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**Understanding Franco-Ontarian Public Spaces:
A study of La Nouvelle Scène**

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**Understanding Franco-Ontarian Public Spaces:
A study of La Nouvelle Scène**

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Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
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ABSTRACT

Franco-Ontarians have founded an array of institutions to ensure their long-term cultural survival. By patronizing them, Franco-Ontarians are communicating their desire to belong to the community, to distinguish themselves from the majority, and to be recognized as part of a distinct cultural entity.

Based on Habermas' notion of the public space and on Breton's concept of institutional completeness, this study aims to explore how Franco-Ontarians regard the value of institutions as public spaces which affect the nature of Franco-Ontarian identity.

Surveys and interviews were conducted with patrons of the francophone theatre centre *La Nouvelle Scène*, to gather information on motivations and expectations in associating with such institutions.

This study's main finding was that Franco-Ontarians don't accredit their sense of identity to the substance of *La Nouvelle Scène*'s activities, but rather to its very presence within the community's boundaries and to the consequences that this presence entails.

RÉSUMÉ

Les Franco-ontariens ont fondé plusieurs institutions pour assurer leur survie culturelle. En les fréquentant, les Franco-ontariens communiquent leur volonté de faire partie de cette communauté, de se distinguer du groupe majoritaire, et d'être reconnus comme membres d'une communauté culturelle distincte.

À partir des concepts de l'espace public d'Habermas et de la complétude institutionnelle de Breton, cette étude vise à comprendre comment les Franco-ontariens perçoivent la valeur des institutions en tant qu'espaces publics qui définissent l'identité franco-ontarienne.

Sondages et entrevues ont eu lieu avec des clients du centre de théâtre La Nouvelle Scène afin d'amasser des informations au sujet de leurs motivations et attentes envers ce genre d'institution.

La conclusion principale de cette recherche suggère que les Franco-ontariens n'attribuent pas leur appartenance identitaire à la programmation de La Nouvelle Scène, mais plutôt à sa présence à l'intérieur des frontières de la communauté et aux conséquences qui découlent de cette présence.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Throughout the last century, the francophone minority living in Ontario has faced important cultural issues due to an imposing anglophone dominance. In their struggle to preserve their language and culture, Franco-Ontarians have founded a variety of institutions over the last century, hoping that these public spaces would contribute to their cultural survival.

In order to gain a better understanding of the current situation of the Franco-Ontarian community, an overview of its recent history is indispensable. This will be followed by a summary of the theoretical context within which this thesis rests, and the methodology for addressing the central research question.

1.1 Franco-Ontarian history

Traditionally, French Canadians have had two primary institutions on which to base their social and cultural development: the family and the Church (Bélanger, 1998).

The family has been considered to be the fundamental social group, into which an individual is born and from which he or she acquires values, inculcates culture and develops perspective on the surrounding world. The 21st century has seen the structure of the average Canadian family unit change dramatically. The 2006 Census shows developments in marital status, common-law status, households and living arrangements. For example, couples are having fewer children, divorce rates have risen, and single-parenthood has become much more frequent and socially acceptable than it has been in the past. In addition, Canada's widely diverse population has resulted in a rise of interracial and inter-ethnic marriages (Statistics Canada, 2007), indicating that family values are changing as well. Considering

each of these sociological factors affecting families, the presence of identity-building institutions beyond the family unit seems all the more necessary.

The French-Canadian household has been greatly impacted by the current flow of changes in family structure and values, but also by the changing role of the Church. Not only were French-speaking Canadians once bound by language and territory, they were also bound by faith, which played an important part in setting moral standards and transmitting values. Historically, the Catholic Church has been the social institution that has exercised the most influence on Francophones, serving to keep this community together (Choquette, 1980b). After all, the words “French” and “Catholic” have been almost synonymous since even before the French arrived in the New World. In the French-Canadian society, the Church has been the fundamental reason that Francophones have gathered and developed a community distinct from other Canadians. The Church’s decline, which became especially noticeable in the 1960s (Bélanger, 1998), has impacted the French-Canadian lifestyle by removing attending mass as part of the family’s conventional weekly routine, thereby discouraging this regular social meeting among Francophones.

Francophones from across Canada not only had to deal with the fact that ancestry and religion were having a lesser cultural impact on the population, but also with the fluctuating social climate of the time in the province of Québec.

The story of the francophone culture specific to Ontarians began, oddly enough, in the province of Québec. Maurice Duplessis’ repressive, church-oriented conservative regime from 1944 to 1959 set the stage for the Quiet Revolution in Québec, an era of great political and social change (Choquette, 1980b, p. 201). When Liberal Jean Lesage was elected in 1960, Québec’s economy was opened to the world but especially to English-speaking

Canada, which began to dominate the Québécois market. The Roman Catholic Church, which, until then, had reigned over the population, now began to play a lesser role as the government started to take charge of public life (Bélanger, 1998). During this period, a sovereignty movement started to emerge. The *Ralliement national* political party merged with the *Mouvement Souveraineté-Association* to form the *Parti Québécois* in 1968, advocating statehood for Québec independent from Canada. The *Rassemblement pour l'indépendance nationale* disbanded in favour of supporting the new *Parti Québécois*. The Québécois population was pulling away from Canada, leaving their French-speaking kin in the other provinces to fend for themselves (Bernard, 1988).

Consequently, the 1960s was an era of change for Francophones outside of Québec. The term “*Canadien français*” was gradually being replaced with other expressions: *Québécois*, *Franco-Ontariens*, *Franco-Manitobains*, *Fransaskois*, and so on. These Francophones had to redefine themselves now that the concept of a national French-Canadian identity was dissolving into a thing of the past (Bernard, 1988). Distinct cultural communities were created, defined not only by the territory in which they reside as the Québécois have, but also by their specific socio-linguistic realities. Franco-Ontarians especially, who could no longer identify with Québécois values because of this paradigm shift, now had to rely on their own traditions and institutions to ensure their cultural development.

Of course, in the early 20th century Franco-Ontarian institutions other than the Church and the family household did exist. Some schools gave instruction in French, various associations and federations were founded (such as the *Association canadienne-française d'éducation d'Ontario* in 1910, and the *Association de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne* in

1949), and later in the century there were a few French-language radio and television stations across the province, all with the specific mandate of preserving the French-Canadian language and way of life outside of the province of Québec (Bouchard, 1997). Following the Quiet Revolution, however, the need to create more Franco-Ontarian public spaces was being noticed in even the most isolated regions of the province (Choquette, 1980b). The need for Francophone-friendly public policy was also perceived. Numerous reports (e.g. Bériault Report, 1968; Hall-Dennis Report, 1968; Saint-Denis Report, 1969; Symons Report, 1972; Kipp Report, 1982; Bourdeau Report, 1991) have demonstrated this fact, especially in the field of education. Appropriate legislation ensued at both the provincial and federal levels to protect the French language (i.e. Laws 140 and 141 in Ontario, 1968; Canada's Official Languages Act, 1969; Ontario's French Language Services Act, 1986). As a result, the legitimacy of French was confirmed (although not yet to the point of declaring Ontario as an officially bilingual province) and Franco-Ontarians' rights to services and education in their language were gradually being recognized.

Franco-Ontarians have embraced their newly emphasized cultural-minority status by persistently creating environments in which they could grow as a community. They have toiled to establish a network of Franco-Ontarian public spaces touching all aspects of community life, including education, services, associations and the arts.

The quintessential example of an established Franco-Ontarian institution is *La Nouvelle Scène*, the Ottawa-Carleton francophone theatre centre. *La Nouvelle Scène* is a non-profit corporation founded in 1999 by four local theatre companies that offers a 152-seat auditorium for theatrical and musical presentations, a large bistro and lounge area for artistic exhibitions and gatherings, as well as office space for theatre companies and other

organizations working in the arts. Ideal because of its location in the city of Ottawa, the city with the highest number of Franco-Ontarian citizens (out of 488 815 Francophones in Ontario, 139 205 live in the Ottawa region [Statistics Canada, 2007]), and because of its mandate of promoting francophone culture, *La Nouvelle Scène* is the subject of this study of Franco-Ontarian public spaces.

1.2 Theoretical location

Institutions act as places of public debate where, as Habermas (1984) explains, individuals gather to participate in open discussions on issues of public concern. This public sphere, based on democratic principles, is an area of mediation between the State and its citizens (Holub, 1991). The overall importance of these public spaces is that they offer an environment for people of the same sociolinguistic background to gather, to communicate their beliefs and values, to differentiate themselves from other cultural groups and, thus, to further define their cultural identity.

This study is mainly based on the concept of institutional completeness, developed by sociologist Raymond Breton, which suggests that the strength and vitality of ethnic communities derives from the quality and the range of institutions available to them. A community's capacity to attract and integrate members depends on having a developed network of social organizations situated within their cultural boundaries (Breton, 1964).

The development of cultural identity happens through the repetition of common values and history through intra-cultural communication within the confines of what Barth (1969) refers to as "ethnic boundaries". These social boundaries differentiate the in-group (the ethnic or cultural group in question) from out-groups (all other ethnic or cultural groups

present in the environment). Such boundaries are defined by the presence of institutions segregating one ethnic or cultural group from the next. On the one hand, as Barth points out, these boundaries help members of a particular group interact with one another, creating shared values and an understanding of the past. On the other hand, boundaries, especially linguistic ones, allow people to easily recognize members of other groups, thereby hindering intercultural communication as this minimizes the amount of interaction among groups (Barth, 1969).

Each of the preceding concepts of public spaces, institutional completeness and ethnic boundaries will be further developed in the following chapter.

Franco-Ontarian sociologist Roger Bernard explains that social identity development in the Franco-Ontarian community and the presence of cultural institutions are closely related: "*L'ethnicité et la culture qui s'y rattache sont produites à la fois par des relations sociales et des institutions qui reproduisent d'une génération à l'autre les caractéristiques et les valeurs propres aux Franco-Ontariens*" (1988, p.16). The characteristics and values in question are those traditionally related to French-Canadian culture, including Catholicism, the French and Latin influence, and *la joie de vivre*, among other characteristics stated by Saint-Hilaire (2005), which tend to guide the behaviour and interactions of the population and define the very nature of their identity.

Franco-Ontarians choose to associate with these various institutions for a variety of reasons, either symbolic or practical (Savas, 1990a). Whatever their reasons, by actively participating in these public spaces, Franco-Ontarians are communicating their desire to belong to the community, to distinguish themselves from the majority, and to be recognized as part of a distinct cultural entity (Juteau & Séguin-Kimpton, 1993).

Given that a well-defined public space is vital to the development of the community (Johnson, 2006), given that the Franco-Ontarian community has endured hardships in maintaining these institutions in the past, and given that the Franco-Ontarian identity has evolved since the Quiet Revolution, this study aims to explore how Franco-Ontarians regard the value of institutions such as *La Nouvelle Scène*, as public spaces which affect the nature of Franco-Ontarian identity.

The potential contribution of this research is both theoretical and practical. First, this research is complementary of the already existing knowledge regarding the need for public spaces in cultural identity development, especially *vis-à-vis* minority groups. Second, the proposed study may be applied in the area of public policy, since obtaining provincial and federal funding for institutions such as *La Nouvelle Scène* can be quite challenging. The results of this study may facilitate the planning and management of theatre centres and its activities, and of similar institutions in francophone communities across the country.

1.3 Methodology

The design of this study consists of the following methods:

First, covert participant observation has served to collect information on the habits and behaviours of patrons of *La Nouvelle Scène* while they attend theatrical events and other types of events there.

Secondly, surveys were conducted with patrons of *La Nouvelle Scène*. The questions concerned their perception of what characterizes Franco-Ontarian identity, their motivations and expectations in associating with institutions such as *La Nouvelle Scène*, and the frequency with which they attend events held there. The respondents were also asked to describe their

community involvement, whether as volunteers, patrons, administrators or employees of other Franco-Ontarian initiatives, in order to allow the categorization of the respondents according to their civic involvement.

Afterwards, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the respondents of the survey who accepted to participate, including both regular patrons of *La Nouvelle Scène* and people having rarely visited the theatre centre with little motivation to return. The compilation of this data served to compare the different perceptions of *La Nouvelle Scène* within the Franco-Ontarian community in Ottawa, and to look into the institution's perceived responsibility as a public space and its effect on Franco-Ontarian identity.

1.4 Thesis overview

The next chapter of this thesis will highlight main elements from relevant literature on the topics of Franco-Ontarian identity, collective identity and public spaces, and will summarize their findings. It will also explore the history and the *raison d'être* of *La Nouvelle Scène*, by drawing upon the institution's own publications. Additionally, the description of the conceptual framework and the rationale for this research will be stated.

The third chapter will explain the research design and methodology used to accomplish this study. This will include a justification of both the methodological design and the choice of research tools employed.

The fourth chapter of this thesis will discuss the main findings of the surveys and interviews conducted with patrons of *La Nouvelle Scène*. The analysis will include an assessment of the respondents' perceptions of Franco-Ontarian identity and their motivations for attending Franco-Ontarian public spaces.

The final chapter will discuss the implications of the findings and review the contributions of the thesis, as well as provide an outline of the possibilities for further research relating to cultural institutions and ethnolinguistic identity.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

“In the Western world of the mid-nineteenth century, language became accepted as the most important single defining characteristic of nationality.” In 1962, N.C. Roy also wrote: “Wherever a separate language is found, there is also a separate nation which has the right to manage its affairs [...] and to rule itself” (Inglehart & Woodward, 1967, p.358). This statement briefly outlines the ambitions of the Franco-Ontarian community.

The following pages include a critical review of research literature on the topics of Franco-Ontarian identity, collective identity, public spaces, and specifically Franco-Ontarian public spaces. The historical context and mandate of *La Nouvelle Scène* as a quintessential Franco-Ontarian public space is then addressed, followed by the statement of conceptual framework and the research rationale.

2.1 Perspectives on Franco-Ontarian identity

Widespread use of the term “Franco-Ontarian” began during the French-Canadian semantic adjustments of the 1960s, in reaction to the Quiet Revolution in Québec. The expression, however, had appeared much earlier during the *Règlement XVII* school crisis, from 1912 to 1927, in which Francophones struggled to regain their right to teach in the French language in Ontario schools (Bock, 2004, p. 120). The expression is in itself a political statement, as Savard (1978) explains:

“[...] manifestant à la fois leur attachement à la culture et la langue canadienne-françaises, leur attachement à l’Ontario, et leur distance à l’endroit d’un Québec engagé dans une aventure politique bien différente de la leur, pour ne pas dire opposée” (p.13).

2.1.1 Definitions of Franco-Ontarian identity

It may be beneficial at this time to elaborate upon what exactly defines Franco-Ontarian identity. What once may have been described on the basis of purely objective factors has come over time to include subjective aspects in its definition.

The Saint-Denis Report of 1969 described a Franco-Ontarian as a person whose native language is French and who lives in Ontario, regardless of whether or not he or she was born in the province (Clavel, Grenier, Lecuyer, & Samson, 1984, p.50). The report suggests that immigration from francophone countries has been instrumental in the continuity of French culture in Ontario. Mostly apparent in Southern Ontario, the inclusion of francophone immigrants into the Franco-Ontarian community is vital to its survival, statistically speaking (Deslauriers, 1978, p.27), all the while contributing to the cultural diversification of the province's Francophonie (Gérin-Lajoie, 2004).

However, to suggest that identity depends solely on territorial and linguistic attributes prompts an array of debatable issues: Why do some Francophones living in Ontario not identify themselves as Franco-Ontarians? Can a French-speaking child with non-francophone parents consider himself Franco-Ontarian? How long must a francophone immigrant live in the province before being considered a Franco-Ontarian? Must there be an intention to stay in Ontario for a certain length of time? How fluent must one be in French? How far back in their ancestry must the *Francophonie* be present? Furthermore, is there such a thing as a "*pure-laine*" Franco-Ontarian – A Francophone of entirely Franco-Ontarian ancestry, born in rural Ontario? Would this person be more entitled to wave the Franco-Ontarian flag than anyone else? To answer this question we can turn to Roger Bernard (1988), who stated that one is not born Franco-Ontarian but becomes Franco-Ontarian over

time: *“Il faut dissocier ethnicité et hérédité. Pour paraphraser Simone de Beauvoir, je dirais: on ne naît pas Franco-Ontarien, on le devient”* (p.20). The fact is, there is more to the concept of identity than exclusively linguistic and territorial characteristics. Identity implies a belief and at least a certain degree of allegiance towards the ethnic or cultural group.

As stated in Appadurai's concept of transnationalism (1996), people living in this era of globalization have loyalties that transcend the nation-state. This is particularly true for minorities and migrant groups. As he suggests, belonging to a particular cultural group does not rest mainly on the possession of certain linguistic or territorial attributes, but also on the consciousness of these attributes and on the belief that these are essential aspects of one's identity. Following Appadurai's logic, Bernard (1988) argues that a person living in Ontario and who speaks French is not necessarily a Franco-Ontarian. Culture represents more than a simple language or territory, but a belief that these characteristics are an important part of one's identity.

Cuche (2004) emphasizes the necessary blend of objective factors and subjectivity in cultural identification, all the while insisting that identity must necessarily be founded upon measurable circumstances such as citizenship and ancestry:

“Pour un ‘subjectiviste’, l’identité ethno-culturelle n’est rien d’autre qu’un sentiment d’appartenance ou une identification à une collectivité plus ou moins imaginaire [...] Mais le point de vue subjectiviste poussé à l’extrême aboutit à réduire l’identité à une question de choix individuel arbitraire, chacun étant libre de ses identifications” (p. 85).

The perspectives of Franco-Ontarian adolescents confirm the existence of subjective elements in the definition of identity. Dallaire (2004) had the opportunity to speak to

francophone teenagers about their views on identity. Although the respondents were in a somewhat biased situation (being interviewed while participating in *Les Jeux franco-ontariens*, an annual activity for Franco-Ontarian youth), the opinions of the teenaged generation matter largely because of their understanding of the evolving Franco-Ontarian context in which they were raised. According to the surveyed participants, Franco-Ontarian identity depends foremost on each individual's acceptance of this identity, as well as on their willingness to speak French, to show interest and to become involved in the Franco-Ontarian cause (p. 135).

An active, voluntary involvement in the community and its institutions is, then, a manifestation of a sense of belonging and an expression of a desire to contribute to the community's growth and prosperity, according to Cuche (2004) and Dallaire (2004). Additionally, Arnopoulos (1982b) argues, it is a demonstration of one's attempt to be distinguished from the surrounding communities and cultural groups. Arnopoulos has examined the inner conflict affecting Franco-Ontarians and other minority groups who routinely speak two languages and participate in two cultures. He asserts that:

“there is the exhilaration of searching for a cultural identity in opposition to the majority and the satisfaction of moving freely from one culture to the other. But there is also a feeling of powerlessness when they are denied the official recognition they feel they deserve” (1982b, p. 8).

Indeed, one cannot ignore the influence of the dominating anglophone culture in Ontario. Increasingly, Franco-Ontarians (adolescents in particular) regard themselves as being bilingual rather than francophone (Boissonneault, 1996; Gérin-Lajoie, 2004), which illustrates the alarming trend of acculturation and cultural assimilation.

2.1.2 The threat of acculturation

Acculturation is the minority group's subtle adoption of the values, traditions and behaviours of the majority, which results from the former's continuous immersion in the latter's environment whether it be through the workplace, the neighbourhood or the media, for example (Clavel et al., 1984, p. 27). Of course, acculturation in Ontario is not only brought upon by the influence of the Anglo-Saxon majority, but also by the evolving sociological circumstances surrounding urbanization, immigration and industrialization (Bock, 2004; Castonguay, 2002). Assimilation is the end result of acculturation, as Paul Ricoeur explains:

“The problem is this: mankind as a whole is on the brink of a single world civilization representing at once a gigantic progress for everyone and an overwhelming task of survival and adapting our cultural heritage to this new setting. To some extent, and in varying ways, everyone experiences the tension between the necessity for the free access to progress and, on the other hand, the exigency of safeguarding our heritage” (1965, p. 271).

This thesis is based on the assumption that protecting the French language and ensuring the survival of the Franco-Ontarian community is important, as most researchers of this field assume themselves. It is essential for minority groups to avoid the cultural melting pot of the dominant society and to maintain their community's distinctiveness in order to build strong ties amongst each other, which as Luque (2002) mentions, “*l'identité communautaire [...] souligne la cohésion et la solidarité entre les membres*” (p. 65). Furthermore, the survival of the francophone community is historically significant in the context of Canadian heritage and linguistic duality, and contributes to the country's unique culture as a whole (West, 2002).

Schöpflin (2000) has addressed the issue of cultural assimilation, and suggests that, in exchange for citizenship and access to a high standard of living, the minority population would give up its linguistic and social identities and take on the cultural identity of the majority. The question, in this case, is why would the Franco-Ontarian community be willing to sacrifice their cultural identity when they are already entitled to full citizenship?

In 1969, Comeau devised an instrument that, he argued, could measure the degree of acculturation of Franco-Ontarians based on their educational background and their customary use of language. The results indicated that over 43% of the school children who had participated in the study showed signs of acculturation (such as their preferred choice of language used in daily situations) to a degree which varied remarkably among different regions of the province (p. 167). A similar trend of acculturation carries on to this day (Boissonneault, 1996).

Acculturation, especially through media, not only affects the propensities and linguistic abilities of Franco-Ontarians, but also alters their perceptions of themselves: *“Soumis au feu nourri de la propagande des médias qui vantent sous toutes ses formes les modèles culturels anglo-canadiens ou américains, il [le Franco-Ontarien] finit par adopter les stéréotypes des autres sur son propre groupe ethno-culturel”* (Clavel et al., 1984, p. 43). Mass media reminds Francophones of their statistical inferiority, of their insignificant contribution to the province’s economy (Savard, 1978, p. 15) and of the complications surrounding their cultural survival, which, beyond imparting Francophones with a negative self-image, further coaxes them into the process of acculturation.

How can Franco-Ontarians protect themselves from acculturation and eventual Anglo-Saxon assimilation? Institutions, networks and associations – founded and managed

by Francophones – have proven effective in downplaying the effects of acculturation (Bernard, 1986; Gervais, 1986) by providing spaces for the minority culture to thrive and preserve its collective memory (Charron, 1997). This illustrates the need for francophone infrastructure to allow Franco-Ontarians to access services and entertainment while avoiding the threat of acculturation.

Can institutions prevent acculturation altogether, or can they only delay its onset? *La Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada* postulates that acculturation will only be avoided once Francophones have access to every possible service and resource in their native language, from pre-schooling to care for the elderly, giving them the opportunity to live in French, “24 heures sur 24!” (Radio-Canada & FCFA, 2007).

2.2 Theories on collective identity

In order to develop a better understanding of the notion of collective identity, it is important to understand the logic of social representation and social identity. Moscovici (1972; 1979) has theorized that perceived reality is based on nothing more than social representations: things and events that are socially accepted as reality based on conventional wisdom. By applying this theory to the concept of identity, one can deduce that collective identity exists only if it is socially recognized as such (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Triandafyllidou, 1998). Some type of infrastructure is necessary to ensure this public recognition, which illustrates the need for public spaces within ethnic communities.

2.2.1 Public spaces in collective identity development

It seems advisable to offer a workable definition of the concept of public spaces and its effects on collective identity in order to better recognize the role that institutions play in identity development.

Based on Habermas's abstraction of public spaces, Holub highlights some of the more generic qualities of the public sphere:

“What attracted Habermas to the notion of a public sphere then and now is its potential as a foundation for a critique of society based on democratic principles. The public sphere is a realm in which individuals gather to participate in open discussions. Potentially everyone has access to it; no one enters into discourse in the public sphere with an advantage over another” (1991, p. 3).

Whereas Kant considered public debate as the mandate of philosophers rather than of common folk, Habermas insisted on equality and true accessibility as being indispensable to achieve open and rational discourse, “free from both domination and linguistic pathology, and oriented towards intersubjective understanding and consensus” (Holub, 1991, p. 8). The public sphere promises democratic participation while mediating between private interests and public power (Crossley & Roberts, 2004; Edgar, 2006; Laplante, 2002a).

The physical public sphere has suffered a noticeable decline during the course of the last century, mainly caused by the state's intervention into private affairs and civil society's participation in the state organization. “Since the rise of the public sphere depended on a clear separation between the private realm and public power, their mutual interpenetration inevitably destroys it” (Holub, 1991, p. 6). Bernard Miège (2004) seems to agree with this statement, adding that over time, the public sphere has become less politically motivated and has become more concerned with societal issues (p.141).

Of course, the rise of the Internet has presented the possibility of opening a new form of public sphere for technologically developed societies. Highly participatory, this new technology has greatly facilitated access to information and the exchange of knowledge among individuals of all linguistic and educational backgrounds (Miège, 2004). However, in regards to identity development within the public sphere, the vastness of the online community and its lack of boundaries may prevent members of a minority cultural community from connecting with one another in favour of participating in the dominating web culture which, as Vallee and Shulman (1969) would argue, because of its stronger presence has more social power than the minority group. This may actually accelerate the acculturation process. Furthermore, the development of identity has much to do with physical human contact which personifies social identity (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003; Luque, 2002), which is not available in the web's public sphere. This is why the Internet as a public space was not included in this study.

The public sphere could not exist without public institutions to manage and maintain it. On this issue, Calhoun (1992) has investigated the social conditions necessary to ensure civic participation in the debate about public issues, conditions that include the development of social institutions (the press, church, school, etc.). This, according to Habermas, is a necessary first step in the resuscitation of public spaces in contemporary society.

Padovani (2002) discusses the requirement of participation within public spaces for the development of shared identity among the public, by commenting on the work of Aufderheide (2000):

“From Habermas, [Aufderheide] derives the idea that the public needs its own space to exist. If there is no space where people can discuss issues of common concern (in a ‘meaningful way’, as Aufderheide puts it), there can be

no public. No space for meaningful communication, no public, no informed citizenry. Nevertheless, having the space in and of itself is of little relevance if such space is not actively used as an ‘arm of community self-structuring’ ” (Padovani, 2002, p. 54).

Although concerned with physical spaces rather than conceptual ones, the architectural perspective offers another point of view on effective public spaces, with similar arguments (Lofland, 1998; Low & Lawrence- Zúñiga, 2003; & Valentine, 2001). Urban designers Carr, Francis, Rivlin and Stone (1992) see public spaces as the common ground that binds a community. They propose that a “good public space should be supportive, democratic, and meaningful” (p. xi). Sociologists Morrill, Snow and White (2005) describe effective public spaces as having become “imbued with particular meaning and practices” (p. 13) which are particularly valued by members of the community.

No matter the discipline from which we study them, public spaces allow members of a community to gather, to openly communicate and construct their collective memory, and to distinguish themselves from other communities – key elements in the development of the community’s collective identity.

2.2.2 Ethnic boundaries

Theoreticians agree that identity is a social construct which is derived from a community’s contacts with other groups (Barth, 1969; Calhoun, 1994; Cuche, 2004; & Luque 2002). In other words, a group has no existence (or social identity) other than in its relation to other groups. As Tajfel (1982) indicates, the characteristics of a group only become significant when in relation to differences from other groups, hence the importance of comparative out-groups when studying collective identity.

Schöpflin has addressed the issue of collective identity by stating that it all starts with cultural reproduction, which “establishes the means by which communities seek to keep themselves in being” (2000, p. 15). Ricoeur (1990; 2004) and Venema (2000) explain that human beings acquire narrative identity through their understanding of past personal and collective experiences. The construction of collective identity is dependent upon the repetition of these experiences over time among members of a shared identity, as Luque (2002) suggests:

“Outre l’espace, le temps est aussi important dans le processus d’identification. Le passé aide à comprendre et à interpréter le présent et à projeter le futur. Or la réalité de ce processus est remise en cause par le fait que le passé se scinde en passé individuel (mémoire individuelle) et en passé collectif (histoire)” (p. 61).

Luque adds that boundaries play a most important role: *“L’identité est une construction élaborée par rapport aux limites ou frontières entre les groupes qui entrent en contact. En ce sens, il s’agit d’une manifestation relationnelle d’interactions”* (2002, p.63).

According to the works of Frederik Barth (1969), the process of identity development or “identification” is dependent upon the adeptness of the ethnic group at demarcating itself from other groups. The group must establish symbolic, social boundaries which result from a compromise between the boundaries they lay claim to and the ones which the outside groups agree to allocate to them (Cuche, 2004, p. 94). These boundaries are contingent primarily on the willingness of the group to differentiate itself from the rest and on its use of select cultural traits as insignia of its identity. In Barth’s (1969) opinion, to study ethnicity, defined as the end result of the process of identification, one must avoid analyzing these cultural traits uniquely, but rather must inspect the procedures that ethnic groups utilize to build and

readjust these ethnic boundaries, all the while reaffirming their identity. Of course, these are imagined boundaries, as actual territory can often be shared by many parties.

Benedict Anderson reaches a similar conclusion about ethnic boundaries in his thoughts on nationalism. He defines a nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (2006, p. 6). By “limited”, Anderson describes the community as having elastic boundaries, which implies the existence of other communities outside of these limits, and that such limits can morph in response to a varying context.

2.2.3 Institutions as public spaces

The expression “social enclosure” is employed by Breton, Reitz & Valentine (1980) to refer to the existence of separate, sometimes parallel networks and institutions segmenting communities, defining ethnic boundaries. These parallel institutions are not necessarily culturally distinct from one another:

“[...] rather, [the structure of these parallel institutions] is a statement about the locus of the institutional authority and clientele. [...] That is not to say that cultural differences are irrelevant. Indeed, to the extent that they exist, they support and sometimes accentuate the social and institutional segmentation” (p. 140).

While ethnic boundaries provide the framework for members of a community to interact with each other and to depend on their own institutions, they tend to minimize movement between different communities. Nevertheless, Barth states that the existence of ethnic boundaries does not prevent interaction and mobility between ethnic groups, but rather regulates such

exchanges in a way to preserve each group's concept of identity (1969, p. 10), and allow each to maintain its distinctiveness.

Raymond Breton (1964; 1985`1990) and his colleagues (Breton, Reitz, & Valentine, 1980) have studied the ability of ethnic communities to attract members into its social boundaries. He argues that this ability is largely dependent upon many factors, but especially on the community's institutional completeness, that is to say the extent of the variety of institutions, services and resources available within the ethnic community. Hypothetically, as Breton (1964) argues, the highest degree of institutional completeness would be attained when every service required by the ethnic community (education, work, food, clothing, medical care, social assistance, media, etc.) would be available within its social boundaries (p. 194).

Breton's 1964 study pertained to the experiences of immigrants, but the results seem to be applicable to native ethnic communities. He argues that: "the presence of formal organizations in the ethnic community sets out forces that have the effect of keeping immigrants within its boundaries" (p. 196). Thus, institutions minimize out-group contacts. According to Breton's study, members of highly institutionalized communities (those that have a wide range of institutions within the community's boundaries) tend to have most of their personal relations within their ethnic group, whereas members of poorly institutionalized communities have the majority of their personal relations outside of their ethnic groups.

Interestingly enough, Breton's research demonstrates that the presence of institutions in a community is related to higher in-group relations even among the members who do not frequent these institutions. For example, members of an ethnic community with many

churches have more in-group relations than communities with few churches, regardless of whether or not these members actually attend church. The same applies to media. Breton has measured higher in-group relations in members of communities with many ethnic publications, even among non-readers (1964, p. 198). This implies that ethnic institutions serve a purpose other than the actual services they were meant to provide; their very presence within the ethnic community's boundaries cultivates strong ties between its members, irrespective of the individual members' attendance in the institutions' activities.

This situation is largely due to the leadership demonstrated by the exceptionally active members of the ethnic community, which Breton and his colleagues label the elites (Breton, Reitz, & Valentine, 1980, p. 284). These decidedly motivated individuals, diligently participant in the community's institutions, "nourish the national sentiment of non-participants and include them among their associates" (Breton, 1964, p.199). Breton et al. as well as Dennie (1978) suggest that the elite of ethnic communities, who highly value their nationality and often whose careers are dependent upon leading their people against the majority group, act as social entrepreneurs by becoming actively engaged in their community's survival. They create organizations and associations which aim to kindle public interest in the life of the group in an attempt to retain and enlarge the community's membership.

Additionally, Breton has authored studies specifically about the institutional completeness of francophone communities in Canada outside of Québec. He insists that the francophone community's survival depends not only on a strong institutional presence, but also on its efforts to foster economic development, which can empower francophone

minority groups, giving them the necessary expertise to create their own business opportunities and to compete in the larger society's affairs (1985, p. 88).

To summarize, the presence of institutions relating to all aspects of society (education, culture, welfare and employment) that gather Francophones of all ages and backgrounds within the minority group can counter-effect the forces of acculturation of the dominant society.

2.3 Franco-Ontarian public spaces

The fact that institutions play a vital role in the preservation of identity seems to be rarely contested. In recent decades, a number of academics have studied the capacity of institutions belonging to minority francophone groups in Canada to influence their collective identity. Many have attempted to assess the strength of francophone communities outside of Québec by looking at the group's network of institutions and individual participation within them (Bernard, 1986; Gérin-Lajoie, 2004; Gérin-Lajoie, 2005; Gilbert, 2002; Savas, 1990a; Sylvestre, 1984; Thériault, 2004; & Vallee & Shulman, 1969). The consensus seems to be that Franco-Ontarian communities having a high degree of institutional completeness and control (management) of their institutions are the most resistant to assimilation (Vallee & Shulman, 1969, p. 92).

2.3.1 Previous research on francophone institutions

The role of institutions in identity development has been investigated in many French-Canadian communities, from East to West (Moss, 2004; Savas, 1990b). Based on Breton's concept of institutional completeness (1964), Savas (1990b) has looked at the

ability of the francophone community of Manitoba (which is quite similar to the Franco-Ontarian community in regards to its history and socio-economic status [FCFA, 2004b]) to attract and integrate members, which (according to Breton's logic) depends on the existence of a developed network of social organizations within the community. Savas explains that institutions in such a network accomplish four fundamental tasks which, when performed effectively, can succeed in the integration of members:

1. They become the **favoured stage** for members of the community to participate in social activity and bonding, to the exclusion (in part or fully) of other, non-francophone institutions.
2. The social bonds created within institutions help to define **the geographic and symbolic boundaries** of the community.
3. They create a **space for debate** on issues pertaining to the community, further reinforcing the distinct identity of the group.
4. They provide **leadership** in attempting to increase and maintain the number of clients of the institution. (1990b, p. 7-9)

In addition to attracting and integrating members, Savas (1990b) explains that the vitality of a community depends on its ability to hold on to its members, which is contingent on the quality and functionality of the institutions. This has two main implications:

1. Members of the community will value their institutions if they feel that the services provided by them are sufficient:

“Plus les francophones croient pouvoir accomplir leurs divers tâches quotidiennes dans la communauté et plus ils croient pouvoir combler leurs divers besoins personnels (pratiques, psychologiques, spirituels) à travers des réseaux de contacts communautaires, plus ils valoriseront l’organisation sociale de la communauté” (1990b, p. 9).

2. A considerable proportion of the members of the community must participate in the various social aspects of the social organization, for the community to maintain its vitality.

Choquette (1980a; 1987) explains that Franco-Ontarians have long been very much unsatisfied by the lamentable state of their culture in the province. Artistic and cultural institutions are the foundations for the development of collective identity, and as long as these institutions are being neglected and under-utilized, Choquette fears that the Francophones of Ontario will never receive the recognition they strive to obtain.

Gervais (1986) enquires about the role that institutions can play in allowing minority groups to reach the same status as the majority group, a question which he feels is particularly relevant in regards to post-secondary education and health care for Franco-Ontarians (p.11). He questions the capacity of so-called “bilingual” institutions to demonstrate true equality in the distribution of services among each linguistic group. Likewise, Thériault (2004) has investigated a number of such institutions which, as he suggests, act to ensure a certain degree of continuity of the community’s cultural heritage in a practical setting: *“L’institutionnalisation est une sorte de concrétisation des propositions culturelles d’une société, visant à leur assurer une certaine permanence, tout en les transposant dans des formes applicables et appliquées”* (p. 6). Yet Thériault sees the francophone community of Ontario becoming denationalized over time – the structure of Franco-Ontarian institutions changing to better suit the market. According to him, institutions such as the University of Ottawa, historically the epicentre of the Franco-Ontarian elite, has been refashioned and branded into a bilingual institution, where the English language now dominates (2004, p. 12). In Thériault’s opinion, unilingual institutions

are absolutely necessary to ensure the survival of a linguistic group and avoid cultural assimilation.

An important amount of previous research on Franco-Ontarian institutions is focused on francophone schools and educational programs (Comité de travail des communautés ethnoculturelles francophones de l'Ontario sur l'éducation, 1998; Cormier, 2004; Duquette, 2004; Gérin-Lajoie, 2004; & Sylvestre, 1987). Franco-Ontarians have long fought for the management of their own schools and school boards, hoping to provide an ideal milieu to raise and educate francophone youth in a culturally appropriate environment. Yet, as Gérin-Lajoie (2004) and Cormier (2004) demonstrate, Franco-Ontarian schools have not become the cultural havens that their supporters had hoped. A significant number of students from outside the Franco-Ontarian and French-Canadian communities are being admitted to these schools, due largely to immigration from French-speaking countries and to the desire of English-speaking parents to enrol their children in francophone schools. In this case, the multicultural environment of Franco-Ontarians schools may be facilitating cultural assimilation rather than preventing it (Rex, 1996; Ruble, Alvarez, Bachman, Cameron, Garcia Coll, et al., 2004).

2.3.2 Challenges arising from parallel institutions

A variety of sociological dilemmas become evident in the debate on Franco-Ontarian institutions. Perhaps the construction of these ethnic boundaries reflects what we could consider the “garrison mentality” of Franco-Ontarians, who feel the need to build metaphorical walls against the outside world, fearing the oppressiveness of the dominating group.

Institutions tend to compartmentalize the domains of public life in which people feel they can use certain languages (Arnopolous, 1982a, p.138). Among Francophones in Ontario, the use of French is most often encouraged at home, at school, and during extra-curricular and community activities. Yet elsewhere in the community, in the street and even in school hallways, the use of English among Francophones is predominant (Arnopoulos, 1982a; Berger, 1995; Boissonneault, 2004; & Gauthier, 1993). This is mostly an indicator of the habits of Franco-Ontarians in a multicultural and multilingual context, not of the language's inferior status, according to Arnopolous: "*On parle anglais non pas à cause de sa supériorité sur le français, mais parce que l'on mène des vies compartimentées où certains domaines sont anglais et d'autres français*" (1982a, p. 139).

The federal government adopted, in 1969, *La Loi sur les langues officielles*, followed by *La Loi 8*, adopted in Ontario in 1986, which both acknowledged the rights of Francophones and promised access to government services in French. Regrettably, the official legal recognition of the rights of Francophones in Ontario has endorsed their minority status which, as some would argue (Arnopolous, 1982a; Choquette, 1980b), has developed a sentiment of inferiority. Particularly distinguishable among Franco-Ontarian youth, the apprehension of marginalization drives them towards "bilingualization" and cultural assimilation (Arnopolous, 1982a, p. 139).

Researchers and historians agree (Breton, Reitz, & Valentine, 1980; Gervais, 1986; & Statistics Canada, 2007) that Francophones in Canada are at a disadvantage in terms of average income, levels of education, and political influence. They have long been deprived of the ownership and management of their affairs and economic development (FCFA, 2004a). Community organizations which erect ethnic boundaries in the form of institutions

in order to inhibit cultural assimilation makes access to important economic, political and social resources of the greater society particularly difficult for members of a minority group, thereby perpetuating the minority group's disadvantaged state (Breton, 1985, p.79).

Furthermore, Vallee and Shulman (1969) explain that by investing most of the minority community's resources and energy into maintaining these boundaries and limiting their members' mobility for the sake of preserving their identity, few resources remain to facilitate their members' integration into the outside society's affairs and opportunities. This, again, prevents the community from overcoming its socio-economic disparities. The greatest challenge for a cultural minority group to overcome, according to Gervais (1986), is to reconcile their will to maintain their distinctiveness with their capacity to integrate with the rest of society (p. 10).

From another perspective, as Graham Fraser (2006) explains, establishing unilingual institutions (such as schools and other non-governmental institutions) rather than bilingual ones discourages the bilingualization of English-Canadians, thereby dissolving the utopian vision of a bilingual Canada. Parallel institutional networks affect the integration between the two groups, which leads one to question whether the country is truly characterized by a bicultural/bilingual nature, or whether it is primarily anglophone "with a francophone appendage" (Breton, Reitz, & Valentine, 1980, p.247).

Bernard's view on bilingualism is that it is not an end in itself as once imagined, but rather has become the means by which the country's two main linguistic groups tackle the issue of linguistic rights. Bilingualism as social policy, which was meant to establish equilibrium between the country's two founding nations, "*fait partie aujourd'hui des*

stratégies et des pratiques pour maintenir les positions individuelles et pour consolider les positions des groupes les uns par rapport aux autres” (1986, p.41).

2.3.3 Franco-Ontarian theatre

This literature review would not be complete without a brief summary of previous research that has been published on the topic of Franco-Ontarian theatre. According to the Saint-Denis report of 1969, theatre has traditionally been the favoured Franco-Ontarian art form. Considering the current variety of Franco-Ontarian institutions related to theatre, some have argued (e.g. Bertrand, 2004; Chevrier, 2001; & Fréreau, 1985) that this is still true today.

Of course, long before theatre became an important means of expression for Franco-Ontarians, ethnic theatre was omnipresent in Canada, particularly where large immigrant communities were settled. In metropolitan areas, one could find Yiddish theatre groups, as well as Ukrainian, Italian, Hungarian, German, and Lithuanian, among others (Curtis, Gupta & Straw, 2001, p. 19). A recurring theme in many of their productions concerned the strained relations between the ethnic group and the dominant group (p. 23). As Curtis et al. have remarked, the bulk of Canadian studies on the performing arts has been conducted by members of the artistic community themselves (2001, p. 22), and provides much insight into each of these ethnic communities.

Of the previous research concerning Franco-Ontarian art and theatre specifically, some refer to theatrical establishments and organizations (e.g. Bureau, 1989; Farmer, 1996; & Fréreau, 1985), while most deal with the very content of theatrical productions (e.g. Bertrand, 2004; Chevrier, 2001). Overall, many authors feel that the performing arts have a

unique responsibility towards minority groups trying to assert their identity: “*D’ailleurs, il n’est pas nouveau de constater le rôle essentiel de l’art et de la culture dans la création de nouvelles identités qui cherchent tôt ou tard à s’exprimer dans l’affirmation et la quête de soi des groupes minoritaires*” (Frégeau, 1985, p. 8). Unfortunately, the study of theatre and the performing arts is complicated by the fact that only a fraction of Franco-Ontarians are active consumers of the Arts. Curtis et al. (2001) have observed: “[...] *le théâtre ne joue pas un rôle central dans la vie de la plupart des Canadiens ‘ordinaires’ et [...] préoccupe pour une large part l’élite intellectuelle ou artistique*” (p. 26). Patrons of theatrical institutions are rarely representative of the community as a whole.

In 1985, Frégeau examined the historical context which led to the foundation of artistic and cultural establishments and generated Franco-Ontarian theatrical productions, by studying what are arguably the three most important government reports on Franco-Ontarian culture (Saint-Denis, 1969; Beaulne, 1971; & Savard, 1977) – each of which concluded that financial resources and infrastructure were lacking to properly support Franco-Ontarian cultural initiatives. Frégeau described how the main stakeholders (organizations, governmental and non-governmental) have prompted the evolution of theatrical infrastructure (e.g. francophone theatre companies and festivals) in each region of the province over time.

Bertrand (2004) has studied the evolution of Franco-Ontarian theatre with particular emphasis on what members of the Franco-Ontarian community refer to as “*le théâtre identitaire*” – that is to say, plays which illustrate either the history or the current realities of francophone life in Ontario, – which corresponds to the very first Franco-Ontarian theatre center’s original mandate when Sudbury’s *Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario* was founded in 1971

(2004, p.157). Since then, most Franco-Ontarian theatre companies have produced plays which fall into this category. Francophones can recognize familiar themes and issues about the harshness of life for Francophones in Northern Ontario in plays such as *Moé, j'veiens du Nord, s'tie* (1971), *Lavalléville* (1975), *La parole et la loi* (1980) and *Le Chien* (1988), to name a few. According to Bertrand, “*faire du théâtre en français en Ontario, peu importe la forme et les moyens employés, constitue un geste identitaire*” (2004, p.160). Franco-Ontarian literature, cinema and television production do likewise.

Juteau and Séguin-Kimpton most eloquently describe the rise of identity-themed productions, which transforms elements of Franco-Ontarian lifestyle into artistic displays of Franco-Ontarian values, adding to the community's collective memory:

“L'émergence d'une vie culturelle et artistique axée principalement sur la spécificité franco-ontarienne témoigne des transformations profondes que subit la collectivité. À travers leurs productions respectives, écrivains, artistes, dramaturges, chansonniers, cinéastes captent le vécu franco-ontarien et le traduisent sous une forme propice à son rayonnement. Ces divers acteurs sociaux font de leur art un moyen de communication avec la collectivité, un outil d'intervention sociale qui actualise les nouvelles dimensions de la réalité franco-ontarienne” (1993, p. 274).

Similarly, O'Neill-Karch, who has analyzed in detail spatial representations in a selection of plays from the Franco-Ontarian repertoire, suggests that “*le théâtre identitaire*” has allowed the Franco-Ontarian community to proceed from a “borrowed” culture – in which cultural content is purloined or translated from Québec or from English Canada, – to its own, original culture (1992, p. 17). It has allowed the community not only to preserve its language but to preserve its past (Chevrier, 2001, p. 8), by imprinting the public with elements of its collective memory. Having succeeded in their mission to create their own cultural content by

overcoming the barriers of the province's anglophone majority and of the abundance of québécois literature, Chevrier anticipates the awakening of a collective cultural conscience within the community (2001, p. 3).

Having studied the narratives in a sample of Franco-Ontarian plays, Chevrier (2001) suggests that playwright André Paiement, among others, has contributed to the construction of Franco-Ontarian identity by having composed plays that reflect, in their own language, the traditions and realities of Franco-Ontarian society. In fact, many Canadian theatrical studies include textual analyses of the plays in question, with the assumption that the scripts of these plays are significant in understanding the impact of theatre on Canadian society and identity. This phenomenon, again, extends beyond theatre to all forms of art and media. For example, Matte (2007) has investigated the impact of the Franco-Ontarian television series *FranCoeur* (2003-2006), suggesting that identity-themed content contributes to an ongoing debate within the community, and encourages the collective contemplation of the community's situation and history.

That being said, there is a remarkable difference between the study of cultural content and the study of cultural infrastructure. It is interesting to speculate on which of the two has the most lasting effect on collective identity development: the content of the plays and other elements of the performing arts, or the very institutions that provide the venues for such performances.

It is my hypothesis that identity development is not so much dependent upon the substance of an institution's activities as it is on the very presence of the institution, on the understanding of the stakes related to its existence, and on the perceived sense of urgency surrounding the community's cultural preservation. Besides fuelling the debate on the

foundations of identity, identity-themed cultural content does not in itself favour an individual's strong identification with the community. An institution that allows for the gathering of like-minds, on the other hand, provides the milieu for this debate and increases the possibilities for individuals to attach subjective meaning to their community (Bernard, 1988).

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the value of institutions themselves (as opposed to the cultural programming held within these institutions) in regards to collective identity development. The main focus will be not on the content of the performances, productions or publications of *La Nouvelle Scène*, but rather on the public space this institution represents.

2.4 La Nouvelle Scène

For reasons specified in the introduction of this thesis, the object of this study is Ottawa's French-language theatre centre *La Nouvelle Scène*. Of course, a variety of other Franco-Ontarian institutions could have proved just as interesting to explore, such as the Montfort Hospital, which is the only French-language teaching hospital in the province; the University of Ottawa, with its historic mandate of preserving Franco-Ontarian culture; Le Droit or TFO, the prototypical Franco-Ontarian media; or the francophone colleges, Collège Boréal and La Cité Collégiale, to name a few examples.

La Nouvelle Scène was chosen as the object of this study because of its strictly cultural mandate. Patrons of this institution do not primarily associate with *La Nouvelle Scène* for reasons other than for their recreation and appreciation of artistic expression, whereas francophone students of the University of Ottawa, of the Collège Boréal and of La

Cité Collégiale, patients of Montfort, and the readership and viewers of Franco-Ontarian media, engage in each of these other institutions for mostly practical reasons – in order to obtain a necessary service (Baker, 2001). People have more personal motivations for visiting artistic institutions such as *La Nouvelle Scène* (ATFC, 2004; Savas, 1990b), which makes it a most interesting object of study.

In order to gain a better understanding of the current situation and challenges facing the Franco-Ontarian institution in question, as well as to explore the historical, institutional and legal frameworks in which it operates, the following is a brief review of the mandate and initiatives of *La Nouvelle Scène*, accomplished mainly by the analysis of *La Nouvelle Scène*'s institutional documents including its statutes, its annual report, its press review and the contents of its website.

According to its statutes, ratified at the first Annual General Assembly on June 10th 1997, the mandate of the *Centre de théâtre francophone d'Ottawa-Carleton* (*La Nouvelle Scène* being its commercial name) is to provide a gathering place for artists and members of the community and to promote francophone culture. Specifically, its objectives include the following:

- 1) *aménager et faire fonctionner un centre de création et de présentation de spectacles de théâtre et des autres arts de la scène;*
- 2) *mettre ce centre à la disposition des artistes et de l'ensemble de la communauté aux meilleures conditions possibles;*
- 3) *favoriser l'éclosion d'une expression artistique en français. Favoriser la diffusion de produits artistiques dans la région d'Ottawa-Carleton, en Ontario, au Canada et ailleurs;*
- 4) *éduquer et sensibiliser les Canadiennes et les Canadiens aux arts de la scène;*

- 5) *offrir à la communauté de la région d'Ottawa-Carleton et d'ailleurs une saison artistique de qualité;*
- 6) *servir de lieu de représentation aux compagnies résidentes ainsi qu'aux artistes et compagnies poursuivant une démarche de création artistique.* (Centre de théâtre francophone d'Ottawa-Carleton inc., 1997)

The renovations of the building on King-Edward Avenue, which was to become La Nouvelle Scène, began in 1998. Jacqueline Pelletier, the President of the administrative board at that time, describes the fulfillment of this construction project as a landmark for future Franco-Ontarian generations:

“Ce que je veux, c'est que les jeunes rêvent de devenir comédiens, éclairagistes, designers de costumes et qu'ils puissent rêver de faire ça ici, chez eux. C'est un énorme défi, mais la communauté franco-ontarienne a atteint une maturité telle que les arts et la culture ont leur place à côté de toutes nos autres institutions” (Barrière, 1998).

The four founding theatre companies, all based in Ottawa, are *Compagnie Vox Théâtre*, *Théâtre de la Vieille 17*, *Théâtre du Trillium*, and *Théâtre la Catapulte*. They each converge and produce their performances in the space offered by *La Nouvelle Scène*. National recognition and numerous awards have been bestowed upon many of the stagings and artists of these founding companies (La Nouvelle Scène, 2007b), which in turn, have allowed for greater visibility of the theatre centre itself.

The institution is managed by an executive committee and administrative board, composed of representatives of the member theatre companies, members of the larger artistic community, as well as members of the local business community. The current and past lists of board members include the names of distinguished members of the Franco-Ontarian

community, including entrepreneurs, academics, artists and educators, some of whom have been recognized for their leadership (such as the current president, who has been awarded the *Ordre de la Pléiade* in 2004 by the Canadian Branch of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie*, to name one example). These people are part of the Franco-Ontarian elite of educated community leaders, and their involvement with *La Nouvelle Scène* contributes to the institution's prestigious image.

Beyond artistic endeavours, the administrators of *La Nouvelle Scène* consider the theatre centre as "*le lieu par excellence*" for openings, book launches, press conferences, special announcements, unveilings, cocktails, meetings and other special events and celebrations. *La Nouvelle Scène* has received consistent support from francophone organizations of all types – not only artistic groups – who opt to hold special events there, some on an annual basis. The institution's administrators claim that organizations that choose to associate with *La Nouvelle Scène* pledge their commitment towards the francophone community by doing so (La Nouvelle Scène, 2007a).

Articles concerning *La Nouvelle Scène* appear regularly in local newspapers such as *L'Express d'Ottawa* ("*La voix francophone de l'Est à l'Ouest d'Ottawa*") and Gatineau/Ottawa's pop culture-themed publication *Voir*. The content is comprised mainly of reviews of the artistic productions and updates on future events and expositions to be held. *Le Droit* and *Le Devoir* also highlight upcoming shows, but often cover the more administrative aspects of the institution: the subsidies received, the strategic planning, the financing campaign and such. This type of journalistic exposure has undoubtedly allowed for greater visibility of *La Nouvelle Scène* within the region and helped instil its activities into the francophone community's collective memory.

Finally, in their own words, resident artists at *La Nouvelle Scène* list on the institution's website what the theatre centre allows them to achieve:

“Animer notre culture ; Façonner notre identité ; Célébrer notre langue ; Rassembler notre communauté ; Communiquer notre fierté, d’un bout à l’autre du pays, notre fierté de vivre en français en Ontario ; Partager avec les générations à venir le fruit de nos luttes et de nos succès. Voilà ce à quoi nous convient les artistes et artisans de La Nouvelle Scène à chaque spectacle, à chaque tournée, à chaque rendez-vous” (La Nouvelle Scène, 2007a).

2.5 Conceptual framework

The main aspects of the theoretical approach that will be used to frame this research project include Tajfel (1982) and Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Wetherell's (1987) Social Identity Theory and Self-categorization Theory, as well as Savas' (1990a) research tools on community vitality. These theories and their applications are described below.

2.5.1 Social Identity Theory & Self-categorization Theory

Individuals belong to a variety of different social groups (according to one's ethnicity, occupation, social class, etc.), which form the individual's self-concept. In every context, individuals use these different identities to secure a sense of self-worth by comparison to other groups:

“Consequently, in constructing representations of in-groups and relevant out-groups, dimensions of comparison are chosen that produce more favourable representations of in-groups than of out-groups, resulting in in-group favouritism or out-group denigration or both” (Barrett, Lyons & del Valle, 2004, p.162).

An individual's multiple social identities are organized in a dynamic hierarchy, which changes according to the specific social context:

“For example, when the in-group is a minority group perceived as being chronically under threat from a majority out-group, the salience of the in-group category, the strength of subjective identification, and in-group homogeneity may be particularly high for those individuals within intergroup situations” (p.163).

Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Self-categorization Theory (SCT) offer a psychological perspective of this social identification. They both postulate that in-group favouritism, out-group prejudice, and the stereotyping of in-groups and out-groups can often occur as consequences of knowing that one belongs to a particular social group (Tajfel, 1982). These theories posit that these effects may be most pronounced either when that particular social group membership is subjectively important to the individual or when the prevailing social context renders that social group membership especially salient to the individual.

SIT and SCT have been applied to the study of collective identity development (Abrams & Hogg, 1999; Barrett, Lyons, & del Valle, 2004; Brown, 2000; Capozza & Brown, 2000; Eagly, Baron, & Hamilton, 2004; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; & Huddy, 2001). Barrett et al. (2004) have tested these theories against data collected from children of different European countries, concluding that these theories can be useful for research into collective identity development as long as other factors, such as individual motives, values, expectations and background, are included in the study. The following lists the main characteristics of SIT and SCT that have been previously explored by researchers (as presented in Barrett et al., 2004, pp. 163-164):

SIT

1. Representations of in-groups and out-groups will be based upon dimensions of comparison that produce in-group distinctiveness and in-group favouritism.
2. The strength of identification will correlate either with the positivity of the in-group evaluation, or with the negativity of the out-group evaluations, or with the positive distinctiveness that is ascribed to the in-group.
3. In-group favouritism will be a consequence of subjective identification with the in-group.

SCT

1. In-group homogeneity will be lower in contexts in which only the in-group is present, and higher in contexts in which relevant out-groups are also present.
2. In-group stereotype content will change in conjunction with changes in comparative context, with different dimensions being selected depending on the comparison out-groups that are available in the prevailing context.
3. The strength of identification will correlate with in-group homogeneity.
4. The strength of identification with the in-group may be higher in members of minority groups than in members of majority groups.
5. In-group homogeneity may be higher in members of minority groups than in members of majority groups.

Many of these postulates have been confirmed in previous research on Franco-Ontarian identity. As Boissonneault (1996) has observed, Francophones tend to describe themselves and the members of their community (the in-group) in positive terms, while associating negative qualities to Anglophones (the out-group) (p. 181). An individual claiming to have a positive perspective of their in-group has a stronger sense of identification towards that group

than someone showing a less-than-positive perspective. Cormier (2004) adds that having positive perceptions increases the likelihood that an individual will attempt to maintain their distinctiveness and will defend their differences when surrounded by members of an out-group (p. 59).

Furthermore, the postulates concerning in-group homogeneity explain why a seemingly diverse group of adolescent Francophones display very similar opinions about their cultural community versus the dominant anglophone community, when questioned in the context of *Les Jeux franco-ontariens* by Dallaire (2004, p. 129). Being surrounded by people sharing the same identity strengthens one's opinions on issues related to the dominant group.

These predictions should make possible the study of the strength of identification of Franco-Ontarians towards their cultural community, by allowing the comparison of their perceptions of themselves to their perceptions of out-groups, including the English-speaking and Québécois communities.

2.5.2 Ethnolinguistic vitality

Another indicator of the strength of a cultural community is its ethnolinguistic vitality: "The vitality of an ethnolinguistic group is that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations" (Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977, p. 308). Determined by the juxtaposition of three variables (the community's status, demography and institutional support), a community's ethnolinguistic vitality affects the behaviour of group members when among other groups, and affects the group's ability to compete with the other groups in economic and political spheres, for example (Allard &

Landry, 1994; Landry & Allard, 1984). Relatively high ethnolinguistic vitality, usually recognized in groups that tend to use their language routinely in a large number of contexts (Ros, Huici & Cano, 1994, p.146), indicates the likelihood that the group will maintain its distinctiveness and therefore survive. Communities with low ethnolinguistic vitality have less opportunity to prosper and tend to blend in with the larger community.

Savas (1990a) conceived a series of research instruments that would allow the administrators of francophone institutions to evaluate the vitality of their community, in hopes of learning to better integrate members into the community. One of his research tools is a categorization of the different motivations that drive members of a community to visit their various institutions. Savas viewed these motivations as either symbolic (to emphasize a sense of belonging to the community; a desire to distinguish oneself from other cultural groups; etc.) or practical (wanting to meet and socialize with Francophones; a desire to encourage francophone endeavours; the availability and proximity of the service; etc.) (1990a, pp.33-35). The capacity of institutions to attend to these various motivations is indicative of the community's vitality.

All of the aforementioned conceptual framework will be used in an attempt to better understand how Franco-Ontarians perceive the value of institutions such as *La Nouvelle Scène*, as public spaces that affect the vitality of their community and the very nature of Franco-Ontarian cultural identity.

2.6 Rationale

This thesis can be considered as an academic attempt to investigate the concept of identity: how it comes to exist, how it is defined and how sociological factors can influence

it. Postmodern times have witnessed the collapse of a traditional way of life, the reorganization of the social order, and the fragmentation of identity (Lyotard, 1979), so much so that identity-building infrastructure is needed to strengthen the social bond. Yet, it is inaccurate to assume that the mere presence of common characteristics, experiences and institutions within a community suffice to define identity and its boundaries. Weber's (1971) process of communalization suggests that the social bond is created only when individuals ascribe subjective meaning to their membership of a community. In other words, individuals must be intrinsically motivated to consider themselves a part of the community.

In Bernard's opinion, Franco-Ontarian institutions have failed so far in their attempt at communalization. French-language schools have yet to prevent linguistic assimilation, and access to government services in French have not succeeded in changing the habits of Franco-Ontarians regarding their use of language (1986, p. 41). Although the network of institutions is much more developed now than it was decades ago, the survival of the French language in Ontario is not yet guaranteed. The problem, it seems, resides in the fact that language is no longer the foundation of Franco-Ontarian culture. As Bernard mentions, "*la francité ne représente pas une valeur de culture non négociable, mais plutôt un élément périphérique de l'identité individuelle, même s'il est au centre de l'identité collective des Franco-Ontariens*" (p. 46). Rather, the French language has been reduced to a tool used to convey a culture, which tends to resemble more and more that of the dominant group. For this reason, Bernard argues that a strategy based primarily on culture, rather than on language, must be central in order to ensure the Franco-Ontarian community's growth and survival.

If a focus on culture is essential to understand the potential development of Franco-Ontarian identity, *La Nouvelle Scène*, as a cultural and artistic centre *par excellence*, seems to be an appropriate object of study. This thesis offers insight into the realm of cultural institutions as identity-building public spaces.

Previous research on Franco-Ontarian identity has revolved mostly around institutions in a general fashion, mainly about schools and associations (e.g. Faucher, 2001; Gaffield, 1987; Gervais, 1996; Gervais, Thomson, & Hallsworth, 1985; Gilbert, 1999; Institut franco-ontarien, 1986; Juteau, Séguin-Kimpton, 1993; & Welch, 1988), but very few studies have provided an in-depth look into the influence that individual institutions can have on members of the community, nor into the symbolism that a single institution may hold (e.g. Cormier, 2004; Grimard, 2004). By exploring the particular circumstances of *La Nouvelle Scène*, this thesis aims to unearth the practical reasons behind the patronage of cultural institutions, by allowing members of the Franco-Ontarian community to evaluate for themselves the influence that *La Nouvelle Scène* has on their sense of identity. The study of Franco-Ontarians' understanding of the value of institutions as public spaces is important if only to better understand the role of public spaces in a minority context.

The specific objectives of this research are: to gain a better understanding of the motivations of Francophones living in Ottawa to patronize *La Nouvelle Scène*; to pinpoint any correlation between the perceptions of Franco-Ontarian identity and the significance attributed to *La Nouvelle Scène* as a public space; and ultimately to assess the impact of cultural institutions on the preservation of Franco-Ontarian collective identity.

Furthermore, this study differs from others in its field due to its communicational perspective. Beyond their primary mandate, institutions serve as public spaces in which La

Haye (1982) distinguishes four types of communicational reasoning ranging from precise, objective-based communications to the very basic development of the social bond. The relevance of this thesis in the academic discipline of communication lies in its relation to the social bond. Communication is the one method capable of consolidating the social bond (Bouvier, 2005; Laplante, 2002b; Rouquette, 1998). The institution in question acts as a public space that controls the processes through which individuals become members of the social order, thereby strengthening the social bond (Lianos, 2001; Nisbet, 1970).

3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The following chapter serves as an outline of the research strategy employed and aims to justify the selected methodological approach. The criteria used to determine the methods and procedures involved in this study are described.

3.1 Research strategy

In order to assess the Franco-Ontarian community's understanding of the value of institutions as public spaces, it has been deemed imperative to interrogate members of the community directly, to gather insight from the population itself and to ground the study on people's experiences and practices. Considering its important subjective element, identity can only be fully understood by analyzing individual perspectives. Qualitative research such as ethnography has been shown to be effective in the study of identity construction (Gérin-Lajoie, 2002). Furthermore, an empirical approach was necessary to verify existing theories on Franco-Ontarian identity, such as Breton's institutional completeness (1964). A mixed-method approach seemed most appropriate for this study.

The three methods that seemed most suitable for the data collection were observation, surveys and interviews. First, the unstructured observational study of the behaviour of patrons while attending various events at *La Nouvelle Scène* has shown to be an effective way of gaining perspective on the habits of individuals frequenting the institution, as well as on their understanding of the theatre center. Patrons were covertly observed on numerous occasions during the months of April and May 2008, during theatrical presentations, press conferences and meetings of francophone community groups. This method was also useful

to discreetly document the actions of patrons who might not be eager to participate in the survey or interview.

Surveying has permitted a certain amount of statistical analysis by gathering generalizable quantitative, empirical data, and also qualitative data through open-ended questions. The information gathered by the surveys has served to illustrate certain elements of the community's situation. Small-scale interviewing has allowed for the collection of qualitative data. In-depth interviewing has been valuable in that it could draw out rich descriptions from complex situations, allowing the exploration of how cultural groups make sense of their experiences.

A mail-out questionnaire seemed to be convenient way of reaching patrons of *La Nouvelle Scène* directly. This technique was selected because it could reach a large number of potential respondents, both frequent and infrequent patrons of the institution's theatrical, musical and all other types of performances. Although response rates could be low and respondents could not seek clarification, a mail-out questionnaire could ensure a more effective sampling process than if the questionnaires were to be distributed to patrons during their visit to the establishment. Anonymous and confidential, a self-administered questionnaire has allowed respondents as much time as needed for pondering, while not being as lengthy or as intrusive as face-to-face surveys.

The surveys were especially useful in targeting unique subjects to invite to participate in the interviews. Semi-structured interviews have offered flexibility to the researcher, facilitating the gathering of relevant data. A well-defined questioning plan allowed the interviewer to investigate certain issues more thoroughly, depending on the participant, and remains a logical tool to grasp nuances in the conversation and to gather insight on the

patrons' individual habits and motivations in a comfortable, conversational style. One-on-one interviews ensured confidentiality, allowing participants to express their thoughts freely on each question (unlike during group interviews), and allowing the interviewer to read non-verbal cues (unlike during telephone interviews).

Admittedly, many survey respondents did not want to commit to a time-consuming interview, and it was expected that most of the respondents who would accept to participate would be activists – members of the Franco-Ontarian elite (the community's most involved citizens). Efforts have been made to ensure that just as many infrequent patrons participate in the interviews as frequent patrons, to avoid biased results.

Before describing the details of the methods involved, here are some of the specific questions that were addressed in the surveys and interviews:

- a) What are the motivations for Franco-Ontarians to patronize cultural institutions such as *La Nouvelle Scène*?
- b) How do Franco-Ontarians perceive the benefits of having an institution such as *La Nouvelle Scène* in their community?
- c) Do Franco-Ontarians feel that *La Nouvelle Scène* fulfills its role as a public space?
- d) Do frequent patrons of *La Nouvelle Scène* demonstrate a higher strength of identification towards the Franco-Ontarian community than infrequent patrons?
- e) Do members of the Franco-Ontarian elite have stronger opinions on the necessity of cultural institutions than those of the average patrons?

These are only a few of the central elements which were focused on in order to explore how Franco-Ontarians regard the value of institutions such as *La Nouvelle Scène*, as public spaces which affect the nature of Franco-Ontarian identity.

3.2 Methods summary

The following is a summary of the particular methods and procedures involved in this study, including the sampling process and the design of the research tools.

3.2.1 Sampling strategy

The recruitment process began in the spring of 2008 upon approval of the University of Ottawa's research ethics committee. The administrators of *La Nouvelle Scène* were responsible for providing the researcher with a list of mailing address information of their patrons. Selected based on residency in Ontario and on the availability of complete mailing addresses in *La Nouvelle Scène*'s box office records through a systematic sampling process, 210 patrons of *La Nouvelle Scène* (18 years of age or older) were sent the French-language questionnaire package by mail (see appendices).

The institution's administrators consider that, by giving their personal contact information to *La Nouvelle Scène* either when purchasing a ticket or when making a donation, the patrons consent to the use of their names and addresses by a third party for promotional and research purposes related to *La Nouvelle Scène*. The institution's ticket office database, which contains over 5000 entries (58% of which are addresses in Ontario), offered a simple and efficient way to access contact information of the clients. There are of course certain limitations with this sampling method. Patrons who do not customarily attend events at *La Nouvelle Scène* often pay for their tickets by cash or debit payment, meaning their contact information is not entered into the database. The administration has confirmed that targeting infrequent patrons has often been difficult in past studies. Furthermore, it may have been ideal to identify subgroups within the database, by considering the total amount of

money spent by individual patrons on *La Nouvelle Scène*'s activities throughout the year. Through stratified sampling, one could ensure that just as many high-spenders (regular patrons of the theatre centre) would have the opportunity to participate in the study as low-spenders (infrequent patrons). Such financial information in the database was deemed confidential and hence was unavailable to the researcher.

The recipients of the questionnaire package were invited to fill out a 20-minute paper survey concerning their interests in *La Nouvelle Scène*, their views on Franco-Ontarian identity and their civic involvement. In addition to the questionnaire, the package contained the recruitment text, the consent form and a return envelope, allowing the respondents to return their completed questionnaire at their convenience.

Only 17 surveys were completed and returned to the researcher. The low response rate may be due to survey exhaustion, since *La Nouvelle Scène* had very recently completed a wide distribution of a market research survey when this study began. The recipients of this questionnaire might have preferred an online survey, possibly lacked the motivation to complete a self-administered survey, and probably did not feel they had anything to gain in participating. The poor response rate may also be indicative of the state of the Franco-Ontarian population's disenchantment with its institutions or with the seemingly constant academic efforts to study and ameliorate them, though one can only speculate on the accuracy of these claims.

Participants were not directly compensated for their collaboration in this study. However, with their individual consent, the names of the respondents of the questionnaire were included in a draw for a chance to win a *La Nouvelle Scène* membership for 2008-2009.

It is likely that non-frequent patrons did not feel this prize was worth the effort of completing the survey on time.

On the consent form, participants had the opportunity to indicate their desire to participate further in this study. Each of those who responded positively ($n = 6$) were then invited to participate in a one-time, one-on-one interview with the researcher, lasting approximately a half-hour, to further develop the issues addressed in the questionnaire. Among the volunteers were both frequent and infrequent patrons of *La Nouvelle Scène* of different age groups, gender and income level. The interviews were held in French either in a closed area at *La Nouvelle Scène* or elsewhere that was convenient to each participant, according to their availability.

As this is a study on the habits of patrons of *La Nouvelle Scène* and their views on Franco-Ontarian identity, participants needed to have at least a good understanding of the French language, although participants did not have to identify themselves as “Franco-Ontarians” necessarily. In order to avoid any risk of negative reaction on the part of the few non-French speaking patrons of *La Nouvelle Scène*, a short English information letter was included in the questionnaire package. This letter explained the purpose of the study, apologized for any inconvenience to those who do not understand French and invited those who do to participate in the study and fill out the questionnaire in the language of their choice.

3.2.2 Design of research tools

For reasons already mentioned, two methods have been chosen to carry out this study: the self-administered questionnaire and the one-on-one interview, as described below.

Surveys

Aspects of the research questions that were addressed in the questionnaire include: views on language and identity; frequency of attendance of events held at *La Nouvelle Scène*; motivations for attending these events; topics of personal conversations held there; and level of civic involvement. Demographic information, including levels of education and income, was also collected.

In terms of their views on language and identity, respondents were invited to describe their identity, using the terminology of their choice, and to describe their community via open-ended questions, thereby defining their in-group. They were also been invited to describe the characteristics of their in-group in relation to relevant out-groups, based on the characteristics defined in Jacques Bouchard's *Les 36 cordes sensibles des Québécois* (Saint-Hilaire, 2005). A few variations were added to this list to include more contrasting attributes. These indicators have been useful in determining the strength of identity of the respondents, according to Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (1982).

As for their frequency of attendance, participants were asked to estimate the number of occasions that they attended events held at *La Nouvelle Scène* during the past two years, and to specify which types of performances and events they usually attend. It will be interesting to see if frequent patrons have a higher strength of identification towards the Franco-Ontarian community or have different motivations in attending events at *La Nouvelle Scène* than infrequent patrons. Respondents were also been asked to evaluate their level of agreement to a series of statements relating to possible motivations for attending events at *La Nouvelle Scène*, according to Savas' typology (1990a, pp.33-35).

To grasp a better understanding of the types of discussions held between individuals patronizing *La Nouvelle Scène*, respondents were invited to indicate which general topics of conversation they regularly partake in when they meet people there. This could then be compared to La Haye's four types of communicational reasoning in public spaces (1982).

Finally, respondents were asked to describe the types and extent of their civic engagements, both within the Franco-Ontarian community and beyond. Breton, Reitz and Valentine have listed the different forms of community involvement, which include:

“[...] the support of artistic, cultural or recreational endeavours, participation in civic events, or contribution to religious, welfare, educational, and health institutions [...] or [...] an active concern for the economic development of the community” (1980, p. 166).

Interviews

Most of the elements addressed in the questionnaire were further developed in the interviews. These include: views on Franco-Ontarian identity; understanding of the value of Franco-Ontarian institutions and of *La Nouvelle Scène* in particular; types and purposes of conversations with other patrons; and the nature of civic engagement. Portions of Matte's (2007) interview guide, which was created to gather opinions of viewers of a particular Franco-Ontarian identity-themed television show, have been borrowed and adapted to suit this study.

In regards to their views on Franco-Ontarian identity, data was analyzed mainly according to Tajfel's Social Identity Theory. Specifically, SIT's 2nd postulate states: “The strength of identification will correlate either with the positivity of the in-group evaluation, or

with the negativity of the out-group evaluations, or with the positive distinctiveness that is ascribed to the in-group” (Barrett, Lyons, & del Valle, 2004, p. 163).

As for their understanding of institutions, participants were encouraged to express their personal views on the value and necessity of cultural institutions such as *La Nouvelle Scène*, as well as on their personal attachment to such institutions. They were asked to name other Franco-Ontarian institutions and other theatre centers they frequent. The purpose was to better understand their usage of cultural institutions within the Franco-Ontarian community and beyond, as well as to explore how individuals perceive the role of these institutions in cultural development.

Respondents were invited to elaborate on the types of conversations they participate in when at *La Nouvelle Scène* and their recurring topics, to define their communicational reasoning. They were also asked to specify whether they often met new people at *La Nouvelle Scène*, whether they have had the opportunity to network for work-related purposes there, and whether they become involved in community events as a consequence of these impromptu meetings with other patrons.

Lastly, participants were asked to describe involvement within the Franco-Ontarian community and beyond, to establish whether or not they are part of the Franco-Ontarian elite. They were questioned on their knowledge of Franco-Ontarian institutions, and on the roles they may have played in the establishment of those institutions, in order to better grasp individual motivations for becoming involved.

It is expected that the combination of data compiled from both the surveys and interviews will allow for a better understanding of *La Nouvelle Scène* and its effects on the nature of Franco-Ontarian identity. (See survey and interview guide in appendices.)

4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The above-mentioned methodology produced an interesting array of perspectives on identity and public spaces. In this next chapter, the key findings of the surveys and interviews are outlined, each followed by a discussion on the findings and the research design.

4.1 Survey results

The data gathered via the mail-out questionnaire includes demographic information, perspectives on language and identity, opinions regarding *La Nouvelle Scène* and descriptions of community involvement.

4.1.1 Demographics

Although entries in *La Nouvelle Scène*'s database included many Ontarian addresses as far away as Toronto, Timmins and Hearst, 100% of the survey respondents currently reside in the Ottawa area (including Vanier and Orléans), which may suggest that proximity has an effect on one's desire to contribute to the understanding of the institution in question.

Five out of the 17 respondents were born in the Ottawa area. The remaining respondents originate from a variety of localities of the national and international *Francophonie* (5 from Northern Ontario, 1 from South-Western Ontario, 3 from the province of Québec, 2 from New-Brunswick and 1 from France), which has provided a fairly representative sample group of Ontario's francophone community as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 - Place of birth of Francophones living in Ontario and of survey respondents

	Origins of Francophones in Ontario ¹	Origins of survey respondents	
Ottawa area / Eastern Ontario	65.4 %	29.4 %	64.7 %
Northern Ontario		29.4 %	
South-Western Ontario		5.9 %	
Québec	28.4 %	17.6 %	29.4 %
Acadia		11.8 %	
Other Canadian provinces		0.0 %	
Other countries	6.2 %	5.9 %	

To sum up, among the survey respondents, 82% (14) were 36 years of age or older, 70% (12) were female, and 82% (14) had obtained at least one university degree. As for their employment, 5 respondents worked in the educational sector either as teachers or as administrative staff, 2 were entrepreneurs, 2 were graduate students and 3 were retired, among the many other jobs that were mentioned.

4.1.2 Language and identity

The second section of the survey allowed respondents to describe their cultural identity and to characterize their cultural community in relation to relevant linguistic communities found in the Ottawa area.

Every survey respondent specified French as being their maiden language (first language learned and still spoken), including one Ottawa-native who had specified both French and English as maiden languages, which is indicative of the highly valued bilingual

¹ Source: Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, 2004, p.4.

nature of many Franco-Ontarians. All but one of the respondents most often speak French at home, while 10 out of 17 work in a mainly francophone environment.

Only 10 out of 17 respondents primarily use the expression “Franco-Ontarian” to describe their cultural identity. These 10 Franco-Ontarians each named objective elements as a justification for their choice of expression (French as a mother tongue; French as main language of communication; Raised in Ontario; etc.), while half of them also listed subjective elements as part of the definition of their identity (Pride related to being a Francophone in Ontario; Desire to distinguish oneself from the Québécois; etc.). However, of the 11 French-speaking respondents born in Ontario, all but one prefer the expression “Franco-Ontarian”, which demonstrates the likelihood that being born within the province will lead to the choice of the Franco-Ontarian appellation, all subjective elements aside. Those born outside of the province all prefer to identify themselves according to the distinctiveness of their native community (*Québécoise, Acadienne, Française*), regardless of the length of time that they have been living in Ontario, while three individuals consider that the expressions *Canadienne* and *Canadienne-française* best reflect their cultural identity.

When asked if and how they choose to display their affiliation to the Franco-Ontarian community, each of the self-proclaimed “Franco-Ontarian” respondents fall either into one or more of the following four categories: 1) Those who claim to do nothing to flaunt their affiliation; 2) Those who communicate primarily in French as a way of distinguishing themselves; 3) Those who participate in francophone events and consume francophone cultural products; and 4) Activists who fight for francophone causes. The vast majority of the respondents fall into both the second and third categories. They regularly take part in francophone social and cultural affairs and choose to communicate and conduct their

business in French. As for the fourth category, 2 out of the 10 Franco-Ontarians demonstrate a tendency to campaign for access to services in French and for bilingual postings and publications.

All of the participants, whether they consider themselves primarily as Franco-Ontarians or not, were asked to give an example of Franco-Ontarian culture. Many (7 out of 17) list Franco-Ontarian organizations, events, artists and associations such as *Le Festival franco-ontarien*, *L'Écho d'un peuple*, *Le Mouvement d'implication francophone d'Orléans*, *l'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario*, *la Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne*, *l'Hôpital Montfort*, Damien Robitaille, Brian St-Pierre, as well as *La Nouvelle Scène* and its founding theatre companies to name a few. The survey respondents seem to feel that Franco-Ontarian culture is most closely associated with the artists and institutions that organize cultural manifestations.

Secondly, many respondents refer to the community's important bilingual nature as being representative of Franco-Ontarian culture. According to them, it is not only the fact that Franco-Ontarians are generally "*parfaitement bilingues*" which matters, but also the feeling of pride that they exhibit, proud that their language and culture has endured as a minority in the midst of a dominating anglophone environment. Similarly, 6 out of 17 respondents name the historic conflicts that have led to the current state of the *Francophonie* in the province. These include the militancy against assimilation, and the struggles to obtain rights and services for Francophones in Ontario.

Finally, a few refer to the more traditional symbols of francophone culture: The trillium, the Franco-Ontarian flag, the time-honoured *réveillon*, the large family gatherings, the folklore and the efforts made to keep these practices alive. Such examples of Franco-

Ontarian culture underline the value of tradition and heritage often associated with people of francophone descent.

Respondents were then asked to select from a list of characteristics those that, in their opinion, most represent the values of the Franco-Ontarian community, the Anglo-Ontarian community and the Québécois community. The list of attributes, borrowed and adapted from the characteristics inventoried in Bouchard's *Les 36 cordes sensibles des Québécois* (Saint-Hilaire, 2005), contained both favourable and unfavourable characteristics and allowed respondents to describe each community either in positive or negative terms. This measure was used to establish the strength of identity of each respondent, based on the evidence of in-group favouritism and out-group denigration or stereotyping, in accordance with Tajfel's Social Identity Theory and Self-categorization Theory (1982).

The most popular characteristics attributed to each of the three communities (Franco-Ontarian, Anglo-Ontarian, Québécois) by the survey respondents are summarized in Table 2 (see following page). It was essential to sort these results according to the respondents' primary denomination of identity (Franco-Ontarian, Canadian or French-Canadian, Québécois, and Acadian), in order to distinguish between members of the in-group and members of the out-groups relevant to this discussion.

Generally speaking, each group assessed favourably the community which most resembles their own and judged less favourably the communities which are linguistically or culturally opposed to their own, as was expected. Respondents who primarily consider themselves as "Franco-Ontarians" describe the Franco-Ontarian community in a positive manner and use many of the same flattering characteristics to describe the Québécois community.

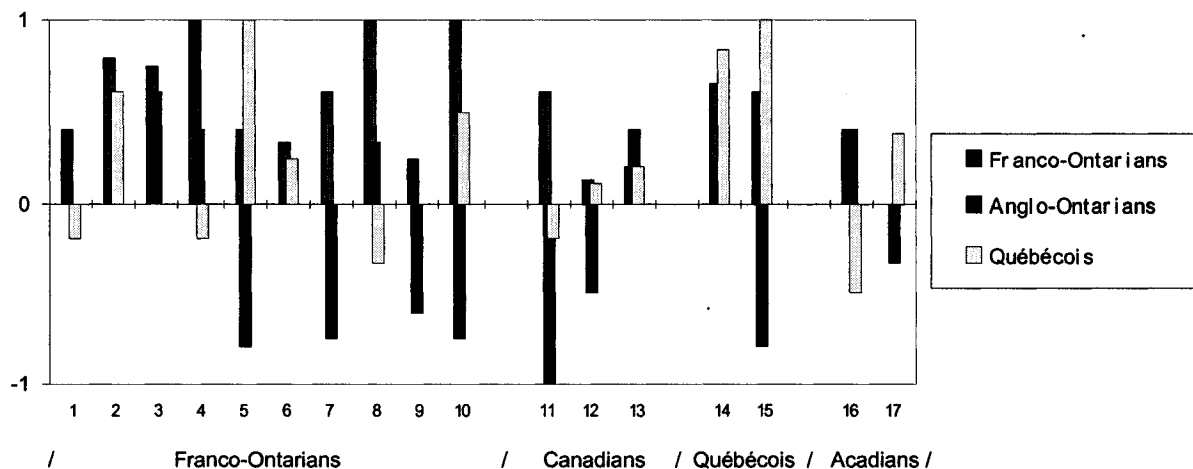
Table 2 - Most popular characteristics attributed to each group according to the primary identity of the respondents (number of votes)

	Characteristics of the Franco-Ontarian community	Characteristics of the Anglo-Ontarian community	Characteristics of the Québécois community
All the respondents	<i>Le compromis</i> (10) <i>La tradition</i> (10) <i>La joie de vivre</i> (9) <i>La fidélité au patrimoine</i> (8) <i>Le complexe d'infériorité</i> (7) <i>La simplicité</i> (7)	<i>Le conservatisme</i> (13) <i>L'individualisme</i> (8) <i>Le sérieux</i> (8)	<i>La fidélité au patrimoine</i> (12) <i>La joie de vivre</i> (10) <i>Le besoin de paraître</i> (7)
Franco-Ontarians	<i>La tradition</i> (7) <i>Le compromis</i> (6) <i>La fidélité au patrimoine</i> (5) <i>La joie de vivre</i> (5)	<i>Le conservatisme</i> (7) <i>L'individualisme</i> (4)	<i>La fidélité au patrimoine</i> (10) <i>La joie de vivre</i> (5) <i>Le besoin de paraître</i> (4)
Canadians / French-Canadians	<i>La joie de vivre</i> (3) <i>Le complexe d'infériorité</i> (2) <i>Le compromis</i> (2) <i>Le conservatisme</i> (2) <i>La fidélité au patrimoine</i> (2)	<i>Le conservatisme</i> (2) <i>L'individualisme</i> (2) <i>Le sérieux</i> (2)	<i>La joie de vivre</i> (3) <i>Le besoin de paraître</i> (2) <i>La générosité</i> (2) <i>La recherche du confort</i> (2) <i>La sensualité</i> (2) <i>La vantardise</i> (2)
Québécois	<i>Le compromis</i> (2)	<i>Le conservatisme</i> (2)	<i>L'amour de la nature</i> (2) <i>Le bon sens</i> (2)
Acadians	<i>La simplicité</i> (2)	<i>Le conservatisme</i> (2) <i>Le sérieux</i> (2) <i>La tradition</i> (2)	-

Among all the respondents, the English-speaking Ontarian community was the most harshly judged, characterized across the board as being conservative, individualistic and serious. This may be symbolic of the underlying resentment some Francophones might feel towards the historically repressive dominant community. In addition, those who primarily identify themselves as being Canadian or French-Canadian display a somewhat unfavourable opinion of the Québécois community, which is perhaps representative of their frustration towards the Québécois' separatist ambitions.

The next step of this analysis has served to compare the strength of identification of each respondent towards his or her community. By conferring either a positive, negative or neutral value upon each of the listed characteristics, the respondents' evaluations of each the groups have been calculated, as illustrated in the chart below. Those who use only positive terms (total value of "1") to describe a specific group show a higher degree of internalized group membership than those who use both positive and negative terms, or negative terms only (total value of "-1").

Figure 1 - Appreciation of the Franco-Ontarian, Anglo-Ontarian and Québécois communities by individual survey respondents



Although this calculation presents a few uncertainties because the characteristics are not clearly defined as being positive or negative in the questionnaire and respondents may have interpreted them in their own way, the results are still indicative of each respondent's perception of their in-group and out-groups. The chart is categorized according to the respondents' in-group. Respondents 1 through 10 consider themselves primarily as Franco-Ontarians, 11-13 as Canadians or French-Canadians, 14-15 as Québécois, and 16-17 as Acadians.

These findings are, for the most part, consistent with Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (1982). Tajfel predicts that in-group favouritism is an indication of an individual's strength of subjective identification with the in-group. According to the above chart, 9 out of the 10 Franco-Ontarians favour the Franco-Ontarian community above all others, having a strong sense of identification towards that community. Both the respondents native of Québec tend to favour the Québécois community but also highly regard the Franco-Ontarian community. Results vary among those who consider themselves as French-Canadians and as Acadians.

To sum up, the Franco-Ontarian respondents 1 through 4 and 6 through 10, as well as the French-Canadians numbers 11 and 12 each demonstrate a high subjective identification with the Franco-Ontarian community. It remains to be seen if these respondents have stronger opinions about *La Nouvelle Scène* and have different motivations in attending events there than the rest of its clientele.

4.1.3 Patronage of *La Nouvelle Scène*

Surprisingly, the majority of respondents were not frequent patrons of *La Nouvelle Scène*. More than half of the respondents (58.8 %) have set foot in the building only once or twice in the last two years. On the other end of the scale, 2 of the survey respondents (11.8%) have been there more than 10 times over the same time period.

Patrons are primarily attracted to *La Nouvelle Scène* for its cultural programming, which includes plays, concerts and art exhibitions. In fact, one of the respondents was even surprised to learn that non-artistic events were held there also. Just under half of respondents (47.0 %) admitted to having participated in such happenings at *La Nouvelle Scène*, including

community events and meetings, social gatherings and academic colloquia, to name a few examples.

The events that attract patrons to *La Nouvelle Scène* are the primary factor affecting the types of personal conversations held there. The majority of respondents affirm having frequent conversations of a purely social nature with other patrons while attending cultural and artistic programming at *La Nouvelle Scène*. This corresponds to La Haye's 4th type of communicational reasoning, which is one of simple sociability, in which individuals express themselves openly in a public space without any specific objective in mind other than to be polite and to enjoy the companionship of others. Such light-hearted conversation is often overheard as patrons enjoy their evening out at *La Nouvelle Scène*, as noticed during the observational study.

Only when attending community meetings and conferences do patrons usually discuss topics relating to La Haye's (1982) first three types of communicational reasoning which are: 1) focused on the State and its affaires, 2) focused on commercial interests, and 3) focused on socio-cultural movements and the defence of common interests. These discussions are most often planned ahead and chaired with a varying degree of formality by the event organizers and are unlikely to arise spontaneously among regular patrons.

Unfortunately, the design of the survey did not allow much leeway for respondents to elaborate on the types and topics of conversations held at *La Nouvelle Scène*, although the interviews were useful in this regard (see section 4.2 – Interview results).

One of the survey questions invited the respondents to rate, on a scale of 1 (meaning “strongly disagree”) to 6 (“strongly agree”), their agreement with a series of statements regarding *La Nouvelle Scène*, their preferences in cultural outings and francophone culture in

general. The point of this exercise was to gain a better understanding of the Franco-Ontarian community's ethnolinguistic vitality and of the respondents' motivations in participating in events held at *La Nouvelle Scène*, according to Savas' categorization of symbolic and practical motivations (1990a) as described in the table below. The table also provides examples of the corresponding survey statements.

Table 3 - Description of symbolic and practical motivations for patronizing francophone institutions (Savas, 1990a) and examples of corresponding survey statements

I. Symbolic motivations

1. Ownership: Members of the in-group consider the institutions as being a fundamental part of their community and collective heritage. They feel responsible for its continued existence and development.
 - *La Nouvelle Scène m'appartient et fait partie de mon patrimoine.*
 - *La Nouvelle Scène représente une fierté pour la communauté franco-ontarienne.*
2. Community participation: By patronizing these institutions, members affirm their belonging to the community. They view the institutions as places to meet people from their own community.
 - *Je fréquente La Nouvelle Scène pour me retrouver parmi des personnes qui me ressemblent.*
 - *La Nouvelle Scène est un lieu de rassemblement pour les gens de ma communauté.*
3. Francophone identity: Members support the institutions in order to emphasize the existence and well-being of the francophone cultural community.
 - *L'existence de La Nouvelle Scène est une preuve que la culture franco-ontarienne est bien vivante.*
 - *J'aime voir la culture francophone sur scène.*
4. Recognition from majority group: Members long for validation from the out-groups. They strive to confirm the legitimacy of the French language and the capacity of their community to manage their own social and economic affairs.
 - *La survie de la langue française en Ontario dépend de l'appui de la communauté anglophone de la province.*
5. Distinctiveness from majority group: Francophones choose to patronize certain institutions to distinguish themselves from others. They have a desire to demonstrate and value the differences between the in-group and the out-groups.
 - *J'apprécie de façon particulière les créations artistiques franco-ontariennes.*
 - *La Nouvelle Scène se distingue autres centres de théâtre de la région.*

(continued next page)

II. Practical motivations

i. Desire to function in French

1. To be among Francophones: Patrons of francophone institutions do so with the expectation to socialize and network with other Francophones of similar interests.
 - *J'invite souvent des amis à découvrir les arts francophones.*
 - *La plupart des gens de mon entourage sont francophones.*
2. To obtain services in French: Some members of the francophone community are more comfortable receiving services in their maiden language and prefer to purchase francophone goods.
 - *Je suis plus à l'aise dans un milieu francophone.*
 - *La plupart de mes sorties sociales se font dans un milieu français.*
3. To promote the French language: Francophones often make an effort to support their institutions to keep them in operation and to ensure the survival of the French language.
 - *Je vois l'importance qu'il y a à fréquenter les institutions francophones.*
 - *Je crois qu'il est important d'encourager la création artistique francophone.*

ii. Practicality, regardless of language

1. For its reputation: Members of a community patronize institutions based on its reputation and upon recommendations of their friends and colleagues.
 - *La Nouvelle Scène bénéficie d'une réputation artistique excellente.*
 - *J'ai déjà travaillé, ou je connais bien quelqu'un qui a travaillé, à La Nouvelle Scène ou pour une de ses compagnie théâtrales résidentes.*
2. For the quality of service: The institution offers products and/or services that adequately meet the expectations of the patrons.
 - *Je passe toujours une soirée agréable à La Nouvelle Scène.*
 - *Les employés de La Nouvelle Scène font preuve de compétence dans leur travail.*
3. As an economic choice: People choose the institution according to the availability and the price of the desired products or services, and the proximity of the institution.
 - *Je demeure ou je travaille tout près de La Nouvelle Scène.*
 - *Le coût d'un billet d'entrée à La Nouvelle Scène est très abordable.*
 - *La programmation de La Nouvelle Scène comprend souvent des pièces ou des spectacles qui captent mon intérêt.*
4. As a habit: Frequenting the institution is a part of the person's routine.
 - *J'assiste régulièrement à des pièces de théâtre, soit à La Nouvelle Scène ou ailleurs. Je fréquente La Nouvelle Scène depuis quelques années.*

Based on this categorization and rated on the same scale of 1 to 6 (1 representing “poorly motivated”, and 6 “highly motivated”), the survey respondents’ motivations for attending events at *La Nouvelle Scène* are presented in the following table. It is important to

keep in mind, of course, that the questionnaire respondents have already shown to be fairly motivated individuals in regards to *La Nouvelle Scène*. Otherwise, they would not have had any interest in participating in this survey, which may be another explanation of the survey's low response rate.

Table 4 - Survey respondents' motivations in patronizing *La Nouvelle Scène* according to their primary identity

	Franco-Ontarians	Canadians, French-Canadians	Québécois	Acadians	All
Symbolic motivations	4.74	4.85	4.22	5.17	4.75
Ownership	4.90	5.33	5.00	4.50	4.94
Community participation	4.20	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.94
Francophone identity	5.35	5.67	6.00	6.00	5.56
Recognition from majority group	3.90	3.67	1.00	5.50	3.71
Distinctiveness from majority group	4.95	6.00	3.50	6.00	5.09
Practical motivations	4.55	5.18	5.00	4.13	4.66
Desire to function in French	5.05	5.00	5.50	3.75	4.94
To be among Francophones	4.45	4.17	4.75	2.50	4.21
To obtain services in French	5.10	4.83	5.75	3.00	4.88
To promote the French language	5.60	6.00	6.00	5.75	5.74
Practicality, regardless of language	4.21	5.30	4.67	4.39	4.48
For its reputation	4.05	5.67	3.50	3.25	4.18
For the quality of service	4.75	5.33	5.75	5.50	5.06
As an economic choice	4.40	4.89	4.50	5.17	4.59
As a habit	3.55	5.50	5.00	3.25	4.03

Overall, symbolic motivations rate slightly higher than practical motivations within the sample group. Franco-Ontarians and Acadians especially frequent *La Nouvelle Scène* mostly for symbolic reasons. Franco-Ontarians are personally affected by the presence of such institutions and they feel the need to ensure their continued existence. The Acadian survey respondents, showing the widest gap between symbolic and practical motivations for attending events at *La Nouvelle Scène*, seem to sympathize with the Franco-Ontarian

community and cause. The Acadian community's history and current linguistic and political situation are somewhat similar to that of the Franco-Ontarian community. Hence, Acadians are more likely to recognize the symbolism in patronizing cultural institutions as an act to preserve one's language and identity.

The Canadians, French-Canadians and especially the Québécois in this sample group tend to favour practical motivations above symbolic ones. On the one hand, they may be less attached to the Franco-Ontarian community and culture in general. The Québécois, who are the least likely to frequent *La Nouvelle Scène* for symbolic reasons, may have little interest in the Franco-Ontarian cause, having a fairly dissimilar history and current situation. On the other hand, respondents who favour practical motivations may simply have a greater need for services in French due to their linguistic abilities.

The next table compares the types of motivations of the survey respondents according to their level of identification towards the Franco-Ontarian community, based on their demonstration of in-group favouritism and out-group prejudice as established in section 4.1.2 (figure 1). The difference between their appreciation of the Franco-Ontarian community and the relevant out-groups determine the strength of identification towards the Franco-Ontarian community of each individual respondent. For the purpose of this comparison, only the respondents displaying the highest and the lowest strength of identification towards the Franco-Ontarian community have been included in the calculation.

In addition to being exceptionally motivated across the board, the respondents with the highest strength of identification primarily frequent *La Nouvelle Scène* for symbolic reasons, while those with the lowest strength of identification are almost equally divided between each type of motivation. There seems to be a clear association between respondents

who highly value their belonging in the Franco-Ontarian community and their recognition of the symbolism behind the existence of *La Nouvelle Scène*.

Table 5 - Survey respondents' motivations in patronizing *La Nouvelle Scène* according to their strength of identification towards the Franco-Ontarian community

	Relatively high strength of identification	Relatively low strength of identification
Symbolic motivations	5.06	4.70
Ownership	5.38	4.75
Community participation	4.13	3.58
Francophone identity	5.63	5.92
Recognition from majority group	3.75	3.83
Distinctiveness from majority group	5.75	5.00
Practical motivations	4.85	4.72
Desire to function in French	5.13	4.75
To be among Francophones	4.63	3.75
To obtain services in French	4.88	4.58
To promote the French language	5.88	5.92
Practicality, regardless of language	4.67	4.70
For its reputation	4.63	4.25
For the quality of service	5.13	5.75
As an economic choice	4.75	4.50
As a habit	4.13	4.42

One could assume that the individuals rating symbolic motivations higher than practical ones do so not only in regards to *La Nouvelle Scène*, but also in regards to other Franco-Ontarian institutions. They may show a higher engagement towards the Franco-Ontarian community in general, as addressed in the final section of the survey.

4.1.4 Civic involvement

Each member of the sample group demonstrated a different degree of civic involvement. Just over half of the respondents (9 out of 17) admit to volunteering within the

Franco-Ontarian community on a regular basis. Five of these individuals also volunteer in the wider community. Though most respondents become involved in unions and associations related to their employment, especially within the teaching profession, many also offer their time to various community endeavours, large and small. For example, they volunteer for local theatre companies, for the Ottawa Hospital, for the *Fondation franco-ontarienne*, as well as for their church and Boy Scout organizations. Some are also members of the administrative boards of these organizations.

Two of the respondents admit to being involved in volunteerism but only outside of the Franco-Ontarian community, either with sports organizations or with institutions in one respondent's native province of Québec.

The last 6 respondents do not volunteer and rarely participate in civic events, neither within nor outside of the Franco-Ontarian community. Their involvement is limited to outings of a recreational nature, such as visiting museums and theatres and attending church celebrations.

As anticipated, the individuals showing the highest level of civic involvement within the Franco-Ontarian community are precisely those demonstrating the highest strength of identification towards the Franco-Ontarian community, as seen in section 4.1.2 (figure 1). Their motivations in frequenting *La Nouvelle Scène* vastly resemble those of patrons displaying a relatively high strength of identification (table 5). While they are remarkably motivated throughout all categories, symbolic motivations prevail.

4.1.5 Discussion & limitations

The survey has been particularly effective in understanding the patrons' motivations and habits in dealing with *La Nouvelle Scène*, as well as how they use the theatre centre as a public space of debate, despite the limited number of respondents.

Francophones patronize cultural institutions such as *La Nouvelle Scène* for a number of reasons, although Savas' (1990a) symbolic reasons are generally predominant. Patrons of *La Nouvelle Scène* consider it and other similar institutions and organizations as an essential part of the very definition of Franco-Ontarian culture. Franco-Ontarians manifest their identity by frequenting such institutions, purchasing francophone products and participating in francophone events.

Those who most highly recognize the symbolic value of *La Nouvelle Scène* within the Franco-Ontarian community's ethnic boundaries are generally those displaying a high subjective identification with the community, as well as those who declare being actively involved in the community.

Despite being primarily motivated by a sentiment of ownership and responsibility towards the institution, it is not clear whether the average patron understands the usefulness of *La Nouvelle Scène* as a public space which can affect the nature of Franco-Ontarian collective identity.

Over half of the respondents patronize *La Nouvelle Scène* exclusively for its artistic programming, during which they participate in discussions of a purely social nature with other patrons. Although the installations of *La Nouvelle Scène* offer an ideal space and context for collective deliberation of current issues affecting the Franco-Ontarian community, often, a night out at the theatre is nothing more than a social gathering. Many

patrons are unaware that other types of events are held there and that these are often open to the public. Individuals who do not attend academic or community happenings at *La Nouvelle Scène* limit their opportunities to participate in any debate related to La Haye's (1982) three other types of communicational reasoning.

In regards to their rate of attendance of events at *La Nouvelle Scène*, the most frequent patrons are quite obviously exceptionally well motivated across all categories. These theatre and performing arts enthusiasts assess practical motivations above symbolic ones. The least frequent patrons have below average motivations all the while favouring symbolic reasons. It seems, then, that even the patrons who rarely participate in events at *La Nouvelle Scène* recognize the symbolic value of the institution for the francophone community. One does not have to be a committed theatre enthusiast, a "*mordu du théâtre*", nor be a part of the Franco-Ontarian elite, to understand the significance of patronizing this institution.

This is, however, probably partly due to the leadership demonstrated by the Franco-Ontarian elite, who promote *La Nouvelle Scène* and mobilize members of the community around its cause and vision, as Breton (1964) had predicted.

I had questioned earlier whether frequent patrons of *La Nouvelle Scène* would demonstrate a higher strength of identification towards the Franco-Ontarian community than infrequent patrons. It seems that survey respondents displaying a fairly low strength of identification are in fact infrequent patrons, while those displaying a high subjective identification with the Franco-Ontarian community attend events at *La Nouvelle Scène* at different rates – some less often, some more often. This seems to be consistent with Breton's (1964) suggestion that the mere presence of cultural institutions within a community's

boundaries contributes to ensuring an individual's relations with members of that community (hence promising a higher strength of identification towards that community), regardless of whether or not these individuals actually frequent the institutions in question.

The survey only invited the respondents to estimate their attendance of *La Nouvelle Scène* during the last two years. As discovered soon afterwards during the interviews, more than a few respondents were regular patrons in its earlier years and have rarely frequented the institution since. Survey data from the last two years only is insufficient to lead to any conclusion on this question, at least until it is combined with the interview results.

Despite all efforts to design and distribute the survey properly, the selected method has shown to be costly and ineffective in gathering sufficient quantitative data. A disappointing 8.1% response rate may be due to an array of factors related to the timing of the survey distribution and to the considerable number of outdated addresses in *La Nouvelle Scène*'s ticket office database. Although it seemed to be the most appropriate way to reach a wide sample of *La Nouvelle Scène*'s clientele, the self-administered survey failed to generate interest among most of its recipients.

The compiled survey results did, however, provide a glimpse into an interesting variety of backgrounds and opinions of patrons of the francophone theatre centre. The surveys have also been helpful in targeting individuals to participate in the interviews, which would complete the picture. Regrettably, the small number of returned surveys would limit the number of interviews to be held, as this has been a two-step methodology. The following interviews would seek to better understand how patrons perceive the role and the significance of *La Nouvelle Scène* in their community, and how they make use of the institution as a public space.

4.2 Interview results

Interviews were held with each of the 6 survey respondents who were willing and available to participate in the half-hour-long dialogue. Fortunately, the sample group included participants from a variety of different backgrounds and each had a unique rapport with *La Nouvelle Scène*, which promised a rich and diverse assortment of data for this study. To simplify the analysis of the interviews, the responses of each participant have been summarized in the following table.

Table 6 - Interview summaries

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Participant	Northern Ontario, F, 18-35, Government worker	Northern Ontario, F, 18-35, Graduate student	Ottawa region, M, 18-35, Francophone institution administrator	Southern Ontario, F, 18-35, Teacher & physiotherapist	France, F, 56-75, Retired teacher	Acadia, F, 36-55, Coach & educator
Identity (Franco-Ontarian = FO)	<i>Franco-ontarienne</i> Defines FO identity solely in regards to the language spoken and province occupied. Believes FOs distinguish themselves by their traditions, their minority status, their “<i>différent vécu culturel</i>”, and their tolerance of other groups.	<i>Franco-ontarienne</i> Considers as FO someone who has lived in Ontario and who considers him/herself as FO. FO identity is defined by bilingualism, resistance, different cultural objectives, and the relationship with the anglophone majority.	<i>Franco-ontarien</i> Most friends and colleagues are also FO. Lists historic struggles for schools and services as defining FO identity. Claims the only difference between FO and other French-Canadian communities is their location. Daily routines are similar, though less so for the Québécois.	<i>Franco-ontarienne</i> Many of her relations are within the FO community. Claims Francophones and francophiles involved in FO causes only have to consider themselves FO to be part of the FO community. Characterizes the FO community as being diverse and highly inclusive, unlike the Québécois.	<i>Française</i> Considers “<i>l’attachement à la langue et à la religion</i>” as being characteristic of FO identity. FOs differ from the Québécois by their willingness to protect the French language throughout the country.	<i>Acadienne</i> Very few relations within the FO community. Defines FO identity as a conviction to survive in French. “<i>Dispersée sur la géographie ontarienne</i>”, the FO community endures hardships unlike those of Acadians. (continued next page)

Understanding of La Nouvelle Scène (LNS)	Has been there once to attend a play, as a requirement for a course. Unaware of its mandate or history. Believes in the need for francophone entertainment, and sees in LNS an outlet for socializing in French.	Has attended 2-3 plays and 1 conference. On LNS mandate, knows only that it offers a space for theatre companies to perform. Sees LNS as “<i>un lieu de création identitaire franco-ontarien</i>”, and as proof of the existence of a distinct FO culture.	Has attended almost every performance and event over the last few years, due to the nature of his work. Extremely knowledgeable of the history, mandate, projects and administration of LNS. Sees LNS as “<i>un lieu sûr</i>” for francophone organizations to meet and to perform, without having to rely on non-francophone organizations. Feels personally attached to LNS because of its FO nature and his experiences there.	Has been to one musical show. Knows very little about LNS, though is somewhat familiar with the <i>Théâtre du Nouvel Ontario</i> in Sudbury. Believes LNS provides a meeting place for artists, and is “<i>un milieu d’épanouissement pour francophones d’ici et d’ailleurs</i>”. Considers LNS as an ideal cultural outing for francophone school children.	Used to be a frequent patron to all kinds of cultural events held there, though not as much recently. On LNS history, knows it is celebrating its 10th season. Admits LNS is important because “<i>bien de troupes de théâtre seraient mal pris</i>” without it. Considers the layout and decor as being favourable to communication between patrons and artists.	Was a frequent patron years ago. Now, occasionally attends events there, including plays, music shows and a focus group. Limited knowledge of LNS mandate other than to gather francophone theatre companies in one space, “<i>une question de synergie et d’économie de ressources</i>”. Feels LNS provides “<i>un lieu abstrait temporel</i>”, ideal for all types of events.
Conversations	Besides polite greetings to and from strangers, only spoke afterwards to students from her class about the experience. Feels LNS gathers people with similar interests, but is somewhat hard to find for new patrons.	Participates mostly in polite conversation with patrons, and listened to speakers at a conference. Claims to have difficulty in making new friends, as the general clientele is older than herself.	Always meets people, mostly artists or theatre administrators. Discusses work and issues related to the arts, and trades business cards. Rarely speaks to regular patrons. Believes certain events favour socialization more than others.	Has met old friends and acquaintances from high school. Spoke about each other’s lives and projects. Also met and spoke with the featured artist.	Usually speaks about the performance and things related to theatre with other patrons. Considers the decor and ambiance very favourable for such type of communication.	Does not often converse with other patrons, being somewhat introverted. Admits that the space is ideal, as patrons are always seen discussing and enjoying themselves. (continued next page)

Does not regularly patronize any FO institution in particular. Feels these institutions are most important for FO youth, to teach them about <i>la Francophonie</i>. “<i>Preuve d’une communauté vivante</i>”, institutions send the message that it is possible to live in French. Frequents them to practice her French vocabulary and to meet new people.	Patronizes a number of FO events and francophone institutions. Believes they promote FO culture and allow people to live and study in French. Schools in particular train future FO leaders, though it is not without its challenges.	Supports many FO cultural, educational and economic institutions and associations. Claims these organizations “<i>permettent aux Franco-ontariens de développer et de vivre leur culture</i>”, while ensuring recognition from other communities. His involvement with these institutions has strengthened his attachment to the community.	Patronizes many FO institutions, including post-secondary institutions, and community centers. Feels that they define FO culture by promoting FO arts and traditions, and their presence reduce the risk of assimilation. Feels the need to support FO institutions, because “<i>je n’aurais pas l’actualisation de mon désir d’être Franco-ontarienne sans fréquenter les institutions</i>”.	Participates in FO events (i.e. <i>Festival franco-ontarien</i>) and volunteers with a local francophone theatre group. Believes these institutions allow her to better understand the FO community and its ways.	Supports francophone artistic institutions such as <i>APCM</i>, <i>4^e Salle du CNA</i>, <i>Écho d’un peuple</i>, etc. Feels they are necessary “<i>pour vivre sa culture</i>”. Claims that institutions have allowed her to notice and sympathize with FOs and their ordeals.
No civic involvement	Limited involvement, would like to be more active in francophone causes.	Highly active, almost exclusively with francophone organizations.	Somewhat active outside of the francophone community.	Fairly active, mostly in francophone settings.	No civic involvement

The interview participants answered questions regarding Franco-Ontarian identity, their knowledge and experiences with *La Nouvelle Scène* and with other francophone institutions either as patrons or as volunteers, as well as the types and purposes of conversations held there.

4.2.1 Franco-Ontarian identity

As shown in Table 6, representatives from the province’s very diverse *Francophonie* were part of this sample group, each having a unique rapport with the Franco-Ontarian community.

The first four participants were all raised in Ontario and primarily consider themselves as being Franco-Ontarian, while participants # 5 from France and # 6 from Acadia, having spent 45 and 30 years in Ontario respectively, each identify most with their native community, though they are both fascinated by and sympathetic towards the Franco-Ontarian cause. The French participant # 5 is particularly intrigued by “*l’attachement à la langue française. Il semble que le français est plus important pour les Franco-ontariens que pour moi*”. Meanwhile, the Acadian participant # 6 feels her time spent in Ontario has allowed her to recognize the similarities between the Franco-Ontarian community and her own, and to develop “*une meilleure sympathie naturelle avec les Franco-ontariens, qui vivent une situation semblable à celle des Acadiens*”.

Though neither the Acadian nor the French participants include themselves in the Franco-Ontarian community specifically, the other interview participants would have a tendency to include them, having a much wider, inclusive definition of Franco-Ontarian identity. However, as participant # 2 replied, “*c’est individuel. Il faut se considérer Franco-ontarien pour l’être. Ça dépend de la perception de la personne même*”. Again, the participants go beyond the objective elements related to Franco-Ontarian identity of a francophone person living or having lived in Ontario, to embrace the subjectivity related to identity, in concurrence with Cuche’s (2004) aforementioned observations.

Some include participation in community events as being an attribute of Franco-Ontarian identity. “*Les Franco-ontariens, ce sont des gens qui participent à la communauté, qui s’impliquent dans les journaux, les écoles, à l’ACFO [l’Association canadienne-française de l’Ontario], etc. Ceux qui ne s’impliquent pas sont moins portés à se dire Franco-Ontariens*”, states participant # 4. For others, the most important marker of Franco-

Ontarian identity is the determination to live almost entirely in French and to work towards making that goal possible for future generations. Participant # 3 declares “*il faut une certaine volonté de vivre en français pour que ça arrive*”, while participant # 6 adds “*être Franco-Ontarien, c’est la conviction de vouloir survivre, pas juste vivre, en français*”.

Many times during the interviews comparisons with the Québécois community were mentioned. Participants were inclined to describe Franco-Ontarian identity in light of the somewhat adverse qualities generally associated with the Québécois. They highlight the value of tolerance, inclusivity and bilingualism of Franco-Ontarians, versus the insecurities of the Québécois. For example, participant # 4’s parents and extended family are from the province of Québec. She considers herself primarily as a Franco-Ontarian and has distanced herself from the Québécois community, displaying a high degree of frustration towards them in regards to their ignorance of the Canadian *Francophonie*, their ambitions for sovereignty and their recent “*accommodements raisonnables*” crisis (concerning the social accommodation of religious and cultural minorities in Québec which has sparked heated debate in the the québécois media) of which she observes “*C’est pas comme ça ici*”. This supports Tajfel’s (1982) suggestion that individuals will choose dimensions of comparison that favour their in-group.

Participant # 1, however, tends to stand separate from the group. She listed only objective factors in defining Franco-Ontarian identity. A longer look at the interview summary reveals that she has very few in-group relationships, she is not and has never been involved in her community, she has not voluntarily been motivated to frequent *La Nouvelle Scène*, and she scarcely patronizes other Franco-Ontarian institutions. Though she does consider herself to be Franco-Ontarian - deliberately or not - she has distanced herself from

the community. In this case, it seems fair to say that there is a correlation between one's involvement with a community's institutions and one's sense of belonging to that community. Regardless of the fairly high degree of institutional completeness of the Franco-Ontarian environment, some individuals will simply not partake in the cause either out of lack of interest or opportunity. Perhaps further invitation to participate in the community's institutions would impart her with a greater appreciation of the community itself and of Franco-Ontarian identity.

4.2.2 Significance of Franco-Ontarian institutions

As expected, the interview participants had varying degrees of knowledge and of experience with *La Nouvelle Scène*, yet they all agree that the institution in question serves to promote Franco-Ontarian culture by organizing events and offering francophone cultural productions. Some even say that *La Nouvelle Scène* acts as an advertisement of Franco-Ontarian arts, as participant # 2 states, "*c'est un 'billboard' bien situé entre Ottawa et Gatineau, preuve de l'existence du théâtre et de la culture franco-ontarienne*".

Patrons seem to understand the symbolic value of having an institution such as *La Nouvelle Scène*, which attracts attention from the francophone community and beyond. Participant # 1 specifies "*les institutions franco-ontariennes comme La Nouvelle Scène envoient un message aux francophones de l'Ontario et d'ailleurs: que la communauté est vivante et que c'est possible de vivre en français ici*". In that same line of thought, participant # 3 mentions "*les institutions officialisent la culture, et permettent une reconnaissance des 'autres' et de nous même*". The significance of *La Nouvelle Scène* seems to lie behind the recognition and standing it acquires from other communities.

Furthermore, the interview participants tend to believe that *La Nouvelle Scène* and other Franco-Ontarian institutions not only serve to define Franco-Ontarian culture, but allow members to better understand their community and to live out their culture. “*Ça va de soi qu’il faut des institutions pour vivre sa culture*”, explains participant # 6, adding “*les institutions favorisent une prise de conscience du groupe*”. Raised in Southern Ontario, participant # 4 remarks “*il y aurait un gros blanc culturel sans ces institutions. Comme il y en a moins dans le Sud, le taux d’assimilation est sans doute plus élevé là bas.*” She further observes that she feels the need to patronize such institutions: “*C’est la ‘colle’. Sans ça, je n’aurais pas l’actualisation de mon désir d’être Franco-ontarienne.*”

Of course, patrons are also aware of the purely practical value of *La Nouvelle Scène*, which allows francophone theatre groups to rehearse, perform and promote their events effortlessly, rather than having to negotiate for space and scheduling with other organizations in the area. As participant # 3 puts it, “*plus besoin de dépendre sur d’autres organismes, souvent non-francophones. Maintenant, les regroupements francophones ont tendance à converger à La Nouvelle Scène pour leurs événements spéciaux*”.

One cannot deny that *La Nouvelle Scène* offers a service to Francophones in the Ottawa area. A service obtained in French is a necessity to some and an expectation to many, whether in regards to the performing arts or in any other sphere of day-to-day life. Participant # 3 gives the example of the banking institution *Caisse Desjardins*: “*Sans Caisse, on n’exigerait pas nécessairement un service en français d’une autre banque. Nos institutions nous donnent des lieux où on peut vivre en français.*” Likewise, it is almost unimaginable for participant # 1 to picture the Franco-Ontarian community without *La Nouvelle Scène*: “*Si La Nouvelle Scène n’avait pas été créée, quelqu’un d’autre le créerait.*”

Y'a assez de francophones à Ottawa pour justifier l'offre de ce service, et assez de leaders pour le réaliser."

On the topic of leadership, a few of the participants have admitted to being particularly involved with Franco-Ontarian institutions either as patrons or as volunteers, while others have little or no involvement. Some people are more motivated than others to become involved with Franco-Ontarian institutions, possibly depending on their availability, their interests and their understanding of the Franco-Ontarian cause.

Some interviewees become involved only to make themselves useful to the community, such as participant # 5: "*Je m'implique pour être utile. Je suis attachée à la langue, et je prends plaisir à enseigner la langue et à apprendre*". Others feel compelled to contribute to their community, as participant # 3 does: "*J'ai envie de m'impliquer, et je sens que j'ai quelque chose à offrir. J'accorde une importance particulière aux causes franco-ontariennes parce que c'est ce que je suis. Je préfère donner à ces organismes là, car il y a d'autres gens pour donner aux autres organismes*". As Dallaire (2004) had foreseen, this individual's active, voluntary involvement in the Franco-Ontarian community is, in fact, a manifestation of his sense of belonging to it.

Some people, on the other hand, claim to make a sufficient contribution to their community merely by attending its events. Participant # 4 explains: "*Je ne 'trippe' pas trop politique. Je m'engage quand même auprès de la communauté en assistant à des événements comme le Festival franco-ontarien*". It seems that among those who feel it is their duty to contribute to their community, each individual's manner of contributing will differ.

Participant # 3 goes on to say that his habitual patronage of *La Nouvelle Scène* has had an important consequence on his personal identity:

“La Nouvelle Scène a beaucoup forgé mon identité. J’étais déjà franco-ontarien en partant, mais à force de m’impliquer dans divers aspects de la communauté au travers de La Nouvelle Scène, je suis plus connaissant de ce qui se passe et des enjeux de ma communauté” (Participant #3).

Years ago, this person had been presented with the opportunity to become involved with *La Nouvelle Scène*. He has since become increasingly involved with other organizations and has developed a vast appreciation of the Franco-Ontarian community. Would it be fair to assume that patronage of Franco-Ontarian institutions can lead to greater involvement and a higher strength of identification towards the community? If so, it may be beneficial for *La Nouvelle Scène* and other institutions to create more opportunities for members of the community to become involved and to develop their sense of belonging, which in turn would strengthen their adhesion to the institutions in question and would increase their participation in these public spaces.

4.2.3 *La Nouvelle Scène* as a public space

Though most interview participants select the location of their cultural outings based mainly on the featured performance, they particularly appreciate *La Nouvelle Scène* for its small size and quaintness, its proximity to downtown Ottawa, and its familiar ambiance. The close-knit atmosphere of the theatre center is what most impressed participant # 1: *“Les gens se connaissent, ce qui est bien si tu viens d’une petite ville et que tu recherches cette familiarité.”* Even strangers are often seen conversing as friends, adds participant # 5.

Patrons consider that *La Nouvelle Scène* offers an ideal setting for Francophones to meet and to communicate among themselves. They recognize the layout and decor of the bistro area as being effective in encouraging patrons to linger a while longer after the

performance or event, especially when refreshments are being served during events like the “soirées 5 à 7” and the “vins d’honneur”.

The interview results suggest that one’s frequency of attendance of events held at *La Nouvelle Scène* is related to the amount of communication he or she will partake in with other patrons on each occasion. Whereas infrequent patrons are generally less motivated to be there in the first place and are mostly unknown to those around them, frequent patrons feel more at ease and initiate conversations of a social nature with others, whether they know them or not. The topics of discussion are almost always directly related to the subject of the performance, among other courteous conversation.

Essentially, the bottom line seems to be this: the majority of *La Nouvelle Scène* patrons use the space to discuss the performances they attend. It may be advantageous for the administrators of *La Nouvelle Scène* to look into the diversification of the types of activities held on site. By including a wider variety of academic and community events (workshops, networking events or volunteer fairs, for example) into its yearly programming, the institution could hope to attract a different type of public and improve the accessibility for individuals with various interests – other than the intellectual elite most interested in the arts – who would partake in conversations of various sorts in line with La Haye’s types of communicational reasoning (1982). Different events could nourish the patrons with subjects of conversation of public concern and thereby better make use of *La Nouvelle Scène* as a public space.

The recent production “*Terre d’accueil*” presented at *La Nouvelle Scène* is a fine example of the preceding argument. A play written and produced by French-speaking immigrants on the very topic of francophone immigration in Canada brought together

members of the community, a number of francophone organization administrators, as well as key federal government representatives. Among the conversations overheard during that evening (which was included in the observational part of this study) were discussions on the plight of immigrants, on their inclusion into francophone communities, on the distribution of this play in schools and in other localities, and on the possible sources of subsidies for such a project. In this case, *La Nouvelle Scène* offered not only a show, but also a place for people with similar attitudes to converge and to set common goals in response to the needs of their community. Connecting people for purposes greater than the featured performances may quite possibly be *La Nouvelle Scène*'s responsibility as a public space.

Likewise, as one of the interview participants claimed, the available space offered by *La Nouvelle Scène* may be more important for Franco-Ontarian organizations than it is for individual patrons. Being an administrator of such an institution, participant # 3 is exceptionally knowledgeable of the issues surrounding *La Nouvelle Scène* and the Franco-Ontarian community. He is aware that representatives of francophone groups tend to converge there, either to participate in happenings organized by *La Nouvelle Scène* or its theatre companies, or to present their own events (press conference, general meeting, etc.). The institution's mandate and reputation are clearly in line with most other Franco-Ontarian organizations that want to associate with *La Nouvelle Scène*. Participant # 3 considers the theatre center as a great space to network with members of the Franco-Ontarian artistic and intellectual elite, as well as with other individuals involved in the community, whether as employees or as volunteers. He often exchanges business cards and makes plans with these people to develop common projects between their respective organizations.

Despite its ideal material setting, *La Nouvelle Scène* is not a public space as Habermas (1984) would have deemed. The general population is unintentionally kept at a distance and the types of conversations overheard there are mostly limited to the subject of the evening's presentation. Yet, it may still be an effective public space if the administrators of *La Nouvelle Scène* would better recognize their responsibility to organize events accordingly to orchestrate the public space. By purposely holding events related to issues of public concern for the Franco-Ontarian community, individuals and organizations can partake in these central debates and benefit from the public space created within the walls of *La Nouvelle Scène*.

4.2.4 Discussion & limitations

To summarize the collected interview data, Franco-Ontarians, as well as Francophones from other origins, do distinguish the benefits of having institutions such as *La Nouvelle Scène* in their community. They appreciate the existence of *La Nouvelle Scène* for three main reasons:

1. It contributes to the development and promotion of Franco-Ontarian culture while gaining recognition from other communities.
2. It offers a space for theatre companies and for other francophone organizations to operate and to hold events independently from non-francophone associations.
3. It gathers Francophones of similar interests and offers a venue for socializing in French.

For these reasons, patrons feel *La Nouvelle Scène* allows them to understand and to experience their culture, which in itself serves to help define Franco-Ontarian collective

identity. They demonstrate their attachment to the community by becoming involved with its institutions, either as patrons, participants, volunteers or employees. One's involvement with these institutions contributes to one's personal identity development.

Franco-Ontarians, it seems, don't accredit their sense of identity to the substance of their cultural institutions' activities necessarily, but rather to the very presence of such institutions within the community's boundaries and to the consequences that this presence entail on the lives of all Francophones and francophone organizations in the area, as previously hypothesized.

As for *La Nouvelle Scène*'s value as a public space, it is evident that much effort must be put into providing appropriate opportunities to create debates on issues concerning the Franco-Ontarian community and on ensuring a higher and more diverse participation in these events, to generate interest among the public for the institution's activities and to allow the public to fully appreciate the public space it provides. As the interview results demonstrate, patrons rarely use the space to discuss matters of public concern unless the topic is forced upon them. While these institutions do provide public gathering spaces which define the symbolic boundaries of the community (as Savas [1990b] had described) and which serve to promote Franco-Ontarian culture, motivations for attending such places often depend on the value attributed to the necessity of these institutions.

According to the interviews, the individuals who best make use of *La Nouvelle Scène* as a public space are precisely those displaying the highest civic involvement. They are more likely to feel a personal attachment to *La Nouvelle Scène* and to recognize it as an identity-building public space than individuals admitting to a lesser involvement in their community, which is consistent with the previous survey results. These exemplary citizens are each

involved in a number of organizations and projects within the francophone community, have strong opinions regarding the necessity of such institutions, feel it is their duty as Franco-Ontarians to patronize their cultural institutions, and often have careers which are dependent upon the continuation of the Franco-Ontarian society. The active promotion of these public spaces by the Franco-Ontarian elite, as Breton (1964) had labelled them, helps create and maintain a sense of collective identity and solidarity within the community.

I had expected that the vast majority of the respondents willing to participate in the 30-minute interviews would be the most active members of the Franco-Ontarian community, always eager to fight for Franco-Ontarian ideals. Generally well educated, Breton (1964) has argued that these people tend to have strong opinions about their identity and their rights and they look for ways to contribute to the advancement of their community. They would most appreciate the opportunity to participate in this study. It would be important to balance their views with those of less militant respondents, who, I had mistakenly assumed, would be considerably harder to target.

In regards to the selected methodology, it would have been helpful to apply a wider sampling process for the interviews, rather than inviting the survey respondents uniquely, to ensure a higher participation rate. I would argue that the one-on-one interviews were in fact the best way to gather complete information on individual perceptions of *La Nouvelle Scène*, due to the personal approach and little chance of group influence and bias.

However, as in any research involving people, it is unclear whether or not individuals were being entirely honest in their responses. I can only assume they were being sincere, but they may not necessarily have shared their true personal opinions in favour of the widespread rhetoric on the subject of Franco-Ontarian identity with which they are familiar. It is hard to

assess the true perceptions of participants when they speak in common idioms, which they may believe the researcher is expecting to hear.

As an example of this tendency, participant # 2's responses to the interview questions represent what I would call "*le discours FESFO*"². She refers mainly to her high school experiences to describe her involvement with the Franco-Ontarian community; she sees institutions, such as schools, as being training-grounds for future leaders; and she tends to defend the FESFO's main arguments, including the necessity to increase youth participation in the mandates and administration of Franco-Ontarian associations and institutions. She imitates the FESFO's intolerance towards the cultural take-over of Franco-Ontarian events: "*Il y a juste deux artistes franco-ontariens au Festival franco-ontarien cette année!*" She has inculcated Franco-Ontarian culture from the FESFO, and the organization's rhetoric has remained with her. That being said, her opinion is not any less relevant, though it is more of a collective opinion than an individual one.

Despite this, the interviews served to collect rich data from six unique individuals, each with a different and relevant experience with *La Nouvelle Scène*, providing much insight into the institution's effects on Franco-Ontarian identity.

² FESFO, *Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne*, is a well-established Franco-Ontarian youth organization which hosts leadership-building events for francophone teenagers and which represents the interests of Franco-Ontarian youth province-wide.

5 CONCLUSION

The significance of this thesis lies in the series of key components of Franco-Ontarian culture and identity which were exposed during the course of both the survey and the interviews. This study sheds light on how Franco-Ontarians regard the value of *La Nouvelle Scène* as an institution and as a public space which affects their collective identity. This chapter summarizes these findings, presents certain implications of this study, and suggests further research possibilities.

5.1 Key findings and implications

First of all, it appears that Franco-Ontarian culture is primarily associated with the institutions that communicate the community's values and heritage. In the eyes of its patrons, *La Nouvelle Scène* fundamentally represents and offers everything they consider Franco-Ontarian culture to be: Original, often identity-based artistic creation produced in a space free from anglo-dominance and the threat of assimilation; the long sought result of militancy to obtain francophone rights and recognition from others; and the source of collective pride in having preserved their practices and kept their language alive. To put it simply, *La Nouvelle Scène* allows the productions held there to have meaning greater than the performance itself.

However, on a more practical level, though patrons appreciate *La Nouvelle Scène's* many qualities, very few patrons actually favour this institution over other theatre centres for its Franco-Ontarian nature. Instead, the majority of patrons frequent the several francophone, anglophone and bilingual theatres in the Ottawa-Gatineau area exclusively according to the

featured performance. When in competition with these other institutions, *La Nouvelle Scène*'s belonging in the Franco-Ontarian community has a lesser significance.

For this reason, it is essential for the administrators of the theatre centre to go beyond its primary mandate of francophone theatrical production and to embrace its function as a public space. As an institution, *La Nouvelle Scène* has great outreach potential towards both francophone organizations and individuals who, with further invitation to participate, could benefit from the public space in question and converse on topics of interest to the community. The Franco-Ontarian community could only ameliorate its odds of survival by creating more occasions for public debate and increasing participation in such events, allowing individuals not only to contribute to issues of public concern, but also to develop their appreciation for their community and strengthen their sense of belonging and identity.

Furthermore, as part of the institution's marketing strategy, the administrators of *La Nouvelle Scène* may want to consider focusing on the symbolic motivations which attract patrons to the theatre centre, rather than simply on the scheduled programming, as the survey has shown that individuals generally rate symbolic reasons for patronizing the institution higher than practical ones. Promotional material which highlights the distinctiveness of the institution and its francophone heritage would reach out to individuals on a different level, and would incite them to affirm their belonging to the community by patronizing the institution.

In that same line of thought, the administrators could work towards endorsing inclusivity in the theatre centre's activities, in order to encourage Francophones from all origins, as well as francophiles, to participate in events and performances at *La Nouvelle Scène* and to promote a better understanding of the institution's history and mandate. The

entire Franco-Ontarian community would only benefit from the institution's recognition by all Ontarians.

As the federal government hacks away at cultural funding for all types of artistic subsidy programs, it seems particularly relevant to review the need for cultural institutions to exist for minority groups, and to confirm the role of public spaces in a minority context. These findings are important because identity-building infrastructure is needed to strengthen the social bond and to ensure the survival of society's minority ethnolinguistic communities.

Recently, the announcement of the closure of another well-known Franco-Ontarian institution was made public. *L'Écho d'un peuple*, a grandiose exhibition of Franco-Ontarian history based out of Casselman, in Eastern Ontario, will no longer be produced due to the accumulated debt of the organization. Similar to *La Nouvelle Scène* because of its mandate of artistic production and for the gathering place it creates, *L'Écho d'un peuple* is a prime example of what once was an effective Franco-Ontarian public space. The nature of the performance served to enhance Franco-Ontarian collective memory, and to allow audience members to become aware of the stakes defining their cultural milieu, all the while encouraging conversations on the topic during the dinner and other events held on-site. Unfortunately, despite the value Franco-Ontarians attribute to the existence of their institutions, and despite the efforts of members of the Franco-Ontarian elite to promote and maintain them, the risk of losing these institutions, especially the unprofitable ones, is still at hand.

Thankfully, the disappearance of *L'Écho d'un peuple* will at the very least create an urgent topic of debate within the Franco-Ontarian community, to ensure the continued existence of such institutions. Such discussions may provoke an attempt to revive *L'Écho*

d'un peuple and to manage it more efficiently, or may unearth other initiatives that would take its place. Coincidentally, the first such community meeting is scheduled to be held at *La Nouvelle Scène*.

5.2 Further research possibilities

Further research may be needed to better comprehend the effectiveness of Franco-Ontarian institutions as public spaces. Institutions such as schools, community centers, health centers, associations and the Church all have the potential to promote open discussion on subjects of public concern. It would be relevant to look into the best utilization of these spaces for the advancement of Franco-Ontarian collective identity.

Of course, having a variety of effective public spaces within the community would serve no purpose if members of the population do not partake in the debates. It would be interesting to study the interests of Franco-Ontarians in participating in such debates, as well as the means by which institutions attempt to widen their audience beyond members of the intellectual and artistic elite. The administrators of Franco-Ontarian institutions certainly have an interesting perspective to offer on this issue. It would be valuable to question them on their understanding of their somewhat unconventional role as “public space coordinators”, assuming they feel that task is a part of their organization’s mandate.

As for theatrical institutions, it would be interesting to conduct a study similar to this one with patrons of the *Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario* in Sudbury, or with patrons of other francophone theatre centers outside of the province, to compare the opinions and motivations of each group. Finally, it may be beneficial to delve deeper into the question of cultural content versus cultural infrastructure in collective identity development. Much attention is

given to identity-themed theatrical production. However, beyond adding to the discourse, the performances themselves would likely have little effect on the public if it weren't for the institution that has allowed for the showing and the gathering of like-minds.

Institutions, upon which the community's strength and prosperity rest, champion the idea of the existence of a distinct cultural entity. Deliberately or not, they create spaces of debate which, when effectively utilized, can help ensure the community's social and political progress.

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APPENDICES

Questionnaire

Les espaces publics franco-ontariens : Le cas de La Nouvelle Scène

Le présent questionnaire cherche à recueillir vos impressions par rapport au centre de théâtre francophone La Nouvelle Scène et à la culture franco-ontarienne. Nous sollicitons votre participation, peu importe le nombre de fois que vous y êtes allés.

Prenez tout le temps nécessaire pour compléter le questionnaire. Veuillez vous assurer de répondre à toutes les questions.

Merci de participer à cette recherche. Nous apprécions énormément votre collaboration.

SECTION 1 – Informations générales

1. Ville, province et pays de résidence : _____
2. Ville, province et pays de naissance : _____
3. Âge :
 - ☐ moins de 18 ans
 - ☐ 18 à 35 ans
 - ☐ 36 à 55 ans
 - ☐ 56 à 75 ans
 - ☐ plus de 75 ans
4. Sexe :
 - ☐ homme
 - ☐ femme
5. Niveau de scolarité :
 - ☐ école secondaire
 - ☐ études collégiales
 - ☐ études universitaires, premier cycle
 - ☐ études universitaires, cycles supérieurs
6. Titre et secteur d'emploi : _____
7. Revenu annuel moyen :
 - ☐ moins de 30 000 \$
 - ☐ 30 000 \$ à 55 000 \$
 - ☐ 55 000 \$ à 80 000 \$
 - ☐ 80 000 \$ à 105 000 \$
 - ☐ plus de 105 000 \$

SECTION 2 – Langue et identité

8. Langue maternelle : ☐ français
☐ anglais
☐ autre : _____

9. Langue la plus souvent parlée à la maison : ☐ français
☐ anglais
☐ autre : _____

10. Langue la plus souvent parlée au travail : ☐ français
☐ anglais
☐ autre : _____

11. a) En ce qui concerne votre identité culturelle, est-ce que vous vous considérez principalement comme étant Franco-Ontarien, Franco-Ontarienne ?

- ☐ Oui
☐ Non

b) Sinon, quelle expression correspond le mieux à votre identité :

12. Pour quelles raisons choisissez-vous de vous identifier par l'expression ci-dessus ?

13. Faites-vous des efforts pour afficher votre appartenance à cette communauté ? Si oui, de quelles façons ?

14. Donnez un exemple de ce que représente pour vous la culture franco-ontarienne :

15. Parmi les caractéristiques suivantes, lesquelles décrivent le mieux les valeurs de la communauté franco-ontarienne, telles que vous les percevez (veuillez cocher un maximum de 5 cases) :

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ L'amour de la nature | ☐ L'individualisme |
| ☐ L'amour des enfants | ☐ L'insociabilité |
| ☐ L'avidité | ☐ La joie de vivre |
| ☐ Le besoin de paraître | ☐ Le manque de sens pratique |
| ☐ Le bon sens | ☐ L'ouverture sur le monde |
| ☐ Le commérage | ☐ Le professionnalisme |
| ☐ Le complexe d'infériorité | ☐ La recherche du confort |
| ☐ Le compromis | ☐ La sensualité |
| ☐ Le conservatisme | ☐ Le sérieux |
| ☐ L'envie | ☐ La simplicité |
| ☐ L'étroitesse d'esprit | ☐ La superconsommation |
| ☐ La fidélité au patrimoine | ☐ La tradition |
| ☐ La générosité | ☐ La vantardise |
| ☐ L'habileté manuelle | ☐ La xénophobie |

16. Parmi les caractéristiques suivantes, lesquelles décrivent le mieux les valeurs de la communauté ontarienne anglophone, telles que vous les percevez (veuillez cocher un maximum de 5 cases) :

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ L'amour de la nature | ☐ L'individualisme |
| ☐ L'amour des enfants | ☐ L'insociabilité |
| ☐ L'avidité | ☐ La joie de vivre |
| ☐ Le besoin de paraître | ☐ Le manque de sens pratique |
| ☐ Le bon sens | ☐ L'ouverture sur le monde |
| ☐ Le commérage | ☐ Le professionnalisme |
| ☐ Le complexe d'infériorité | ☐ La recherche du confort |
| ☐ Le compromis | ☐ La sensualité |
| ☐ Le conservatisme | ☐ Le sérieux |
| ☐ L'envie | ☐ La simplicité |
| ☐ L'étroitesse d'esprit | ☐ La superconsommation |
| ☐ La fidélité au patrimoine | ☐ La tradition |
| ☐ La générosité | ☐ La vantardise |
| ☐ L'habileté manuelle | ☐ La xénophobie |

17. Parmi les caractéristiques suivantes, lesquelles décrivent le mieux les valeurs de la communauté québécoise, telles que vous les percevez (veuillez cocher un maximum de 5 cases) :

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ L'amour de la nature | ☐ L'individualisme |
| ☐ L'amour des enfants | ☐ L'insociabilité |
| ☐ L'avidité | ☐ La joie de vivre |
| ☐ Le besoin de paraître | ☐ Le manque de sens pratique |
| ☐ Le bon sens | ☐ L'ouverture sur le monde |
| ☐ Le commérage | ☐ Le professionnalisme |
| ☐ Le complexe d'infériorité | ☐ La recherche du confort |
| ☐ Le compromis | ☐ La sensualité |
| ☐ Le conservatisme | ☐ Le sérieux |
| ☐ L'envie | ☐ La simplicité |
| ☐ L'étroitesse d'esprit | ☐ La superconsommation |
| ☐ La fidélité au patrimoine | ☐ La tradition |
| ☐ La générosité | ☐ La vantardise |
| ☐ L'habileté manuelle | ☐ La xénophobie |

SECTION 3 – Institutions franco-ontariennes

18. Combien de fois avez-vous fréquenté La Nouvelle Scène pendant les deux dernières années (que ce soit pour assister à une pièce de théâtre ou à tout autre événement) ?

- ☐ 0-2 fois
- ☐ 3-5 fois
- ☐ 6-10 fois
- ☐ plus de 10 fois

19. Qu'est-ce qui vous amène à fréquenter La Nouvelle Scène? (Cochez toutes les cases qui s'appliquent.)

- ☐ Les pièces de théâtre
- ☐ Les spectacles musicaux
- ☐ Les expositions d'art visuel
- ☐ Les soirées bénéfices
- ☐ Les divers galas
- ☐ Les réunions d'organismes communautaires
- ☐ Autres : _____

20. Pour chacune des affirmations suivantes, veuillez évaluer le niveau de votre accord (ou désaccord) selon l'échelle présentée ci-dessous :

1	2	3	4	5	6
Fortement en désaccord	Moyennement en désaccord	Légèrement en désaccord	Légèrement en accord	Moyennement en accord	Fortement en accord

- a) _____ J'assiste régulièrement à des pièces de théâtre, soit à La Nouvelle Scène ou ailleurs.
- b) _____ La Nouvelle Scène bénéficie d'une réputation artistique excellente.
- c) _____ J'ai déjà travaillé, ou je connais bien quelqu'un qui a travaillé, à La Nouvelle Scène ou pour une de ses compagnie théâtrales résidentes.
- d) _____ Je fréquente La Nouvelle Scène depuis quelques années.
- e) _____ Je demeure ou je travaille tout près de La Nouvelle Scène.
- f) _____ Je n'apprécie pas de façon particulière les créations artistiques franco-ontariennes.
- g) _____ Je passe toujours une soirée agréable à La Nouvelle Scène.
- h) _____ Le coût d'un billet d'entrée à La Nouvelle Scène est très abordable.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Fortement en désaccord	Moyennement en désaccord	Légèrement en désaccord	Légèrement en accord	Moyennement en accord	Fortement en accord

- i) _____ Les employés de La Nouvelle Scène font preuve de compétence dans leur travail.
- j) _____ La programmation de La Nouvelle Scène comprend rarement des pièces ou des spectacles qui captent mon intérêt.
- k) _____ J'invite souvent des amis à découvrir les arts francophones.
- l) _____ Je suis plus à l'aise dans un milieu francophone.
- m) _____ La Nouvelle Scène m'appartient et fait partie de mon patrimoine.
- n) _____ Je fréquente La Nouvelle Scène pour me retrouver parmi des personnes qui me ressemblent.
- o) _____ La Nouvelle Scène est un lieu de rassemblement pour les gens de ma communauté.
- p) _____ La plupart des gens de mon entourage sont francophones.
- q) _____ Je ne vois pas l'importance qu'il y a à fréquenter les institutions francophones.
- r) _____ La Nouvelle Scène ne se distingue pas vraiment des autres centres de théâtre de la région.
- s) _____ La Nouvelle Scène représente une fierté pour la communauté franco-ontarienne.
- t) _____ L'existence de La Nouvelle Scène est une preuve que la culture franco-ontarienne est bien vivante.
- u) _____ La survie de la langue française en Ontario dépend de l'appui de la communauté anglophone de la province.
- v) _____ J'aime voir la culture francophone sur scène.
- w) _____ Très peu de mes sorties sociales se font dans un milieu français.
- x) _____ Je crois qu'il est important d'encourager la création artistique francophone.

21. Lorsque vous rencontrez des gens à La Nouvelle Scène alors que vous assistez à une pièce de théâtre, à un spectacle ou à un autre événement, de quoi parlez-vous ? (Veuillez cocher la case appropriée.)

	Souvent	Parfois	Rarement	Jamais
a) De la pièce ou du spectacle à l'affiche	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) De vos activités familiales	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) De votre travail	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) De vos engagements communautaires	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) De prochaines sorties culturelles	☐	☐	☐	☐
f) De projets que vous avez en commun	☐	☐	☐	☐
g) De la pluie et du beau temps	☐	☐	☐	☐
h) Autre : _____	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION 4 – Engagement communautaire

22. Veuillez énumérer vos engagements communautaires au sein de la communauté franco-ontarienne (ex : activités bénévoles, implications sociales, membre de conseil d'administration, etc.) :

23. Veuillez énumérer vos engagements communautaires hors de la communauté franco-ontarienne :

Grille d'entrevue

Les espaces publics franco-ontariens : Le cas de La Nouvelle Scène

Présentation de la recherche : La Nouvelle Scène et son rôle dans le développement de l'identité franco-ontarienne

Durée : 30 minutes

Rappel : droit du participant de se retirer de l'étude; confidentialité des données; enregistrement sonore.

1) L'identité franco-ontarienne	
Est-ce que vous vous considérez principalement comme étant Franco-ontarien(ne) ? Si non, quelle expression correspond le mieux à votre identité?	
Diriez-vous que la majorité de vos amis et de vos collègues de travail font partie de cette même communauté?	
Pouvez-vous me dire en quelques mots ce qui caractérise, selon vous, l'identité franco-ontarienne ?	
Qu'est-ce qui, selon vous, distingue l'identité franco-ontarienne de l'identité québécoise, ontarienne, ou canadienne-française ?	

2) L'institution franco-ontarienne	
Pour quelles raisons fréquentez-vous La Nouvelle Scène? (théâtre, spectacles, rencontres, etc.)	
Combien de fois avez-vous mis pied à La Nouvelle Scène?	
Que connaissez-vous de l'histoire et de la raison d'être de La Nouvelle Scène?	
Mise à part les pièces de théâtre, les spectacles et les événements qui ont lieu à La Nouvelle Scène, est-ce que La Nouvelle Scène sert à autre chose, à votre avis?	
Si La Nouvelle Scène n'existait tout simplement pas, en quoi la communauté franco-ontarienne serait-elle touchée?	
Parmi toutes les salles de théâtre et de spectacle d'Ottawa et de Gatineau, francophone ou anglophone, est-ce que vous favorisez particulièrement La Nouvelle Scène? Pourquoi?	

2) L'institution franco-ontarienne (suite)	
Est-ce qu'il vous arrive parfois de rencontrer des gens que vous connaissez lorsque vous participez à des événements à La Nouvelle Scène? Si oui, de quoi parlez-vous?	
Est-ce qu'il vous arrive aussi de faire des nouvelles rencontres à La Nouvelle Scène? Dans ce cas, de quoi discutez-vous?	
Est-ce que La Nouvelle Scène est un endroit propice pour faire des nouvelles rencontres et pour réseauter entre francophones?	
À part La Nouvelle Scène, fréquentez-vous d'autres institutions franco-ontariennes de façon régulière? Nommez-en quelques-unes.	
Croyez-vous que les institutions franco-ontariennes jouent un rôle : a) dans le développement de la culture francophone de l'Ontario? b) dans votre développement identitaire personnel?	

3) Engagements communautaires	
En ce qui a trait à vos activités bénévoles, est-ce que vous vous considérez très actif, moyennement actif ou peu actif dans votre communauté?	
Pouvez-vous me décrire la nature de vos engagements communautaires bénévoles? (Organismes et rôles joués)	
Pour quelles raisons choisissez-vous de vous impliquer au sein de ces organismes?	
Accordez-vous une importance particulière aux causes franco-ontariennes? Pourquoi?	

Questions démographiques

Emploi :

Origine :

Remerciements