Abstract

This research was designed to find out how migration is understood by high school students who have experienced it first-hand, and to investigate to what extent the prescribed social studies curriculum in British Columbia contributes to students’ grasp of geographical concepts that might give them a deeper and broader understanding of the migration experience. The study took place in an East Vancouver school that serves a neighbourhood of relatively low socio-economic status and high immigrant population. Six grade 12 students, from a variety of source nations, were interviewed firstly to capture the participants’ stories of migration, and secondly, to find out, using a range of visual sources, whether students are able to find connections between taught curriculum and their lived experience. Aspects of the work of Edward Soja and Wayne Au provide the theoretical frame for the study. A combination of narrative enquiry and grounded theory was used to analyse the findings. The research uncovers some of the ways in which migration has an impact on students’ everyday lives and everyday places. Further, it considers students’ knowledge as a potential starting point for developing more sophisticated geographic understandings through the social studies curriculum. Several practical suggestions are presented in regard to finding a new space for the study of geography in British Columbia.
Preface

This study was completed with the approval of the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board, certificate number H12-00515. The study, entitled “Understanding Migration”, was approved on May 14, 2012, with Dr. Peter Seixas listed as the Principal Investigator.
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Ephesians 3:20: Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us.
Dedication

For Aunt Jean, with much love. I miss you.
1. Introduction

1.1 A city of strangers

The city of Vancouver is the second most popular destination for migrants to Canada. According to the 2006 census, two-thirds of the population of Metro Vancouver were born outside of the province, suggesting that Vancouver has now become “a city of strangers.”\(^1\) Articles relating to immigration are rarely out of the press: concern over marriages of convenience, wealthy immigrants making housing unaffordable and the treatment of temporary foreign workers are common topics that are routinely discussed in the local and national media. Of the forty-thousand or so people who emigrate to British Columbia each year, eighteen percent are children aged fourteen and less.\(^2\) CBC’s recent television programme, *Generation One*,\(^3\) provided insight into how the children of families who have immigrated to Canada position themselves in their changed circumstances, and how they negotiate the contrast between their lives at school and at home. As issues of immigration and its impact on young people are being actively debated in the public arena, more measured studies of this kind are crucial for informing public discussion.

For those migrant children entering the BC public school system, becoming proficient in English may be just the start of their adaptation to life in school, just the beginning of their attempts to manage the ground between their culture at home and their life at school. Some take to school life like proverbial ducks to water, others have more of a struggle on their hands, as they make constant adjustments to their understanding of not only *who* they are (identity) but *where* they are (place). The school they attend plays a significant role in guiding migrant students through the various obstacles that


\(^3\) “Generation One” was broadcast by CBC on February 15, 2012. Reporter Nahlah Ayed travelled to Churchill High School in Winnipeg, Manitoba, to investigate the experiences of children born to immigrant parents.
they come across, and allowing them to achieve their potential both academically and personally. The content of the high school curriculum has an impact on their identity as citizens of a new country, but also helps them to understand the place that they now find themselves in. The role that social studies curriculum has to play in this transformation from resident to citizen is considerable, and the geography component of the syllabus has the potential to be an important part of this process.

At this point, I need to declare an interest. Before immigrating to Canada eight years ago, I was gainfully employed as a geography teacher in a large suburban secondary school in the United Kingdom. I have no doubt that discipline of geography has the potential to engage students in global issues that can move them forward from interested student to active citizen. Seeing ex-students taking care of street kids in Rio de Janeiro, or helping to supply safe drinking water in remote parts of Malawi, or employed to sanitise toxic waste in the UK, has been hugely rewarding. It provides the impetus for seeing other young people have the opportunity to engage in a subject that has such potential benefits.

The topic migration is included in Human Geography section of the prescribed Social Studies 11 curriculum in BC (British Columbia, Ministry of Education, 2005, p.34), and Place (the physical and human characteristics that make a location unique), is listed as one of the core themes in the BC curriculum relating to geography (The Canadian Council for Geographic Education, 2001, p.2). This study explores how the lived experience of six seventeen-year-old, first generation migrants relate to aspects of the compulsory social studies syllabus. It investigates how students’ ways of knowing coincide or conflict with the prescribed curriculum.

1.2 “You’re really angry about this”

_We want a social science committed up front to issues of social justice, equity, nonviolence, peace, and universal human rights...this is no longer an option._ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.11)
A couple of months before I embarked on this Master’s course, I attended a conference in Oklahoma about creativity in education. During one of the breaks, I was chatting with a teacher who had brought along a group of his students who were demonstrating some of the creative ways they had been learning mathematics at school. I had been doing some pre-reading for a couple of the courses I was hoping to take, and had become discouraged by the apparent disconnect between what was being produced in academia regarding teaching and learning, and the reality of secondary school life. I’d had several moments when I was at a loss to grasp what possible application these beautifully written, but often inaccessible books and papers could have in a secondary school classroom. (One book was hurled across the living room in frustration and one paper got shredded, but most have been quietly set aside with a sigh of disappointment.) Having been encouraged by one of the professors at UBC to journal this postgraduate trek, later that evening I wrote about the conversation:

I had a very interesting conversation with one of the teachers...I was telling him about the reading...all the high-minded, self-indulgent nonsense that passes for wisdom. Anyway, it was one of those aha! moments, it really struck a chord [when he said], “You’re really angry about this, aren’t you?” Too right. (Journal entry, November 20, 2010)

My starting point of this study, therefore, was a conviction that I should produce a piece of research that would have the potential to be a catalyst for change. Research for its own sake undoubtedly has its place, but research that deals with a practical issue, (in this case the BC social studies curriculum), and proposes concrete changes to policy and process are not so plentiful. Over the course of my graduate programme I have given vent to my opinion that too many papers in journals of education have little practical application in the classroom, and so I felt somewhat beholden to the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy to create a project that directly addresses specific issues relating to the BC curriculum and offers solutions based on solid research. In this regard, I trust that the
of principles social justice and equity underpin this thesis: a belief that the school children of British Columbia deserve to have a social studies curriculum that not only meets their educational needs, but allows them to participate in their own learning, to create knowledge for themselves and to acquire the wisdom and skills that they need to become global citizens.

Having decided to investigate aspects of geography within the social studies curriculum, I needed to pinpoint topics within the syllabus that might have most significance for high school students in Vancouver. Having experienced immigration for myself, I decided to seek out those students who have been in a similar position; I was curious to find out whether they were able to see themselves and their experiences within the curriculum. I wanted to know whether the concept of place which is so central in geography would take on particular meanings for migrant students. I also wanted to deliberately target those students whose voices are less often heard: I sought out schools in the more economically disadvantaged (but more integrated) East Vancouver area.

1.3 Research questions

1. How is migration understood by Grade 11 students who have experienced it firsthand?
   a. What has contributed to this understanding? Are some influences more significant than others?
   b. How do these students negotiate the impact that migration has had on their lives?
      i. which aspects of their home culture or ethnicity have they retained or rejected?
      ii. in what ways has the experience of migration affected their understanding of place?

2. To what extent does the social studies curriculum contribute to student understanding?
   a. Are students able to find connections between taught curriculum and lived experience?
1.4 Organisation of thesis

This thesis follows a conventional format: chapters are laid out in the usual sequence. Chapter one introduces the choice of subject matter for this research and outlines some of the reasoning behind embarking on this project. Style of writing and researcher voice are also commented on.

Chapter two works through a broad review of literature that forms the foundation and scaffolding for this project. First, the status of geography in the curriculum is considered in general; various approaches to geography are examined and the current framework for geography education in BC is examined. Next, the concept of place in geography is discussed. This covers how young people understand place, and how place is linked to identity. Several British ethnographies which have explored these ideas in detail are referred to. An overview of place-based education, in particular the work of David Gruenewald, follows this section. The link between social justice and place-based curricula is appraised. Studies which have advocated the voice of young migrants are analysed next: papers which have specifically investigated the relationship between migrant students and the curriculum are conspicuous by their absence in academia, hence the need for studies of this kind. Two approaches to a theoretical framing of this study make up the last three sections of this chapter. Edward Soja’s concepts of Thirdspace and spatial justice are considered as a means by which migrant students’ relationship to place might be better understood. Finally, Wayne Au’s critical curriculum theory provides a structure for explaining how marginalised students are impacted by the prescribed curriculum; his concept of curricular standpoint provides practical ways in which this issue can be undertaken.

Chapter three covers the methodologies employed in this project. Some background is given about the school and students involved, including a summary table of all the participants for reference, and some photos (taken a few weeks before the interviews) of the school and its surroundings to give
context. This chapter also contains some comments about the difficulties of transcription along with a detailed description of the methods used to analyse the interviews. The use of narrative analysis is also discussed, as is the use of grounded theory. Overall, it is hoped that this chapter can be useful as a working document for other researchers: knowing how a piece of research was conducted gives the results more substance by enabling readers to understand fully the limitations, contexts and strengths of its claims.

Chapter four details and expands the themes that surfaced during the data analysis. Each section of the chapter has a short quotation from one of the students attached to it: “I wanted to tell you that” or “My home is Canada.” This is where the students tell their stories and describe their understanding of the social studies curriculum. The largest section in this chapter is devoted to curriculum. Entitled, “It wasn’t, like, part of the course” it reports on how these students understand the concept of migration, given that they have experienced migration firsthand. Chapter four also includes a section which reflects on what might be left out of these interviews: the presence of absence. This is perhaps ambiguous, but it is included to highlight an aspect of interviewing that is not often covered in research projects of this kind. At the end of this chapter, two summary sections are offered for consideration: one regarding place and social justice, which is an issue at the core of geography education, and a second which considers a particular curricular standpoint employed to frame the results of this project.

Chapter five is a discussion/conclusion. First, the original research questions are answered in summary: this acts as a prologue for the argument that follows. The case for teaching geography is set out - particularly for those students who are most disadvantaged, and especially for those who are first generation immigrants. Various propositions for change are made, in terms of both curriculum and pedagogy, along with some practical ideas for further research. Effectively, this thesis stands or falls on this last chapter. Either this project will be a catalyst for change within BC social studies education, or
it will be sidelined as a nice piece of research that is of no further value beyond providing me with an MA. The jury is out.

1.5 Voice

[Name of professor] was amazed that I would want to ask students what they wanted to learn. [Professor] thought that they would not have much of an idea. I’m hoping [professor] is wrong and that students will have some interesting and thought-provoking ideas. I want to keep in mind that this is not my curriculum to change, or even to teach: I want to gather evidence, thoughts, ideas, interviews. I want to keep open-minded...I don’t have a dog in this fight - I want to assess the lie of the land (how geographical!)...I want to offer my two cents, but in the end, it’s not my call, nor my position. (Journal entry, December 9, 2010)

Much of what I have written is in the first person. Since a sizeable portion of the data I collected was effectively narrative, I have written with story in mind - hence the use of journal entries to help illuminate my research. The intent is to take the reader through the course of each chapter pointing out what I was thinking and why, to explain the stances I have taken and the route I took to arrive at my findings. I wanted to be transparent in my explanations, and open with the difficulties I met with along the way. Most of all, I trust that the readers will get to know the students I interviewed, to listen carefully to what they had to say and to consider the implications of their stories. You will hear my British accent as you read: the use of British spelling is quite deliberate, as is the use of a majority of British authors and researchers. I stand outside the education system that I have researched. Although I have lived in Canada for eight years and have permanent residency, I inhabit a Thirdspace: a place that is neither British nor Canadian. It is a place from which I have the opportunity to investigate an issue as an outsider; although I have had the opportunity to teach the Social Studies 11 curriculum for myself, I
hold little attachment to it. It belongs to the students and teachers of British Columbia, and although I

can publish my findings and explain my conclusions, I am not in a position to decide what happens

next. It is not my call.
2. Literature Review

Geography. 1540s, from French, from Latin, from Greek, geographia "description of the earth's surface," from ge "earth" + -graphia "description," from graphein "write." (Online Etymology Dictionary)

2.1 Writing the Earth: geo-graphy in the curriculum

What is geography? Geography is concerned with place. Understanding the nature and causes of real differentiation on the global surface has been the geographer’s task since people first noticed difference between places. (The Royal Canadian Geographical Society, 2001, p.6)

Geography is concerned with place. That might be stating the blindingly obvious, but it is a statement that is loaded with ambiguity. Defining what a place (and the attendant ‘sense of place’) is - and what it is not - has been up for debate amongst geographers for decades: do places have borders? Are they fixed? Do places equate to locations? Can a place be imaginary? Cresswell’s distillation of these discussions is very helpful: “Places...are particular constellations of material things that occupy a particular segment of space and have sets of meanings attached to them” (Cresswell, 2008, p.135).

“Sense of place refers to the meanings, both individual and shared, that are associated with a place” (Cresswell, 2008, p.134). These are the definitions of place that will be used in this project to investigate student understanding of place.

What is agreed by all parties is that the idea of place should be at the core of the discipline of geography: a cursory review of geography curricula from the English-speaking world (a place?) indicates that place is something that every school pupil should know about. For example, the diploma programme for the International Baccalaureate is emphatic that, “The aims of the geography syllabus...are to enable students to develop an understanding of the interrelationships between people,
places, spaces, and the environment (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2009, p.6). The framework for the Australian National Curriculum lists place and space as key ideas in geography (McInerney et al., 2009, p.26): “Geography is the study of places...the characteristics of places...relationships between places” (McInerney et al., 2009, p.7). In England and Wales, the guidelines for the National Curriculum for Key Stage 3 (first three years of secondary school; Year 7 to Year 9) lists place as a key concept in geography, and prescribes that students should develop geographical imaginations of places. The UK Geographical Association’s recently published guide to geography education, entitled A Different View, suggests an “essential educational outcome” should be that students are able to think geographically, and specifically understand how “space is used and humanised to create meaningful places” (The Geographical Association, 2009, p.10). Students should be able to recognise the “similarities and differences across the world and [develop] knowledge and understanding of location, interconnectedness and spatial patterns” (The Geographical Association, 2009, p.11). These ideas are developed further in the specification for UK Advanced Level courses (last two years of secondary school). For example, two of the human geography units offered within the widely used Edexcel syllabus are Unequal Spaces (exploring urban and rural disparities) and Rebranding Places (focussing on how rural and urban places can be regenerated) (Edexcel, 2009, p.31). The 2001 Canadian National Standards for Geography designates six “essential elements” of geography (The Royal Canadian Geographical Society, 2001, p.2). The element of “Places and Regions” is listed with the explanation: “The identities and lives of individuals and peoples are rooted in particular places and regions, each of which had distinctive human and physical characteristics” (The Royal Canadian Geographical Society, 2001, p.2). In British Columbia, the framework for teaching geography is based on five themes developed by an American joint committee of geography educators...
in 1984: location, place, human/environmental interactions, movement and regions. These themes form the basis of the BC 2006 Geography 12 Integrated Resource Package; place is listed under “themes and skills” as one of the “five important geography themes” (BC Ministry of Education, 2006, p.4): one of the prescribed learning outcomes for Geography 12 is that students will be able to explain these five themes (BC Ministry of Education, 2006, p.16). Given that the concept of place is such a fundamental element in geography in general, and in the BC curriculum in particular, one of the aims of this research project will be to determine in what ways the experience of immigration has shaped first generation migrant students’ understanding of place.

2.2 Place in geography

*People are attracted to geography for a range of reasons...For many, the initial fascination is aroused through an interest in places, their characteristics and variety.* (Johnston, 1996, p.59)

Having concluded that place should be at the core of geography education, geographers over the years have attempted to explain why this is so, and why it is so crucial that students should have an understanding of what place means. Curiosity about the world around us seems to be hardwired in humans. Fascination at the recent photos sent back from the (aptly named) Mars explorer in 2012 is a good illustration. Therefore, school geography is one of the ways in which young people have the opportunity to find out more about places that they may well already be interested in. Although field trips to Mars may not yet be available, geography should be a means by which curiosity about our surroundings is nurtured: geography should be “generating of interest in a dimension [i.e. place] which influences the actions and explanations of everyday life” (Walford, 1984, p.4); in other words,

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geography should help students investigate and appreciate places both near and far, real and imagined, using (for example) Rawling’s (1991) enquiry questions: What is this place like? What do people feel about it? How did it get like this? How is it changing? With what consequences? However, these questions only get us so far.

Curiosity about our surroundings does not entirely answer why place is so important to us. Take a look at a friend’s holiday photos from a trip to New York, and you can guarantee somewhere there will be a photo of the Statue of Liberty: New York’s identity is interwoven with that of Lady Liberty. Cooke (2008) suggests that one of the reasons for building public art or iconic buildings is that it is an act of place definition - a way of saying that this place is different and special (p.13). Place and identity are closely linked, and so a student’s identity will be partly embedded in where they live, or perhaps more succinctly, where they call home. Where are you? rather than, Who are you? becomes the important question. Huckle suggests that being aware of their place in the world helps students form their identity and to take in “their sense of longing and belonging” within a community (Huckle, 1997, p.248). Longing is an interesting choice of word; it suggests that young people have an inbuilt need to find a place where they feel at home. Johnson concurs with this idea, suggesting that, “People become what they are because of where they are, and places in turn become what they are, because of the people who live in them” (Johnston, 1996, p.65, italics added). Once students have a grasp of where they are, they can then begin to see how the element of place connects their home town or community to the rest of the world. Lambert’s view is that by helping students to understand place, they will begin to make sense of the wider world and begin to make links between the local and global issues, and, in addition, see how those connections might play out in the future - in short, how the temporal and the spatial are inter-folded. Lambert makes the case that geography teaching should both deepen and broaden “young people’s understanding of the world in which they live and which they will
inherit” (Lambert, 2009, p.7, italics added). He suggests that a ‘living geography’ for schools should actively include student’s experiences and encounters with the world, and perhaps most importantly, take seriously what students make of these things. Helfenbein (2008) gets right to the crux of the matter: “educators must know where kids are coming from” (p.193). Thomson (2010) advocates “making space in the curriculum for...family, local and community knowledge” (Thomson, 2010, p.128, italics added). Morgan (2009) argues that by including “spaces of everyday life” (p.8) in geography lessons, students can begin to understand how their lived geographies are a part of global processes.

Geography educators, therefore, need to consider their own outlook on life - whatever values we cling to, or philosophies we aspire to, or prejudices we hold, will inevitably creep into our teaching; we have a hidden curriculum that is not always so hidden as we think. Writing for prospective geography teachers, Daniels reminds us: “Geographers must confront their own assumptions and value judgements that shape the way they look at the world” (Daniels et al., 2001, p.3). The official geography curriculum, too, has distinct values and viewpoints woven into it. Huckle explains: “What counts as school geography (its content, teaching methods and assessment) is largely, but not wholly, determined by dominant groups and interests in society...” (Huckle, 1997, p.242). If, as Morgan suggests, official school geography claims to “represent the world as it is” (Morgan, 2002, p.22), then it is incumbent upon geography teachers to point that out to our students. For example, residents of Vancouver will have a different perspective of the impact of climate change in the Canadian Arctic from those who live in the Northern Territories. How Canadians understand conflict in East Africa, whether they consider colonisation, religion or oil exploration, will be at odds with the view of those who are helping to negotiate the border between North and South Sudan. The atlas does not tell the whole story, and any claims to knowledge should be held up to scrutiny. Morgan suggests that students
should be taught how to assess school texts “to critique the reified view of knowledge” (Morgan, 2002, p.25). Teaching About Critical Thinking (Bahbahani et al., 2008), developed for geography teachers in BC, devotes a chapter to teaching sense of place. The authors encourage teachers to avoid imposing their own perceptions of a place, and help students to do the same; for example, to not presume that the social practices and natural features in one place mean the same to people in another place. (Bahbahani et al., 2008, p.63)

2.2.1 A place called home

_Toni Morrison’s writing...undermines for ever any notion that everyone had a place called home which they could look back on, a place not only where they belonged, but which belonged to them and where they could afford to locate their identities._ (Massey, 1994, p.166)

When I was at secondary school, place was all about models and measuring; Christaller’s central place theory was held up as an example of how real geographers think about place: everything in order, everything predictable, no surprises; the kind of stuff that makes positivists happy. Times and places have changed, and both temporal and spatial thinking has moved on. Doreen Massey is not your common-all-garden geographer; it is hard to put a label on her: post-modern, post-structural or just plain post. Her writing about place is unique and complex, the kind of writing that has people seeing place differently. First off, Massey points out that the notion of place has been largely unexamined: “Place is posed as a source of stability and unproblematical identity” (Massey, 1993, p.63). The tried and tested geographical premise that a place is a space or location that is significant simply won’t do. With a nod to Jameson, Massey suggests that our notions of sense of place need not be static and
defensive. Rethinking ‘space identity’ (Massey’s term) requires putting to one side the “old order of prescriptive and exclusive places” (Massey, 1994, p.162). Although we, like Jameson, might need a little cognitive mapping to get our bearings, and although we might feel somewhat placeless and disorientated by “new technologies of communication” which have made the world so much smaller, most of us still live in very ordinary places: “Much of life for many people...still consists of waiting in a bus shelter with your shopping for a bus that never comes” (Massey, 1994, p.163). Massey suggests our difficulty is perhaps because place has been so often equated with community, which in turn has provided the basis for identity. It is hard to think about our place in the world without considering such spatial-laden concepts as nation, region or neighbourhood. Although the notion of place might have lost those nice hexagonal borders that Mr. Christaller so carefully drew for us, there is no need to worry. Places are still there, but their identity is constructed not so much from bricks and mortar as from interactions with elsewhere. According to Massey, place is formed out of a distinct set of social relations which interact at a specific location: “What gives place its specificity...[is that]...it is constructed out of a particular constellation of relations, articulated together at a particular locus” (Massey, 1993, p.66). Places are not just red dots on a map; they are intersections of social relations and movements. They are not static, they are processes (p.66). What makes a place unique is not the space it occupies, it is not is about degrees of longitude and latitude or square kilometres. It is about social relations that converge at a particular location; distinctiveness is created when the “juxtaposition of these relations may produce effects that would not have happened otherwise” (Massey, 1993, p.68). A sense of place - what we might longingly call ‘home’ - is found in the relationship between place and space.

Massey also takes up (and builds on) David Harvey’s concept of time-space compression. This refers to the “collapse of spatial barriers that has undermined the older material and territorial
definitions of place” (Harvey, 1993); it describes how rapid technological changes and advancing globalisation have changed the definition of place. Massey argues that this time-space compression has resulted in the geographical stretching-out of social relations that requires adjustment by individuals and social groups. Some groups ability to negotiate and to benefit from these changes will be different to others. Massey considers the classroom application of these ideas in the Secondary Geography Handbook: “one of the things a geographical discipline can bring to that is a rigour in the way in which we imagine those essential geographical notions: space and place” (Massey, 2006, p.48). She argues that students should be encouraged to think of places as “complex, internally differentiated meeting places of different people, different groups and different ethnicities” (Massey, 2006, p.51). In this way, students can explore the idea of place from different perspectives; to realise that places are complex and contested, and that geographies of the mind which inform understanding of place need to be an imaginative or figurative value we can name and feel.

2.2.2 Identity and place

There are places I remember

All my life, though some have changed

Some forever not for better

Some have gone and some remain

All these places have their moments...

(Lennon/McCartney, In My Life, 1965)

Contemporary urban geographies have worked extensively with conceptualisations of space and place and their importance for both identifications and identity formation. (Reay & Lucey, 2000, p.410)
The impact of this time-space compression is seen in reality in recent ethnographies that have explored the lives of teenagers from communities that are economically disadvantaged. Nayak’s ‘Real Geordies’ are a lively lot. Keen to spend their weekends watching football and drinking in local pubs, these young men define themselves by place. It is in their name. The term ‘Geordie’ refers to people with a geographical allegiance to the North-east of England. Like ‘Scouser’ in the area around Liverpool, ‘Geordie’ is a badge of honour in Newcastle. For the lads in Nayak’s ethnography, it is all about place: history is attached to it, relationships depend upon it and futures revolve around it. ‘Real Geordie’ identity is deeply connected to a particular locality (described by Nayak as a “landscape of power”) (Nayak, 2006, p.815). North-east England has undergone a huge upheaval over the past few decades, as a result of the decline of heavy industry in the region. However, as the shipbuilding and mining industries have all but disappeared, place-based identities remain significant, and have become more entrenched (Nayak, 2003a, p.156). The Real Geordies are determined to preserve traditions and pastimes handed down from their fathers and grandfathers, despite their changed circumstances and cloudy futures. Nayak observes, “the embodied practices of the Real Geordies would denote that young people are constructing a new sense of place from the rusting metal carnage of deindustrialisation” (Nayak, 2003b, p.22). Here, then, is the Real Geordies time-space compression: “Like flies in amber”, they are caught in a dilemma: wanting to carry on with the values from an older period, but having to face the realities of social and economic change in an area they feel strongly anchored to (Nayak, 2003b, p.16).

Nayak’s 2006 paper, *Displaced Masculinities* (my emphasis) takes a look at another group of teenagers: the ‘Charver Lads’. Although they are similar to the Real Geordies in their socio-economic circumstances, without an identity that is attached to a physical locality, the Charver Lads find

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5 Charver or Chav is a derogatory British term for the “uneducated, lower-class, and vulgarly-dressed.” The term has proved controversial; to some its use is seen as an attack on working-class poor. (BBC News website, June 3, 2011, retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-13626046).
themselves chained to a place not of their choosing.\textsuperscript{6} Living within nondescript, run-down
neighbourhoods, the Charver Lads response to encroaching globalisation and its attendant stripping of
local identity is to become more isolated than ever before (Nayak, 2006, p.827). Without the cultural or
financial capital required to adapt to the changing employment landscape, Nayak observes how these
lads struggle to find identity in “the shift to post-modernity, or the meaningless of place in the ‘new
times’” (Nayak, 2006, p.828).

Shaun’s Story (Reay, 2002) is not unlike that of the ‘Charver Lads’. He is the oldest child of a
single mum living on a social housing estate in the centre of London, UK. Reay makes heavy use of
Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts to try and understand Shaun’s place in the world, and in particular, the
difficulty he faces in trying to adapt his working-class Irish identity to his life at school: “We would
expect Shaun...to feel at home in the poor, inner-city, working-class, ethnically mixed [secondary
school] he ends up in” (Reay, 2002, p.223). However, being more academically able than most of his
peers, he finds himself in a locality that is hugely uncomfortable for him. His sense of place is torn
between wanting to stay true to his cultural background and Irish working-class roots whilst wanting to
make the most of his academic ability: “He is positioned in an untenable space on the boundaries of
two irreconcilable ways of being” (Reay, 2002, p.223).

“I don’t really like it here, but I don’t want to be anywhere else,” says Alice. Her comments sum
up Raey and Lucey’s research examining the connections between place and identity. The teenagers in
their study have complex relationships with the places in which they live, and their feelings about their
locales is often conflicted: “I don’t know really, it’s just that I’ve grown up in there and I feel that’s
where I should be” (‘Joe’, in Raey & Lucey, 2000, p.423). They point out that places are infused with
meanings and feelings (Raey & Lucey, 2000, p.415); these young people had a strong sense of

belonging, but had a yearning to be somewhere else. For Reay and Lucey, there is an additional issue of social justice embedded in place that needs to be both acknowledged and investigated further by students from economically disadvantaged areas: “...space needs to be made for working-class understandings of locality and place to counter the hegemony of middle-class versions” (Reay & Lucey, 2000, p.425).

Recent British ethnographies (for example, Skelton (2000); Kehily & Nayak (2008)), have investigated the differences between genders in negotiating space. In Nothing to Do, Nowhere to Go, Skelton focusses on the lives of young women in the Rhondda Valley of South Wales, UK. This region similar to Real Geordie country, is still reeling from deindustrialisation that dates back thirty years. However, by taking advantage of social networking and global connections, these girls have been more adept at negotiating the resulting time-space compression. Even though much of their time outside school is spent hanging out on the neighbourhood streets (Skelton, 2000, p.90), in their “private domestic spaces,” (in most cases their bedrooms) they successfully connected with the outside world. Having access to the internet allowed them to “create their own spaces and to choose how to behave within them” (Skelton, 2000, p.94); they were skilfully making use of an aspect of globalisation that perhaps the Real Geordies and Charver Lads were either unable or unwilling to do. Kehily and Nayak note the same phenomenon. Quoting McGrellis’ (2005) research in Northern Ireland, they conclude that young are women happy to “access cosmopolitan culture in urban spaces beyond the local, while young men remained rooted in...structures that harnessed them with local boundaries” (Kehily & Nayak, 2008, p.329). In very general terms, young women appear to be more adept at embracing the more social aspects of new technologies, whereas young men are slower to recognise the value of interconnectedness. For this project, it will be interesting to discover whether there are marked
differences between genders regarding how they manage time-space compression, and whether they make mention of the ways in which they personally connect with friends and family.

2.3 Reading the texts of our lives

_Schools and teachers need to engage in the development of area or place-based curricula that reach out and enable the different funds of knowledge of young people and communities to be respected and utilised in schools._ (Raffo, 2011, p.13)

David Gruenewald has long called for a critical pedagogy that reflects the importance of the spatial in social justice. “Human beings are because they are in a situation” (Gruenewald, 2008a, p. 310). If students are able to examine and understand the places (real or otherwise) that they inhabit, they are more likely to engage in reflection and action (praxis) that has the potential for making the world a better place (Gruenewald, 2008a, p.311). Since places shape cultural identities, a place-based curriculum should relate directly to student experience of the world, and should seek to improve the quality of life of the communities in which students live (Gruenewald, 2008a, p.315). A generic, _placeless_ curriculum will not do. Gruenewald introduces the concepts of ‘rehabitation’ and ‘decolonisation’ to frame his vision of a curriculum that would both teach students how to live well in their local environment (rehabitation) as well as identify ways of thinking that injure and exploit other people and places (decolonisation) (Gruenewald, 2008a, p.319). A critical pedagogy of place would therefore “explicitly examine the place-specific nexus between environment, culture and education” (p. 320). Gruenewald’s contention is that a place-based education must incorporate the ways in which students understand their own geographies rather than impose a curriculum that is derived from the hegemonic (read: White, middle-class, middle-aged) view of the world. A curriculum that seeks to impose a particular standpoint on global issues will fall short if there is no connection between the
student’s situation and that of the educator; learning about environmental issues will be meaningless if other aspects of students’ lives have priority: “It’s hard to be concerned about the environment when someone’s foot is on your neck” (Gruenewald, 2008b, p.145).

### 2.4 Voice of young migrants

By 2016, foreign-born youth and Canadian-born youth from immigrant families will make up a quarter of the country’s population...as their numbers grow, more attention is being paid to their successes and failures. (CBC, Generation One, 2012a)

Canadian research that specifically investigates how first generation teenagers manage the impact of migration on their lives is thin on the ground; a rummage around the archives unearths either studies from the USA (often Latino/Latina youth) or investigations concerning adult migrants. There are some studies in which refugee and asylum seeking children have been interviewed, but few contain details of school life. Some studies are focussed on how schools and teacher development can meet the needs of emerging bilingual students. How the experience of family migration squares with the high school curriculum is barely thought about. It would seem, therefore, that this study is both timely and pertinent.

Irizarry and Kleyn’s (2011) research notes that, “Immigrant students are with teachers who may have the best intentions but are not adequately prepared to work with them” (p.11). They observe that the learning of many refugee students is severely affected by their experiences. This is perhaps a given; students from such circumstances will inevitably require extra resources to settle into school life. However, the authors do pick up on the issue of migrant student voice; they conclude, “what is often missing from...school reform efforts in districts serving immigrant youth are the voices and perspectives of immigrant students themselves” (Irizarry & Kleyn, 2011, p.12). This study is quite
deliberately student centred for this very reason - many of the studies available describe the difficulties that migrant students are having, but rarely ask the students themselves what help they need; the assumption is made that they just do not know. Clearly, younger children may struggle to articulate what their needs are, but older teenagers have knowledge and insight that is perhaps not being utilised by school districts. Irizarry and Kleyn pick up on an aspect of classroom learning that is so obvious that it is consistently overlooked: there is often a gulf between migrant students and their teachers in terms of life experiences and cultural background. As a result, these students “often experience schools as hostile spaces that are difficult to navigate” (Irizarry & Kleyn, 2011, p.19, italics added). They suggest that schools should respond by building on “the strengths and knowledge base immigrants bring with them to school,” concluding that courage is required by those in the educational establishment to ensure that the voices of immigrant youth are “fully heard, appreciated and appropriately responded to within policy debates around immigration or school reform efforts” (Irizarry & Kleyn, 2011, p.23). Why is courage required? Surely one of the underlying principles of public education is that is the job of every teacher to strive to provide the best possible education for every student, regardless of background or culture. Courage should not come into it; it should just be part of everyday practice, surely?

Mary Adams’ (2009) research looks into projects that assist young asylum seekers and refugees. Adams notes that the goal of these efforts is emancipatory: “to give each child a voice and to recognise each as a self-directed, entitled and unique and so authoritative subject” (Adams, 2009, p.167). However, Adams observes that the young people within the asylum-seeking system feel obliged to describe experiences in ways that “would be deemed legitimate by others” (Adams, 2009, p.168). She conveys the sense that these young people are doing their level best to prove themselves; to be seen as creditable, particularly by those in authority. This is a note of caution for this project, to understand that the answers I have been given may not always have been the whole unvarnished story.
Studies in different countries have sought to find out the perspective of school teachers and other educators responsible for meeting the educational needs of migrant students. Devine’s (2005) research in Ireland highlights the teachers’ tendency to overlook cultural differences between students, and like Irizarry and Kleyn, comments on the cultural gap between students and teachers. She considers how the relatively more powerful position of the teachers (in terms of race and class) has an impact on their perception of migrant students: “teachers tend to be White, Catholic and sedentary - very much embedded in the life world of the dominant ethnic group in Irish society” (Devine, 2005 p.53). Devine notes that teachers seem more welcoming of East European Catholic students, than those of African or Muslim heritage (Devine, 2005, p.64), and that their prime goal is the integration of immigrants; for them to “be the same” as their Irish peers (p.65).

Hersi’s (2011) work observes that teachers often act as cultural brokers for their students (p.198), and although they set high expectations for migrant students, and believe in their academic ability, these students also require, tangible, material support (Hersi, 2011, p.199). Hersi suggests that teachers need to look beyond the school walls to be effective in understanding the worldview of migrants, for example, “educators need to understand how students’ family contexts work to connect families to the school community” (p.199).

Schellenberg’s (2011) study is a rare glimpse into the lives of migrant students in Canada: in this case, a rural community in southern Manitoba, close to the border with the USA. Her research centres on how an influx of migrant students might impact teacher development, given that migrant students present “new challenges and new opportunities for...teachers to extend their professional skills” (Schellenberg, 2011, p.279). She concludes that the “changing demographics in the region have created a pressing need for teachers to shift...to student-centred pedagogical approaches to support diverse learners sharing a common curriculum and classroom” (Schellenberg, 2011, p.280). This is
perhaps what would be expected of any classroom since diversity is not confined to nationality or culture: ‘every child is special, every child has special needs.’ Schellenberg suggests that deep changes are needed to teachers’ core beliefs, and that professional development should challenge misconceptions. She provides a practical list of suggestions for teacher education in this regard, although none of them consider how the curriculum could be adapted to assist migrant students.

Fitchett and Salas suggest that teacher educators should encourage students to investigate current immigration to the USA, analysing it in comparison to past migrations to the States (Fitchett & Salas, 2010, p.96). However, they found that many teachers were avoiding the topic of immigration, finding it too controversial, particularly concerning immigrant rights (Fitchett & Salas, 2010, p.98). As a result, “transnational identities and other contemporary immigrant experiences are ignored or disparaged in citizenship curriculum” (p.98). The CBC’s recent programme (Generation One) reported on the lives of first generation students living in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The reporter spoke with several teenagers who were grappling with the desire to fit into Canadian high school culture whilst negotiating home lives that were still very much connected to their country of heritage: “Generation One citizens...often find themselves on a difficult journey consolidating the identity of their peers with that of their families’ culture” (CBC, 2012a). Ronia’s story was not atypical. By the age of 16, Ronia was living in a group home, having made the brave decision to leave her family home. Her parents’ Iraqi/muslim culture was increasingly at odds with her own identity: “My parents don’t like the way I dress...they want me to be like them, but I don’t know anything about their culture...to Canadians I’m just a really nice girl” (Ronia Arab). Although it is a concept associated with conflicts inherent in developing a black identity in a society dominated by a white majority (Wallach, 2005, p265), ‘double consciousness’ may serve to describe and analyse how first generation students construct their identities, given that there is often a tension between what happens at school and how they conduct...
themselves at home. Double consciousness was introduced in 1903 by writer and activist W.E.B. Du Bois: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (Du Bois, 1903).

2.5 Thirdspace

Thirdspace is a concept that is as infuriating as it is brilliant. The term, first used by Homi Bhabha to investigate the locations of emerging hybrid cultures in postcolonial cities, is an idea that has been embraced by sociologists and geographers over the past three decades, especially by human geographers, who have attempted to draw away from the idea of place being fixed and defined only in terms of what can be physically experienced. Soja deliberately avoids attempts to nail down a dictionary definition of Thirdspace: his use of Thirdspace as a “way of thinking about space and social spatiality” is, in his thinking, “purposefully tentative and flexible” (Soja, 1996, p.2). In Thirdspace: journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places (1996), Soja builds on the work of sociologist Henri Lefebvre, and in particular, La Production de l’espace (Production of Space) (1974/1991). Borrowing from Lefebvre, Soja proposes a “ontological trialectic”, which is a “crude picture of the nature of social being, human existence” (Soja, 1996, p.70). This “trialectic of being” (p. 71), which combines social, historical and spatial aspects of human life, is the basis for Soja’s thinking on spatiality. Using a third element is Soja’s way of avoiding binaries: space neither real or imagined - it can be both. Again, he is using Lefebvre’s terminology; Soja’s “trialectic of space” (Soja, 1996, p.74) consists of three distinct forms of spatiality: lived (or real), perceived (or imagined) and conceived (Thirdspace).

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Thirdspace has a variety of spellings depending on the author. Throughout this document I have purposefully used Soja’s spelling and capitalisation.
To define Thirdspace, it is perhaps easier to say what it is not rather than what it is. It is not Firstspace which refers to the material world, the world that can be seen and touched and smelled. This could be a firsthand experience of a wilderness region, or in Soja’s case, the streets of Los Angeles: architecture, infrastructure, function. Thirdspace is not wholly imagined - that is Secondspace: a geography of the mind; how people perceive places. For example, if you were to ask a Canadian to draw a map of Paris, or ask an American what Afghanistan is like. Thirdspace combines the two; its an attempt to describe “the Other” in social geography; a place is that is both real and imagined; a conceived space where “Firstspace and Secondspace combine to create a lived experience” (Bustin, 2011b, p.55). Soja’s intention is that Thirdspace should not be locked down as a theory, “it is not sanctified in and of itself” (Soja, 1996, p.61). He sees it as a framework with which to “build further, to move on, to continuously expand the production of knowledge beyond what is presently known” (p. 61). Using Thirdspace in this project is both a risk and a possibility; it is a term that may be unwieldy, but has the potential to reveal aspects of migrants lived experience that might otherwise go unreported or unscrutinised.

2.5.1 Thirdspace and young peoples’ geographies

Central to Bhabha’s thesis has been the understanding that identity is produced through (in)between spaces which provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood.

(Matthews et al., 2000, p.64)

One of the hardest aspects of immigrating from the UK to Canada has been adjusting identity; although the move may be permanent, identity is not. Am I British or Canadian? British-Canadian? Neither? The question of who I am in terms of culture or nationality is nearly impossible to answer. I am navigating Soja’s Bermuda Triangle of social, spatial and historical aspects of everyday living (Soja, 1996, p.3): socially I generally fit in with the culture of Vancouver - being white, middle-class
and middle-aged presents few social barriers. I have struggled with the historical aspects of this move. Dragging around White Guilt associated with a history of Empire is uncomfortable at best; transforming guilt into more useful responsibility is a work in progress. However, spatially, I am (literally) all over the map. I have strong ties to family and friends in the UK, but I am physically located half way round the world from them. I am stuck with an eight hour time difference, and hopping on a plane to go back to the UK on a regular basis is both emotionally and financially prohibitive. If identity is attached to place, then to articulate where I am is the most difficult - I am likely to give a different answer on any given day. If I have to describe this real-and-imagined place from which I now take my identity, Thirdspace is the closest I get. I was curious, therefore, to discover how first generation students understand the geographical concept of place given their first hand experiences of immigration, and whether Thirdspace helps them explain their sense of place.

Hongyu (2006), Sonu and Moon (2009), Sardinha (2011) and Matthews et al. (2000) are recent examples of studies in which Thirdspace has been successfully used to describe and explain young people’s sense of place. For migrant students, having bonds to different places called home gives them a perspective on place that is worth incorporating into the curriculum: “Standing on the margins of two worlds, the [migrant]...has a unique opportunity to see two landscapes simultaneously” (Hongyu, 2006, p.112). The author draws on Thirdspace to articulate her place in the world as an immigrant to the USA; she, too struggles to describe this real-and-imagined space that she occupies: “struggling with an in-between realm, I am in constant search for a cross-cultural identity which is neither confined within one space nor trapped between two spaces” (Hongyu, 2006, p.113). Being a first generation migrant requires wrestling with different cultures and ways of thinking to find a space that is somehow genuine: “A third space cannot be assumed, it must be created” (p.111).
Sonu and Moon (2009) discuss how identity is tied to place, and use Thirdspace to shed some light on this phenomenon: “[Thirdspace is] an attempt to share how geographical displacement...play(s) into our sense of identity” (p.143). They note how this displacement is not necessarily negative, having observed young migrants constructing new identities, “The loss of home-and-homeland, although devastating at first, creates a space to unleash a sense of self less restrained by geographical borders and ethical loyalties” (Sonu & Moon, 2009, p.157). The authors also see opportunities to accommodate student knowledge regarding immigration into the curriculum, and in doing so, challenge the homogenised categories of culture and nation that “haunt our racially divided multicultural curriculum” (Sonu & Moon, 2009, p.159). Thirdspace allows migrant stories to be one-of-a-kind: literally, sui generis. “Thirdspace is an-Other way...no matter how much you are similar...your story is never my story” (p.159). It will be interesting to see whether migrant students see themselves in the stories of migration that they are taught in social studies; whether they can make connections between their understanding of place and those of historical or contemporary migration.

Sardinha’s (2011) article makes use of Thirdspace to describe the tension created by being of Portuguese heritage, but living in Canada, and so designated ‘Portuguese-Canadian.’ Sardinha equates Thirdspace with the hyphen between ‘Portuguese’ and ‘Canadian’; identities are found somewhere along the dash between the two cultures. He observes friends and family displaying “dual-senses of belonging, each one possessing differing degrees of attachment to the opposing ends of the hyphen” (Sardinha, 2011, p.385). It is a helpful description, which could be of use when trying to measure where migrant students place themselves between the culture they have inherited from their family, and the culture that they have moved to. Sardinha observes: “Most interviewees do not possess a single, clear-cut and unmistakable ethic identity, but instead are divided into various cultures and split
among various loyalties. The creation of a third space is, therefore, a fitting description of the space these individuals have settled into” (Sardinha, 2011, p. 386).

Matthews et al.’s book chapter entitled, *The Street as Thirdspace*, has a slightly different take on how Thirdspace can be used to observe how young people negotiate geographical space; in this study the authors describe the streets where teenagers hang out as safe spaces where young people can gather to affirm their sense of difference and celebrate their feelings of belonging (Matthews et al., 2000, p. 64). In this case Thirdspace is the “space between cultures” (p.69) that the streets provide. In this real-and-imagined domain the space between adult and child is successfully negotiated. Matthews et al. conclude that they found, “Considerable strength in use of Thirdspace as a concept when focussing on young people’s everyday experiences” (Matthews et al., 2000, p.77). Likewise, it is hoped that Thirdspace will be a worthwhile implement with which to analyse the impact that migration has had on the lives of the students for this project, specifically in finding out how first generation students conceive of the place they now occupy.

2.6 Spatial justice: curriculum for the disadvantaged

[A] kind of paradigm shift is occurring; we are perhaps now acceding to a new, invigorated sense of looking at the struggle over geography in interesting and imaginative ways.

(Said, 1993)

The choice of high school for this study is calculated; speaking to students from a relatively economically disadvantaged neighbourhood presents an opportunity to evaluate Soja’s ideas concerning spatial justice. Soja suggests that, there needs to be a greater emphasis on finding out “how spatiality and spatial processes shape social relations of all kinds” (Soja, 2010, p.18); in this case how the neighbourhood has shaped the composition of the school, and how geography shapes how these students live. Soja maintains that justice is both social and spatial, “space - like justice is never simply
handed out or given...both are socially produced, experienced and contested on constantly shifting
social, political, economic, and geographical terrains” (Soja, 2010, p.28).

Connell’s (1993) standpoint of the least advantaged argues that the “the current hegemonic
curriculum embodies the interests of the most advantaged. Justice requires a counter-hegemonic
curriculum...designed to embody the interests and perspectives of the least advantaged” (Connell, 1993,
p.44). This means that those schools whose geography adversely affects student wellbeing should
deliberately and consistently incorporate the values, culture and beliefs of the students that it serves.
This study will investigate whether migrant students’ voices are being heard, whether their perspectives
are being incorporated into the curriculum.

2.7 Curricular standpoint

If we put before the mind’s eye the ordinary schoolroom, with its rows of ugly desks placed
in geometrical order, crowded together...all is made for ‘listening’...it marks the dependency
of one mind upon another...child is to take in as much as possible in the least possible time.
(Dewey, 1907, p.48)

Critical educators...[re-imagine] schools and classrooms as social justice building spaces.
(Anyon, 2011, p.99)

Garret Keizer is a retired English teacher, who recently returned to the classroom after a
fourteen year break. His article, written at the end of his year-long stint, illustrates the paucity of socio-
political awareness amongst high school students living in an economically disadvantaged county in
Vermont, USA. On the morning after Osama bin Laden is killed, he writes some words from Homer’s
Odyssey on the blackboard: “To glory over slain men is no piety”. He expects a barrage of questions
and comments, but none are forthcoming. After three days, no-one has asked him what the words mean
or what they are doing on his blackboard (Keizer, 2011, p.37-38). You could argue that instead of waiting for his students to ask, Keizer should have initiated a conversation about the rights and wrongs of USA military engagement in Afghanistan, and how such political decisions affect the lives of American citizens. That said, Keizer’s point is that these students were either unwilling or unable to engage in discussion about topics that, at first glance, have little direct impact on them. Several critical educators have argued that it is imperative that school children - and especially those who are the least economically advantaged - should be given opportunities forge links between the curriculum that they are taught in school with their everyday lives, and in doing so, gain a greater, and more nuanced understanding of social and political issues. “Forge” suggests that this is not an easy given; this kind of pedagogy requires defiance and determination; it requires persistence and conviction on the part of educators. Perhaps more than any other discipline, social studies is best placed to provide the arena for such an education.

John Dewey must be rolling in his grave. His call to deliberately incorporate children's own knowledge and experience into the school curriculum seems to have been largely ignored - at least in secondary education. His extraordinary vision of child-centred schooling, in which students are fully engaged in their own learning seems to be as far off as ever. All too often, decisions regarding pedagogy and curriculum become embroiled in political ideology; the case for including student knowledge in the curriculum is lost in the squabbling over standardised testing. Even if all parties agreed with Dewey’s thesis, the thought of re-working a curriculum and its attendant teacher education and rewriting of lesson plans is overwhelming - a point not lost on Dewey: “to transform the material; ....to take it and develop it within the range and scope of the child’s life. But it is easier and simpler to leave it as it is” (Dewey, 1902, p.122).
In a benchmark study of how social class has an impact on school knowledge, Anyon (1981) distinguishes between reproductive and non-reproductive school knowledge: reproductive knowledge perpetuates hegemony, whereas nonreproductive knowledge (and especially student created knowledge) facilitates a “fundamental transformation” of ideologies and practices (Anyon, 1981, p.31). She observes students struggling against a “foreign curriculum” (p.33), that not only did not reflect their own life experiences, but also ensured the preservation of social inequality: “The reification of ideas and knowledge into given facts and generalisations that exist separately from one’s biography or discovery contributes to the commodification of knowledge” (Anyon, 1981, p.31). Thirty years later, Anyon is still as unequivocal in her call for students to be taught a social studies curriculum that engages students in social issues that are personal to them, and which equips them with the know-how needed to make effectual change: “When critical educators involve students in contention via issue campaigns, we teach students the civic skills necessary for meaningful participation...which can create in them a sense of efficacy as change agents and effective actors in their communities” (Anyon, 2011, p.102).

I like Michael Apple. Observing him in action as a discussant the 2012 AERA conference, I was struck by how angry he still is; really spitting-feathers-angry. But he is angry in a good way; angry that there is still so much to be done to improve public education in North America, angry that political infighting and entrenched ideology has effectively hamstrung progress, angry that so much research and academic study has fallen on deaf ears on both sides of the forty-ninth parallel. Much of Apple’s work centres around exposing how official school curriculum maintains social inequality. In Ideology and Curriculum, Apple rails against the hegemony of public education; his questions are not designed to gently prod, they are loud and demanding: “Whose knowledge is it? Who selected it? Why is it

organised and taught in this way?” (Apple, 2009, p.6). It is as if he is yelling in your face: the official curriculum must be interrogated; as educators we need to be aware of the hidden curricula that we carry around with us; we must be careful not to be so debilitated by the day-in day-out schlep of teaching that we have no energy left to reflect on what we are personally teaching and why. If not, the hegemony will continue, and social inequality will remain unchallenged. The established curriculum will be taught ad nauseum until we chose to do otherwise: “Social and economic values...are already embedded in the design of the institutions we work in, in the ‘formal corpus of school knowledge’ we preserve our curricula, in our modes of teaching, and in our principles, standards, and forms of evaluation. Since these values now work through us, often unconsciously, the issue is not how to stand above the choice. Rather it is in what values I must ultimately chose” (Apple, 2009, p.8). However, Apple is not all fire and brimstone - underlying the raging there is hope: “We ignore the fact that the kinds of institutional and cultural arrangements which control us were built by us. They can be rebuilt as well” (Apple, 2009, p.11). This project is limited in scope - I’ll have to pass on Apple’s call for researchers to live in the classroom - but there is possibility for this study to uncover “which particular ‘kinds’ of students ‘get’ what particular kinds of knowledge and dispositions” (Apple, 2009, p.15); in this case, whether first generation migrant students ‘get’ the geographical concept of place, and whether they are able to connect their own experience to the official version of migration taught in social studies.

It is no surprise that Michael Apple wrote the introduction to Wayne Au’s book entitled Critical Curriculum Studies: their stance on curriculum is very similar. However, whereas Apple writes with all guns blazing, Au wants to reason with us. His arguments are meticulously thought through and carefully structured: he moves from point to point in a logical manner, patiently repeating important ideas. His ‘curricular standpoint’ is an adaptation of Lukacs’ (1971) standpoint theory, and in developing his thesis, he cherry picks from a variety of curricular theorists - Apple especially. Au had
me at Chapter 1: “Curriculum studies would be better served if it were more grounded in schools and met the concrete needs of practicing teachers” (Au, 2012, p.7). Cracking the spine of yet another text on curriculum from yet another reading list, this is not what I had been expecting. Au’s starting point for his standpoint theory is anchored firmly in the understanding that curriculum theory must be pragmatic: connecting curricular theory to teaching practice in a way that takes account of the “complex social, political and cultural relation of the material world” (Au, 2012, p.9). All too often, curricular theorists write about the school curriculum as if it were some philosophical matter to be considered and debated perpetually by very clever academics. I have grown weary of curricular theory, and academic deliberation thereof, that makes little difference to the lives of most school kids. It seems to me that we should directly address the problems faced by school education. We have to get our hands dirty, and Wayne Au gets that. Curricular standpoint advocates the adoption of curriculum and teaching approaches that actively promote the viewpoint of the disadvantaged or marginalised. In doing so, the parameters of the prescribed curriculum are challenged; Au describes curricular standpoint as “political and epistemological intervention against status-quo, hegemonic school knowledge” (Au, 2012, p.51).

Au breaks down his curricular standpoint into five main arguments:

First - Curricular knowledge: the official curriculum taught in high school is an extension of “material and social relations” (Au, 2012, p.66); what is included or left out of the curriculum is a reflection of the society that created it. The content of the curriculum will make perfect sense to students who possess corresponding cultural capital; for those who are more marginalised, the curriculum will be, to use Anyon’s phrase, “foreign” (Anyon, 1981, p.33). First generation students are in the process of finding their place in society, and some aspects of their inherited culture may be at odds with mainstream society, so this argument is almost a given.
Second - Power relations: Au argues that school knowledge is embedded in a “system of domination” (Au, 2012, p.66), whereby certain knowledge is favoured, specifically that of the most powerful in society in terms of class, socio-economic status, gender, nationality, and so on. This is evident within the social studies curriculum where, in Canada at least, the temporal is always favoured over the spatial - history is the dominant discipline and geography comes a poor second. For Social Studies 11, this means that students will spend much of their year studying the Canadian military and social history of the twentieth century; global issues such as climate change, population growth and uneven development are crammed into one unit that is all too often taught in haste. Au states that: “The curriculum of the ruler will in many ways be oppositional to the curriculum of the ruled” (Au, 2012, p. 71). Such language may be hyperbolic, but Au is exaggerating to make a point. High school students have limited options when it comes to choosing the subjects that they study, and no options at all when it comes to the content of the syllabus. There is also a hierarchy of disciplines that is hard wired in every education system around the world: Maths and science at the top, humanities in the middle somewhere, physical education at the bottom.

Third - Hegemony: when it comes to the official curriculum, one size fits all. Everyone in grade 11 Social Studies has to learn the same cookie-cutter content; most students have the same textbook, learn the same names and dates, write the same provincial exam. Apple’s questions come back to haunt us: Whose knowledge is it? Who selected it? Why is it organised and taught in this way? Au’s answer is that, “The curricular perspectives of those in power are made...hegemonic and commonsense forms in school knowledge for everyone” (Au, 2012, p.71). And all too often politics trumps everything else. The political discourse drowns out the pedagogical discourse.

Fourth - Struggle: Au’s curricular standpoint advocates the adoption of curriculum and pedagogy that deliberately promotes the interests and viewpoints of the most marginalised or disadvantaged in
society. This is not easy: clashing with the educational establishment is exhausting and dispiriting, changes are always resisted and challenged, “standpoint is achieved not given” (p.71).

Fifth - Human liberation: Although progress may be glacial, Au insists the effort is worth it, since challenging hegemony has the potential for human liberation: including students’ own knowledge in the curriculum and nurturing their ability to think critically will impact their thinking beyond their teenage years. Curricular standpoint presents an opportunity for students to use what they have learned in class to be “change agents and effective actors in their communities” (Anyon, 2011, p.102). “As educators, when we push students to learn something, to think about a subject more deeply and complexly, to consider some new or contradictory information, then in the broadest terms we are functionally involved in affecting student consciousness” (Au, 2012, p.92). Au insists that curricular standpoint is not brainwashing, or forcing our own ideology on impressionable minds; this is about having a positive effect on “student consciousness”: equipping them for future civic participation and engagement in social justice issues.

Not only has Au presented reasoned theory, he also provides practical application of his ideas - a whole chapter of examples of how curricular standpoint can be applied to a variety of school subjects. This is an approach which resonates with the project in hand; finding out to what extent the current social studies curriculum contributes to student understanding of migration is one of the main objectives of this study, and so offering practical ideas for how the curriculum could be adapted to meet the needs of migrant students will be part of the conclusion; presenting findings and critiquing the curriculum is not enough: for me, this project needs to be practical and useful, otherwise my time and effort will have been wasted.
3. Methodology

So here we are, 1.9 years later, courses finished, proposal done, approval acquired. On to [name of school] to meet first potential interviewees, hope, trust this going to work. I’m thinking it will. Got to remember a ton of stuff - go through consent but before that start to build relationships with the interviewees; ask lots of questions, find out how grade 12 is going. Need to make notes on how recruitment and interviewing goes and check with the teacher if there is a class where I can ask students to participate, I would rather ask them myself and explain rather than teacher if possible; always better to explain your own research I guess. (Journal entry, September 12, 2012)

Figure 3.1 School buildings

3.1 Background: site of research

The choice of secondary school is deliberate: it serves a neighbourhood of relatively low socio-economic status and high immigrant population in East Vancouver. Taking a walk around the perimeter of the school used in this study brings an appreciation of how the geography an area shapes the social...
composition of the school. First impression of the neighbourhood is that it is plain tired; although the streets are pleasant enough, with well-maintained houses and litter-free pavements, everything seems somewhat jaded, a little threadbare. The adjoining side streets give impressive vistas towards downtown Vancouver and the Coast Mountains; on the surface this is a quiet, pleasant enough (if a little down at heel) neighbourhood. Vancouver is an affluent city, and although the location for this study is less moneyed, it should be acknowledged that this is not the inner city district of *Framing Dropouts* (Fine, 1991) or the council estate (social housing) of *Learning to Labour* (Willis, 1977).

Detached homes in the streets around the school sell for around $750,000\(^9\), which is lower than the average of $927,500 for Greater Vancouver,\(^{10}\) but is still a significant amount for any family moving to the area.

The main school building dates back to the 1920s, with additional buildings and recreational facilities added in the 1970s. The buildings are showing their age, and (according to the BC Provincial Government’s May 2012 news release),\(^{11}\) are high priority for a seismic upgrade: this school would be flattened by a moderate earthquake. The interior of the school is well-maintained (a coat or two of paint has been applied over the summer and the corridors have been re-waxed). The high ceilings and less than efficient heating system make it somewhat draughty - in short, this is what the vast majority of secondary schools that I have encountered look like: a bit shabby around the edges, but holding up.


3.2 Interview protocol

Migration is one of the topics that is covered in the human geography unit of the Social Studies 11 curriculum. It is a prescribed learning outcome laid out in the IRP (Integrated Resource Package) that students are expected to be able to explain the significance of changes in world population with reference to distribution and density (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2005, p.21). Writing the interview protocol required referring and re-referring to the research questions to ensure that the interview resources and questions would address them sufficiently.

Interview 1

a. (Participants brought an image that represents “migration” to them.) Describe the image that you have brought with you.

b. Why did you chose this particular image?
c. How does this image connect to your own story of migration to Canada?

In this first interview, students used the images they brought with them to begin to recount their migration stories. It was an opportunity for their voices to be heard, and for their experiences to be acknowledged, before moving on to discuss how their stories connect with the curriculum. Although brief, it was also an opportunity to get to know the students a little before launching into interview 2.

Interview 2

1. Migration to Canada
   a. What are the best things about moving to Canada? What are the worst things?

   These questions were deliberately very open-ended to allow students to elaborate on the topics they touched on during the first interview. Transcripts from the first interview were referred to, and any supplementary questions based on answers already given.

2. Culture and Heritage
   a. In what ways does your background (heritage/culture of the country your family came from) affect your everyday life?
   b. Would you consider moving back to the country your family came from? Why or why not?
   c. Where do you consider your home to be? Do you find this question difficult to answer? If so, why do you think it is difficult?

   These questions were aimed at understanding participants’ sense of place: finding out whether the concept of Thirdspace would help to describe the places that these students inhabit, and how the idea of place, as per the prescribed curriculum, links with these ideas. These questions would also determine what aspects of their home culture they may have rejected or retained and their reasons for doing so.

   Questions 3 - 7 were designed to find out to what extent the participants connect what they have personally experienced to the subject of migration in general.
3. Graph - Canada permanent residents by source country, document 3

Figure 3.3 Permanent residents

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

a. (Question 3a. asked before showing the graph.) Which countries do you think most immigrants to Canada come from (say top 5)? (2010 top 5 are Philippines, India, China, UK and USA.) What surprises you about the top 5?

b. In what ways does the graph compare to the source countries in your own community and school?

The aim of this question was to find out whether these students could see links between their own experience and the prescribed curriculum: this graph\(^{12}\) shows the countries that most permanent residents (migrants) come from, and so should - in part, at least - represent the demographic composition of the school and community.

4. Sri Lankan asylum seekers off the coast of BC (MV Sun Sea, 2011), document 4

Figure 3.4 MV Sun Sea

![MV Sun Sea](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/story/2012/05/15/be-mv-sun-sea-tamil-charges.html)

Source: CBC News

The photo shows 492 people in a ship off the coast of British Columbia in August 2010. They were asking to stay in Canada. In your opinion, what action should the government of Canada have taken in this situation? If they are allowed to stay, what difficulties do you think they will encounter as they settle down to life here?

This question was included to touch on some of the political aspects of migration, and in doing so, to understand the viewpoint of the students themselves: for example, to see if they are sympathetic to the plight of the Sri Lankan asylum seekers, and the extent to which they see their own situation as similar or different. The choice of example was calculated: the photo\(^{13}\) shows the MV Sun Sea incident which took place off the coast of British Columbia in August 2010. It is almost identical to the

Website accessed December 3, 2012.
Komagata Maru incident that occurred in May 1914, which students will have covered in Social Studies 11: the objective was to see if students could apply their knowledge.

5. Asylum seekers, Calais, France (Asylum seekers/economic migrants), document 5

Figure 3.5 Asylum seekers

![Asylum seekers](image)

Source: BBC News

a. Say, in your own words, what you see in the photo. Which part of the world (country/region) do you think they come from? How do you know?

b. Why do you think these young men say that they would rather die than go back home?

Again, some of the more challenging aspects of migration are dealt with in these questions. Some of the insight given by students - a reflection of their standpoint - will inform what suggestions could be made to adapting the prescribed curriculum to include student-created knowledge. This question also gauges their geographical knowledge (to what extent has this knowledge been gained from personal experience?) This example also had links to the Social Studies 11 curriculum, although this time, the connection was less obvious. The image shows the Jungle Camp which was demolished by French authorities not long after the photo was taken. Afghan and Iraqi asylum seekers and
economic migrants hoping to make the crossing from Calais to France were deported. Calais is located on the English Channel, very close to the site of two major Canadian military events that are studied in Social Studies 11: the Dieppe Raid (1942) and Juno Beach, Normandy Landings (1944). This is another opportunity for students to apply their Social Studies 11 knowledge to an unfamiliar example. The photo\textsuperscript{14} was originally taken from the BBC News website, but the news story is no longer available.

For this question, I considered using a video clip from District 9, which poignantly and accurately depicts the plight of refugees. However, the use of video might have over-complicated this question; District 9 would be worth considering for further studies.

6. Dadaab refugee camp, Kenya/Somalia border (Refugees - civil war/drought), document 6

   a. Photo 1 - aerial view of camp. Describe the living conditions shown in the photo. Where do you think this photo was taken? Why?

Figure 3.6 Dadaab refugee camp

Source: The Guardian

\textsuperscript{14} The image is still available on other sites, for example: \url{http://calaismigrantsolidarity.files.wordpress.com/2009/07/banner-4.jpg}, Website accessed December 5, 2012.
b. **Photo 2 - Madahir Borow Mohamed.** Madahir, aged 16, walked to Dadaab from Somalia with two of his brothers after the October and April rains failed. There was only enough money for his mother and four of the youngest children to take a truck headed for Kenya. His family used to be farmers, so he never went to school, and spent his days in the fields with livestock or ploughing the soil. If you could meet Madahir, what would be the first question you would ask him?

c. What do you think might happen to Madahir in the next five years?

d. How does Madahir’s family migration story compare to your own?

Figure 3.7 Madahir Borow Mohamed

Source: The Guardian

By discussing Madahir’s story, the participants were required to further evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of migration. In thinking about Madahir’s future, they were effectively commenting on
their own. The story\textsuperscript{15} was taken from the Guardian newspaper’s website. Madahir was chosen because he is around the same age as the participants. These images would almost certainly be unfamiliar, so this was another way for students to draw both on their own experience and their knowledge of history and geography to answer the questions. Questions b and c were very open-ended, students would be required to draw on a different set of thinking skills to answer them; this would require participants to try to put themselves in Madahir’s place, which would require them to have assimilated knowledge about standards of living and refugees from Social Studies 11.

7. Links to social studies curriculum

a. How do the photos/materials relate to what you have learned about migration in social studies? What aspects are similar, which are different? How are they similar or different?

b. In Social Studies 11, have you discussed any questions similar to the ones we have been discussing here? If so, what were they? If not, have you studied anything about migration or immigration? If yes, what did you learn about? Do you think it is a topic that is worth learning about? Why?

The final questions explored whether the students have made solid connections between their own experience and what they had learned in class, or whether they see school knowledge and understanding as something separate from what they have encountered directly through the process of immigration.

### 3.3 Recruiting students

Table 3.1 Participants in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Migrated from</th>
<th>Route to Vancouver</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Siblings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camila (Mili)</td>
<td>Born three years after family migrated from Argentina.</td>
<td>Rural eastern Argentina to Toronto, to Vancouver. Dad left first, Mum and children followed later.</td>
<td>Both from Argentina. Paternal grandfather from Italy, maternal grandfather from Spain. Parents have Canadian citizenship.</td>
<td>Two older brothers, one older sister, one younger brother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efren</td>
<td>Mum pregnant with Efren when family moved from Philippines.</td>
<td>Direct from rural Philippines to Vancouver.</td>
<td>Both from rural central Philippines. Parents have Canadian citizenship.</td>
<td>Two older brothers, one younger sister.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow</td>
<td>England aged seven.</td>
<td>Born in Vancouver, moved to UK aged two. Moved from city in southern England aged seven, to Ontario for six months, then on to Vancouver.</td>
<td>Mum from England, lives on one of the Gulf islands. Dad lives in East Vancouver.</td>
<td>Only child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>Philippines aged eight.</td>
<td>Direct from rural Philippines to Vancouver.</td>
<td>Parents' hometown, five hours from Manila.</td>
<td>Two younger sisters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiao</td>
<td>China aged five.</td>
<td>From Beijing to Houston, USA to Vancouver.</td>
<td>From central Beijing. Paternal grandparents from Shanghai region.</td>
<td>Only child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karim</td>
<td>Morocco aged three.</td>
<td>From central western Morocco to Rome, Italy, to Vancouver.</td>
<td>Mum from Vancouver, dad from Morocco. Met in Italy.</td>
<td>One older brother.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
teacher I worked with did not have a Social Studies 11 class in this academic year, so I had to settle for interviewing students who had just started grade 12: in the event, this worked just as well. The first two students that I met had been suggested by the teacher (rather than by me pitching my project to the class). This was acceptable for the first two interviews, but for the remainder of the study, I recruited directly from History 12 classes.

On arrival to the school, I was directed to the open-plan school office. As I waited for the social studies teacher, I took a moment to observe the various coming and goings, just to get a feel for the school. Several students came in for (free?) lunch vouchers. One student was speaking Portuguese with one of the secretaries. When she left, there was a brief conversation between two of secretaries about how important it was that students are able to speak in their own language. Next, there was an Asian student speaking with another secretary. Presumably new to the school, and living with a home stay family, she spoke in hesitant English. She was doing her best to communicate, trying to find information on her cellphone, apologising. All four secretaries were patient and kind, but firm; for example, informing one 'lunch voucher’ student that he must bring his form in tomorrow for lunch otherwise, “You’re on your own.”

I chose a lunchtime to meet with the first two prospective students; I did not want to encroach too much on their time, for example, having them wait behind after school. The students were both girls: Angel left the Philippines aged eight, Jiao left China at five years old. They were very polite and bright, settling well into grade 12, having taken grade 12 courses in summer school to get ahead. Both were taking tough subjects and advanced courses, and expressed their determination to do well academically. In the end we took the remainder of the lunchtime (around forty minutes) chatting about the project and about school life. I went over all the points in the consent/assent form, careful to make sure I was following protocol to the letter. I arranged with the girls to begin interviewing the following
week, and set up times for both interview 1 and interview 2 (the interviews need to be at least one week apart). Fortunately, I could interview during the students’ free periods, so they did not have to stay behind after school.

The students asked good questions: I explained that I would want to come back and explain findings and ask for feedback from them once I had analysed the data and produced my initial findings. Angel wanted to know if the findings would consist of, “This person said this, and that person said that?” I explained that I would look at all the answers and see what comes out - to see if people saying the same thing. Their teacher was very positive and accommodating; I was very grateful for his support.

3.4 Initial interviews: Jiao and Angel

For these interviews I used both a hand held digital recorder and video recorder (turned away) in case one or the other didn’t work properly. We were able to use one of the social studies classrooms, which meant that we had private, quiet environment. Both interviews were only around 11 minutes long. I had thought they would be much longer, expecting the students to elaborate on what they had to say: this was a pilot of sorts, I had an opportunity to make changes to the protocol. It was clear for my next interviews I would need to add some of the questions from interview 2 so that it was a bit more worthwhile for the students. The focus of interview 1 is squarely on the student; for them to tell their story. If they didn’t wish to share every last detail, then so be it. I could not (and would not) poke at them, or cajole them to tell more than they wanted to. If giving a voice to the more marginalised is going to mean anything, then I had to give them free reign in what they disclose and what they hold back.
Angel and I had a mix up in communicating where we would meet (“I thought you weren’t coming”) and I was concerned that I might have jeopardised the interview. In the end, it went well. On tape, Angel is a little hesitant, but off-tape, she is more forthcoming: it is true that some of the best interviewing happens when the recorder is switched off. Afterwards, she chatted at length about the History 12 curriculum. I told her a bit about my family’s World War One and Two stories. She was interested in Vera Brittain and Letters from a Lost Generation (I think one of the best texts on World War One) and said she would look it up.

After her interview, Jiao chatted about leaving school and going to the University of British Columbia; she is concerned that she won’t get high enough grades with “too many smart people” in her school district competing for places. I talked about speaking Chinese at home; her English is now better than her Chinese and she cannot always keep up with her parents’ conversation. She spoke about leaving her secondary school. She has clearly enjoyed her time here, and is reluctant to leave this “warm bubble” (her words). I was interested to find out that Jiao is from Beijing; her parents’ apartment overlooked Olympic Birdsnest stadium. She lived with grandparents before moving to USA and then Canada. Jiao is an only child, whereas Angel has two (younger) sisters. On tape Jiao is at ease; she is very cheery and chirpy when being interviewed and seemed happy to tell stories, requiring little prompting and nudging from me.

After interview 2, Angel wanted to add to what she had told me in interview 1 about her parents story of migration: how they had prospered in the Philippines, how her dad had a good job from with Coca-Cola in the Philippines and how he started out in Vancouver pushing trollies in the supermarket, but now has a much better job - equivalent to one in the Philippines. I was very happy that she felt confident enough (and trusted me enough) to tell more of her story. It was also a confirmation that having two interviews would work best: on reflection, she had decided that she wanted to add to her
story. I talked to Angel about coming back later in the year to give feedback once I had got initial results. She asked me about this each time I went in; it was clearly very important to her.

3.4.1 Reflection on initial interviews

Interview 1 was designed to allow participants to tell their stories of migration - a chance for them to have their stories heard. Bringing an image that represents migration to them was an icebreaker, a conversation piece, a frame for building their story. Only it didn’t quite work out that way. Given that this interview was more about getting to know the participants and finding out about their migration to Canada in their own words and in their own way, these interviews were fine, but I was concerned that ten minutes of tape did not give me a lot to work with: the stories were very matter of fact, and despite some prompting by me, did not deliver the detail I was hoping for; but then, it is not about me (those two narratives\footnote{“Two narratives” refers to the voices of both researcher and participant being heard in the data (Smythe and Murray, 2000).}), and it is not entirely surprising - these girls didn’t know me from the proverbial bar of soap, so they were always likely to be cautious. Since the first interview was much shorter than expected, I wondered if it was worth keeping it separate. On the one hand, it would make the research more efficient, but on the other, it was useful and important to get to know the students a little better before interview 2. I thought about using resources from a historical migration - particularly the final question comparing the resources to their own migration story. This would have needed to be an example that was not well known, one that is not in the textbook, so that I could gauge how well students can interpret historical source material versus contemporary migration stories. However, I felt that this might overcomplicate the process and not provide clear evidence to answer the main research questions.
3.5 Revisions to interview protocol

After the first two interviews, the interview protocol was re-submitted to the UBC Ethics Board with the following revisions:

Interview 1

d. **What are the best things about moving to Canada? What are the worst things?**

Question 1 from Interview 2 has been moved forwards to make Interview 1 more substantial and allow for a more in-depth discussion.

Interview 2

1. **Review Interview 1**

   a. *After Interview 1, is there anything that you would like to add to your migration story?*

   This question allows students to elaborate on the topics they touched on during the first interview if they would like to.

2. **Culture and Heritage**

   a. **What aspects of your life in [name of source country] have your family brought with them? Has this lead to any difficulties for you?**

   I wanted to find out how students negotiate any tensions between their home culture and their school life, how they negotiate assimilation into Canadian culture, and if they do so consciously.

7. **Links to social studies curriculum**

   *When you studied migration in Social Studies 11, what kind of questions or issues did you investigate? What kind of resources did you use? Do you think it is a topic that is worth learning about? Why?*

   The original version of this question had proved really unwieldy. It was intended to find out whether the students have made solid connections between their own experience of migration and the
It needed to be re-worded so that could find out what kind of resources they typically come across in social studies and what aspects of migration they have studied in class. I wanted to find out whether my suspicion that contemporary immigration issues are being overlooked in favour of historical migration had any foundation, and to see whether student knowledge has been utilised in the classroom.

### 3.6 Recruiting students for the remainder of the study

When I wrote the thesis proposal I thought (naively as it turned out) I would have no problem recruiting students who fitted the criteria: to have been born outside Canada, and had a first-hand migration story to tell. I was given free rein to recruit students from three grade twelve classes over the course of a school day; I felt sure that I would have at least eight or ten possible interviewees by close of play. First, it became apparent that most of the students I was addressing were born in Canada; I had to quickly revise my definition of *first generation*, so that I would have a larger pool to recruit from, so included students whose parents had moved here within the past 20 years (i.e. they were born within two to three years of their parents’ arrival). This produced a few more hands going up - but still only a smattering of students in each class, not all of whom were willing to participate. From the first class, I recruited only one student, and then two from each of the following classes - five in total. This was far fewer than I was hoping for, but I had to go with what I had got; I had already approached two other schools without success, and time was running out. I had an additional conversation with another possible participant (along with her friend who came along for support, but despite my best efforts, she was not convinced that this was something she wanted to take part in).

I arranged the interviews for the following week - four on one day, and one on the next - not an optimal schedule, but I was prepared to work around the students to complete the research. It meant
hanging around in the social studies classroom between interviews, but on the plus side, I could use the time to transcribe and write journal (field) notes. In the end, one student turned up a couple of hours late, and one did not show up at all, which left me with a total sample of six students, which is far fewer than I had planned for.

3.7 Meet the students

When I interviewed her, Willow had just spent the weekend with her mum on one of the Gulf Islands; we met at eight forty-five in the morning: by then she had been up for hours. Willow is shy and a little nervous but has a quirky sense of humour. She is thinking about traveling when she finishes school next year, and did not mention any ambition to go on to further education. Willow lives with her mum on the island at the weekend, and with her dad in East Vancouver during the week. The photo that she brought with her was of Willow and her mum on a beach in British Columbia. They are standing on a log with arms outstretched, clearly having fun. Willow was born in Vancouver, but her British mum moved back to the UK when she was two. She lived there until she was five or six, when she and her mum moved back to Canada, initially staying with her grandmother in Ontario, before moving back to British Columbia.

Karim didn’t turn up on time for his appointment - despite being paged from the school office, and me waiting outside in the corridor for some time. He came later at lunch time bringing a friend (from Ethiopia) in tow. I had heard from his teacher that this friend had an interesting migration story to tell, but was notoriously difficult to pin down. I took the opportunity to chat with him a for a bit, telling him about the study. He said he would ask his teacher about it and took off. Karim is an easy-going lad who seemed a little reluctant to be interviewed. He had forgotten to bring a photo, but brought a completed consent form. Since I did not want to let this opportunity to pass, I made up
questions as we went along to get some idea of his family’s migration story. Karim’s mum is from Vancouver, and met his Moroccan father in Italy where they were both working. They stayed in Italy for a while, before moving to Morocco where Karim was born. The family then moved to Vancouver to be closer to Karim’s mum’s family. His brother travelled to Europe and Northwestern Africa after he left school, and Karim is contemplating doing the same thing; further education holds little appeal.

Camila (Mili) is a bubbly, funny girl: kooky and curious with a great sense of humour (she insisted on saying “hello” and “good-bye” to the tape recorder as if it was a third person in the conversation). She asked lots of questions before the interview, asking me about my university course and immigration to Canada. She forgot to bring her photo, but had got a photograph in mind, so we could chat about that. Our conversation flowed easily - there was lots of laughter, and I felt that her answers were very open and forthright. Her family is from Argentina, and although she was born a couple of years after her family had emigrated to Canada, she was able to recount her family’s migration story, using the photograph that she had in mind. Her photo was of her dad receiving his Canadian citizenship with Mili as a toddler in his arms. Her dad had moved first to work in Toronto, and her mum and elder sisters had followed him, moving on to Vancouver after a couple of years, since Toronto was too cold!

Efren’s hand shot up when I asked for participants for this study: “I’ll do it!” He is a remarkably well-adjusted and even tempered lad; sharp and engaged in school, steadily making his way through grade 12. We met in the school canteen, since the social studies classroom was unavailable; we found a quiet corner and were able to conduct the interview with little interruption. Efren’s family moved from the Philippines when Efren’s mum was pregnant with him, along with three other children. Efren’s auntie had married a Canadian living in Vancouver, and she was very instrumental in assisting the family’s move from the Philippines, providing accommodation in her home, where the family still live,
seventeen years later. Efren’s photos showed his family getting their Canadian citizenship: three-year-old Efren at the front of the group with his parents, sister and brother, who were smiling broadly. Efren was very easy to interview: very forthcoming with questions, happy to oblige. Off-tape, he asked me about my course at university and how the research fitted into that. He is not sure whether he wants to go to university, citing the tuition fees as his main concern. His siblings are either at college or contemplating returning to vocational school; no-one in his family has been to university.

The following week, I returned to the school to complete second interviews: I had three booked for the first day, and one booked on the second. On the first day all three students did not turn up, leaving me sitting in a chilly classroom for four hours. Apart from being frustrating, it left me with a quandary as to what to do next. The second day proved more successful, although it was quite the operation, dashing from pillar to post tracking down students. Added to the usual difficulties of locating students, I had unwittingly chosen “Post-Secondary Day”, which meant that grade 12 students were not having their regular lessons, but visiting various presentations from several post-secondary institutions including Simon Fraser University, The University of Victoria, British Columbia Institute of Technology, Capilano University and Vancouver Community College. (An aside: the University of British Columbia was noticeably absent from this list and I wondered why...?) This meant that it was harder to find missing students, but with the able assistance of Efren and my contact teacher, I managed to catch up with two of the no-shows, and booked one in for the following day, and one the day after that.

The next day, I arrived on time to meet with the re-booked student. Despite being paged by the school office, and called on his cellphone by his counsellor, he did not show up. At this point, I felt it was clear that he was not interested in continuing - which was fair enough. I was grateful that I had at
least conducted the first interview with him. However, as I waited, I happened upon the final student that had been in the wind, and arranged to meet her the following day.

This highlighted the difficulty of recruiting and interviewing students at arm’s length; clearly if I was a teacher in this school, I would be in a position to find suitable participants, and to remind them of their interviews. The only way I could communicate with the participants was through their teacher, via e-mail, which was less than ideal. In addition, I had a limited relationship with the support staff, and had to be careful not to overstay my welcome by interrupting them with questions about the teacher’s or students’ whereabouts.

The final interviews (Efren, Mili, and Willow) took place in a quiet corner of the library; this happened somewhat by accident: Efren suggested that we might go there, since the classroom was unavailable. I chatted with the wonderfully affable librarian, who was more than happy for me to use the library, and made accommodations for me to do so. In hindsight, this was the best venue for interviewing, being cosier and more homely than the classroom. It also gave me an opportunity to experience another facet of this school, it was another way to get an understanding of the school community.

3.8 Lost in transcription

I need to scribble a note about transcription...previously, I’ve transcribed from digital recordings on my laptop and typed up the interview bit by bit. But a funny thing happened at the school that means I can do the transcription and analysis in a different way. I find writing down information or notes sticks in my brain more than listening. Since the interview with Angel was much shorter than I thought, I had some time to kill before Jiao - so I thought I’d start transcribing long hand. It turns out I can still write with a pencil faster than I can type, plus I
can hold the little recorder in one hand and write with the other. This also means that I’ll write the interviews out twice, thus enabling me to get a better idea before starting analysis. Aha. Odd how things that happen by accident work out so well. (Journal entry, September 20, 2012)

Bakhtin was right. What is captured on tape is not entirely reflected on paper: dialogue is horribly cheapened as soon as it is written out (Bakhin, 1981). All the students have accents and ways of speaking that become clunky and dull when seen in black and white. I could not communicate Jiao’s way of speaking very quickly to begin with and then slowing down as she reflects on an answer; I could not adequately portray the smile she has in her voice when she was reflecting on happy memories or making a little joke. Angel’s accent has a sing-song quality, that, even if I tried to convey with different typefaces or icons, would not reveal her style of speaking. She has a unique pronunciation of certain words (“em-i-grate”) that just does not come across. Angel is fluent in English, but she had little give aways in slip-ups in grammar and word use: “one way stop (one way flight); I didn’t recognise it (I don’t remember it)”. Frequently, the students’ English is punctuated with teenager-speak: “like, like, like”; “actually lived in, actually immigrated”; “that really sucks”. All the students are (at least) bilingual, often speaking their first language at home. Jiao confessed to being more comfortable speaking English than Chinese admitting, “my Chinese has gone downhill”. Equally, Mili’s family usually speak Spanish at home, but she prefers using English. Her voice has a certain cadence that reflects her interest in theatre; she sits bolt upright with her hands in her lap and wrinkles her nose when she is thinking...none of which can be transcribed. Willow is very quietly spoken, (I had to go over some of the passages several times before I could catch what she was saying), so that words on paper do not quite reveal how precisely she gives her answers, starting off quietly and slowly, and then getting louder and more confident:
Willow: [pause] Ummm [pause] Mmmmmmm [thinking - weighing the possibilities]

Maybeeee China? Or...off the coast of British Columbia, so...somewhere Asian maybe -
maybe Indonesia or India?

Efren’s family speak Tagalog at home: his voice has a slight accent; he speaks quickly and confidently, often starting his answers before I had finished my questions. What is not captured on paper is his extensive range of gestures: he uses his hands to illustrate his answers which is difficult to portray, but adds meaning to his answers that is lost in transcription.

Kvale suggests that analysis begins during transcription; deciding how to transform words on tape to words on a page affects the outcome of the research: “What is a useful transcription for my research purposes?” (Kvale, 1996, p.166). Since one of the tenets of this research was to give migrant students an opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas in their own way and in their own words, I chose to transcribe every syllable - including all the umms and errrs and hmmmms. In the findings section, I have not tidied up the words or corrected grammar; for improved readability I have occasionally removed ums and uhs, but most remain. I wanted to give the reader a sense of how these students told their stories, and to consciously re-create the participants voice as faithfully as possible. Denzin refers to this as self being re-created in discourse: “In speaking I hear myself being created. I hear myself, not as the other hears me, but as I want them to hear me” (Denzin, 1995, p.11).

3.9 Narrative analysis

My advice is to read, and analysis, whatever it is, will follow. (...do tell me what you think you do when you think - when you do analysis? Do that.) (St. Pierre, 2011, p.622)

Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre suggests I describe my thinking on data analysis, so this is that. The data I was collecting is mixed: part biography, part response to interview questions. Given that a
sizeable chunk of the research is a collection of stories, I wanted to carry out a narrative analysis of the transcripts, aware that such analysis needs careful handling. If analysis is “an act of resistance” (Reissman, 2008, p.61), then I would need to resist my own misgivings and see where such an analysis would take me. Reissman (2008) contends that narrative analysis should pay attention to both what is being said and the way in which it is recounted: “Narrative analysts interrogate intention and language - how and why events are storied, not simply the content to which the language refers” (p. 11). This means that analysis was not only a matter of systematically working through the transcripts to find particular themes from which to draw conclusions, but to actively think about what was not said, or issues that were avoided. Wiles et al. (2005) suggest that, “By closely examining how a story is told within an interview, or how the interview itself unfolds...we can gain a strong sense of how the story is meant to be interpreted by the speaker” (p. 92).

This study presented an opportunity to explore different techniques to analyse data, rather than working with one predetermined framework for evaluation. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) suggest using a bricolage of approaches: to borrow from different disciplines, perspectives and paradigms to “secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.5). Analysis of interviews (and field notes) therefore drew on both bottom-up (Sipe, 2004; Emerson et al., 2011), and top-down (Erickson, 2004) techniques, to produce more comprehensive results from which to draw conclusions. Erickson advises not to rely on either top-down or bottom-up as an “imitable model,” but to find an “analytic framework that fits [the] data” (Erickson, 2004, p.492). The intention here was to “ask questions of the data” (Emerson, 2011, p.176); to dig deeply and systematically for understanding rather than taking answers on face value.

To begin, I went through all the books and papers I had amassed from three methodology courses. My criteria for selection were not particularly scientific: I selected what I considered to be the
most helpful, insightful, creative and innovative, and concentrated on those which covered discourse
analysis - the particular brand of narrative analysis that I wanted to use. First, I tried to group the papers
by broad categories that related to thesis chapters: methodology, findings, discussion/conclusion. This
failed miserably: most papers moved across different categories, and in the end, I was left with a pile of
twenty-odd papers that was not helping me at all. Strike one for a top-down approach. I needed to think
again. The whole pile was daunting, but the only solution was to go through it again, and code to find
meanings to uncover the ideas and thinking that I was interested in. I wanted to take Kvale’s advice to
think about the analysis before conducting the interviews: “How shall I conduct my interviews so that
their meaning can be analysed in a coherent and creative way” (Kvale, 1988, p.92). A systematic
analysis (bottom-up) approach was needed: the papers were already marked up with highlights and
comments from previous readings (a kind of open coding?), so I had already done some analysis by
filtering out the ideas and sections that stood out the most. The next step was to compile a list of code
memos by working thorough the pile, pulling out important words and phrases from each paper on big
post-it notes. This turned out to be a time-consuming process, but the results were well worth it. I
started to notice some major themes and topics coming through, which would provide a kind of
backdrop for analysis of the transcripts:

1. Story telling - prose, audience
2. Self reflexion - researcher awareness
3. Rigour - data collection, explaining analysis, coding (validity)
4. Researcher in the data - objectivity, affect
5. Power - relationships, voice, interpretation, research participant feedback (validity)
6. Language - speech, phrasing, emotions
7. Layers of meaning - contradictions, selecting focus
1. Story telling

_There was once a sweet little maid, much beloved by everybody, but most of all by her grandmother, who never knew how to make enough of her. Once she sent her a little riding hood of red velvet, and as it was very becoming to her, and she never wore anything else, people called her Little Red Riding Hood._ (Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, _Little Red Riding Hood_, 1812)

Once upon a time. Humans like telling stories, especially when there is meaning in them, when they portray something significant about human existence (Wadham, 2009; Charmaz & Mitchell, 1996; Kvale, 1988). As participants give their stories away (Smythe & Murray, 2000) the onus is on the researcher to “bring the reader along with them” as they re-tell these stories (Riessman, 2008, p.188). Meaning is delivered through a researcher’s supportive voice, keeping a “respectful distance” between the voice of the researcher and the voice of the narrator (Chase, 2005, p.665): it is in the analysis of the data that the story is found (Kvale, 1988). The story is found. Not not the conclusion, not the findings, but the story. The endeavour here, was to avoid an over-analytical, over-thought analysis, but to draw the reader in to want to find out more about the participants in the study: “The researcher adds all the human touches that make the story interesting to others, and the account at the end also fulfils the human desire for storytelling” (Holloway & Biley, 2011, p.969).

2. Self reflexion

It seems that every author has their own take on self-reflexivity. It routinely boils down to an analysis of how the researcher is both a part of an event and a describer of it, how the person of the interviewer influences both form and content. For this project to have validity, being all-too-aware of the woman in the mirror only goes so far. Self-reflexion has two ditches: an over-awareness bordering on narcissism on one side, and a woe-is-me, navel gazing on the other. Somewhere in-between lies an honest self-assessment of how one’s own view from the stands impacts both data collection and
analysis. It is not about ticking the I-did-the-reflexivity-bit box, it is about noticing how the research is influenced by who I am (Wiles et al., 2005; Burr 1995). Tracy (2010) helpfully advises show rather than tell when it comes to self-reflexion by “weaving one’s reactions or reflexive considerations of self-as-instrument throughout the research report” (p.842). Self-reflection should therefore be apparent in the data analysis, rather than on a pedestal for all to see.

3. Rigour

In the end, data still has to be analysed, and analysis is personal, although not detached from theory (Erickson, 2004; St. Pierre, 2011). St. Pierre advises her students to stop coding altogether: “I expect we teach coding because we don’t know how to teach thinking” (St.Pierre, 2011, p.621-622), but unfortunately I am not brave enough. Sipe and Ghiso (2004) advise creating your own codes, (sorry, Labov and Gee, you are just too quantitative, so unattractively un-post), but coding procedures need to be described if analysis is to hold water and get the validity stamp of approval (Burr, 1995, p. 167). Validity adds to significance which in turn should answer that nasty little “so what?” question (Wiles et al., 2005); member checks (horrible phrase), that is, going back to your participants to discuss your findings and allowing for their response (Holloway & Biley, 2011; Riessman, 2008) adds a level of accountability as well as rigour. Tracy (2010) suggests that “member reflections” provide “opportunities for questions, critique, feedback, affirmation, and even collaboration” (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). The idea of collaboration is appealing; this goes beyond the rigour and accountability reasoning for member checks: for this project taking the initial findings back to the participating students allows them to analyse the analysis; to be co-writers of the final report, to have a stake in what is finally published.
4. Researcher in the data

*Investigators carry their identities with them like tortoise shells into the research setting.*

(Riessman, 2008, p.139)

The position of the researcher is a theme that is more nuanced than I had anticipated. Kvale warns against “stamp collecting”: it is not a matter of clinically amassing stories as a means to an end; stories are co-authored between participant and researcher (Kvale, 1988, p.101). Smythe and Murray (2000) flag the potential for conflict with two narratives (one participant, one researcher) being collected from the same material, and so Erickson (2004) recommends parsing the data again and again (from top to bottom and vice-versa) to get the best fit between “script and counter-script” (p.488).

Sipe and Ghiso (2004) observe that interviewers position themselves within the research: “we hide ourselves in our writing” (p.474). As researchers re-presenting reality (Holloway & Biley, 2011, p.970), habitus is etched on findings, positioning evident even as we construct our data (Sipe & Ghiso, 2004). The voice of the researcher is positioned alongside that of the participants (Holloway & Biley, 2011; Riessman, 2008), so that there is an underlying dialogue evident in the writing that demonstrates an empathy and understanding - allowing the object to object! (Kvale, 2006).

5. Power/Relationships

The issue of power - who has it, how and when it is used, when it is withheld, surfaces repeatedly within narrative analysis literature. It comes in a variety of guises: voice of the marginalised and advocacy research (Holloway & Biley, 2011; Kvale, 2006; Chase 2005; Burr 1995), privileged storytelling (Riessman 2008; Kvale, 2006), allowing participants to raise concerns and equal status of participants (Kvale, 2006; Burr, 1995). Burr goes so far as to suggest that, “Researchers must view the research as necessarily a co-production between themselves and the people they are researching” (Burr, 1995, p.160).
The relationship between participant and researcher therefore is central to the stories that will emerge; in this project the first interview is a small window of opportunity to get to know the students a little better before asking the main interview questions. There is a need to build relationships of care, quality, trust, empathy (Hollaway & Biley, 2011; Smythe & Murray, 2000; Charmez & Mitchell, 1996).

Holloway and Biley use an intriguing metaphor to describe the nature of the relationship between participant and researcher: “walk the hyphens of the Self and Other” (Holloway & Biley, 2011, p. 971). This suggests that the researcher needs to actively find the connections between themselves and their participants...to bridge the gap between them and to allow that bridge to be a route by which ideas, thoughts, feelings and understandings are passed in both directions - mostly by foot - so that there is time to contemplate the view, and consider how far the drop is should that bridge fall apart. Walking is deliberate; no need to run to get the job done. No need for a train or car that would insulate from the nitty-gritty of relationships.

Given the researcher’s privilege of reporting, Kvale cautions that there needs to be a respectful gap (hyphen?) between interviewer and interviewee: close, but not to chummy. The interviewer should use their influence to act as a Trojan horse to “get behind the defence walls of the interview subjects, laying their private lives open and disclosing information to a stranger which they may later regret” (Kvale, 2006, p.482). The participants’ words are being appropriated by the researcher (Smythe and Murray (2000) insist they are stolen!), and so words should not be embroidered (Holloway & Biley, 2011), but analysis should enrich and deepen meaning of what was said (Kvale, 1988, p.101). Chase (2005) asks, “What does it mean to hear the Other’s voice?” (p.655). I think that needs answering.
6. Language

Researchers should listen within interviews, across interviews, paying attention to use of language, to metaphor, to figures of speech, (Burr, 1995, p.159). Bakhtin (1981) insists that language is not neutral, and there is a tension between what is said and what is captured on tape, and later what is extracted from the interview by analysis: “Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker’s intentions; it is populated - overpopulated - with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one’s own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process” (Quoted in Riessman, 2008, p.125, my italics). However, nit-picking through data to squeeze out every last intention may not get to the story that is there for the telling. Reissman suggests stepping back from the narrative, to listen to the participants language “to notice how a narrator [participant] uses form and language to achieve particular effects” (Reissman, 2008, p.81). Erickson (2004) urges the researcher to go with their own intuition and empathy to get to the story, avoiding “romantic assumptions” (Chase, 2005, p.670) that interviewees will reveal the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

7. Layers of meaning

Several authors refer to the layers of meaning to be found within participants stories (for example: Riessman, 2008; Wiles et al., 2005). It is as though there are rich seams of stories to be mined, but equally there is potential for rabbit trails: investigating meanings may be interesting and well-intentioned, but research questions still await answers. Some meanings may need to be discarded for another project in order to focus on the task in hand. Whilst Chase (2005) discusses how these meanings are then communicated; Holloway and Biley (2011) provide the framework: “focus on meaning not measurement” (p.968). Whilst focussing on meanings, the results may not be as neat and tidy, cut and dried as expected, but Wiles et al. (2005) are reassuring - messiness is not necessarily
meaningless. Smythe and Murray (2000) suggest the researcher needs to “make peace with contradictions” (p. 318). The point of the research is not to present the reader with a gift-wrapped box of neatly labeled results, but to provide insight to readers (Charmaz & Mitchell, 1996), and to generate knowledge that could be the basis for other people’s work (Wiles et al., 2005).

3.10 First pass

Before attempting ground-up, line-by-line coding of the interviews I wanted to get a sense of the broad themes apparent in the data (as per Erickson’s suggestion above). I re-read through the transcripts looking for four major themes derived directly from the research questions:

1. Geographical knowledge and understanding
2. Heritage and culture
3. Space and place
4. Connecting curriculum to personal experience

1. Geographical knowledge and understanding: Most of the students struggled with applying geographical knowledge to the resources that we were looking at. Understanding of contemporary global migration issues was very shaky, and yet these students all have a deep knowledge of the impact that migration has had on their lives.

2. Heritage and culture: Having watched CBC’s *Generation One*, I was expecting the students to tell me about conflicts between their home and school cultures, but few materialised: the school that these students attend has had a very positive affect how they view themselves and others; heritage and culture is something that individualised and celebrated. The lack of conflict and the ability to successfully adapt to changing circumstances was significant.
3. Place and space: I was curious to find out how first generation students understood the geographical concept of place and how they negotiated their sense of place. I had in the back of my mind the various UK ethnographies that had put such an emphasis on place, and expected that sense of place would be a significant theme in these interviews, having deliberately added direct questions about place in the interview protocol. Place emerged as a theme running in the background: locations were important, and special spaces were described, but only in the context of other themes: social justice, rather than place became the dominant theme.

4. Connecting curriculum and personal experience: There is a disconnect between the first-hand experiences of the students and their families and the Social Studies 11 curriculum: students can readily recall information about historical migrations, but have made no bridge between what has happened in the past, and what they, their families and their friends have encountered up front. What I needed to do at this stage, was to go deeper into the data, keeping these themes in the back of my mind to see whether I could expand on these ideas, and look for other themes that may emerge by line-by-line open coding.

### 3.11 Grounded theory

*Grounded theory coding requires us to stop and ask analytic questions of the data.* (Charmaz, 2006, p.42)

Kathy Charmaz describes grounded theory as a craft that researchers practice (Charmaz, 2006, p.10). Whilst not being a master (pun intended) craftsperson, this research presented an opportunity to use grounded theory to find answers to the research questions I had set myself. Grounded theory makes use of detailed coding: “categorising segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarises and accounts for each piece of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p.43). Typically, there are two main
phases of coding: first, working through each line to name each word, phrase or segment, and then a focussed, selective phase, in which the most frequent or significant codes are examined further. In practical terms, this meant working through each transcript several times, line by line, word by word, noting down codes in a notebook as I went along, and annotating the hard copy with thoughts and ideas. Charmaz prescribes this memo-writing as an,“intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts of papers” (Charmaz, 2006, p.72). I ended up with pages and pages of notes that I needed to take a step back from to be able to see the major themes coming through. To add to the “messiness” that Wiles et al. predicted, I discovered a set of questions worming their way through my notes that I could not answer: for example, What is unsaid? Who is excluded from the story? Which events are forgotten? This was part of the process of analysis, and although such questions cannot be answered directly, the presence of absence can be acknowledged, and is returned to in Chapter 4.

After several passes through the transcripts, I developed a set of working themes (and sub-themes), with which to discuss the interviews and answer the main research questions:

1. Identity (later changed to Belonging): family, “We”, adapting
2. Loss: status, culture/heritage, relationships
3. Journey: stages, details, assistance
4. New beginnings: community, school/work, networks, obstacles
5. Place: locations - signposts, sense of place, home
6. Social justice: empathy, sympathy, equity, fairness
7. Curriculum: geographical knowledge, connections to personal experience, temporal over spatial, doing school

Armed with these themes, I worked back through the transcripts (second, selective phase of coding), noting where each theme or sub-theme occurred, so that I could refer back to particular
sections when writing up my findings. I soon found out that the social justice themes were proving too hard to pin down, and instead used the UN Declaration of Human Rights\textsuperscript{18} as a resource for four ready made, top-down themes which I could more easily track down: I chose Articles 3, 6, 7 and 14 as they seemed the most appropriate fit to the data:

- **Article 3:** Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person
- **Article 6:** Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law
- **Article 7:** All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law
- **Article 14:** Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution

I used a different technique for matching up sections of the interviews to these social justice themes: I marked up the sections of the transcripts that pertained to social justice and copied them into a separate document which I then printed out. I then cut up the quotes and reassembled them in piles under each theme. Practically, it required laying out the quotes on a table in four columns labelled: “Safe” (Article 3), “Person” (Article 6), “Equal” (Article 7) and “Asylum” (Article 14). Since the quotes were moveable, it was possible to shuffle them around from column to column until a best fit was found. It is a technique I had used before to sort quotes for papers, so instead of trying to reinvent the wheel, I used a tried and tested method, which gave me the results I was after.

3.12 Member checks: co-authoring

I was hoping that I would get a chance to provide feedback to the six students who took part in this study. Apart from getting their response to my findings, this was an opportunity to thank them for their involvement, and to let them know that I had made extensive use of their interviews in my findings: they have co-authored much of this study. The meeting took place during a lunch hour once the first draft of the thesis had been produced. I did not audio-tape this session: although member checks had been part of the original thesis proposal, I felt that these students would be more comfortable without the tape recorder intruding into our conversation. I went through my findings and conclusions briefly; I wanted them to understand that the knowledge that they had acquired, both through their families’ experience of migration and their exposure to issues of social justice gathered along the way at school, has set them in good stead for whatever they plan to do after they leave school. These are extraordinary young people who have the potential to effect positive change in their communities; whether that is in the university or college they attend, or in the places they visit when they are travelling, or in the companies they might be employed by in the future. I gave the students an
opportunity to ask questions and make comments on my conclusions: as has been so typical of these young people, they were more interested in how I was and what I was doing to be doing next: had I finished writing? When was I going to get the results? They were curious to know what pseudonyms I had bestowed upon them! They asked if they would be allowed to read what I had written about them: I let them know that I would be passing on a copy of the thesis (“Efren: One hundred and twenty pages? That’s a book!”) to their teacher once it was all finished, so he could let them take a look.
4. Findings and Initial Conclusions

4.1 Introduction: themes

The development of themes allowed for the data to be interrogated systematically, so that the main findings could be drawn out of the interviews as they relate to the research questions. The outcomes of this study are therefore grouped under these main themes; the research questions are summarised at the end of the section.

4.2 Belonging: “Canada morphed me”

A sense of belonging is emphasised throughout these interviews; participants reveal their allegiances - the strongest of which is towards their immediate families, notably their parents. The importance of family ties is highlighted throughout: relationships between siblings and parents, between immediate and wider family. All the participants spoke warmly of their families, even when acknowledging tensions within them; for example, Mili let on that her dad has a traditional, conservative view of the role of women in the home, and she complains that she has to more than her fair share of cooking and cleaning. She put this down to her parents upbringing: “...they just grew up with something different.” Jiao is an only child, and although she is clearly close to her parents, she was aware that in some respects she is drifting from them; for example,

Jiao: ...it’s really hard to, like, argue in my family [laughs] ‘cos they talk in Chinese, and I understand them, but I can’t, like, follow them, and so I’m like, “What does that mean?” “What are you saying?”

Both Efren and Mili took pride in belonging to large families (four and five children respectively); Efren’s photos showed his family receiving citizenship, and he pointed out all his siblings to me by name. Mili listed all her siblings and where they were born.
The use of “we” and “they” in the participant’s stories divulged the more subtle aspects of the students’ loyalties. Efren and Angel used “we” extensively when referring to their extended families, whereas Mili and Jiao used “they” when referring to their family - “they” typically being their parents:

Angel: This is when we ate at KFC, and we had a group photo, and it was the day that we are going to fly off to Canada.

Efren: ...we lived with my auntie...who lived in the house as well in the years that we were here when we came here.

Mili: ...my family has changed a lot since they came from Argentina...they’ve lost a lot of their culture that they once had, but I think when they came here they just tried their best to fit in....

Jiao: ...they had jobs there...I think the visa didn’t work out and they had to move somewhere else...I think they decided Canada...

Connections and disconnections became apparent. The way in which these students relate to Canada both as a place and a nation was disclosed without conscious thought. Jiao and Willow clearly identified more closely with Canada, using “we” when referring to actions taken by the Canadian nation:

Jiao: (discussing MV Sun Sea asylum seekers) I don’t think we should just reject everyone who tries to come here [...] We should help out as many as we can but we can’t help them all.

Willow: (talking about the treatment of First Nations peoples) I think that...the worst in retrospect, how the things we did back then, and we didn’t have the knowledge that we do today...
Willow struggled with her allegiances: although she would be willing to live in the UK for a couple of years in the future (“I do like it there”), and she is often reminded to take pride in her British heritage by her mum, she was also conscious of the history of the British in Canada and both takes responsibility for what happened in the past (“we” as in the British) and for reparations in the future (“we” as in Canada).

    Willow: ...it makes me sick, you know...what we did to the First Nations people...
    Oh...it’s terrible...I, I feel guilty knowing, I know that my family had nothing to do with it, I just feel terrible on behalf of the nation I was born from...
    ...I just hope that, we can...make it up to them somehow, I don’t know how you would do that...

In contrast to Jiao, Angel and Mili placed themselves at arm’s length from Canada, for instance when discussing asylum seekers. In this case, Mili used “Canada” in place of “we” and Angel used “the Government”:

    Mili: I think Canada should let them into the country...I think Canada should take them in...
    Angel: The Canadian government doesn’t want them to live in Canada? ...I think the government should have allowed them to live in Canada...

All the participants have settled to life in Canada to varying degrees and in different ways. I was not entirely sure whether the question, “Where do you consider your home to be?” was an indulgence on my part; (it is a question I still struggle with after eight years in Canada) or whether it would shed light on how the participants negotiate the impact that migration has had on their lives. Although Angel still considered the Philippines to be home (“It’s where I learned my first language”), she enjoys living in Canada, and thinks it is unlikely that she would go back to the Philippines permanently. She did not
mention speaking either Spanish or Tagalog at home (and I omitted to ask!), and was perfectly at ease speaking English, “If you can speak English, you can go anywhere.” Jiao’s parents are less fluent in English and continue to speak Chinese at home. She seems to have distanced herself somewhat from Chinese culture: “Culturally, I’m more comfortable with Canada.” Jiao rarely visits China, and although her parents insist, “You’re Chinese no matter what you do”, she said that in China she feels both a language and cultural barrier. That said, she was quick to defend aspects of Chinese culture in the classroom, for example, the One Child Policy. Jiao put this down to her “Chinese mentality” that she has inherited from her parents.

Angel’s family have retained some of their traditions from the Philippines including Christmas (Notchebuena), attending church and watching Filipino TV. Like Efren, social networking seems to have gone some way to bridge the cultural gap between Angel and her cousins still in the Philippines. Mili’s family also continue to watch Argentinian TV - soap operas (telenovelas) and news channels. Both Mili and Efren commented that their families, although firmly rooted in Canada, continued to cook food from their source countries. This was just a passing comment for Mili, but for Efren, this aspect of his heritage culture was very important, since it links him to his wider family:

   Efren: ...our food, it’s part of our culture [...] traditional foods from the Philippines, which I’m really happy that my parents still make, make for my family, just ‘cos I’m able to, like, connect my family back in the Philippines, ‘cos of the traditional foods we eat, ‘cos I know that my parents are making here is what they are eating back in the Philippines...

All the students were aware of the impact that adapting to Canadian culture has had on their lives. Jiao is more at ease with the person she has become since moving from China, even though it has
created a gap between herself and her parents. She appears comfortable and confident in herself, and identified herself as Canadian rather than Chinese:

Jiao: ...I think I’m more Canadian than I am Chinese [...] I think Canada, like morphed me.

...I grew up here, like, culturally, so I’m more comfortable with, you know, Canada.

I’m moulded into a Canadian now.

Angel was more hesitant - she doesn’t describe herself as Canadian, but is aware that she has been changed by migration, but has adapted to, rather than been moulded by, her experiences:

Angel: I have learned to adapt to Canada and how...everything works, the schools, the government, the health system, and I grew up here, and if I were to grow up in the Philippines I would not have had this personality of mine...

Mili has observed how life in Canada has changed her family as they moved from a rural area in a conservative country to a more broad-minded and cosmopolitan city:

Mili: ...my family has changed a lot since they came from Argentina, right now they’re more, I don’t want to say Canadian....when they came here they just tried their best to fit in...

I wondered if Mili would mention her family’s Catholicism: we were close to October 31 and off-tape Mili told me (in exasperation!) how her mother was still unhappy about her going out on Halloween, convinced that she would come to harm. I assumed Mili’s family, or at least her mum, continue to practice their Catholic faith as she had in Argentina, but it was a subject that was not elaborated on.
4.3 Loss: “I wanted to tell you that”

The move to Canada has cost most of the families in terms of loss in status. The exception was Willow: coming from England, a country with a similar economic position to Canada, her mother’s decision to move to Canada was the only one that was not (at least partly) based on job opportunities, and Willow’s mother seems to have been able to pick up where she left off. For Angel’s father, migrating to Canada meant taking a job as a “cart pusher” in a supermarket, before going back to college and getting better paid employment. Angel was keen to let me know that she had been looked after by “maids” in the Philippines: her mum did not work, and the family was solely supported by her father. Since moving to Canada, Angel’s mum has re-trained as a pharmacy technician, and is now employed:

Angel: ...my mum worked, because my dad just can’t, um, work by himself...and my sisters and I are going [her word] too fast, going to university soon, and so mum needs to help my dad with the fees?

Angel and her two sisters are attending the same secondary school in East Vancouver, but in the Philippines her parents had the resources to send them to a private school. After the second interview Angel asked if she could tell me more of her dad’s story: of how he left a well paid job in the Philippines to bring his family to Canada, and how he had re-trained so that he could get equivalent employment in Canada.

Angel: When we moved to Canada, my dad had to sacrifice his most favourite job, and his dream... [...] ...he had to leave that for his family...

Angel: Eventually my dad...he got another job similar to the one [he had in the Philippines] ...and that amazed me about my dad, that...

Su: His determination?
Angel: Yeah, even though it was really difficult for him...

Migrating to Canada has meant losing or abandoning culture for most of these families. Again, the exception is Willow, given that British culture is often incorporated into everyday Canadian life.

(Having said that, Willow insists that her mum strives to keep her British accent, and maintains her allegiance to the British royal family.) The participants’ families have retained some aspects of their home nations, but some have either been relinquished or deliberately set aside. This loss seems to be felt more keenly by the students’ parents rather than the participants themselves. Jiao’s English was very fluent, but for her parents, being less proficient in English has meant that they are unable to express themselves as effectively as they would like. Jiao’s dad is particularly interested in current events, and likes to discuss political and social issues which he finds difficult to do in English:

Jiao: ...when they’re speaking English, especially my dad, he’s not as confident, like, he’s in Chinese, he can, come out with jokes.... [...] ...he can’t really express his interest in English...for me it’s not that big of a concern...

Most of the students have left close relatives behind when their families moved to Canada: Angel and Efren have large extended families back in the Philippines that they miss, and although they keep in contact by Facebook, they rarely visit - the cost of flights being prohibitive:

Efren: ...we lost connection, even though we sent back money and we talked [by]...long distance phone calls...I haven’t seen my family in...twelve years now...

Efren was concerned for his parents. He was aware of the sacrifices they have made to make a life in Canada - his immediate family all live in the basement suite of his aunt’s house - and he was sad that his mum would like to return to the Philippines but remains in Canada for the sake of her children:
Efren: I can feel for my mum that she misses them [siblings] ...and she would...really like to actually go back there, the reason why she’s here is so my siblings and I can have a better life and really benefit our future...

Angel has noticed that her friends seem to have more relatives in Canada, which, “...kind of makes me miss my relations in the Philippines a lot...” Jiao was more pragmatic; she seemed to be very adaptable and easy-going, but recognised that her mother feels the loss of family, since they don’t have any immediate family close to them:

Jiao: ...I think my mom gets really lonely, so, like her parents are in New Zealand and so are her siblings... I go wherever things take me, so I’m pretty down with it.

4.4 Journey: “That’s what happened”

Whilst reading the transcripts, it was sometimes difficult to follow the stages that the families had taken travelling from their home countries to Canada. I finally printed off some outline maps of the world so that I could draw on the routes that the participants’ families had taken to get to Canada, so I could get their stories straight.

Mili was born in Vancouver three years after her family emigrated. Her father had emigrated first (to Toronto) and her mother moved some time later with her elder brothers. Willow was also born in Vancouver, but moved to England when she was a toddler, and then moved back to Ontario (staying with her grandmother) aged seven, moving on to Vancouver six months later.

Angel’s family moved directly to Vancouver from the Philippines (as did Efren’s parents and siblings), but they haven’t always lived in the East Vancouver neighbourhood where the school is situated. Jiao’s parents established themselves in the USA before moving to Canada. What became very clear was that the students wanted me to understand these stories in detail, often making sure that what
I had on tape was accurate. For example, Angel was eager to explain her family’s migration story in precise detail, and corrected me if I misunderstood any of the specifics of the journey. Getting the story straight was clearly important; for example, when Angel showed me the photo of her family at the airport just before they moved to Canada:

Angel: This is my mum, my dad, my sisters...and this is my cousin, she has another sister, but she’s not in the picture... And I have...they are from my dad’s side, on my mum’s side I have a lot of cousins, ‘cos she has six siblings...

Jiao’s story came out at about ninety miles per hour - she was keen to tell me as many details as she could about how she got to Canada:

Jiao: So, we were in Texas first, and my dad left first, so this is when he first left, and this is my mum, me and my dad [showing photo at airport], so my dad left first in the summer? Or sometime in the spring, and then my mum left in the same year in the winter. So they left like a couple of months, like six or something months afterwards, after each other, and then I was just in China with my grandparents for a year and then after that I went to the USA as well.

Mili’s account of her family’s migration also came out as a rapid stream of consciousness, stuffing as much as she can into her story as she went along, thinking of another event that was important for the story, barely drawing breath in the process:

Mili: ...well first my father moved to Canada and then um after a little bit my mother came over with my two brothers and they went to Toronto and after a whole lot of court stuff in claiming I think first they tried to claim refugee [status] and then they claimed something else and there there was some stuff going on like their lawyer backed out at the last minute they had to get a new lawyer to take up their case and they finally um
were allowed to stay in Canada and um yeah first they were in Toronto and then they moved to Vancouver because it was way too cold here ‘cos Argentina is very warm [laughs]...\(^{19}\)

The students’ families required assistance to a lesser or greater degree to make the move from their source country to Canada. Jiao’s grandparents had taken care of her for a year in Beijing before her parents came to collect her and take her back to North America. Angel’s father had a nephew in Vancouver who helped them find accommodation when they arrived here. Efren’s aunt was very instrumental in helping his family complete paperwork and get work permits, and was able to provide a home for his family when they arrived in Vancouver.

4.5 New beginnings: “Happily ever after”

Jiao adjusted quickly to her new life in Vancouver (she attended an elementary school a couple of blocks from the secondary school):

Jiao [happy, smiley]: I think... I think I cried the first time, and then after, after that day I was perfectly fine...

Jiao’s mum had an old school friend living in Vancouver, whose child was in kindergarten with Jiao. This meant that she was not quite so isolated when she arrived at school, “It was comforting knowing that she was in the other room”. Angel found it a bit more of a challenge, since she missed her friends and teachers back in the Philippines: “it’s a new school environment and I’m scared”. None of the other students mentioned their elementary school. However, the secondary school that the students attend actively nurtures migrant students. Both Efren and Angel told me about a special department within the

\(^{19}\) Absence of punctuation in Mili’s speech here is intentional.
school for students with English as a new language, where recent immigrants can take courses in English with the goal of joining mainstream school when their English is strong enough.

Efren: ...it’s mostly like, from what I know, like ESL, ESL courses for them to, like, improve their English, and be in that kinda like, close group, of people who are also not from here, so...like, learn English together...

Several students spoke about the community feel of their school. Off tape, Jiao described her school as a “warm bubble,” wondering what life outside its gates would be like. Efren was a bit puzzled when I asked him whether he found any tensions between his life at home and the culture of school. He had not thought for a moment that there might be an alternative to the inclusive community that his school provides. Like Jiao, he obviously feels very at home living in the East Vancouver neighbourhood where he has been all his life:

Efren: ...here in [name of school], in this neighbourhood, yeah, it’s very diverse and welcoming to any culture and that’s why I find it easy for me, I, like, I don’t have to hide my culture and my traditions, there’s, I feel like everyone else has their own cultures and traditions that we can all come together and share...

Off-tape, Mili told me with some pride how there is less bullying in her school because of its inclusive nature; she appreciates how everyone gets along regardless of nationality or ethnicity. It is probably a bit of an exaggeration when she said she is “terrified” of going “out to the real world” next year, but it was a worry for her nonetheless. Like the other students, she feels very much at ease at this school, and appreciates its all-embracing character:

Mili: School - here is much more inclusive like I’ve mentioned, I feel more comfortable being myself here at school...
Mili was the only student to comment on any kind of tension between their home life and school. She felt that she could be herself at school, whereas at home she had to be more guarded:

Mili: I’m a goofy teenager and I do goofy things; at home they just wouldn’t understand it...

4.6 Place: “My home is Canada”

When describing the best aspects of moving to Canada, a number of the students mentioned its multicultural, multinational character. Jiao described Canada as “very open” and “diverse”, and has observed some of the different nationalities in her school and wider community:

Jiao: I know that in the metro Vancouver area there’s a lot of Indians... I’ve been noticing a lot of Koreans coming in lately...

Angel described Vancouver as “multicultural”; she noted the number of Asian students at her school (Filipino, Chinese, Vietnamese) and used to live in a neighbourhood that was mostly Punjabi. Angel appreciates Vancouver’s cultural and ethnic mix - in her estimation it was one of the best things about moving to Canada:

Angel: I get to experience new environment and...different...people from different countries around the world...

Efren described Canada as, “really welcoming” and a “diverse” country, and he liked “being with people from all over the world...not just Filipino people.” Willow listed “international” and “open-minded” as two of the best things about living here. Mili agreed:

Mili: Best things...for me, personally the society...[...]...I think that’s the one great things that I love about Canada is all the different cultures and, I think that’s a good thing...
Willow was the only student to mention Canada’s physical geography, rather than focusing on demographics and multiculturalism. This might be explained by her being a self-confessed “kind of an outdoorsy person” (Willow comes to school by bike and has a Scout badge sewn to her backpack). Willow’s appreciation for Canada’s wide open places is very apparent:

Willow: ...I love the wilderness, how there’s actual real wilderness, like untamed wilderness, open forests [...] Canada’s so...so wild.

...I like how big Canada is...it’s just huge...

One of Jiao’s parents’ reasons for leaving China was to avoid the over-pressurised education system and the Gaocou university entrance exam; she has clearly found a safe place to thrive academically and socially. Angel was aware that there are difficulties settling into a new place, aware that it takes time to feel “part of the community.” Although it was initially difficult for Mili’s family to settle down, her family has lived in the same house (very close to the school) since she was five years old:

Mili: ...they just like the neighbourhood - it’s safe compared to where we were living before...

The students had differing views on where they call home. Jiao, having adapted to Canadian life, now feels vulnerable when she returns to China since her language and written Chinese are lacking. For her, home is emphatically Canada, but describing herself as having “Commonwealth” culture, she is happy enough with the idea of moving to New Zealand with her family; she feels that New Zealand would be “pretty much the same as Canada.” Angel’s concept of home was more nuanced; she feels the pull of family and friends back in the Philippines, but would not go back their permanently: in short, she still calls the Philippines home, but is sure that Canada holds more opportunities for her. Efren said, “My home is Canada” three times during the course of the interview. I was not sure if he was trying to convince himself or me of the veracity of that statement:
Efren: Although I am Filipino, and my family is from the Philippines, **my home is Canada**... I’ve been here all my life and this is the place I call home... I feel safe [...] this whole country is very welcoming and safe...

Mili was more assertive about where home is for her: without skipping a beat, she said, “Vancouver”, and was horrified at the very thought of living in Argentina:

Su: Would you consider moving back to Argentina?

Mili: [smiley] No! Not at all!

Su: [laughs]

Mili: NO. Definitely no. Never. [scowls]

Willow considers Canada (and specifically British Columbia) to be her home; she was flummoxed by my question:

Su: ...where do you consider your home to be?

Willow: [no answer - looks blank]

Su: If I say, “Where’s home?”

Willow: Canada. [pulls face: d’uh! stupid question]

Su: [laughs] And would that be Vancouver, or...?

Willow: Oh... BC, I suppose, I’ve never really travelled outside of BC, so...

Home, then, for these students is Canada - although Efren and Angel feel the pull towards the Philippines, they have firmly planted their stake in the ground here: Canada has their loyalty and allegiance.
4.7 Social justice: “They’re just coming together and fighting as one group”

Whilst geographical knowledge might be lacking in the students I interviewed, a sense of social justice is not. These were exceptionally compassionate and caring young people, who were able to apply their understanding of social justice issues to the examples of contemporary migration that I was discussing with them. I sensed that the experiences of their families, combined with the nurturing climate fostered by the school they attend. The school’s website lists six tenets that the school aspires to: Helpful - Considerate - Perseverance - Honesty - Determined - Generous. My observation was that these were not just fine words included on the school’s home page or on a banner in the school’s main hallway. These were standards that everyone I came across - from the school secretaries, to the librarian, to the Principal - all displayed. Quite an achievement.

Mili chatted about her involvement in the school’s drama productions; I asked her about the play she is currently taking part in, and was a little taken aback by her answer. The students are tackling difficult and important subjects that re-enforce the principles that the school espouses: Considerate, Generous, Determined:

Mili: I’m - this one is an original piece and it revolves around suicide, and, um...
basically teenage suicide, and the next one that I’m doing the theme is ageing...

The interviews were interspersed with thoughts and comments from the students that demonstrated their understanding of concepts of social justice, in particular those that pertain to equality, dignity and human rights, as defined by the UN Declaration of Human Rights Articles 3, 6, 7 and 14:

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20Adjectives have been changed for anonymity but essentially they are the same. Information retrieved from study school’s website, November 23, 2012.
1. Safety: *Article 3 Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.*

Efren was bothered by the MV Sun Sea incident photo, and did not want to answer the questions until he knew what had happened to the people in the photograph; he seemed genuinely concerned about their wellbeing:

   Efren: Well this... [pause] Were they, like, shipped off the same day as they arrived, or how did that work?

Willow, also, wanted answers before giving her thoughts on the Sun Sea question; she too, needed to know what happened to them before she could answer fully. She assumed that, given the condition of the ship, that these people must be refugees fleeing from something awful, and that their lives were on the line. She felt strongly that they should have been taken care of by the Canadian government:

   Willow: [pause] (little sigh) I don’t have much context but if they’re - if they are desperate and if they are starving, and if they are escaping from something then they should be let in - they’re refugees....

   Su: Mhmm. [encouraging]

   Willow: ...and they’re desperate... It’s not right to let anyone suffer like that especially if you’re given the chance to help them...

Mili’s reaction to the Calais asylum seekers was in a similar vein. Her concern for the young men in the photo was because of what might happen to them if they were not allowed to stay in France; she was concerned that their lives might be in danger:

   Mili: Perhaps they would be forced to do things that they wouldn’t be in France and they are trying to show how desperate they are to stay in France because of the conditions back at home and that they are serious about this...
I did not ask Mili to elaborate further on this answer; later, I wondered if she has some understanding of Argentina’s recent history that was informing her comments. The source of her awareness is perhaps not the issue here. Like Willow, she used the word “desperate” several times, to describe the predicament of the asylum seekers.

Jiao also thought that lives of the Calais asylum seekers were in danger, since they may not survive in their home country if they were deported. I asked her what she thought they might die from if they were sent back:

Jiao: War, um, diseases, um, starvation, unsanitary drinking water... um... err... possible government, possibly government corruption or, religious, um, what’s it called?

Discrimination?

Jiao’s list gave another clue about the values that influence the students’ strong sense of justice and equality: understanding of quality of life in other countries is one of the main components of the human geography unit of the grade 11 social studies. According to the IRP, students should be able to “compare Canada’s standard of living with those of developing countries, with reference to poverty and key indicators of human development”\(^{21}\). Evidently, these students have assimilated what the have learned in class and combined it with their own experience, and that of their families, to develop a laudable appreciation of these issues. Their understanding has also being influenced by their knowledge of history, which they draw on when their geographical knowledge runs out. Efren gave a good example of this when I showed the him the Dadaab photo. He looked at it for a while before commenting:

Efren: It’s like a concentration camp.

Su: That’s an interesting answer.

Efren, Mili and Angel were all positive that it is worthwhile learning about migration in grade 11. When I asked Angel why, she implied that Canada’s high standard of living was not always appreciated:

Angel: ...they might realise that Canada’s, um, ummm, a better country in terms of living conditions, than, um, where they were living before... [pause] ...I think it’s a matter of realisation...because if they know it’s there, but they really haven’t thought about it...[trails off].

[...]

Like, really thought about it [her emphasis].

2. Personhood: Article 6 Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law. The issue of personhood crops up frequently in discussions around asylum seekers and refugees. For these students these issues are less complicated: having experienced hardship and in migrating to Canada, they have a strong sense of what it means to become a citizen of another country and to have the rights (and responsibilities) that come with that territory. Both Mili and Efren showed me photos of their families obtaining citizenship, and the value that they attach to that recognition was reflected in their answers. Efren was cheering on the inhabitants of the camp in Calais: he hoped that strength in numbers and sheer determination might carry the day:

Efren: I see [pause] youth - a lot of young people who - are fighting for their rights, and what they believe that they deserve and [pause] they’re just coming together, and fighting as one group, coming together for what they believe...

Angel was concerned that the young man from Somalia might lose his right to personhood altogether, and that he might end up being enslaved:
Angel: [pause] He might get sold to someone who needs his skills, or he might be sold to someone who needs a slave, or he might be a child soldier...[trails off].

Clearly she is drawing on knowledge that she may have learned in Social Studies 11 or elsewhere within the official curriculum.

Willow was the only student to mention First Nation peoples in relation to social justice; this came from a discussion about her British heritage in relation historical British involvement in the treatment of First Nations. She is concerned that some attitudes have yet to change, and many of the issues regarding redress still remain:

Willow: And I think that even, even the worst in retrospect, how the things that we did back then, and we didn’t have the knowledge that we do today, it’s still happening today - that’s even worse... [...] Haven’t we moved beyond that?

3. Equality: Article 7 All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.

Like Mili, Efren appreciated the inclusive nature of the school they attend. With young people from so many ethnicities and nationalities, Efren felt that all students are treated equally, regardless of background:

Efren: And, like, I have friends who have families from all over the world and we kind of embrace each other’s cultures rather than, “Oh, your country’s, or your culture’s different from our traditions.”

Mili felt that what is learned in the classroom should provoke action beyond the school doors; that having learned more about immigration and issues around discrimination, young people would be more willing to act on behalf of those who are discriminated against:

Mili: I think we need to bring awareness to it, I think it’s something worth
knowing about, um and - it - could - inspire people to, like, help refugees and, sometimes there can be just discrimination against immigrants and if you, if you’re taught more about it in schools it could help with that...

Willow felt the same way. Evidently, what she has experienced in her own family has caused her to think in more depth about how immigrants to Canada are treated:

Willow: ...[A] lot of issues that should be resolved in terms of who is allowed to come to Canada... I know my uncle from England - he wanted to move to Canada and he couldn’t because my dad hasn’t paid his taxes [...] even though he has tonnes of family here, no-one is eligible to support him and let him come in to Canada, so we need to find a better system...

Willow’s understanding of discrimination combines both personal experience and knowledge acquired from social studies:

Willow: ...we looked pretty deeply into migration, like the first part of the century [...] Europeans were a lot more favoured in terms of...gaining Canadian citizenship and not everyone was well...it wasn’t a fair system - completely un-fair - there was a lot of prejudice, bias and resentment and sometimes violence...

Efren’s understanding of the Chinese Head Tax was also informed by his family’s experience of what he perceived to be discrimination - the deporting of his uncle back to the Philippines when he was a young boy was echoed in his reaction to the treatment of Chinese immigrants:

Efren: ...because I don’t, I don’t really agree with the fact that they’re having to pay to come for a new life where you want to be a prosperous in your own life and kind of being sent back to your own country, I didn’t find, I didn’t agree, so...
4. Asylum: *Article 14. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.*

Mili and Efren felt very strongly that the asylum seekers on the MV Sun Sea should have been allowed to stay in Canada. Their reasoning may well have been influenced by what their families have endured; that asylum seekers should be heard and understood; that they had every right to seek asylum in Canada. I was struck by their emphasis on the need for asylum seekers to be listened to: evidently they feel that immigrants to Canada are all too often voiceless, that few are interested in hearing their reasons for emigrating:

Mili: Well, these people seem to really want to come to Canada if they are willing to put themselves in that kind of conditions. If they would go to that extent to try to get into Canada... [...] So, I think Canada should have, had - I don’t know what happened, but they should take them in and let them become Canadians.

Efren: ...they should have [pause] interviewed or talked to like all of the people that were on board, and, like find out like their purpose for coming here for, and [pause] and just being kinda like - more like, welcoming...I would feel that they should be more understanding when these people are coming in ‘cos they’re here for a reason...

4.8 Curriculum: “It wasn’t, like, part of the course”

*I’m writing this on the day after Hurricane Sandy hit New York and the eastern seaboard of the United States. It is (depending on forecasts for climate change) a once in a lifetime event. And yet, I’m wondering how many social studies classrooms across the country are talking about an event that is both geographically and historically significant. My guess is very few.*
Most will be continuing on with question 4 on page 10822 of the textbook. (Journal entry, October 30, 2012)

One of main goals of the research questions was to find out whether the social studies curriculum was fit for purpose: whether it is meeting the needs of the students it is designed to serve, principally in regard to geographical knowledge, and specifically whether students could connect their own experience to the curriculum. In short, geographical knowledge was sketchy at best amongst this group, although they were not without geographical terminology, using words such as “environment” “infrastructure” “living standards” “terrain” “young populations” and “natural resources.” Looking at the graph showing immigrants to Canada, Jiao confessed, “I’m not very good with places, I’m not even sure where Morocco is...” She was surprised to see that France comes in at number six: she knew about French migration in the past to Canada, but had not thought about it continuing to the present.

Angel, Mili and Efren were very unsure about where the asylum seekers at Calais were from (Angel: “They’re not French”; Mili: “East Asia maybe?”; Efren: “I guess India”). Willow and Jiao were somewhat closer. Willow: “They look Palestinian or Iraqi? Like, Middle East?”; Jiao: “…in-between Europe and Asia, the Middle Eastern countries.” Although Jiao’s answer was fairly accurate (they were from Afghanistan), she then went on to suggest that they might die from diseases, starvation or unsanitary drinking water if they returned home - effectively reciting the measurements for standards of living as per the Social Studies 11 curriculum, rather than applying specific geographical knowledge. My sense was that Jiao’s understanding was enhanced by her father’s interest in current events which they discuss at home; for example, her guess that the Calais asylum seekers were Middle Eastern was probably not learned in class, given that most of the examples of migration in social studies are historical.

22 “Question 4 on page 108” is not made up: it was the work for the day written on the blackboard of the classroom I was using for interviews.
None of the students grasped the significance of the English Channel (France in relation to the UK) even though they had both recently studied World War Two, including Canada’s participation in the raid on Dieppe and the Juno Beach D-day landings. Even though Willow had lived in a town located on the English Channel when she was in England, she was not aware that Calais is a magnet for asylum seekers and economic migrants trying to get into the UK; after understanding Calais’ location, Willow suggested the young men in the photo might be trying to get on board a ship to England.

The explanation for this gap in understanding became all too apparent when I asked what kind of migration issues or topics they had looked at in Social Studies 11:

Jiao: We didn’t talk much about immigration currently, we talked about migration in the past, like the Komagata Maru...the Head tax...

Willow: We spent a long time on the Chinese Head Tax [...] we looked pretty deeply into migration, like the first part of the century...

Mili: ...we did, like, that Head Tax, when Chinese immigrants... [...] we didn’t really focus on, like, refugees...

Efren: Well, I do remember the most which was the Chinese Head Tax...

Efren was the only student who made the connection between the photo of the MV Sun Sea incident (2011) and the Komagata Maru affair in 1914, which was an almost identical event:

Efren: ...that exactly reminded me of what I learned last year and how they shipped off those people on board...and sent them back and didn’t allow them on the coast...they refused to let them come on land...

Document 6 (the resources pertaining to the Dadaab refugee camp) emerged as a measure of the extent to which these students are missing geographical knowledge: a benchmark of geographical non-thinking? I was genuinely surprised that they found these questions so hard to grapple with, and found...
their answers very telling in terms of the implications for future development of the BC social studies curriculum, given my understanding of the UK National Curriculum in which geography is a core discipline:

*I’ve had enough. I’ve analysed, line by line, word by word, five different answers to the Dadaab questions, and I’m really - truly - taken aback by the students’ lack of geographical knowledge. I’m sure that the majority of UK students of the same age, given their background in geography education, would have no trouble guessing Africa, and would probably be able to tell me why a camp like this would exist.* (Journal entry, November 21, 2012)

I scribbled a quick note to a former colleague to get her thoughts, sensing that I might be viewing the geographical ability of UK students through rose-coloured spectacles. Her reply was revealing:

*Asked four of my year 11s [grade 10] today; all instantly said it’s a refugee camp somewhere in Africa. One added [comments about] aid being air-lifted in and discussed forced migration. All were aware of living conditions. I asked how they knew. All said through geography and RE [religious education] lessons as well as TV programmes. Don’t see my Year 13s [grade 12] until Monday, but I think you have your answer! Hope it helps! (I explained why I asked them and they were quite shocked).* (Louise Ashman, personal correspondence, November 21, 2012)

Only one student guessed that the refugee camp in Document 6 was in Africa - or even knew that it was a refugee camp. They could describe the living conditions well enough, but could not connect them dry, desert like environment to the continent of Africa - it rang no bells at all:

Su: So where do you think this photo (of Dadaab, Kenya) would have been taken?

Angel: Southern Asia?

Jiao: Probably in a third world country.
Mili: India, maybe?

Efren: ...not like somewhere like here...a desert?

Willow took one look at the photo and said, “It looks like a refugee camp” without any hesitation. She was also the only student who correctly guessed the location:

Willow: It looks like a desert...so...maybe someplace in Africa? Maybe Sudan or Ethiopia?

I tried to find out how she knew, but her answer was not very forthcoming, directing the question back to me:

Su: Why would you say Africa?

Willow: Uh, um... Oh, ‘cos it’s desert like and... that’s the main thing on the basis for that conclusion...

Su: So you’ve seen photos like that before.? 

Willow: ....and there are wars going on? [very quiet]

My hunch (educated hunch, but hunch nonetheless) is that her British heritage (her mum?) may have had an influence, given the much higher profile given to Africa in British media and in the UK-based charity projects that receive huge attention on British TV - for example, Comic Relief23 and Sport Relief24 which both provide very accessible and appropriate resources for schools.

All the students could demonstrate their understanding of the technicalities of population change (part of the Social Studies 11 curriculum) and could use geographical language in this respect:

Angel: I remember push and pull factors, the reasons why they would move out of the country...

23 Comic Relief website: http://www.comicrelief.com/get-involved/school-youth/year-round-activities

24 Sport Relief website: http://www.sportrelief.com/schools/learning-resources
Willow: (looking at graph showing immigration to Canada) These are kind of representative of the population.

Mili: (looking at same graph) I’d say this represents the demographic in Vancouver.

All the students thought (to differing degrees) that studying migration was worthwhile, for a variety of reasons. Angel linked it back to family history:

Angel: I think we should be taught about immigration more...for [students] to understand why their parents or ancestors moved from where they were before to Canada...(my italics)

Both Mili and Efren were enthusiastic; Efren thought that a more in-depth study of migration would help students who have recently immigrated:

Efren: ...learning about migration, will kind of help them cope and learning more about their situation...they can relate to what they are learning...

Mili saw it more from a social justice point of view - studying contemporary migration issues would foster greater understanding and generate action:

Mili: I think we need to bring awareness to it... [...] ...and - it - could - inspire people to, um, like, help refugees and, um...uh, sometimes there can be just discrimination against immigrants and if you, if you’re taught more about it in schools it could help with that.

Willow struggled to see how contemporary migration issues could be investigated beyond “studying the principles of migration” since, in her reasoning, it is a topic that has no clear boundaries and therefore cannot be studied effectively:

Willow: ...it’s something that’s ongoing...it’s difficult to base the curriculum on something that is so - it’s always changing...
I wondered if this view was influenced by only having studied migration in the context of history - something cannot be studied whilst it is still in progress, only once an event has been assigned to history can it be investigated. Jiao was somewhat skeptical, wondering how immigration would fit into the syllabus:

Jiao: If I knew more about it...what the classes would be like...

[...]

...migration is so broad.

I had a longer chat with Jiao after the interview about how migration is taught at the school. She recalled a class discussion about China’s One Child Policy, mentioning a friend that is third generation Chinese and “very Canadian.” Her friend did not share Jiao’s point of view, which, she admits is more influenced by her Chinese heritage. Jiao is not convinced that migration is a worthwhile topic; she doesn’t see it as particularly interesting, even though she has experienced it for herself. She wondered if people would be willing to share their migration stories in class since they are very personal, thinking that students might be too shy to discuss in front of their peers. Jiao is aware that Vancouver is different to other parts of Canada in terms of acceptance of migrants, for example, she mentioned a friend in Calgary who was the only Chinese kid in class.

Throughout the interviews, there were examples of students applying their firsthand experience of migration to the resources we were discussing. Having seen how her family struggled to establish themselves in Vancouver, Angel could easily comprehend the barriers that the passengers of the MV Sun Sea would need to overcome if they were allowed to stay in Canada:

Angel: I think one of the difficulties they will encounter is actually settling in Canada and finding a job, and um, finding a home, food, clothing, and all those basic
necessities. Hmmm. [thinking] ...and also the feeling of being part of the community and not being discriminated, that their...ethnicity? Where they’re from...[pause].

Guessing the top five source countries of immigrants to Canada produced some answers that were directly linked to personal experience. Efren guessed Germany because he has met German exchange students at the school. Mili guessed Italy since that is where her paternal grandparents are from, and presumably the school’s proximity to Vancouver’s version of Little Italy. Angel asked: “Does Mexico count?” Mexico was not an obvious choice, but later she told me about a friend of hers whose family had fled from Mexico to Canada to seek asylum. Angel was not sure where these young men were from, but drew on her personal experience of living amongst a number of Punjabi families when her family first came to Vancouver:

Angel: I think India [...] because the skin colour, and also, how their faces look, hmmm. [pause] But usually some Indians...they would wear turbans, but they’re not wearing turbans, maybe it’s because of the law, the government don’t want them to...to show their cultural ...selves.

The students were very unsure about my line of questioning concerning the sixteen year-old young man (Madahir Borow Mohamed) from the Dadaab refugee camp - I got several blank looks. It was a stretch for them to connect their own story of migration with that of Madahir. For example, when I asked them what questions they would put to him if they met him they struggled for answers:

Mili: How is it like, being separated from your family like that, how are you coping with that?

Jiao: I’m curious, like, what do you do in your spare time, um, d’you...what do you do in your spare time, is there anything that you would like to do...um...
Willow: Um, how do you take this situation - do you - d’you feel like that you need help? Maybe?

Angel: I’d say, hmmm, would you like to see your family again?

[...] I’m guessing he’d burst into tears...

Su: Anything else?

However, after some prompting and providing more information, they were better able to see how Madahir’s story might have parallels with their own; what they lacked was the knowledge to be able to apply their understanding. Efren could see how education might provide a route forward for this Somalian young man, as it has in his own life and in the lives of his siblings:

Efren: And now that he has education, he has the knowledge to really benefit his future and move on forward and have a better life, so...

Given further information about the circumstances that caused Mahadir’s migration, Mili was better able to find links between their stories:

Mili: ...they didn’t move just because they wanted to move, they’re just...they had to move because of a reason not under their control [...] At first my family was a bit separated like my dad having to come here by himself, but I think that’s the only comparison I can find.

As I worked through the transcripts there were hints that these students were “doing school” (Pope, 2001): the enthusiasm (or lack of it) with which they talked about the subjects they were studying suggests that they are just treading water until they graduate next year, rather than engaging with the content of their courses. Jiao and Angel have their sights set on going on to university after they finish school. To this end, Jiao is taking extra courses in Mini School which has been developed
for students who have “demonstrated above average academic achievement”\textsuperscript{25}. Willow, Mili and Efren are not so sure; they are thinking about travelling, or potentially attending college.

Jiao mentioned her concern at not having high enough grades to get into UBC. Interestingly, one of the reasons that her parents moved from China is so that she could have a less pressurised education; she is relieved that she does not have to take the make-or-break Gaocou high school exam that would have determined which universities she could apply to. Her parents wanted her to have a less stressful “school career” (her words), and for her to have more opportunities in the future. When I asked her whether she thought that migration was a worthwhile topic to explore in social studies, she was very matter of fact:

Jiao: I think it would be useful to look at some of the statistics...of how many people...move to Canada and from where, I think that would be, sort of, interesting. ‘Cos we can relate it to who is in our community...”

Off-tape, Jiao mentioned that she was interested in studying sciences at university, so statistical data would probably appeal to her, however, I got the sense that she was only interested in studying topics that would be useful for getting good grades in the provincial exams: she was not drawn to activities that were outside that remit. She mentioned that in Social Studies 11 they had discussed migration, but since it was not a main component of the course she hadn’t given it much thought:

Jiao: ...we talked briefly about reasons why people would want to migrate, but that was briefly, in passing, it wasn’t, like, part of the course, so... [shrugs].

That sentence, “It wasn’t part of the course” stuck with me.

It seems that much of the human geography taught within the Social Studies 11 course is technical in nature: facts to be rote-learned and regurgitated for the provincial exam, rather than

principles to be applied to real-life situations. Mili and Efren readily recalled learning about the Demographic Transition Model (DTM) - a classic piece of geographical theory that is almost always included in the exam. I commented on Mili’s use of the word *demographic* - not an everyday word for most eighteen year-olds. Mili explained that her teacher had “drilled that into us”; another sentence that stuck in my craw: a growing feeling that this part of the course was being taught specifically for the exam. Angel’s comments confirmed this:

Angel: I think we just learned about push and pull factors, but I didn’t have Mr [contact teacher’s name] as my teacher I had another one and he kind of - uh - taught us quickly about it ‘cos we were running out of time...um...errr...[pause].

Efren rattled off the bits and pieces of human geography that had lodged in his memory:

Efren: ...we also looked at the demographic transition model, the different age groups and like different shapes of the pyramid and we learned, like, yeah - that’s all I remember - all that transition stuff - demographic transition model...

Sadly, it seems as though the human geography is just one more item on the check list of a myriad of topics to cover within the Social Studies 11 curriculum: so much to do, so little time. In the end, the students may well come away with enough credits for their Dogwood Diploma, (that may also act as their ticket to university or other further education), but leaves them with a handful of facts about geography that they find difficult to their own lives or to contemporary migration issues.

### 4.9 Presence of absence

The initial line-by-line analysis unwittingly produced two distinct sets of codes. The first set generated clear-cut themes that could then be used to interrogate the data further: a conventional
grounded theory approach. However, perhaps because a significant portion of these interviews are essentially stories, a second set of codes emerged as questions rather than themes:

1. Who is included in the story? Who is excluded?
2. What is remembered? What is forgotten?
3. What is lost? What is gained?
4. What gives comfort? What causes pain?
5. What is embraced? What is rejected?

Using a dialogic (narrative analysis) approach to the story highlighted not only what was said, but what was left unsaid: what was included in the story and what might be left out. This was intriguing, but somewhat perplexing; how could these questions be approached, if at all? Was this another layer of meaning to pursue, or was it a rabbit trail to set aside? Clearly some of the questions could be answered directly from the interviews; for example for question 1, I could point to a line where a student mentions leaving cousins behind in their home country, and cite another where they make new friends. I could list family members who are included in the story, but I could not know which family members are deliberately or unconsciously excluded from the story. Or, for question 4, I could show instances of participants bringing familiar traditions with them, and equally highlight comments what they found odd or difficult about settling down to life in Canada. What I could not answer precisely are those that fell under the category of “the presence of absence”: a sense that I was not privy to some parts of these narratives. This is consistent with Adam’s 2009 study which cautioned that migrant students want to be deemed credible and legitimate, and therefore researchers may not always get the whole story. It is another layer of meaning: an acknowledgement that the participants I interviewed were not at liberty, or not willing to share particular pieces of information. The researcher was making her presence felt in the data: the extent to which these students would divulge information
had to do with their relationship with me; had they been interviewed by anyone else, the data would be different. Having recently experienced immigration to Canada, I may have had the edge on researchers who have not, but there is still a gulf between the cultural and social capital I was able to deal in and that of the students I interviewed. Had this been a two-year ethnography in which I was embedded within the school (in whatever capacity) the absences would be less apparent or the reason for their presence better understood.

4.10 Conclusion: place and social justice

*That place called home was never an unmediated experience.* (Massey, 1994, p.164)

These students seem to have found a place - both in terms of the school they attend, and Vancouver as a city - where they feel at ease, but they are not completely tied to the area. They have developed a sense of place from combining aspects of their heritage with Canadian culture, and they pick and chose as needed - in fact they seem quite adept at this. In effect, these students have created their own space identity: the place they inhabit is defined more by the social relations taking place in the neighbourhood in which they live, and the school they attend, than their physical surroundings. All the students I spoke to live locally, and all of them identify with the community that lives here. This is in line with Said’s argument that the physical attributes of place are “less important than what it is poetically endowed with which is usually a quality with an imaginative or figurative value we can name and feel” (Said, quoted in Gregory, 1995, p.456). The participants in this study have, probably without consciously thinking about it, conceived a place for themselves that is anchored in the physical, but is blurred at its edges: it is both real and imagined. This coincides with Sardinha (2011) Sonu and Moon’s (2009) research: each of these stories are unique, each student has established their own place in their school and community, and are successfully negotiating their cultural identity, within an ever-
evolving time-space compression. However, throughout this study, these participants have managed to wriggle out of any theoretical framework that I have attempted to place over them. Thirdspace, as discussed by Soja and Lefebvre is intended as a different way of thinking about the “spatiality of human life” (Soja, 1996, p.2). Both authors insist that place is socially constructed, that it is not neutral; these young people may have created a space for themselves, but the attributes of the place they inhabit has been influenced by factors outside their control: family, school, state, technology. Can this real-and-imagined place be labelled Thirdspace? I think so. It serves as a reminder that their current situation is neither predictable nor lasting. Even now, re-development of downtown Vancouver creeps slowly eastwards, and the neighbourhood that they are so familiar with might soon look very different in a few years time. The relationships that have sustained these students throughout their school years will inevitably adjust as they graduate this year. The identities that they have created for themselves in this community are also subject to change. The neighbourhood that they imagine as safe and comforting might be re-evaluated as dull and stifling as they travel beyond its borders. Development in technologies of communication gather apace: current advancements show no sign of slowing down, and these young people have to respond to that reality. A greater scrutiny of the concept of place, and a clearer understanding of spatial justice is unquestionably needed within the social studies curriculum.

4.11 Conclusion: curricular standpoint

...curriculum...carries with it explicit and implicit messages about what epistemological orientations are deemed valuable and made readily available to students, as some groups’ perspectives are sanctioned over others. (Au, 2012, p.51)

Whether they be enacted, social, masked or unofficial (Weisz, 1989), explicit, implicit (Eisner, 1994) or hidden (Apple, 2009), curricular come with strings of power attached. Au maintains that in
creating and delivering school curricula, those with power generally support the status quo; evidently those who are in the position to design the social studies curriculum are of a nervous disposition. No rocking the curricular boat here. The social studies curriculum has remained heavily weighted towards history since it was revised in 1997: the point at which geography and history were no longer taught separately (Broom, 2008, p.38). Au, (quoting Kumashiro, 2002) describes an “anti-oppressive education”: a curricular standpoint that directly challenges the status quo; “it is a process of looking beyond the curriculum. It is a process of troubling the official knowledge in the disciplines. It is a process of explicitly trying to read against common sense” (Au, 2012, p.59, emphasis added). This research reminds educators of the importance of troubling official knowledge: curriculum committees are not disposed to re-write IRP documents and retrain teachers unless they have a good reason to do so. If we label ourselves educators, it behoves us to challenge the powers that be when we see inadequacies in the curricula we are responsible to teach. Connell’s standpoint of the least advantaged is cited by Au, and is reflected in his thoughts on hegemony in the school system. Connell argues that the “the current hegemonic curriculum embodies the interests of the most advantaged. Justice requires a counter-hegemonic curriculum...designed to embody the interests and perspectives of the least advantaged” (Connell, 1993, p.44, original emphasis), but as Apple suggests, the problem lies in the tendency teachers to avoid the political aspects of topics like migration; depoliticising has a neutering effect. Historical examples are safe in this respect: what has happened is in the past and all is well. Bringing the topic of migration into the present is risky: nasty political aspects have to be addressed, fear of brainwashing or indoctrination should not deter teachers from providing students opportunities to question the status quo.

Jean Anyon advocates the creation of student-produced knowledge beyond the prescribed curriculum: “When critical educators involve students in contention via issue campaigns, we teach
students the civic skills necessary for meaningful participation...which can create in them a sense of efficacy as change agents and effective actors in their communities” (Anyon, 2011, p.102). That is what the school at the centre of this study has done by engaging students in social justice issues; the participants in this study had strong opinions about asylum seeking and refugees, which the school has nurtured, but this is almost certainly not as a result of the Social Studies 11 curriculum. Mili’s involvement in dramatic productions covering issues such as teenage suicide and attitudes to ageing is a good example.

Anyon’s 1981 paper examined how students from a variety of different socio-economic backgrounds understand the production of knowledge: her study was used as a reference for determining how, and more importantly, why, student-created knowledge can be incorporated into the social studies curriculum. As I explained why I was doing this research, I asked two of the participants where knowledge comes from. They both said a similar thing - that knowledge comes from everyone, every student can make a contribution to understanding. Nothing about textbooks and teachers. I trust that somehow these students will not lose this belief, and that they will tell anyone who will listen. Hopefully, their confidence in their own agency, and their commitment to social justice will continue far beyond grade 12. Unlike the less advantaged students in Anyon’s study, these young people were aware of their potential to create knowledge themselves, but, perhaps more importantly, they were well versed in social justice issues, that has the potential to make them very effective in their communities. For these students, it is not the school that is letting them down, it is the approved curriculum: social studies has the power to enlarge and advance students’ understanding of vital social issues, but as it stands, it is clearly - is failing to strong a word? - in its remit. This study has put just a small segment of the Social Studies 11 curriculum under a magnifying glass, and found that that understanding of migration is missing an essential component. Au cautions that wallpapering the curriculum so that it
has some multicultural elements is not enough. The BC curriculum is no different from the norm in North America: fundamentally grounded in “Eurocentric culture based on understanding the canon of Western Civilisation” (Au, 2012, p.63). Changing the social studies curriculum to include the geographies - and histories - of first generation migrants in the core syllabus requires a fundamental shift in what constitutes the knowledge is of most worth, a significant revision of the underlying epistemology.
5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Answering the research questions

1. How is migration understood by Grade 11 students who have experienced it first hand?

   a. What has contributed to this understanding? Are some influences more significant than others?

   Migration to Canada is understood as a hugely significant event which has unquestioningly improved the lives of the students who have experienced it for themselves. The social studies curriculum has informed understanding, but it is almost exclusively by studying historical examples of immigration to Canada, which, although interesting and significant, provides these students with very limited knowledge. Narrowing down the curriculum to a Canada-centric temporally-focussed course inevitably gives students a skewed impression of migration. Their families’ experience of migration mitigates some of this view: they have an excellent grasp on what social, cultural and financial capital is required to move from one country to another. As a result, they can empathise with the plight of immigrants in the past. Geographical knowledge is thin on the ground, and therefore, (unless it has been acquired outside school), contributes very little: students can have sympathy for those caught up in contemporary migration examples, but do not have the resources to connect them with their own experience and/or historical events. One side of the history-experience-geography triangle is missing, and without it, their understanding is incomplete.

   b. How do these students negotiate the impact that migration has had on their lives?

      i. which aspects of their home culture or ethnicity have they retained or rejected?

   The participants I spoke with have settled into life in Canada remarkably well. Contrary to the recent CBC documentary investigating the lives of first generation immigrants, these young people are able to pick and choose aspects of their home culture, whilst at the same time incorporating aspects of Canadian and high school culture. They do this with apparent ease, which is due in great part to the
school that they attend: inclusivity and appreciation of other cultures and nationalities is actively encouraged.

ii. in what ways has the experience of migration affected their understanding of place?

These students have an affection for, and an affinity with the neighbourhood in which they live: their lives are principally divided between their day-to-day experience of school, and their close-knit family life. Several of them intend to enlarge their borders by travelling when they leave school, or by attending college or university. Although they identify with this East Vancouver community they are evidently not chained to it; they have a measure of agency in terms of what happens to them in the next few years. Their sense of place is tied to their identity as first generation migrants: they appreciate what Canada offers in terms of opportunities for the future, and what their school environment offers in the here and now. Canada is their home. Their self-effacing attitude to their own accomplishments, lack of a sense of entitlement combined with their compassion for those who have not had such a positive experience of migration is marked.

2. To what extent does the social studies curriculum contribute to student understanding?

a. Are students able to find connections between taught curriculum and lived experience?

Students are able to connect their own experience to the social studies curriculum, but only in so far as they can identify with some of the losses and obstacles encountered by individuals who have immigrated to Canada in the past. When presented with examples of contemporary migration, they find it difficult to employ their historical knowledge and apply it to an unfamiliar situation. The contribution made by the social studies curriculum is therefore limited in scope; without the spatial component it is difficult to bridge the gap between curriculum and experience: the lack of a foundation in geography means that students, who are in possession of a wealth of understanding of migration, are unable to
make use of what they know. Understanding historical migration can only go so far, and a store of knowledge lodged within these students remains untapped.

5.2 The case for geography

*education is concerned with the growth of ideas, attitudes and personality as a result of a study of facts, information and experiences. All these attributes, of course, are those specially fostered by geographical study.* (Scarfe, 1959, p.112)

The discipline of geography needs to be reconsidered and re-evaluated in the context of the BC social studies curriculum; somehow its importance as a core subject has been sidelined. This research has demonstrated that a lack of geographical knowledge is short-changing BC students: what follows are practical, applicable suggestions, focussed on the topic of migration, that might go some way to remedy this. They are written with both students and teachers in mind.

5.2.1 Curriculum in British Columbia

*the intent of all curriculum is to influence student learning and, by extension, shape student consciousness about not only subject matter, but also their worldview and their view of themselves.* (Au, 2012, p.92)

Au argues that curricular knowledge is derived from a particular epistemology: it doesn’t just drop out of the sky onto the pages of a BC Ministry of Education document. It has a starting point; it is the result of the collaboration of a group of educators, all of whom have acquired their way of seeing the world from somewhere. Any given curriculum cannot help but structure student understanding: this is its power. It may be limiting and/or enabling, depending on how the curriculum is taught and received. For BC students, wanting to graduate and perhaps go on to higher education, this means
getting a decent grade in Social Studies 11. Whether they find the course content interesting, uplifting, wearisome or downright boring, it matters not: the content is examined by a provincial exam, and is a means to an end: the knowledge embedded in the curriculum has to be somehow acquired. For a social studies teacher, this is no mean feat. The course is dense and relentless: there is barely time to take a breath from one topic to the next. Students have shockingly little time to properly absorb content, let alone time to discuss and debate topics in such a way to allow them to shape their own ways of thinking.

5.2.2 Canada-centric curriculum

The BC curriculum, going back to 1919, has always been Canada-centric. As an outsider to the Canadian education system, leafing through Social Studies 11 textbooks is baffling and somewhat disconcerting. The focus on Canadian geography and history in Social Studies 11 borders on parochial: surely by the time students reach grade 11 they should have moved beyond North America to have a much broader understanding of world history and geography. Debating the reasons for such an inward-looking curriculum is beyond the scope of this project, but the consequences do need to be addressed here. The students I interviewed have a view of the world that is, at best, somewhat distorted. Unless these students purpose to do so, they will have little opportunity to investigate the geography of their home countries, let alone investigate pressing global issues. Their world begins and ends in North America. The students I interviewed have been unfairly left with huge gaps in their geographical understanding; for me, it is disappointing that these bright, thoughtful, compassionate young people have not been given an opportunity to apply their knowledge of history and personal experience of migration to contemporary global issues. It is sad that their curiosity about the world around them has been limited by a curriculum that seems to want to cling on to how its always been. Taught effectively,
geography should provide students with an understanding of the world around them: it should actively engage young people in becoming global citizens by providing them with an understanding about global issues that will affect their future lives.

Migration is one of those issues: it is closely linked with concerns over climate change and population decline. High school students should have an in-depth knowledge of climate change: how can they make informed choices regarding energy use in their own lives if they do not have a sufficient grasp of the facts? A well-rounded understanding of climate change can only be achieved when students are provided with knowledge about both physical and human geography. In the future, it is likely that major migrations will result from continued desertification in sub-Saharan Africa. It is likely that many island and coastal communities will be forced to relocate as a result of rising sea water. An understanding of both physical and human geography is required, but if weather and climate is relegated to science lessons and migration is limited to historical examples, students are left without the understanding required to tackle global issues. Future migrations are ignored by the current social studies curriculum.

Contemporary migration to Canada is likely to be an increasingly controversial topic, particularly if immigration continues to be required to balance declining birth rates: being able to interpret the Demographic Transition Model is all very well, but unless such theory is used to predict and discuss future population issues, then it becomes just another chunk of the curriculum to be learned and then forgotten after graduation. High school students should be equipped to be able to engage in debate and action as future citizens: geography is the best vehicle for disseminating such knowledge. However, changing the curriculum to give equal weight to both geography and history is a scary prospect, especially when geography specialist teachers are so thin on the ground.
When I discussed these findings with the participants at our feedback session, they readily agreed with my conclusions: this was the aspect of the curriculum that they had the greatest issue with. They have found the social studies curriculum (especially grade 10) far too focussed on Canada. They were hoping that History 12 would venture into new ground for them, but they have been disappointed to find that the majority of the course (so far) is, again, Canada-centric.

5.2.3 Thematic approach to social studies

The case could be made for separating history and geography into distinct disciplines, but the dearth of geography specialist teachers leaves this idea dead in the water. As is stands, the prospect of becoming a social studies teacher for a graduate with a degree in geography cannot be very enticing. To have specialised in a subject for which you have a deep interest, and to have spent four long years studying it in depth, to then be presented with a curriculum that barely makes use of all the talent and knowledge you have acquired must be very dispiriting. It is hardly surprising, then, that the vast majority of newly-minted social studies teachers have a degree in history.

If separating geography and history (something that Neville Scarfe advocated) is a step too far, then greater integration of the subjects might be a better route to a more balanced curriculum. Population studies would be a good example of how this might work. At present there are few opportunities for integration of student experience in the prescribed Social Studies 11 curriculum: with only historical examples to work with, the participants in this study have compartmentalised different aspects of their understanding of migration. Their own experience is in one box, history in another. A geographical component is required to link the two. For curriculum writers, this could mean producing a thematic rather than subject based course. A unit on population studies would therefore combine historical and contemporary migration examples with student familial experience (historical, spatial
This would give students a much fuller understanding of the complex issues concerning migration: for example, comparing the Komagata Maru incident with the MV Sun Sea event and their own experience of migration would not only enable them to see historical migration in the context of contemporary issues, but, perhaps more importantly, allow them opportunities to tell their own stories, and to have those stories validated and appreciated.

5.2.4 Place-based curriculum

*Geography in school is above all an experimental, inductive inquiry into the influences that places have on people and/or the influence of people on places*... (Scarfe, 1959, p.117)

Geography should not be an add on, it should be part of the whole. Geography has shaped how these students direct their lives in ways that they are both conscious and unaware of; they are familiar with the grander scale of moving to Canada and how that has impacted their families, but they have also been affected by the neighbourhood in which they live and the school they attend. They have acquired an awareness of social justice issues that, I would argue, has been hugely influenced by the neighbourhood in which they live. The school curriculum, therefore, should reflect this “spatial causality” (Soja’s terminology) so that students can make sense of their geography as well as their history. After all “we are as much spatial as temporal beings...There is no a priori reason to make one more important than the other” (Soja, 2010, p.16). Following the thematic framework above, this would mean students would investigate the impact of urban growth both in a historical context, as well as looking at the effects of gentrification in their own locale. This could then be linked to global examples of rapid urbanisation (say in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro or bustees of Kolkata (Calcutta)). By comparing the social, demographic, political and economic consequences of urban growth locally, globally and historically, these students would have a much clearer understanding that would inform...
their actions as citizens in their communities in the future, and give them a stake in shaping their own curriculum. If power is bound up in knowledge, then giving students a more active role in their own learning will provide them with the capital they need to be active participants in society as adults.

5.2.5 Curricular standpoint

The participants in this study are caught between two curricula standpoints. On the one hand, the school they attend does its level best to influence student consciousness in a very commendable way: respect and appreciation for others is built into every aspect of school life; these first generation migrant students feel at home here, they are valued and supported and, in some cases, are reluctant to leave. Effectively, the school embodies the standpoint of the least advantaged. On the other hand, they are being taught an official social studies curriculum that, without them realising, has taught them a view of the world that they do not have the resources to challenge. Having overcome hurdles of their own to migrate to Canada, they can understand better than most that the Chinese Head Tax was a terrible burden, but they do not have the opportunity to compare this example with, for example, the awful obstacles faced by economic migrants attempting to reach the UK from France. Given the need for a more place-based curriculum, they are not actively investigating the impact of immigration in their own locality - a topic that they are very familiar and very well versed in, but their opinion is rarely asked for on such matters. They do not get to ask why the kind of inequalities associated with historical migrations still exist and what they can do, individually and collectively, to address them. When presented with ideas about what a migration syllabus might look like, they readily agreed that learning about contemporary migration, and its attending controversy, would encourage students to investigate these matters further.
5.2.6 Implications for pedagogy

This research reveals that students (that might be labelled as less academic) are more than capable of engaging with the curriculum in deeply meaningful ways, if provided with the framework of knowledge to do so. At the moment, they are limited to plodding through historical example after historical example: all the students could recite information about the Head Tax and European migration to Canada, but had not had an opportunity to consider how their own migration stories are in any way linked, let alone how their experience interfaces with, say, the lives of contemporary refugees and asylum seekers. If high school students are to become the global citizens that the BC Ministry of Education hopes they will, then they should be given opportunities to explore global issues for themselves, making use of their own experiences and communities. A study of migration might include collecting stories of migration by the students themselves - both recent and historical - from friends, family and community members. Guided by their social studies teacher, they could investigate the patterns that emerge from such stories, and explore more complex issues associated with migration. This would go beyond the mundane regurgitation of push and pull factors, it would require students to tackle social justice issues that have a spatial component, for example, concerns around asylum seeking, barriers to migration and global population movement. They could evaluate the types of cultural and social affects of migration, such as finding out how migrants have negotiated the adjustment to life in Canada in the past and at the present time. They could then compare their findings to, for example, the stories from CBC’s Generation One programmes, or use readily available web-based resources to compare their migration stories with those of young people around the world.

Community-based studies are hugely beneficial for those students who are most disadvantaged: having an opportunity to create knowledge based on data collected and analysed by themselves demonstrates to young people that they are capable of shaping their own learning. Such hands-off
teaching is messy and difficult to manage, but necessary if students are to develop problem solving and creative thinking skills required for lifelong learning and participation in the democratic process.

5.2.7 Promoting geography

*The function of modern education is to train future citizens to think diligently and critically for themselves and by themselves so that they can act wisely and virtuously in social, political, economic and private affairs.* (Scarfe, 1959, p.111)

Materially changing the core of the BC social studies curriculum will not be achieved by wishing on a star. Educators who believe that the prescribed curriculum should include a greater proportion of geography will be in for a fight, and they could use a heavyweight in their corner. My understanding is that in the past, the Geography department at UBC has been influential in promoting geography within the Faculty of Education and into BC schools, but the fact remains that the content of geography within the social studies curriculum remains woeful. Somewhere along the way there has been a disconnect between university and schools. UBC continues to have a thriving Department of Geography, but school geography is hanging by a thread. A good starting point would be for UBC to appoint a Professor of Geography Education, who would be responsible for making the case for geography within the Faculty as well as providing the bridge between university and schools.

Geography teachers in the UK benefit enormously from a vibrant Geographical Association, that has done stellar work over the past decades: not only promote geography in schools, but also to engage with policy makers and curriculum developers. This has not happened overnight, and has required constant effort by very committed local and national organisers. The Canadian Council for Geographic Education (in association with the National Geographic Society in the USA) has a similar remit, but its scope is much more limited. I checked their website for lesson plans on the theme of
migration: only one was specific to the BC curriculum, and it involved investigating census data from
the Statistics Canada website. Hardly riveting stuff. A quick trawl through the Geographical
Association’s website produced a variety of resources including a series of lesson plans entitled, “What
would happen if all migration to the UK stopped?”26 (with links to a list of articles and video news
reports) and details of a project called “My Place”27, designed for students to explore their
neighbourhoods using mobile phone technology. Both of these would have been of interest to the
participants in this study, and both have the capability to make use of student knowledge. The gap
between the scope and quality of resources being offered is apparent, but developing and maintaining
this kind of website is costly and time consuming - few not-for-profit organisations with limited funds
see their website as a priority.

5.3 Further research

...historicism...drifts away from space and geography, geo-stories that embody history and

geography. (Edward Soja, 2012)28

And these children that you spit on

As they try to change their worlds

Are immune to your consultations

They're quite aware of what they're going through...

(Bowie, Changes, 1971)

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26Migration lesson plans from the Geographical Association: http://www.geography.org.uk/cpdevents/onlinecpd/migration/

27My Place lesson plans from Young People’s Geographies: http://www.youngpeoplesgeographies.co.uk/resources-ideas/
my-place/ Website accessed December 10, 2012.

This project has broken a little ground on an area of curriculum research that has been overlooked: cities and regions with high proportions of first and second generation migrants would benefit from a curriculum that more appropriately reflects their life experience. A first extension to this project, therefore, would be to broaden the scope of this research to include grade 11 and grade 12 students from other schools in the East Vancouver neighbourhood. A greater sample size would not only strengthen the validity of these findings, but, more importantly in my view, give a voice to students whose opinions in regard to curriculum are rarely sought. In addition, there would be scope for investigating whether there are any marked differences between genders in regard to how they perceive place: this study was too small to make any meaningful conclusions in that regard. A second approach would be to extend the research to other parts of the Vancouver metropolitan area, to find out whether students from different communities and more materially affluent neighbourhoods have similar awareness in regard to relating their own life experiences to the social studies curriculum, or whether the results of this project are location-specific. A third proposal might be to use a different theoretical framework to investigate the lives of migrant students. Diane Raey’s *Shaun’s Story* successfully makes use of a number of Bourdieuan concepts to relate the life of a working class boy in London; such an approach could be replicated to investigate the day-to-day lives of migrant students in more depth. The first interviews in this project could be expanded to provide a deeper understanding of how the process of immigration impacts how migrant students negotiate life in high school.

This project might have the potential to approach curriculum development in a more student-centred way. Even though the participants in this study are the consumers of the social studies curriculum, they have little say in what they are taught. Back in secondary school, we were informed that we would be studying a Shakespeare play and a classic novel as our set texts at the equivalent of grade 10. I cannot remember what our English teacher had chosen for us, but we were appalled by the
prospect of studying what we estimated to be very dull and tedious literature for an entire year, and complained to our teacher about it. What I do remember is how we felt when we were told that our teacher had taken our complaints seriously, and had chosen *Romeo and Juliet* and *Jane Eyre* for us instead. We could not quite believe that we had been heard, and that our opinion mattered, that we had a say in our studies.

The writers of the social studies curriculum would do well to include the evaluation of students who have studied the subject in BC schools: their understanding from being at the pointy end of the curriculum is invaluable, but rarely asked for. Empowering students to take an active part in public education is currently being debated, as students ask for policy changes that would create student-trustee positions on the school boards of Greater Vancouver. A parallel move would be to give students a place at the table to discuss ongoing changes to the social studies curriculum currently being considered by the Ministry of Education. For curriculum developers this would require taking a deep breath: criticism (in the fullest sense) from students is very uncomfortable but very worthwhile. Actively listening to judgments about curriculum content from teenagers is often awkward, but as educators, we have to be prepared to swallow our professional pride and work with the young people for whom the curriculum is designed, to ensure that it is fit for purpose. The inclusion of a greater geography component must be one of the suggestions on the table: students need to be fully acquainted with impending global issues such as climate change and population movement, and have a grasp of both the underlying physical and human geography. This should be part-and-parcel of a place-based curriculum that gives students an appreciation of spatial justice both at the local and global scale. The study of place in geography should not be limited to past definitions or even current understandings: the discipline of geography has moved on from defining place as a fixed location. Geography needs to

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occupy a new space in the BC curriculum that allows students to develop their own understanding of place, informed not only by the prescribed curriculum, but also by their own experiences. The school children of British Columbia deserve to be taught a curriculum that allows them to discover where they are as well as who they are.
References


*Geography, 96*, 60-68.


