development. Hornby (2011) explained that, economically, funds are rarely allotted to PI, because it is a long term process that will not have immediate effect on literacy and numeracy testing and goals, nor immediate positive reflection on current government initiatives. I argue that now is the time to implement policy and funding to promote PI and have short and long term improvement. The French schools require a PI policy, support practices, and adequate resources to offer quality French education.

Limitations and Reflections on the Research

As with all research, there were limitations in this research project. First, there was participation from approximately 25% of the possible NF parents on PEI, so I cannot generalize my findings to a larger population. The reports shared by parents reflected parent perceptions and memory, rather than experiences and involvement recorded in a log or diary. I did not require parents to use a log, which would provide more accurate information compared to memory recall, as well as decrease the tendency to over-report positive behavior for reasons of social desirability. Also, the NF participants reflected one region in Canada, and the number and percentage of NF parents and their experiences may vary in other regions. Nonetheless, I endeavored to share enough information about the context so that readers can gauge to what degree the findings could be transferable (Patton, 2015). One school was not represented by NF parent participation in the survey or interviews, preventing a system-wide perspective. Also, the survey sample size of 86 limited the inferential statistical analysis possible.
If I were to do the research again, I would change several aspects concerning the instruments, collection of data, and data analysis. For example, I would refine or add additional questions to query about heritage and accessing the school through a grandparent clause. I would also add cognitive development to the list of parent motivations for school choice and ask those parents who had considered moving a child to an English school to explain why. Additionally, I would visit the schools and hold sessions to inform and motivate NF parents about participating in the research rather than relying on the administration and social media to spread the invitation. Finally, I would try to develop a working relationship with a statistician to do deeper statistical analysis with the data.

One of the challenges using mixed methods research was the complexity of designing, conducting, analyzing, and interpreting both types of data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006). For example, there was variance in the qualitative and quantitative findings about the parent motivations for choice of school, which made analyzing the differences challenging. The weight parents attributed to the motivating factors for choice of school differed. This divergence could be seen as a limitation, but I also see it as an advantage of mixed methods research. If only the survey data or only the interview data had been available, a limited piece of the puzzle would have been revealed. Despite the limitations, my research was rigorous, answered many questions, and raised several new ones, which are discussed in the section below.

**Future Research**

This research has created an evidence base, which is useful for supporting new initiatives in French minority-language schooling. It would be useful to repeat this research in other minority-language contexts in Canada to compare the demographics, beliefs, involvement, and
experiences of NF parents across the country. However, to avoid relying exclusively on teacher or parent perceptions, I recommend the use of a parent log and teacher log in addition to the survey and focus groups. In this way, parents and teachers would keep track of PI activities in a record book or journal rather than relying on memory. Also, future research could be undertaken from a critical perspective, including an examination of the cultural, social, and linguistic capital of parents and how these issues intersect with PI. From another perspective, future research could examine the dynamics with power relations and social capital (Bourdieu, 1989, 1992), between speakers of the majority and minority language; Cowan and McLeod (2004) recommended the use of discourse analysis procedures to help reveal social processes and social reproduction that occur in focus group interactions. With respect to future quantitative research, I recommend performing confirmatory factor analysis of the survey findings with a larger sample.

The differentiated parent support model and the policy and practices recommended to enhance PI in French minority-language schools will need to be implemented and tested to confirm its applicability in French schools. Other future research should analyze: To whom are the French minority-language schools/school boards marketing their schools? How are schools welcoming, supporting, and retaining linguistically and culturally diverse families and parents and are there sufficient resources in place? How have French schools considered and acted on the (ACB) needs of parents, and how are they willing to support these needs? To what degree do parents feel welcome (belonging), involved (autonomous), and able (competent) to help their children (ACB) while attending French schools? What guide or sessions already exist to help French schools support NF parents? Future research could also examine the experience and involvement of Francophone parents. All of the above suggestions would delve more deeply into research similar to mine, but broader research is also required in the minority-language context.
As a result of court cases such as Mahé v. Alberta in 1990 (Mahé, 1990; Rocque, 2008) governance of the French minority-language schools has been granted to right-holder parents because the members of the minority will best know how to make decisions and recommendations for the minority. When there is an increasing number of right-holder parents who are members of the majority language, there may be a lack of understanding of the needs of the minority and how best to protect and promote the French language. Future research should examine how to balance this delicate topic of inviting the majority into the institution for the minority (Cormier, 2015) and how to encourage dialogue and decision-making conscientization of the minority-language situation and effective governance.

Denis (2011) pointed out the need for commitment of government to provide adequate resources to the French school boards to enable them to fulfill their mandate to repair past damage and provide minority-language education. The need for resources is greater in areas like PEI with less French ethnolinguistic vitality. Therefore, future research should investigate how federal and provincial Governments provide funding for school boards, such as the CSLF, and if funding is adequate. Such research could be in the form of document analysis or a literature review. Adequate funding is required to provide human and material resources to meet teacher and student learning needs in minority French contexts, respond to the needs of NF parents in the French education system, hire pedagogical and community development consultants (school liaison or liaison agent), ensure and promote the quality of English courses at intermediate and senior levels, and offer extracurricular programming similar to majority language schools. In order to fulfill the recommendation to meet the needs of parents and teachers with a diverse clientele in French schools, resources are essential.
Some participants compared the involvement needs of NF parents with children in a French school to parents with children in French immersion. This comparison sparks an idea for future research to compare and contrast the experiences of NF parents with children in French immersion and Francophone schools. An inquiry would explore the degree to which strategies for PI in French immersion could be borrowed and useful for NF parents with children in French schools. Additionally, discussions about French minority-language education typically mention French or Francophone culture; however, culture is rarely defined. I suggest that future research explore and define what is meant by French culture beyond cabane à sucre/maple sugar cabin and tortière/French meat pie (Rocque, 2006a) that is taught in French minority-language schools. In addition to discussing what constitutes culture, another topic worthy of consideration is the definition of a francophone. Ontario updated their definition of a francophone (Prasad, 2012) to be broader and inclusive of those who have a certain knowledge of French and choose to speak French in the home, as well as those educated in or raised in French. Given the changing demographics in French minority-language schools, it would be useful to examine if there is a benefit or a need to expand the Charter definition of francophone as it relates to right-holders.

Other research could investigate the effect that judgements and criticisms about the quality of French of parents, students, and programs have on students, parents, and individuals trying to learn the French language. For example, to what degree is linguistic insecurity present for educators, students, and parents and how does it improve or impede the use of French at school or in the community by Francophones and non-Francophones? I also recommend further research about the effects of judging the quality of French and about children’s resistance to NF PI at home and at school.
One parent commented on how complex it is for children from a NF family to consider their own identity when attending a French school:

The whole identity … my child finds herself perplexed, and I do too. Really, there are very few simple boxes you can put people in. Mono-English or French, but probably the majority of parents, and 100% of the kids, cannot fully go into one box. They are somewhere in between, even with a French mother or father. (Participant 24)

In turn, exploring the identity of a child, especially a NF child in a minority-language French school, is one other important area of research to be considered.

Summary

This dissertation is about the involvement of NF parents in their children’s education in a French minority-language school. The research broadens the knowledge base about the types of NF parents and the NF parent involvement in French schools. The results confirm that the clientele in French minority-language schools on PEI is diverse and requires an expanded definition of the family and parent type. There are many types of NF parents beyond those in exogamous couples, and many parents need assistance with communication, social connections, and resources to optimize their educational involvement with a child in a French minority-language school. I have made a theoretical contribution by recommending modifications to models that exist in minority education and in PI. I have also created a model to reduce barriers to PI by offering differentiated support to parents, considering their proficiency in the language of the school and, specifically, to enhance PI in French minority-language schools. Finally, I suggest policies and practices based on the research data to enhance the educational involvement of NF parents, and potentially all parents, at home, at school, and in the community. Some of the recommendations made from this research may be relevant for other school systems where the
parents do not speak the language of the school; however, further research is needed to verify the applicability of the policies and practices in other contexts.

**Personal Reflection**

I realize that I have answered my research questions, I understand the answers from both theoretical and personal perspectives, and I have an improved understanding of my role as a NF parent to children in a French minority-language school. The literature review for this research provided evidence about the advantages of PI and the participants suggested a multiplicity of ways that school boards, administrators, teachers, and parents can facilitate PI. Rereading the findings and recommendations is satisfying, because I can apply them directly to my children’s education, my teaching, and my work with French teacher education. I am also confident that the answers to the research questions will contribute to enhance engagement by educators and parents in French minority-language schools on PEI, across Canada, and potentially more broadly. I believe my research makes an important contribution because it has been well received at national and regional conferences, has been published in educational journals, and has been presented in the media (MacPhee, 2014, 2013). Furthermore, I believe that now is a critical time for the research findings to be shared: improvements are necessary to have required resources in French minority-language schools and to provide support to parents.

I terminate this study with a greater appreciation for the existence of French minority-language schools. I also have a deeper understanding of how valuable it is to share the importance of PI with all educators through in-service or pre-service training. The French minority-language school system is experiencing growth and increasing linguistic and cultural diversity. The increased diversity adds to the challenge of teaching French in a minority-language context with low French ethnolinguistic vitality. As indicated by Cavanagh,
Cammarata, and Blain (2016), French schools will only be able to effectively market and meet the expectations of educators and parents if the personnel at the French school (and preschool), are adequately trained and equipped with strategies and resources to welcome and assist NF children and families, along with francophones. My work in teacher education has lead me to believe that in order to respond to the challenges in a minority context, teacher education content could include:

- The importance of PI, diverse forms of PI, and the value of inviting parents to help at home or at school and in community as educators, resources, or volunteers;

- The relevance of having one school liaison in the school building responsible to organize parent involvement (from kindergarten through all grade levels) and as a contact for parents;

- The demographics/diversity of the clientele in French minority-language schools, the significance of the school choice of the NF parent, the reality and needs of the NF and Francophone parent, genuine respect and value for all languages and cultures, while prioritizing French;

- The information and resources for teachers working with NF parents and students, the francisation program, teaching and supplementary resources that are available to teach/integrate students requiring francisation in and outside of the classroom;

- The support for NF parents such as information about parents getting involved as early as possible, choosing early years/preschool French education where possible, and staying involved throughout the grades;
• The value of a guidance counsellor or administrator offering parent orientations prior to Grade 7 and Grade 10 to inform parents about intermediate and high school choices as well as to enhance a sense of belonging for parents;
• The development of a bilingual learner, the importance of the first language as a base for language learning and bidirectional transfer of language skills, and that parent assistance in vocabulary and literacy in the home language will transfer skills to French;
• The resources available to provide for NF parents with suggestions and information about how to assist children at home in language and academic development and encourage use of French outside of school to develop bilingualism;
• The importance for parents to encourage children to use French as frequently as possible while at a French minority-language school and resist code switching to English in or outside of the classroom, except for specific cases where it benefits or clarifies academic and linguistic learning.

Change is occurring in education and the diversification of the school population is at a rate that makes it difficult for research to keep up. A constructive way forward would be to invite the linguistically and culturally diverse members of the school into the discussions and planning, so that the objectives of the schools and needs of families can be met with sensitivity and awareness. With the improved understanding that comes from sharing information, the bridges of communication and involvement will become stronger. Such bridges or connections will help all educators, students, and parents effectively navigate the changing demography of French minority-language schools.

I anticipate that the French schools will evolve by following the recommendations
presented here to meet the needs of parents and the objectives of the school. This research brings to light some of the challenges experienced by NF parents in the minority-language school, and for some readers, these findings may come across in a negative way. But it is not my intent to find fault with French school personnel. In fact, I am optimistic and inspired by the following statement from Fosnot and Perry (1996):

The culture and collective individuals within it create a “languaging of lived experience” such that the individual is disequilibrated; but reciprocally the culture is disequilibrated by individuals as they construct their environment. Thus, individual thought progresses towards culturally “accepted” ideas but always in an open dynamic structure capable of creative innovation. (p. 27)

I want to consider this quote and the evolution of the French schools with a social constructionist worldview, moving from the above individual example to consider the group of French minority-language schools. The French schools, which are disequilibrated by the changing demographics, can use creative innovation and collaboration with the various societal partners. With the support of adequate resources, they will succeed at providing a quality education and transmitting French language and culture. Professionals in schools will be able to creatively innovate ways to build bridges of communication and involvement for parents that are appropriate to their school contexts. Being in a difficult and messy situation does not prevent moving forward:

Disequilibrium facilitates learning. "Errors" need to be perceived as a result of learners' conceptions, and therefore not minimized or avoided. Challenging, open-ended investigations in realistic, meaningful contexts need to be offered which allow learners to explore and generate many possibilities, both affirming and contradictory. Contradictions, in particular, need to be illuminated, explored, and discussed. (Fosnot &
Perry, 1996, p. 27)

This quote describes for me what I see occurring in the French school context. If you consider that the French schools are in disequilibrium due to the changing demographics, then any errors made to date can serve as an opportunity for learning how to make improvements. Likewise, if government has not provided adequate funding to permit the French schools to achieve their mandate, this lack of resources can be amended. Where NF parents do not know how or lack the resources to assist their children, this lack can be remedied.

This research serves as an investigation to generate many possibilities for French schools to consider, implement, and thrive. I recommend acknowledging and accompanying the diverse types of parents present in French minority-language schools. When schools reach out to parents to help meet their educational involvement needs and benefit from the contributions parents can offer, the partnership and supportive actions will result in stronger partnerships and optimal success for students and the schools. Reflection, dialogue, resources, training, and action are critical for French minority-language schools with increasingly diverse populations. Building bridges of communication and social connections with strong policy and effective practices will contribute to the evolution, improvement, and strength of French minority-language schools.
References


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In the reference section, I have used French formatting for all French-language references and English formatting for all English-language references. For example, after the colon, in English the first word is capitalized, however, in French references, the first word is not capitalized, according to French rules.


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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey

Thank you for participating! The answers of each parent are really important and will be confidential. Please respond to the questions in each category if you are a parent or guardian of a child attending a French minority language school and you did NOT learn French as a first language and you did NOT receive your primary education in a francophone school. DO participate if you were in French immersion or core French.

Please respond with only YOUR answer, not that of a partner. The information collected will help us understand the experience and involvement of non-francophone parents and identify successes and challenges faced by families at this school.

Thank you for your time and participation and I encourage you to participate in our focus group discussion and interviews explained at the end of the survey. I will donate $10 to your school library for every parent focus group that meets with me.
Section A: General Information

Question 1a - Are you a non-francophone parent?

Francophone means raised speaking French in my family or I was educated in a French school (not immersion) for my primary education. Non-francophone means I was not raised speaking French in my family and I was not educated in a French school for my primary education

☐ Yes

☐ No

Question 1b - What school do your children attend?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child 1 (oldest)</th>
<th>École A</th>
<th>École B</th>
<th>École C</th>
<th>École D</th>
<th>École E</th>
<th>École F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child 2</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 3</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child 4</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2 - The person completing the survey is...

☐ Father

☐ Mother

☐ Other ________________________

Question 3 - Where are you from?

☐ Canada

☐ Country other than Canada ________________________

Question 4 - Choose the type of non-francophone parent that best describes you

☐ I am English/anglophone in a couple with a francophone
- ☐ I am English/anglophone in a couple with a non-francophone (anglo or-allophone)
- ☐ I am an English/anglophone single parent
- ☐ allophone (my 1st language is not English or French) in a couple with a francophone
- ☐ allophone parent in a couple with a non-francophone (including allophone)
- ☐ allophone single parent

Question 5 - First language learned and still understood

- ☐ English

☐ Other

Question 6 - First language learned and still understood by parent # 2

- ☐ English
- ☐ French
- ☐ English and French from birth

☐ Other

Question 7 - Rate the ability to communicate in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>51-75%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother (or equivalent) speaks and understands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother (or equivalent) reads</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother (or equivalent) writes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father (or equivalent) speaks and understands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father (or equivalent) reads</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father (or equivalent) writes</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 8 - Rate the ability to communicate in French

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>51-75%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1-25%</td>
<td>26-50%</td>
<td>51-75%</td>
<td>76-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother (or equivalent)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaks and understands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother (or equivalent)</td>
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<td>reads</td>
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<td>Mother (or equivalent)</td>
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<td>writes</td>
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<td>Father (or equivalent)</td>
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<td>speaks and understands</td>
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<td>Father (or equivalent)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Father (or equivalent)</td>
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<tr>
<td>writes</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Question 9 - Regardless of your ability in French, how CONFIDENT are you to speak in French at the school?

- [ ] not confident
- [ ] somewhat confident
- [ ] confident
- [ ] very confident

Question 10 - What is the mother tongue of the student's grandparents?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>English and French</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>maternal grandmother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maternal grandfather</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>paternal grandmother</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>paternal grandfather</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Question 11 - What is the percentage of time that French is spoken at home?

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>1-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>51-75%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother (or equivalent)</td>
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<tr>
<td>speaks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Father (or equivalent)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>speaks</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child 1 (oldest) speaks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child 2 speaks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 12 - Do you expect your child/children to complete grade 12 in this or another French school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child 1 (oldest)</th>
<th>Child 2</th>
<th>Child 3</th>
<th>Child 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>explain: ___</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 13 - GRADE level of 1st (oldest) child __ 2nd child __ 3rd child __ 4th child __

Question 14 - Did your child or children attend a French preschool?

child 1 (oldest) Yes / no child 2 Yes / no child 3 Yes / no child 4 Yes / no

Section B - Support at School
Some French schools offer extra support, called "francisation" to help students acquire the French language & culture and catch up to francophone peers.

PLEASE CHOOSE ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

Question 1 - To your knowledge, does your school offer francisation services?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Don't know

Question 2 - If you answered yes, how did you first hear about the francisation offered?

- [ ] principal
- [ ] teacher
- [ ] school board
- [ ] pamphlet/poster
Section C: School Experience

The following questions examine factors about your school and your choice of school.

Question 1  Select YOUR MAIN reason for choosing this French school and rank it number 1 by typing 1 in the box. You may choose two other reasons that were important for a total of three main reasons: 1 - most important, 2 - second, and 3 - third most important.

PLEASE GIVE YOUR MAIN REASON, not reason of parent # 2.

- French for future employment
- Bilingualism with French as a second language
- Family heritage
- Right-holder status
- Cultural emphasis
- Student’s choice
- Location/proximity of school
- Smaller class sizes
- School climate
- Greater availability of academic supports
- Teaching excellence
- Greater access to music, arts, shows, and authors
- Sense of belonging to the francophone community
- French education was preferred by other parent
- Other

Question 2  Note your level of agreement with each of the following statements:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure/Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I feel welcome at the school</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. There should be staff members at the French school who speak English with non-francophone parents</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. I feel awkward when I visit the school</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. I would like to get involved in activities that take place at school</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. I make sure my child has supplies and a quiet space for homework</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. I do NOT attend meet the teacher night because I do not understand what is said in French</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Teachers should use some English in class to help my child learn French</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>h. The francisation provided at the school has been very helpful</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>i. I have considered moving my child (children) to the English school system</td>
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<td>j. I feel uncomfortable at social, cultural, or sporting events (e.g. birthday parties) where others are speaking French</td>
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<td>k. I am satisfied with how the school communicates with me to keep me up-to-date on my child’s progress.</td>
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<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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<td>l.</td>
<td>The school should enforce a French-only policy for students</td>
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<td>m.</td>
<td>The school has provided helpful tips or strategies to aid me in supporting my child/children with homework</td>
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<td>n.</td>
<td>I experience some resistance from my child when I try to be involved at school</td>
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<td>o.</td>
<td>I experience some resistance from my child when I try to be involved in school work at home</td>
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<td>p.</td>
<td>We have access to someone who can help our children with French</td>
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<td>q.</td>
<td>I believe parents should be involved in their children's education</td>
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<td>r.</td>
<td>Student achievement depends on effort and work</td>
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<td>s.</td>
<td>I have some influence and control over my child's learning</td>
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<td>t.</td>
<td>I feel competent to help my child with school homework</td>
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<td>u.</td>
<td>Supporting our child in a French school requires more effort than if in French immersion or English</td>
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<td>v.</td>
<td>I need help to understand messages that come home from the French school</td>
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<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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<td>w. Student achievement depends on the child’s ability</td>
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<td>x. My involvement has contributed positively to my child’s achievement</td>
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<td>y. I feel left out of some of my child’s education because it occurs in French</td>
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<td>z. I have been invited to be involved at school by the teacher, administration, or my child</td>
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Section D: Parental Involvement and Experience

Question 1. Please indicate your average frequency of participating in the following activities at this school (number of times **PER YEAR**).

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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4 or more</th>
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<td>I attend meet the teacher night at the school</td>
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<td>I attend parent-teacher interviews</td>
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<td>I volunteer at school</td>
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<td>I participate in fundraising for the school</td>
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<td>I am in contact with the school via notes, calls or visits</td>
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<td>I am involved in francisation program activities for my child</td>
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<td>Our family attends activities in French in the community (e.g. museum, theatre, music, community center, etc.)</td>
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<td>Our family goes to the</td>
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</table>
French library

Our family goes to the English library

I ask for updates on my child’s progress at school between report cards

We discuss the value of education with our child

We discuss reasons why learning French is important with our child

I am involved in committees where decision making about the school takes place

I am involved in support workshops to help me as a parent help my child in his or her education

Question 2. Weekly Involvement. Please indicate the average frequency of your involvement with the following activities. (number of TIMES PER WEEK)

0 1 time 2 times 3 times 4 or more

I read to/with my child in French

I encourage my child to read in French

I read to or with my child in English

I encourage my child to read in English

I help my child improve his or her French vocabulary.

I praise my child for his or her efforts at school

I do activities in French with my child at home (games, crafts, etc.)

I assist my child with homework.

We use French radio, TV,
Question 3. Use of English at school. When do you use English to communicate at the school? CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY.

- ☐ with teachers
- ☐ with school principal/vice principal
- ☐ with other staff
- ☐ with my child
- ☐ with other students
- ☐ with other parents
- ☐ never

Question 4 - Do you think English should be used at school with non-francophone students?

☐ Yes _______________________  ☐ No _______________________

Section E: PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

Question 1 - What do you need as a parent to be able to help your child/children in the francophone school?

Question 2 - Why do you get involved educationally with your children at home, or at school, or in the community in the ways that you do?

Question 3 - Please add any other information that would describe your experience as a non-francophone parent with a child or children attending a francophone school.

Section F: Demographics

Question 1 - Your marital status
• Single
• Married or equivalent
• Separated, divorced, or widowed

Question 2 - Your age

Question 3 - Your highest level of education

• less than high school
• high school diploma or equivalent
• some college
• some university
• college diploma
• university degree
• Graduate or professional degree

Question 4 - Highest level of education of parent #2

• less than high school
• high school diploma or equivalent
• some college
• some university
• college diploma
• university degree
• Graduate or professional degree

Question 5 - Combined family income

• less than $24,999
• $25,000 - 49,999
Your participation in our focus group discussion and individual interviews is valuable. I will donate $10 to your school library for every parent focus group that meets with me.

Focus group Interviews

If you are willing to participate in a one hour focus group discussion in October or November, please leave your name and contact information below. This information will be separated from the data collected in this survey to maintain your anonymity.

PHONE:

Email:

School:

Preferred time to be contacted:

Name:

Thank you for participating in our study.
Appendix B: Focus group interview questions for NF parents

1. Let’s start with introductions. Tell us your name and the grade that your son or daughter is in at this school.

2. Now, can you explain the reasons (main) why you enrolled your child in this Francophone school? PROBE: How did you/do you feel about the choice—was it difficult? Who made the choice of the French school? What information did you seek or get beforehand? Did heritage/culture play a role?

3. What do you see are the main benefits for your child attending a French school? PROBE: Any benefits for you as parents?

4. As a parent, have you experienced any difficulties or challenges having a child attending a French school? Please explain, and has it changed over time? How has this made you feel? PROBES: Some parents have said they find it extremely difficult and they are not able to help their children or connect with the school, other parents have said they feel able to help in different ways and it has been an enriching and good experience...

5. Given the challenges and benefits, OVERALL how would you describe your experience?

6. Francisation occurs when educators provide extra support for French language and cultural development for children. Have you received any French support you can tell us about? PROBE: Describe your experiences with any services available to your children to help in the francisation process at school? Tell us about any services that helped at home? Program

7. Tell me about how you have been involved with your child’s education at home, at school, or in the community. PROBE: Why do you choose to be involved that way, rather than other ways? Do the kids resist your involvement?

8a. Have you been helped as a non-Francophone parent? What strategies did the school use to welcome and support you (NF)? Did they try—know how to help you?

8b. How could PARENTS be helped by school and what would have been helpful to know or to have done to prepare parents and the child for the French school? (or other) to help kids with their education in French?

9. How do you see the role of English? (some parents resist the use of English for themselves or their children in school situations because they believe this maximizes learning French, while other parents rely solely on English to communicate) Is there a need for English? PROBE: communication home from school?

10. Do you foresee your child completing Grade 12 in the French school system and why?

11. How is revitalization of the French language and culture important to you and your family?

12. How do you think your child would describe their identity? Anglo, bilingual, Francophone?

13. Is there anything else we need to know about your experience as a NF parent with a child in the French school?
Appendix C: Ethics permission
Appendix D1: Letter of Consent for Parents
September 14, 2014

Dear Parent,

I am a researcher from UPEI preparing to conduct research for my Ph.D. dissertation. I am supervised by Dr. Miles Turnbull from Bishop’s University, Dr. Marianne Cormier from Moncton University, and Dr. Jane Preston, from UPEI. This project – A Mixed Methods Study of Non-Francophone parents in Francophone Schools in Atlantic Canada– will relate to my Ph.D. dissertation in Educational studies at UPEI. Your school and school board have given permission for this research.

My aim is to survey and talk with non-Francophone parents whose children attend French minority-language schools in PEI. I wish to explore your experiences as non-Francophone parents’ with a child or children attending a French first language school. More specifically, what motivations, challenges, or advantages are there when navigating the educational road with your children in another language? Also, I aim to identify in what ways parents are, or could be, involved in their child’s education at home, at school, and in the community.

I invite you to be a participant in this research. This study involves little risk and would constitute little more than beneficial dialogue and sharing about your child’s education and your role in it. You are free to decline this invitation and if you accept, you are also free to withdraw from the research at any time without any negative consequences.

If you choose to participate, the process would begin by completing a 15 minute online survey. You can then participate in a focus group interview, which would last approximately one hour, to discuss the experiences of the non-Francophone parents who have their children in a French school. Afterwards, several parents will be invited to participate in a subsequent in-depth interview, about 45 – 60 minutes long, concerning the role of parents and how they are involved in their child’s education by what they do at home and/or at the school or in the community. The focus group and individual interviews will be audiotaped. The meetings will be scheduled at convenient times and locations for the parents. Participants will receive transcripts from interviews to review and make corrections and additions to them before data analysis begins. A gift donation of $10 will be made to the school library for each focus group of four to eight parents.

The information collected in this study will be used to inform future research but will also inform school policy and classroom practice. The results of this study may be published in scholarly and professional presentations and publications and will inform a dissertation completed by Mary MacPhee, the main researcher for the project.
The confidentiality of your responses would be ensured within the limits of the law. No individuals would be identified in conference presentations, written reports or publications. I may use quotations from the interviews but only pseudonyms will be used to identify participants. Only Mary MacPhee and supervisors or transcriber will have access to the audio recordings and related transcripts from the day. As with the nature of a focus group involving several people, confidentiality will be dependent on the group participants. Mary MacPhee will remind everyone that topics and opinions discussed during the focus group session are to be confidential but we cannot guarantee that participants will respect this request.

All documents related to this study will be kept in a secure place. Audio recordings and transcripts will be kept on a password protected computer and print-outs will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office. All data will be destroyed after Mary MacPhee’s PhD dissertation is complete.

When the study is complete, I will share an electronic version of the results of the study.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. Any personal information you provide during discussions will be kept confidential and will not be released under any circumstances. However, absolute anonymity and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed for focus group participants since you know each other’s identities and it is impossible to control what is said outside the group. If you do not feel comfortable at any time during the focus group, please be advised that you can withdraw from the group without negative repercussions. If you chose to withdraw, the data collected from you up to the point of your withdrawal, will be retained. It is impossible in an interactive setting such as a focus group to extract participants’ contributions without rendering others at least partially unusable. You may withdraw from the individual interview, if you opt to participate in it, and you can ask that the tape recorder be turned off at any time and you can opt to not answer any question.

If you would like to receive more information about the study, please contact me at mmmacphee@upei.ca or at 902-892-4658. You could also contact the UPEI Research ethics Board at 902-566-0637, or by email at lmacphee@upei.ca, should you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study.

Sincerely,
Mary MacPhee
Doctoral Candidate
Faculty of Education, UPEI
September 14, 2014
Declaration of Consent

I understand that this research has received Research Ethics Board approval at UPEI. I voluntarily consent to:

_____ complete the survey described above
_____ participate in the focus group session as described above.
_____ participate in the individual interviews described above.

I understand that I may withdraw my willingness to participate at any time. I also understand that my name and personal information will remain confidential within the limits of the law. I grant permission to use quotations from this interview provided I am not identified. I grant permission to use the data collected in this focus group in Mary MacPhee’s Ph.D. dissertation. I understand I can contact the UPEI Research Ethics board at 902-620-5104 or lmacphee@upei.ca if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study. You may keep a copy of the signed consent form.

Name of Participant: _____________________________ Date: _________________

Signature of Participant: _____________________________ Date: _________________

Signature of Researcher __________________________ Date: _________________

Signature of Supervisors __________________________ Date: _________________
Appendix D2: Letter of Consent for School Board

24 septembre, 2014

Je suis chercheur à la University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI), supervisée par le Dr Miles Turnbull de la Bishops University et la Dr Marianne Cormier de l’Université de Moncton. Je vous demande la permission de mener le projet suivant dans votre commission scolaire: A Mixed Methods Study of Non-Francophone Parents in Francophone Schools in one Atlantic Province. J’aimerais enquêter et discuter avec des parents non-Francophones qui ont des enfants inscrits dans les six écoles. Nous voulons connaître leur expérience et engagement en tant que parents non-Francophones qui ont un ou plusieurs enfants inscrits dans une école Francophone. Plus précisément, quels sont les défis ou les avantages comme parent associés au cheminement scolaire d'un enfant qui étudie dans une autre langue? De plus, nous désirons identifier comment les parents s'impliquent ou peuvent s'impliquer dans l'éducation de leur enfant à la maison, à l'école, et dans la communauté.

Cette étude porte un risque minime et consiste tout au plus en un survey et une discussion/partage concernant l'éducation des enfants et le rôle en tant que parent. Vous pouvez refuser cette invitation. Si vous acceptez de participer, vous pouvez retirer votre autorisation à la recherche en tout temps sans répercussion.

Le processus commencerait avec une lettre d'information et consentement envoyée par courriel par l'administration de l’école, accompagnée d’un survey à remplir qui prendra quinze minutes à compléter. Les parents non-Francophones seront invités aussi de faire partie d’une entrevue en groupe de discussion d'environ 60 minutes où nous discuterons de l'expérience des parents qui ont des enfants inscrits à l'école Francophone. Les parents seront ensuite invités à partager leurs coordonnés si voulu afin de participer à des entrevues individuelles de 45 à 60 minutes traitant plus spécifiquement de leur rôle et participation à l'éducation de leurs enfants à la maison, à l'école, ou dans la communauté. Le groupe de discussion et les entrevues individuelles seront enregistrés sur bande sonore. Les participants recevront une transcription des entrevues afin de les réviser et d’y apporter des corrections ou des ajouts avant le début de l'analyse des données. Les rencontres seront fixées à des moments et des endroits opportuns pour les familles.

Les informations recueillies lors de cette étude serviront à documenter des recherches futures et aideront à évaluer les politiques scolaires et les pratiques en classe. Les résultats de cette étude pourraient être publiés dans des présentations ou des publications érudites et professionnelles, et seront utilisées dans une dissertation rédigée par Mary MacPhee. Celle-ci sera la chercheuse principale du projet.

La confidentialité des réponses des parents serait assurée selon les limites de la loi. Aucun individu ne sera identifié dans les présentations données lors de conférences, dans les rapports écrits ni dans les publications. Des pseudonymes seront utilisés pour identifier les participants si
nous utilisons des citations provenant des entrevues. Seuls les superviseurs et Mary MacPhee auront accès aux bandes sonores et aux transcriptions se rapportant à cette journée. Puisqu'il s'agit ici d'un groupe de discussion impliquant plusieurs individus, la confidentialité dépendra des participants du groupe. Mary MacPhee rappellera à tous que les sujets et les opinions discutés durant la session de discussion doivent demeurer confidentiels, mais nous ne pouvons pas garantir que les participants respecteront cette demande.

Tous les documents pertinents à cette étude seront conservés dans un endroit sécuritaire. Les bandes sonores et les transcriptions seront sauvegardées sur un ordinateur protégé par un mot de passe, et les copies imprimées seront gardées sous clé dans le bureau du chercheur. Toutes les données seront détruites après cinq ans lorsque Mary MacPhee aura complété la rédaction de sa dissertation de doctorat.

Une fois l'étude terminée, je vais offrir aux participants une copie électronique du rapport s'ils le désirent. Une copie sera également disponible pour les écoles et le conseil scolaire.

La participation à ce groupe de discussion est entièrement volontaire. Toute information personnelle partagée durant les discussions sera confidentielle et ne sera divulguée sous aucune circonstance. Cependant, l'anonymat absolu et la confidentialité ne peuvent pas être garantis puisque vous connaitrez l'identité des autres participants et qu'il est impossible de contrôler ce qui est dit hors du groupe. Vous pouvez vous retirer du groupe en tout temps si les sujets de discussion vous mettent dans une situation inconfortable, et ce sans répercussion. Toutefois, les informations que nous avons recueillies jusqu'à votre départ seront conservées. Il est impossible dans une situation interactive comme un groupe de discussion, de retirer la contribution d'un participant sans affecter celle des autres participants.

**Déclaration de consentement**

Je comprends que cette recherche a été approuvée par le conseil déontologique pour la recherche de UPEI. Je consens à participer de façon volontaire au projet de recherche décrit ci-dessus. Je comprends que je peux me retirer du projet en tout temps. Je comprends également que mon nom et mes renseignements personnels seront conservés de façon confidentielle selon les limites de la loi. J'accepte d'être cité à la suite de mon entrevue, sans toutefois être identifié. J'accepte que les données recueillies dans ce groupe de discussion servent à la rédaction de la dissertation de doctorat de Mary MacPhee. Je comprends que je peux communiquer avec le conseil déontologique de UPEI au 902-620-5104 ou reb@upei.ca si j'ai des inquiétudes face à l'éthique de cette étude. Vous pouvez conserver une copie signée de ce formulaire de consentement.

Nom du participant: ________________________________Date: _________________

Signature du participant : ____________________________Date : ________________

Signature du chercheur principal ______________________Date: ________________

Signature des superviseurs ___________________________Date: ________________
Appendix E: Permissions

Permission May 15, 2017

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Best wishes,
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Journals Editor

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<td>Model for Parental Involvement in Education</td>
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<td>Editor of portion(s)</td>
<td>Springer</td>
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<td>Garry Hornby</td>
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Appendix F: Counterbalance Model

Figure 1 – Modèle des balanciers compensateurs (Landry et Allard, 1987)

26. (1) Subject to the approval of the French Language School Board, a parent who is not an eligible parent may apply to the French Language School Board, in accordance with the regulations, to enrol his or her school-aged child in the French school system.

(2) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations, in addition to the regulations under section 107, with respect to the French school system and, in particular,

(a) providing for the provision and administration of French first language instruction in the province;

(b) respecting the process by which a parent, other than an eligible parent, may enrol his or her school-aged child in the French school system; and

(c) respecting the determination of demand for French first language instruction in the province.

SLF politique linguistique et culturelle: Par conséquent :

- toute communication orale et écrite venant des écoles et du bureau de la CSLF doit se faire en français, et
- toute réunion publique doit être convoquée et doit, autant que faire se peut, se dérouler en français. Exceptionnellement, et selon l’initiative du personnel, certains renseignements peuvent être communiqués en anglais pour tenir compte des circonstances particulières du parent ayant droit non parlant français.

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