High School Choices:  
Comparing Representations of French Immersion and International Baccalaureate Diploma Programs in Nova Scotia

by

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Abstract

In response to growing concerns regarding the effectiveness and equity of French Second Language education in Canada (Barrett DeWiele & Edgerton, 2021), this research takes discourse as a point of entry to investigate students' choice to enrol in one of two programs in Nova Scotia public schools: French Immersion and the International Baccalaureate Diploma. Using the Discourse Historical Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (Reisigl, 2017), French Immersion and International Baccalaureate program descriptions were examined. Program descriptions were extracted from the course selection handbooks of 11 Nova Scotia high schools offering both programs and these descriptions were analysed with the aim of understanding (1) how each program was constructed in the discourse, and (2) the evaluations and assumptions of school knowledge and social capital inherent in these constructions. The analysis considered patterns of intertextuality, textual prominence, and discursive strategies of nomination (i.e., synecdoche, deixis and nominalisation), predication (i.e., evaluative attributes and overlexicalisation) and argumentation. IBD program descriptions were found to contain more overt intertextual references, be more prominent textually, and to make greater use of argumentation schemes. Given the authoritative role of schools as trusted education institutions, the discursive constructions found in the program descriptions are arguably those which most influence students' and parents' decision making. The increased understanding of this decision making brought about by this research has the potential to inform policies aimed at increasing rates of French-English bilingualism amongst young Nova Scotian students.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

It is often inaccurately supposed that Canada, although officially bilingual, is strongly monolingual dominant. In reality, 40% of Canadians report being bilingual or multilingual with just under half of these, 18%, identifying as French-English bilinguals (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Since the adoption of the Official Languages Act in 1969, both English and French have been recognized as Canada's official languages. Canada's linguistic duality has relied on the existence of a significant number of French-English bilinguals to ensure the right of Canadians to receive federal services in either official language and to promote mutual understanding between English and French speaking communities. Canadian language education has, as a consequence, a key role to play in the bolstering of Canada's language policy, increasing rates of French-English bilingualism nationwide.

This project considers the context of French education in the province of Nova Scotia, which has a strongly dominant English speaking population with 96% of the population who report speaking English at home (Statistics Canada, 2022a). The promotion of French-English bilingualism within Nova Scotia requires that students choose to immerse themselves in a minority language (French). This constitutes a uniquely Canadian and relatively rare language learning context, bringing with it a distinctive set of challenges. Chief amongst these challenges is how to provide just and equitable access to French-second language public education province wide. This study aims to critically investigate the representations of two high school programs in Nova Scotia; French Immersion and the International Baccalaureate program. This is done with the further aim of comparing ideological assumptions underlying each program's representation.

French Immersion represents a uniquely Canadian model for bilingual education and has served as an example for language education programs worldwide (Canadian Parents for French, 2013). The program offers a content-based approach where students learn all or most school subjects through the French language (Roy, 2020). Early French immersion (beginning
in grade primary and continuing to the end of high school) is the most comprehensive French-second language learning option available in Nova Scotia public schools, and is widely accepted as yielding the highest degree of French proficiency. Due to staffing and resourcing limitations, immersive French education cannot be offered on a universal or mandatory basis.

As it currently stands, access to French Immersion is accorded through a choice-based model of student grouping, in which students and parents may choose to enrol in either English language study streams or French-Immersion study streams. The social impact of the choice to participate or not to participate in French Immersion has long been a topic of debate across the country. This choice is not equally available to all Canadians and has been criticised as potentially leading to social segregation, impacting the inclusivity of Canadian education systems (Alphonso, 2019; Hutchins, 2022; Ostroff, 2014). For instance, a 2019 report by the Ottawa School Board showed that significantly more students who were newcomers to Canada or who had special learning needs were enrolled in English language schools when compared to French Immersion schools (Ottawa Carleton District School Board [OCDSC], 2019).

A further challenge lies in motivating young people from majority anglophone regions of the country to continue developing their language skills through adolescence and early adulthood. Canada's 2018-2023 Action Plan for Official Language flags the slow growth of bilingualism among the anglophone population as a threat to the vitality of Canadian linguistic duality (Government of Canada, 2018). In particular, the action plan highlights not only issues of access to French-as-a-second-language education, but also the decrease in the numbers of students continuing to study French at the high school and university level (Government of Canada, 2018). Significant numbers of students across the country who enter the program are not continuing their study of French to the end of high school (Canadian Parents for French, 2020). French Immersion programs exist in part to increase rates of bilingualism and to support the federal government's mandate to promote linguistic duality within Canada (Government of
Canada, 2018). These aims are greatly undermined if a majority of students are dropping out of programs designed to run until the end of Grade 12 (Kissau, 2005).

In 2022, the province of New Brunswick, Canada's only officially bilingual province, backtracked on plans to replace existing French Immersion and Core French programs with an alternative model for French-second language education. Part of the justification for the overhauling of French-second language education in the province was low completion rates within French Immersion programs (Finn & McLaughlin, 2021). A 2018 report stated that two thirds of New Brunswick students who entered French Immersion programs in the province's anglophone school districts dropped out before the end of high school (Government of Canada, 2018). A similar trend was seen in Nova Scotia, where the most recent public school cohort, the class of 2022, saw a 59% completion rate of French Immersion (Statistics Canada, 2013, 2022a). Of the students who did not finish the program, more than half dropped out at the high school level (Statistics Canada, 2013). Similar patterns were seen across graduating classes of the last two decades.

The proposed changes to French second language education, announced by the government of New Brunswick in late 2022, would have altered a French second language learning model similar to the one currently offered in Nova Scotia schools. Existing French-second language programs allowed anglophone New Brunswick parents to choose to enrol their child in a French Immersion program (where 80-90 percent of their child’s instruction would be provided in French) or in an English language program (where students would receive a minimum of 30 minutes of French instruction a day between grades 4 and 9). The suggested remodelling of French-second language education would have seen it become mandatory for all elementary school students in anglophone schools to spend half of their school day in French and all middle-school students to spend 40% of their day in French (Alam, 2022; Poitras, 2022). This remodelling would have removed elements of choice surrounding French-second language education in New Brunswick. Choice would first be introduced at the
high school level, where students would be offered opportunities to participate in enriched and advanced studies in French (Poitras, 2022).

Critics, including some parents who threatened to mount a legal challenge to the proposed reforms, contend that maximising French instruction at a young age is critical in promoting bilingualism (Poitras, 2022). In a province where bilingualism is required to access both federal and provincial government employment, some parents fear that removing the option to choose more French for their child would make it more difficult for them to find work in their home province. Liberal opposition leader Susan Holt commented on the proposed changes saying, “It doesn’t meet the needs of people who are saying ‘I want my kids to have every opportunity to build a career in New Brunswick, to access public jobs in New Brunswick” (Poitras, 2022, para. 12).

New Brunswick Education Minister Bill Hogan explained that the purpose of the proposed reforms was to ensure that all students in anglophone schools achieved a conversational level of French upon graduation (Alam, 2022). As it currently stands, less than half of high school graduates in the anglophone sector are able to speak French at a conversational level (Alam, 2022; Revic & Brown, 2022). The proposed new model aimed to see more students graduate with basic levels of French proficiency, but would have resulted in far fewer students achieving the levels of competency attainable through participation in a French Immersion program. As a result, the removal of French Immersion was seen by some to be a reduction in the standard of bilingualism expected of New Brunswickers, having the potential to lead to lower French requirements for government workers and a watering down of the province’s bilingual status (Alam, 2022). Such was the degree of anxiety surrounding the impact of removing French Immersion programs that it solicited criticism from Quebec’s minister for Canadian Francophonie, who publicly declared opposition to the French-second language reforms in New Brunswick, even going as far as to suggest that Québec’s government would act against the reforms (Hughes, 2023).
Although the planned reforms in French-second language education in New Brunswick were ultimately abandoned in early 2023 following the public's outcry, the same points of dissatisfaction with French Immersion programs persist: concerns about the program contributing to social segregation and concerns regarding the effectiveness of the program at the high school level. This project’s primary focus is on the latter concern, which it addresses through an investigation of the choice that many students make at the high school level: discontinuing French Immersion.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2012 report “Equity and Quality in Education” recommends that educational streams not be introduced into school systems until the upper-secondary level (2012). In compliance with this recommendation, education streams, options and choices, apart from French Immersion and English options, are not introduced into the Nova Scotia school system until grade 10 or 11. The introduction of additional educational choice on high school entry temporarily corresponds with reductions in enrolment in French Immersion programs.

The steep French Immersion drop out rates seen in the early years of high school could be attributed in part to the devaluing of provincial curricula brought about by an increase in the uptake of alternative curricula options across the country. Most popular among these alternate curricula is the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma program, which espouses an international education through the implementation of a curriculum developed by the International Baccalaureate Organisation, a nonprofit foundation headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland (DiGiorgio, 2010). The IB diploma program, which replaces the provincial grade 11 and 12 curriculum, has seen unprecedented growth within Canada in the past decade, making Canada the country with the second highest number of IB schools after the United States (Fitzgerald, 2020). Recent research by Fitzgerald (2020) has found that IB is increasingly being perceived as posing a threat to provincial curricula, of which French Immersion is a part. Scheduling and program requirements make it difficult, often impossible, for students to
simultaneously earn IB and French Immersion high school diplomas (Froese, 2019). Meanwhile, Nova Scotia is the only province that offers IB at no cost to students (Fitzgerald, 2020). The program is offered at thirteen of the province's largest high schools, eleven of which also offer French Immersion as an option (Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development [EECD], 2020a). These high schools make up approximately 40% of students enrolled in grade 11 and 12 across the province (Government of Nova Scotia, 2020). This project investigates the choice that students and families at these schools are making between French Immersion and the International Baccalaureate programs.

While previous research has examined IB and French Immersion individually (Baker, 2014; Barrett DeWiele & Edgerton, 2021; Fitzgerald, 2018; Tarc & Beatty, 2012), this project compares discourses surrounding both programs, with a view of investigating the movement in Nova Scotia away from High School French Immersion and towards alternate curricula such as the IB program. Previous research (Baker, 2014; Campbell, 2018; Fitzgerald, 2020) suggests that discourse surrounding both programs reveals concerns regarding equity and access, with fears that these programs could lead to a two tiered education system within the Canadian provinces. If the choices of students to enrol in the high school French Immersion program or in the International Baccalaureate Diploma program do in fact lead to the streaming of students into a two tiered system, it is worth investigating how enrollment choices are made.

This project investigates representations of the IBD and French Immersion programs with the aim of understanding how these representations might inform choice of program. In the second chapter of this thesis I provide details about the historical and sociological context of Nova Scotian education and the status of French in the province. I follow this with a third chapter elaborating theoretical concepts and defining terms related to the sociology of education and educational discourse. This provides me with a language and framework for discussing the choice to participate in the IBD and French Immersion programs. At the end of Chapter 3 I specify research questions. In chapter four, I present a methodology for examining IBD and
French Immersion enrollment choices through the analysis of program descriptions within school course selection handbooks. I follow this with a fifth chapter reporting on my findings. I conclude in a final chapter with discussion of results and some comments on the implications of this research and on areas for future research.

The positionality of the researcher in relation to the topic of research has been acknowledged as an important element of contextually situating research in sociology and linguistics (Van Dijk, 2001). In the following paragraph I will briefly set out my own position in relation to the education system in Nova Scotia and Canadian language policy more generally. As a child and young person, I went through Nova Scotia’s public school French Immersion program, graduating from Halifax’s Citadel High School in 2012. The French language competency which I gained through the program allowed me to participate in Canada’s federally funded immersion and cultural summer exchange program, Explore. Later, I was able to pursue two semesters of my undergraduate education at a French language institution, Université de Bourgogne. Upon graduating with French as one of my university majors and later with an education degree, I became certified as a French Immersion teacher. I taught French Immersion and Core French for two years in Nova Scotia as well as teaching English as a Foreign Language for an additional year abroad. Currently, I occupy a bilingual position with Parks Canada, a federal government agency, in Halifax. As a result of these experiences I possess knowledge of Nova Scotia’s education system from both the perspectives of a student and teacher. I have witnessed the impact of federal language policy on Nova Scotian institutions (public school and federal agencies) and have observed how the distribution of French-second language education has impacted my work life as well as that of my colleagues. I am optimistic about the role of improved language education as a step on a path toward a more equitable society.
Chapter 2: Background and Context

In the previous chapter, I identified the project's aims and justified their relevance in addressing current problems with French Immersion public school programs in Nova Scotia. The present chapter provides information about the context of public education in Nova Scotia and details the origins and curriculum structure of the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBD) program and the French Immersion program in Nova Scotia. I explore the history of the status of French in Canada with the aim of describing how French education fits into broader federal language policy initiatives.

2.1 The Context of Public Education in Nova Scotia

With a population of 967 383, Nova Scotia is the largest of Canada's Atlantic provinces and is situated on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi’kmaq people (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Its territory is covered by the “Treaties of Peace and Friendship” (1725-1779), which recognized Mi’kmaq and Maliseet titles and laid out rules for an ongoing relationship between the Mi’kmaq and Maliseet and European settlers (Government of Canada, 2010). The province's capital, Halifax, is home to roughly 44% of the province's population and is the province's only city. Nova Scotia has a relatively high rural population amounting to 42.6% (Beck, 2021). Close to 99% of Nova Scotians report speaking English; however, an additional 23 languages are spoken in numbers of at least 500 (Statistics Canada, 2017a). These languages include Mi’kmaq, an indigenous language, Acadian French, spoken by the descendants of early French settlers, and a large number of immigrant and heritage languages such as Arabic, Mandarin, and German (Statistics Canada, 2017b). Nova Scotia's public school system serves 125 124 students across the province, with only 2.7% of the province's school-aged population forgoing public education in favour of private (Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development [EECD], 2022; MacLeod, 2018). A further 2784 students are served by Mi’kmaw band schools, supported by the Mi’kmaw Kina’matnewey (Mi’kmaq Education Authority), which operates
under a jurisdictional agreement allowing for the self-governance of Mi'kmaw schools by the Mi'kmaw (Simon, 2014).

**Federal and Provincial Influence on Education**

In accordance with its education act, Nova Scotia develops and implements its own curriculum and handles education policies, programming and resources with limited federal influence (Robson, 2013). Public schooling in Canada is the responsibility of provincial and territorial governments, making Canada the only Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country without a federal education department. The role of Canada’s federal government in matters of education is limited to six areas: (a) the provision of financial support for postsecondary education, (b) the provision of financial support for the teaching of official languages, (c) the education of Indigenous Canadians on reserve, (d) the education of personnel in the armed forces and (e) the education of inmates in federal prisons (Robson, 2013; Council of Ministers of Education [CMEC], 2022). This unique decentralisation of education was written into the country's founding constitution for the purpose of creating a system that better reflects local priorities and protects the interests of the diverse ethnic and cultural groups found across regions of Canada (Robson, 2013). While it is true that education in Nova Scotia is primarily the responsibility of the provincial governments, an interaction of provincial and national interests shapes curricula development and programming (Council of Ministers of Education Canada [CMEC], 2022).

Despite Canada's decentralised approach to education, the education systems of the provinces and territories are very similar (Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2022). These similarities are brought about, in part, by the alignment of curricula with national and international standardised tests, a process which is facilitated by intergovernmental bodies such as the Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC). CMEC allows ministers of education to cooperate on projects of mutual interest, including the administration of Canada's national official-languages programs and the conducting of national and international standardised tests
Similarly, the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training exists to facilitate the collaboration between Canada's Atlantic provinces with the aim of “minimising unnecessary duplication of work among Atlantic departments of education” (Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training [CAMET], 2020a, para. 3). Collaborations between Ministries of Education are made necessary because of the requirement of provincial and territorial systems to prepare students for national and international standardised tests and to facilitate the movement of students between provinces, especially for students seeking to pursue post-secondary programs outside their home region.

Education in Canada stands apart not just in its decentralisation but also in its lack of reliance on high school exit exams and other forms of high-stakes testing (Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2022). Standardised tests tend to have a significant impact on teaching as teachers are required to align their curriculum and instruction with the test (Au, 2007; Herman & Golan, 1993). Nova Scotia, even compared with other Canadian provinces, administers few high-stakes standardised tests and the province's professional teaching standards encourage a student-centred and culturally responsive approach to pedagogy (Cowley & MacPherson, 2022; EECD, 2018b). The Program of Learning Assessment for Nova Scotia (PLANS) exists primarily to collect data and monitor the province’s education system through assessments, which do not contribute to student grades, and examinations, which do contribute to final grades. Students in Nova Scotia only sit two provincial examinations throughout their time in the public school system. These exams evaluate performance in grade 10 Math and grade 10 English but only make up 20% of their total mark for these courses. The fact that Nova Scotia administers relatively few standardised tests leaves room for teachers' to adapt their instruction to students with the guidance of learning outcomes listed in curriculum documents. Nevertheless, these tests, along with other national and international standardised tests administered in Nova Scotia, influence the education system, which must align, to some degree, with the test's concept of school knowledge.
National and international standardised tests administered in Canada are limited in scope and assess education systems and not individual students (CMEC, 2022). National assessment takes place in the form of the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP), measuring the reading, math, and science skills of a sample of 13 and 16-year-olds from across the country (CMEC, 2022). International testing takes the form of the OECD’s Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which evaluates the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students around the world (OECD, 2018). The Canadian provinces have historically performed well on PISA assessments, ranking highly when compared to the other 78 participating nations (OECD, 2018). Both the PCAP and the PISA tests measure schools against national and international standards, assessing knowledge that is said to be necessary for “full participation in modern societies” (OECD, 2018, p. 1). Although the Nova Scotia government administers its own education system, the high performance of students on these standardised tests reflects the influence of national and international standards on the province's policies and curriculum.

*The Structure of Public Education in Nova Scotia*

Nova Scotia's *Education Act* (2021) states that the primary aim of Nova Scotia's public school system is “to provide education programs and services for students to enable them to develop their potential and acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy” (p. 6). The chief person responsible for education in the province is the Minister of Education, who is democratically elected as a member of the Nova Scotia legislature and appointed to the ministry by the Premier. The Minister of Education is responsible for establishing policies and standards governing the administration of public education and is the head of Nova Scotia's Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD, 2018a). The Deputy Minister of Education manages the Regional Executive Directors of Education, who are responsible for establishing regional education policies, implementing provincial policies, and overseeing regional centres for
education (EECD, 2018a). There are seven such centres across the province: the Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE), The Annapolis Valley Centre for Education (AVCE), the Strait Regional Centre for Education (SRCE), the Chignecto-Central Regional Centre for Education (CCRCE), the Tri-County Centre for Education (TCRCE), the Cape-Breton Victoria Regional Centre for Education (CBVRCE), and the South Shore Regional Centres for Education (SSRCE). The funding of these regional centres is chiefly made up of contributions from the provincial government, but some also receive municipal funding. Regional centres allocate funding to individual schools according to funding formulas, which take into account enrollment, socioeconomic conditions, the number of students on individual program plans (IPP), and student achievement data (Gorman, 2019). School principals report to regional directors and are responsible for individual school communities. School advisory councils inform principals and regional centres on issues related to their schools (EECD, 2019a). It is worth noting that French-first language education in the province is governed differently through the Conseil Scholaire Acadien, which is directed by 18 counsellors representing ten regions of the province (EECD, 2018a).

In order to guide classroom teaching and curricular renewal, the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET) released a framework of “Essential Graduate Competencies” outlining the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that Atlantic Canadian students should develop through their time in the public education system (CAMET, 2020b). These broad interdisciplinary competencies are developed through work in individual curricular areas, which, at the secondary level, fall into three categories: (a) language communication and expression, (b) science, math and technology, and (c) personal development and society (CAMET, 2020b). Secondary school students must complete a minimum of 18 half-year credits, including a minimum of one physical education credit, one art credit, one Canadian history credit and one global studies credit (EECD, 2020b). The remainder of the 18 credits can be made up through enrollment in courses of the student’s choice, although these choices are
constrained by the school’s course offerings. The Department of Education has the power to approve locally developed courses for recognition as credit courses (EECD, 2020b). Students who enrolled in early or late French Immersion programs prior to entering high school can earn a French Immersion certificate by completing nine courses where the language of instruction is French (EECD, 2020b). In grades 11 and 12 students may enrol in the International Baccalaureate program allowing them to simultaneously earn an IB diploma and a Nova Scotia public school diploma.

For the most part, elements of choices in the education system are not introduced until the secondary level. The exception to this is early French Immersion, whose entry point is usually Grade Primary (age 4-5), and late French Immersion, which begins in grade 7 (age 11-12). Students who were enrolled in Early or Late French Immersion at its entry point may earn a Nova Scotia French Immersion certificate by continuing in French Immersion through to the end of high school. In recent years, there has been a shortage of French teachers in NS. Consequently, a new program, requiring fewer bilingual staff members, was developed to provide more French exposure to students than is offered by Core French. Integrated French has a grade 7 entry point and middle school students in these cohorts follow a French language arts class and take their social studies class in French. Students who enrolled in Integrated French at its entry point may earn a Nova Scotia Integrated French certificate by completing a French language arts course and one other subject in French in each of their years of high school.

At the Secondary School level, several programs are offered as more rigorous alternatives to the regular secondary school curriculum. The most widespread of these programs is the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program offered at 13 public schools across the province. Students may earn an IB diploma by meeting the IB organisation’s standards for issuing the Diploma and by completing the Creativity, Action, and Services (CAS) extra-curricular requirements. The entry point for the IB program is grade 11, however most schools offer a pre-IB preparatory stream beginning in grade 10. Students who complete an IB
diploma will also be awarded a Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma. Students may also earn an IB French Bilingual Diploma as well as a French Immersion Certificate or Integrated French Certificate. Advanced Placement (AP) program courses are offered at six high schools across the province. Advanced Placement courses follow a curriculum developed by the American College Board and are assessed, in part, through externally graded AP exams. These courses are advertised as being equivalent to university courses. Other schools offer advanced courses; not to be confused with AP courses, these advanced courses follow the normal Nova Scotia curriculum but function as a way of streaming higher achieving students into one classroom therefore allowing the teacher to adapt their instruction accordingly.

Finally, there exist some uniquely Nova Scotian program options. The department of education has the power to approve locally developed courses for recognition as credit courses (EECD, 2020b). Schools may implement programming to meet the needs of their student population. An example of such programming is Woodlawn High School's newly introduced Afric-centric cohort offering students who identify as being of African descent exposure to information about Africa, continental Africans, and people of African descent in the diaspora that is largely absent from school curricula in Nova Scotia. The program aims to increase the presence of African Nova Scotian students in science, technology and mathematics. The Options and Opportunity (O2) program is similarly unique to Nova Scotia and requires that students complete a portfolio, the Career Development 10 course, the Community-Based Learning 11 course, and a minimum of three Co-operative Education courses. The entry point for the program is grade 10. Graduates of Nova Scotia's O2 program are offered priority admission to Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) programs.

**Neoliberal Trends in Nova Scotia Education**

In the past two decades there has been a movement towards a more neoliberal style of governance of education in Nova Scotia (Rogers, 2018). Neoliberalism refers to an approach to governance that favours free-markets, deregulation, and reduction in government spending
(Harvey, 2005). Through policy genealogy and critical discourse analyses of Nova Scotia education documents, Rogers (2018) reveals policy reforms from 1994-2016 that aligned public education with the province's neoliberal economic priorities. From 1994 onwards, these priorities occupied an increasingly significant portion of the discourse surrounding curricular and programming decisions (Rogers, 2018). Widespread anxieties over curricula, educator and learner accountability, testing, and the competitiveness of the province's economy, motivated changes in the education system over this time (Rogers, 2018). Discourses of the economic crisis were used strategically to justify reforms (Rogers, 2018).

Nova Scotia's neoliberal education reforms have taken a variety of forms. When it comes to curriculum, changes have taken the shape of an increased emphasis on math and literacy at the detriment of other academic subjects, thereby reducing school knowledge to a set of decontextualized skills (Rogers, 2018). Professional educators have been impacted by the implementation of accountability measures, especially surveillance technologies as well as the introduction of whole school improvement plans, teacher assessment procedures, professional growth plans and monitoring (Rogers, 2018). Report cards have been reformatted to provincially consistent standards, limiting the kind of feedback that can be communicated to families. Compounding this, there has been an increased public and media discourse surrounding provincial, national and international testing (Rogers, 2018). Rogers (2018) observed this to be a source of frustration for teachers, who see these discourses as framing the success of the education system and of the teaching profession within Nova Scotia, in terms of tests that are an insignificant element of their day to day work. Finally, the bargaining power of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU) was reduced in 2017 with the signing of Bill 75, which legislated a forced contract between teachers and the province and obliged teachers to end ongoing work-to rule job action. The passing of this bill was criticised as failing to respect the process of good-faith collective bargaining (The Canadian Press, 2017). Most recently, in 2022, Bill 75 was struck down by the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia as unconstitutional.
More recent Nova Scotian reforms occurring after 2016 also aligned with some features of neoliberal governmentality. This includes a continued movement towards increased standardisation and accountability measures, further enforced by the 2018 restructuring of the administration of education in the province (Glaze, 2018). This administrative restructuring was implemented in the name of developing a more “coordinated provincial approach” and included the establishment of an independent Student Progress Assessment Office (SPAO), the removal of principals and vice-principals from the NSTU, the establishment of an education ombudsperson, the creation of a provincial college of educators, and the creation of an independent teacher licensing body (Glaze, 2018). The changes brought about following the release of the report were justified by the need to govern, discipline and regulate the teaching profession, and to improve public confidence in the education system (Glaze, 2018). While these measures can be seen as purely managerial and continue to allow for inclusive and holistic classroom pedagogy, they can also be thought of as reinforcing the notion that Nova Scotia’s education system must be held accountable to high standards of student achievement so as to uphold a global competitive Nova Scotia economy.

2.3 French Immersion in Nova Scotia

The History of the French Language in Nova Scotia

There is a long history of French speaking peoples in Nova Scotia. The first permanent European settlement in Canada, Port Royal, was settled by the French in 1604 and is located on the territory of modern day Nova Scotia (Hayday, 2005). By the beginning of the 18th century, about 60 French families lived on what is modern-day Nova Scotia territory, but which formed part of la Nouvelle France until the land was ceded to the English in 1713 by the treaty of Utrecht (Hayday, 2005). From 1755 to 1764, the English forcibly removed French speaking Acadian settlers from Nova Scotia in an event known as “Le grand dérangement” or “The Great Deportation” (Boudreau & Dubois, 2007). Nova Scotia’s first official French-language policy was enacted in 1902 and permitted the use of French as a language of instruction in grades 1 and 2
An updated 1939 policy allowed students to be more gradually assimilated to English by providing French education in primary schools, bilingual education from grade 7 to 9, and monolingual English High School education (Rawlyk & Hafter, 1970). This system made it difficult for members of the Acadian community to attain higher education, with only half the population completing grade 8 (Hayday, 2005). Eventually, this model of education led to more than half of the province’s Acadian population of the 1960s reporting English as their mother tongue (Rawlyk & Hafter, 1972). It was not until 1981 that the province adopted a new Education Act that accorded Acadians the right to receive a French-language education, leading eventually to the 1996 establishment of the Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial (CSAP), which returned education to the hands of Acadian and francophone communities (Hayday, 2005).

The history of francophone populations in Atlantic Canada is tied to that of other francophone communities across the country who underwent similar struggles for linguistic security. Prior to 1960, the francophone majority population of Québec largely occupied lower socio-economic positions in society, working under English-speaking superiors (Roy, 2020). The 1960s saw the beginning of Québec’s Quiet Revolution, which slowly overturned the order of Québec society, leading to an increase in the presence of French in the mass media and in city landscapes (Roy, 2020). From this point onward, the French language formed a central part of Québécois identity and perceptions of the French language and of French-English bilingualism evolved accordingly (Roy, 2020). Outside of Québec, however, the relative dispersal of francophone populations made the nationalistic concept of French as a state-language impossible, leaving other francophone communities across the country to redefine themselves as Franco-Albertans, Franco-Ontarians, or Acadians, forming minority communities in their individual provincial contexts (Roy, 2020).

In 1963, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism was put in place to address linguistic inequality and resulted in the Official Languages Act (1969, 1988), which mandated English and French as Canada’s official languages, requiring the government of
Canada to support the learning of English and French across the country (Roy, 2020). As a result, French education programs grew in size nation-wide. Through the final decades of the twentieth century, the number of English-speaking students studying French outside of Québec grew from 1,489,537 in 1970 to approximately 2 million in 2002 (Kissau, 2005). This period was characterised by a new interest in the concept of bilingualism.

In the years following the Royal Commision on Bilingualism (1963-69), French-English bilingualism took on new value in the minds of Canadians. French-English bilingualism was now seen as a path to national unification and good citizenship (Hayday, 2015). Some called for French-English bilingualism to be a core requirement for federal civil servants but this requirement was never fully implemented (Hayday, 2015). Instead, in 1977 a bilingual bonus plan was implemented, providing French-English bilingual workers occupying positions requiring French-English bilingualism with a salary bonus (Treasury Board of Canada, 2008). Around the same time, language training was made available to civil servants. Despite never having achieved the status of a core requirement across the federal civil service, French-English bilingualism is valued as a means of accessing government jobs.

Initial resistance to French-English bilingualism in the 1960s and 1970s was often grounded in arguments in favour of continuing pre-established practices of requiring francophone Canadians to learn English (Hayday, 2015). However, in recent decades, there has been a steady increase in public acceptance of French-English bilingualism as central to Canadian politics and public policy. Majority support is particularly strong in favour of the affordance of language rights and the delivery of services in both official languages (MacMillan, 2021). In particular, there remains strong and enduring public support for the provision of governmental and educational services in both official languages (MacMillan, 2021).

Despite majority support for the current policies related to Canadian French-English bilingualism, there are indications that the expansion of policy surrounding French-English bilingualism would garner significantly less support (MacMillan, 2021). There persists a view
among Anglophone Canadians in particular, that official bilingualism is in danger of being pushed too far (MacMillan, 2021). Meanwhile, language debates surrounding Canada's official languages, continue to be featured prominently in Canadian media discourse. For example, these debates resurfaced during the 2011 Vancouver Olympics in response to commentary on the limited inclusion of French in the Olympic opening ceremonies (Vessey, 2013). More recently, the 2016 defeat of a private members bill seeking to impose the legal requirement for Supreme Court of Canada justices to speak both French and English provoked new questions regarding the status of French in Canada (Dufresne & Ruderman, 2018). In English dominant regions of Canada, these debates tend to take for granted the cultural and social role of English in everyday life and are often characterised by anglocentrist attitudes (see p. 41). These attitudes contribute to the belief that the international importance and dominance of English in North America renders bilingualism unnecessary, resulting in many Canadians continuing to devalue learning any second language (Hayday, 2015).

**Mutual Accommodation**

Stacy Churchill (1986) developed a typology for the stages of education policy for regions aiming to maintain a linguistic or cultural minority alongside a more dominant one. At the most advanced stages of education policy development, not only do minority members of society succeed in education at equal rates to majority members of society, but minority language learners are provided with the opportunity to develop minority language skills through education (Churchill, 1986). Francophone Canadians are accorded this right through Section 23 of the Canada Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982). In order to accord minority culture equal status within a society, the majority group must make adjustments to accommodate the minority language or cultural group (Churchill, 1986). This process, sometimes called mutual accommodation, in the context of Nova Scotia where the francophone population acquires English through participation in the largely majority English society, requires that public education provide a means by which the majority group, anglophone Canadians, may acquire
French (May, 2012). This typology directly connects minority language education for majority language speakers with a desired outcome of equal language and cultural rights. In Canada, this education is achieved in part through French Immersion.

**The History of Canadian French Immersion**

French Immersion exists in part to increase rates of bilingualism and to support the federal government's mandate to promote linguistic duality within Canada (Government of Canada, 2018). Born in the wake of the *Official Languages Act (1969)*, French Immersion was first introduced when English-speaking parents in St-Lambert, Québec were concerned that the amount of French Second Language (FSL) instruction that their children were receiving was insufficient to make them bilingual. This led them to propose, in 1965, a content-based program to their school board (Roy, 2020). The success of the program resulted in its continued growth through the early 2000s, with a national increase of 52% in enrollment between 2003 and 2013 (Barrett DeWiele & Edgerton, 2021). Major challenges with the program have included a shortage of qualified French teachers, a lack of program accessibility, and perceptions of the programing leading to inequality (Kissau, 2005; Roy, 2020; Barrett DeWiele & Edgerton, 2021). Despite increases in enrollment, currently only about 8% of all Canadian K-12 students are enrolled in French Immersion (Bosetti et al., 2017).

In 2003, the Government of Canada released an action plan to promote Canada's linguistic duality that listed targets in the domains of community development, education, and public service (Government of Canada, 2003). The action plan provided a framework for the federal government's support of minority language education, second-language education, and language education beyond the classroom. When it came to FSL education, the action plan stipulated bilateral funding agreements between the federal government and the provinces for French programs (Government of Canada, 2003; Barrett DeWiele & Edgerton, 2021). The document highlighted problems surrounding second language education in Canada. In particular, it cited high drop-out rates among students in secondary school as a threat to the
quality of French Second Language (FSL) instruction because it did not lead to conditions where youth might consider pursuing post-secondary education in their second official language (Government of Canada, 2003, pp. 22-28). Among the aims of the action plan was the doubling of the proportion of secondary school graduates (youth aged 15-19) with a functional knowledge of their second official language, which at the time of the report’s release sat at around 24% (Government of Canada, 2003).

In 2016, thirteen years following the release of Canada’s Action Plan for Linguistic Duality (2003), the Canadian census revealed that just under 25% of Canadians aged 15-19 spoke both French and English. This amounted to less than a percent increase over thirteen years, falling far short of the action plan’s targeted doubling of rates of youth bilingualism. The same trend was observed in Nova Scotia where, in 2016, 21% of Nova Scotia youth aged 15-19 reported speaking both official languages, representing just a 2% increase over the 2006 rates (Statistics Canada, 2016, 2006). The Government of Canada acknowledged that their commitment to supporting official languages in Canada was not resulting in the desired improvement in the status of French-English bilingualism. They responded with the release of a new Government Action Plan for Official Languages in 2018. This action plan lists the “slow growth of bilingualism among English-speaking Canadians outside of Quebec” as a major area of concern and includes a promise to renew bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories to support second-language education (Government of Canada, 2018, p. 8). As part of the updated action plan, the Department of Canadian Heritage pledged investments in the recruitment of immersion teachers and in the creation of bursaries to encourage FSL speakers to pursue their post-secondary studies at a French-language institution (Government of Canada, 2018). Changes must be made to the education programs in order for it to be more effective in producing confidently bilingual youth. If the goal is to encourage more students to pursue post-secondary education in their second official language and to continue speaking it into adulthood, then improvements must be made to secondary school language education.
High school discontinuation of French Immersion has been an issue in programs nationally, with a recent report in New Brunswick stating that two thirds of New Brunswick students who entered French Immersion programs in the province's Anglophone school districts dropped out before the end of High School (Government of New Brunswick, 2018). Significant numbers of students across the country who are entering the program are not continuing through to the end of High School (Canadian Parents for French, 2020). Where 31,071 grade 1 students were enrolled in French Immersion nationally in 2009, only 18,252 members of that cohort were enrolled in grade 12 French Immersion in 2020, amounting to a dropout rate of 41% (Statistics Canada, 2022a). One of the aims of French Immersion is to increase rates of bilingualism and to promote linguistic duality within Canada (Government of Canada, 2018). As was pointed out by Kissau (2005), these aims are greatly undermined if a majority of students are dropping out of a program designed to run until the end of grade 12.

When it comes to French-second language education, the Canadian model of French Immersion has been described by some experts as the highest quality and most effective route to bilingualism (Roy, 2020). This is because, provided it is delivered correctly, French Immersion offers all children, regardless of whether or not they have learning difficulties and challenges, the opportunity to develop multilingualism through long term exposure to French (Roy, 2020). Many consider it critical for language learning to begin at a young age, but it is rarely acknowledged that the length of study is perhaps more important (Dixon et al., 2012). While it is true that learners who begin at a younger age are more likely to achieve native-like proficiency, it is also true that younger learners typically require more time to reach high levels of proficiency (Dixon et al., 2012). In fact, it may be the increased length of exposure to the language that is ultimately responsible for the success of young learners (Dixon et al., 2012). This means that the benefits of early French Immersion are lost if the learner does not persist through the program. The effectiveness of French Immersion in helping young people achieve bilingualism lies in the amount of French input and duration of interaction with the French Language offered by the
program. Teenagers and young adults have been shown to be more efficient learners of a second language, although they are less likely to reach native-like proficiency compared with learners who begin in childhood (Nicoladis & Montanari, 2016).

**The Inclusivity of French Immersion**

Over the past decade there have been a series of editorials appearing in Canadian media criticising French Immersion for its lack of inclusivity. With titles such as “Is Immersion French for Elitist?” (published in the Toronto Star in 2014), “‘Just Say 'Non': The Problem with French Immersion” (publish in MacLean’s Magazine in 2022) or “French Immersion Causes Two-Tier School System, Data Shows” (published in the Globe and Mail in 2019), these articles make similar arguments that French Immersion primarily attracts the children of Canadian-born middle class parents without learning challenges and leads, as a result, to social segregation within the school system (Alphonso, 2019; Hutchins, 2022; Ostroff, 2014). Although some studies have confirmed these claims, findings as to the degree to which this social selection is occurring vary (Allen, 2004a; Ottawa Carleton District School Board, 2019; Sinay, 2015; Willms, 2008; Yoon & Gulson, 2010).

Researchers and policy-makers have approached the French Immersion’s selectivity problem in two ways. As was the case for those responsible for the recently proposed French-second language education reforms in New Brunswick (see chapter 1, p. 8), some believe that current models of French Immersion must be scrapped altogether (Government of New Brunswick, 2018). Others believe that what are needed are targeted efforts to attract under-represented groups to French Immersion programs (Wise, 2009, 2011). This might be done through making more French Immersion learning supports available to students or by encouraging Canadian newcomers to enrol in the program (Mady & Black, 2012).

**2. 2 The International Baccalaureate Diploma Program**

The International Baccalaureate Diploma, created in 1968, was first conceived to serve the needs of a mobile population by providing a universally recognized curriculum offered
consistently across different regions of the world (DiGiorgio, 2010). The IB curriculum, as a result, is said to espouse an internationalist perspective and to instil ideas of citizenship beyond the level of the nation (Doherty, 2009). However, as is remarked by Fitzgerald (2020), the program has a largely disproportionate presence in North America, with almost half of all IB schools worldwide being located in the United States and Canada. The IB diploma program has seen unprecedented growth within Canada over the past decade, making Canada the country with the second highest number of IB schools after the United States and the highest per-capita number of schools in the world (Fitzgerald, 2020).

The International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) is a nonprofit organisation with headquarters in Geneva and regional offices in Cardiff, The Hague, Singapore, and Washington ((International Baccalaureate Organization [IBO], 2022). The organisation’s functions include designing and marketing curricula programs, administering international IB examinations, training educators, and authorising the delivery of IB programs in schools (IBO, 2022). Since its inception, the IBO designed and marketed the “the IB continuum”, a series of curricula programs for students aged 5 to 19 (IBO, 2022). These programs are described on the IBO website as different and superior to other curricula by virtue of their holistic education, centred around multicultural awareness, global citizenship and critical thinking. For example, the original IB diploma program is described as better at preparing students for university, while producing students who are “better able than their peers to cope with demanding workloads, manage their time and meet the expectations placed on them” (IBO, 2014c, para. 4).

Thirteen public schools across Nova Scotia have become accredited as “IB World Schools” including the largest secondary school in each of Nova Scotia's regional centres of education and in the French language school board. Only the largest two regional centres, Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE) and the Chignecto-Central Regional Centre for Education (CCRCE), manage multiple IB world schools, with the HRCE managing five schools and the CCRCE managing two schools. Through offering IB at these select schools, the choice to
enrol in the program is made accessible to approximately 11,150 (40%) of the population of 27,919 secondary school students across Nova Scotia (EECD, 2022). In reality only a small portion of students, fewer than 10%, will enrol in the program. These schools were accredited through a multi-step process involving the completion of workshops by school administrators, the professional development measure undergone by teachers, and the development of provisions for ongoing staff development (IBO, 2022). The costs of this process include an authorization fee, a consultancy fee, and an application service fee, which together amount to an estimated $35,500 CAD. On top of this, the annual IB World School fees currently stand at $15,264 CAD (IBO, 2022).

To earn an International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma, Nova Scotia students must pass written examinations in six subjects, complete the IB organisation’s “Theory of Knowledge” course, write an extended essay, and complete a required number of hours of extracurricular activities (IBO, 2014b). IB exams are marked and moderated by external IB examiners and graded on a scale from 1-7. Seventy to eighty percent of final grades are made up from exam marks, with the remaining 20-30 percent coming from internal assessment conducted by the classroom teacher (IBO, 2014b). To earn an IB diploma students must achieve a cumulative 24 points across their IB subject, without earning any grades of 1 (IBO, 2014b). Additionally, schools in Nova Scotia issue transcripts with predicted IB grades that are based on what the classroom teacher anticipates a student will achieve on their IB exams (EECD, 2012). As IB exam grades are not released until after universities make entrance and scholarship decisions, predicted grades are considered to be important in influencing university acceptance. These predicted grades allow the Department of Education to award IBD students with Nova Scotia graduate diplomas months prior to issuing of IB diplomas by the IBO (EECD, 2012).

There are a few key differences between the IBD program and the standard Nova Scotia curriculum. Most apparent is the existence, in the IBD program, of high stakes external exams. The standard provincial curriculum is founded almost entirely around internally developed and
graded exams, accounting for a maximum of 30% of final grades in any given course (EECD, 2021). As a result of this key difference, teachers administering the provincial curriculum have more control over what is taught, learned, and evaluated in their classrooms. Other important differences between IB and provincial curricula include graduation requirements, elective course options, and the availability of French language-of-instruction classes (see table 1). These large structural differences inevitably lead to distinct pedagogical practices, which shape students’ day to day secondary school experience.

In this chapter I have described the structure of Nova Scotia’s education system, provided a short history of the French language in Nova Scotia and in Canada, the historical and sociological context of Nova Scotian education and described the IBD and French Immersion programs. In the following chapter I will elaborate education and sociological theory relevant to the study of both programs.
**Table 1**

*A comparison of IBD and Nova Scotia provincial curriculum structure (EECD, 2019b)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IB Diploma Program</th>
<th>Grade 11 and 12 Nova Scotia Provincial Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Requirement to study an additional language</td>
<td>No requirement to study an additional language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement to complete extracurricular activity, and services hours</td>
<td>No requirement to complete extracurricular activity hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Externally developed and graded exams amounting to 70-80% of final grades.</td>
<td>Internally assessed and developed exams amounting to 20-30% of final grades.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No requirement to complete a Canadian History or Culture course.</td>
<td>Requirement to complete a Canadian History or Culture course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility of pursuing 2 science subjects.</td>
<td>Possibility to pursue 3 science subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility of pursuing 2 arts subjects.</td>
<td>Possibility to pursuing multiple arts subjects (depending on individual school offering)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No requirement to complete a physical activity course.</td>
<td>Requirement of completing a physical activity course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement to complete a theory of knowledge philosophy course and an extended essay.</td>
<td>No possibility of completing philosophy courses or extended essays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility of completing 3 classes where the language of instruction is French.</td>
<td>Possibility of completing 5-6 classes where the language of instruction is French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A more narrow range of course offerings.</td>
<td>A greater range of elective course offering. The possibility of participating in locally developed courses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 3: Theory and Definitions

I can think of few areas of investigation more pressing than that which seeks to uncover the linkages between meaning and control in our cultural institutions

- Michael Apple, Curriculum Ideology, 2004

In this chapter I elaborate theoretical concepts and define terms related to the sociology of education and educational discourse with the aim of developing a language and framework for discussing the choice to participate in the IBD and French Immersion programs. I begin by defining school knowledge and social capital and I connect these concepts to common curriculum ideologies. I then define the concept of social capital and relate this to the value we place on language. Next, I define political and social movements (neoliberalism, globalisation) impacting education systems. I describe how these broader movements impact the way we group students and organise our school systems. Finally, I describe how the study of discourse can be used to investigate sociological problems and phenomena.

3.1 School Knowledge and Social Capital

The term curriculum refers to the subjects that are taught in a course of study and can be understood as being composed of two elements: the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum (Apple, 2004). The formal curriculum constitutes learning that is formally planned-for and written into curricular materials and resources. The hidden curriculum constitutes learnings which result as a natural consequence of the organisation and administrations of the school. These are “the tacit teaching to students of norms, values, and dispositions that goes on simply by their living in and coping with the institutional expectations and routines of schools day in and day out for a number of years” (Apple, 2004, p. 13). While it is perhaps easy to see the hidden curriculum as ideological, Apple (2004) points out that the formal curriculum is also highly ideological. It is often forgotten that the very nature of what gets written into learning outcomes and legitimised as school knowledge is, in itself, a choice based on certain values and ideologies.
The writing of a curriculum is the defining of the forms of knowledge that should be validated by the institution of school and formally recognized by society. It might seem natural and obvious that certain subjects and knowledge should be deemed worthy of school study while others should not be. However, lessons in math, science, reading and writing, no matter how objectively or scientifically relevant they may seem, are inherently ideological (Apple, 2004). By design, curricula reproduce economic and political systems of dominance and subordination through the attributing of value to some subjects over others. While it is often acknowledged that school curricula play a role in constructing the social and emotional realities of students, it is not acknowledged that it also shapes our understanding of the nature of science and the legitimacy of individualism or that these constructions serve the interest of some and not of others (Apple, 2004).

Schools are, at their foundation, cultural institutions which define school knowledge, and in doing so also define “[t]he very categories we use to approach our responsibility to others”, in other words, the role of the individual in relation to the community (Apple, 2004, p. 8). Through the allocation of credentials and the transition of certain kinds of cultural knowledge, schools prepare individuals to be hired into certain jobs and to participate in certain social spheres within the larger community. The way that the cultural institution of school directs individuals towards certain economic and social positions is characterised by the asymmetric distribution of power. Many theories regarding the connection of culture and power have been developed (Bernstein, 2003; Bourdieu, 1977; Foucault, 2005; Williams, 1995). One such theory, Bourdieu's theory of habitus, forms part of the theoretical framework of this project.

Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of habitus proposed a model for understanding the relationship between cultural and economic reproduction (Bourdieu, 1982). He employs the language of economic capital to aid in our understanding of cultural phenomena, arguing that just as children possess varying amounts of economic capital, they also possess varying degrees of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1982). A child's performance in school is in many ways a measure of
how well they are able to conform to middle class culture (Bourdieu, 1982). The patterns of behaviour and ways of understanding the world of the middle class, which Bourdieu refers to as the *habitus* of the middle class, is presented by schools as natural and children are treated as if they have equal exposure and background in it. Familiarity with middle class culture, in itself a form of capital (cultural capital), is unequally distributed within society in a way that mirrors the distribution of labour and power (Bourdieu, 1982). Bourdieu ultimately postulates that societal problems such as poverty and curricular problems such as low achievement are inevitable products built into the way societies, economies and cultures are structured (Bourdieu, 1982). The attainment of social capital is what motivates individuals to participate in school and in certain curricular options within schools.

Social networks and interpersonal connections can be thought of as resources aiding in the achievement of goals (Field, 2003). Bourdieu sees social capital as a means of accessing institutional resources (Allan & Catts, 2012). People rich in social capital are connected and share a common outlook with a group allowing them to access the resources of the group (Field, 2003). Social groups facilitate positive cooperation amongst individuals but also establish in-group and out-group dynamics, excluding some from the social network as a source of power (Field, 2003). Social networks can be conceived on different scales from local micro-level social networks to national networks to global networks. Individuals simultaneously belong to smaller or larger scale communities but often membership to a certain level of community receives disproportionate emphasis as a source of social capital. The choice between curriculum options such as IBD and French Immersion are based on assumptions about what is and should be on the curriculum (school knowledge), and evaluations of that curriculum's capacity to provide value (social capital) to the individual.

By questioning the assumptions about knowledge that lie at the foundation of our education systems, we inevitably must put into question the policies and practices of educational institutions (Ball, 2013). Such policies and pedagogical practice present certain topics of study as
natural, rational, and objectively true (Ball, 2013). Through the study of representation of IBD and French Immersion curricular programs, this project attempts to uncover inherent assumptions about the forms of school knowledge attained through the IBD and FI programs and how this knowledge is presented as leading to the attainment of social capital. When presented with program descriptions, certain kinds of parents and students are more likely to be motivated to enrol themselves or their child in a given program. Consideration of the ideologies underpinning representations of the programs can contribute to an understanding of how program choices are made and of why certain students might choose to discontinue a French Immersion program.

3.2 What Gets Taught in School

Dominant curriculum ideologies are informed by movements in the field of education based in varying philosophies of what constitutes knowledge and learning. Curriculum ideology is generally described (Eisner & Vallance, 1974; Cadiero-Kaplan, 2004; Schiro, 2012; Schubert, 1996) as aligning with four major curriculum movements, each defining school knowledge differently and favouring different sets of pedagogical practices. These are the scholar-academic curriculum, the social efficacy curriculum, the progressive or learner-centred curriculum and the critical or social-reconstructivist curriculum (Cadiero-Kaplan, 2004).

A useful summary of these curricula is outlined by Harb and Thomuire (2020). The scholar academic curriculum sees education as a tool for the transmission of knowledge. However, these curricula understand school knowledge to be limited to what is considered 'scientific knowledge'. Scientific knowledge is seen as objective and absolute and is thought to be universally applicable across cultures and society. Universal basic skills are seen as the building blocks of scientific knowledge. Reading and writing skills can therefore be reduced to sub-skills such as phonological awareness, letter formation, recognition of letter sounds, vocabulary and grammar knowledge, and paragraph structure. No regard is given to the social situation in which students are expected to use these skills (Harb & Thomure, 2020).
The social efficacy curriculum sees education as a tool for serving society's needs. The aim of this curriculum is to help students learn how to perform roles in society. Instruction seeks to shape students’ behaviour, making them more productive members of society. This is often achieved by teaching skills in discrete parts. As in the scholar academic curriculum, school knowledge is seen as a scientific or technical field. However, here the focus is not on building basic skills but on applying skills and knowledge to real world situations or to the workforce (Harb & Thomure, 2020).

The learner centred curriculum (sometimes known as the progressive curriculum) sees education as a tool for exposing students to learning experiences. This curriculum assumes that students naturally make meaning from experiencing their environment and aims to meet students' needs and interests. Constructivist education theory serves as the foundation for this curriculum and instruction is seen as the process of helping students construct their own meaning from the world. Here the focus is on overall meaning and not on discrete decontextualized skills. School knowledge is seen as any knowledge that helps students make meaning, build experience, and deepen their understanding of their environments (Harb & Thomure, 2020).

Some progressive educators found fault with the idea that individuals could construct logic out of autonomously acquired knowledge and values (Apple, 2004). They argued that the autonomous action of students could not be separated from the political and economic systems that influence their lived realities. A new perspective on curriculum was needed to address the seemingly inevitable way in which schools instruct students with a particular set of social meanings (Apple, 2004). Critical curriculum arose in response to the idea that schools should shape the values of students in view of constructing a better society.

The scholar academic, social efficacy, and progressive curriculum all share an autonomous view of school knowledge whereby knowledge is seen as existing autonomously of one's environment and emerging from an individual's objective observations rather than
emerging from collaboration with others (Harb & Thomure, 2020). The social reconstruction curriculum, however, sees school knowledge as ideological and education as a tool for assisting people to construct and transform their societies (Harb & Thomure, 2020). Under this approach, school knowledge is constructed from students’ personal histories and identities (Harb & Thomure, 2020). Students question their own place in history, how their identities are shaped by context, and how they are labelled by others due to their race, religion, gender, social class, etc. Pedagogical approaches focus on the development of critical literacy skills, allowing students to read classroom text from a variety of perspectives, while considering their own positionality with relation to classroom text and societal power structure reflected in these texts (Harb & Thomure, 2020).

3.3 Trends in Education

**Neoliberalism in Education**

This project takes the perspective that knowledge and curriculum is ideological and therefore it becomes necessary to consider the systems of political and economic power that school knowledge is mobilised to maintain (Ball, 2013). As was touched upon in the previous chapter, Neoliberalism refers to a political and economic philosophy proposing that societal betterment is best achieved through the expansion of market value to all human activities (Harvey, 2005). Until the late 1970s, neoliberalism was a relatively marginal argument, occupying limited space in political and popular discourse, but has since become characteristic of political discourse (Harvey, 2005).

Neoliberalism, as a political logic, is characterised by the deregulation of industry, agriculture and resource extraction and the promotion of free market and free trade (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism requires strong private property rights to be upheld, with the role of the state being limited to the maintenance of the proper functioning of markets (Harvery, 2005). Neoliberal governments should ensure the quality and integrity of money and the security of private property rights through legal structures and even by military and police force when...
necessary (Harvery, 2005). The government's role should not extend beyond this, leading to a withdrawal of the state from social services, including from education (Tett & Hamilton, 2019).

Importantly, neoliberal modes of governance require that markets be created in areas where they might not previously have existed, including in education (Harvey, 2005). The delimitation of education goods (curricula, school reputation, certificates and qualifications) becomes an important prerequisite, allowing neoliberal values to be applied to education. This is because only once educational goods are delimited can they be branded and promoted within global markets (Tett & Hamilton, 2019). Education goods are sold along with promises that they will prepare students to compete in the global job market, all leading to an increased emphasis on individual achievement in education. Promised improvement in individual achievements must be made visible and so assessment and other means of educational measurement take on extra importance within education systems, ultimately fostering low trust environments where educators and students are monitored and assessed against external measures (Tett & Hamilton, 2019). The purpose of education systems becomes, therefore, to efficiently produce globally competitive workers with monetizable skills instead of providing social services or promoting social equity, diversity and well-being (Tett & Hamilton, 2019). This places neoliberal education directly in contradiction to holistic and inclusive education (Tett & Hamilton, 2019).

Through the lens of neoliberalism, curricular programs are reduced to educational products whose purpose is to efficiently facilitate individual achievement. This is evidently opposed to critical curricula, whose purpose is to allow students to question and consciously reconstruct their societies. Only social efficacy and, to a lesser extent, academic-scholarly curricula can exist within the framework of neoliberal education. These curricula pass off school knowledge as natural, concealing the role of the curriculum in maintaining societal inequality. This model of schooling functions to reproduce the unequal distribution of social capital within society. As we have seen in chapter 2, the Nova Scotian education system is no exception to neoliberalism (see p. 18).
Globalisation in Education

Defined as the process by which the world’s economies, cultures, and society are becoming increasingly interconnected, globalisation is transforming the structure of regional education systems (Daun, 2002). Business owners and corporations are increasingly moving beyond saturated national markets and relying less and less on the demands of their fellow citizens as consumers or suppliers (Daun, 2002). Education sectors play a critical role in this evolving economic climate, as nations compete to attract financial capital through educating a highly skilled labour force (Daun, 2002). Many OECD countries including Canada have been described as evolving towards a knowledge economy which relies less on natural resources and skilled labour and more on human capital and intellectual property (James, 2006). Human capital is a term used to delineate personal characteristics such as health, knowledge, and education making them into distinctive attributes that can be bought and sold within neoliberal market economies (James, 2006).

A linguistic feature signalling a movement towards a conception of self as globalised human capital has been described by Urciuoli (2008) as “skills discourse”. According to Urciuoli (2008), workers competing in the job market are increasingly expected to sell themselves to employers through evocation of the skills they possess (Urciuoli, 2008). The term “skills” used to denote specific manual operations but has expanded in meaning to include “any practice, form of knowledge, or way of constituting productive labour” (Urciuoli, 2008, p. 212). Skills can be quantified, counted, rated, measured, segmented, tested and ranked. Even subjective and culturally-embedded behaviours like communicating and cooperating are included in this kind of discourse through the evocation of the term “soft-skills”. These behaviours become objectified as workers begin to conceive of themselves as “bundles of skills” (Urciuoli, 2008, p. 211). Often vague and ambiguous skills such as “leadership”, “excellents”, or “team-work” are strategically employed to signal social alignment with certain institutions through their removal from everyday social context. Urciuolli (2008) suggests that this discourse constructs skills as
commodities and naturalises the act of speaking of oneself as a commodity. Importantly, education begins to be thought of as segmentable into the various kinds of skills it provides, the productive element it has the power to instil in students.

While the increased importance of education in national knowledge economies might be expected to incentivise governments to invest in public education, globalisation has occurred in conjunction with the rise in neoliberalism, fuelling instead the growth of private sector education (Daun, 2002). The debate between economic and socialist visions of school is played out through policy decisions in education, with the result being a global restructuring of public systems (Daun, 2002). This restructuring has taken the form of standardised policies derived from a world model for education, policies aimed at decentralising education management detaching it from nation aims, increased competition between schools through increased school choice policies, an increase in surveillance of educational processes, the diminished power of teacher's unions, and a rise in policies aimed at attracting private resources (Daun, 2002). Increasingly, education reforms are justified through allusions to global competitiveness. This is done at the detriment of the school's role in adapting to local needs and interests and integration within local cultures.

Economic globalisation is a term used to refer to an increased interdependence of world economies resulting from the growing scale of international cooperation and international trade. Political and economic ideologies serving the interests of the globally dominant powers guide the process of globalisation. The most important of these dominant political ideologies is neoliberalism. Globalisation, in parallel with neoliberalism, influences the current day Canadian political climate impacting all aspects of society including education.

Despite the dominance of neoliberal globalisation, other ideologies coexist within society and present challenges to dominant ideologies. School curriculum can often be the site of contestation and resistance to dominant visions of globalised education. For example a critical democratic view of globalised education seeks emancipation, diversity and social justice through
commitment to multiculturalism and critical awareness of global power asymmetries (Camicia & Franklin, 2011). Standardisation, a marker of neoliberal educational curricula, is often associated with testing due to the fact that teaching to a test requires teachers to narrow and homogenise their curriculum instruction to focus on discrete and quantifiable conceptions of skill and school knowledge, rendering this knowledge marketable (Camicia & Franklin, 2011). Contrary to this, a less standardised curriculum is a marker of critical democratic curricula due to the fact that it allows for the incorporation of culturally embedded and contextual knowledge (Camicia & Franklin, 2011). Globally interconnected societies and cultures produce interconnected education influenced by globally dominant ideas but which have the potential to also encourage diversity, plurality of thought and contestation of dominant perspectives. Languages are taught as school subjects both as a means of allowing access to globalised markets and cultures but also as a means of passing on more localised cultural knowledge. Language learning in increasingly globalised education systems has the potential to either reinforce the hegemonic status of dominant languages or to allow for the coexistence of a greater diversity of languages. The kind of value assigned to language learning determines the potential impact of that learning.

**Language Education and Anglocentrism**

The value assigned to a language can be understood by looking at what motivates learners to acquire the language. Gardner and Lambert (1959) described motivation for second language acquisition (SLA) as resulting from the valuing of language instrumentality, as a means of achieving a goal such as career success or engagement in international business, or integratively, as a means of identifying with a community or of engaging with another culture (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). A similar theory of extrinsic-intrinsic motivations describes the role of external pressures and internal desires in motivating language learners (Oxford, 1996). The French language in Nova Scotia can be considered in terms of both its extrinsic-instrumental value of increasing employability, particularly in the federal public services and in public
education, and its inherent-integrative value of maintaining Francophone Nova Scotian communities and identities. The acquisition of French could also be considered a means of achieving personal growth and good citizenship through conforming to a bilingual Canadian national identity. On the other hand, many do not see knowledge of French as valuable.

Anglocentrism is a monolingual language ideology espousing the value of English as a single language of education, politics and public discourse (May, 2012). Anglocentrists see multilingualism and multilingual education as a threat to English monolinguals and protest its legitimation through public policy. On a global scale this phenomenon has been labelled by some as “English linguistic imperialism”, whereby the global status of English serves the interest of certain world powers through perpetuating social, economic, and political inequality between English and non-English speakers (Phillipson, 2009).

Popular arguments in opposition to multilingual education are based on claims of the status of English as a global language and its perceived role in achieving globalisation, cosmopolitanism and global citizenship (Archibugi, 2005; Pogge, 2003; Swaan, 2001). English is thought to have powerful instrumental value in promoting modernity and modernization. Some go as far as to claim that multilingual education programs deprive young people of access to this modernity (Pogge, 2003).

Often arguments against multilingual education frame the choice between English education and education in another language as mutually exclusive (May, 2012). English is thought to provide individuals with greater economic and social mobility, with minority language serving the less important role of maintaining cultural identities (May, 2012). Extreme manifestations of this ideology posit that the promotion of a minority language and associated cultural identities actually harms children as it prevents them from adopting a majority culture which is likely to endow them with more social and economic benefits (Dicker, 2000). Meanwhile, English is thought of as a neutral language that serves only instrumental purpose
and it does not play any role in maintaining cultural identities. The ideologies associated with the English language are obscured and unavailable for critiquing (May, 2012).

Added to this, minority languages are sometimes painted as posing a threat to the dominance of English. These arguments are more easily entertained in countries where English is acquired as an additional or minority language; however, this argument can be observed even in societies where the dominance of English seems irrefutable. Despite the implausibility of French posing any sort of threat to the status of English in Nova Scotia (a province where upwards of 99% of the population speak English), assertions that French Immersion negatively impacts children's English reading and spelling ability are not infrequently made against French Immersion. In reality, there is no evidence to suggest that French immersion has negative effects on English language development (Genesee, 2007; Swain & Lapkin, 1982; Turnbull et al., 2001; Wiss, 1987). To the contrary, French Immersion enrolment has been shown to correlate with increased English reading scores (Allen, 2004b). As there is no real threat to the status of English in Nova Scotia or in Canada more generally, arguments rooted in perceived threats to English reveal a deeper perpetuation of anglocentric ideologies interested in maintaining monolingual English dominance. For this to be possible, monolingual English speakers must remain monolingual.

Education which allows students to be bilingual in English and French does not threaten the student's ability to use English. The promotion of French language education in Nova Scotia aims to allow the possibility of public bilingualism or multilingualism in the province. Rather, the children of monolingual majority language speakers are being encouraged to learn French as a way of accommodating French as an official language in Canada. In fact, Canadian models of French Immersion are one of a limited number of global examples of a majority language group incentivised to learn a minority language (May, 2012).
**Ability Grouping in Education**

It is inevitable that in the administration of public education, decisions must be made about how to organise pupils within a school system. Students must be sorted into school, grades, classes, or programs. The mechanism of this sorting has long been a subject of debate. From the inception of public education, achievement-based selection has been front and centre in this controversy (Johnston & Wildy, 2016). Despite a growing consensus regarding the insufficiency of a stable, generalisable and measurable conceptualisations of intelligence, measures of prior attainment are extrapolated to represent a student generalised potential for learning and used to assign students to pedagogical groups within a school board, within a school or within the classroom (Johnston & Wildy, 2016).

There are several ways in which students are commonly grouped according to ability within school. One of the most obviously apparent forms of ability grouping, streaming (referred to as ‘tracking’ in the US context), refers to the practice of creating teaching groups within schools based on the general ability of students across all subjects. The rationale for this practice is that students will make better progress alongside pupils of similar ability and that lessons prepared for groups of students of similar ability will be more coherent (Inglis, 2008). This practice has many limitations, including its inability to account for students whose performance varies across subject areas. Setting (referred to as regrouping within the US context) arose in response to these limitations and represents an alternative form of ability grouping that attempts to account for variance in ability across academic subjects by grouping students differently between academic subjects (Inglis, 2008; Lee & Sukhnandan, 1998). Instead of dividing students into cohorts according to ability, setting assigns students to higher or lower ability classes in each of the school subjects.

While ability-based setting and streaming practices are thought of as a solution to social segregation, all high achieving students will be admitted into high sets and streams regardless of race, gender or social background, these approaches fail to acknowledge that children from all
social groups do not enter school on an even playing field (Francis et al., 2017). Children from lower socio-economic backgrounds tend to be behind their middle class peers upon entering school, and this difference continues to be perpetuated by students' unequal access to extra out of school resources throughout their education (Francis et al., 2017). Boys, the youngest children in a year-group, students of ethnic minorities, and students from working-class backgrounds, have all been shown to be disproportionately represented in low sets and streams (Francis et al., 2017; Lee & Sukhnandan, 1998). The grouping of students into classes and cohorts according to ability, has actually been shown to reinforce social segregation within schools, with groupings both reflecting and reinforcing social inequalities (Francis et al., 2017; Inglis, 2008; Johnston & Wildy, 2016; Lee & Sukhnandan, 1998). Gaps in achievement between social classes widen as children progress through school, indicating that schooling acts as an exacerbator, rather than mitigator, of social inequality (Francis et al., 2017). Mixed ability classes are thought to limit this exacerbatory effect.

Through their investigation of ability grouping in the context of the United Kingdom, Francis et al. (2017) sought to understand why a clear research consensus pointing to the ineffectiveness of ability grouping, was not reflected in policy decisions within the UK. UK education policy frequently promotes ability grouping and connects the practice with high educational standards. The research revealed that ability grouping reflected a cultural acceptance of a discourse of 'natural order' and hierarchy characteristic of the UK middle-class (Francis et al., 2017). Ability grouping can be taken up without research evidence because it forms part of a discourse of 'natural order' that is hegemonic to the way we talk about our social world as being made up of naturally unequal actors (Francis et al., 2017). Similarly, Ball (2013) describes a “discursive bundle” where justification of ability grouping goes hand in hand with discourses of high academic rigour and of natural order.

The relationship between ability grouping and inequality has likewise been observed in the Canadian context (Krahn & Taylor, 2007). Krahn and Taylor's (2007) comparison of
provincial education systems revealed that provinces with less streaming of grade 10 students produced graduates with more post-secondary options. Provinces with less streaming had a weaker relationship between the socio-economic status and education background of parents and the post-secondary options available to their children upon graduation from high school (Krahn & Taylor, 2007). Whether within Canada or elsewhere in the world, there is no consistent or reliable research evidence for the benefit of ability grouping in any given subject area or at any given ability level (Inglis, 2008).

Prior to the early 1990s, Nova Scotia public schools streamed students into general and advanced high school programs (Minister's Panel on Education, 2014). Throughout the early 1990s streaming was removed from the school system and replaced with common graduate outcomes (Minister's Panel on Education, 2014). Despite the fact that advanced, academic, open, and graduation options exist within Nova Scotia high schools, these are presented as academic choices rather than academic streams and therefore Nova Scotia schools can be said to be free of academic streaming. That being said, teachers and guidance counsellors are not precluded from encouraging students to make certain choices based on their prior academic achievement and, in fact, class descriptions in course selection guides often recommend prospective students achieve prerequisite grades in prior courses (C.P. Allen High School, 2022).

### 3.4 School and Curricular Choice

While ability grouping represents one mechanism for sorting students, choice represents another. Sorting according to ability and sorting according to choice each have the potential to lead to the segregation of students in accordance with pre-existing societal divisions. Choice within an education system might take the form of school-choice requiring students and parents to navigate options of neighbourhood schools, private schools, and magnet schools. Choice could also take the form of curricula choice where students and parents must decide between several curriculum programs that may be offered at the same school or school district.
There is a trend amongst OECD countries towards the increase of school and curricular choice opportunities for students and parents (OECD, 2012). Proponents of educational choice frame the practice as providing equal access to high quality schooling by allowing all students, no matter their background, to change to better schools (OECD, 2012). It is argued that the rich and powerful have always had access to school choice through their financial access to private schools and their greater residential mobility. It is reasoned that school choice evens the playing field by offering choices to middle and lower class parents that have always been available to the wealthy (OECD, 2012). Aside from promoting equality of opportunity, school-choice is thought to have the added bonus of fostering competition between schools, which is thought to improve the quality and efficiency of education (OECD, 2012).

Critics of educational choice point to evidence that school choice in practice, leads to the segregation of students based on social economic factors, ethnicity and academic ability (Henderson, 2020). School choice undermines the roles of schools as architects of social cohesions by resulting in the homogenisation of student bodies, and the amplification of achievement gaps between social groups (Henderson, 2020). This effect of educational choice has been observed within Canada, where it has been shown that school choice is shaped by parental income and education level (Davies & Aurini, 2011).

This reasoning assumes the existence of winners and losers within a system of choices which parents and students are responsible to navigate (Henderson, 2020). These systems of choice transfer the responsibility of providing quality and equitable education, from the state to the schools with parents and students cast as consumers who must navigate systems of school choice in order to access optimal education (Henderson, 2020). The choice of school becomes a high stakes decision that impacts the nature and quality of a child’s education with well-informed parents and affluent parents having been shown to be more likely to exercise school or curricular choice leading to the perpetuation of existing society divisions (Henderson, 2020). Henderson (2020) described the propensity for some UK school administrators to
attribute low grammar school enrollment of working class or marginalised students to lower aspiration on the part of the students rather than to systemic barriers limiting the choices of these students (Henderson, 2020). Choice-based education frames equality in terms of the creation of avenues for individual success, rather than in terms of societal progress.

Often work on school choice has examined contexts where the choice of school also means the choice of curriculum offered at that school (Doherty, 2009). In some contexts students and parents might not have many available school choices but do have the choice of curriculum offerings within a school (Doherty, 2009). School choice and curricular choice are interrelated and parents might choose a certain school in order to access its curriculum or might enrol in certain curricular programs in order to attend an out of neighbourhood school. Both IB and French Immersion can be thought of as curricular choice options within the Nova Scotia public school system. These curricular choices, like school choice, can be thought of as emerging from the global spread of neoliberal education policy that makes use of choice within education systems to produce stratified markets that perpetuate the unequal distribution of social capital (Baker, 2014). Parents and students become consumers tasked with navigating these systems of choices (Baker, 2014). An example of one such choice is the choice between the French Immersion program and the IB program in Nova Scotia high schools. It is nevertheless important to note that the choice to participate in French Immersion does not necessarily preclude participation in some English language Nova Scotia curriculum courses. At the high school level, French Immersion cohorts are usually integrated with non-French Immersion students through the participation in non-French Immersion courses.

Baker (2014)’s examination of the practice of curricular choice within the Ontario education system suggested that the IB program serves as an alternative curricular choice and exists in part due to the influence of neoliberal globalisation leading to educational reforms, which increasingly results in schools having to distinguish themselves from other schools in order to attract students and maintain enrolment (Baker, 2014). Baker (2014) found that the
IBD program primarily served middle class students, creating an exclusive enclave within the public education system. The IBO promotes itself as a choice educational product, with IBO documents emphasising the program's reputation for academic rigour leading to entrance into prestigious universities and its capacity to prepare students for an increasingly global society (Baker, 2014). This focus on the IBD program as a superior curricular choice detracts from the stated goals of IB, which are to foster intercultural understanding and respect leading to a more peaceful world (Baker, 2014; IBO, 2022). The findings of this study suggest that “schools are choosing the IBDP more for its 'brand-power' than its curricular content or idealist ambitions” (Baker, 2014, p. 118).

The choice to enrol in French Immersion has likewise been studied in the Canadian context (Barrett DeWiele & Edgerton, 2021; Culligan, 2010; Worswick, 2003). Using data from the 1998-99 National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, Worswick (2003) applied a theoretical model of school program choice to compare FI program students and families and English program students and families. Results highlighted the choice of French Immersion as a mechanism of grouping according to ability and socio-economic background. There existed significant differences in reading and writing ability between students in French Immersion and English language streams (Worswick, 2003). French Immersion students were shown to be more likely to have a parent with a university degree and higher income and less likely to come from families who relied on government assistance programs (Worswick, 2003). As was the case with the IB program, the FI program was shown to create privileged bubbles within the public education system. Worswick (2003) concludes that the increased program choices within Canadian education systems put the equality of these systems into doubt, questioning whether it is possible for the public education system to provide program choices while also ensuring equality.
3.5 Discursive Representation

Choosing a highschool program is, at its core, a social practice and language is an important component of this practice. Language is the social negotiation of meanings used to disseminate knowledge throughout a community. It reflects prior knowledge of pre-existing linguistic and non-linguistic parts of society but also projects upon these parts of society categories and systems of logic which construct our knowledge of the social and natural world. Language takes on different meanings in different contexts, so in order for an analysis of language to be meaningful, the context in which this language was used must be considered. The study of discourse can lend insight into the interconnected nature of language and society. This research takes Fairclough's (2015)' definition of discourse as socially determined language in use. It is through the critical analysis of discourse that this study proposes to examine the social practice of program choice in Nova Scotia high schools.

Where discourse acts to perpetuate unequal power dynamics, it can be said to function ideologically (Fairclough, 2015). Ideology can be defined as systems of belief about social reality that justify a society's distribution of authority and resources (Apple, 2004). Those who have disproportionate authority and resourcing within society are in a position of dominance. Dominance can be achieved through coercion and violence or through acquiring the passive consent of those being dominated; the latter means of domination is achieved through the use of ideology. The critical analysis of discourse reveals the ideologies underpinning social practices such as program choice.

Foucault and Nazzaro (1972) theorised the way in which social institutions, such as schools, use their power to create and shape social constructs through the strategic use of language. School can therefore be thought of as an architect of social reality. Social practices are patterns of socially learned behaviours that allow us to respond to each other's action and in doing so construct social reality (Haslanger, 2018). The choice for or against French Immersion or IBD enrolment is a social practice and studying it as such may provide insight into the
complex web of social factors contributing to the likelihood that the IBD program might be chosen over the FI program.

Social practices, such as educational choices, are coordinated through the use of language (Haslanger, 2018). Throughout school, students will have encountered messages about the IBD and French Immersion programs which will have made these programs meaningful to students therefore guiding their choice of program. In choosing a high school program, students respond to the behaviours of teachers, administrators, and previous students. Through opting in to one program and out of another, students in turn contribute themselves to the construction of a program as being more or less appropriate for certain kinds of students. Knowledge of each program is conveyed to parent and student in great part through language, alongside other meaning-making devices.

The use of discourse to construct social and linguistic realities is referred to as discursive construction. The discursive construction of French Immersion and International Baccalaureate programs is this project’s object of study as it directly influences program choice. When Nova Scotia high school students and parents make the choice to enrol in FI or IBD high school programs, their decision is informed by the discursive representations of each program. The programs are not simply a product of their respective curriculum outcomes and learning resources but are equally defined by the discursively constructed meanings attached to them.

Discourse within the Nova Scotia education system contributes to an education discourse that reflects the social realities of our school systems and imposes upon the school system a certain structure, logic, and world view. This discourse arises from the specific social and historical contexts in which the Nova Scotia education system is situated and reflects the struggle for dominance between competing world-views. The pre-existing social realities of Nova Scotia’s education system—the make-up of student bodies, the content of courses, the administrative structure of schools, etc— Influence and are influenced by educational discourse within the province.
The proportion of students completing high school French Immersion is decreasing while the number of students participating in the IBD program is increasing (EECD, 2022). Many factors may contribute to this trend, including students' and parents' values, program perception, exposure to marketing, and attitudes of teachers and school administrators. These factors can be understood through the study of the discourse surrounding each program.

**The Analysis of Discourse**

A text can be taken as a point of entry into investigations of the relationship between discourse and society (Fairclough, 2015). The notion of “text” encompasses any unit of language representing a whole and complete social interaction where language is in use (Thomspson, 2014). Fairclough (2015) defines text as the product of the social process of text production and a resource in the social process of text interpretation. He proposes a model of discourse as the inlay of text within interaction within context (see Figure 1). Evidence of the social interaction with a text can be studied through the examination of text features, which contain traces of the process of production and cues to the process of interpretation (Fairclough, 2015). These processes of textual interaction, production, and interpretation are determined by social context. Fairclough’s (2015) three dimensional model for the critical analysis of discourse takes the position that texts are embedded in the discourse practices of production and interpretation and that these practices are in turn embedded in greater socio-cultural practices. While I use Fairclough’s three dimensional model to describe the theory underpinning the interrelationship between text and context, it must be noted that the methodology of this study is adapted from the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) to critical discourse analysis rather than from Fairclough’s (2013) Dialectical Relationship (DR) approach.
There is a dialectical relationship between discourse and society whereby discourse is socially determined and society is constructed through discourse (Fairclough, 2015). Both the IBD and French Immersion program are socially and discursively constructed. Both programs are shaped in part by the students who participate in the program, but also by texts such as program descriptions within course selection handbooks. Through the study of the discourse of course selection handbooks, specifically the program descriptions within these handbooks, it is possible to gain an understanding of how this discourse contributes to constructing beliefs about a program, thus impacting enrollment and ultimately the practical or financial viability of each program at the high school level. In particular, ideological perspectives on school knowledge and social capital inherent in the discursive construction of French Immersion and the IBD program have the power to influence program choice. This research therefore seeks to investigate evaluations and assumptions about school knowledge and social capital latent within each
program’s discursive construction. With this in mind, I identified a central guiding research question as well as five subquestions. The guiding research question for this study is:

How (if at all) do representations of French Immersion and IB in school handbooks differ with relation to assumptions about and evaluations of school knowledge and social capital?

In its approach to answering this question, this thesis will consider the following subquestions:

1) How is French Immersion discursively constructed within Nova Scotian high school course selection handbooks?

2) What evaluations and/or assumptions about school knowledge and social capital are included in discursive constructions of French Immersion?

3) How is IB discursively constructed within Nova Scotian high school course selection handbooks?

4) What evaluations and/or assumptions about school knowledge and social capital are included in discursive constructions of IB?

5) Are there differences between the evaluations and/or assumptions about school knowledge and social capital with relation to FI and IB?

In this chapter, I have described and defined the components that make up the theoretical framework for this study. I identify discourse analysis as a means of studying the social action of high school program choice and I identify course selection handbooks as a point of entry for the study of discourse. Finally, I identify research questions guiding this project. In the next chapter I describe critical discourse analysis (CDA) and detail the methodological approach that I adopt for this research based on Reisigl & Wodak (2017)'s Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA).
Chapter 4: Methodology

In the previous chapter, I established discourse studies as an approach to studying the social phenomenon of high school program choice. I elaborated theoretical concepts and defined terms related to the sociology of education and educational discourse. In this chapter, I expand on the theoretical component of my methodology by discussing the aims and objectives of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). I describe the Discourse Historical Approach to CDA and how I have adapted it for use in this research. I present course selection handbooks, particularly the program descriptions within course selection handbooks, as the texts of analysis and introduce a toolbox which I used to identify the linguistic realisation of discursive strategies. Finally, I provide a procedure for my textual analysis.

4.1 Discourse Analysis

The dialectical relationship between discourse and society (and, specifically, educational discourse and Nova Scotian society) allows for the social act of program choice to be studied through the analysis of educational discourse. Discourse analysis refers to a range of approaches centering on the study of text and/or speech as evidence of larger sociological phenomena (Taylor, 2013). Discourse analysis can be approached from a number of theoretical traditions; however, all of these have in common the understanding of language as inseparable from its social context (Taylor, 2013). Critical Discourse Analysis attempts to denaturalize taken-for-granted assumptions in order to reveal systems of power and domination and to hold those in power accountable for their contributions to societal inequality (Taylor, 2013).

4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emerged from the field of critical linguistics in the 1980s to fulfil the need for a set of thorough and systematic methods and theories tailored to the analysis of the relationship between language, power, and ideology (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The critical element of CDA sets it apart from other kinds of research that do not have critique as a central focus. CDA does not refer to a specific set of methods for the study of discourse but
rather specifies a series of interdisciplinary problem-driven approaches, all of which view language as a means of social construction (Flowerdew et al., 2017). Through CDA, a detailed and rigorous analysis of the linguistic features of texts is used to explain how both overt and covert meanings are communicated (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Wodak (2009) describes how CDA accounts for the dialectical relationship between discourse and society:

Critical Discourse Analysis regards both written and spoken 'discourse' as a form of social practice (Fairclough & Wodak 1997). It assumes a dialectical relationship between particular discursive acts and the situations, institutions and social structures in which they are embedded: the situational, institutional and social contexts shape and affect discourse, and, in turn, discourses influence social and political reality. In other words, discourse constitutes social practice and is at the same time constituted by it (p. 8).

This study situates the IBD and French Immersion program descriptions within the institutional context of Nova Scotia public school and the greater context of Nova Scotian and Canadian society. The project attempts to understand the social act of pupils' decision-making through an examination of discourse as constituting and being a constituent of this practice.

4.3 Text and Context

CDA uses text as an entry point for the study of discourse. A text is considered a unit of language which represents the entirety of a social interaction where language is in use (Thompson, 2014). In this study, the program descriptions within course selection handbooks will provide an entry point for the analysis of the larger discourses surrounding Nova Scotia program options. Through the study of Nova Scotia educational discourse, this study endeavours to understand the discursive construction of educational choice, which is resulting in increased provisions for the IBD program as opposed to the French Immersion program.

In the previous chapter (p. 52), the theoretical relationship between text and context was elaborated with reference to Fairclough's three-dimensional model of text in context. I have
applied Fairclough’s model to describe how program descriptions serve as a starting point for the analysis of the social phenomenon of educational program choice in Nova Scotia. As represented in the figure below, program descriptions are a product of the social process of text production by school staff and a resource for text interpretation by Nova Scotia students and parents. The analysis of the program descriptions will show traces of program production (by school staff) and cues to the program interpretation (by students and parents). The processes of text production and interpretation are influenced by the particular social and cultural context of Nova Scotia high schools, which inform text interpretation.

**Figure 2**

*The relationship between the course selection handbook and the discursive and social context in which they are embedded, according to Fairclough’s 2015 three dimensional model (elaborated on page 52).*

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### 4.4 Discourse Historical Approach

This research utilises the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) to CDA. The DHA is distinctive from other approaches in its increased consideration of intertextuality and
interdiscursivity at the macro-level, and in its comprehensive analysis of rhetoric at the micro-level. As the name suggests, DHA places emphasis on historically anchoring data through considerations of social contexts of the past and the present (Reisigl, 2017). Data triangulation is achieved through studying multiple dimensions of a social problem, including linguistic, historical and political dimensions (Reisigl, 2017).

The DHA identifies four levels of context: the broad socio-political and historical context, the situational context, the intertextual and interdiscursive context, and the text-internal co-text (Reisigl, 2017). The broader socio-political and historical context fosters conditions for a particular cultural and linguistic situation to arise and this situation shapes the intertextual connections with which meanings are negotiated by individuals through text production and interpretation. These four levels of context are investigated through various levels of analysis, ranging from the analysis of macro-level social intertextual relationships to the analysis of micro-level linguistic devices (see Figure 3 on page 61).

Intertextuality refers to the linking of a text to other texts which are related in genre, text-type, register, or topic. These connections can take a number of different forms, including explicit referencing of a topic or main actor, explicit referencing of the same events, alluding to similar topics, or transferring main arguments from one text to the next (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017). The analysis of intertextuality involves the investigation of the backdrop of other text(s) in relation to which the text is situated. In the context of the course handbooks used as data in this study, this inter-text might include program description from other schools, school websites, and IBO and other department of education publications.

The language use of social communities is characterised by a reliance on intertextuality for meaning-making (Lemke, 1992). A variety of texts circulate within communities, each influencing to some small degree the meaning-making resources available for the production and interpretation of related texts (Lemke, 1992). Discourse communities build systems of interconnected texts, which function for the purpose of allowing readers to recognize
relationships between different kinds of texts to draw on as meaning-making resources (Lemke, 1992). In this way, intertextuality can be implied or directly acknowledged. It can be linguistically realised through direct citation and indirect allusion and paraphrasing, or signalled through lexical choices associated with certain text-types and genres, something more commonly referred to as jargon. Jargon may be employed as a form of intertextuality to construct a text’s membership within a certain pre-established discourse.

By tracing systems of intertextuality, it is possible to support arguments about the most likely reading of text given its particular inter-textual and inter-discursive context. An author might situate a text as agreeing with or opposing other texts, or as being similar or dissimilar to other texts. Analysis of intertextuality allows for an understanding of the positionality of a text in relation to greater discursive contexts and how this positionality impacts a reader’s understanding.

Next, the DHA describes discursive units called discourse topics. Discourse topics are linked intertextually through the use of common subtopics, main actors or events, argumentation schemes or macro-discursive strategies. A matrix of topics has previously been used in the DHA (e.g. Wodak, 2002; Wodak et al., 2009; Strong, 2020) to identify and display discourse topics. However, for the purposes of this study, broad topics in the data were identified through examination of the headings and subsections of program descriptions. These subsections guided the identification of the main themes in the texts (the procedure for the identification of discourse topics can be found on p. 78).

At the following level of analysis discourse strategies are employed to express coherent ideological perspectives pertaining to educational programs and the students involved in these programs (Wodak & Meyer, 2015). A discursive strategy refers to planned or unplanned discursive practices that achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic effect (Wodak & Meyer, 2015). The DHA defines five discursive strategies which can be employed at any level of textual organisation. The discursive strategies described by the DHA are nomination
strategies, predication strategies, argumentation strategies, perspectivization strategies and intensification or mitigation strategies (see Table 2 on p. 62). This research pays particular attention to nomination, predication strategies and argumentation strategies (see “Procedure” section on page 76), with a view of understanding the discursive construction and characterization of French Immersion and IBD programs and the students who participate in these programs.

Figure 3

*Levels of analysis considered by the DHA to critical discourse analysis.*

**Interdiscursive and Intertextual Relationships**

Texts circulating within Nova Scotia high school communities influence the meaning-making resources available for the production and interpretation of related inter-texts (Lemke, 1992). These texts include program descriptions from schools across the province, Nova Scotia Department of Education website, and IBD program websites.

**Discourse Topic**

Discourse topics include FI and IBD program eligibility, program aims, and program graduation requirements. Discourse topics are identified through examination of section headings.

**Discourse Strategy**

Nomination strategies, predication strategies, argumentation strategies, perspectivisation and mitigation strategies

**Linguistic Realisation**

These will be discussed in the CDA tool-box section in section 4.5. They include document sequencing and structure, membership categorization devices, overlexicalization, and topoi.
4.5 CDA Toolbox

The CDA toolbox describes how sequence and structure relationships and discursive strategies are linguistically realised and therefore how they can be identified through the text analysis. Table 2 presents a list of linguistic devices commonly used to realise a given discursive strategy. Some, but not all, of these devices will be targeted through the analysis. Cohesion and coherence will only be targeted to a limited degree in order to understand how the program descriptions were situated within the course selection handbooks. The nature of each of the strategically employed linguistic devices is further elaborated in the following sections. In brief, patterns of textual prominence and text sequencing and structure are examined as devices for the establishment of coherence and cohesion relationships. Nominalization and membership categorisation devices (deictics, metonymy, synecdoche and metaphor) will be analysed as contributors to the realisation of nomination strategies. Choice of adjectives, prepositional phrases, clauses, predicative nouns/adjectives/pronouns (especially evaluative attributes) and overlexicalisation will be analysed as contributors to the realisation of predication strategies. Finally, the identification of topoi (see page 70) will guide the analysis of argumentation strategies present within the texts.
Table 2

*DHA's Discursive Strategies (Reisigl, 2017, p. 113)*

### Table 4.1: A selection of discursive strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nomination</td>
<td>discursive construction of social actors, objects/phenomena/events and processes/actions</td>
<td>membership categorization devices, deixis, anthroponyms, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tropes such as metaphors, metonymies and synecdoches (paes pro toto, totum pro parte)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>verbs and nouns used to denote processes and actions, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>predication</td>
<td>discursive qualification of social actors, objects, phenomenae, events/processes and actions (more or less positively or negatively)</td>
<td>stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits (e.g. in the form of adjectives, appositions, prepositional phrases, relative clauses, conjunctive clauses, infinitive clauses and participial clauses or groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>explicit predicates or predicative nouns/adjuncts/whom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>collocations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>explicit comparisons, similes, metaphors and other rhetorical figures (including metonymies, hyperbole, litotes, euphemisms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>allusions, evocations, and presuppositions/implicatures, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>argumentation</td>
<td>justification and questioning of claims of truth and normative rightness</td>
<td>topoi (formal or more content-related)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>fallacies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prospectivization, framing or discourse representation</td>
<td>positioning speaker’s or writer’s point of view and expressing involvement or distance</td>
<td>deixis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>direct, indirect or free indirect speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>quotation marks, discourse markers/particles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>metaphors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>animating prosody, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>diminutives or augmentatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(modal) particles, tag questions, subjunctive, hesitations, vague expressions, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hyperbole, litotes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>indirect speech acts (e.g. question instead of assertion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>verbs of saying, feeling, thinking, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intensification, mitigation</td>
<td>modifying (intensifying or mitigating) the illocutionary force and thus the existent or doxonic status of utterances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sequence and Structure**

The sequence in which elements of a text appear to comprise part of a textual structure which allows patterns in discourse to echo patterns in society (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999). In other words, the structure of a text helps to construe its meaning. Within the field of discourse analysis, two approaches address sequence and structure: narrative analysis and membership categorisation analysis. Both of these take the linguistic, textual, and intertextual relations to give evidence of a greater macro level social, cultural and ideological structures (Jaworski &
Coupland, 1999). In the case of narrative analysis, the sequencing of events in narrative is a means of legitimating such accounts that are deemed relevant for current and future activities (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999). Similar to narrative analysis, membership categorization analysis looks at the way in which categorical descriptions are applied in texts to categorize certain textual elements together and certain others apart (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999). It is people's capacity to recognize these categories which allows them to make sense of text (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999). This study does not employ either narrative analysis or membership category analysis, but it does utilise the theory underpinning these types of analysis to justify the focus on sequencing and structure as central to the meaning(s) being produced (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999). Text sequencing and structure guides the reader's understanding of the legitimacy and relevance of textual elements and how they relate conceptually to other textual elements.

**Textual Prominence**

The coherence of a text refers to how a whole text is organised to make meaning more accessible to readers (Thompson, 2014). Textual cohesion contributes to achieving coherence and refers to the linguistic elements of a text that allow it to be recognized as a textual unit rather than a cluster of sentences (Thompson, 2014). Patterns of prominence can be studied to understand how certain discourse topics, such as the constituents of high school programs, fits into the overall organisation of a text. The way in which these topics are situated against the background of other topics contributes to their discursive construction.

Prominence has been defined as the relative noticeability of textual components. Patterns of prominence within text can be employed as a means of structuring discourse representations (von Heusinger & Schumacher, 2019). The prominence of certain textual features can account for the attention they receive from the reader, their accessibility to the reader, the “givenness” of the information provided (whether or not justification is required), and the salience of certain information within a text (von Heusinger & Schumacher, 2019).
The term foregrounding describes clauses which convey central ideas and are afforded more prominence within a text and the term backgrounding describes clauses that elaborate on those ideas by providing contextual information and are afforded less prominence. Similarly, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) examines prominence relations on the clausal level by examining theme and rheme (Thompson, 2014). The first part of a clause (the theme) stands out and serves to orient the reader, while the second part of the clause (the rheme) contains the information to be communicated (Thompson, 2014). Some themes are said to be marked and therefore to be more prominent within the overall text. Marked themes are those whose grammatical structure or word choice is in some way unexpected or unusual.

These characterizations of prominence relations at the clausal level have been extrapolated by certain theorists to the textual level. The theoretical concept of thematic progression, for example, describes hyper-theme and macro themes (Martin, 1992). A hyper-theme is an introductory sentence that sets up the frame for a sequence of following sentences and a macro-theme is an introductory paragraph that sets the frame for a sequence of following paragraphs (Martin, 1992). Hyper themes and macro themes are prominent sections of text that contribute to the overall coherence of the text as a whole. Similarly, Thompson (2014) describes the thematic structure of text by asking how theme-choices work together through a text to construct textual coherence. He suggests that themes can be used to signal the boundaries of sections of text or to suggest the angle from which the content should be seen (Thompson, 2014). The principle that theme relations can function at different levels of textual organisation allows for us to understand how the layout of a text might impact how a text is read and how topics within the text are discursively constructed. Just as the first part of the clause is the most prominent, information presented in the first part of a text can be said to be most prominent. In the way that themes marked by unusual lexical or grammatical choices are more prominent, so paragraphs marked by unusual textual features can be said to be more prominent.
The program description of French Immersion and IB program are contained within course selection reference books and therefore, the prominence of these sections contributes to their construction as more or less significant or important when compared to other programs and activities offered at the school.

Membership Categorization Devices

Membership categorization devices establish and communicate the notion of membership to cultural and social categories which function to coordinate societies (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2015). A membership categorization device is any linguistic device which serves to organise or collect together social categories and actions associated with these categories (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2015). One such device, metonymy, functions to background someone or something by replacing the actual name for something or someone by another name that is closely associated with it (e.g., “Ottawa” for “Canadian Government”). A similar device, synecdoche refers to the replacing of names for objects or people with words that are either semantically “wider” or “narrower” in meaning. Where a semantically narrower concept is drawn on to represent a semantically broader one, synecdoche is said to be “arising”. Where a broader term is employed to represent a semantically narrower concept, synecdoche is said to be “generalising”. The application of these semantically wider or narrower terms can function to highlight certain characteristics of a person or object over others in a way that is evaluative or presumptive. Finally, metaphor is a device that draws on the semantic “mapping” from the “source” or the “target domain”, which may also convey evaluative and presumptive elements. For instance, some scholars (Charteris-Black, 2006; Santa Ana, 2002) have described the way in which metaphorical conceptualisations in immigration discourse of the movement of people as the movement of water is strategically deployed to convey negative evaluations of immigration as overwhelming. Membership categorisation devices are relevant to this study because they serve to construct categories through which programs are imbued with additional meaning through associations with other programs or courses.
Deictic Expressions

Deictic expressions are a form of referential indexicality. An index is a sign which derives additional meaning from association with certain contexts (Schieffelin et al., 1998). The use of deixis often signals the construction of identity by positioning the author in relation to other social actors. Deixis or referential indexicality more specifically, is when a word's referent changes depending on who says the word. In other words, deixis is the use of general words and phrases to refer to a specific time, place, or person in context. Words or phrases that allow deixis are called deictic expressions. Pronouns (I, you, he, her, they, it, that, etc.) are common examples of indexicality because their precise meaning changes depending on who is using it and in what context.

The author's choice of when to use nouns and when to use pronouns, as well as their choice of the particular nouns and pronouns, can function to realise a particular nomination strategy. For example, the pronouns “us”, “we” and “them” can be used by the author to categorise the reader as similar to certain social actors and as distinct from others. This device can also be used to realise perspectivisation strategies whereby the author uses indices, such as pronouns, to align the reader to their own perspective or to position them against another's perspective. In other words, authors can use these pronouns to make it seem as if their ideas are also the reader's ideas. Pronouns such as “we” can be employed to obscure relations of power between individuals by referring to both parties using a single word. On the other hand, pronouns like “I” and “you” can be employed to reinforce status differentials, to signal one's authority by directly providing instruction or to encourage the reader to identify with a particular perspective or characterisation (Machin & Mayr, 2012). In addition to personal referents such as pronouns, deixis can refer to spaces (for example through use of the prepositional phrases 'with us', 'with them') and time (temporal prepositions, adverbs of time, temporal conjunctions, temporal references) by means of nouns, semi-prefixes with temporal meaning (Wodak, 2009). This form of deixis might position the writer's point of view relative to
a perspective associated with certain cultures, places, or times in history. This will be relevant in
this study because the positioning of the reader and writers of the program description
perspective relative to the cultural and social spheres where their education is presumed to be
recognised could impact assumptions about social capital inherent in the program descriptions.

**Nominalization**

Nominalization is the linguistic construction of verbs as nouns or nominal groups. It is a
device for the realisation of nomination strategies which reference actions as nouns. Patterns in
the use of nominalization indicate how the authors choose to represent actions. The choice to
present an action as either a verb or a noun allows for choice regarding the grammatical function
of the verb within a clause. For example, nominalization can be employed to conceal
responsibility for an action or to suppress the agent and affected within a clause. Nominalization
has the effect of rendering actions into countable and classifiable entities while backgrounding
the causality of those actions. Nominalization allows the existence of an action to be
communicated without providing detail about the circumstance surrounding the action.

Through analysing where nominalization is present and absent within a text, it is possible to
identify assumptions that the author is making regarding the cause and effect of certain actions
related to a school program’s delivery and regarding the role of participant within these actions.
For example, in Nova Scotia educational discourse the use of the term “language acquisition"
could indicate the assumption that language learning occurs automatically through exposure
without emphasising the complex processes of language learning and teaching in which students
and teachers engage.

**Evaluative Attributes**

Evaluation constitutes the communication of meaning related to the social actors
involved in communicating or receiving a message. Evaluative attributes are a device for the
realisation of predication strategies. The application of evaluative attributes to objects serves to
construct an author's feelings and values and authority on a topic (Martin & White, 2005).
Writers adopt stances and positions which are either in alignment or misalignment with their imagined or actual readers. Similarly, writers position their readers to adopt certain stances thus constructing communities of shared feeling, values, emotions, taste and normative assessments (Martin & White, 2005). Within the program descriptions, evaluative attributes might take the form of evaluative adjectives such as 'wonderful' or 'shameful', evaluative verbs such as 'achieve' or 'underperform', evaluative adverb such as 'rightly' or 'carefully', or evaluative nouns such as 'mastery' or 'thoroughness' (Martin & White, 2005). It must be noted that the function of evaluative attributes is often context dependent.

**Overlexicalisation**

Overlexicalisation is another resource for the realise of predication strategies. Overlexicalisation describes the use of excessive repetition of synonymous terms, or surplus information that seems to over-explain a concept beyond the scope of the text's apparent purpose (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Overlexicalisation can signal a text’s relationship to dominant ideologies (Machin & Mayr, 2012). For example, a text which describes an “ambitious student who is self-motivated and determined to succeed” seems to insist with undue fervour on the attribution of ambition to students. The same message could have easily been communicated through the use of the adjective “ambitious” alone. The fact that the author has also chosen to overemphasise their message using terms quasi-synonymous to ambition such as “self-motivated” and “determined to succeed” signals over-persuasion and suggests the anticipation of some degree of ideological contention amongst the anticipated audience. It might signal the existence of alternate discourses which does not paint all students as ambitious but instead focuses on their privileged possession of economic and social capital. The length of a program description might give the indication that over-explanation and over lexicalization is at play. Where over-lexicalization is present within the program descriptions, it is possible that ideologically contentious assumptions and evaluations of school knowledge and social capital are also present.
**Modality**

Modality is a resource for writers to intrude their own views into text or speech (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Modality can communicate a writer or speaker's views on likelihood, typicality, judgements of right and wrong, probability, usuality, obligation and preference. It is expressed through the use of modal verbs, modal adjuncts and grammatical metaphor (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Grammatical metaphors are constructed through modal verbs, modal adverbs, or mental processes and can be used to communicate an evaluation of a neighbouring clause. A particular type of modality, epistemic modality, communicates degrees of certainty or usuality of a proposition and can be studied as a resource for the realisation of evaluations within a text (Machin & Mayr, 2012). An analysis of modality reveals the degree of certainty with propositions are made indicating the degree of confidence the writers have in standing behind a claim. This degree of certainty gives indication of evaluative stances (Martin & White, 2005).

**Topoi**

Topoi are argumentation schemes or conclusion rules that construct an internal logic to a text. DHA uses the term topoi (or “topos” in the singular) to refer to central warrants which must be accepted to make sense of a text's arguments (Wodak & Meyer, 2015). Topoi becomes more evident when framed using “if, then” statements which connect an argument with a claim (see Table 3; Wodak & Meyer, 2015). For the analysis of program description data, the following topoi in Table 3 were identified within the texts. Topoi form the backbone of argumentation strategies and can be employed by writers to present certain ideas as natural truths even if these beliefs might not necessarily be shared by the audience. In this way, ideological statements can be put forward indirectly without the need for a defence of justification. The presence of conclusions based on certain understandings of the nature and value of school knowledge and social capital gained by students participating in a high school program will reveal how social choice of school program is constructed.
Table 3

The topoi which were sought out and labelled through the argumentation portion of the analysis of French Immersion and International Baccalaureate program descriptions. This table was adapted from Strong (2020) and Wodak (2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macro-strategy</th>
<th>Topoi</th>
<th>Argumentation Scheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constructive strategies</strong></td>
<td>Topos of Advantage/Disadvantage</td>
<td>If there is an opportunity, you should take it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topos of Definition</td>
<td>If an action would be useful, then it should be done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topos of Authority</td>
<td>If a person or thing is designated as X, that person or thing should carry the qualities/traits/attributes consistent with the meaning of X.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topos of Law/Right</td>
<td>If an authoritative figure says that something is right or wrong, then it is right or wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assimilation, Inclusion and Continuation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dissimilation/Exclusion and Discontinuation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy of Justification</strong></td>
<td>Topos of advantage/disadvantage</td>
<td>If something is useful, then it is worthwhile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topos of comparison (similarity/difference)</td>
<td>If something is better than its alternatives, then it is worthwhile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
criticisms.

*Shift of Blame and Responsibility*

Ideologically squaring social actors involved in high school programs as “u”, against those not involved in a given program as “them”.

*Downplaying*

Emphasising negative sameness of the other kinds of students and other kinds of programs

Avoidance of direct mention of the social actors responsible for negative aspects of other school programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies of Perpetuation</th>
<th>Topos of Reality</th>
<th>with reality as it is, a particular action should be performed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topos of Justice</td>
<td>If persons/actions/situations are equal in specific respects, they should be treated/dealt with in the same way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topos of Threat</td>
<td>If specific dangers or threats are identified, one should do something about them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Topos of Reality*

if persons/actions/situations are equal in specific respects, they should be treated/dealt with in the same way.

*Topos of Justice*

If specific dangers or threats are identified, one should do something about them.

*Topos of Threat*
### Strategies of Transformation

Functions to transform preconceptions about students and school programs.

**Positive In-Group Presentation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Topos of Burdening</th>
<th>If an institution is burdened by a specific problem, then one should act to diminish it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topos of History</td>
<td>Because history teaches that specific actions have specific consequences, one should perform or omit a specific action in a specific situation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Strategies of Dismantling

Disproving existing mechanism of student identity construct and high school program construction

**Assimilation**

emphasize on the similarities between school programs and students.

**Dissimilation/Exclusion**

emphasize on the differences between school programs and students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Topos of Maximization</th>
<th>If something is maximised/pure, then it is of high quality.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topos of History</td>
<td>Because history teaches that specific actions have specific consequences, one should perform or omit a specific action in a specific situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topos of Equality</td>
<td>that all should have equal rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topos of Definition</td>
<td>If an action, a thing or person (group of persons) is named/designated (as) X, the action, thing or person (group of persons) carries or should carry the qualities/trait/attributes contained in the (literal) meaning of X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.6 Data

The dataset under examination is a collection of 11 course selection handbooks, retrieved from the websites of the high schools in Nova Scotia that offer both the IB diploma program and the French Immersion program (see Table 2). These course selection documents are designed for students and parents and can be found on school websites. As it is the role of school guidance counsellors to advise students on their choice of classes, in most cases the documents can be
found in the counselling section of the school website. The authorships of the documents are credited to the school generally and not to specific individuals. The documents were published between 2015 and 2022 and each is the most current version of the handbook available at each school. They range in length from 11,417 words to 34,883 words, with an average length of 18,618 words, and are between 25 and 50 pages in length. Most are available online in PDF form; however, the Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School document is published in the format of a slide show presentation.

Table 4

List of the course selection handbooks comprising the dataset.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Handbook Name</th>
<th>Regional Centre for Education</th>
<th>Handbook Word Count</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horton High School Course Selection Handbook</td>
<td>Annapolis Valley</td>
<td>14457</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Academy Course Selection Handbook</td>
<td>Cape Breton-Victoria</td>
<td>14769</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobequid Education Centre Course Selection Handbook</td>
<td>Chignecto-Central</td>
<td>28045</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland Regional High School Course Selection Handbook</td>
<td>Chignecto-Central</td>
<td>15181</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles P. Allen High School Course Selection Handbook</td>
<td>Halifax</td>
<td>34883</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citadel High School Course Selection Handbook</td>
<td>Halifax</td>
<td>16239</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cole Harbour District High School Course Selection Handbook</td>
<td>Halifax</td>
<td>22152</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halifax West High</td>
<td>Halifax</td>
<td>14108</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The course selection handbooks describe the course and program options available at a given school. They generally contained a list of Nova Scotia High School graduation requirements, descriptions of each of the curricular programs offered at the school (most often these were French Immersion, IBD, and the Options and Opportunities programs), course descriptions for each of the courses offered at the school, and course selection instruction and worksheets. Please see Table 2 for a complete list of the elements contained within the course selection handbook and the number of handbooks in which these elements were present. These subsections informed the identification of discourse topics within the program descriptions.
Table 5

A list of commonly occurring handbook subsections and the number of handbooks in which these sections occur.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Number of Handbooks Appearing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia High School Graduation Requirements</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Descriptions</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Immersion Program Description</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IB Program Description</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O2 Program Description</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title Page</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course Selection Instructions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Change Procedure</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Course List</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Course Planning Worksheet</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Letter</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Programming Descriptions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-op Program Description</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration and Residency Requirements</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Support Services Information</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated French Program Descriptions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia Virtual School Course List</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Exploration Resource</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study is limited in scope to the analysis of only the sections of the handbooks dealing with French Immersion or IB programs. The French Immersion and IBD program descriptions are made up primarily of text but also contain some tables and course lists. The program descriptions range in length from 250 to 1000 words, with a mean length of 259 words for the French Immersion descriptions and 815 words for the IBD program descriptions. The program descriptions tend to appear near the beginning of the handbooks. The course
description sections tend to comprise the bulk of the handbooks and usually appear as the final section. Each handbook contains the descriptions of approximately 100 courses and each course description is between 40 and 180 words in length.

4.7 Procedure

The analysis focuses on (1) uncovering sequencing and structure relationship between the program description and the larger course selection handbooks (2) identifying discourse topics (3) uncovering intertextual connections within each individual text and (4) uncovering the linguistic realisation of nomination, predication, and argumentation strategies. Due to this study's primary focus on the construction of school programs and the ways in which students are discursively constructed with relation to these programs, greater attention was applied to the uncovering of nomination, predication and argumentation strategies. More specifically, nomination strategies were examined to uncover the discursive construction of the IBD program, the French Immersion program, and their respective students. Predication strategies were examined with the aim of uncovering the characteristics applied to the IBD and French Immersion programs, as well as students in these programs. Finally, analysis of argumentation strategies served to describe the presence or absence of rhetorical persuasion employed to encourage or dissuade students from enrolling in a particular program of study.

Because the course handbooks are prohibitively long to analyse in their entirety using fine-grained CDA, it was necessary to sample sections from within these handbooks (see Appendix A for the sampling procedure). Samples were selected on the basis of the intertextuality analysis, which revealed that many sections of the course handbooks were found to share direct quotations or paraphrases of one another. These sections were deemed to be representative of the kind of educational discourse shared across a majority of the handbooks, and they were selected for fine-grained CDA (see figure 4).
Figure 4

The selection process for the identification of course selection extracts.

**SELECTION OF PROGRAM DESCRIPTION EXCERPTS**

### Step 1: Discourse Topics

Discourse topics were identified by highlighting recurring titles, bolded or italicised text within the program descriptions. Topics which appeared as titles, italicised or bolded text in at least three program descriptions were compiled into a list of command discourse topics (these are listed in table 6). Each of the 11 IBD and 11 French Immersion program descriptions was surveyed for the presence or absence of each of these discourse topics. These subsections aligned well with the main themes in the texts.
**Table 6**

*A list of discourse topics identified through examination of headings within the program descriptions.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses Offered</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completing IB and French Immersion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rules/Expectation of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Legacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drop-out Policies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student-Program Fit</td>
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<tr>
<td>University Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Enrollment Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparatory Program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 2: Sequence and Structure**

To analyze the prominence of IBD and FI program descriptions within the greater context of the course selection handbooks (see p. 80 for the section on prominence), I collected information about handbook formatting and word counts. This allowed me to compare the length of the program descriptions and to observe patterns in the sequencing of the handbook elements (see sequencing and structure p. 63).
First, I took all word counts including titles, heading, tables and other forms of text\(^1\). I then located the IBD and French Immersion program descriptions within each handbook and recorded the number of words occurring before the program description. This was done as a measure of the placement of the program descriptions within the overall handbook. The information appearing earlier in the course selection handbooks was deemed to be more prominent as were the sections with the longest word counts. Sequencing and structure was examined through an analysis of the use and sequencing of section headings. Textual elements appearing adjacent to one another or under the same subheading were deemed to be constructed as conceptually related.

From there I moved on to a closer analysis of each program’s course list, course description and overall program description. I calculated the mean length of these course descriptions. First, I recorded the number of words making up each program description and the number of course descriptions present for each program. This was taken as another measure of the amount of space devoted to a given program and therefore the prominence of this program within the overall course selection handbook. The programs with the longest course description were deemed to be most prominent. I then recorded if course descriptions for a given program were provided with their own section or if they were grouped in with course descriptions from other programs of study. Information relegated to its own section was considered marked and therefore more prominent within the overall text. It was also considered to be constructed as distinct and conceptually distanced from other kinds of information contained within the handbooks.

\(^1\) It must be noted that two schools made available a second IBD-specific course selection document. The main Horton High School handbook referred readers to a second course selection handbook for IBD program and course descriptions. The Dr. John Hugh Gillis High School provided IBD course descriptions within the main course selection handbook but referred readers to a separate document for the IBD program description. In these cases I combined the word count of both documents.
As a final step, I observed if French Immersion courses had their own course descriptions or if the reader was referred to the equivalent English language course description elsewhere in the handbook. Where no French Immersion course description existed, French Immersion could be said to be afforded less space and therefore to have less prominence within the overall course selection handbooks. In these cases, French Immersion courses could be said to be constructed to be conceptually similar to English language public school program courses.

**Step 3: Intertextuality**

I examined the IBD and French Immersion program descriptions for evidence of the linguistic realisation of intertextuality through citing, paraphrasing and use of jargon (see page 10 for more on the linguistic realisation of intertextuality). First, I familiarised myself with the contents of the program description and was able to identify four types of intertextuality that were present within the program descriptions. These included a) direct citation inclusion of a website link, b) close paraphrasing or direct quotation without citing c) references to educational documents such as certificates and diploma d) the use of jargon or technical language. I conducted a second close-reading of the program descriptions while tagging each instance of intertextuality.

The purpose of this step in the procedure was to allow me to describe how the program descriptions were situated relative to other program descriptions and educational texts. The aim was to identify which sources of information the program descriptions aligned themselves with and against and to identify patterns in the construction of certain social actors and institutions as sources of knowledge and authority (Lemke, 1992). The analysis also allowed me to identify text and social actors that might be expected to be connected with the program descriptions but were absent.
Step 4: The Linguistic Realisation of Discursive Strategies

Nomination Strategies.

Nomination and referential strategies are employed for the purpose of discursively constructing social actors, objects, phenomena, events, and actions. My nomination analysis therefore, served to uncover the discursive construction of the IBD program, the French Immersion program and their respective students. This was achieved through the identification of the linguistic device employed to realise nomination strategies. First I examined membership categorisation devices such as metonymy, synecdoche, and metaphor (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2015). I looked for instances of the strategic use of metonyms to background someone or something by replacing a name with another closely associated name (e.g., “Ottawa” for “Canadian Government”). I identified instances where synecdoche was employed to highlight certain characteristics of a person or object over others in a way that was evaluative or presumptive. I looked for the strategic use of metaphor to convey evaluative and presumptive elements. Next, I identified the use of pronouns and other deictic expressions which functioned to obscure relations of power between individuals and to construct readers in a certain light. Finally, I identified nominalised verb processes and described the functional consequences of these nominalised processes (see page 68 for information on the effects of nominations).

Predication Strategies.

Predication strategies make use of predicates that may be more or less explicit and more or less specific, to attribute characteristics to social actors, objects and actions. These characterisations can serve an evaluative purpose depicting objects, social actors and actions positively or negatively. I identified instances where predictions were used within the program description excerpts to evaluate social actors and school programs and label them approvingly or disapprovingly. I analysed prediction strategies through identifying adjectives, prepositional phrases, relative clauses, conjunctural clauses, infinitive clauses and participial clauses or groups, predicates or predicative nouns/adjectives/pronouns, collocations, explicit
comparisons, allusions, evocations and presuppositions/implications (see Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). I then described how these devices functioned to construct assumptions and evaluative judgements of school programs and students involved in these programs. I identified instances of overlexicalisation associated with the characterisation of students and programs and I described the effect of this overlexicalisation. Finally, I identified modal verbs, modal adverbs, or mental processes and their evaluative effect.

**Argumentation Strategies.**

Through analysing argumentative strategies, I was able to describe how claims of truth and normativity regarding school programs were either justified or put into question. This allowed me to understand how the writers argued for/against the attribution of positive and/or negative characteristics to school programs and the students associated with these school programs. After familiarising myself with the excerpts from the program descriptions, I identified 12 conclusion rules called 'topoi’ which have previously been described by CDA research (Strong, 2020; Wodak, 2009) and which I expected might be present within the program descriptions (see p. 70 for a list of these topoi). Next, I identified the presence of some of these topoi through performing a close reading of the program description excerpts. Finally I associated these topoi with ideological stances applied to each school program regarding the nature and value of school knowledge and social capital said to be gained through participation in a program.

**4.8 Summary**

In this chapter, I have discussed the methodology adopted in this study including a detailed description of my data set (program descriptions from course selection handbooks), a delimitation of my theoretical framework adapted from the DHA, and a procedure of the steps that I undertook in conduction my Critical Discourse Analysis. The next two chapters will draw on the theoretical and analytical tools outlined in the preceding chapters and apply these in the analysis of the program descriptions.
Chapter 5: Results

In order to examine the discursive construction of the IBD and French Immersion programs in Nova Scotia high schools, an analysis was conducted of the program descriptions from eleven course selection handbooks publicly available on school websites. This chapter reports on the results of this analysis. As discussed in chapter 4, course selection handbooks exist as a reference guide to aid students in selecting their high school courses (see section 4.6 on p. 74). The program descriptions offer insight into the top-down construction of these programs by the province's educational institutions. The in-depth analysis presented in this chapter draws on a selection of program description extracts representing the most commonly cited and paraphrased information shared between each of the eleven course selection handbooks (for more detail on these extracts, see p. 77 of chapter 4 and appendix A). The broader social contexts in which the program description texts were embedded (discussed in Chapters 2 and 3) are likely to have had an impact on the production and interpretation of these program descriptions. Knowledge of these contexts has informed the analysis that follows.

Three main themes emerged from the results of the analysis of each type of program description (French Immersion and IBD), for a total of six themes. The French Immersion program descriptions are notable for their reduced length and sparsity of information and contain the following discursive constructions. First, the French Immersion program is constructed as having well-accepted value requiring little justification. Secondly, the program is discursively constructed as an opportunity available for students but one which does not promise a minimum standard result. And thirdly, French Immersion is constructed as beneficial due to the assumed value of French-English bilingualism to students. In contrast, the IBD program descriptions are lengthy and contain extensive arguments for the value of the program. First, the IBD program is constructed as providing a distinctive form of education which is holistic and all-encompassing. Secondly, The IBD program is constructed as both attracting and producing a distinctive “IB-type” learner. And thirdly, the program is discursively constructed as
advantageous due to its ability to endow students with a valuable international perspective to carry forward in future endeavours.

This chapter will report on each of these findings by first reporting discursive constructions realised through handbook structure and sequencing. A report will also be given of the intertextual relationships and the kinds of discourse topics shaping these particular discursive constructions. Finally, the micro-level analysis of discursive strategies and their linguistic realisation will be reported. The confluence of these levels of analysis will denote the discursive constructions which were found to characterise the IBD and French Immersion program descriptions.

5.1 Little Need Be Said About French Immersion

The most apparent features of the French Immersion program descriptions are their simplicity and inconspicuousness. The program descriptions occur within the wider context of the course selection handbooks, where the French Immersion descriptions are on average less prominent than IBD program descriptions. For example, they contain few overt intertextual references and are on average 224 words long compared with 1134 words for the IBD program descriptions. At the micro-level, linguistic realisations of discursive strategies construct the program as a series of course choices rather than a cohesive program of study (see p. 48 on school choice). This construction justifies the reduced detail of French Immersion program descriptions, relegating specific details about the French learning process to French language arts course descriptions.

The course selection handbooks, serving as a sort of reference guide for students, make use of prominence relations to facilitate the book's usability. The relatively short length of the French Immersion program descriptions contributed to their lack of prominence within the greater context of the course selection handbooks. Not only are the French Immersion program descriptions significantly (67%) shorter than the IBD program descriptions, but also in 9 out of 11 course selection handbooks there are fewer French Immersion courses listed. The handbooks
contain an average of 5.5 fewer French Immersion courses with existing course descriptions being on average 21% shorter than IBD program course descriptions. The confluence of these factors leads to the French Immersion being featured less prominently in the course selection handbooks, contributing to the program's decreased prominence, which could also be understood as a signal of the program's lesser importance within the context of the school.

In many cases, a school's French Immersion program description is limited to the reporting of the high school French Immersion graduation requirements and does not contain details about the program's purpose, aims, or mode of delivery. Discourse topics were identified through the examination of titles and subsections of the program descriptions (see p. 77) and, indeed, the only discourse topics that are present in the French Immersion program descriptors of all eleven schools are the topic of graduation requirements. Course offerings are present as topics in six program descriptions. Only 5 of the program descriptions address program eligibility and only 4 speak to the aims or benefits of French Immersion. The omission of these particular topics leads to the construction of an expected set of prior knowledge about the program. The assumption that readers have this prior knowledge about the program is well-founded, given that students eligible to complete high school French Immersion are those who were previously enrolled in early or late immersion middle school programs and therefore possess first-hand experience of the program. Students making the choice for or against French Immersion at the high school level are therefore choosing to continue or discontinue with the program. Compared with other school choices, the choice for or against French Immersion is likely to be based on perception of the program arising from other kinds of discourse and first-hand knowledge, leading to the program description serving a less important role. Due to the fact that the French Immersion program descriptions position the reader as having prior knowledge of the program, the purpose of the program description becomes less one of program marketing, and more one of providing a set of practical instructions for how to enrol.
Table 7

Discourse Topics Present in French Immersion and IBD program descriptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FI Program Descriptions</th>
<th>IB Program Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Requirements</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses Offered</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completing IB and French Immersion</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules/Expectation of Students</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Legacy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop-out Policies</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Program Fit</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Recognition</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Enrollment Required</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparatory Program</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overt intertextual referencing does not appear to a significant degree within the French Immersion program descriptions. Most common are references to graduation certificates and program requirement policies. These documents are sometimes referenced with acknowledgement to the Nova Scotia Department of Education. This serves to situate the Nova Scotia Department of Education as a source of authority with regards to the French Immersion program. Few parallel texts are directly cited within the program description documents and the authors do not generally attempt to align themselves with particular sources of information about the program.

Throughout the program description excerpts, French Immersion accreditation is referred to, in all but one instance, as a certificate, or a certificate of completion rather than as a diploma (as is the case with the IBD accreditation). The more specific term “diploma” generally
refers to the specific kind of certificate awarded upon completion of an educational program. The semantically wider term, certificate, removes emphasis from French Immersion’s status as a program of study. In the field of educational choice, various levels at which choice can occur are identified. Where students are grouped differently in different subject areas, student grouping is referred to as “setting” and where students are placed in cohorts consistent across subject areas, students are said to be “streamed”. Here, French Immersion is presented as an educational set rather than an educational stream (see chapter 3, p. 43 for more details). Students receive a Nova Scotia graduation diploma and a French Immersion certificate. Here synecdoche, the substitution of a broad semantic term to describe a narrower concept, is employed to construct the French Immersion accreditation as an add-on to the main high school graduation diploma, rather than an alternative program of study to the English language Nova Scotia curriculum.

The construction of French Immersion as a less cohesive program of study is reflected to some degree in a membership categorisation device present within two course selection handbooks (Yarmouth Consolidated, Horton High School, Sydney Academy, Cobequid Education Centre and Northumberland Regional High School). In these handbooks, French Immersion program descriptions appear alongside subject areas much as math, social studies and science, rather than alongside programs of study such as IBD and Options and Opportunities (O2) programs (described on pg. 18). This kind of categorisation equates French Immersion to subject areas rather than as an equivalent option in a series of choices to IBD and O2 (see example 1 below). Once again, this reinforces the status of French Immersion as an educational set rather than an educational stream.
Example 1: Here we see French Immersion at Horton High School represented as a series of course choices. Readers are reminded that these course choices are only available contingent on a sufficient number of requests. It is notable that students are required to enrol in Nova Scotia virtual school courses to complete the program requirements.

![IMMERSION COURSE CHART]

The excerpt below (see example 2) illustrates the use of nominalisation within French Immersion program description excerpts to construct the French Immersion program with relation to the experience of the student while backgrounding the social actors and instructional methods responsible for the delivery of the French Immersion program. Students are the only social actors present in the program description excerpts and often, as seen above, they appear as part of a nominalisation (i.e.“the students' needs”). Through a reference to the students' need, the focus remains on the fulfilment of these needs without needing to explain how this actually happens. Through the suppression of teachers and program designers, the program descriptions avoid including details about the classroom experience, instructional and assessment methods associated with French Immersion. Students remain the only social actors directly named and activated in the French Immersion program description excerpts while the immersive French environment remains the only instructional strategy named within the program description. As we will see, this is in contrast to the IB program, where the IB Organization, universities, and external experts are all positioned as authorities justifying the quality of the IBD program and IBD-style learning is discursively constructed as unlike the learning that happens in other programs (see section 5.5 on p. 104).
Example 2

“Primary emphasis will always be on the students’ need to develop their ability to communicate effectively in French.” (Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School, 2021, p.12)

The French Immersion program description excerpts contain very few evaluative adjectives, verbs, or nouns, allowing the program description to take on a neutral and unbiased tone. Beyond the first sentence which constructs French Immersion as an “opportunity” allowing students to “improve”, “appreciate” and “enjoy” the French language, the strongest evaluative attributes are references to the “successful” completion of courses. The use of evaluative attributes is avoided through fact-based statements about enrolment and graduation requirements policies. An example of such a statement appears below.

Example 3

“An Immersion Certificate from the Department of Education, Province of Nova Scotia, will be awarded to those students who attain 9 academic credits (out of the minimum 18 required for graduation) in subjects taught in the French Language.” (Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School, 2021, p.12)

As discussed in chapter 4 (p. 70), topoi are argumentation schemes or conclusion rules that help to construct a text’s internal logic. The internal logic to the French Immersion program description excerpts rests in part on the “topos of advantage” (Strong, 2020; Wodak, 2009), which argues or implies that the program leads to the development of a certain amount of French fluency which, in turn, is implied to be advantageous and therefore worthwhile. The program description does not argue for the usefulness of developing French fluency and as a result, for the argument in favour of French Immersion to be coherent, the reader must have
previously accepted this tenet. It is possible that some groups within society might be more inclined to view French-English bilingualism as an advantage for their children. For example, motivation for enrollment in French Immersion has been found by some to be derived, not purely from the inherent value of bilingualism, but from a perception of French education programs as a source of prestige (Roy, 2020; Barrett DeWiele & Edgerton, 2021). Previous research on motivations for French Immersion enrolment is present in chapter 3 (p. 49). French fluency is widely accepted as providing social and economic advantages in certain fields of work and communities within Canada (see section 2.3 on attitudes towards French-English bilingualism, p. 19).

In contrast to the topos of advantage, the “topos of reality” argues that given the nature of reality, a certain course of action should be taken (Strong, 2020; Wodak, 2009). In the context of program descriptions, this would imply that given the degree of one's interest in developing French communication and the reality of one's status in relation to the program eligibility criteria, one may or may not choose to enrol. As illustrated in example 4, the program description does not directly argue for or against the benefits of enrolling in the program. Instead, the program descriptions guide student decision making through a series of statements of reality. These statements include statements related to graduation requirements and of the eligibility criteria. Students who want to enrol must simply follow these instructions. The reality of the French Immersion program is stated neutrally, making it difficult to imagine any alternative version of the program. Here, the topos of reality is not employed in service of arguments for choosing French Immersion, but rather supports the existence of High School French Immersion in its current form. This attitude is further reflected by references to resource limitations, which are present in half of the program descriptions (see example 5). It is suggested that due to staffing limitations French Immersion cannot easily be changed or adjusted.
Example 4

“An Immersion Certificate from the Department of Education, Province of Nova Scotia, will be awarded to those students who attain 9 academic credits (out of the minimum 18 required for graduation) in subjects taught in the French Language. FRAIMM10, FRAIMM11, FRAIMM12 must be passed in their respective levels. French Immersion students wanting to graduate with a FI certificate must take: 9 credits in French out of the minimum 18 total courses to graduate.” (Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School, 2021, p.12)

Example 5

“French immersion is an expanding and increasingly popular program within the schools of the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board. Unfortunately, this expansion has occurred at a time when there is a growing national shortage of immersion teachers. Some of the new subject offerings depend on funding, the number of student requests that would warrant a course to be offered, and the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board being able to attract qualified staff.” (Horton High School, 2022, p.30)

5.2 French Immersion Provides Opportunities not Promises

Remarkably, the aims and benefits of French Immersion are only included in 4 of the 11 program descriptions examined. In the majority of program descriptions, discourse topics are limited to course requirements for completion of French Immersion. In these cases, readers would have to refer to individual course descriptions to inform themselves on the specific French language skills and abilities that they could expect to build through participation in French Immersion. In instances where the French Immersion program descriptions reference the program's learning outcomes (see example 6), these outcomes are predicated with
suggestions that not all students will experience the same outcomes. The program is thus constructed as having the potential, but not the guarantee to improve a student's French communicative abilities and appreciation for French culture. Six program descriptions include caveats stressing the importance of student compliance with the program’s language rules (as seen in example 7 from Cole Harbour high school). The implication here is that the program’s benefits are not automatically endowed on all those who participate, but are more likely to be experienced by those students who follow classroom expectations.

**Example 6**

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“Many graduates will be fluent enough to live and work in French as adults; others will require further language learning opportunities.” (Northumberland Regional High School, 2015, p. 3)
```

**Example 7**

```
“In order to maximize the opportunity for students within the French program to be successful, it is important students and parents/guardians understand that students are required to communicate in French, rarely in English. Students will be required to sign an academic performance contract which states clearly this “French only” requirement. Parents will be asked to initial the contract acknowledging that they are aware of the requirement to have students speak French in all French courses.” (Cole Harbour District High School, 2021, p. 7)
```
By examining the construction not only of the French Immersion program but also of the French Immersion certificate, it is possible to see a similar lack of certainty surrounding the outcomes of French Immersion participation. The French Immersion certificate is not constructed as representing anything beyond the completion of the required courses. Through frequent references to graduation credit requirements (e.g. the French Immersion accreditation is awarded to students who “complete NINE (9) courses in French” (Cobequid Education Centre, 2022, p. 49), it is possible to avoid qualifying the standard of performance which might result from the attainment of these 9 credits and successfully complete the program. In fact, the awarding of the French Immersion certificate is the only element of the French Immersion program that is constructed as a guaranteed result of participation. This omission devalues French Immersion accreditation, which is not made to represent any particular standard of ability.

References to the French Immersion certificate, and the Department of Education graduation requirements, were the only overt form of intertextual referencing present in many of the program descriptions. None of the program descriptions speak to the recognition of the French Immersion certificate by institutions such as universities, colleges or government organisations. In fact, there is no attempt in any of the program descriptions to construct the benefit of a French Immersion certificate in terms of its external recognition. Two of the program descriptions go as far as to include intertextual references to external language proficiency testing, perhaps with the idea that undergoing external language testing would allow the students’ abilities to be recognized. At Charles P. Allen school, students have the opportunity to sit the Diplôme d’études en langue française (DELF), a test developed and administered by the French Ministry for National Education, and at Sydney Academy students have the opportunity to sit the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), a test developed and administered by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. References to these tests and organisation included web-links directing students to descriptions of the exam components and
assessment measures. The inclusion of these sources serves to suggest that these external accreditations are more meaningful than the French Immersion graduation certificate, which is not recognized as an indicator of a certain standard of French proficiency. French Immersion is therefore discursively constructed as offering an opportunity for students to develop French proficiency without the program guaranteeing the attainment of a certain minimum standard of proficiency, or any recognition of this proficiency.

This construction of French Immersion as an opportunity to participate in the process of language immersion, rather than as a means of attaining certain concrete aims or standards, is realised at the clausal level through the use of predicative adjectives and adverbs, and through the use of modality (see example 8). The adjective and adverbs present serve to mitigate claims of program benefits. For example, the term “bilingual” is mitigated by the adverb ‘functionally”, serving to qualify the degree of bilingualism students can expect to achieve. In a similar vein, program description excerpts emphasise the students’ need to communicate effectively in French, or develop a basic level of proficiency. Modality is likewise employed to communicate a reduced degree of certainty surrounding program results. For example, excerpts from the Northumberland Regional High School program description claims that students “usually develop good French”, and that “many graduates will be fluent enough to work in French as adults” (Northumberland Regional High School, 2015, p.3). These predication strategies are employed to construct a reduced degree of certainty surrounding the results that students can expect from participating in French Immersion.
Example 8

“The aim of French Immersion programs is to enable students to become functionally bilingual. Many graduates will be fluent enough to live and work in French as adults; others will require further language learning opportunities (Northumberland Regional High School, 2015, p.3).”

Just as there are no promises made regarding the abilities of French Immersion graduates, there are likewise no suggestions that French Immersion students have any qualities distinct from other kinds of students. There are few qualities or abilities attributed to French Immersion students in the program description and the immersion student is defined in no other way apart from by their decision to enrol in French Immersion or by their past enrolment in the program. Predications of French Immersion students appearing in the program description excerpts are limited to descriptions of students “who have successfully completed Grade 9 in early or late French Immersion program” or “students wanting to graduate with a FI certificate” (Halifax West High School, 2019, p. 14; Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School, 2021, p. 12). The immersion student is not endowed with an identity and is distinctive only in so much as they have decided to take advantage of an opportunity. In this way, the program descriptions avoid identifying specific student outcomes of the program while simultaneously making it impossible to suggest that the program selects for a certain kind of student. As we will see in Section 5.5 (p. 105), this is in contrast to the qualities and identities attributed to IB students.

5.3 A Path to Bilingualism

The results of the analysis suggest that French Immersion is associated with the term “bilingualism”. This, coupled with the lack of overt argumentation in favour of the French Immersion program, led to the construction of the program's value to rest heavily on the
reader's preexisting acceptance of the value of bilingualism (see section 2.3, p. 21-22). French Immersion is discursively constructed as a means for moving towards bilingualism through participating in a language immersive learning environment. This language immersion environment distinguishes the program from other Nova Scotia curriculum options and from other French second language learning options.

Furthermore, handbooks from Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School and Charles P. Allen High School do not include course descriptions for French Immersion content courses (i.e., courses where the language of instruction is French but the subject matter is not language), but instead refer readers to the equivalent English language courses description for details. This serves to diminish the space occupied by French Immersion courses within the course selection handbook, reducing the program's prominence and noticeability. The membership of French Immersion courses within the same category as English public school program courses leads to the construction of these two programs being conceptually similar, identical but for the language of instruction. This construction is supported by several discursive strategies identified through the micro-level analysis including the use of metonymy and synecdoche to refer to the program in terms of it's immersive environment and resulting bilingualism, an avoidance of the attribution of qualities or characteristic to French Immersion and the use of argumentation strategies which compare the program with other French second language options in terms of the degree of bilingualism each program is likely to produce (these are elaborated in further detail on p. 99).

The French Immersion program is constructed as distinct only in terms of its language immersive environment and as a result this environment receives the largest emphasis. Often the French Immersion program is referred to simply as “the immersion program”, its students as “immersion students” and its courses as “immersion courses”. The omission of the term “French” is possible because the term has become strongly associated with French language learning in Canada. This use of metonymy makes it appear as if the education product being
delivered is purely that of language immersion as opposed to a language immersion program notable not just for the immersion aspect but also for its course requirements and curriculum.

An excerpt from the program description of Yarmouth Memorial Consolidated High School, refers to French Immersion as “the bilingual program” (2021, p. 12). At first glance this seems an odd choice of terms considering the program construction as providing monolingual French instruction. However, this use of synecdoche functions to foreground the program's capacity to promote bilingualism rather than suggesting there is a bilingual element to classroom instruction. The use of the term “bilingual” is present in other program descriptions, most notably the program description from Northumberland Regional High School (see example 10), which uses the term to compare the French Immersion program with other French second language options.

There is no attempt made in any of the program descriptions to describe the program's immersive language environment or to provide evidence of the quality of this educational environment. This is achieved through the avoidance of predication strategies, which could have been employed to characterise the program. The absence of this form of description would suggest that the title of “French Immersion” speaks for itself and requires little explanation or justification. However, in combination with references to staffing limitations and reduced availability of course offerings (see example 5), the requirement to complete fewer than 50% of high school credits in French and the backdrop of the English majority school, would suggest that there exist reasonable grounds to doubt the quality of the immersive environment being provided to students. This choice to provide little characterisation of the program and the immersion environment requires readers to rely on other texts and utterances to complete their understanding of what the program has to offer.
In six of the eleven course selection handbooks, the French Immersion program description is listed alongside the descriptions of the other French second language programs offered in Nova Scotia schools (core French, extended French, and integrated French). This has the effect of suggesting arguments grounded in the “topos of comparison”, which refers to arguments made on the basis that if something is better than its alternatives, then it is worth choosing (Strong, 2020). The French second language programs are distinguished from one another in terms of the degree of bilingualism that students can expect to acquire. French Immersion is said to result in the highest degree of bilingualism, supporting arguments for enrolment.

French Immersion is clearly constructed as the preferable option; however, this argument is diminished by the predicated clause stipulating that some immersion students “will require further language learning opportunities” to become functionally bilingual.
(Northumberland Regional High School, 2015, p. 4). This statement includes not only arguments grounded in the topos of advantage (program participation may or may not result in a bilingual advantage), but also arguments grounded in the topos of comparison because it serves to diminish the distinction between French Immersion and other French second language options such as integrated French (see example 11, below).

**Example 11**

> "Many graduates will be fluent enough to live and work in French as adults; others will require further language learning opportunities (Northumberland Regional High School, 2015, p. 4)."

Whether arguments are grounded in the topos of comparison and the topos of advantage, the provision of bilingualism remains the sole tenant of arguments for French Immersion enrolment. Due most likely to the wide societal acceptance of the value of French-English bilingualism (see p. 22), there are no arguments made for the advantage of bilingualism itself. Arguments in favour of French Immersion rely therefore, on the reader's understanding of the term 'bilingual' and the social capital assumed to result. This corroborates the finding that French Immersion program descriptions were less prominent, lacking detail (see section 5.1). Both findings show that the program relies on pre-existing assumptions about the value of French in Canadian society, which are necessary in order to understand the value of the French Immersion program. It also relies on the assumption that students already possess competence in English and therefore require instruction in French, rather than English, to achieve French-English bilingualism.

**5.4 The IBD is not like other programs**

The IBD program is discursively constructed as being more holistic and far reaching than the Nova Scotia curriculum. Discourse strategies contributing to this construction were identified during the analysis and are described in the paragraphs that follow. In brief, the
program is distinguished from the Nova Scotia Curriculum through suggestions that it extends education to domains that have not traditionally been directly targeted by curricular outcomes (i.e., via motivation, cooperation, cultural sensitivity). The construction of IBD as presenting a fundamentally different sort of curriculum is initially established through constructing the IBD program within the course selection handbook as belonging to a category separate from other school programs. Intertextuality is employed to establish the IBO as a respected educational authority and IBD jargon is used to highlight the program's distinctiveness from other program options. At the level of the clause, metaphors consist of parts central to greater wholes. An analysis of the use of overlexicalisation revealed the author's insistence on the program's long-lasting influence on students and communities through a focus on the broad implications of school. The topos of comparison is employed to support arguments of the worthwhileness of IBD enrolment. These comparisons cite the IBD's holistic vision as something that distinguished it from other programs.

Many of the IBD program descriptions contain web links to other sources such as school IBO websites, IB school bulletins, the Nova Scotia Department of Education's policy on University recognition of the IBD graduates, and, in one instance, a link to a private online school where students can pay to take additional IB courses online. The existence of IBD school websites and bulletins, distinct and separate from regular school publications, serves to further set the IBD program apart from the Nova Scotia Public Schools Programs, solidifying its image as a standardised educational product. In fact, nine of the eleven schools examined operated a second school website, devoted exclusively to the IB program. When students choose IBD, they are not only choosing IBD courses; they are also choosing to be part of an IBD cohort which is given a different status within the school.

In three instances the IBD program is either relegated to its own section of the course selection handbook, or is presented in a different document altogether. The latter is true of two handbooks (Dr. John Hugh Gillis high school and Horton high school), which refer readers to a
second course description document containing only information about the IBD program. The relegation of IBD program descriptions to their own section of the course selection handbook, constructs the program as falling into different membership categories compared with other programs. This categorisation would suggest to readers that the IBD program descriptions are conceptually different in some way that does not allow them to be categorised alongside French Immersion and other high school programs.

The analysis of sequencing and structure revealed that the arrangement of the course descriptions varied between course selection handbooks and contributed to the construction of the IBD and French Immersion programs in relation to the rest of the handbook. The course descriptions for a program of study could either be grouped together or thrown in with and distributed amongst the course descriptions for other programs. IBD course descriptions were grouped together in 9 of the 11 handbooks while French Immersion courses were only grouped together in 3 course selection handbooks. The IBD courses were therefore more often associated with one another, leading to the IBD program being discursively constructed as a cohesive and distinct program. The analysis of prominence revealed that there was an increased number of IBD course descriptions and that these descriptions were more likely to be grouped together, leading the IBD section of the course selection handbook to be more prominent and easier to locate.

The use of IBO terminology was present in all of the IBD course descriptions, while the French Immersion program descriptions did not contain program associated jargon. IBD program descriptions employed terminology associated with the administering of IBD (IB coordinator, IB world school, IBO), to the IBD curricular design (IB core, higher and standard level courses, the six subject groups, creativity, action and service hours/ CAS, extended essay/ EE, Theory of Knowledge/ TOK) and to IB assessment (1-7 scale, scoring a 24, scoring a 45, bilingual diploma, self-study options). The use of IBD jargon helps to construct the distinctiveness of the IBD program so that it can be marketed by the IBO but also because the
construction of a standard language surrounding the programs helps to construct the program as internationally standardised. In many ways, the distinction between IBD and public school program classes is less obvious than it may appear. Within the Nova Scotia schools, IB teachers are likely also assigned public school classes as part of their course load, and much of the IBD course material overlaps with public school curricula. For students and parents' to make a decision in favour of enrolment, they must first be convinced that the program offers something distinct from other program options.

The construction of the IBD program as holistic forms the basis for arguments for the program's distinctiveness. This holistic approach is characterised as being more expansive than alternative curricula such as the Nova Scotia curriculum. This is conveyed most clearly through the use of metaphor. Several program descriptive excerpts refer to the IBD program using metaphors of parts setting the direction and influencing the greater whole. For instance, the Learner Profile, a document describing qualities of the IBD students, is described as being at “the heart” of IBD, the learner is described as being “at the heart” of IB programs, the main course components of the IBD are referred to the “IBD core” and the adjective “central” is used repeatedly to lend emphasis to certain elements of the program (IBO, 2014a). In parallel to these metaphors, predicative adjectives qualify the programs as “holistic” and IBD students as “whole” and “well-rounded”. These predicative adjectives are strategically employed to highlight an abstract, yet distinctive essence of the program setting it apart from other options. Dissimilar IBD subjects and program-components are associated through emphasis on ideas and beliefs deemed 'central' to the program's ethos of holistic education. These comparisons cite the IBD's holistic vision as something that distinguished it from other programs, allowing for arguments for IBD enrolment to be grounded in the “topos of comparison” (Strong, 2020; Wodak, 2009).

There is an overlexicalisation (Machin & Mayr, 2012) of IBD program characteristics. The program's supposed international focus, standardisation, promotion of cultural understanding, rigour, and holistic approach are overemphasised through repetition. For
example, the terms “whole” and “lifelong” recur frequently in the course description excerpts (see example 12). Great emphasis is placed on characterising the IBD learner and the IBD learner's place within the IBD framework (as demonstrated in example 13 and 14). It is stressed that the learner is “firmly” placed at the heart of the program (see example 13). One might assume it to be a given that learners would be central to school programs; however, the fact that the centrality of students is directly stated points to the IBD program's insistence on the prioritisation of students, suggesting that other programs might not share this conviction.

Somewhat vague and opaque chains of reasoning are then applied to connect the central status of the IBD learner, with the IBD commitment to “placing focus where it belongs: on learning” (Horton High School, 2023, p. 14). It seems obvious that schools should focus on learning and therefore this statement would appear unnecessary unless it were to suggest that some school programs do not put the focus on learning. Indeed, the inclusion of the caveat “where it belongs” adds to the impression that some programs put focus where it does not belong; with this only being implied and never stated directly, it becomes difficult to contest. Thus the topos of comparison is discretely employed to support arguments of the worthwhileness of IBD enrolment (direct comparisons to other curricula can be seen in example 15). Excessive use of characterisation surrounding the IBD program, coupled with an over-insistence on the program's commitment to students and learning, points to the author's preoccupation with the program's superiority.

**Example 12**

“The learner profile is a profile of the whole person as a lifelong learner (Horton High School, 2023, p.14).”
Example 13

“It places the learner firmly at the heart of IB Programs and focuses attention on the processes and the outcomes of learning (Horton High School, 2023, p.14).”

Example 14

“The learner profile is at the heart of the IB and is central to the definition of what it means to be internationally minded. Thus, the IB is placing the focus for schools where it belongs: on learning (Horton High School, 2023, p.14).”

Example 15

“IB Programmes aim to do more than other curricula by developing inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who are motivated to succeed (Cole Harbour High School, 2021, p.42; Halifax West High School, 2019, p.15).”

5.5 The IB-Type

All but two of the IBD program descriptions address the discourse topic of student suitability. While the French Immersion program descriptions address student eligibility, this is done through fact-based descriptions of program policies and entry-points; there is no discursive construction of the type of student suitable for French Immersion. In contrast, this discourse topic is very prominent in IBD program descriptions, appearing in more than half of the IBD program descriptions. The topic of learner suitability is addressed most often through intertextual references to the IBO Learner Profile. The Learner Profile is an IBO policy document which is said to represent a commitment by IBD programs to the development of “a
broad range of human capacities and responsibilities that go beyond academic success” in its students (IBO, 2014a).

Through the use of intertextual referencing, the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) was constructed as an authority within the program descriptions. In fact, the most common direct citations in the IBD program descriptions were references to the IBO website. Most often, the IBO home page was linked in the program description but the program’s Learner Profile page was also referenced frequently. The IBO Learner Profile is a two page document which outlines ten characteristics of IB students and is said to act as a guiding mandate for the program design and delivery (IBO, 2014a). References to the Learner Profile were present in more than half of the program descriptions and most often occurred as a direct quote or a close paraphrasing of the IBO original document. The presence of intertextual references to the Learner Profile could be understood as serving two purposes. First, the Learner Profile serves to describe the kind of person a student might become if they were to enrol in IB. Next, the Learner Profile serves to explain which kind of student should enrol in the IBD program and the kind of students you would be associated with were you to enrol in the IBD program. In other words, the Learner Profile is said to describe the social networks and interpersonal connections that might be gained through program participation and which might improve access to institutional resources such as university scholarships. The presence of the Learner Profile within the program descriptions therefore speaks to the educational aims of the program, while also marketing IB enrollment as a source of social capital through implications that enrollment in the IBD program will allow students to gain entry into a social network of high-achievers.

The discursive construction of the Learner Profile contributes to the discursive construction of the imagined IBD student. Within the program description excerpts, the Learner Profile is described as “a map of a lifelong journey towards international mindedness” and “a clear and explicit statement of what is expected of students” (Horton High School, 2023, p. 4).
The metaphor of the description of the IBD students as a map would suggest that the Learner Profile is similar to a set of instructions describing what students should strive to become. This metaphor suggests that the Learner Profile exists to describe the kind of person a student might become if they were to enrol in IB. This is further reinforced with the metaphor of the Learner Profile as a 'lifelong journey towards international mindedness' (Horton High School, 2023, p. 4). Enrolling in the IBD program could be thought of as a step along the journey of becoming the sort of person described in the IB Learner Profile. However the description of the Learner Profile as a “statement of expectations” should suggest that the profile exists to describe the kind of student who should enrol in the IBD program (i.e. the kind of student who is able to conform to certain expectations). By describing the Learner Profile both as a journey and as a set of expectations, the authors are able to simultaneously claim that the IBD program is a choice open to anyone willing to set out on a journey, while also communicating that the IBD program is a superior tier open to those capable of adhering to certain expectations.

The choice of the term 'Learner Profile' rather than 'prerequisite abilities', for example, would suggest that IBD students are not united through a shared set of abilities but rather through shared identities. The content of the Learner Profile is presented in some of the program description excerpts as a dialogue between the authors and their imagined readers. Through the use of deixis, potential students of the program are nominated using the pronoun 'you', something that is entirely absent from the French Immersion program descriptions. This positions prospective students to 'try on' the identity described by the Learner Profile to determine if they are a good fit for the IBD program. This is done either by listing a series of questions that the authors ask of the reader, for example “are you a mature and academically able student interested in going to university”. The reader is therefore positioned to judge themselves in relation to the 'IB-type' student. The inclusion of positive evaluative attributes (knowledgeable, caring, highly motivated, well-rounded, curious, mature, able, able to get along well with others), positions the reader to want to align themselves with the IBD student. The
inclusion of positive evaluative attributes therefore allows the program description to serve the purpose of marketing the IBD program to students. However, the construct of the IBD student as a certain ‘type’ would suggest that some students do not fit this profile and the exclusivity of the program might in itself make the program more attractive to some students because this exclusivity signals that a certain amount of social capital may be attached to the program.

Within the program description excerpts, IBD learners are characterised in 36 different ways (see table 8 for a complete list) and repeatedly qualified by the same set of adjective and prepositional phrases. The IBD program is described simultaneously as being a choice available to all students and as a program most suitable for students with certain abilities. IB students are characterised as “motivated”, “ambitious” and “capable of coping” while at the same time insisting that any students who puts their mind to it can complete the IBD program. A program open and available to all students might be considered less rigorous or worthwhile by virtue of its reduced capacity to endow social capital through the construction of in-groups and out-groups. To highlight the program’s rigour and exclusivity without overtly excluding certain students, authors construct the IBD program as an academic choice suitable for students aligning with an excessively long list of characteristics. These characteristics are juxtaposed with the inclusion of the province’s soft-landing policy (EECD, 2015), which allows students to drop out of the IBD program while staying on course to graduate with a Nova Scotia graduation diploma. The need to include this policy would suggest to the reader that significant numbers of students choose to discontinue with the program.

Table 8

Terms used to predicate IBD students within the IBD program description excerpts.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>highly motivated</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>who enjoy academic challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>who wish to become involved in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>well-rounded</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>who are prepared to move into post-secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>from around the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>develop self-confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>develop initiative concern for others and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>develop responsibility,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Develop concern for others</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Develop the ability to work cooperatively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>not the perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>motivated</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>who has curiosity and a zest for learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>mature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>academically able</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>interested in going to university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>not the academically elite student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>committed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>conscientious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>academically ambitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>capable of coping successfully with our regular high school academic courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>who complete pre-IB courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>who are successful in this program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>firmly at the heart of IB Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>lifelong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>literate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>articulate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>adaptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>with expertise in at least two languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>with a global understanding of issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An analysis of the IBD program description excerpts revealed that IBD graduates are discursively constructed as having an advantage over other students after graduation. At the same time, the excerpts seemed to refute anticipated criticisms of the program's exclusivity (see example 16). This was achieved by employing nomination and predication strategies which constructed IBD students as moral, mature and capable, and perpetuated the image of IBD students as high achievers. These strategies are elaborated on in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Example 16

"Any student with a love of learning and who is willing to work and demonstrates a strong degree of academic competency by coping successfully with our regular grade level academic program should also be able to cope with the IB diploma, provided they are willing to put in the extra time and effort required (Halifax West High School, 2019, 15)."

The construction of IBD students as possessing desirable moral and intellectual characteristics was achieved through the use of nomination and predication strategies that help to form the foundation for arguments in favour of enrolment in the IBD program. For instance, the device of synecdoche is employed strategically to nominate students as 'young people', 'graduates' and 'learners'. The more specific category of “graduates” and “future graduates” are predicated with a plethora of positive evaluative adjectives and prepositional phrases related to personal success (articulate, confident, with a global understanding of issues). These are characteristics that can be expected to be gained through participation in the IBD program.
Meanwhile the broader category of 'learners' or 'young people' is predicated with evaluative adjectives related to individual moral characteristics (e.g., caring, inquiring, motivated). Here synecdoche is employed to situate IBD students in terms of the positive impact they are sure to have as young people in the greater community.

The topos of advantage operates on the logic that if an action will be useful, it should be performed. The authors argue that “IB Programmes aim to do more than other curricula by developing inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people”. If the development of “inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people” is thought of as useful for individuals and for society, then the topos of advantage allows the reader to conclude that they should enrol in the IBD program (see example 17). The usefulness of enrolment is reinforced by predication strategies which endow students, not only with academic abilities but also with positive social attributes such as being “caring” and “conscientious”, or having a “concern for others”, a “sensitivity to other cultures” and “a wish to become involved in the community”. Simply put, the IBD program is argued to develop a kind of global citizen. The value of the IBD program does not therefore lie solely in the value of the IBD certificate but also in the value of internalising the IBD student identity. The program is constructed not merely as a means of attaining the IB diploma credential but also as a means of becoming a global citizen. The program promises more than just a certificate, but the production of a certain kind of person.

Example 17

“The IB Programme emphasizes critical thinking, intercultural understanding and exposure to a variety of points of view, and is designed for highly motivated students who enjoy academic challenges and wish to become involved in the community. The holistic approach of the programme aids in character growth and development, and produces well-rounded students who are prepared to move into post-secondary education upon completion (Cole Harbour District High School, 2021, p. 44).”

The topos of advantage is likewise relevant in supporting the conclusion that the IBD program leads to personal success for students (a different kind of usefulness). By making
statements about the future success of students, (e.g. “[g]raduates of the IB Diploma Programme consistently perform well at university”), the authors once again rely on the topos of advantage. Here the conclusion rule would suggest that if enrolment in the IBD will be useful in leading to future success, then they should enrol. This argument is reinforced by predication strategies which characterise IBD students as being provided with such useful benefits as “preferred entrance status, scholarships and possibly advanced credit or transfer credits for IB courses” (Cole Harbour High School, 2021, p. 42).

5.6 The IB Gift and Internationalism

The IBD program description constructs the IBD program as superior to other options due to its international standardisation and recognition. One program description excerpt goes so far as to call the IBD program a “gift” providing students with unique educational experiences that students in Nova Scotia would never normally be able to access (see example 18). This construction of the IBD program as providing a humanistic service to students by exposing them to international perspectives that they would not otherwise come by, is reflected in the use of intertextuality and the strategic use of discursive devices such as metaphor, metonymy, and overlexicalisation.

Example 18

“This free, open access, alternate pathway through grades 11 and 12 is truly a gift, as the inherent value of the program provides unique perspectives and experiences that are specific to IB.”

(Horton High School, 2023, p.8)

Of the eleven IBD program descriptions examined, 9 contained direct citation, 7 contained close paraphrasing or direct quoting, and all eleven contained reference to education documents and the use of IB jargon. The reliance on intertextuality in the IBD program description could be interpreted as a signal of the program's membership to the prestigious network of IBO resources and IB world schools. Situating the IBD program within this network
is important for establishing the legitimacy of the program through its external recognition. In other words, intertextuality in the IBD program description might serve to build trust in the IBD accreditation in a way that is not held for accreditations which are accorded by the province. The program descriptions go beyond simply building trust in the IBO as an educational authority to constructing the IBD as providing a superior kind of standardised education. The IBO is therefore constructed as more reliable than the provincial government in providing students with the education they need. The establishment of the program as adhering to international standards is critical in constructing IBD as a source of social capital derived from international recognition by universities and other institutions (see example 19). By situating the IBO as the authority on the program delivered at the local level, the IBD is discursively constructed as bestowing on students something that the Nova Scotia curriculum courses are unable to provide.

**Example 19**

> “In addition to just wanting to participate in this excellent program, many students take the IB Diploma to improve their chances of university admission. Graduates of the IB Diploma Programme consistently perform well at university. At some universities, graduates with an IB Diploma may receive preferred entrance status, scholarships and possibly advanced credit or transfer credits for IB courses in which sufficiently-high results were achieved (Cole Harbour District High School, 2021, p. 44).”

There is a high degree of similarity between the IBD program descriptions. In fact, IBD program descriptions often contained blocks of text exactly matching text from the handbooks of other schools, without clear reference to the original sources of the material. These verbatim reduplications featured extensively in eight of the IBD program descriptions and most notably, a full 50% of the Halifax West High School and Cole Harbour District High School IBD program description were identical. Even when IBD program descriptions did not match word-for-word, they paraphrased one another. An example of this is shown in table 9. This close adherence to
IBD language and wording, reinforces the construction of the program as standard across all schools.

**Table 9**

An example of two near-identical excerpts from the IBD program description section of course selection handbooks and a further two examples of non-identical but highly similar excerpts

(Cole Harbour District High School, 2021, p. 42; Halifax West High School, 2021, p. 15; Horton High School, 2022, p. 9; Parkview Education Centre, 2022, p. 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cole Harbour District High School</th>
<th>Halifax West High School</th>
<th>Horton High School</th>
<th>Park View Education Centre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The IB Programme is not meant just for the academically elite students. Any motivated student capable of coping successfully with our regular high school academic courses should also be able to cope with the IB diploma, provided they are willing to put in the extra time and effort required. We encourage you to seek advice from your teachers, counsellors and parents before deciding on pursuing the IB Diploma Preparation Programme at Cole Harbour District High School. Questions should be forwarded to the IB Coordinator.</td>
<td>Any committed, conscientious and self-motivated student can be successful in the IB program. The IB program is not meant just for academically elite students. Any student with a love of learning and who is willing to work and demonstrates a strong degree of academic competency by coping successfully with our regular grade 10 academic program should also be able to cope with the IB diploma, provided they are willing to put in the extra time and effort required. We encourage you to seek advice from your teachers, counsellors and parents before deciding on pursuing the IB Diploma Preparation Program at Halifax West.</td>
<td>Keep in mind that the IB program is not meant just for the academically elite student. Any motivated, academically ambitious student capable of being successful in regular high school academic courses should also be able to cope with the IB diploma, provided they are willing to put in some extra effort from time to time.</td>
<td>The IB program is open to all students. It is not solely for gifted students, but rather for all who are willing to work hard and are motivated to succeed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nature of the IBD “gift” is suggested through overlexicalisation in the form of excessive use of the terms “standardised”, “international”, and “rigorous”. The adverb *internationally* and the adjective international (inherent in the naming of the IBD program) appear in disproportionately large numbers: i.e. internationally recognized, internationally standardised, internationally minded, international curriculum, international reputation. Frequent mentions are made of international standards and international standardisation with
the international community being constructed as an authority on quality schooling whose standards lead to a more rigorous education. The adjectives “standardized” is frequently used to modify terms such as curriculum, assessment, examinations, and conversion scales while the terms “IB standard” or the “international standard” are used to characterise the program. The insistence of standardisation and rigour of the program might exist to compensate for anticipated distrust of an unfamiliar curriculum and system of assessments.

The topos of authority refers to the reasoning that if an authoritative figure makes a claim, that claim must be reliable. References to universities and international standards are both used within the program description excerpts to provide testimonies of the benefits of the IBD program. The authority of universities and unspecified international experts is harnessed to make an argument for the benefits of participating in the IBD program. This argument is only coherent if it is taken for granted that international and standardised programs are more rigorous and valuable compared with programs embedded into more localised contexts (see example 20). The IBD gift therefore becomes the empowerment of gaining access to perspective beyond one's local communities.

**Example 20**

"Students are exposed to a broad range of subjects, but study several subjects in great depth. The ultimate benefit of this program is that IB graduates are literate, articulate, adaptable, confident young adults with expertise in at least two languages and a global understanding of issues (Halifax West High School, 2010, 15)."

**5.7 Summary**

In this chapter I reported on the findings of the textual analysis IBD and French Immersion program description. French Immersion and IBD program descriptions were found to differ significantly in their discursive construction of students and educational objectives. The French Immersion program descriptions were marked by their lack of detail and their tendency to rely on the reader's prior knowledge of the program. In contrast, the IBD program
descriptions employed excessive detail to distinguish the IBD program from the Nova Scotia curriculum and to construct a distinct IBD student identity. In the following chapter, I will discuss these results and attempt to contextualise them in relation to the educational sociological theories outlined in chapter 3. I will address the research questions and draw conclusions regarding the significance of the study results.
Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to critically investigate the discursive construction of IBD and French Immersion programs in Nova Scotia high school course selection handbooks, and to compare the assumptions about school knowledge and evaluations of social capital inherent in each program’s discursive construction. With those aims in mind, the following research question was asked: How (if at all) do discursive constructions of French Immersion and IB in school handbooks differ with relation to assumptions about and evaluations of school knowledge and social capital? In this chapter I summarise research findings and situate these findings within the theoretical framework established in Chapters 3 and 4. I discuss themes arising from the findings and interpret these themes within the broader context of Nova Scotia education and Canadian Official Languages (see page 25). I conclude this dissertation with an overview of the wider implications of this research, the study’s limitations, and areas for further research.

6.1 The Discursive Construction of French Immersion

How is French Immersion discursively constructed within Nova Scotian high school course selection handbooks?

French Immersion: Nothing to See Here

One of the most significant results of the textual analysis of the course selection handbooks was a pattern of paucity of information regarding the French Immersion program when compared to the IBD program. This result was corroborated by several findings. First, the French Immersion program descriptions were significantly shorter and less prominent than the IBD program descriptions (see section 5.1, p. 85). They omitted certain discourse topics (program features, aims and benefits) which could reasonably be expected to be included in descriptions of high school programs and which are indeed included in the descriptions of the IBD program (see section 5.4, p. 100). At the micro level, the analysis program description excerpts revealed that few social actors are included in French Immersion program descriptions with nominalisation being strategically employed to suppress teachers and curriculum designers
as social actors. This results in students being the only social actors referenced. The in-depth analysis further revealed the absence of evaluative adjectives within the program descriptions which favour instead direct statements of fact regarding the program eligibility and graduation requirements. The program description excerpts did not employ argumentation and appeared neutral with regards to the question of program participation (see section 5.1, p. 85). Where argumentation schemes were present, they were grounded in the “topos of reality” (Wodak, 2009), contending that given the reality of the nature of the program, clear steps could be taken to achieve the French Immersion certificate. In sum, the French Immersion program description excerpts were observed to be short, to lack prominence, to omit expected discourse topics and to contain few social actors, evaluative language and argumentation.

The brevity of the French Immersion program description can be explained in part by the fact that they do not act as a student's first introduction to the French Immersion program. This is because students eligible to participate in high school French Immersion have previously participated in French Immersion in middle school. As a result, readers of French Immersion program descriptions have a greater degree of prior knowledge about the program when compared to readers of the IBD program descriptions. Nevertheless, the paucity of information contained within the French Immersion program descriptions makes it necessary for students and parents to rely on prior knowledge derived from other texts or utterances to inform their decision for or against continuing into high school French Immersion.

There is a failure within the program descriptions to acknowledge, confirm or contest these pre-existing constructions of French Immersion. For instance, there is little attempt within the program to justify the value of developing French-English bilingualism, to argue for the benefits of immersive language learning or to contest the program’s elitist reputation. Education surrounding Canada's Action Plan for Official Languages (discussed on p. 25) would help to make the purpose and underlying values of French Immersion more transparent. Arguments in favour of program enrolment are only coherent if readers are assumed to value French-English
bilingualism, to have a pre-existing understanding of the benefits of immersion learning and to see themselves as the kind of students for whom French Immersion education is appropriate. By failing to justify the existence of high school French immersion or to argue in favour of enrolment, schools pass up the opportunity to control the narrative regarding French Immersion with possible knock-on effects for student enrolment. While avoiding taking a stance on French Immersion makes it less likely that schools will face criticism from opponents of the program, it also passes-up the opportunity to promote enrolment amongst the kind of student who is most likely to drop the program at the high school level. With a mere 46% of the most recent French Immersion cohort having completed the program to the end of High School, there is significant room for improvement in French Immersion retention (Statistics Canada, 2013, 2022).

There are a number of common myths regarding French Immersion, bilingualism and language learning more generally, that have been shown to be prevalent in Canadian society. Addressing these myths in program handbooks could be beneficial to students and could improve retention rates for French Immersion. One such myth is that the French Immersion program is reserved for high achieving students which has the potential to lead to students with exceptionalities being counselled to switch out of the program (Wise, 2011). This particular misconception might be contested within the program descriptions, making it more likely that students who do not see themselves as academic high achievers will continue with the program. A second language learning myth involves the perception that language education in childhood is more important than language education in young adulthood. In fact, younger learners require more time to reach high levels of proficiency and the length of exposure to the language is critical for the success of young learners (Dixon et al., 2012). If students were educated on the language learning process, students might be less likely to adopt the attitude that they have already learned, in elementary and middle school, all they are slated to gain from the program (Dixon et al., 2012; Nicoladis & Montanari, 2016). Finally, most students will have been exposed
to anglocentric attitudes (see section, p. 41) asserting that the status of English as a globally
dominant language renders multilingualism unnecessary or valueless (May, 2012). Arguments
in favour of French-English bilingualism or multilingualism more generally would construct
participation in the French Immersion program as a value-driven choice instead of trying to
pass it off as a neutral option.

**A Path to Bilingualism**

Although the French Immersion program descriptions made few arguments, the
references made to bilingualism framed French Immersion in relation to the achievement of
bilingualism. If readers of the program descriptions discursively construct French-English
bilingualism as a valuable form of school knowledge, one that might be a source of social capital,
then participation in French Immersion as a path to bilingualism might be considered an
argument in favour of enrolment. The analysis showed that the French Immersion program was
often reduced to simply imply an environment for achieving bilingualism (see section 5.3, p. 96).
The program description did not construct French Immersion as noteworthy with regards to its
curriculum or course offerings, for instance. This was reflected in the finding that some English
language course descriptions were made to stand in for French Immersion courses descriptions,
thereby reinforcing the notion that French Immersion courses are identical to English language
courses in every respect but for the language of instruction. The “topos of comparison” was
evoked through the situating of French Immersion along a continuum of French learning
options each said to result in a different degree of bilingualism (see section 5.3, p. 96). The
benefits of the program are associated primarily with an immersive language environment as a
means of developing bilingualism. A reader's presuppositions about the value of bilingualism are
therefore critical to their evaluation of French Immersion as a program.

The promotion of French-English bilingualism in Canada facilitates the provision of
language rights to Francophone communities through ensuring that federal services may be
offered in French and through bridging connections between Anglophone and Francophone
communities in Canada (Government of Canada, 2018). Rates of French-English bilingualism amongst Francophone Canadians are already very high, sitting at 46.4% in Quebec and 99% in Nova Scotia, however successful maintenance of minority language rights through mutual accommodation (see p. 23) requires that a certain number of majority language speakers acquire the minority language (Statistics Canada, 2022a, 2022b; Churchill, 1986; May, 2012). By framing French Immersion as a means of achieving bilingualism, the French Immersion program is related to federal aims of transforming Canadian society toward the stable maintenance of the status of French. As a consequence, those most likely to already support the provision of language rights for minority francophone communities are most likely to choose French Immersion.

Evidently there are also those who will choose French Immersion purely for the instrumental value of French in increasing employment opportunities. This is likely to attract students who would consider work and study opportunities outside the province or who have middle class aspirations of work in private commerce or the public service. It is significant that in Nova Scotia provisions are made for IBD students, a program clearly targeted at students aspiring to university education, to continue studying French but no such provisions are made for other programs aimed at students headed to community college (the Option and Opportunities program). In sum, by associating French Immersion with official bilingualism, French Immersion will be successful in appealing to students who support or at the very least accept Canada's bilingual policy but would not attract students who are not aware of the status of French in Canada or who do not view Canadian bilingualism as relevant to their own life trajectories. Efforts could be made to attract a wider range of students if the program information articulated arguments for the instrumental and integral value of French-English bilingualism (see p. 41 on the valuing of language and p. 22 on attitudes to bilingualism). Research studies designed with an intent to identify the kind of student most likely to
discontinue with the French Immersion program could help to inform targeted interventions directed towards supporting program continuance within these populations.

**French Immersion Opportunities not Promises**

Another striking result of the textual analysis was the degree of uncertainty with which the French Immersion program outcomes are described and the lack of assurance of outside recognition of the French Immersion certificate. While the value of the IBD graduation diplomas is discursively constructed through intertextual references to experts, education institutions, or graduation credentials, the same is not true of the French Immersion certificate. Current French Immersion program descriptions contain little overt intertextuality (see section 5.1, p. 85). Instead, references are made to French or American standardised language testing available to students as a means of achieving recognition for the French skills they had developed through the program (see section 5.2, p. 94). The French Immersion program description excerpts omit discourse topics pertaining to program outcomes and present French Immersion strictly in terms of the steps that must be taken to achieve the French Immersion certificate. French Immersion students are not predicated with any distinctive quality or abilities and are only represented as distinct from other kinds of students insofar as they have made the decision to enrol in French Immersion. The program outcomes that students can expect to achieve are mitigated through the use of modality, which renders them less certain and more variable (see section 5.2, p. 95). While students are expected to acquire language skills through the program, there is no reference to specific details about the degree of language ability students might expect to acquire or the kind of language situations they will be prepared to navigate.

The omission of clear sets of language standards from the program descriptions makes it more difficult for opponents of French Immersion to make claims of the program's failure to reach these targets. In this sense, the discursive construction of French Immersion as an opportunity and not a guarantee works in the program's favour. The choice to avoid making specific promises in regard to student achievement is a somewhat logical one as results rely on a
myriad of factors and are likely to vary from person to person, as is the case with all school subjects. Unlike school subjects like math, French education is more likely to be put into question as a form of valuable school knowledge. This makes it vulnerable to criticisms questioning the value of studying learning French to any degree less than very high or near-native proficiency. The French Immersion program is not designed to prepare students for a specific language test or for a specific language context; rather, it is designed to facilitate the development of language skills that are meaningful within the particular context of the students' environment (EECD, 2020a). Public perception of French Immersion does not always align with what the program truly has to offer. If parents and students are expecting French Immersion to produce students with near-native grammar, syntax and fluency, then the program will be continually perceived as a failure (Hayday, 2015). The program descriptions have the potential to provide some education about the aims and possibilities of immersion education. If the aims of the program were made clear, and if the program were associated with further language learning pathways, students would be less likely to abandon the program due to its failure to deliver on unrealistic expectations and students would be more likely to see the program as opening doors to future opportunities. While being realistic about what the program can achieve may help maintain student interest, educators and policy makers should nevertheless strive to improve the quality of the program through improved access to resources and student support which in turn may encourage a greater number of students to remain in the program.

The lack of specificity surrounding what French Immersion can be expected to deliver seems to suggest a kind of resignation towards the maintenance of the status quo when it comes to French Immersion. It suggests that there is nothing to be said about the program that could inform a student's expectations. While, in Nova Scotia, progress towards improved French education has been seen in the introduction of integrated and intensive French programs and in the piloting of the neurolinguistic approach to French teaching, little has been done to update French Immersion. Updates to the curriculum (the program's curriculum documents are
upwards of twenty years old), an increase in the number of courses offered in French (due to the shortage in French teachers some school require student to take course online) and the enhancement of French extra curricular exchange or cultural experiences (the province introduced a cultural experience credit in 2010 but none of the course course selection handbook advertise this as a component of the French Immersion program) are a few example of concrete steps towards the improvement of French Immersion (EECD, 2020a). While undoubtedly much has been done by hardworking teachers to offer engaging and high quality programming, students are not being told what they serve to gain through participation in French Immersion and more could be done to make the program attractive to high schoolers.

6.2 The Discursive Construction of the International Baccalaureate Program

How is IB discursively constructed within Nova Scotian high school course selection handbooks?

**IBD Exceptionalism**

One of the primary results of the textual analysis was the discursive construction of the IBD program as unlike other programming options (see p. 99). This was achieved through the increased prominence of the IBD program within the course selection handbook and the tendency of the program to be categorised separately from other programs and course offerings. Added to this, the use of IBD terminology serves to construct a distinctive IBD language separate from the language of the Nova Scotia curriculum with which most families would have become familiar. Metaphor is strategically deployed to discursively construct the IBD’s approach to learning as holistic and ideologically distinct from other curricula. Overlexicalisation is used strategically to emphasise the program’s supposedly unique commitment to student-centred learning.

Perhaps the most important function of the IBD program descriptions is to construct the IBD program as distinct from the Nova Scotia curriculum. The continued existence of the IBD program in Nova Scotia schools relied on the assumption that the IBD program provides a kind of educational service that the Nova Scotia curriculum does not. In the most concrete terms this
distinction is difficult to make, the IBD program is run in the same classrooms, taught by the same teachers and contains many of the same specific learning outcomes as the Nova Scotia curriculum. The distinctiveness of the two programs is therefore constructed as deriving from each program’s ideological orientation to education. IBD values are constructed as grounded in both a responsiveness to students and increased demand on students.

At first glance it seems to be an ideological contradiction for the IBD program to be constructed as exceptional in both its standardisation and its responsiveness to individuals. On one hand, the IBD program is constructed as unique in its increased emphasis on student accountability through standardised testing, seeming to reflect an underlying ideology based in neoliberal values of individual achievement in global markets. This reading of neoliberal value in the IBD program descriptions is born out through frequent references to international standards and exams assessed by international experts. However, claims are also made regarding the increased care and consideration that the program pays towards its students. The IBD program is said to put importance not just on academics, but also on the wider social development of the student. In fact, the program descriptions insist that the IB centres its programs around the student and the students' learning (Cole Harbour High School, 2021; Halifax West High School, 2019, Horton High School, 2023). This seems to contradict neoliberal values by expanding the focus of school beyond achievement and the development of human capital. Critical, student-centred and multicultural approaches to education see knowledge as arising from students' personal experiences derived from their own particular history and position in society. These approaches of education represent a commitment to critical-democratic values (Harb & Thomure, 2020). These values should preclude extensive regimes of standardised testing and should prominently support the development of generalisable and decontextualized learning opportunities in the IBD program.

The use of the term “holistic” instead of “student-centred” betrays the IBD program's true ideological orientation. The authors of the IBD program stress the importance placed on the
development of skills that usually do not fall under the domain of school. The assumption here is that a multifaceted education is equivalent to a student-centred one. In effect, the exceptionality of the IBD program is derived from its promotion of a holistic education which expands the definition of scholarly achievement to encompass other domains of a student’s life. This is exemplified through the attention that is given to the student's community engagement and extra-curricular activities (IBO, 2022). For instance, IBD students must record their participation in community and extra-curricular activities to satisfy the IBD's requirement for a certain degree of participation in volunteer work, arts, and physical activity, which is deemed necessary for the production of well-rounded students (IBO, 2022). Here, a holistic education refers to the identification of marketable skills and soft-skills in all areas of a students' life. IBD program descriptions are therefore not truly a site of ideological contestation after all, with the student-centeredness indicating a concern for the socialisation of students but not for the critical construction of knowledge based on student experiences.

**The IB-Type Student**

The IBD program descriptions were found to afford a significant amount of attention to the discursive construction of the IB student. This was often done through intertextual reference to the IB Learner Profile, an IBO policy document which defines the IB learner (IBO, 2014a). The choice to title the policy document as such emphasises the purposeful construction of a strong and distinct IB student identity. Excessive characterization of the IBD student serves to construct the program as exclusive. The use of the second person pronoun invites readers to hold themselves up to the IBD students' identity to decide if the program is right for them. The IB identity is constructed as widely recognized and respected by education institutions worldwide. This contributes to arguments for enrollment grounded in the topos of advantage (see section on topos, p. 71).

The Nova Scotia education system is responsible for serving all children in the province and any democratically elected government would not be served well to be seen as investing
disproportionately in any small number of students. To justify the IBD program's inclusion in the public education system, the IBD program must avoid overtly excluding certain students from participation and must therefore be discursively constructed as a choice albeit a choice only available to those willing to work hard enough. The excessive qualification of the IBD student is a means of signalling that the program is designed for a student elite, while appearing to be open and available for all. This strategy allows schools to avoid accusations that the IBD program perpetuates and reflects inequalities already inherent in society.

The characterisation of IBD students as caring and community minded, contributes to arguments for the social advantage of incorporating IBD into the school system. These arguments are grounded in elitist philosophies of education contending that those possessing high intelligence, skill, and experience are better placed to benefit society and should be given access to higher quality education (Dorling, 2010). This is seen through the definition of the IBD students identity in terms of certain attitudes (caring, with concern for other, mature, curious, motivated, ambitious, with a zest for learning), desires (who wish to go to university and become involved in the community), abilities (capable of coping with regular academic classes) and soft skills (well-roundedness, responsibility, cooperativeness, confidence). Not only is the IBD student discursively constructed as being academically able, but they are also attributed with pro-social qualities and community mindedness. The provision of a more globally competitive and prestigious education for a small number of Nova Scotian students is therefore justified through the suggestion that IBD students are best positioned to contribute positively to their communities.

Although the IB graduates are constructed as positively contributing to Nova Scotian society, the IBD program description puts more emphasis on the benefits of the IBD program for the individual learner. Skill discourse (see p. 39) is employed to construct workers as “bundles of skills” which can be sold as commodities in the job market contributing to a students' value as human capital (Urciuoli, 2008). The IBD program descriptions endow IBD graduates not only
with the typical skills considered to be associated with school (literacy, numeracy, etc.), but also with a series of soft skills and attitudes (confidence, maturity, cooperation). This separation of all aspects of students' selves into context independent, generalisable and marketable skills is an extension of a larger neoliberal perspective which conceptualises education as a product whose purpose is to efficiently facilitate individual achievement.

The IBD program is fully funded for Nova Scotian students (EECD, 2023), making it appear accessible to all. However, the excessive qualification of IBD students signals a selection process grounding in meritocratic values. IBD students are granted recognition due to their talent, effort and achievement. This reasoning fails to acknowledge systemic forces making the program more accessible to some and less accessible to others. More than half the province's students do not attend a school where the IBD program is offered (EECD, 2022), and while it can be said that students at participating schools have equal opportunity to participate in the IBD program, most will not do so leading the mechanism of student choice to select for a small number of elites. The IBD program functions therefore to produce globally competitive workers with monetizable skills instead of providing social services, or promoting social equity, diversity and well-being within the school system as whole.

**The IB-Gift**

Finally, the analysis found that the IBD program descriptions contain suggestions of the IBD programs as a blessing deserving of gratitude. This is done by insisting on the program's international status and standardisation as markers of the program's rigour and promise. Through the use of intertextuality, the IBO is discursively constructed as an education authority deserving of superior recognition by universities compared to the Nova Scotia Department of Education curriculum. The IBD program description contained blocks of identical text pointing to the program's consistency and standardisation across the province and around the world. Overlexicalisation of the term standardised, international and rigorous serves to hammer home the point that this program offers something that the province curriculum cannot.
The discursive construction of an international organisation such as the IBO, as a superior form of authority to the Government of Nova Scotia suggest that students should be prepared to participate in a globally connected economy in addition to in their provincial and national economies and that as a consequence they require an education which will be recognized in global markets. Certain communities, particularly those affected by the decline of industry, are thought to lose out in the wake of globalisation (Stalker & Phyne, 2014). The IBD program proposes a path through which Nova Scotia students may escape this fate and become empowered through education to access the benefits of a globalised economy.

The increased focus on the student’s position within a globalised economy which privileges the English language, are more likely to see knowledge of English as sufficient for achieving globalisation, cosmopolitanism and global citizenship. If French is to be promoted, it is promoted not as a means of achieving a bilingual Canadian identity or of connecting with local francophone communities but of improving one's ability to participate in an international job market. Popular arguments in opposition to multilingual education are based on claims of English’s status as a global language, and its perceived role in achieving globalisation (as was discussed on p. 41).

6.3 Evaluations and Assumptions of School Knowledge and Social Capital

School knowledge is the formal kind of knowledge legitimised through its inclusion in school curricula and deemed to have social and economic value (Apple, 2004). Social capital, by contrast, refers to the advantage obtained by an individual through belonging to certain social networks. To some respects, school knowledge can be considered to represent what is valued at the societal level, while social capital can be considered what is valued as a means of improving an individual’s position within society. The acquisition of school knowledge is a means of gaining entry into a social group afforded access to certain institutional resources. In the context of this study, the attainment of social capital is what motivates individuals to participate in certain curricular options such as the IBD and French Immersion (Allan & Catts, 2012).
This project examined the ways in which school programs are socially constructed through the contextualised use of language. Perceptions of high school programs are based on the following types of assumptions and evaluations inherent in the program's discursive construction: 1) assumptions about what constitutes school knowledge 2) evaluations of the likelihood that the attainment of a certain kind of school knowledge will translate into social capital. When an individual's values align with the values inherent in the discursive construction of a program of study, they are more likely to choose to enrol in this program.

Assumptions about school knowledge include assumptions about what kind of school knowledge is most likely to benefit society and which kinds of knowledge should, as a consequence, be legitimised through inclusion on school curricula.

**French Immersion School Knowledge and Social Capital**

What evaluations and/or assumptions about school knowledge and social capital are included in discursive constructions of French Immersion?

The analysis revealed that the discursive construction of French Immersion contains the assumption that French is beyond doubt an obvious form of school knowledge. In addition to this Immersion education is assumed to be student-centred with French competency being formed from each students' interaction with their linguistic environments (see p. 24). Although the ultimate aim of French Immersion might be the promotion of French-minority language rights, this social reconstructionist purpose is not directly alluded to within the program descriptions. French proficiency, as a form of school knowledge, is connected with French-English bilingualism which is understood to be a form of social capital, allowing speakers to gain access to increased employment opportunities (sse p.22). Apart from its capacity as a path to bilingualism, French Immersion is not constructed as endowing students with any additional skills or knowledge apart from what they can expect to gain through participation in English language public education (see section 5.3, p. 95). However, the program description fails to refute other discursive constructions of French Immersion.
prevalent in society including the perception that French Immersion serves as a higher level academic stream. The persistence of this discursive construction makes it more likely that students and parents will perceive participation in French Immersion as a source of social capital through the program's capacity to facilitate membership within a network of prosperous and middle class families (see p. 27 on the inclusivity of French Immersion). This perception of French Immersion is ultimately harmful for the aims of the program because if motivation to participate in French Immersion is derived from the perceptions of the program's elitism and not from the presumed social value of acquiring French, then students are likely to leave the program as soon as other education opportunities are presented offering alternative avenue to membership within a network of academic or social elites.

**International Baccalaureate Program School Knowledge and Social Capital**

*What evaluations and/or assumptions about school knowledge and social capital are included in discursive constructions of the International Baccalaureate Program?*

The analysis revealed that discursive construction of the IBD program contained assumptions pertaining to school knowledge as sets of skills allowing students to compete in global educational and economic markets. Although the program descriptions contain allusions to holistic and student-centred education, the underlying assumption behind these references is that holistic education benefits the students through broadening the concept of school knowledge to encompass sets of general and decontextualized skills such as cooperation and international-mindedness. The IBD's version of student-centred education is not discursively constructed as being derived from contextualised knowledge relevant to the experience of individual learners. Instead, school knowledge is discursively constructed as internationally standardised. Inherent in discursive constructions of the program are evaluation of social capital as being derived from membership within a prestigious group of internationally recognized academic elites endowed with a myriad of pro-social attitudes and academic abilities as listed by the IBO Learner Profile (IBO, 2014a).
6.5 Discursive Constructions of French Immersion Compared with Discursive Construction of the IBD Program

Are there differences between the evaluations and/or assumptions about school knowledge and social capital with relation to FI and IB?

Evaluations of the social capital attached to the IBD program and to French Immersion are related to how each program distinguished itself from the regular English language Nova Scotia curriculum. The French Immersion program is discursively constructed as indistinct from the English language Nova Scotia curricula in all manner but for the language of instruction. The IBD program, on the other hand, is constructed as fundamentally and ideologically different from the Nova Scotia public school curricula, including French Immersion. While the French Immersion program description reassures readers that participation in French Immersion will not preclude students from the benefits associated with the regular Nova Scotia curriculum, the IBD program description assures readers that their program bestows on students a superior kind of education. Those who believe that social capital is obtained from schools through the transmission of culture and the creation of social cohesion are more likely to positively evaluate participation in French Immersion. Those who believe that social capital is obtained through distinguishing oneself within a competitive educational environment and through earning membership within an academic elite are more likely to choose the IBD program.

The choice between curriculum options such as IBD and French Immersion are based on assumptions about what is and should be on the curriculum (school knowledge), and evaluations of that curriculum's capacity to provide value (social capital) to the individual. The analysis undertaken in this study revealed that discursive constructions of the French Immersion and IBD program were premised on fundamentally different assumptions about what counts as knowledge and as a consequence differences in the kind of social capital promised to students. Within the French Immersion program descriptions French was constructed as a form of school knowledge resulting from an individual's interaction with an
immersivelanguageenvironment. No claims are made regarding the standard of ability that students might expect to obtain nor was the program represented as transmitting other kinds of knowledge apart from French proficiency. The French Immersion program description situated the social capital associated with participation in French Immersion in relation to the intrinsic and extrinsic value accorded to French-English bilingualism within Canadian society. By contrast, the IBD program describes constructed school knowledge as discrete, decontextualized and generalisable. School knowledge was not limited to subject area knowledge directly targeted by the program but included the socialisation of young people and was associated with a series of attributes and soft skills. As a consequence, the social capital associated with the IBD program was discursively constructed as arising from international recognition of the IBD credential and membership within a prestigious network of IBD students endowed not just with intelligence but with a myriad of pro-social characteristics. Those most likely to understand knowledge as discrete, objective and universally applicable across cultures and society are also most likely to value the IBD program over the French Immersion program. However, students and parents who understand learning as a social construct and contextually embedded might be more likely to select Nova Scotia curriculum programs such as French Immersion and are more likely to see language learning as a path to good citizenship.

6.4 Conclusion

Strong secondary French language education in Nova Scotia would help to produce a generation of Nova Scotians who feel confident using their language skills as adults, whether to consume French-language media and arts, pursue studies at French-language universities or deliver services in French through their work. They would perhaps be less likely to uncritically accept the dominance of English in local, national and global spheres and would perhaps be more likely to support the promotion of minority language rights. The normalisation of French as a minority language within the public domain would promote cultural and linguistic diversity within the province.
Content-based language education programs, such as French Immersion, when made available to all through inclusive public education, offer a powerful tool for bolstering minority language rights through mutual accommodation (see section 2.3, p. 23). However, the social impact of the choice to participate or not to participate in French Immersion has long been a topic of debate across the country with opponents of the program claiming that it leads to classist stratification of the education system (Alphonso, 2019; Hutchins, 2022; Ostroff, 2014). These accusations are not unfounded, with research suggesting that certain groups including lower-income and new Canadians are underrepresented in French Immersion (Allen, 2004a; Ottawa Carleton District School Board, 2019; Sinay, 2015; Willms, 2008; Yoon & Gulson, 2010). However it is difficult to understand why alternative high school curricula programs, such as the International Baccalaureate Diploma program, which openly represent themselves in exclusive or even elitist terms, although garnering some criticism surrounding cost, seem to receive little of the same criticism as French Immersion when it comes to inclusivity (see Fitzgerald, 2020).

The difference lies in the nature of the two programs. While any socially segregation effects of French Immersion work against the ultimate aims of the program to increase rates of bilingualism throughout all society, perceptions of the IBD program as an exclusive educational tier actually align with the program's aims. If the IBD program exists to provide wider global recognition of the academic achievement of students in the province, global recognition of mediocre or low academic achievement would not yield any added benefits to participation in regular provincial curricula programs. For the IBD program to present a viable alternative to provincial public education curricula and for its presence in the Nova Scotia schools system to be justifiable, it must be marketed towards ambitious or high achieving students.

Admonitions of the limited number of staff and course offerings available in high school French Immersion were a frequent feature of French Immersion program descriptions appearing in the province's course selection handbooks [see Charles P. Allen High Schools, 2022, p. 6; Horton High School, 2021, p. 30.; Northumberland Regional High School, 2015, p. 4;
Students are required to complete only half of their required course load, amounting in most cases to less than half of their true course load, to earn a French Immersion certificate (EECD, 2020a). Nevertheless only 46% of Nova Scotia’s 2010 French Immersion cohort completed the program through to the end of high school with many of these students abandoning the program once they reached high school (Statistics Canada, 2013, 2022c). Having completed up to ten years of French Immersion education, by the time they reach high school students might assume that they have received everything the program has to offer for them. These lower high school enrolment rates have the potential to exacerbate staffing and funding problems. Meanwhile, Nova Scotia is the only Canadian province that fully funds the IBD program at no cost to students (Fitzgerald, 2018, 2020). The IBD program’s language credit requirement makes it necessary to enlist French Immersion teachers to teach in the IBD program (IBO, 2014b). At Sydney Academy, grade 11 and 12 French language arts courses are only offered through the IBD program requiring even students wanting to graduate with the less stringent Integrated French certificate to participate in IB (Sydney Academy, 2021, p. 2). Students certainly should not be required to participate in program offerings clearly represented as high-tier, such is the case with the IBD program, in order to earn credits to satisfy French Immersion graduation requirement.

French Immersion is not designed as a high tier educational stream, however in some contexts the program could be thought of as such due to the nature of the discourse surrounding the program. This discourse guides student program choice, thus further reinforcing the program’s status as a de facto high-tier educational stream. To reduce the potential social segregation consequences of the availability of the French Immersion choice, efforts must be made to mitigate discourse of elitism surrounding the French Immersion program. This could be accomplished through outreach and education efforts directed towards groups underrepresented within the program, through clear statements of the program's aims, and through the deconstruction of common language learning myths such as the misperception that
language learning puts extra and undue academic strain on students (Hayday, 2015). If French Immersion is to grow and remain viable it cannot be discursively constructed as a high level educational stream. However, when other high stream options, such as IBD, are introduced into the education system students are required to make a choice; either they enrol in the IBD program or continue with French Immersion and forgo the status and recognition afforded to IBD graduates. In response to this choice, the Nova Scotia department of education developed a policy adjusting the French Immersion graduation requirements for IBD students, allowing them to earn a French Immersion certificate through participating in the IBD program (EECD, 2019b). Although on paper this allows more students to continue in French Immersion, it has the effect of further associating French Immersion with the “rigorous” IBD programs, dispersing limited French Immersion staff and making it more likely that certain students will understand that the French Immersion program is not meant for them.

The IBD program is offered at no cost to Nova Scotian students, however the program does have the potential to divert education resources away from public school programs (Fitzgerald, 2020). It might be worth considering whether it is in the best interest of Nova Scotia students to offer such a program while programs such as FI are under-resourced. Nova Scotia students would retain access to the same schools, teachers, classrooms, and the learning material were IBD not to be offered in schools. What the IBD program truly offers students is not a radically different sort of education but rather access to the global recognition and prestige associated with the program. While this is undeniably valuable to individual students, particularly those in more rural areas of the province, it shouldn't come at the expense of other programs, such as French Immersion, offering value through their capacity to build a more just society, in the case of French Immersion, through the promotion of minority language rights.

The proposed changes to French-second language education in New Brunswick, the replacement of French Immersion with a less extensive but universally mandatory French-second language alternative, presented one possible solution to anxieties surrounding
inequality resulting from the existence of French Immersion as a program choice within Canadian education systems. However, these changes would have made it more difficult for students to attain high levels of language proficiency within public education and could have resulted in fewer future teachers attaining levels of French proficiency sufficient to account for the program staffing demands. Similarly, within Nova Scotia, rates of bilingualism are far too low to realistically entertain the introduction of a universal or mandatory French Immersion equivalent. Instead, the current model of French Immersion must be adapted to allow for the gradual increase in rates of bilingualism which in turn would alleviate current French Immersion staffing and resourcing issues further strengthening what French Immersion has to offer.

The long term aims of French Immersion in promoting French-English bilingualism should be explicitly communicated. The program should not be presented as ideologically neutral, but rather the values unpinning the program and its relationship to the construction of a Canadian bilingual identity, should be made transparent. While some past research (Mady & Black, 2012; Ottawa Carleton District School Board, 2019) has identified groups who are less likely to enrol in French Immersion to begin with, further research is needed to identify those students most likely to discontinue with the program in adolescence. The results of this research would allow for a targeted approach to mitigating the issue of program non-completion through targeted outreach aimed at underrepresented groups. Further research is also needed to identify the explicit reasons that students choose to discontinue with the French Immersion program.

**Limitations and Areas for Future Research**

This research was limited in its assumption that IBD and French Immersion were equivalent choices. In reality, two factors made the choice of participating in the IBD and French Immersion programs fundamentally different. First, students may participate in French Immersion while also enrolling in other Nova Scotia curricular courses. In other words, the choice to participate in French Immersion does not imply the complete opting out of English
Nova Scotia curriculum courses. On the other hand, enrollment in the IBD program usually replaces participation in Nova Scotia curriculum programs. Secondly, the entry point for French Immersion is at the primary or grade seven level meaning that the choice available to students when they reach high school is to opt out of a program that students have already experienced. Students considering the IBD program are making the choice to participate in an education program that they have not yet experienced. These differences in the nature of the French Immersion and IBD program choices would influence the characteristics of the program descriptions and likely contributed to the increased length of the IBD program descriptions when compared to the French Immersion program descriptions. Disparity in length between the IBD and French Immersion program descriptions was another limitation to this study. To gain a fuller and more accurate picture of the discursive construction of French Immersion in Nova Scotia, further research is needed and should consider a larger data set and a greater variety of text-types.

Future research might investigate alternative streams in Nova Scotia secondary schools including the Option and Opportunity (O2) program (which prepare students for work in the trades), the Advanced Placement (AP) programs (which follows a standardised curriculum developed by the American college board), and Advanced Course (which follow the provincial curriculum but in more depth). The study of discourses surrounding all of these programs could provide a more nuanced understanding of different facets of school and program choice in Nova Scotia. Future research focusing on French Immersion in Nova Scotia could examine the distribution and demand for French Immersion across different geographic regions of the province, with the aim of understanding the relationship between the demand for French Immersion and French Immersion public school offerings. Comparisons could also be drawn between discourses of French Immersion in different geographic regions of the province.
Final Remarks

French is not the only minority language spoken and learned in Nova Scotia. As the province grows and becomes more linguistically diverse, there is likely to be a greater demand for different kinds of language education in the province. Already Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey schools have introduced Mi'kmaq immersion programs in the first four years of elementary school and Gaelic courses have been introduced into the province's major high schools (Simon, 2014; EECD, 2019). Strong French language education in the province does not detract from these minority language teaching efforts but rather has the potential to support them. French language education does not need to push out other forms of language learning in schools. Instead, the de-naturalising of English as the default language of instruction, and the widening of the definition of school knowledge to include local and cultural embedded forms of knowledge such as minority, indigenous, and heritage language learning, allows for a broader imagining of what is possible to gain from language and literacy education.
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Appendix

The sampling procedure for the selection of text excerpts for fine grained analysis.

Having familiarised myself with the content of each of the 11 IBD program descriptions, I undertook a phased approach to thematic analysis whereby I identified eleven commonly occurring themes present in IBD program descriptions and seven themes commonly occurring in French Immersion program descriptions. I identified these themes by highlighting subheadings and content words recurring across multiple program descriptions. For the IBD program descriptions the themes identified were; graduation requirements, program descriptions, university recognition, the IB mission and legacy, the IB learner profile, IB assessments, program eligibility, pre-IB programming, French learning, IB course lists and Nova Scotia accreditations. Each of these themes appeared in a minimum of seven course selected handbooks. For the French Immersion program descriptions commonly recurring themes were; student eligibility, program aims and characteristics, graduation requirements, course offerings, French-learning pathways, call to speak only in French and references to funding or staffing limitations. Each of these themes occurred in a minimum of five program descriptions.

Once I identified commonly recurring themes, I tagged these themes in all of the program descriptions. I recorded the number of paraphrased or directly quoted words present within each tagged theme. I selected the tagged sections with the highest percentage of paraphrased or directly quoting for closer analysis. In cases where themes from two different course selection handbooks had near-identical proportions of paraphrasing, I took the longest excerpt. In cases where there was equal use of quoting and paraphrasing between excerpts of similar lengths, I took an excerpt from the school that was the least represented in the sample. Table 1 and table 2 lists the course selection handbook from which excerpts were taken.
**Table 10**

*IBD program description themes for which an excerpt was selected for closer lexicogrammatical analysis and the course selection handbook from which each was selected.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse theme</th>
<th>Handbook Excerpt is Taken From</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Requirements</td>
<td>Citadel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program description</td>
<td>Cole Harbour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Recognition</td>
<td>Cole Harbour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The IB Mission and Legacy</td>
<td>Halifax West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The IB Learner Profile</td>
<td>Horton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IB Exams and Assessment</td>
<td>CPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility</td>
<td>Dr. J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-IB</td>
<td>Horton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Learning</td>
<td>CEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IB Courses</td>
<td>Halifax West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS Accreditations</td>
<td>Dr. J</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 11**

*French Immersion program description themes for which an excerpt was selected for closer lexicogrammatical analysis and the course selection handbook from which each was selected.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse theme</th>
<th>Handbook Excerpt is Taken From</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Eligibility</td>
<td>Halifax West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Aims and Characteristics</td>
<td>Citadel and Yarmouth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduation Requirements</td>
<td>Yarmouth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Courses Offered</td>
<td>CEC</td>
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<td>French-learning pathways</td>
<td>Northumberland Regional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Call to speak only in French</td>
<td>Citadel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding and staffing limitations</td>
<td>Horton</td>
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</table>